

A young girl with dark skin and short hair, wearing a bright yellow t-shirt, is smiling warmly at the camera. She is standing in front of a dark chalkboard. A piece of lined paper with handwritten text in red ink is pinned to the chalkboard behind her. The paper contains several lines of text, including phrases like "I will get married", "I don't want", "I have a heart", and "I will get married". The chalkboard has some faint white markings on it. The overall scene suggests a classroom or educational setting.

The impact of South Sudan's crises on education

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Statistics highlighting need to Education in South Sudan



4.5 MILLION CHILDREN

in South Sudan are hungry, affecting their education, resulting in poor academic performance, inconsistent attendance and eventual dropout¹



3.6 MILLION
people need education support



2.8 MILLION
children are out of school¹



1 in 3 schools have **no** access to **safe drinking water**¹



14 MONTHS
the amount of time schools were closed for Covid-19



190 SCHOOLS
closed due to flooding in 2021

Along with conflict and climate change weather events, the reasons children drop out of school:



No money for school fees



Distance from schools



Inadequate learning spaces



Lack of school supplies



Untrained teachers



Early marriage



Lack of mobility or assistive devices for children with disabilities¹

Data sources:

¹UN OCHA. (2022, February). Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hno_ssd_2022_26feb2022.pdf

A deepening hunger crisis and its impact on South Sudan's vulnerable children

Children like 11-year-old Paksa are the most affected and vulnerable to compounded crises, especially in matters related to food, nutrition, and education



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In South Sudan, vulnerable children face a deepening crisis. For children like Paksa, the scarcity of food increases a burden she was already facing. At just age 11, Paksa has become carer to her three younger siblings.

"I have to take care of the children, yet I don't know anything," she says.

As the world navigates increasing inflation, an ongoing pandemic, and harsh effects of climate change and conflict, countries like South Sudan – which was already in a precarious state – are struggling to cope. Ongoing insecurity and violence in South Sudan continues to displace people and climate change weather events are forcing people to abandon their homes, livestock and crops.

Yet, even before these multiple crises, children like Paksa were teetering on the edge of survival.

When Paksa's mother died giving birth to her baby sister Rose and their father abandoned them, the 11-year-old became a caregiver to her three younger siblings. Paksa dropped out of school to care for her baby sister.

"It hurts to see that other children go to school, but we have to stay at home because no one can support us and I need to take care of Rose," Paksa says.

The girls weren't left entirely by themselves for long though. They were sent to live with their uncle who lived nearby. But he suffers from alcohol

addiction and, fearing for the children's safety, an aunt stepped in.

Paska and her siblings now live with their aunt in South Sudan's capital city, Juba. Their aunt has children of her own, and while she feels a sense of responsibility for her extended family, she admits, "I cannot provide for them."

Paska says simply, "Our life was far better when our mother was alive, even if she didn't have a job. Now it's terrible."

Many other children in the country are facing their own struggles. In April 2022, an estimated 7.74 million people in South Sudan were predicted to face high acute, emergency or catastrophic food shortages by July, according to data from the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), a system that measures global acute food insecurity². The report also highlights that the situation will likely be worst in Jonglei, Unity and Western Equatoria States.

Children who have been able to persist with their education often do so in crippling hunger. Others, like Paska and her siblings have been forced to drop out of school, due to the brittle edges of hunger and the desperate need to survive.

As a result, they are missing out on their childhood.

World Vision's protection staff Yomima Aja Watts closely monitors their condition, visiting them from time to time.

"These children need a safe and conducive environment to stay. They also need to go to school. Without proper care and nutrition, especially for the baby, she will continue being malnourished," Watts says.

In South Sudan, World Vision continues to help vulnerable families like Paska's. The organization has been providing food packages, and cash and vouchers, so families can stay safe and stay healthy. Nutrition support is making sure that emergency food packs are available for children under age five to recover from malnutrition.

To keep children in school, World Vision is collaborating with the UN World Food Programme to institute school food programmes which have helped limit school dropouts due to hunger. The school food programmes have also assisted the various participating schools in increasing enrolment and student retention.

World Vision South Sudan has also been able to address issues such as gender equality and the

education of girls – who are often seen as having less value in South Sudanese rural communities. Once such girls are out of school, their chances of child marriage or pregnancy increase.

While deeply appreciative of assistance already rendered regarding school feeding programmes and projects, World Vision acknowledges the need grows direr by the day and requires even more help and action. World Vision South Sudan is already feeding 150,000 children and, as a result, has seen an increase in enrollment by 40,151. In the face of flooding, World Vision South Sudan built 169 temporary schools so that education could continue. The school to many children in South Sudan represents an island of tranquillity in the middle of turbulent waters.

