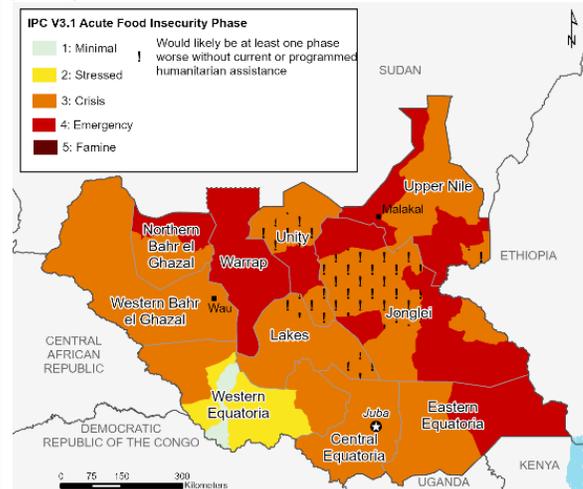


Surge in conflict in western Upper Nile displaces thousands, driving Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes

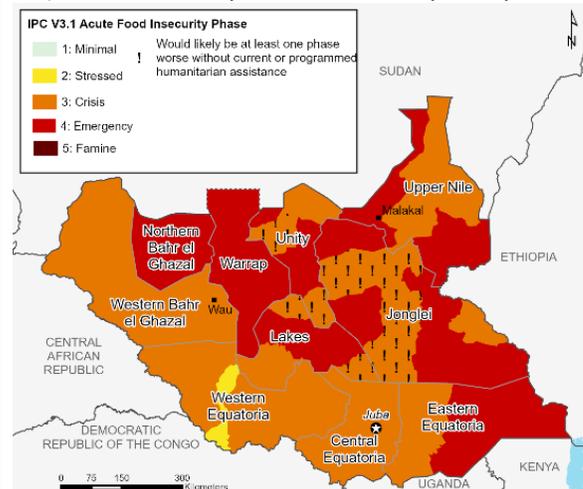
KEY MESSAGES

- While the availability of the main and second-season harvests is marginally alleviating food insecurity in some areas, such as Western Equatoria State, millions of households in South Sudan remain acutely food insecure due to extensive crop and livestock production losses, the significant loss of other livelihood assets, repeated household displacements, and the erosion of income-generating activities caused by floods, conflict, and poor macroeconomic conditions. Additionally, staple food prices are more than double that of the same time last year and more than three times the five-year average due to currency depreciation, high import and distribution costs, and increased regional competition for atypically low supplies.
- Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are widespread, and food and non-food assistance needs remain high. Populations of highest concern include households who lack productive assets and face extreme hunger in Fangak, Canal/Pigi, and Akobo counties of Jonglei and the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, as well as conflict-affected households along the northern Jonglei-Upper Nile state border, especially in Fashoda County. Due to funding and access constraints, less than 1 million people have received General Food Distributions or Food for Assets each month since October.
- Conflict in northern Jonglei and Upper Nile is defined by a rise in civilian deaths and injuries, sexual and gender-based violence, pillaging of cattle and harvests, and displacement. In early December, much of the violence occurred in Fashoda County as armed youths from northern Jonglei, operating as part of the white army, attacked communities and IDP camps, resulting in the displacement of **up to 40,000 people**. In mid-December, confrontations shifted back towards eastern Upper Nile and northern Jonglei, with clashes occurring between the white army, Agwelek, and the South Sudan People’s Defense Forces (SSPDF) and between the Sudanese People’s Liberation Army (SPLA)-Kitwang forces and Gawaar civilians. The surge in insecurity is hindering food assistance deliveries.
- Atypical rainfall from October to mid-December, combined with elevated water levels in the Nile River and its tributaries, has slowed the recession of floodwaters in the Sudd Wetland and White Nile River Basin. The flood waters continue to impede trade and market functionality, contribute to elevated waterborne disease incidence, and disrupt health services. Breakages in health services are also a critical factor in the nationwide measles outbreak that the Ministry of Health declared on December 11. Cases have been reported in 22 counties to date, raising the risk of increased acute malnutrition and mortality levels due to the interaction of hunger and disease, especially in areas with large populations in Emergency (IPC Phase 4).

