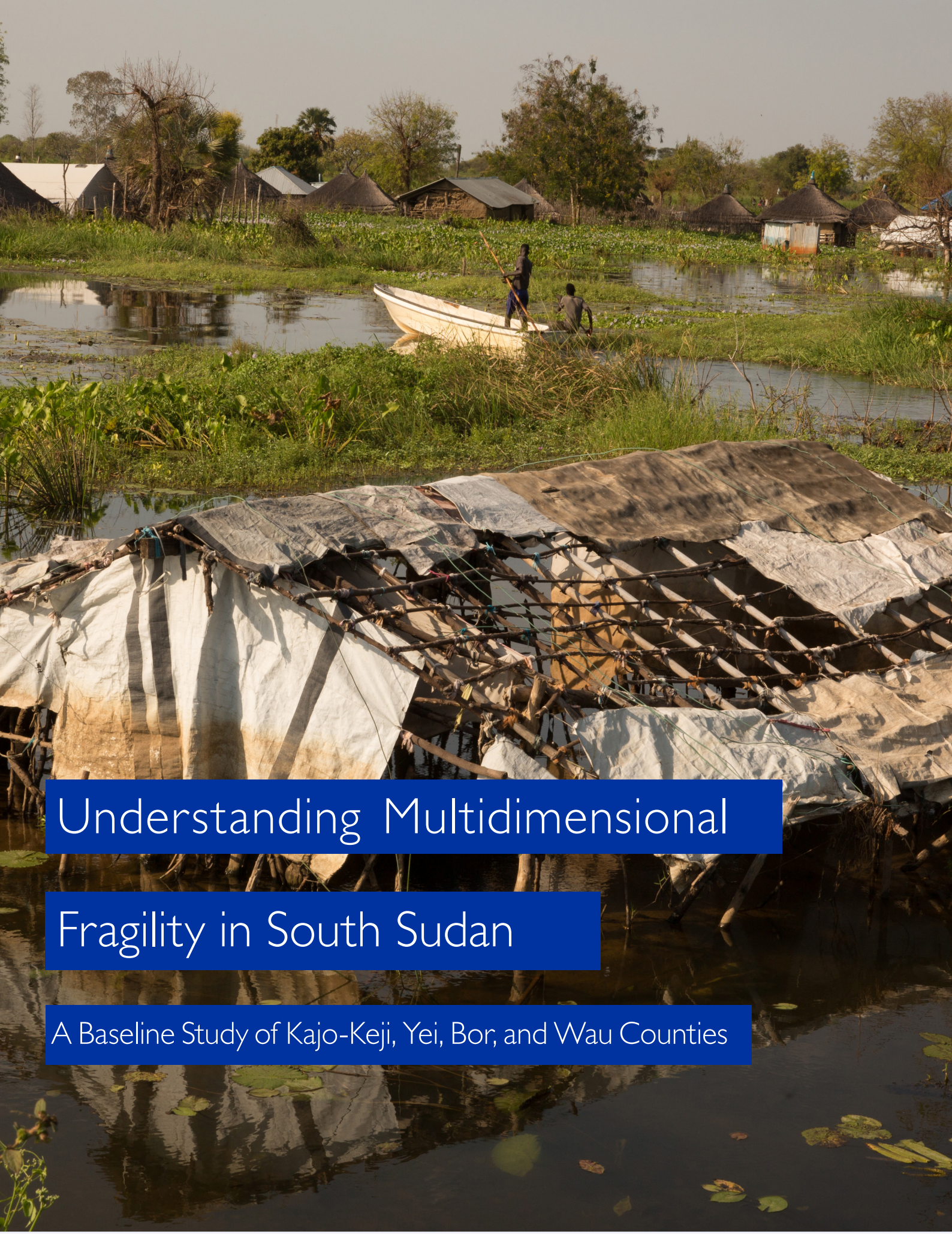

# Understanding Multidimensional Fragility in South Sudan

## A Baseline Study of Kajo-Keji, Yei, Bor, and Wau Counties

THE UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA at CHAPEL HILL

Duke Law

IOM UN MIGRATION

# BACKGROUND

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This report is authored by Dr. Olga Aymerich (IOM), Dr. Mara Revkin (Associate Professor of Law, Duke University), and Samuel Akau (Ph.D. Student, University of North Carolina) with significant contributions from Dr. Don Hopkins and Surabhi Trivedi at Duke Law School on methodology and data analysis and from Robert Cerise (Duke Law School '25), Yechan Choi (Duke Law School '25), Maia Foster (Duke Law School '23), and Steven Gaston (Duke Law School '24) on research and drafting.

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## ABOUT THE SOUTH SUDAN RSRTF

The South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (South Sudan RSRTF) pioneers an innovative whole-of-system approach in implementing reconciliation, stabilization, and resilience components that, together, build peace and stability. Stakeholders of this interagency pooled fund support South Sudan communities in realizing the economic and livelihood outcomes of sustained peace and benefits of accelerating SDG and 2030 Agenda outcomes.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Executive Summary** ..... **5**

**Objectives** ..... **6**

**Introduction** ..... **7**

**Methodology** ..... **9**

**Background** ..... **12**

**Overview of Fragility** ..... **17**

*Security Fragility* ..... *18*

*Social Fragility* ..... *20*

*Economic Fragility* ..... *22*

*Environmental Dimension* ..... *23*

**Bor County Profile** ..... **25**

**Kajo-Keji County Profile** ..... **30**

**Wau County Profile** ..... **35**

**Yei County Profile** ..... **40**

**Way Forward** ..... **44**

# GLOSSARY

| | |
|---|---|
| Civil Society Organization | CSO |
| Democratic Republic of Congo | DRC |
| Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration | DDR |
| Disaster Risk Reduction | DRR |
| Displacement Tracking Matrix | DTM |
| Gender-Based Violence | GBV |
| Housing, Land, and Property | HLP |
| Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus | HDPN |
| Internally Displaced Persons | IDPs |
| Integrated Food Security Phase Classification | IPC |
| International Organization for Migration | IOM |
| National Salvation Front | NSF |
| Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development | OECD |
| Primary sampling units | PSUs |
| Protection of Civilians | PoC |
| Probability proportional to size | PPS |
| Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan | R-ARCSS |
| Security Sector Reform | SSR |
| South Sudanese Pound | SSP |
| Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army | SPLM/A |
| Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army in Opposition | SPLM/A-IO |
| United Nations | UN |
| Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene | WASH |

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study provides a comprehensive assessment of the multiple dimensions of fragility in South Sudan at the subnational level: political and legal, social, economic, security, and environmental. By providing evidence-based contextualized insights, the study seeks to guide the development of programming and policies to support peacebuilding efforts in South Sudan, in in alignment with the Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN) approach. South Sudan is an important case for the study of fragility because the country is in the process of transitioning from a humanitarian-only response plan to a more recovery-focused approach in which fragility, rather than armed conflict, is the primary barrier to sustainable peace and development.

The study deepens the understanding of how fragility varies across these dimensions within four distinct South Sudanese counties (Yei, Kajo-Keji, Bor, and Wau). It explores the impact of this variation on the local contexts where peacebuilding interventions are carried out by IOM and partners. To address these objectives, the research was conducted through a face-to-face household survey involving 1,595 adult respondents (51 per cent female, 49 per cent male), with approximately 400 participants in each of the four selected counties.

The findings reveal a complex landscape across multiple fragility dimensions. On the political dimension, there is a notable lack of confidence in government authorities at local, state, and national levels, and concerns persist about expressing political opinions in the context of national elections. However, there is a positive trend towards greater acceptance of women in politics. In the security dimension, perceptions vary across counties, with overall low trust in security actors and a reliance on informal mechanisms for dispute resolution. Informal armed groups continue to be seen as a source of insecurity, and concerns about renewed conflict linger. Opinions on transitional justice, accountability, and reconciliation are divided. In the social dimension, feelings of community acceptance are generally high, regardless of displacement status, although these results should be interpreted cautiously in light of potential social desirability bias on sensitive questions. Gender-based violence (GBV) including child marriage remains a challenging issue. Around 23 per cent of respondents had experienced Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) disputes, which are typically resolved by village chiefs, and acceptance of women's land ownership was mixed. Lack of documentation of legal ownership and conflicts over natural resources including cattle and water are significant risk factors for HLP disputes. The majority of respondents rely on subsistence farming for their livelihood, and have limited purchasing power. Many also report an increase in the number and frequency of natural hazards contributing to environmental fragility.

The analysis shows important differences between the four counties across different dimensions of fragility. Bor stands out as the county with the highest levels of security, environmental, and economic fragility. Kajo-Keji, on the other hand, exhibits the highest level of political fragility, alongside high scores in economic and environmental fragility. Yei County records the highest level of social fragility and moderate levels of political and security fragility. In contrast, Wau County displays moderate overall fragility levels, with the lowest political fragility scores, along with low levels of social, economic and environmental fragility. Although the baseline pilot study does not enable precise identification of the drivers of subnational variation in fragility, we suggest potential explanations based on local context that could be more rigorously tested with follow-on studies.

# OBJECTIVES

This study aims to assess multiple dimensions of fragility in South Sudan at the subnational level in order to inform evidence-based and locally contextualized peacebuilding programmatic interventions in line with the HDPN approach.

Specifically, the study is designed to advance the following objectives:

1. Improved understanding of how variation in fragility across five dimensions (political and legal, social, economic, security, and environmental) in four different counties affects the local contexts where IOM and partners implement peacebuilding interventions;

2. Inform evidence-based and context-specific programming and policies within the HDPN approach;

3. Identify remaining knowledge gaps and open questions in need of further research including the effects of different types of fragility on efforts to promote sustainable development and peace.

Understanding variation in fragility across different regions within the country is crucial for developing context-specific interventions in line with the HDPN approach. This pilot study is the first empirical analysis of subnational variation in fragility in South Sudan across five different dimensions: political and legal, economic, social, security, and environmental. The results provide detailed insights into the needs of the four counties studied, which have broader implications for IOM programming in South Sudan.

# INTRODUCTION

## The Humanitarian Development Peace Nexus (HDPN) approach

The HDPN, also known as "The Triple Nexus"[1] approach, is an integrated framework that aims to address the interconnected challenges of humanitarian action, development, and peacebuilding.[2] It recognizes that these three dimensions are closely linked and mutually reinforcing, and that their integration can lead to more effective and sustainable outcomes in crisis-affected contexts.

By breaking down silos and fostering collaboration, the HDPN approach seeks to bridge the gaps between short-term emergency responses, medium-term development initiatives, and long-term peacebuilding efforts. It promotes collaboration, information-sharing, and joint planning among these stakeholders to maximize their collective impact, and recognizes the need for an integrated holistic approach.

