



Adhiew (8) at her temporary home in Mangala after fleeing floods in Bor in August 2020.
Photo Credit: Save the Children*

South Sudan floods leave farming families in despair

By Richard Sultan

IT'S mid-morning, and children at Mangala displaced persons camp in Juba are playing the "no-no & a yees" game where you close your eyes and jump in rows of different square sizes inside a column of rectangles marked on the ground. All of a sudden, Deng John a 51-year-old farmer displaced from the town of Bor in Jonglei State (111 km from Juba), screams to Chol, one of his children, "stop playing that your nonsense and go to the roadside to see if there are signs of lorries coming".

Deng is one of the hundreds displaced in South Sudan's worst flooding on record in 2021, which displaced over 200,000 households and affected nearly a million people, according to the UN office for Humanitarian Affairs.

Mangala camp residents largely depend on relief supplies delivered by humanitarian trucks.

Despite the humanitarian support, Deng says his wish is to return to his hometown because they've become beggars in the camp.

"What we are given is not enough to sustain us, and in most cases, we have to rely on help from relatives in Juba," he says.

The World Food Programme (WFP) reduced humanitarian aid to some parts of South Sudan last April due to a lack of funding resulting from the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

"It is a difficult decision to take from the hungry to give to the starving, but this is the reality; because of the alarming rise of food insecurity in remote locations. WFP has to reduce the size of its rations in some communities, including refugees and internally displaced people, who are in a less precarious situation," said Matthew Hollingworth, WFP Representative and Country Director in South Sudan.

But Deng's hope of going back to Bor is likely to remain a dream after the government shelved its plan to dredge the river to prevent it from flooding following resistance by conservation activists. The activists warned dredging it would cause the Sudd Wetlands, the largest of its kind in the world and home to various wildlife and bird species, to dry up.

According to Save the Children, another humanitarian agency in the country, the widespread flooding has driven South Sudan into its worst hunger crisis since independence in 2011. In a report released ahead of the World Food Day in 2022 titled 'Leave No One Behind', Save the Children urged the international community not to overlook South Sudan or to divert funding to other crises. The UN estimated that nearly nine million or 71 percent of the population, need humanitarian assistance. This includes 1.4 million children under five suffering from malnutrition.

"The situation has deteriorated in recent months with more than 600,000 people impacted by an unprecedented fourth consecutive year of large-scale flooding, destroying homes, crops, and leading to a spike in malaria and snakebites, particularly among women and children.

This has combined with thousands being displaced by the ongoing conflict that has plagued Africa's newest country since 2013 with slow progress in implementing a 2018 peace agreement. A melting economy

has seen the currency fall by nearly 40 percent and food prices surge, exacerbated by higher import prices linked to the war in Ukraine," says the report.

South Sudan is one of many countries crippled by the worst global hunger crisis this century, fuelled by a deadly mix of poverty, conflict, climate change, and economic shocks, with the lingering impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic and the crisis in Ukraine further driving up food prices and the cost of living.

"South Sudan's farming families saw little hope of an end to the flooding caused by late and heavy seasonal rains that has left their houses and land up to two feet (0.6 metres) underwater, a breeding ground for snakes," says the report.

Jib Rabiltoosaporn, Save the Children's South Sudan Country Director, said South Sudan is now facing one of the worst food insecurity emergencies in the world.

"South Sudan is among five of the most vulnerable countries in the world to climate change, with drought and devastating floods a common feature. With nearly a decade of conflict, frequent displacements, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity and multiple disease outbreaks, families and children here are on the brink. We must not leave anyone behind," he said.

Save the Children is calling for increased investments to build on successful efforts around flood mitigation that saved lives previously and in flood prevention infrastructures to protect lives, livelihoods, and assets in the long run.

Back in Mangala, Deng's anxiety finally stops as the queue of lorries start to make their way under the big distribution tent.

"Like it or hate it, I will be the one opening the sacks today," he screams upon arrival at the tent. His plan is to secure enough empty sacks to use for packaging charcoal.



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