Projected food security outcomes, December 2022 to January 2023



Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2023

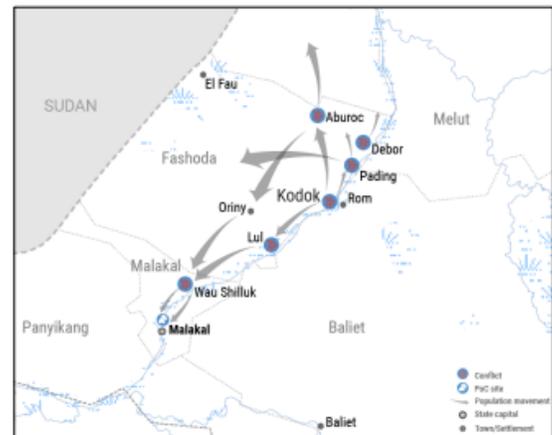


FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

CURRENT SITUATION

Conflict and insecurity: The conflict situation in the Upper Nile-northern Jonglei region, which began in mid-August, remains volatile and dynamic. The epicenter has shifted in recent weeks deeper into Upper Nile, particularly to Fashoda County. The ongoing violence and strategic movements of warring groups have caused further civilian deaths, population displacement, and disruptions to trade flows and assistance delivery. The most recent escalation includes a surge in violent armed attacks by the white army on civilians and IDP camps in the Akedid area, Kodok Payam in Fashoda County on December 1, as well as around Aburoc and Dethouk, with movement into Manyo County on December 2nd, followed by further attacks on December 5th around Kodok Town. The attacks involved the use of sexual and gender-based violence, widespread looting of an unknown number of cattle, and pillaging of crop harvests while leading to the deaths of civilians, displacement of thousands of people, and relocation of humanitarians. The intensification of conflict in Fashoda, which is considered the heartland of the Shilluk community, prompted President Salva Kiir to move the King of Shilluk Kingdom from Fashoda to Juba, a decision that demonstrates the severity of the deterioration in security conditions and level of risk to civilians that remain in the area.

Figure 1. Location of conflict along the borders of Upper Nile and Jonglei, December 2022



Source: OCHA

Based on an inter-agency assessment led by OCHA in Kodok Payam, an estimated 21,000 to 40,000 people have been displaced as a result of the attacks in Fashoda — including the elderly, the disabled, and large numbers of unaccompanied children who are in need of urgent life-saving assistance and living in dire conditions scattered under trees in the open or in makeshift shelters and government buildings. An estimated 21,000 people, at a minimum, have been internally displaced to Kodok Town alone, and there are reports that many people are still hiding in the bushes and unable to make their way to the towns of Kodok, Malakal, and Melut in search of safety. In addition, the attacks on December 2nd and movement of the conflict into Manyo County further displaced about 5,000 people into Melut County, with as many as 3,000 fleeing into Sudan. Moreover, an estimated 22,000 people have been displaced to the Malakal Protection of Civilian (PoC) site and at least 166 civilians have been killed and 237 people have been injured since the outbreak of violence in the border region first began in Panyikang County in mid-August. However, given the difficulty in accessing and monitoring events in these areas, it is likely that the number of people who have died or been displaced due to the violence are underestimated.