While emphasizing the need for the concurrent and interconnected implementation of humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding interventions, the approach advocates for a strategy that prioritizes prevention, development whenever possible, and humanitarian action when necessary, in order to reduce the frequency of crises and alleviate the humanitarian caseload.

Peace interventions (the "P" in HDPN) play a central role in the nexus, working hand in hand with humanitarian and/or development interventions to achieve sustainable outcomes.[3] The HDPN approach acknowledges that sustainable peace requires comprehensive and context-specific interventions that address the root causes of conflict in order to support the development of peaceful societies.

The HDPN approach recognizes that every context presents unique dynamics and challenges. Thus, a contextualized analysis that ensures a comprehensive and shared understanding of the specific context-not only at the national but also at the sub-national level-is crucial. Given the increasingly complex nature of crises, there is a growing emphasis on understanding the underlying causes of these crises, which are often rooted in a combination of political, historical, economic, social, and environmental factors. A thorough understanding of the intricate interlinkages among these drivers is essential for addressing the multifaceted dimensions of crises and developing sustainable long-term solutions.

There is currently a gap between the concept of the HDPN and its practical implementation in specific contexts. Finding a suitable framework of analysis can contribute to bridging this gap by providing evidence-based interventions within the HDPN approach. By adopting a defined framework of analysis, the disconnect between the theoretical foundations of the HDPN and its practical implementation can be narrowed, leading to more effective outcomes.

## Fragility as a Framework of Analysis in support of the HDPN approach

This study proposes fragility as a framework of analysis to provide evidence-based contextualized information and support programming within the HDPN approach. Specifically, the report utilizes the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) multidimensional fragility framework adapted for use at the community level, and tailored to the specific context of South Sudan.[4]

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*1. UN Trust Fund for Human Security, "Realizing the triple nexus: Experiences from implementing the human security approach," (Mar. 2022), https://www.un.org/humansecurity/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/FINAL-Triple-Nexus-Guidance-Note-for-web_compressed.pdf.*

*2. Elizabeth Ferris, "The Humanitarian-Peace Nexus," UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, (Aug. 2020), https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/sites/www.un.org.internal-displacement-panel/files/ferris_humanitarian_peace_nexus_0.pdf.*

*3. In the HDPN approach, both "big P" and "little p" interventions are recognized and included. "Big P" actions focus on high-level diplomatic efforts, peace agreements, and security measures for violent conflicts. This report focuses on "little p" interventions that build local peace capacity. These interventions address underlying conflict drivers and causes, with a long-term focus. They include activities like prevention, response, and reinforcement of peace efforts, aiming to foster sustainable community peace.*

*4. In this study we adhere to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) definition of fragility: "the combination of exposure to risk and insufficient coping capacity of the state, systems and/or communities to manage, absorb or mitigate those risks," which "can lead to negative outcomes including violence, poverty, inequality, displacement, and environmental and political degradation." OECD, "What is Fragility," States of Fragility 2020 (Sep. 17, 2020), https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/ba7c22e7-en/index.html?itemId=/content/publication/ba7c22e7-en.*

Fragility is a multifaceted concept, meaning that it consists of multiple dimensions that interact and influence each other. These dimensions include:

1. **Political and Legal Fragility:**[5] Political fragility refers to the instability, weaknesses, and challenges in political systems and governance structures. This component encompasses issues such as political instability, corruption, lack of transparency, weak rule of law, ineffective institutions, and limited political participation.

2. **Security Fragility:** Security fragility pertains to the presence of threats, conflicts, and violence within a society. This component includes factors such as armed conflicts, political violence, crime rates, weak law enforcement, arms proliferation, and challenges in ensuring citizen security and safety.

3. **Social Fragility:** Social fragility focuses on societal divisions, inequalities, and social cohesion. It includes factors such as ethnic or religious tensions, social exclusion, discrimination, unequal access to resources and opportunities, and social polarization.

4. **Economic Fragility:** Economic fragility relates to the vulnerabilities and challenges within the economic systems of a country or region. This component includes factors such as high poverty rates, income inequality, lack of economic opportunities, unemployment, economic shocks, and dependence on a narrow range of sectors or resources.

5. **Environmental Fragility:** Environmental fragility refers to the challenges and risks associated with the environment and natural resources. This component includes factors such as environmental degradation, resource scarcity, climate change impacts, natural disasters, and challenges in sustainable resource management.

This multidimensional approach provides a structured framework for assessing the context-specific challenges and dynamics that contribute to fragility and identifying opportunities for programmatic intervention and improvement. Fragility is a helpful analytical framework to support the HDPN approach for the following reasons:

1. **Contextual Understanding:** The fragility framework helps to understand the specific context in which programmatic interventions within the HDPN approach are implemented; provides insights into the underlying causes and dynamics of fragility, including political instability, social tensions, economic challenges, and security threats, which are crucial for tailoring interventions and strategies to address the context-specific fragility issues.

2. **Integrated Approach:** The fragility framework recognizes the interdependencies and linkages between humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding efforts. It helps identify how fragility impacts each of these sectors and how they can collectively address fragility-related challenges. By integrating the analysis of fragility across these sectors, the HDPN approach promotes a more coordinated and holistic response to fragility.

3. **Targeted Interventions:** The fragility framework helps to identify the specific vulnerabilities, needs, and priorities within a fragile context. It allows stakeholders to target interventions more effectively to address the root causes of fragility at the community level and at the level of individual beneficiaries.

4. **Conflict Sensitivity:** The fragility framework considers the conflict dynamics and sensitivities within a context. It helps identify potential risks and unintended consequences of interventions and ensures that efforts are conflict-sensitive. By incorporating fragility analysis into the HDPN approach, stakeholders can develop strategies that mitigate the risk of exacerbating tensions and contribute to peacebuilding objectives.

5. **Long-term Perspective:** The fragility framework takes a long-term perspective by focusing on the underlying causes of fragility. It helps identify structural and systemic issues that need to be addressed for sustainable development and peace. By incorporating fragility as a framework of analysis into the HDPN approach, stakeholders can move beyond short-term responses and work towards addressing the root causes of fragility for lasting positive change.

*5. OECD's fragility framework does not include a standalone dimension for "legal" fragility. In this report, we have modified the category of "political fragility" to "political and legal fragility" to capture important aspects of the legal context including rule of law and preferences for dispute resolution among alternative providers of justice including state courts and customary tribal or religious authorities.*

6. **Enhanced capacity of sovereign member states:** The fragility framework helps to identify barriers to the development of sovereign state capacity in areas including rule of law, respect for human rights, and service provision, and can be used to inform policy recommendations for overcoming these barriers.

# METHODOLOGY

IOM South Sudan worked with researchers at Duke University and the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to conduct a face-to-face household survey in four counties in South Sudan: Yei, Kajo-Keji, Bor, and Wau with a random sample of 1,595 adult respondents - approximately 400 in each community. These counties were selected for variation in different dimensions of fragility and because they are priority areas for IOM South Sudan peacebuilding and transition and recovery interventions. The survey was administered over a one-month period from June 19 to July 19, 2023 by a mixed-gender IOM team of 43 South Sudanese enumerators using computer tablets.

## Map 1 Surveyed Counties

The sample was drawn by random selection of 10 villages / settlements in each county as primary sampling units (PSUs) from the IOM's Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) 13 Baseline, based on probability proportional to size (PPS) according to the most recent census data from 2008.[6] Within each PSU, 40 individual households were selected by following a random-walk procedure in which enumerators visited every 4th dwelling. The first identified adult at the dwelling was asked to participate. To ensure gender balance, enumerators were instructed to oversample men or women as needed, while still following the random walk procedure, to achieve a sample of approximately 50 per cent each in each PSU.

The sample size was calculated with a margin of error of 5 per cent on a 95 per cent confidence interval at the county level, assuming a design factor of 1.5 and a non-response rate of 10 per cent based on previous IOM surveys in these same counties in South Sudan.[7] Participation was anonymous and voluntary.[8]

## Table 1 Sample Characteristics

| County | Yei | Kajo-Keji | Wau | Bor | Average |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| State | Central Equatoria | | Western Bahr el Ghazal | Jonglei | |
| Number of respondents | 397 | 400 | 398 | 400 | Total 1,595 |
| Gender | 51% Male; 49 % Female | 50% Male; 50% Female | 50% Male; 50% Female | 46% Male; 54% Female | 49% Male; 51% Female |
| Displacement Status | 20% Returnees; 14% IDPs | 65% Returnees; 1% IDPs | 13% Returnees; 7% IDPs | 9% Returnees; 12% IDPs | 27% Returnees; 8% IDPs |

The core of the questionnaire consists of indicators of the five dimensions of fragility. The questions were informed by previous surveys on fragility in other contexts that the research team adapted for relevance and appropriateness to the context in South Sudan,[9] and by the indicators included in the OECD Fragility Framework.[10]

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6. South Sudan Central Bureau of Statistics, "5th Sudan Population and Housing Census – 2008: Priority Results" (Apr. 26, 2009), https://catalog.ihsn.org/index.php/catalog/4216/download/55706. In 2008, the number of people age 17 and older was 82,469 in Wau, 116,750 in Bor, 104,117 in Yei, and 91,750 in Kajo-Keji.
7. IOM DTM South Sudan, "Urban Multi-Sector Needs and Vulnerabilities Survey (FSNMS+): Wau Town" (May 26, 2022): 6. Previous assessments have noted that face-to- face surveys administered by UN and other humanitarian and development organizations in South Sudan typically yield very high response rates above 90 per cent without financial incentives (See, e.g., UNHCR, "Results Monitoring Survey: 2022 South Sudan" (2023), https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/99661 (with a response rate of 97 per cent); UNICEF, "A Cost Analysis of Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) Program in South Sudan" (2022), https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/cost-analysis-community-management-acute-malnutrition-cmam-program-south-sudan (with a response rate between 92 per cent and 94 per cent). Both suggest that participants value the opportunity to share their experiences and opinions even when some questions may be sensitive (Richard Garfield, "Violence and victimization in South Sudan: Lakes State in the post-CPA period," Small Arms Survey (2007): 38, https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/HSBA-WP-02-Lakes-State.pdf (noting that a high response rate of 94 per cent on a survey about perceptions of security "demonstrates that given proper preparation and coordination—and the participation of locally recognizable interviewers—individuals are willing to discuss even highly personal, sensitive matters relating to their safety and fears.")
8. The survey began with a detailed informed consent process in which enumerators explained that declining to participate in the survey would have no impact on their likelihood of receiving assistance from IOM. We did not ask respondents to identify their ethnic, religious, or tribal affiliation for two primary ethical and methodological reasons. First, in South Sudan and other contexts where conflicts between individuals and groups often have ethnic, religious, or tribal dimensions, asking respondents to reveal their identities may cause anxiety and primes them to interpret all remaining survey questions with their group's particular identity in mind. Jeffrey Conroy-Krutz, "Surveys and Their Use in Understanding African Public Opinion," Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Politics(2019). This is known as "identity priming" and can lead to bias and potentially increases the risk of inter-group conflicts in areas where the survey is conducted, which would be inconsistent with the humanitarian principle of "do no harm."
9. Including the "Fragility Exposure Index" developed by Ghassan Baliki and coauthors for a study in Kenya. See Ghassan Baliki, Tilman Brück, Neil TN Ferguson, and Sindu Workneh Kebede, "Fragility exposure index: Concepts, measurement, and application," Review of Development Economics 26, no. 2 (2022): 639¬–60.
10. OECD, "Methodology," States of Fragility, http://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-of-fragility/about/0/.