Still there is more work to do. With more than 2 million school-aged children not currently in the classroom, children like Paska are falling through the cracks. With additional funding, World Vision can extend its programming to ensure children like Paska and Rose get the support they need to regain a sense of childhood and build future opportunities.



²Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. (2022, April). South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Situation for February - March 2022 and Projections for April - July 2022. <https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155527/?iso3=SSD>

Meals keep South Sudan's children in school, but long-term peace will help families stand on their own



Elizabeth, 13, and her classmates enjoying lunch thanks to World Vision and the World Food Programme's partnership

"I was four, and I remember my elder sister and brother coming home for lunch every day because the family had enough food for everyone," recalls Elizabeth, now a 13-year-old primary five pupil.

Elizabeth's father employed several people on their farm, but access to farms became impossible. Farming activities came to a standstill.

Like most South Sudan states, families in Western Equatoria State depend on their farms as primary sources of food and livelihood. Before the conflict, the state was the country's food basket, providing enough for its people.

Then, school children did not have to worry about attending afternoon lessons on an empty stomach because the one-hour lunchtime was enough to go home and back to school having eaten. The conflict made access to most farms difficult and dangerous. Hunger then crept in.

"My father stopped going to the farm because people got abducted. I joined school at seven and hated it because I would come home and find no food," Elizabeth reported.

More than 2.8 million children, or over 70 per cent, are out of school in South Sudan, putting their and the country's future at risk, a UNICEF report indicates. Girls, in particular, are more vulnerable and vastly outnumber boys.

To encourage children to go back to school, World Vision and the World Food Programme provide **40,000 children in 47 schools** access to nutritious food through the Food Assistance Programme.

Apart from keeping children fed and healthy, the programme aims to improve enrolment and retention and alleviate hunger. Elizabeth says the programme is helping her and keeping the children focused on learning.

"I know of classmates who depend on school meals to survive, so they come to study and eat every day," she shares.

During the COVID-19 lockdown last year, she says one of her schoolmates was forced to get married so her family could have money for food and basic needs.

Another child, Baraka, a 12-year-old primary four pupil, says, "The school feeding programme motivates children to stay in school. Or else, most of us would be on the streets hustling for money or working. Studying on an empty stomach is not easy."

Juana John, a cook in the school, adds, "The smiles on the children's faces whenever I serve them the meals gives me fulfilment as a mother. This food means a lot to them. We are grateful to World Vision and World Food Programme for the support."

Angelo Misa David, the headteacher of Lutheran Primary School, says, "Where there is hunger, there is always a high school dropout rate and early child marriages. In South Sudan, girls are seen as a source of wealth for families."

Simon Beeyo, the Food Assistance Project Manager, says, "The children's hot meals in school is a big boost for education, but it is very dependent on available funding from donors. The children need all the support they can get to keep them in school."

³UNICEF South Sudan. (n.d.). Education: Creating solid foundations for the future through quality education. <https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/what-we-do/education>

South Sudanese children ready to achieve their dreams despite flooding



Yar tests her classmates with questions to determine if they understood her lesson.

"I am happy to be in school again," says Yar, a 13-year-old girl.

When schools reopened in South Sudan after the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown, learners returned to school and regained hope for the future. Not long after that came another natural disaster; flooding in most parts of South Sudan, especially Jonglei State in its counties of Twic East, Bor and Duk. The flood forced thousands of people out of their homes, seeking refuge as Internally Displaced Persons in Mangalla, Juba and other parts of the country.

World Vision South Sudan, with funding from South Sudan Humanitarian Fund, provided an education in emergency response through setting up of rapid establishment of educational activities, which include:

- i. The mobilisation for child enrolment, the establishment of temporary learning spaces and rehabilitation of existing classrooms, refresher training for volunteer teachers, distribution of school supplies
- ii. Construction and rehabilitation of Water Sanitation and Hygiene facilities in schools
- iii. Awareness-raising campaigns for parents/ caregivers/and youth on back-to-learning messages and child rights

The multi-pronged project aspires to improve the lives of three million vulnerable children by 2025 through humanitarian development, peace programming, and advocacy efforts that address the needs of South Sudan's most vulnerable children and their families.

More than 2.4 million children were out of school before the current conflict, with a further 400,000 children losing out on an education due to school closures because of conflict, Covid-19, and flooding⁴. The world's newest country now has the highest proportion of out-of-school children globally.

Yar, a primary four pupil says, "I like going to school. The teachers teach well, and there are not so many in my class. I want to be a businesswoman in the future."

One of Yar's friends, Matiop, a 16-year-old primary seven pupil, says he was happy to continue his studies after the destruction by floods and the COVID-19 lockdown.

"I want to work hard, excel and join the university to study law," Matiop says.

Just like Matiop, all of Yar's schoolmates have dreams.

