

SOUTH SUDAN'S HUNGER CRISIS:

IMPACTING WOMEN AND CHILDREN'S NUTRITION STATUS

SOUTH SUDAN

CASE STUDY 2022

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CAUSES OF MALNUTRITION IN SOUTH SUDAN



Conflict = food insecurity through



Mass displacements



Deep economic recessions



Increased inflation



Unemployment



Eroded finances for social protection and health



conflict + weather events (drought/flooding)

In regions where agriculture is the main way to earn money, conflict + weather events (drought/ flooding) + displacement affect food production, harvesting, processing, transportation and marketing. Impacting food security leading to malnutrition

Other contributors of malnutrition include:



A mothers' age, education level, and the last time she had a child



Low child birthweight



Not up-to-date immunisations



Not up-to-date a - Poor maternal nutritional status



Food related cultural practices affecting food intake



Early introduction of foods



Pre-harvest season (compared to post-harvest)



Environmental factors like poor hygiene, diseases (chronic or being sick a few weeks before the survey), low dietary intake and poor access to food

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THERE IS NO FOOD: DESTRUCTION FROM FLOODS LEAD TO SPIKE IN MALNUTRITION CASES

The grass around Awel Atem's house is soaked. On the roof of the family home a large tarpaulin is spread, along with wet clothes. The walls of the home have cracked, exposing the poles keeping the structure together. Inside, Awel sits on a wet mattress beside two naked children.

The children are famished, Awel says. The roads that Awel's husband travels to his job are impassible because of the flooding.

"My husband sold all our valuables like bedsheets and phones to feed us but our situation got worse every day," Awel says.

Without income, there is no food. Awel's one-year-old daughter is malnourished. The child's health has been a concern for months.

"She has relapsed three times and is still in the nutrition programme," Awel says.

Because of ongoing heavy rains in Awel's corner of South Sudan, her house is on the verge of collapsing. Awel is not sure what the family will do if that happens.

Sadly, Awel's situation is not unique. The ongoing food crisis, compounded by the effects of flooding impacted 800,000 people in 2021.

Eleven-month-old Abuk Theresa has been treated for malnutrition twice over her short lifetime. The child is currently in hospital where she is undergoing treatment. Her mother, Adhel Mabek, says her family doesn't have any food and she has no breast milk.

"We are only surviving because of God's mercy. I do not want to think of losing another baby due to hunger," Adhel says.

Adhel's other daughter died in 2021 when the child was a year and a half old.

"She got sick and when I took her to the hospital, the test showed she was anemic. She died that day. I knew it all happened because of poor feeding," Adhel says.

More than 40,000 children under age five have been identified with acute malnutrition in Gogrial

East, Gogrial West, Tonj North and Twic Counties of Warrap State.

Rahab Kimani, the Roving Nutrition Manager for Greater Bahr el Ghazal Zone, reports that flooding has significantly disrupted people's lives and, as a result, more children are malnourished. "World Vision has been working with other sectors to establish linkages where caregivers of children in the nutrition programmes can be enrolled into existing food security and livelihood interventions."

In the meantime, World Vision is working with its partners at the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and World Food Programme (WFP) at 64 nutrition centres, providing nutrition support to caregivers and children to stabilize their health.

“She has relapsed three times and is still in the nutrition programme

A MOTHER-TO-MOTHER SUPPORT GROUP HELPS COMBAT MALNUTRITION

"My youngest child would cry because there was insufficient milk from my breast," says 38-year-old Awien Lual.

Floods destroyed Awien's crops, leaving the single mother of four without income or food.

"The floods dragged me to zero and to malnutrition," adds Awien, who lives in Kuajok, Warrap state.

"For several months, we survived on food given to us by a neighbour which I gave to my children," Awien says. "I realised my skin colour had started to change due to insufficient intake of foods."

Worried about her health, Awien visited a nearby hospital.

"The hospital nurse referred me to World Vision's nutrition centre and I got admitted in the nutrition programme with severe acute malnutrition."

“ My youngest child would cry because there was insufficient milk from my breast.

As she received treatment in World Vision's supported nutrition centre, Awien was introduced to 15 other mothers in Kuajok. The other mothers were dedicated to creating awareness about healthy eating practices, particularly for women who had young children.

The mothers' group, supported by World Vision, provided Awien with vegetable seeds which she planted and helped her learn tips to grow a kitchen garden bursting with nutritious vegetables.

"I cultivated in different areas, planted the seeds that I had received from World Vision around my home. I dug a shallow well near my vegetable garden to help me water the plants," she says.

"I am now back on my feet, and my children eat a healthy and nutritious diet," she says

Seeing the success in her own life, Awien joined the mother-to-mother support group.