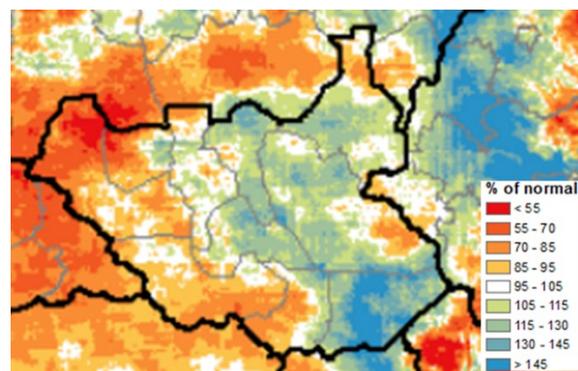
The shifting centers of conflict within the border region are largely linked to the movement and splintering of various armed forces. As the Agwelek forces moved into Fashoda to defend the Shilluk communities, the frequency of attacks have become more sporadic in Tonga of Panyikang County (Upper Nile) and Thalei of Fangak County and Diel/Atar of Canal/Pigi County (northern Jonglei), where the conflict initially began. Meanwhile, the movement of the white army into Fangak resulted in clashes between SSPDF and Agwelek forces on one side and the white army on the other near Wau Shilluk in Malakal County on December 11th. Further south in Ayod, SPLA-Kitgwang forces loyal to Gen. Olony's Agwelek forces attacked Gawaar civilians, leading to unknown number of population displacement towards neighboring counties.

The scale and intensity of the violence in Upper Nile and northern Jonglei have elicited widespread condemnation and raised concern for the implementation of the peace process. The Ceasefire and Transitional Security Arrangement Monitoring and Verification Mechanism (CTSAMVM) has warned that continued clashes in Upper Nile and northern Jonglei areas, as well as further joint SSPDF-Agwelek operations against the white army forces and their mobilization towards Fangak and Canal/Pigi, could interfere with the implementation of the peace agreement.

Elsewhere, fighting by hold-out rebels of the National Salvation Army (NAS) in Greater Equatoria Region, particularly in Lainya, Morobo, and Maridi counties and rural areas of Yei County, remain a driver of food insecurity. In late November and early December, for example, clashes displaced an unknown number of civilians to Yei Town and western Morobo on the DRC border and disrupted second-season harvesting and flows of local produce from rural to urban centers. Additionally, in Mangalla Payam of Juba County, clashes between Dinka Bor cattle herders and members of the Tibari community on December 11th led to 16 deaths, displacement of an estimated 3000 people, and interference with the Juba-Bor trade route. However, counter cattle raiding, banditry, and inter-communal conflict events have been relatively low in December, with the exception of a recent raid by armed youth from Cueibet County of Lakes State on Manyang Ngok Payam of Tonj South County, which resulted in the loss of one human life and 28 cows.

Rainfall performance and flooding: Although the June to September main rainfall season normally ends during October in most parts of the country, the north-central parts of South Sudan and Eastern Equatoria experienced extended wetter-than-normal conditions through December 2022 (Figure 2). In some localized parts of these regions, particularly over Eastern Equatoria, the quantity of rainfall received was up to 45 percent (100 mm) above normal for October-December period. While the rainfall has been favorable for long-maturing sorghum crops and pasture recovery in greater Kapoeta and eastern Pibor, it is likely contributing to the slow recession of flood waters in the central and northern Sudd Wetland. Additionally, even the positive impacts of the recent rains have not been distributed equally. Key informant reports in Eastern Equatoria have confirmed that high rainfall amounts in November contributed to the improved development of long-maturing sorghum crops in Torit, Magwi, and Lafon Counties, which is typically harvested in January. However, the rains had no impact on the ratoon sorghum harvest in the greater Kapoeta area, as the harvest was already completed.

Figure 2. Rainfall as a percent of normal, October 1 – December 30, 2022



Source: FEWS NET/USGS

While floodwaters are gradually receding in many areas, the extension of above-average rainfall into December and the high water levels of the Nile River and its tributaries are slowing the recession of floodwaters in parts of northern South Sudan. The most impacted areas remain along the river basins through the Sudd Wetland, the Jur and Bahr el Ghazal rivers, and the White Nile River. Although there is no recent update on the number of people affected by flooding, OCHA's flood situational update released on October 31st reported that over 1 million people were affected by torrential rain and flooding in 36 counties. High flood levels continue to impede trade flows and market functioning; disrupt food and nutrition assistance deliveries and basic health services; cause significant livestock and crop production losses and damage to basic infrastructure; and result in the loss of human lives. Recent key informant reports, however, indicate that household access to fish in flood-affected areas is high. Overall, while a further reduction in floodwaters is expected as conditions dry out in the coming months, the recovery of typical livelihood activities will be modest given the compounding effects of annual floods since 2019.