To analyze the data, an index of fragility was constructed based on the survey questions where the unit of analysis is the individual survey respondent. This methodology was adapted from one of the only previous studies of perceptions of fragility at the subnational level, which was conducted in Kenya in 2016.[11] First, a linear algorithm was used to normalize each indicator. Normalization ensures that each variable is presented on a comparable scale. Next, domain scores were calculated for each individual using a linear algorithm in which each indicator is weighted equally within the domain. The domain scores for each individual were then summed to produce an overall fragility score. Finally, the overall fragility scores were normalized again to produce a value between 1 and 0, and then multiplied by 100 for ease of interpretation. On a scale from 0 to 100, 0 represents the lowest possible fragility score and 100 represents the highest.

*Beneficiaries of IOM's cash-for-work programme to communities affected by conflict in Wau © IOM South Sudan/ Aleon VISUALS*

*11. See Ghassan Baliki, Tilman Brück, Neil TN Ferguson, and Sindu Workneh Kebede, "Fragility exposure index: Concepts, measurement, and application," Review of Development Economics 26, no. 2 (2022): 639–60.*

# BACKGROUND

Despite the formal end of South Sudan's most recent civil war in 2018, the country continues to grapple with significant political, legal, security, social, and environmental challenges. Drawing upon existing literature, this section provides contextual information on those challenges at the national level, which relate to the county profiles analysed in this report.

**Political and Legal Challenges:** South Sudan's nascent democracy-the youngest country in the world, established in 2011-struggles with various political and legal challenges. In 2018, the parties reached a Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) that resulted in the formation of a unity government. However, this transitional government struggles to unify the various factions of the military, write a new constitution, and prepare for elections, resulting in a 2022 "roadmap" agreement that postponed elections for another two years until December 2024. Thus, the country has yet to hold an election since it gained independence over a decade ago[12] and the transitional period has repeatedly been extended amid ongoing conflicts between rival political factions.[13] Trust in government is low particularly in rural areas where populations perceive themselves as marginalized by the central government.[14]

The 2015[15] and 2018[16] peace agreements provided for the creation of several transitional justice mechanisms including the Commission for Truth, Reconciliation, and Healing, the Compensation and Reparation Authority, and the Hybrid Court for South Sudan, but none of these mechanisms are operational as of September 2023.[17]

South Sudan has a long history of customary justice and dispute resolution by traditional authorities including priests, tribal chiefs, and other community elders.[18] South Sudan's Constitution recognizes the authority of customary law in several important areas including marriage, divorce, and inheritance.[19] The state and customary legal systems operate in parallel with some mechanisms for cooperation. For example, the statutory (state) courts have the authority to hear appeals of cases from customary courts. But in practice, appeals are rare, and customary courts decide the vast majority of cases-up to 90 per cent.[20] Preferences for customary justice also reflect distrust in the state justice system, which is widely perceived as corrupt, politicized, and influenced by ethnic favoritism.[21]

In South Sudan, traditional authorities play an important role in filling gaps in state capacity, solving problems that government authorities are unable or unwilling to address, and providing alternatives to formal institutions that are widely perceived by the public as corrupt and illegitimate. Traditional authorities are often viewed as more effective, cheaper, and faster than state institutions, but they present a number of concerns for peacebuilding. Traditional justice institutions tend to be dominated by elder males and often exclude women, youth, and ethnic or religious minorities. Some customary justice mechanisms in South Sudan are inconsistent with international law and human rights principles including the practices of dowry payment, rooted in a belief that wives are the property of their husbands,[22] and "girl child compensation," in which the clan of a person who is wrongfully killed by a member of another clan can demand one of their girls as compensation.[23] Furthermore, different ethnic and religious groups may have different rules, resulting in different outcomes for very similar cases depending on the individual parties' ethnic or

12. George Obulutsa, "South Sudan extends transitional government by two years," Reuters (Aug. 4, 2022), https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-sudan-extends-transitional-government-by-two-years-2022-08-04/.
13. In 2018, the parties reached a Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) that resulted in the formation of a unity government. However, this transitional government struggled to unify the various factions of the military, write a new constitution, and prepare for elections, resulting in a 2022 "roadmap" agreement that postponed elections for another two years until December 2024. Several groups refused to sign and do not recognize the roadmap agreement as legitimate, arguing that the transitional government's mandate lapsed with the conclusion of the originally agreed upon transitional period in February 2023. See UN Security Council,"South Sudan Recommits to Revitalized Peace Agreement with 24-Month Extension, Security Council Emphasizes, Urging Country to Avoid Further Delays," U.N. Meetings Coverage SC/15219 (Mar. 6, 2023), https://press.un.org/en/2023/sc15219.doc.htm.
14. Caroline Delgado, "Improving the Prospects for Peace in South Sudan: Spotlight on Stabilization," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) (May 2023):22.
15. Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan ("ARCSS"), Aug. 17, 2015.
16. Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan ("R-ARCSS"), Sept. 12, 2018.
17. Sayra van den Berg, "The Art of Peace and Accountability in South Sudan," Civil War Paths (May 23, 2023), https://www.civilwarpaths.org/2023/05/23/the-art-of-peace-and- accountability-in-south-sudan/.
18. Winnifred Bedigen, Indigenous Peacebuilding in South Sudan: Delivering Sustainable Peace Through Traditional Institutions, Customs and Practices (Routledge, 2023).
19. Small Arms Survey, "Women's Security and the Law in South Sudan," Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) for Sudan and South Sudan (2012): 2, http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/south-sudan/womens-security/HSBA-women-security-law.pdf.
20. Id
21. Rens Willems & David K. Deng, "Justice and Conflict in South Sudan: Observations From a Pilot Survey," South Sudan Law Society (Nov. 2015): 11.
22. Human Rights Watch, "South Sudan: Human Rights Priorities for the Government of South Sudan: A Proposal from Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch and the South Sudan Human Rights Defenders Network" (Feb. 3, 2022), https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/02/03/south-sudan-human-rights-priorities-government-south-sudan.
23. UN Peacekeeping, "Local police in Eastern Equatoria benefit from UNPOL sensitization on violence against women and girls" (Sep. 30, 2020), https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/local-police-eastern-equatoria-benefit-unpol-sensitization-violence-against-women-and-girls.

religious identity, contrary to the principle of equality that is enshrined both in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights[24] and South Sudan's Constitution.[25]

South Sudan is a patriarchal society where women and youth have very few opportunities for participation in high-level decision-making. According to the UN Human Rights Council, women in South Sudan are "dramatically underrepresented" in positions of authority in political, cultural, and security institutions[26], which reflects on deeply rooted gender norms in the society.

**Security Challenges:** Recent assessments of security in South Sudan have found declines in community perceptions of safety and increasing reliance on armed groups despite the formal peace agreement at the national level. For example, surveys by PAX in Jonglei State found that initial improvements in 2016-2018 were reversed in 2018–2020, and while the overall number of reported incidents has decreased over the years, levels of communal violence and crime remain high.[27] Women and youth are particularly vulnerable to violence and insecurity. Although women are allowed to join the military and service as police officers, they rarely do so because of strong cultural norms that discourage women from pursuing these and other traditionally male career paths.[28]

State security forces, particularly the police, are widely viewed as ineffective in responding to the security needs of local populations.[29] In addition to a lack of capacity, ongoing mistrust between civilians and the police has undermined their effectiveness. Citizens who do not trust the police are less likely to share information and report problems, and more likely to try to solve problems on their own including through organized vigilante groups.[30]

South Sudan's history of armed conflict has led to the proliferation of small arms and other light weapons,[31] most of which remain in the hands of civilians due to lack of implementation of the peace agreement's provisions for disarmament.[32]

Finally, the recent outbreak of conflict in Sudan, with the ongoing influx of migrants, returnees and refugees to South Sudan, will likely affect security and other dimensions of fragility. Expected spillover effects might include disruptions in oil exports, further inflation, food shortages, and overcrowding in refugee camps.[33]

**Social Challenges**: South Sudan presents low levels of trust at all levels of society and between different communities, ethnic and religious groups, and individuals.[34] Moreover, the country has grappled with high levels of displacement resulting from conflict, which, combined with barriers to the return and reintegration of internally displaced persons (IDPs), has further complicated efforts to rebuild trust and social cohesion. More than four million people (approximately one third of the country's population, with 85 per cent being women, girls, and boys) remained displaced from their homes as of 2022. Of these, 2 million were displaced internally and 2.3 million were refugees in neighboring countries.[35] However, IOM's DTM show steady progress on returns, with 2.1 million returnees as per August 2022[36] - driven by reductions in aid to refugee camps in neighboring countries as well as improvements in the security situation and livelihoods in

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24. *UN General Assembly, Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 10 December 1948, 217 A (III), Art. 7, https://www.refworld.org/docid/3ae6b3712c.html.2. Elizabeth Ferris, "The Humanitarian-Peace Nexus," UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement, (Aug. 2020), https://www.un.org/internal-displacement-panel/sites/www.un.org.internal-displacement-panel/files/ferris_humanitarian_peace_nexus_0.pdf.*
25. *Constitution of South Sudan (2011), Art. 14 ("All persons are equal before the law and are entitled to the equal protection of the law"), https://www.constituteproject.org/_constitution/South_Sudan_2011.*
26. *UN Human Rights Council, "Conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan," A/HRC/49/CRP.4, para. 30, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-03/A-HRC_49_CRP_4.pdf.*
27. *Residents of rural communities increasingly feel reliant on armed youth for their physical security as a result of insufficient numbers and quality of police and other government security forces. Anton Quist & Anita Hossain, "HSS 2016-2022: Trend Analysis of Jonglei, South Sudan," PAX (Jun. 13, 2022), https://protectionofcivilians.org/infographic/hss-2016-2022-trend-analysis-of-jonglei-south-sudan/.*
28. *See, e.g., Eva Yayi Mawa, "Technology Not For Her?," World Wide Web Foundation (Jul. 20, 2018), https://webfoundation.org/2018/07/technology-not-for-her/.*
29. *Small Arms Survey, "Policing in South Sudan: Transformation Challenges and Priorities," HSBA for Sudan and South Sudan (Mar. 2017), https://www.smallarmssurvey.org/sites/default/files/resources/HSBA-IB26-Policing-in-South-Sudan.pdf.*
30. *See International Crisis Group, "Double-edged Sword: Vigilantes in African Counter-insurgencies," Africa Report No. 251 (Sep. 7, 2017), https://icg-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/251-double-edged-sword.pdf; Radio Tamazuj, "Bor youth announce vigilantism" (Feb. 2, 2022), https://radiotamazuj.org/en/news/article/bor-youth-announce-vigilantism.*
34. *USAID South Sudan, "USAID/South Sudan Transitional Justice Documentation Study: Final Report" (Aug. 2018): 46, 52.*
35. *OCHA, "South Sudan: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022" (Feb. 28, 2022), https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2022-february-2022.*
36. *IOM DTM, "Mobility Tracking Round 13" (2022), https://dtm.iom.int/south-sudan.*

areas of return.[37] Barriers to return of IDPs include lack of identity documents that are necessary for accessing public services,[38] HLP disputes, and property destruction.[39] After the 2018 peace agreement, many IDPs and refugees who fled to other countries returned home to find that their houses had been claimed by other occupants, or were severely destroyed or damaged.[40]

Property conflicts have been exacerbated by high levels of displacement during the conflict but are not limited to IDP populations. A 2019 survey found that approximately one in five households (21 per cent) had experienced an HLP dispute within the last three years,[41] and this pilot survey found a similar rate of HLP disputes (23 per cent, discussed below).

