

Hunger intensifies in South Sudan as 7.8 million people face high acute food insecurity and 2.2 million children suffer acute malnutrition

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The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Food Programme (WFP) and UNICEF warned that a deepening hunger crisis in South Sudan is pushing 7.8 million people into high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3 or above) between April and July 2026, according to [the latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\) analysis](#). This represents 56 percent of the population - one of the highest levels of acute food insecurity in the world today.

Among those projected to be acutely food insecure, 73,300 people are facing Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) - the most severe level of acute food insecurity. This represents a dramatic increase of 160 per cent from the last estimate. Meanwhile, 2.5 million people are in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 5.3 million in Crisis (IPC Phase 3).

The crisis is being driven by escalating conflict, mass displacement, economic decline, climate shocks, flooding, and below-capacity agricultural production, all of which are reducing food availability and limiting families' access to enough food. In Jonglei alone, nearly 300,000 people have been displaced, leaving many communities cut off from humanitarian assistance, while rising food prices, disrupted markets, and weak household purchasing power are further deepening food insecurity.

At the same time, acute malnutrition is being exacerbated by lack of access to health and nutrition services where facilities have been damaged or closed due to conflict. In addition, the shortages of supplies and funding have reduced access to life-

saving treatment. Disease outbreaks, including cholera, malaria, and measles, are compounding the crisis, particularly among vulnerable and already acutely malnourished children.

The agencies warn of a credible risk of famine in four counties across Upper Nile and Jonglei states. Conflict-affected communities have been cut off from food, markets, and essential services, under a worst-case scenario of escalating conflict, further displacement, and constrained humanitarian access. The IPC projects 11 counties across Upper Nile, Unity, and Jonglei states to face IPC Acute Malnutrition Phase 5 (Extremely Critical) outcomes. Humanitarian assistance is being scaled up in some areas, but coverage remains uneven, with some communities still inaccessible and receiving little or no support.

For children, the nutrition situation has continued to worsen. Currently, 2.2 million children aged 6 months to five years old are suffering from acute malnutrition, an increase of 100,000 cases when compared to six months ago. Through July this year, 700,000 children are projected to face severe acute malnutrition, the deadliest form. Similarly, 1.2 million pregnant and breastfeeding women are acutely malnourished, placing both mothers and infants at heightened risk.

At the same time, flooding and below-capacity agricultural production are further undermining food availability.

FAO, WFP and UNICEF - along with the Nutrition and WASH clusters - are calling on the international community and governments to act immediately. Sustained funding for food assistance, nutrition programmes, clean water and sanitation, and health services are critical to prevent further deterioration.

Parties to the conflict must ensure safe, rapid, and unfettered humanitarian access to all affected areas must be guaranteed without delay. Sustained funding for food assistance, nutrition programmes, clean water and sanitation, and health services is critical to prevent further deterioration. The agencies are also urging all parties to the conflict to protect civilians and enable the delivery of life-saving assistance. Without rapid, large-scale intervention, the people of South Sudan risk facing an irreversible humanitarian catastrophe.

“Now, more than ever, we cannot afford to lose the hard-won gains made in recent years, especially as South Sudan works to strengthen its agrifood systems and build on encouraging signs of local agricultural production. These gains remain highly vulnerable to conflict, insecurity, and climate shocks - the very forces driving today’s food crisis. We must act urgently and collectively to protect livelihoods, sustain food production, and prevent millions more people from falling deeper into hunger,” said Rein Paulsen, Director, FAO, Office of Emergencies and Resilience.

“Since the beginning of the year, we have seen a significant increase in conflict in Jonglei and Upper Nile and repeated blockages in our attempts to access people in these areas,” said Ross Smith, WFP’s Director of Emergencies and Preparedness. “We are now engaged in a critical race against time to expedite and increase our deliveries to remote locations in anticipation of an early rainy season. We are deeply concerned about the plight of many whom we may be unable to reach due to the ongoing challenges. Conflict is hitting women and children the hardest. These children are the future of the country, but without urgent support, that future is at risk. We must act swiftly and decisively to ensure their survival and well-being.”

“We are witnessing a deadly downward spiral with 2.2 million children suffering from acute malnutrition and nearly 700,000 among them are at grave risk of dying from severe wasting. Every day of delayed humanitarian access and supply delivery is a day a child’s life and future hang in the balance. We are calling on all parties to grant timely, safe access to conflict-affected, including areas of displacement, and scale up nutrition interventions. We must act now if we are to save children’s lives,” said Lucia Elmi, UNICEF Director of Emergencies.