According to key informants and information from the Ministry of Health, the contamination of water sources by the protracted floods is another significant impact that continues to affect both human and livestock health in flood-affected counties. Additionally, the consecutive years of flooding have caused the destruction of many health facilities and contributed to challenges in physical access to health facilities, resulting in broad disruption to health service delivery, including measles vaccination campaigns, which have been ad-hoc since 2020. These issues have led to a rise in the number of unvaccinated children and increased risk of not only waterborne diseases but also airborne disease outbreaks. 2,471 cases of measles with 31 deaths have been reported in 22 counties across the country this year, prompting the government to declare a nationwide measles outbreak on December 11th. Elevated disease incidence is already one of the contributing factors driving high acute malnutrition levels in eastern and northern South Sudan, and there is concern that the measles outbreak could interact with concurrent high levels of hunger to exacerbate acute malnutrition and mortality levels further.

Crop production: Available key informant reports are consistent with earlier projections that national crop production in 2022 is generally similar to or somewhat lower than last year. The harvesting of the main season crop is complete in unimodal rainfall areas in South Sudan. Similarly, in greater Kapoeta in Eastern Equatoria, the ratoon sorghum crop harvest has already been completed and the overall harvest level is lower than last year due to early-season dry spells. However, some long-maturing sorghum crops are still in their late maturation stage in agropastoral, highland, and mountain livelihood zones in Lakes, Eastern and Central Equatoria. Meanwhile, according to key informant reports, most second-season crops in bimodal rainfall areas were in the late maturation to harvesting stages in early December, with the exception of a few leguminous crops such as pigeon pea, cowpea, and root crops such as sweet potatoes. Cases of green grasshopper infestation are reportedly affecting sorghum crops in Dorik and Imehjek of Lafon County and Imurok of Torit County of Eastern Equatoria, but key informant reports indicate the impact is mild and harvest prospects are better in these areas than in 2021 due to extended rainfall.

Livestock production: Livestock production continues to be negatively affected by enormous challenges, including inter-communal conflict and raiding, thefts, flooding, pasture shortages, water pollution, and diseases amidst poor veterinary services. With low livestock production and productivity, access to livestock products and income in livestock-owning

households in the pastoral and agropastoral livelihood zones has also declined. Despite FAO and partners vaccination and deworming efforts in 2022 (which, for example, targeted Anthrax, Contagious Bovine Pleuropneumonia, Black Quarter, *Peste des Petits Ruminants*, Contagious Caprine Pleuropneumonia, and Newcastle diseases), key informants continue to report cases of liver-fluke, Foot and Mouth Disease, Black Quarter, and hemorrhagic septicemia in most flood-affected counties in Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, Lakes, Unity, and Jonglei states. Key informants also report that livestock body and pasture conditions are still generally poor in severely flood-affected areas due to flood-induced pasture losses. Conversely, livestock body conditions are recovering from earlier dry conditions in Kapoeta East of Eastern Equatoria. The recovery is linked to slightly improved rainfall in October-December compared to July-August, which has regenerated pasture and delayed typical livestock movement to dry season grazing areas.

Trade flows and market supplies: As reported in FEWS NET's [October 2022 Food Security Outlook](#), cross-border and inter-state domestic trade flows are occurring normally through most of the main border crossing points and along domestic trade routes where there is relative calm. However, the availability of market supplies in both state capitals and rural markets is unseasonably low compared to a typical year due to low regional and local production, increased regional competition for staple grains, and high supply costs linked to high fuel prices and depreciation of the SSP. As a result, imported volumes of maize and sorghum grain from Uganda through the Nimule and Kaya-Vurra border crossing points declined by around 70 to 85 percent compared to last month and the same period of last year. Furthermore, disruptions to trade are exacerbating the decline in market supply in areas affected by severe flooding and intense conflict, especially cross-border trade flows from Sudan through the Gok-Machar and Warawar crossing border points of Northern Bahr el Ghazal and inter-state domestic flows in northern Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile states.