Women's underrepresentation in positions of authority, their economic dependence on men, and strong norms of masculinity are believed to contribute to widespread GBV, which affects primarily women and girls.[42] GBV includes child marriage, intimate partner violence, forced marriage, sexual harassment and assault among other practices. Although GBV is stigmatized and therefore under-reported, a 2022 UN Human Rights report concluded that it is "widespread" in South Sudan and has become even worse since the outbreak of renewed fighting in 2016.[43] The vast majority of victims of GBV in South Sudan are women and girls, but boys and men have also been targeted.[44]

**Economic Challenges:** Economic fragility in South Sudan is a driver of inter-communal conflicts and grievances against the government, hindering peacebuilding efforts. South Sudan is currently experiencing an economic crisis attributed to declining oil prices, the rapidly depreciating value of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP), shortages of hard currency, dependence on imports.[45] Oil and agriculture are South Sudan's two most important economic sectors. Oil accounts around 97 per cent of exports and a large share of budget revenue,[46] making the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global oil prices. In recent years, conflict and climate-related disasters have significantly damaged agricultural production, which is the primary source of livelihood for more than four in five households.[47]

More than 80 per cent of the population lives below the poverty line.[48] Unemployment is around 11 per cent for the population as a whole and youth unemployment is around 50 per cent.[49] As of March 2022, 6.83 million people (55 per cent of the population) were classified as experiencing a "crisis" level of food insecurity (defined as Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 3 or worse) while nearly 8.9 million people rely on some type of humanitarian assistance or protection, an increase of 600,000 since 2021.[50]

South Sudan has significant development needs for basic infrastructure, education, healthcare, and other essential

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37. IOM DTM, "Return and Reintegration Survey in South Sudan's Former Breadbasket" (Mar. 9, 2023), https://dtm.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-return-and-reintegration-survey-south-sudans-former-breadbasket.
38. David K. Deng, "Housing, Land and Property Disputes in South Sudan: Findings from a Survey Nimule, Torit, Wau and Yei," South Sudan Law Society (2019): 10
39. IOM DTM, "Return and Reintegration Survey in South Sudan's Former Breadbasket" (Mar. 9, 2023), https://dtm.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-return-and-reintegration-survey-south-sudans-former-breadbasket.
40. Joshua Craze, "Why the return of displaced people is such a thorny issue in South Sudan," The New Humanitarian (Jan. 5, 2022), https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/analysis/2022/1/5/why-return-displaced-people-thorny-issue-South-Sudan.
41. David K. Deng, "Housing, Land and Property Disputes in South Sudan Findings from a survey Nimule, Torit, Wau and Yei," South Sudan Law Society (2019): 1.
42. Steven Chimwemwe Iphani, "'A boy should be a fighter: Addressing harmful masculinities driving cattle-related violence," IOM South Sudan (2021), https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/A-Boy-Should-be-a-Fighter.pdf.
43. UN Human Rights Council, "Conflict-Related Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in South Sudan," A/HRC/49/CRP.4 (Mar. 21, 2022): 1.
44. IOM South Sudan, "Gender-Based Violence Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Survey in South Sudan," (2019): 5, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/south-sudan-gender-based-kap.pdf.
45. Diakonie Katastrophenhilfe, "South Sudan: CVA Best Practices in the Context of High Inflation," CALP Network (Mar. 30, 2023), https://www.calpnetwork.org/publication/cva-in-context-of-high-inflation-south-sudan/.
47. USAID, "South Sudan: Economic Growth and Trade," https://www.usaid.gov/south-sudan/economic-growth-and-trade. See also World Bank, "World Bank Report: With Peace and Accountability, Oil and Agriculture Can Support Early Recovery in South Sudan," (Jun. 15, 2022), https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2022/06/15/world-bank-report-with-peace-and-accountability-oil-and-agriculture-can-support-early-recovery-in-south-sudan#:~:text=Oil per cent20 and per cent20 agriculture per cent20 are per cent20 the, than per cent20four per cent20 in per cent 20 five per cent20households..
48. Amina Lahreche and Niko Alfred Hobdari, "Four Things to Know About How Fragile States Like South Sudan Are Coping With COVID-19," International Monetary Fund African Department (Nov. 20, 2020), https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/11/19/na112020-four-things-to-know-about-how-fragile-states-like-south-sudan-are-coping-with-covid19.
49. "Vocational Training Increases Employability Opportunities For Young South Sudanese | United Nations Development Programme," U.N. Development Programme (Jul. 14, 2022), https://www.undp.org/south-sudan/stories/vocational-training-increases-employability-opportunities-young-south-sudanese.
50. OCHA, "South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2022 (February 2022)" (Feb. 28, 2022), https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-needs-overview-2022-february-2022.

services with an annual infrastructure funding gap of around $879 million per year.[51] Despite earning $6 billion in oil revenues since 2005, According to the World Bank, South Sudan is the least electrified country in the world with only 8 per cent of the population having access to electricity.[52]

The UN Security Council has been imposing targeted sanctions on South Sudan since 2015 over violations of ceasefires and human rights concerns.[53] These sanctions include assets freezes, travel bans and an arms embargo. Combined with poor security conditions, sanctions present barriers for foreign investment.[54]

**Environmental Challenges:** South Sudan is ranked globally as one of the countries most vulnerable to natural hazards including droughts and flooding.[55] Limited natural resource management,[56] combined with disputes over these resources and the increasing severity of climate change impacts, exacerbate political and economic tensions.[57] Climate change, evidenced by more frequent and intense flooding and droughts since the 1960s,[58] has disproportionately affected rural communities that rely heavily on subsistence farming and pastoralism. For the last decade, the temperature in South Sudan has been increasing at twice the global average.[59]

In recent years, the impact of climate change has been particularly damaging to the agricultural sector. Prolonged and severe flooding in 2020, 2021, and 2022 led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people, with significant repercussions for farming and livestock.[60] The floods reduced access to food, increased prevalence of agricultural pests, and outbreaks of diseases including cholera and malaria.[61]

Limited water management in South Sudan is a major concern. Only 10 per cent of South Sudanese households have access to sanitation, and 15 per cent of households travel over two hours round-trip for water access during the dry season.[62] Water scarcity has been weaponized by political elites who have exploited local grievances and conflicts over water to advance political agendas.[63] Droughts and flooding, which one in four South Sudanese currently face, further intensify conflicts over water and force pastoralists to shift routes, increasing the likelihood of resource conflicts.[64]

Livestock, especially cattle, is another limited resource contributing to conflicts in the country. Conflicts over livestock are intertwined with land and water disputes. Lack of water resources leads to livestock death, forcing pastoralists to sell cattle that they cannot support at very low prices.[65] Herders later turn to raiding others' livestock to replace lost cattle.[66] In recent years, cattle raids have become increasingly armed and manipulated by political actors hoping to gain power.[67] Closer proximity to other

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51. Rupa Ranganathan and Cecilia Briceño-Garmendia, "South Sudan's Infrastructure: A Continental Perspective," World Bank Policy Research Working Paper, no. 5814 (2011).
52. World Bank, "Accelerating Sustainable & Clean Energy Access Transformation in AFE Region Multi-Phase Programmatic Approach" (May 30, 2023): 6, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099070723133032794/pdf/P18054700d8958090a1020bb11eeca12a7.pdf.
53. Edith M. Lederer, "UN votes narrowly to extend arms embargo on South Sudan," Associated Press (May 26, 2022), https://apnews.com/article/politics-africa-united-nations-south-sudan-887263f1cc035e7b42ec7c14c4570f3b.
54. U.S. Department of State, Bureau of African Affairs, "Risks and Considerations for U.S. Businesses and Individuals Operating in South Sudan" (Aug. 14, 2023), https://www.state.gov/south-sudan-business-advisory/.
55. International Rescue Committee, "Emergency Watchlist 2023: South Sudan" (2023): 40–41, https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/CS2301_Watchlist per cent20Project_Report_Final_3.pdf.
56. "Climatic Changes and Communal Conflicts in South Sudan," Climate Diplomacy, https://climate-diplomacy.org/case-studies/climatic-changes-and-communal-conflicts-south-sudan.
57. International Rescue Committee, "Emergency Watchlist 2023: South Sudan" (2023): 40–41, https://www.rescue.org/sites/default/files/2022-12/CS2301_Watchlist per cent20Project_Report_Final_3.pdf.
58. INFORM Risk Index (2023), https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Results-and-data/moduleId/1782/id/453/controller/Admin/action/Results.
59. Shelley Knowles, "Entire villages are quickly becoming islands: Dara Johnston from UNICEF explains why climate change is a threat we can't ignore," UNICEF (Nov. 24, 2022), https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/stories/entire-villages-are-quickly-becoming-islands.
60. World Food Programme, "WFP at Hand in South Sudan as Relentless Floods Threaten Lives, Land and Livestock" (Apr. 18, 2022), https://www.wfpusa.org/articles/wfp-at-hand-south-sudan-relentless-floods-threaten-lives-land-livestock/.
61. Shelley Knowles, "Entire villages are quickly becoming islands: Dara Johnston from UNICEF explains why climate change is a threat we can't ignore," UNICEF (Nov. 24, 2022), https://www.unicef.org/southsudan/stories/entire-villages-are-quickly-becoming-islands.
62. Borgomeo, Edoardo, Claire Chase, Nicolas Salazar Godoy, and Victor Osei Kwadwo, Rising from the Depths: Water Security and Fragility in South Sudan (World Bank Publications, 2023): xiv.
63. Id. at xvii.
64. Id. at xiv.
65. Id. at 83.
66. Tonny Muwangala, "UNMISS Begins Campaign to Preempt Deadly Clashes Between Cattle Camps in Lakes Region," U.N. Mission in South Sudan (Jan. 20, 2020), https://unmiss.unmissions.org/unmiss-begins-campaign-preempt-deadly-clashes-between-cattle-camps-lakes-region.
67. "Understanding South Sudan: Cattle Raiding," Healthnet TPO (Mar. 29, 2021), https://www.healthnettpo.org/en/news/understanding-south-sudan-cattle-raiding.68. Id. at 83.

nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers further increases the likelihood of violent clashes and cattle raiding.[68]

Illegal logging activities increased in intensity after the outbreak of conflict in 2016.[69] As refugees fled to northern Uganda, the illegal logging industry moved into the vacuum caused by displacement, resulting in rapid deforestation.[70] As refugees return home, there are tensions between returnees and those who stayed and oversaw the illegal logging activities.[71]

*Civil military dialogue conducted during a donor visit into Yei under RSRTF © IOM South Sudan/ Bombe JOSEPH*

69. South Sudan Council of Churches & UK Aid, "The Impact of Logging Activities on Local Communities" (2020): 8, https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/2020-10-The-impact-of-logging-on-local-communities-Final-Report.pdf.
70. Id. at 14.
71. Id. at 14.

