



Policy Brief: Urgent National Humanitarian Priorities for South Sudan — October 2025

Addressed to: UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator, UN Country Team, and Key Humanitarian Donors.

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Purpose of the Policy Brief

This document is intended to highlight the most acute and emerging humanitarian crises in South Sudan, recommend strategic and operational actions for UN agencies and partners, and influence policy decisions, resource allocation, and response priorities to prevent escalating loss of life and longer-term systemic collapse.

Executive Summary

South Sudan is currently experiencing multiple, overlapping humanitarian emergencies: widespread food insecurity, increasing malnutrition, conflict-driven displacement, climatic shocks such as flooding, and deteriorating public health. These crises are intensifying rapidly, and without urgent, large-scale, and coordinated responses, areas already on the brink of famine will slip into catastrophe. Delays in action will exacerbate mortality, displacement, and instability, undermining fragile gains in peace and development.

Current Situation: Crises, Drivers, and Unmet Humanitarian Needs

- **Food Insecurity & Famine Risk:** An estimated 7.7 million people are projected to face acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) during the current lean season; among these, ~2.5 million face Emergency conditions (Phase 4), and approximately 63,000 are in Catastrophic (Phase 5) hunger (FAO, 2025; FEWS NET, 2025). Driving factors include conflict disruption of farming and markets, inflation and economic decline, and flooding damage to crops and infrastructure (FAO, 2025).
- **Malnutrition Crisis:** Approximately 2.3 million children under five and ~1.1 million pregnant or lactating women risk acute malnutrition, with some areas recording GAM (Global Acute Malnutrition) rates above 15%. Malnutrition is aggravated by restricted access to treatment, disease outbreaks, displacement, and supply disruptions (UNICEF, 2025).
- **Conflict-Driven Displacement & Access Restrictions:** Clashes in states such as Upper Nile (e.g. Nasir, Ulang), Jonglei, and Unity have displaced large populations, disrupted livelihoods, and blocked humanitarian access. Repeated displacement and insecurity hamper sustained assistance (UNHCR, 2025).

- **Flooding & Climate Shocks:** Recurrent, severe flooding has destroyed farmland, contaminated water sources, damaged infrastructure, and forced population movement. Flooding enhances disease spread and undermines agricultural productivity and market access (Logistics Cluster/WFP, 2025).
- **Health, WASH, and Disease Outbreaks:** Displaced and flood-affected communities face heightened risks of cholera, malaria, diarrheal, and respiratory illnesses. Many health and nutrition centres are damaged or inaccessible (WHO, 2025).
- **Economic & Returnee Pressures:** High inflation, currency volatility, and economic collapse reduce purchasing power. Returnees from Sudan and neighboring countries add to demands on stretched humanitarian services and local markets (UNICEF, 2025).

Key Challenges

1. **Severe Funding Gaps:** The current funding for the 2025 Humanitarian Response Plan is insufficient, covering only a fraction of projected needs across food, nutrition, health, protection, and WASH sectors. Delays in funding allocations limit rapid scale-up.
2. **Restricted Humanitarian Access and Mobility:** Ongoing conflict, flooded roads, insecure route networks, and bureaucratic barriers impede delivery of assistance to priority areas, especially during rainy/flood seasons.
3. **Coordination and Operational Capacity Gaps:** Weak coordination at sub-national levels, limited logistics infrastructure, lack of prepositioned supplies, and variable capacity of local partners slow down response and leave significant gaps in coverage.
4. **Structural, Policy, and Infrastructure Constraints:** Unstable governance, poor infrastructure (roads, bridges, storage), weak health systems, and inconsistent policy enforcement hamper early recovery, resilience building, and sustainable humanitarian operations.

Urgent Need for Action

1. **Famine is imminent in several counties:** Without immediate food, cash, and protection interventions, vulnerable populations in Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Unity may suffer mass mortality.
2. **Malnutrition escalation:** Delays in treatment for children and pregnant women will lead to irreversible health impacts and higher mortality rates.
3. **Outbreaks multiply risk:** Disease spread in overcrowded, unsanitary, displaced environments increases morbidity and deaths if health and WASH services are not restored.
4. **Crisis will worsen without intervention:** Humanitarian needs will deepen, requiring more resources, greater access, and more extensive response just to prevent collapse.

Strategic & Operational Recommendations

1. **Enhance Multi-Sector Coordination**
 - Strengthen field-level coordination platforms and integrate local NGOs and government in planning and delivery.
 - Deploy rapid response coordination mechanisms to scale up in emerging hotspots.
2. **Scale up Life-Saving Assistance in High-Risk Areas**
 - Preposition food, nutrition, health, WASH, protection, and shelter supplies in priority states (especially Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei, Warrap).
 - Expand mobile outreach to conflict-affected, flood-impacted, and isolated communities.
3. **Secure Flexible and Reduced-Delay Donor Financing**

- Launch emergency appeals targeting gaps in key sectors; ensure funding is adaptable to shifting crisis dynamics.
 - Encourage multi-year commitments to support both acute response and early recovery/resilience efforts.
4. **Invest in Durable Solutions and Community Resilience**
- Support climate-resilient agriculture, seed systems, and market access to reduce future dependency.
 - Rehabilitate critical infrastructure (roads, bridges, health/nutrition centres) to improve access and sustainability.
 - Promote reintegration programs for returnees with access to services, livelihoods, and safe housing.

Conclusion & Call to Action

South Sudan's humanitarian crisis is deteriorating at an alarming pace. **Urgent action is required now** to prevent famine, reduce child mortality, contain disease outbreaks, and stabilize livelihoods. The UN Country Team, humanitarian partners, and donors must **mobilize resources, enhance coordination and access, and invest in resilience and recovery pathways**. MADO stands ready to collaborate in delivering integrated, scalable, and sustainable responses across the most affected states.

References

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