Staple food prices: Staple food prices remain considerably elevated compared to the same period last year and to the five-year average in all the key reference markets, which is limiting household access to food among households that typically rely on livestock production and labor and households that had negligible harvests due to recent shocks. Based on November 2022 market monitoring price data in CLiMIS, sorghum prices per *malwa* (3.5 kg) trended relatively stable to slightly higher month-on-month in Juba and Bor South (3-8 percent); significantly higher in Aweil Centre and Aweil South (29-35 percent) due to both lower local harvests and limited to no food imports through the Sudan corridors; and slightly lower in Rumbek (-8 percent) due to the relatively better local harvest and continuous flow of goods from Juba via Terekeka. Despite the monthly variation, staple food prices are generally more than double (120-280 percent) that of the same time last year and more than three times higher (209-280 percent) than the five-year average in Rumbek, Bor South, Juba, and Aweil Centre due to continued depreciation of SSP, high import and distribution costs, atypically low regional production, and increased regional competition for supplies. As a result, in November, households that primarily earn their income from casual labor could only purchase roughly 3 kg and 7 kg of sorghum, respectively, with a day's wage in Juba and Aweil, which reflects a 38 and 82 percent decline, respectively, in their purchasing power compared to same time last year.

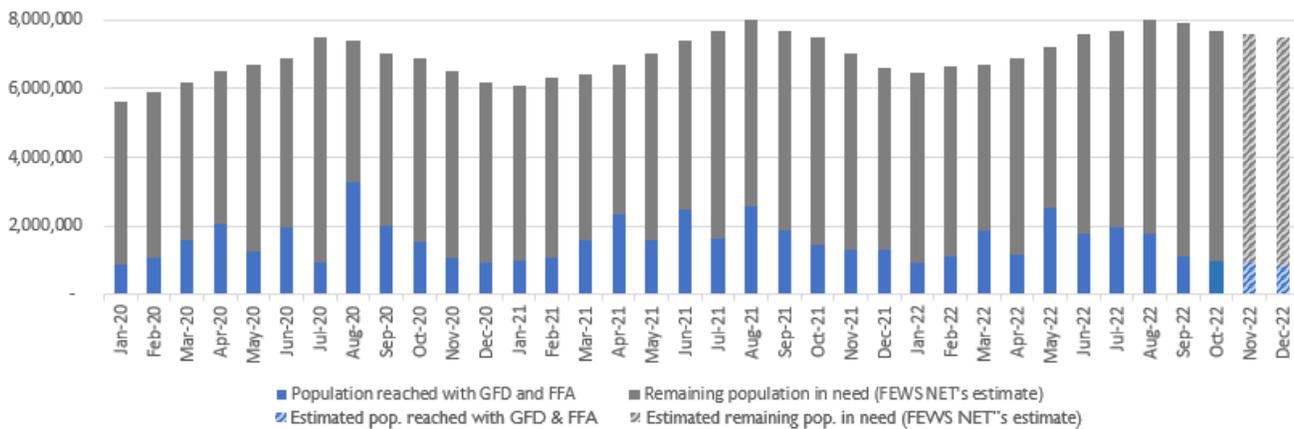
Humanitarian food assistance: Food and nutrition assistance needs remain high as conflict, insecurity, and floods in different areas in the country have driven high levels of acute food insecurity and [acute malnutrition](#), the latter of which is exacerbated by elevated disease incidence. Of particular concern are those affected by the continued conflict in Upper Nile and northern Jonglei, as well as those who have been affected by flooding this year and continue to require food and non-food assistance. Based on the final October distribution report and preliminary distribution updates for November and December from WFP, less than 1 million people received GFD and FFA monthly in the past three months, covering around 10-15 percent of FEWS NET's estimated population in need of food assistance (Figure 3). In Malakal POC, humanitarians are providing newly arrived IDPs with food, WASH, protection, and primary health care services; however, due to the rapid onset of conflict and humanitarian access challenges, there are reports that people have not received any food assistance since their arrival to the displacement sites in Kodok Town, forcing many to seek food through sharing with the local community. Overall, the scope, scale, and severity of need requires a significant scale-up in food and non-food assistance nationally.