# OVERVIEW OF FRAGILITY

## Main Trends by Dimension

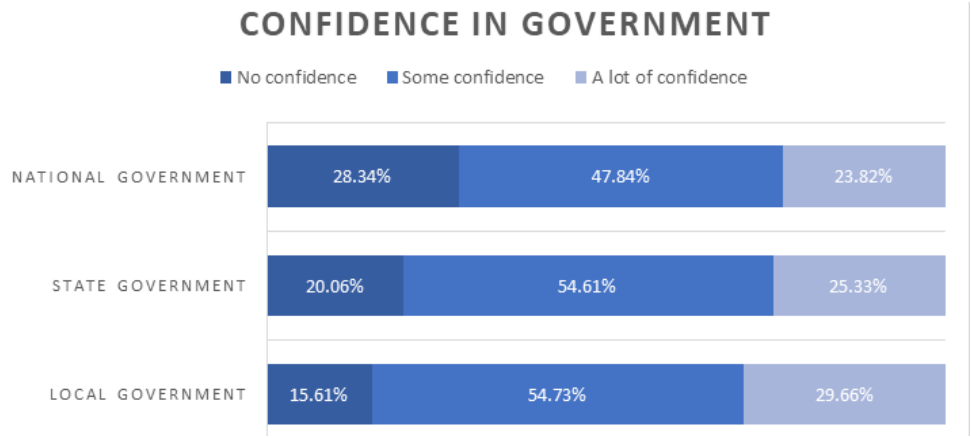
This section discusses key findings across the four counties surveyed for each of the five dimensions of fragility

## POLITICAL FRAGILITY

### Low levels of confidence in government authorities at local, state and national level

Trust in government institutions and authorities is low, as indicated by the average trust levels of 3.9 out of 10 towards the national government, 4 towards state authorities, and 4.2 towards local authorities. Particularly in Bor, a significant portion of respondents express a lack of confidence in the government, with 36 per cent reporting no trust in local authorities, 45 per cent in state authorities, and 50 per cent on the national level. Respondents also perceive government authorities as unable to provide services. On average, service delivery is ranked by respondents at 4.2 out of 10, state authorities at 4.3, and local authorities at 4.6. Yei is the county with the lowest levels of trust overall, with ratings of 3.3 for trust in the national government and 3.9 for confidence in service delivery.

### Figure 1: Confidence toward national, state and local government




Regarding the justice system, trust in the government's official statutory court is also rated low (4.3 out of 10). However, it is noteworthy that despite being less preferred for dispute resolution (with only 2 per cent of respondents selecting statutory courts as the first actor for conflict resolution), a substantial 78 per cent of respondents still feel that they can access justice without discrimination.

### Support for holding national elections amid safety concerns on expressing political opinions

Support for holding national elections remains high, with 86 per cent of respondents expressing favorability, and 9 out of 10 respondents expressing their intention to vote. However, confidence in the government's ability to conduct free and fair elections is relatively low (only 61 per cent).

Safety and security concerns surround the upcoming elections. A total of 66 per cent of respondents believed that elections are likely to have a positive effect on the stability of South Sudan, while 22 per cent are unsure if it will have any effect, and 12 per cent fear a potential negative impact on stability. Despite 77 per cent of respondents feeling somewhat safe going to a polling station to cast their votes, 22 per cent still express some level of insecurity.

Moreover, over half of all respondents (54 per cent) do not feel comfortable expressing political opinions on social media platforms, and a similar percentage (55 per cent) would not feel safe attending a peaceful protest about a political issue.

Respondents in Kajo-Keji were by far the least comfortable expressing political opinions on social media (84 per cent) and attending a hypothetical peaceful protest (87 per cent).

### Widespread acceptance of women in leadership roles

Most respondents accept women's representation in government. A total of 86 per cent of respondents consider women and men as equally capable to take on leadership positions in the government. Additionally, 7 out of 10 respondents support the existing 35 per cent quota for women across governmental institutions, as required by the 2011 South Sudan constitution, and an additional 22 per cent of respondents want the quota to be increased. Despite overall support for women's rights and political participation, GBV, such as forced marriage, is still a major issue (discussed below under 'Social Fragility').

## SECURITY FRAGILITY

### Perceptions of security are variable and trust in security actors is low, with respondents relying heavily on informal actors for dispute resolution

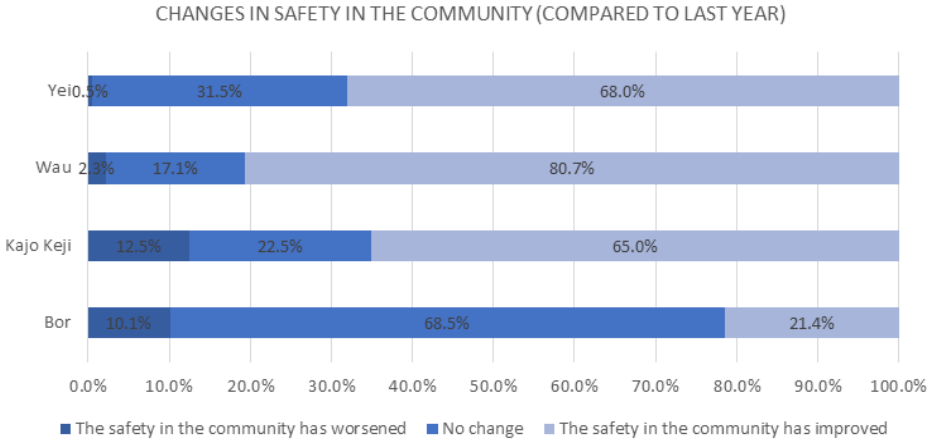
Perceptions of security vary significantly across the four counties. Wau is the county with the highest sense of security, where 96 per cent of respondents feel they live in a safe and secure community. Additionally, 87 per cent of respondents in Wau consider their community stable, and 81 per cent feel that safety in their community has improved compared to the previous year. There were only slight gender differences in perceptions of safety. Overall, 24 per cent of men perceived their community as unsafe compared with 27 per cent of women.

Yei and Kajo-Keji also rank relatively high in perceptions of safety and stability. In these counties, 74 per cent and 77 per cent of respondents, respectively, feel that their community is safe. Additionally, 68 per cent in Yei and 65 per cent in Kajo-Keji believe that safety in their community has improved in the past year.

Bor experiences the lowest perception of security, with less than half of the respondents considering their community safe and secure. Furthermore, 41 per cent of respondents in Bor perceive their community as unstable. Notably, Bor is the only county where a majority of respondents reported no improvement in community safety over the past year. Only 21 per cent perceived an improvement in security, 69 per cent reported no change, and 10 per cent reported a decrease in security.

Improved security in the area of origin is cited as a reason for return by 15 per cent of respondents overall with higher percentages in Yei (31 per cent) and Wau (40 per cent). This underscores the importance of enhanced security conditions for enabling IDPs and refugees to return to their communities of origin.

### Figure 2: Compared to last year (12 months ago), do you feel there has been a change when it comes to safety in the community



Despite positive assessments of security at the community level, the overall perception of personal security remains low in all surveyed counties. On a scale of 1 to 10, the average satisfaction with personal security is rated at 5, and security in the community is rated at 4.2. Concerns about violence and crime remain high, with 62 per cent of respondents fearing crime in their own homes.

The levels of trust towards security actors, the Army and the police, are generally low. On average, respondents rate trust towards the military at 4 out of 10 and the police at 4.2 out of 10. Respondents have a clear preference for non-state and traditional authorities when it comes to resolving disputes or conflicts. The chief of the village is the most commonly preferred actor (40 per cent of respondents). This suggests that traditional authority and local leadership play a significant role in dispute resolution.

Family or friends are the second most preferred actor for dispute resolution (34 per cent), which highlights the importance of informal social networks and support systems in handling disputes within the community. Only 1 out of 10 respondents would approach the police to resolve disputes, which relates to the previously mentioned low levels of trust in the police.

### Non-state armed groups are perceived as the primary source of insecurity followed by the Army, and concerns over renewed conflict remain high

Non-state armed groups are considered the primary actors bringing insecurity into communities. Overall, 49 per cent of respondents identify them as a source of instability. This perception is particularly high in Yei, with a striking 79 per cent of respondents expressing this concern.

A total of 44 per cent of respondents mentioned the presence of organized groups that posed insecurity in their communities in the previous 12 months. This was particular high in Kajo-Keji (80 per cent) and Bor (55 per cent). Following non-state armed groups, the Army is the second actor most commonly viewed as contributing to insecurity. Importantly, perceptions of the Army vary across counties. Whereas in Kajo-Keji, a significant proportion of respondents (reaching 57 per cent) view the Army as a source of insecurity, in Bor only 5 per cent of respondents perceive the Army in this way. This highlights the concerns toward the presence and actions of the military in certain communities.

In Bor and Wau, 37 per cent and 25 per cent of respondents respectively perceive people from other clans as contributing to instability. In Wau, respondents identified cattle herders as the main actors considered to be posing insecurity, with 55 per cent of responses attributing this concern to them. Concerns over armed conflict (3.2 out of 5) are at the top security-related concerns for respondents, followed by violent crimes (3). Ethnic violence is also a source of concern in Bor (3.6).

