

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Violence, flooding, and displacement push one million children in South Sudan to the brink of starvation

Juba, South Sudan, Wednesday 23 December 2020 - Save the Children is warning of a devastating large-scale hunger crisis among children in South Sudan, as new data shows a dramatic increase in food insecurity that has pushed one million children to the brink of starvation – as well as projections that this figure will rise by 13% in the first half of next year.

The charity is calling for immediate action to prevent tens of thousands of children from dying of hunger.

This follows a [joint statement](#) by UN agencies saying 6.5 million people in South Sudan – 53% of the population – have been pushed into severe food crisis– [a rise of nearly 10% from the start of the year](#).

Recent severe flooding, intercommunal violence, the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and general economic decline have impacted lives and livelihoods, including loss of crops, livestock, homes, and access to hospitals and other basic services. The UN [estimates](#) that 856,000 people have been affected by flooding since July, with some 400,000 people displaced in recent months.

The IPC data projects that this figure – the number of people in IPC Phase 3 and above – will increase to 60% of the population in the period between April and July 2021.

Just over two million people – an estimated one million of whom are children – are in IPC phase 4, which is only one step away from catastrophe in some counties. As well as the numbers in this critical stage, hundreds of thousands more children don't know where their next meal is coming from.

For 24,000 people already in IPC phase 5 – described by the food security classification initiative as 'the absolute inaccessibility of food to an entire population or sub-group of a population, potentially causing death in the short term' – catastrophe is already on their doorstep. Almost half of these people are in Jonglei state, which has borne the brunt of the recent flooding and intercommunal violence. The rest are in Warrap state, where livelihoods and markets have been disrupted because of intercommunal violence.

Patrick Analo, Save the Children's Acting Country Director of South Sudan, said: *"This year has been particularly tough on the children of South Sudan. Our teams on the ground were telling us that most families are earning below the poverty line of US \$1.90 per day, but with economic decline and currency devaluation, this is now likely to be much lower. Markets are almost empty due to failed crops, and the little there is will not feed everyone. Children are already dying from the consequences of*

malnutrition and hunger, and more will follow if the international community does not act now, and increase its funding to help the children of South Sudan.”

Already, South Sudan has one of the highest child mortality rates in the world with more than 90 children out of 1,000 dying before they reach the age of five.

Two-year-old Nyandor* narrowly escaped this terrible fate. She arrived with her mother at a Save the Children primary health care clinic in Abyei in the north of South Sudan, weighing just 8.5 kgs. Health workers gave her Plumpy Nut, a nutritional supplement that helps children to recover from malnutrition, and after two weeks she gained more than a kilo in weight.

Nyandor’s mother Achai fled the ongoing conflict has no access to work or an education. Nyandor’s father abandoned them both when she was born.

Achai said: *“Since I gave birth, I’ve had nobody to help me and I’ve been struggling to buy food. It’s particularly difficult if my baby is sick and I’m dependent on relatives.”*

Save the Children said that displacement has also brought on protection risks for children in South Sudan.

Patrick Analo said: *“When children are displaced they are at greater risk of abuse. In Jonglei state, children are forced to seek shelter in schools, camps and open settlements with their families, or even sometimes alone—exposed to floodwaters from the Nile river, which also place children at increased health risk.*

“This perfect storm of hunger, floods, violence and displacement has created a crisis in which children are suffering the most. Children have witnessed unimaginable acts of violence committed against their loved ones. Thousands have been separated from their families and are now at risk of exploitation and abuse.

“Without immediate psychosocial support, protection and education support, we risk losing an entire generation of children to the terrible events of 2020.

“We are calling on the Transitional National Government of Unity to take stringent actions to protect children who are affected by conflict through political intervention, and to ensure adequate policies and funds are available so that children and young people can survive, learn and be protected.”

Save the Children is among the leading child rights organisations in South Sudan, with over 30 years of on-the-ground experience in the country.

Following the flooding, the charity has responded in Jonglei state by distributing hygiene and shelter kits for displaced families and children. It also has been working hard to raise awareness on the dangers of flooding for children, the prevention of Covid-19, and on hygiene, health and nutrition issues.

Save the Children is currently providing basic health care for displaced children, including screening for malnutrition. The organization has reached over 40,000

people between July and end of November 2020 in Jonglei and Eastern Equatorial States.

ENDS

For further inquiries, kindly reach out to:

Emily Wight, Emily.wight@savethechildren.org

Rik Goverde, rik.goverde@savethechildren.org; (+44) 7732 602 301

During out of office hours: media@savethechildren.org.uk / +44 7831 650 409

Notes to Editors

South Sudan is one of the worst places in the world to be a child. **19,000** children have been recruited by armed groups since the conflict began. There are **16,055** unaccompanied, separated or missing children. **65%** of women and girls living in conflict zones experience physical and/or sexual violence in their lifetime. Up to a **third** of women in these areas experienced sexual violence from a non-partner, and many of the incidents were directly related to a raid, displacement or abduction.^[i]

[i] <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/childhood-under-attack-staggering-impact-south-sudan-s-crisis-children>

Bei Interviewanfragen steht Ihnen auch unsere Pressestelle in Berlin zur Verfügung.

Kontakt:





Save the Children Deutschland e.V.

Pressestelle – Susanne Sawadogo

Tel.: +49 (30) 27 59 59 79 – 120

Mail: susanne.sawadogo@savethechildren.de

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Über Save the Children

Im Nachkriegsjahr 1919 gründete die britische Sozialreformerin und Kinderrechtlerin Eglantyne Jebb Save the Children, um Kinder in Deutschland und Österreich vor dem Hungertod zu retten. Heute ist die inzwischen größte unabhängige Kinderrechtsorganisation der Welt in über 110 Ländern tätig. Save the Children setzt sich ein für Kinder in Kriegen, Konflikten und Katastrophen. Für eine Welt, die die Rechte der Kinder achtet. Eine Welt, in der alle Kinder gesund und sicher leben und frei und selbstbestimmt aufwachsen und lernen können – seit über 100 Jahren.