

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Humanitarians reach previously inaccessible areas of Western Equatoria.
- Needs escalate as fighting in Wau continues.
- International Women's Day marked with calls to end child marriage and educate girls in South Sudan.
- Assistance reaches Wau Shilluk as restrictions are lifted.

## FIGURES

No. of Internally Displaced Persons	1.69 million
No. of refugees in neighboring countries (post 15 Dec 2013)	678,163
No. of severely food insecure people from Jan - Mar 2016	2.8 million

## FUNDING

**\$111.5 million**  
funding received in 2016

**9%**  
of appeal funding received in 2016

**\$1.29 billion**  
requirements for South Sudan 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan



A woman gives water to a child in Baliyet, Upper Nile. Photo: OCHA

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## Humanitarians reach previously inaccessible areas of Western Equatoria

Following clashes in the south of Mundri West County in mid-February 2016, humanitarian partners managed to deliver food in Bari on 27 February and an inter-agency humanitarian team travelled to Mundri Town, Kotobi, Gariya, Landigwa and Bangolo from 2 to 4 March to deliver life-saving assistance and assess the situation.

Fighting south of Mundri Town first erupted in May 2015, displacing thousands of people. Renewed fighting in mid-February 2016 saw houses, crops, schools and health centres looted, damaged and destroyed. Kotobi, which has remained relatively stable throughout, is estimated to be hosting just under 8,000 people displaced from surrounding areas. Bangolo, Gariya and Landigwa are all also hosting IDPs from other areas, including Mundri Town, Maridi and Yambio. In Mundri town, an estimated 6,200 people who were displaced have returned, while thousands more are thought to still be hiding in the bushes in surrounding areas. Many people have been displaced multiple times, with women in Gariya telling the inter-agency team they have had to move over 10 times since May 2015.

All five locations assessed by the inter-agency team reported a decrease in food consumption as a result of loss of crops and food stocks. Many people had turned to negative coping mechanisms, such as reducing the number of meals eaten, borrowing food from neighbours, consuming more wild foods than normal, and restricting food consumption by adults.

At least three health facilities were damaged or looted during the fighting, leaving only Mundri Town and Kotobi with functioning facilities and available essential drugs. Water infrastructure was also badly affected during the fighting, with seven water points damaged or destroyed. In Bangolo, the community is now entirely dependent on untreated water fetched from streams. Many containers used to fetch water were looted or burnt, leaving an average of around 20 families to share one five-litre jerry can. As a result, some women have to fetch water from the borehole over 10 times per day.

In Mundri Town and Kotobi, the team was told of men and boys being exposed to threats of harassment and detention by armed actors, while women and girls reported being fearful of increased exposure to sexual violence when moving alone.

Across all of the locations visited, women highlighted the need for shelter, food and household items, such as utensils and sleeping mats. Displaced women whose homes had been



Distribution of household items in Gariya. Photo: Oxfam/Nick Lacey.

*At least three health facilities were damaged or looted during the fighting in Mundri West.*

looted and burnt were living and sleeping in the open, unable to create temporary shelters for themselves as the grass ordinarily used for such activities had been burnt.

### **Essential supplies distributed in Mundri West**

During the mission, partners delivered emergency health kits to health facilities in Mundri Town, Bangolo and Gariya, and about 500 hygiene kits in Mundri Town. In Bangolo and Gariya, basic household items, including survival kits containing mosquito nets, kitchen utensils, water purification tablets and fishing kits, were distributed to more than 1,500 families. Following the assessment, humanitarian partners have returned to the area to provide assistance in health, shelter, and water, sanitation and hygiene services.

## **Needs increase in and around Wau**

Violence has reportedly continued in the western and southern parts of Wau town and surrounding villages - including Mboro, Kayango, Ngondo, Ngonjeko, Natabu and Ngomba - in recent weeks, displacing tens of thousands of people.

In Mboro, about 8,000 internally displaced people (IDP) stranded since February and reportedly in need of urgent assistance were forced to flee when fighting escalated on 21 March. There are also unverified reports of around 10,000 to 12,000 IDPs further south in Suwe. In Natabu, homes were burnt and household items looted. In Ngonjeko, people who had already fled fighting in other areas were re-displaced during recent violence. There were reports of killings and rapes in Wau town and surrounding areas.

Food, water, shelter, basic household items and education for children were highlighted as urgent needs by people displaced to Wau town during a recent assessment. Partners are also concerned about a possible increase in malnutrition rates among children, pregnant women and lactating mothers.



One of the houses that was destroyed in Wau. Photo: OCHA.

A woman who had sought refuge in Mboro and then fled to Wau said, "We survived on leaves and turmeric for salt and we also ate mangoes. All our belongings, including food, were looted back at home. We had no money even if there was a market," she said, adding that women, children and the elderly were worst affected by diseases, including diarrhoea, urinary tract infections, skin diseases and malaria.

However, access outside of Wau town has been restricted. On 1, 10 and 11 March, humanitarian partners were turned back at the check point in Lokoloko and a mission planned for 17 March had to be cancelled due to rising insecurity.

## **Call to end child marriage in South Sudan**

On 8 March, South Sudan joined the rest of the globe to mark International Women's Day. Under the global theme of "Pledge for Parity," the national theme for South Sudan was "South Sudanese Pledge to End Early Child Marriage."

Addressing a press briefing to mark the day, UN Women Country Representative in South Sudan, Izeduwa Derex-Briggs, said: "With early marriage, girls are denied the right to education. Without education they remain unskilled and access to opportunities for sustainable livelihood and political participation is reduced thereby increasing or retaining the gender gap."