Current food security outcomes: Despite the availability of food from the main season harvest, the scale and severity of acute food insecurity remain high during the December-January 2023 harvesting period due to the recent and protracted impacts of floods, conflict, and poor macroeconomic conditions on households' physical safety, access to typical food and income sources, and purchasing power. Flood and conflict-affected areas in Jonglei, Unity, Upper Nile, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Lakes are of high concern, where many households have limited or no production, face limited or restricted financial and physical access to markets due to floodwaters, conflict, and declining purchasing power, and heavily depend on fishing, hunting, and gathering and, in some cases, humanitarian food assistance. In particular, the surge in conflict in the northern Jonglei-Upper Nile area is likely increasing acute food insecurity among those newly displaced. Additionally, the outbreak of measles is of high concern given already high levels of hunger and elevated levels of acute malnutrition across

much of the country, although information is lacking on which 22 counties are currently affected.

As a result, Crisis (IPC Phase 3) and some Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are currently widespread. While the number of households in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) is likely declining during the harvesting period, there remains very high concern for pockets of households in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in Fangak, Canal/Pigi, and Akobo of Jonglei and Pibor County in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. At this time, humanitarian food assistance delivery is likely preventing more severe levels of acute food insecurity in 11 counties in Upper Nile, Unity, Jonglei, and Lakes, driving Crisis! (IPC Phase 3!) outcomes. Given better production prospects in some parts of Western Equatoria, combined with the relative calm and improved household access to own production, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) outcomes are likely present in Ezo, Yambio, Maridi, and Ibba counties of Western Equatoria.

Figure 3. Population reached with humanitarian food assistance (General Food Distributions and Food for Assets programs) compared to FEWS NET’s estimated population in need, January 2020 – December 2022



Source: FEWS NET’s analysis of WFP distribution data

UPDATED ASSUMPTIONS

The assumptions used to develop FEWS NET’s most likely scenario for the [South Sudan Food Security Outlook for October 2022 to May 2023](#) remain valid for the December Food Security Outlook Update.

PROJECTED OUTLOOK THROUGH MAY 2023

South Sudan will continue to face a protracted food security emergency as recurrent conflict, weather, and economic shocks limit food availability and household access to food. As such, high level of acute food insecurity will persist from February to May 2023, which overlaps with the post-harvest period and the typical start of the lean season period. In general, this timeframe is typically characterized by declining food stocks at the household level, a gradual decline in livestock productivity and wild food availability as dry season conditions set in, and rising food prices. Purchasing power is expected to be further constrained for households across South Sudan due to the deteriorating macro-economic context and declining wage opportunities, particularly in flood- and conflict-affected areas where households face limited physical access to markets as well. As most households face a decline in the availability of typical food sources, persistently low incomes, and diminished purchasing power, they are likely to turn increasingly to coping strategies such as begging or migrating to nearby villages in search of food or income.

Food assistance needs among the population will most likely increase and continue to exceed currently funded levels of humanitarian assistance. While FEWS NET assesses that planned food assistance will most likely prevent more severe outcomes in nine counties, which are classified in Crisis! (IPC Phase 3!), it is estimated that 41 counties will be in Emergency (IPC Phase 4), concentrated in Jonglei, Unity, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, Warrap, and Lakes. FEWS NET also anticipates some households will periodically face extreme hunger indicative of Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5) in Fangak, Canal/Pigi, Akobo of Jonglei, Pibor County in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, and Leer and Mayendit counties of Unity.