"The mothers encouraged and motivated me and this prompted my fast recovery. I joined them to support other mothers and children from getting malnourished," she says

Rahab Kimani World Vision's Nutrition roving manager says, "Any form of malnutrition, acute or chronic if not well treated, have long term irreversible effects to children and mothers and this could lead to multiple effects to individual, families, communities and the society at large."

Rahab adds, "It's quite thrilling to see Awien and other mothers getting cured of acute malnutrition."

World Vision works in partnership with UNICEF and the World Food Programme to deliver nutrition support to mothers and children. More than 500,000 pregnant and lactating women took part in nutrition programmes in 2021.



After being identified as malnourished, Awien joined a mothers' group where she learned about healthy eating practices for children and received help to grow a vibrant vegetable garden

MOTHERS USE SEEDS AND SKILLS TO FIGHT HUNGER



"Whenever I hear of the floods, I get worried as a farmer and a mother," says Ateny Mathiang, a 32-year-old mother of six.

Farmlands have been flooded in some parts of Warrap state. Farmers like Ateny in Kuach North are anxious. As crops are nearly ready to harvest, the rains are increasing in intensity, threatening to drown months of hard work.

"We are scared because of the floods. I have seen flooded farms and homes in the county. I am hoping that we shall harvest all the farmlands before the worst happens. I do not want to revisit my past," Ateny says.

The past is not so distant. Just two years ago, Ateny's family was struggling.

"My family suffered from hunger and depended on wild fruits to survive," she remembers.

In 2020, Ateny became one of the farmers involved in a UKAID funded project called BRACE II for farmers in Kuach North. She was among 6,532 families to receive seeds and agricultural tools. Project staff shared tips with farmers on how to cope with the effects of climate change, guiding farmers towards growing drought resilient crops such as sorghum and millet, encouraging farmers to plant crops early to avoid times when flooding regularly occurs, and showing farmers how to use raised beds for vegetable gardening.

Ateny joined a group of farmers who took part in agricultural training led by World Vision staff. "We weed together and do the entire farm work as a unit. The project has built a team spirit among us and we are empowered too. We are happy and will continue to produce more food," Ateny reports.

Previous harvests yielded bags of groundnuts, which were sold to pay for food for her children and cover their school fees. This year's harvest, if not destroyed by the weather, promises to yield more groundnuts, sorghum, beans, pumpkins, sesame and okra.

She is not the only one who has seen results. Thuc Diing a father of eight whose wife is a member of the Anyuat farming group, says, "Last year we received five sacks of groundnuts from the project farm. With the new skills my family has learned from the project, I am confident that we can produce more food!"

Nyibol Akec, a mother of five, harvested 12 bags of groundnuts from the project farm last year. "I am hoping for much better produce this year. If

the floods do not destroy our farms. My wish is to have a small business. I have never owned anything. Now that I know the demands of the people in the village, I will multiply my income."

Deng Chol is the project coordinator of the BRACE II project. He says the project has strengthened social cohesion in the community and provided families with enough food.

"The project has empowered the communities, especially women, by enrolling them in the farming activities and training where they learned about best agricultural practises, climate-smart agriculture, nutrition, and village savings and loans associations. The skills they learned empowered participants to generate income and establish businesses. This has strengthened food security in Kuach North and enhanced community resilience," Deng says.

Kenneth Munyengervi, the Project Director for the BRACE II project, adds that farmers tackle child malnutrition with this project. Mothers take part in cooking demonstrations and learn how to prepare nutritious meals.

"This project makes sure that parents have nutritious food to provide their children, food that they grow. When they sell some of the harvest, they have income to access other healthy food at the market, improving a child's dietary diversity," Kenneth explains.

“My family suffered from hunger and depended on wild fruits to survive”

In Kuach North, 6,532 families have received seeds and agricultural tools, helping them combat child malnutrition. Project staff share tips with farmers on how to cope with the effects of climate change, guiding farmers towards growing drought resilient crops, encouraging farmers to plant crops early to avoid harvesting when flooding regularly occurs, and showing farmers how to use raised beds for vegetable gardening.

JUBA'S MOTHERS AND CHILDREN FIND REFUGE IN NUTRITION CENTRES AMID THE PANDEMIC AND HUNGER CRISIS



"I have no idea about malnutrition because none of my children experienced it until 2020 when the COVID-19 pandemic hit and made life difficult for us," says Martha, 30.

Martha Naam is a mother of four who left her hometown in South Sudan's Torit County to join her husband Dominic, a daily wage earner, in Juba.

"My youngest daughter became malnourished and I had sleepless nights seeing my child go through the pain," says Martha. She treated her daughter with herbal medicines and her condition worsened until a neighbour told her about World Vision's nutrition programme.