Aloot, a 16-year-old girl, flashed back, saying, "Floods came and destroyed everything, even our school. All my friends are scattered, some are in Juba, and others remain in Bor and are not studying. I am excited about continuing my studies and achieving my dream of being a doctor."

Racheal, a 15-year-old girl in primary five, remembers her experience escaping the floods. "I was told to get into the boat. I jumped into it, not knowing where we were going with my parents. I am glad I found schools here in Mangalla. I live near the school where I study. My dream is to be a teacher," Racheal says.

Odong Robinson, the South Sudan Humanitarian Fund Education Officer, says, "World Vision is carrying out an integrated emergency response focused on education and protection for flood-affected people in Mangalla internally displaced person camp and the surrounding host communities."

"In an emergency, children out of school for a long time become less likely to return to school. With these education activities implemented from August 2021 to August 2022, there is a ray of hope for the learners to live everyday life in the future as they return to school."

⁴ UN OCHA. (2022, February). Humanitarian Needs Overview: South Sudan. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/hno_ssd_2022_26feb2022.pdf

Bringing education to children in South Sudan's cattle camps



Simon Majok, World Vision's government supported teacher, moves with pastoralist children from one place to another as they search for greener pastures for their animals to keep them in school.

"I grew up knowing nothing except looking after the cows," shares 13-year-old Makol Akol.

In South Sudan, many children like Makol do not get the opportunity to go to school because they move from one place to another for their cattle grazing pastures. Makol belongs to a group of nomadic pastoralists and currently lives in Aguath Cattle Camp, an hour away from Warrap State's Tonj South County.

"At sunrise, we gather the cow dung, burn it, and use it to clean the cows. We milk them daily for our consumption and then take them out to graze. This is our daily routine," Makol says.

The responsibilities of boys and girls are well-defined in pastoral communities. The boys, like Makol, take care of the cows while the girls fetch water and do the household chores.

However, this is not the case for 12-year-old Ajok. In her family, her siblings are all girls who need to support their father, who cannot tend the cattle in his old age. The girls have to step in and do the job.

"My two elder sisters are married and taken far from the camp. Now, my 14-year old sister Atong

and I joined the boys in our village to take care of our cows, dividing our time between fetching water," Ajok explains.

World Vision's Reconciliation, Stabilisation, and Resilience Trust Fund Project, supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization, was designed to build pastoral communities' literacy and livelihood skills at various cattle camps in Tonj South, North, and Gogrial West counties. The project has already reached more than 700 people.

Ajok says, "We grew up taking care of the cows and being raised believing that girls are the source of wealth for our parents, but going to school gives me a better feeling, even learning how to count up to 50 in English. I want to keep studying."

According to Ajok's father, Mabuac, World Vision's Education On The Move initiative opened their eyes to realising their children's future. "My great grandparents were cattle keepers and handed the job to us. I have seen how delighted my daughters feel whenever they go to school," he shares.

"It taught me that our children can be educated even as they help tend the cattle," Mabuac adds.

World Vision's project works with government-supported teachers who teach children in different camps. Simon Majok, one of the teachers assigned to Aguath Cattle Camp, shares, "We started teaching in May 2021 in Toch village and now in Aguath village following pastoralists to keep their children in school!"

"Being a part of this programme gives me great joy and fulfilment. The pastoralist children are so isolated, yet they deserve the right to education like other children," Simon stresses.

The teachers also help the campaign raise awareness of child marriage and peacebuilding. Chief Manyiel Ayiei of the Aguath Cattle Camp says, "Child marriage is too common among us, but the campaign has helped reduce the practice. Educating the people has an impact."

Project Coordinator Maria Deng explains, "This programme at the camps generated interest in many children and youth. The parents are now keen to send their children to school. After a few months, many children can read and write."

Improving Conflict-Affected Children's Education With Remedial Classes In South Sudan

"The conflict affected our attendance and concentration in school," shares 15-year old Aben.

Aben was born in Balliet County, a part of Upper Nile State located southeast of Malakal County and has around 48,000 people. Aben and thousands of people in the county were displaced by conflict in 2015 and fled to Melut County for safety.

"I was nine and can still remember how we walked for several days to Melut. I witnessed a lot of children getting sick and some dying due to hunger. I was disturbed by what I saw," she says.

She adds, "In 2016, I tried attending school in Dingthoma 1 Primary School, but my family and the teachers realised that I needed time to heal. I suffered difficulty in learning and was always behind my classmates."

World Vision's Multi-Year Resilience Project, with support from Education, Cannot Wait, introduced the Remedial Learning Program in five schools in Balliet County. The project aims to support struggling learners like Aben so they can catch up with others through remedial classes outside the regular school days.

