

HOW DOES THE IMPACT OF FOOD SECURITY BRING ABOUT PEACE?

Food security and peace and security are intricately intertwined. Both internal and external conflicts negatively affect the food security situation. South Sudan has been largely affected by internal conflicts that resulted in mass displacements, deaths, disruptions of livelihoods, trauma, and killings. These have resulted in long-term stagnation and downward movement in the levels of food security of its populations.

On the other hand, efforts to ensure the fulfillment of the food security needs of individuals and communities also have been causes of conflict usually caused by competition for land and water resources. Thus food insecurity is a cause and consequence of the lack of peace and security. While Agriculture is the dominant sector supporting the livelihoods of most households in fragile and post-conflict countries like South Sudan, its ability to feed people has been affected by conflict. Sub-national conflict and insecurity, three consecutive years of catastrophic floods, and macroeconomic challenges have progressively eroded household capacity to produce or purchase food and cope with recurrent shocks. As a result, the severity of acute food insecurity has worsened compared to previous years¹.

Sporadic clashes between armed groups, attacks against civilians, and generalized insecurity are worsening the severity of food insecurity in parts of Unity, Jonglei, Warrap, Upper Nile, and Greater Equatoria. Political tensions between the government and opposition forces reached high levels in March and April, periodically manifesting in violence in central Unity and southeastern Upper Nile (Maiwut and Longochuk counties). Incidents of armed banditry and intercommunal conflict also persist, linked to political power struggles, territorial disputes, resource scarcity, and other factors. These events not only disrupt or prevent households' ability to fish, gather wild fruits and vegetables, plant crops, protect their remaining livestock, and access markets, but also compromise humanitarians' ability to pre-position food assistance in strategic locations ahead of the main rainfall season, such as in Maban, Pibor, and central Unity.

The impact of food security is to improve over the long term as an approach to promote, restore, and maintain peace in the world. Agriculture is the dominant sector supporting the livelihoods for most households in fragile and post-conflict countries.

¹ <https://fews.net/east-africa/south-sudan/food-security-outlook-update/april-2022> accessed on 14/08/22.

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Efforts to revive the agricultural sector and trade, and increase food security, have a positive effect on the sustainability of peace. The creation of jobs, particularly for the young people, who have high expectations in their lives, would also minimize the involvement of young people in violent actions that hinder peace and bolster their engagement in constructive nation building efforts . This, organized and unorganized young individuals, and groups are the triggers for the lack of peace and could be supported to engage in productive activities that will enhance food security in South Sudan. The provision of tools and seeds to the communities who are farming could help reduce the risk of violence.

The question of food security and peacebuilding has an important gender dimension in many post-conflict contexts globally, women are responsible for family food security and provide most of the agricultural labor. Experience and evidence show that women are more likely to spend their incomes on food security, health care and education, thus making crucial contributions to post-conflict recovery. Food security interventions can enhance social cohesion, address root causes or drivers of conflict, generate peace dividends and build the legitimacy of, and trust in, governments.