### Table 2: Top Security Concerns (Scale of 1 to 5)

| | Non-violent crimes | Violent crimes | Armed Conflict | Ethnic violence | Land conflicts | Cattle conflicts | Sexual violence |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bor | 3.0 | 3.8 | 3.9 | 3.6 | 3.4 | 3.2 | 3.4 |
| Kajo-Keji | 1.9 | 2.9 | 3.6 | 1.9 | 2.1 | 1.8 | 2.0 |
| Wau | 2.6 | 2.9 | 2.9 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.7 |
| Yei | 2.3 | 2.5 | 2.6 | 2.4 | 2.5 | 2.5 | 2.5 |
| Grand Total | 2.5 | 3.0 | 3.2 | 2.7 | 2.7 | 2.5 | 2.7 |

### Divided opinions on transitional justice, accountability, and reconciliation

Survey respondents are divided on the question of whether it is "better to speak publicly about what happened during the conflict, or … better to avoid speaking publicly." A total of 45 per cent of respondents believe it is better to speak publicly about the conflict, while 47 per cent believe it is better to avoid discussing it. The reluctance to speak about the conflict is highest in Bor, where a significant 64 per cent of respondents express a preference for avoiding discussions about the conflict.

Those in favor of public discussion cited reasons including grievances with the current government, the need to raising public awareness locally and internationally, educating children and others who did not personally witness the conflict, preventing another conflict, and desire for justice. Those in favor of silence gave reasons including concerns about retraumatization of victims, enabling forgiveness, letting go of painful memories of lost loved ones, desire for closure and moving on, and to avoid reopening old wounds. Interestingly, respondents on both sides believed that their preferred approach (whether silence or public discussion) was best for maintaining peace and that the other approach would lead to more conflict.

Regarding preferences for different justice mechanisms after the conflict, respondents prioritize civil-civil dialogues, with 66 per cent of respondents supporting this approach. A total of 41 per cent of respondents support confessions by perpetrators. Yei stands out with strong support (69 per cent of respondents) for civil-military dialogues. Familiarity with ongoing civil-military dialogues in Yei County might be a factor in favorable perceptions of this mechanism.

### Table 3: Preferred Transitional Justice Mechanisms

| | Civil-civil dialogue | Confessions or apologies | Rehabilitation of perpetrators | Prosecutions | Compensation | Truth-telling |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bor | 60 % | 44 % | 29 % | 36 % | 24 % | 17 % |
| Kajo-Keji | 83 % | 45 % | 41 % | 30 % | 9 % | 20 % |
| Wau | 66 % | 47 % | 21 % | 13 % | 17 % | 24 % |
| Yei | 56 % | 26 % | 26 % | 29 % | 9 % | 24 % |
| Grand Total | 66% | 41 % | 29 % | 27 % | 15 % | 21 % |

When asked which actors they want to be involved in peace-building efforts, most respondents favored religious leaders (73 per cent) followed by community members (63 per cent) and community leaders (63 per cent). Conversely, most respondents do not want the Army to be involved in peacebuilding (only 19 per cent). However, in Yei, this percentage increases to 36 per cent, which could reflect the ongoing civil-military dialogues in the area.

## SOCIAL FRAGILITY

### Feelings of community acceptance are high across counties, and regardless of displacement status

Overall, most respondents feel welcomed and accepted in their current community. A total of 62 per cent reported feeling very accepted and 30 per cent moderately accepted. Less than 1 per cent of respondents report not feeling accepted at all by the community where they reside. This is consistent across counties and regardless of displacement status (whether IDPs, returnees, or members of the host community). We interpret these results cautiously because it is possible that social desirability bias led respondents to report higher-than-actual levels of acceptance of IDPs,

and it is also possible that respondents assumed that the questions were referring to IDPs who share their same ethnic, religious, or tribal identity-the questions did not specify identity-rather than IDPs from other groups, who would likely face steeper social barriers to return due to out-group bias.

Nine out of 10 respondents reported that people live peacefully together in their communities and 8 out of 10 feel that their ethnic group is treated in a fair manner.

However, differences appear when it comes to access to services and livelihood. Although 8 out of 10 respondents feel they can access services without discrimination and 7 out of 10 feel this way when it comes to accessing livelihoods, this feeling is significantly lower in Central Equatoria. In Yei, 36 per cent of respondents feel discriminated against when trying to access services and 37 per cent feel discriminated against in accessing livelihoods. In Kajo-Keji, feelings of discrimination are concentrated around access to livelihoods, with 50 per cent of respondents reporting this type of discrimination. In this county, feelings of discrimination on accessing livelihoods are concentrated among returnees.

The relationship between the host community and returnees appears to be mostly harmonious, with 73 per cent of respondents rating it positively. This positive sentiment is particularly strong in Kajo-Keji, where 92 per cent of respondents view the relationship positively. On the other hand, the relationship between IDPs and the host community seems to be less positive. While 52 per cent of respondents still consider it positive, the feelings are less favorable in Yei. In Yei, 38 per cent of respondents rate the relationship as neutral, and an additional 16 per cent as poor or "very poor."

More than 7 out of 10 respondents (72 per cent) agreed with the statement that "people around here are willing to help their neighbors". Yei respondents were the most likely to disagree with this statement (25 per cent) by a significant margin; the nearest level of disagreement was Bor with 8 per cent.

Preferences for dispute resolution varied between the counties. On average, respondents who have disputes or problems are most likely to turn to village chiefs (39 per cent) and family or friends (34 per cent) for help, and only 10 per cent would turn to the police. Respondents in Wau were much more likely to turn to police (21 per cent) and courts (7 per cent) than in any other community, which may reflect greater state capacity and presence in Wau (which is South Sudan's third largest city) than the other three counties, which are more rural. Wau has also been a focus of UN Police training and capacity-building activities.[72]

### HLP disputes, lack of documentation and legal ownership and concerns over land conflict.

Around 23 per cent of respondents have experienced HLP disputes, which are typically resolved by village chiefs, and acceptance of women's land ownership was mixed. Lack of documentation of legal ownership and conflicts over natural resources including cattle and water are significant risk factors for HLP disputes. Boundary disputes are the most prevalent type of disputes reported by respondents (16 per cent), with peaks in Wau (30 per cent) and Yei (19 per cent). As it was the case with security related conflict, the chief of the village is the most common actor involved in resolving HLP disputes (66 per cent of instances reported by respondents), and 84 per cent of respondents reported to be satisfied with the outcome reached. Land conflicts are rated at 2.7 on average, above concerns over ethnic violence and conflict over cattle.

Most of respondents (83 per cent) own the property where they live in, however, 66 per cent of them do not possess ownership documents. Lacking ownership documents is particularly high in Kajo-Keji where 95 per cent of owners do not possess documentation showing ownership. Wau is the county where more respondents (66 per cent) can show ownership of their property, which might be due to the urban characteristics of the area.

Only 2 out of 10 respondents believe that women are not legally allowed to own land, reflecting a lack of awareness or understanding of existing legal provisions that guarantee women rights to own and inherit property including land.[73] Women had slightly more awareness of their legal rights than men. 19 per cent of female respondents were not aware that South Sudan's laws allow women to own property, compared with a higher percentage of men (27 per cent).

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*72. UN Peacekeeping, "Eyes wide open as UNMISS police build crime investigation capacity among colleagues in Wau" (Sept. 12, 2022), https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/eyes-wide-open-unmiss-police-build-crime-investigation-capacity-among-colleagues-wau.*

*73. The Transitional Constitution, The Land Act (2009) and the draft National Land Policy all stipulate that women can own land. See IOM South Sudan, "Customary Law, Norms, Practices and Related Factors that Enable and Constrain Women's Access to Housing, Land and Property in South Sudan: A Desk Review," (2009): 7, https://publications.iom int/system/files/pdf/Customary-Law- per cent20Norms-Practices-HLP-South-Sudan.pdf.*

When asked whether the law should allow women to own land, 31 per cent of respondents were opposed to women's ownership rights and responses varied significantly across the counties. Wau had the highest support for women's property rights by far (only 7 per cent opposed) and Kajo-Keji had the lowest support (50 per cent opposed women having the right to own property). Importantly, there were significant gender differences. Overall, a higher percentage of male respondents (39 per cent) were opposed to women having the right to own property in comparison with female respondents (24 per cent opposed).

### Acceptance of GBV including child marriage is present to varying extents in all four communities.

On average, less than 19 per cent of respondents were aware of the legal minimum age for marriage, which is 18 years under South Sudan's Child Act (2008).[74] A majority of respondents in all four counties said that child marriage is never acceptable, with some noteworthy differences. The highest acceptance of child marriage was in Bor where 57 per cent of respondents said that it is never acceptable, but 11 per cent said it is always acceptable and 15 per cent said it is acceptable to gain money or cattle in order to pay a bride price. The lowest acceptance of child marriage was in Wau where 79 per cent of respondents said that it is never acceptable and only 5 per cent said it is always acceptable. In Yei, 64 per cent said child marriage is never acceptable and 13 per cent said it is always acceptable. In Kajo-Keji, 73 per cent said child marriage is never acceptable and only 1 per cent said it is always acceptable. Interestingly, there were no statistically significant gender differences between men and women in their attitudes toward child marriage. Acceptance of GBV against women followed a similar pattern. On average, 16 per cent of respondents said that GBV is always acceptable, 68 per cent said it is never acceptable, 11 per cent said it is acceptable within a marital relationship, 3 per cent said it is acceptable within a relationship regardless of marital status, and less than 2 per cent said it is acceptable during war. Bor had the highest percentage of respondents who viewed GBV as always acceptable (24 per cent) followed by Kajo-Keji and Yei (both 16 per cent). Wau, which had the lowest acceptance of child marriage as noted above, also had the lowest level of acceptance of GBV (6 per cent), and 81 per cent said that GBV is never acceptable. Kajo-Keji also had a particularly high level of acceptance of GBV within marital relationships (30 per cent). Again, there were no statistically significant gender differences between men and women in their beliefs about the acceptability of GBV, or their level of concern about the prevalence of sexual violence in their communities. These results are surprising given that women and girls are disproportionately harmed by child marriage and GBV. It is possible that women who support child marriage have internalized patriarchal values, or view acceptance of these practices as necessary for survival.

## ECONOMIC FRAGILITY

### High reliance on subsistence farming and limited purchasing power

The findings highlight the significant economic fragility prevalent in the region. Subsistence farming emerges as the primary source of income for the vast majority, with 51 per cent of respondents relying on it to sustain their households. The exception to this pattern is Wau, which stands out as more urbanized, where 20 per cent of respondents cited formal employment (as business owners or employees) as their main income source, which is only slightly less than the percentage of its population that uses subsistence farming as the primary source of income (21 per cent). This indicates a heavy dependence on agricultural practices and a lack of diverse economic opportunities in the surveyed areas.