*Fighting in parts of Wau town and surrounding villages has displaced tens of thousands of people.*

*Educating communities is the key to promoting girls' education and ending child marriage in South Sudan.*

*An adolescent girl in South Sudan is three times more likely to die in child birth than complete primary school.*

At a round table discussion on the day, the Minister of Gender, Child and Social Welfare, Awut Deng Acuil, emphasized that investing in education was the key to addressing gender disparities.

“For us to close the gender gap for gender parity it is important that we look at the issue of education as key,” she said, adding that this included creating facilities that provide safe spaces for girls, coupled with training female teachers.

She said although legislation is in place to protect girls, it has not been enforced, hence the need to create awareness by disseminating the legal frameworks to people on the ground. Ms. Awut also emphasized the need to educate men, women, traditional leaders and the community at large on the benefits of educating girls and the dangers of child marriage, as they all have a collective responsibility to address these challenges.

Although little data is available, anecdotal evidence indicates that child marriage has increased since December 2013, being used as a negative coping mechanism by families struggling to cope after two years of conflict and increasing economic stressors. Even prior to the conflict, 40 per cent of girls in South Sudan were married before the age of 18. Studies in 2009/2010 found that only 6.2 per cent of girls complete primary school and that 20.4 per cent of females dropped-out of secondary school due to pregnancies. An adolescent girl in South Sudan was three times more likely to die in child birth than to complete primary school.

## Partners respond to needs generated by fighting in Pibor

Following fighting in February, about 30,000 people have reportedly been displaced in Pibor and Gumuruk counties, including about 2,300 people who fled to the protected site in Pibor.

Twelve humanitarian partners on the ground in Pibor have been providing life-saving assistance to displaced people in the protected site, including access to safe water, emergency latrines and bathing areas, hygiene promotion to prevent disease outbreaks, distribution of high energy biscuits and other nutrition supplies for children under age 5, and medical treatment.

Family tracing and reunification efforts are underway for 23 separated children. Out of 32 cases of children associated with armed forces and armed groups met by partners in Pibor, 25 have been assisted to rejoin their families while others are being followed up. A child friendly space is being set up in the protected site.

On 12 March, humanitarian partners managed to reach areas outside of the protected site to conduct an inter-agency needs assessment covering Kondako, Longachat and Pibor town. Most of the areas visited were still deserted and Pibor town still had a strong military presence. However, some people had started trickling back to their homes.

Women account for more than 60 per cent and children for about 30 per cent of the people in the protected site. “We women are suffering alone with children here in the protection site. We need peace so that we can go back to our homes,” one woman told humanitarian partners.

The situation in and around Pibor remains tense and fighting has recently erupted in other parts of Jonglei, including Pochalla.



A displaced woman from Pibor sits by her makeshift shelter following recent fighting. Photo: IOM

*Partners are providing life-saving assistance to thousands of people who fled to the protected site after fighting broke out in Pibor.*



## Aid workers reach Wau Shilluk after access restrictions are lifted

After nearly a month of restrictions, the Government reopened humanitarian access from Malakal to the west bank of the River Nile by boat mid-March following intensive access negotiations.

On 16 March, an inter-agency team of 18 aid workers, both South Sudanese and international, travelled from Malakal to Wau Shilluk, delivering critical health and WASH supplies. Humanitarian partners have since resumed regular delivery of assistance.

Although humanitarian access restrictions have been lifted, freedom of movement for civilians has yet to be granted and families stranded on either side of the river bank are unable to be reunited. At least 84 cases of family separation have been documented between the Malakal Protection of Civilians (PoC) site and Wau Shilluk.

A group of three siblings staying at Malakal PoC said to aid workers, “we miss our mother. She was sick when she went to Wau Shilluk more than a month ago. We have no idea why she can’t come back. We need nothing else, but our mother.”

The critical importance of family reunification was recently highlighted by families who were split during the fighting and fires in Malakal PoC on 17-18 February. “There is nothing more painful than being separated from your child in war time, but there is nothing more joyful than reuniting a family in a war zone,” a mother who was recently reunified with her child in Malakal said.

*Humanitarian access from Malakal to the west bank of the River Nile by boat was reopened in mid-March following intensive access negotiations.*

## Urgent need for educational support in Mayom

An assessment in Mayom County, Unity, carried out by education partners in February 2016 found that just 54 per cent of schools are still functional (36 today, compared to 66 before the conflict).

Out of 1,785 villages assessed, only 19 per cent have an education facility and, where education facilities do exist, 90 per cent are basic primary schools, while just six per cent are secondary schools and four per cent provide adult literacy classes. Schools lack educational supplies, textbooks, furniture, adequate classrooms and latrines. Most schools are damaged and pupils at 14 of the functional schools are learning under trees.

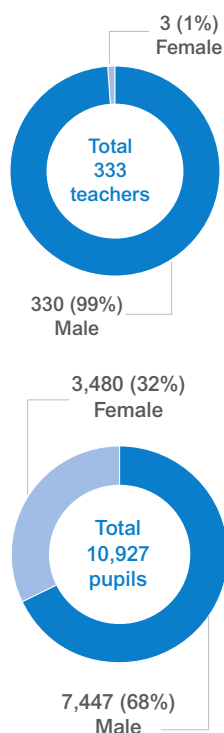
The schools are scattered in remote villages, with pupils sometimes having to walk up to 3 to 5 kilometres daily to access education. Travelling long distances to access education increases protection risks for girls, who may be exposed to violence and harassment en route.

Ten out of the 36 functional schools are along bad roads, making them difficult to access, particularly during the rainy season. Partners are reviewing options to enhance emergency education support in Mayom County.



Classes are conducted under a tree in Mayom. Photo: Intersos

Teacher/Pupil Ratios in Mayom



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