She recalls, "My first reaction was, 'How much do they charge?' When she told me it was free, I immediately rushed to the facility."

Martha's baby girl went through treatment for two months and her condition improved. "I was hopeless when we started, but after completing the one-week supplement, I was relieved of the changes."

World Vision provided 900 cartons of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) to support the 15 nutrition centres in Juba.

The programme provides support to an estimated

10-15 children daily at the Gumbo Nutrition Center. Martha shares, "The RUTF truly helped my child. Now she breastfeeds well, and I am grateful to the team at the hospital for working tirelessly to see my daughter recover."

The mothers take part in health and nutrition education sessions on maternal, infant and young child nutrition and learn about safe water, sanitation and hygiene practices.

World Vision, with its partners the World Food Programme and UNICEF, provided support to help more than 60,000 children recover from malnutrition in 2021.

“My first reaction was, ‘How much do they charge?’ When she told me it was free, I immediately rushed to the facility”



Children are recovering from malnutrition after World Vision provided 900 cartons of Ready-to-Use Therapeutic Food (RUTF) to support the 15 nutrition centres in Juba.

PROVIDING NUTRITIOUS FOOD ASSISTANCE IN TIMES OF CRISIS

In times of crisis, World Vision helps caregivers provide emergency food for their children.

Yar Achien was among the 17,000 people whose home was destroyed during flooding in Bor, in Jonglei State. The 35-year-old mother of six lost all her belongings in the flooding and fled with her children to an internally displaced persons camp.

"Having walked to get to this place was tough, but as a mother, my target was to get my children to safety," Yar says.

World Vision provided 1,000 of the most vulnerable families affected by the flooding with vitamin-rich food. Vitameal - a high protein rice - was provided to families to ensure children remained healthy and had enough to eat.

"Vitameal is fortified also with Vitamin A, which helps in vision and boosting immunity and other minerals like zinc that balances the electrolytes in the body addressing diarrhoea," explains Komakech Ronald Mandela, World Vision's Juba Urban Nutrition Manager.

Each family was given 12kgs of Vitameal. World Vision staff also led cooking demonstrations where parents and caregivers were shown how to prepare a meal with Vitameal.

"My children already like the food, and I am happy because it will not only save them from hunger but also its richness in nutrients will keep my youngest children safe from malnutrition," Yar says.

Mary Michael, a 33-year-old mother of seven, says, "I have learned how to cook nutritious meals with Vitameal and at least I won't need to worry for a few months on what to prepare for my children."

World Vision's GIK Coordinator Emmanuel Dada says, "South Sudan is gripped by extraordinary challenges related to nutrition. Food insecurity is increasingly becoming alarming; this is worsened by an unfavourable economy, with most households being unable to afford basic needs. The Vitameal assistance given to flood affected people is an opportunity for households to have meals, which is vital especially for the children, lactating and expecting mothers."

“ Having walked to get to this place was tough, but as a mother, my target was to get my children to safety



World Vision provided 1,000 families affected by the flooding with vitamin-rich food. Vitameal - a high protein rice - was provided to families to ensure children remained healthy and had enough to eat.

VOLUNTEERS GO DOOR TO DOOR TO SHARE NUTRITION MESSAGES IN JUBA



A total of 15 mother groups and 135 community nutrition volunteers share important information about effective mother and child nutrition strategies throughout Juba.

In South Sudan's largest urban centre, a group of mothers are spreading the message about the importance of breastfeeding. The women go door to door, sharing information about breastfeeding as a way to stave off child malnutrition. The group also identifies children who are malnourished and refers them to a nearby clinic.

A total of 15 mother groups and 135 community nutrition volunteers share important information about effective mother and child nutrition strategies in Juba. World Vision, in partnership

with the State Ministry of Health (SMOH) Central Equatoria State (CES), UNICEF and WFP, supports the groups.

"Every day, World Vision's teams reach about 460 caregivers of children ages six to 59 months," explains Komakech Ronald Mandela, World Vision's Juba Urban Nutrition Manager.

Hadia Charles, 24, is a mother of one. She shares that the information provided is particularly valuable for women who have their first child,

"Now I know the importance of exclusive breastfeeding to keep my child safe from malnutrition and other diseases."

“Every day, World Vision’s teams reach about 460 caregivers of children ages six to 59 months”



KODOK'S WOMEN CREATE A HAPPY PLACE TO FIGHT HUNGER AND MALNUTRITION

The vegetables are ripe, colourful and ready for harvest. Fifty-year-old Nyebol, a mother of eight and the deputy leader of the food security project organised by World Vision in Kodok County says they are at their happiest when working at the garden.