Unemployment is a main concern for respondents, ranking 3.16 out of 5 on average, making it the second most prevalent concern after armed violence (3.25). This is particularly high in Bor (3.47) and Wau (3.37).

Moreover, the purchasing power of the respondents is alarmingly limited, with 74 per cent of them describing their financial situation as insufficient even to meet basic food needs. A staggering 40 per cent of respondents find themselves unable to cover all their basic needs, further illustrating the severe economic challenges faced by these counties.

### Figure 3: Respondents' Purchasing Power (Out of 10 Respondents)

**7** out of 10 respondents state not having enough money even for food

74. *UN Mission in South Sudan, "Child Marriage: A Silent Human Rights and Health Concern in South Sudan's Lakes Region" (Feb. 16, 2019), https://unmiss.unmissions.org/child-marriage-silent-human-rights-and-health-concern-south-sudan per centE2 per cent80 per cent99s-lakes-region.*

The average satisfaction rating for living standards and family financial situations is strikingly low at 2.9 and 2.8 out of 10, respectively, indicating widespread discontent and dissatisfaction with the economic conditions in the region.

A total of 20 per cent of returnees pointed to a decrease in humanitarian aid provided in areas of displacement as one of the main factors to return. As these individuals return to already economically vulnerable communities, it can create tensions between host communities and returnees, intensifying competition for limited economic and livelihood opportunities. As already seen above, although the relationship between returnees and host community members is generally viewed positively, some returnees feel discriminated against in the context of accessing livelihoods opportunities.

On a positive note, 24 per cent of returnees mentioned an improvement in livelihood and services as one of the reasons for their return to their respective areas. This suggests that targeted interventions and support aimed at boosting livelihood opportunities and providing essential services might be having a positive impact on the economic stability and overall well-being of the communities. However, it remains evident that addressing the economic fragility in these counties requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach that encompasses long-term job creation, economic diversification, and sustainable development strategies with short-term interventions to cover for basic needs.

## ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION

### Increased in number and frequency of natural disasters or incidents contributing to environmental fragility

A high number of natural disasters or incidents which contribute to environmental fragility were reported by respondents as having occurred in their communities in the past two years.

In Bor, respondents highlighted severe flooding as the most prevalent disaster, affecting 47 per cent of the population, while in Kajo-Keji, uncontrolled grass burning (32 per cent) and illegal logging (25 per cent) were prominent issues. In Wau, drought (24 per cent) and water pollution (20 per cent) were the most reported issues, while in Yei, rivers and water sources pollution (36 per cent) and uncontrolled grass burning (17 per cent) were prevalent.

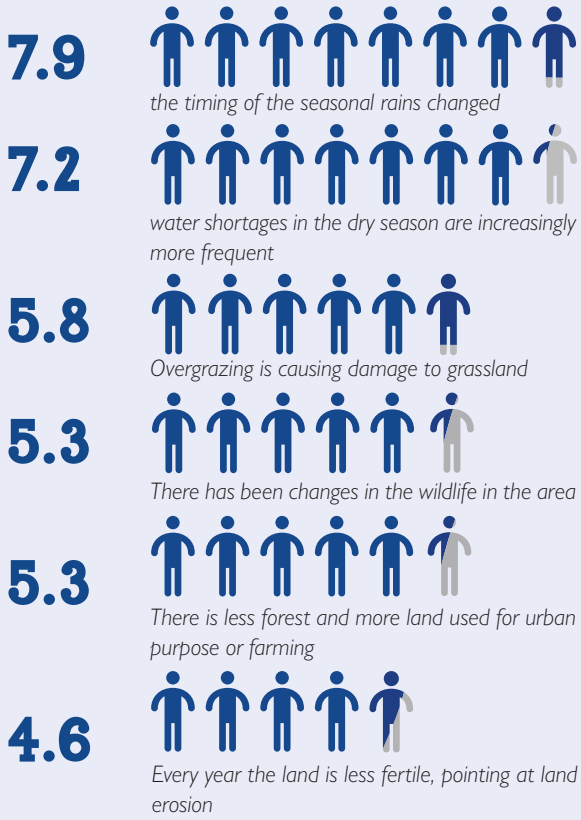
A total of 8 out of 10 respondents reported changes in the timing of seasonal rains, leading to disruptions in farming and water availability. Additionally, 6 out of 10 respondents mentioned increasingly frequent water shortages during the dry season.

Thus, water-related issues, mainly severe flooding and drought, are prevalent in all four counties, in communities where access to water is already challenging. Only 2 out of 10 respondents reported year-round accessibility to water in their communities. For 4 out of 10 respondents, water was either inaccessible or insufficient throughout the year.

Severe flooding or drought is the third most common concern among respondents (3.06 out of 5 on average) after armed conflict and unemployment. In Bor, however, severe flooding and / or severe drought is the top concern among respondents (3.92).

Additionally, a significant portion of respondents (46 per cent) expressed concerns about land erosion and decreased fertility, while 53 per cent noted changes in wildlife patterns and loss of forest cover due to urbanization and farming expansion. Overgrazing, cited by 58 per cent of respondents, was identified as another major factor contributing to environmental degradation.

**Figure 4: Reported Environmental Changes in the community (Out of 10 Respondents)**



The increase in number and intensity of natural disasters can lead to new displacement of populations. Approximately 3 out of 10 surveyed IDPs mentioned the loss of housing, interruption of livelihoods or interruption of access to services in the aftermath of a natural disaster experienced in their areas as a reason for their displacement.

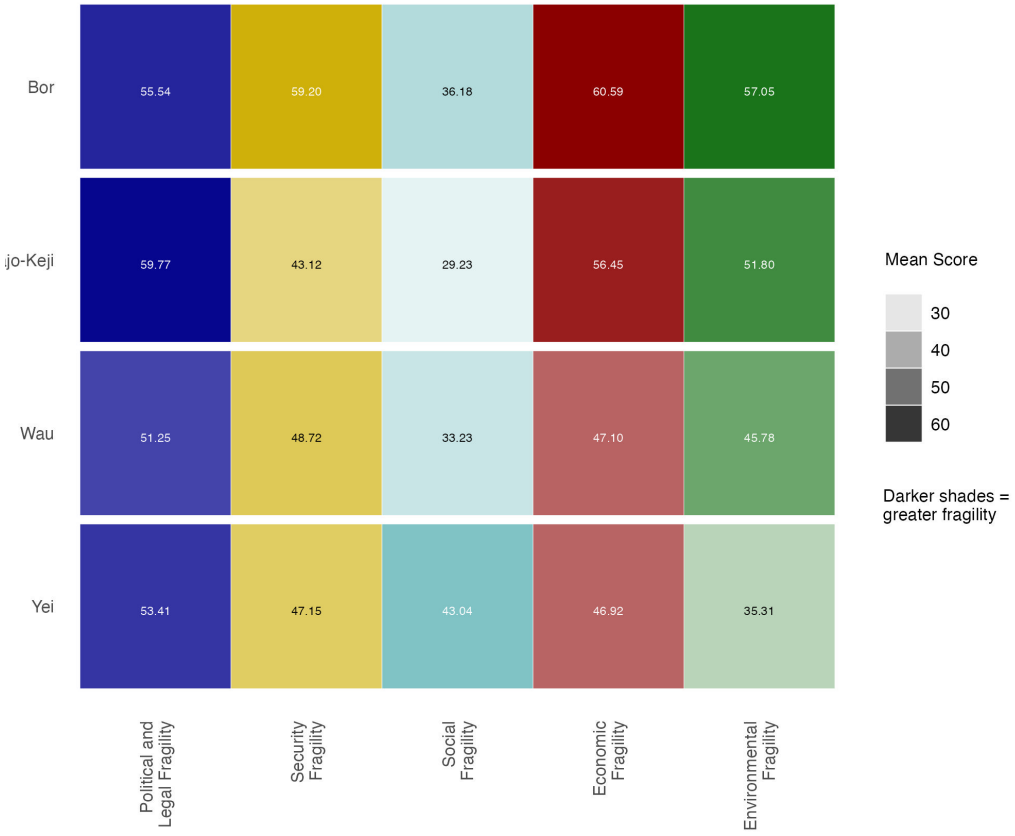
## Intertwined Economic and Environmental Fragility Calls for Comprehensive DRR Strategies

The prevalence of subsistence farming as the primary livelihood for 7 out of 10 respondents underscores the intricate link between economic and environmental fragility. The environmental dimension plays a significant role in exacerbating economic vulnerabilities, primarily through the impact of natural hazards on farming and water resources. With increasing occurrences of severe flooding, droughts, and water pollution, a Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) approach is essential in livelihood programming. Livelihood activities must factor in the environmental fragility of these communities and actively work to mitigate environmental risks while enhancing community resilience. Moreover, diversifying the local economy beyond farming is crucial, providing alternative sources of income to reduce dependency on agriculture. House reconstruction efforts should also factor in environmental fragility, focusing on climate resilience and adaptability to ensure long-term sustainability.

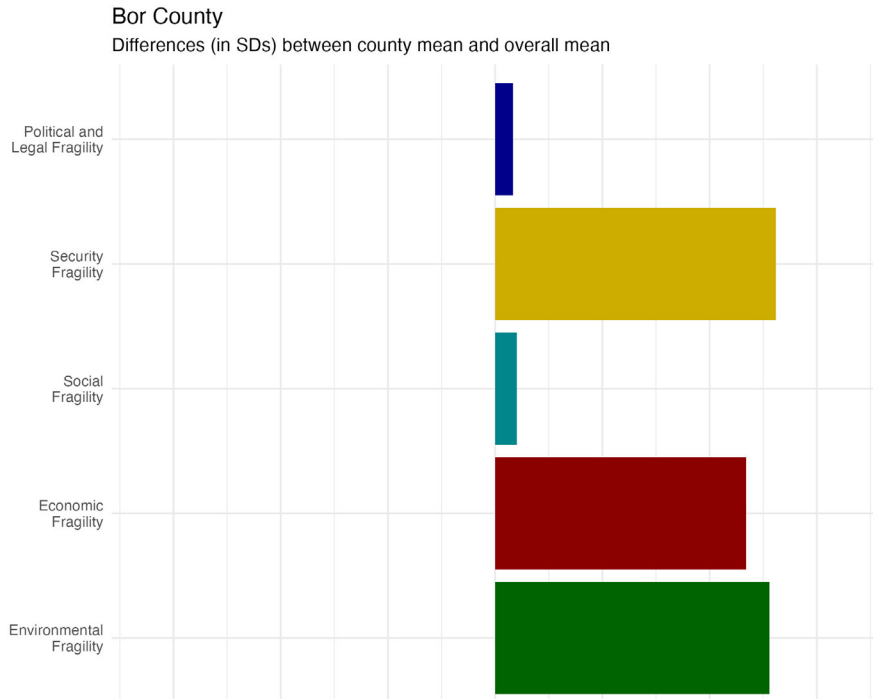
## Fragility Dimensions by County

The fragility index analysis, as described in the methodology section above, reveals distinct patterns among the counties. Bor emerges as the county with the highest levels of security, environmental, and economic fragility. Kajo-Keji demonstrates the highest level of political fragility, alongside high scores in economic and environmental fragility. Yei County records the highest level of social fragility, accompanied by moderate levels of political and security fragility. In contrast, Wau County presents moderate overall fragility levels, characterized by the lowest political fragility scores, as well as low economic and environmental fragility. Detailed county profiles are provided in the next sections.