Remedial learning assists school children who have difficulty achieving core academic skills, especially literacy and numeracy.

In 2017, Aben's family decided to move back to Balliet due to difficult living conditions in the Melut Internally Displaced Persons camp.

"There were few people who went back. I was already 11 years old and decided to go back to school," Aben shares.

She says, "The children were few in the school, so they combined us with the existing class. I started catching up on social studies and science but struggled with English and mathematics."

"I got lucky to be selected among pupils in English and mathematics in my class for the five days of remedial learning. I was able to catch up. I scored 66 in mathematics and 77 in English in the last term. I became confident to ask questions, and learning became easier," Aben adds.

Baliet Primary School is one of the schools supported by World Vision with dignity kits, learner's kits, hygiene kits (a part of COVID-19

prevention materials), school safety planning, teacher's training, and gender-based violence support and awareness activities.

"Someday, I want to become a doctor to support children in my community. I witnessed a child who overdosed on medicine because the mother did not understand the prescription well. I also want to become a role model to other girls," she shares.

Yout Toung, Aben's father, says, "I want to see my daughter achieve her dreams. I do not want my child to get married early like the other girls in the county. The only thing I learned from my parents is farming and cattle rearing, and this should not be the fate of my girl. I can see she loves learning, and I will support her on that."

Yong William, Baliet Primary School's headteacher, explains, "There is a remarkable improvement in the children's performance due to the project. I hope more children will be included in the remedial programme."



Teacher Ustaz Deng taking 15-year-old Aben and her classmates through a Mathematics lesson after school hours

Breaking the stigma of the period that hinders girls' education

Seventeen-year-old Rhoda has a period problem. The primary eight student is one of the thousands of girls living in Juba who does not have access to feminine hygiene supplies such as sanitary pads.

"My family needs to prioritise our other basic needs if we have the money, as our aunt often told us, after which they can think of buying sanitary pads for us," Rhoda shares.

Originally from Maridi County in Western Equatoria State, Rhoda and her family moved to the country's capital Juba in search of better opportunities. Rhoda's aunt, who owns a local restaurant, supports the whole family.

"I would be in secondary school by now if not for the years I stayed home, unable to afford the school fees. But I am thankful that my aunt continues her support despite her too many responsibilities," Rhoda confides.

South Sudan's conflict, which erupted in 2013, has compounded the already challenging

situation of girls and women in urban centres. It also deprived millions of children of their education.

Rhoda and her younger sister Sarah, 15, have been forced to stay home during their menstrual period.

"Missing our lessons every month was normal for us. One day, I had to use a piece of cloth for sitting for exams. It is tough," she adds.

World Vision and the World Food Programme distributed sanitary pads to 28 schools in Juba's urban areas, providing assistance to 2,720 school-going girls.

The reusable pads are in packs of three and include two pairs of underwear and a plastic pouch to store them. Made from absorbent cotton, it has a plastic layer and can be washed repeatedly and used for several months.

Menstrual periods and feminine hygiene are taboo subjects culturally in South Sudan.

This challenge creates the need to develop programmes that would bridge the gap between the need for a student's education and communities' lack of knowledge or reluctance to discuss sexual reproductive issues vis-à-vis feminine hygiene.

Viatore Joseph Gudele, East II Primary School headteacher, adds, "There are actually more girls than boys in school, 330 out of 557 pupils. I realised now that they miss their classes when on their period. Parents under-prioritise the importance of pads because they can barely afford two meals a day."

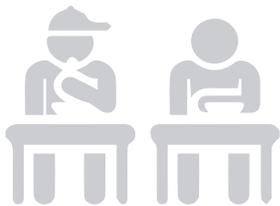
Emmanuel Ondoga, World Vision's Food and Cash Assistance Coordinator, adds, "There is hope for the future. It is a collective responsibility to respond to this menstrual health issue in South Sudan." He concludes that more work needs to be done to provide menstrual supply to school girls and women to "reduce, if not completely remove, the social stigma surrounding menstruation," he concludes.



Rhoda demonstrates to girls at her school how to use the reusable sanitary pads



World Vision's Education Statistics



150,000

children were provided **regular school meals**



40,151

children were supported to **enroll** and **attend school**



37,188

children **provided study materials** including textbooks, notebooks, pens, geometry sets, bags & more



1,337

registered **orphans** and vulnerable children were **supported to attend school**



451

volunteer **teachers were supported with incentives** to deliver education in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps, refugee camps and in refugee returnee communities



54

classrooms were **rehabilitated** from temporary and permanent learning structures

169

temporary education centres were set up in internally displaced persons and refugee camps. Teachers were provided training to deliver education in emergencies and encourage children literacy, while students were supplied study materials



66

school management committees with parents and teachers learned how to create and follow school development and management plans during training sessions





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