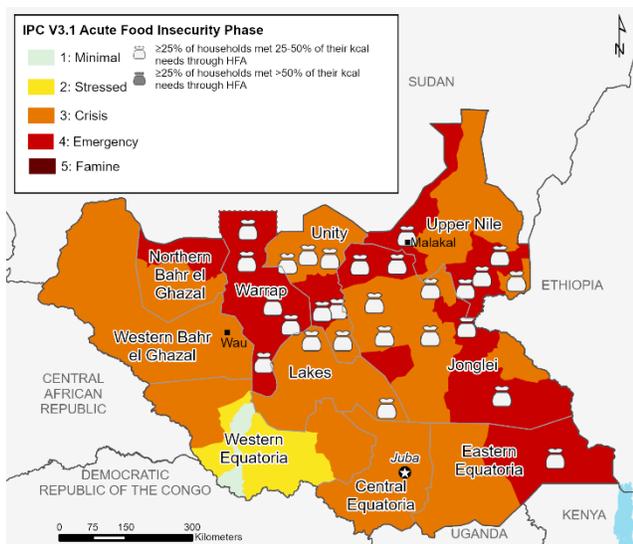
Although Famine (IPC Phase 5) is not considered the most likely outcome in the projection period, there is a credible, alternative scenario in which Famine (IPC Phase 5) could occur, given the [high proportion of the population already facing](#)

acute food insecurity and the potential for the severity of ongoing shocks to increase. FEWS NET assesses that Fangak and Canal/Pigi counties in Jonglei state – where large swaths of land remain inundated and conflict is ongoing along the border with Upper Nile – are among the areas of greatest concern for this risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5). In these areas, if conflict were to escalate, restrict household movement, and isolate households in inaccessible areas such that humanitarians were unable to reach the worst-affected households for a prolonged period, Famine (IPC Phase 5) could occur. A significant scale-up of multi-sectoral assistance is needed urgently in South Sudan in order to reduce acute malnutrition and associated mortality levels and end the risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5).

MOST LIKELY FOOD SECURITY OUTCOMES AND AREAS RECEIVING SIGNIFICANT LEVELS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE*

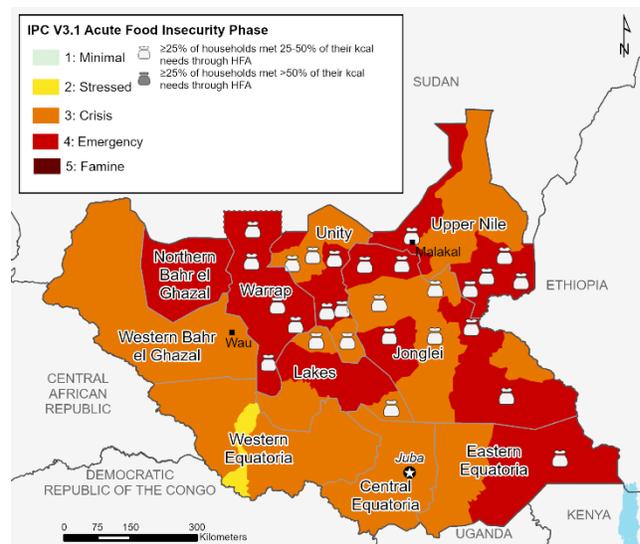
Each of these maps adheres to IPC v3.1 humanitarian assistance mapping protocols and flags where significant levels of humanitarian assistance are being/are expected to be provided. ☺ indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average 25–50 percent of caloric needs from humanitarian food assistance (HFA). ☹ indicates that at least 25 percent of households receive on average over 50 percent of caloric needs through HFA. This mapping protocol differs from the (!) protocol used in the maps at the top of the report. The use of (!) indicates areas that would likely be at least one phase worse in the absence of current or programmed humanitarian assistance.

Projected food security outcomes, December 2022 to January 2023



Source: FEWS NET

Projected food security outcomes, February to May 2023



Source: FEWS NET

FEWS NET classification is IPC-compatible. IPC-compatible analysis follows key IPC protocols but does not necessarily reflect the consensus of national food security partners.

Recommended citation: FEWS NET. South Sudan December 2022 Food Security Outlook Update. Surge in conflict in western Upper Nile displaces thousands, driving Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes, 2022.

ABOUT THIS UPDATE

This report covers current conditions as well as changes to the projected outlook for food insecurity in this country. It updates the FEWS NET’s Food Security Outlook, which is published three times per year. Learn more about our work [here](#).