Indeed, it is. After the intense fighting in 2017 that drove the majority of the people in the county to nearby towns and villages, the women in Kodok despaired with what had happened in their small, quiet town. World Vision was among the very few organisations that stayed behind and supported the people as they trickled back home.

Mary Nicola, 42, expresses her gratitude for the support the garden provides for her family's needs. "My seven children eat healthy food from the vegetables we grow. We can sell them in the market and still have a supply for our families," she shares as the other mothers nodded in agreement.

Sixty women coming from four villages in the county actively participate in the endeavour assisted by two staff from World Vision's Food Security and Livelihoods team. Mary proudly says, "Even our husbands are very supportive of this project."

World Vision's Food Security Officer Stephen Okouch has built a strong bond with the group, guiding them as they improve the way they farmed and organized themselves together. The team taught those new ways of planting and better agriculture techniques.

"We have provided them with tools and seeds to start this project, including the water pump that brings water from the nearby Nile River," he says.

The families were also provided with 150 livestock composed of sheep and goats. The tools included farm hoes, water cans, and shovels.

However, Okouch credits the group's hard work and passion in turning the once-barren place into a thriving garden. He adds, "What matters the most is their interest in making this succeed. As they sell the vegetables in the public market, all the more they realise how beneficial the garden is not just for their families but also the whole community."

Kodok is gradually recovering from the conflict. There are still empty stalls in the market and some houses need rebuilding but people are optimistic that the situation will continue to



improve with the ongoing peace negotiations.

Nyebol finally adds that the most important impact of the project is bringing the women together and allowing them to learn and keep their children healthy.

"We learned how to market and take pride that we have the income to buy our children's needs," she says.

Not only has the garden formed a happy place in Kodok but a land of promise that the women hoped will spread in other villages and towns.

"With World Vision's support, the farmers are now producing enough for their own families'

consumption while selling surplus harvest to the markets in Kodok, Aburoc and even supplying Malakal's Protection of Civilians Camp. This provides them with extra income for other household needs," says John Waswa, Food Security and Livelihood Officer.

The food security initiative is funded by the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA) and supported by the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

“We learned how to market and take pride that we have the income to buy our children's needs”

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNTRY DIRECTOR

Working towards a day when South Sudan no longer faces malnutrition

In the last year, World Vision's team provided assistance to more than 891,262 children and 503,132 breastfeeding mothers or pregnant women who were malnourished in South Sudan. These numbers are not merely statistics, but individual lives that are struggling.

Malnutrition is often the symptom of food insecurity, poor hygiene, or a lack of knowledge of nutritious food. For South Sudan, a triangle of misery confronts families as people struggle with conflict, poverty and the effects of climate change.

Ongoing violent clashes in South Sudan forces people to abandon their agricultural practises - leaving them without the means to produce their own food or earn income from the harvest. For the 2 million internally displaced people in the country there are distinct food security challenges. Climate change is also wreaking havoc on agriculturally-reliant families. With 78 percent of the population relying on subsistence farming, small crop production or livestock rearing can be wiped away in a weather event. In 2021, 835,000 people were affected by flooding, many who were forced to flee their land.

Even without these challenges, South Sudan has a history of chronic poverty. Hunger remains a pressing concern. There are indications based on South Sudan's current trajectory, World Food Programme experts warn, that people in parts of the country are facing famine levels of food insecurity.



Perhaps the most heart wrenching part is that women and children are firmly in the crosshairs of hunger, conflict and climate change.

World Vision's programmes aim to help women and children escape from the clutches of hunger. Our nutrition programmes provide children, breastfeeding mothers, and pregnant women with health care support and nutrient rich food supplements. We provide caregivers training to help them learn how to prepare nutrient-rich food. We work with community groups to build sustainable agricultural projects, providing them with the seeds, tools and knowledge to adapt to shifting agricultural conditions.

We are hopeful that one day South Sudan will be able to lift itself from the grip of hunger and malnutrition. In the meantime, we continue to work alongside our partners to support South Sudan and build a resilient nation.

Dr. Mesfin Loha

Country Director

World Vision South Sudan

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WORLD VISION SOUTH SUDAN'S NUTRITION PROGRAMMES IN FY21

 **1,394,397** people reached with nutrition programming

891,262 children under age 5 screened for malnutrition, along with **503,132** pregnant and lactating women, at World Vision run programmes

 **114** outpatient therapeutic feeding sites were supported

113 target supplementary feeding programme sites and four stabilization centres supported with nutrition services through the Ministry of Health



62,000

children under age 5 recovered from malnutrition after taking part in various World Vision nutrition programmes



132,456

people participated in infant and young children feeding programme group counselling sessions (including mother support groups)



317

community nutrition volunteers trained



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to protect the future generation

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