## Table 4: Average Fragility Scores by County by Dimension



# BOR COUNTY PROFILE




**339,616**
Estimated Total population*

**80,587**
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

**36,586**
Returnees

*In all county profiles, 2022 subnational population estimates are from OCHA South Sudan.[75] Numbers of IDPs and returnees are based on IOM South Sudan's DTM ML 13 data.

## Key Findings

- Bor presents the highest levels of security, economic and environmental fragility, and ranks second in political and social fragility, making it the most fragile county surveyed.
- Political fragility linked to lowest trust in government authorities at the local, state and national level.
- Highest level of security fragility with less than half of respondents viewing their community as safe and secure. It is the only county where most respondents reported no improvement in community safety over the past year.
- Moderate levels of social fragility based on strong intra-community ties based on trust and respect. However, strong intra-community ties could also reflect reliance on one's closer group over fear of other ethnic groups in the ethnic diverse county, at the inter-community level. Bor presents the highest levels of GBV acceptance.
- Highest level of economic fragility with the percentage of respondents who report not having enough money to purchase food (82 per cent), and 53 per cent of respondents unable to meet all their basic needs. High levels of economic fragility intertwined with high levels of environmental fragility and suggest a potential increase in economic fragility in the near future. This is primarily attributed to the county's heavy reliance on farming and livestock rearing as its primary sources of income.
- Highest level of environmental fragility driven by water scarcity, which was identified as the respondents' leading concern and has been exacerbated by increasingly frequent dry season shortages and changing seasonal rains, along with severe flooding and declining land fertility.

75. OCHA, "South Sudan - Subnational Population Statistics," https://data.humdata.org/dataset/cod-ps-ssd?.

## Background

Bor County, also known as Bor South, is the administrative headquarters of Jonglei State. Most of the population live in rural areas and rely primarily on agriculture for their livelihoods.[76] The population is primarily Dinka, known as Bor Dinka. Inter-group conflict at the state level between Dinka and Nuer for political dominance has historically created tension in the area among communities.[77] Bor is located on a labor migration route from the southeastern border with Kenya.[79]

Historically, Bor has been a center of political opposition and armed resistance against the government. In 1983, members of the 105 Battalion staged an armed uprising that paved the way for the establishment of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/SPLA).[80] Since then, the greater Bor area has seen numerous political conflicts, including the 1991 split between Riek Machar and Dr. John Garang de Mabior. In 2013, Bor was one of the centers of the 2013 violent conflict between the SPLM/A of Salva Kiir (who has been president continuously since 2011) and the rival faction of Dr. Riek Machar (currently Kiir's vice president) known as the SPLM/A-IO, referring to The Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition."[81]

Bor County has several valuable natural resources including oil, water, and timber, which generate revenue but also fuel illicit markets and have at times contributed to conflict.[82] The county is severely affected by flooding and droughts. In 2021 alone, flooding displaced over 500,000 people in Bor County.[83]

## Political and Legal Fragility

Bor is the county where lack of confidence towards the government is lower across all three levels-local, state, and national-where 36 per cent express no confidence in the local government (compared to the 16 per cent average), 46 per cent lack confidence in the state government (compared to the 20 per cent average), and 50 per cent lack confidence in the national government (compared to the 28 per cent average).

Despite this widespread distrust in the government, respondents rate the delivery of services slightly higher than the average, albeit still relatively low (with ratings of 4.8 out of 10 for both national and state governments, and 4.9 for the local government). This sentiment extends to legal institutions, with statutory courts receiving a rating of 4.9 and customary law receiving a rating of 5.8.

The lack of trust in the government may stem from respondents' overall perception that their ethnic group is not treated fairly, as 22 per cent report feeling their group is treated somewhat or very unfairly, and an additional 56 per cent feel their group is treated somewhat fairly; and could reflect the heterogeneous ethnic composition in the county with historic rivalries among ethnic groups. Another potential explanation for this sentiment is the fact that the majority of the Jonglei state population belong to the Nuer ethnic group, which has been the primary economic and political rival of the Dinka for centuries.

There is strong acceptance of women in leadership roles, with 90 per cent of respondents considering women equally capable of holding high political posts. Moreover, there is significant support for the 35 per cent quota for women's representation in government institutions, with 70 per cent accepting the quota and 24 per cent expressing a desire to see it increased. Additionally, voting intentions for the next elections are notably high, with 90 per cent of respondents indicating their intention to vote.

## Security Fragility

Bor scores the highest in security fragility across counties, with less than half of the respondents considering their community safe and secure. Furthermore, 41 per cent of respondents in Bor perceive their community as unstable.

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76. *Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, "County Profile: Bor South," CSRF-South Sudan: https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county_profile/bor-south/.*
77. *Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, "County Profile: Kajo-Keji," https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county-profiles/.*
78 *IRIN News, "Why the violence in South Sudan's Jonglei State," The New Humanitarian (Jul. 25, 2013), https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/news/2013/07/25/why-violence-south-sudan-s-jonglei-state.*
79 *IOM South Sudan, "Trafficking in Persons in South Sudan: An Action Research" (2020): 8, https://docs.southsudanngoforum.org/sites/default/files/2020-09/20200724 %20TiP %20full %20report %20low %20resolution.pdf.*
80 *Human Rights Watch, "The Chevron Period: 1974-92," https://www.hrw.org/reports/2003/sudan1103/10.htm.*
81 *REACH, "South Sudan Displacement Crisis: Bor Town Port and Road Monitoring - Bor South County, Jonglei State, South Sudan (May, 2022)" (Jun. 29, 2022), https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-displacement-crisis-bor-town-port-and-road-monitoring-bor-south-county-jonglei-state-south-sudan-may-2022.*
82 *Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, "Land, Conflict, an Displacement in South Sudan: A Conflict-Sensitive Approach to Land Governance" (Nov. 2021), https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/CSRF-Land-Conflict-and-Displacement-in-South-Sudan_22Nov2021-final.pdf.*
83 *IOM, "The Netherlands, IOM Launch Euro 11 million Project to Tackle Floods in Bor" (May 7, 2022), https://southsudan.iom.int/news/netherlands-iom-launch-euro-11-million- project-tackle-floods-bor#:~:text= %E2 %80 %9CWith %20this %20project %20we %20hope,communities %20to %20disaster %2Drelated %20risks.*

Bor is the only county where most of respondents (68 per cent) reported no improvement in community safety over the past year. The satisfaction ratings for personal security (4.6 out of 10), community security (3.3), and security in the payam (3.1) are also the lowest across all four counties in Bor. The leading security concerns in Bor are armed conflict (3.9 on a scale from 1 to 5), violent crimes (3.8), ethnic violence (3.6), sexual violence (both rated 3.4), and conflicts over cattle (3.2).

A total of 52 per cent of respondents perceived non-state armed groups as a source of insecurity currently, and 55 per cent reported that armed groups contributed to insecurity in the previous 12 months. In contrast, perceptions of the Army are very favorable: only 5 per cent viewed the Army as contributing to insecurity. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents perceived other clans as contributing to instability. This result may be partially explained by the long history of inter-ethnic conflict in Bor and Jonglei state more broadly.[84]

Bor respondents are also the most reluctant to speak openly about the conflict in comparison with the other counties: only 26 per cent of respondents are in favor of openly speaking about it (compared to 45 per cent on average). Bor has also the lowest level of support for civil-military dialogues (only 9 per cent compared an average of 36 per cent), and the lowest support for giving the Army a role in peace-building efforts (also 9 per cent compared with an average of 19 per cent), but high support for civil-civil dialogues (60 per cent).

The limited backing for involving the Army as an actor in peace efforts, with only 9 per cent in favor, may explain this preference for civil dialogues. Given that Bor respondents had the most trust in the Army (4.6 compared with an average of 4.0) and were least likely to view the Army as having a negative impact on security (only 5 per cent), one possible explanation is that Bor respondents view the military as effective in maintaining security but do not want the military involved in peacebuilding. The actors most favored to play a role in peacebuilding were community leaders (65 per cent), local government authorities (64 per cent), NGOs and the UN (58 per cent), followed by religious authorities (53 per cent).

## Social Fragility

Bor has the lowest level of social fragility, with 82 per cent of respondents agreeing that neighbors are willing to assist each other, and 31 per cent of them strongly endorsing this sentiment (in contrast to the 17 per cent average). Additionally, feelings of trust and respect among community members are notably high, as 80 per cent of respondents express trust in people within the community (compared to the 65 per cent average), and 76 per cent believe that community members treat each other with equal respect (compared to the 66 per cent average).

These findings underscore robust intra-community ties and strong social bonds among community members. Strong intra-community ties, however, could also reflect reliance on one's closer group over fear of other ethnic groups in the ethnically diverse county, at the inter-community level, pointed at by the fact that 51 per cent of respondents acknowledge that individuals from different ethnic groups might encounter difficulties fitting in.

Despite the strong community ties, attitudes toward IDPs seem favorable, with 71 per cent of respondents describing the relationship between IDPs and the host community as good or very good (a similar percentage as the relationship between host community and returnees (72 per cent). This might be due to the fact that the majority of IDPs in the surveyed locations in Bor county belong to the same ethnic group as the host communities.

Despite the low social fragility score, Bor faces significant challenges in terms of women's rights and child protection. Twenty-four per cent of respondents consider GBV to be always acceptable, the highest percentage across counties, and 43 per cent of respondents consider child marriage acceptable. The high level of acceptance of GBV in Bor could be driven by the widespread practice of bride price, which has the effect of objectifying women.[85]

## Economic Fragility

Bor ranks the highest in terms of economic fragility characterized by low purchasing power among respondents, with 53 per cent unable to meet all their basic needs and a

84. *Human Rights Watch, "South Sudan's New War: Abuses by Government and Opposition Forces" (Aug. 7, 2014), https://www.hrw.org/report/2014/08/07/south-sudans-new-war/abuses-government-and-opposition-forces.*

staggering 82 per cent describing their financial situation as insufficient even for food, marking the highest percentage among all counties.

Levels of satisfaction in Bor are the lowest compared to other counties, with respondents expressing dissatisfaction with both their family's financial situation (scoring 1.9 out of 10) and their overall living conditions (scoring 2.3 out of 10). Bor also records the highest level of concern about unemployment among the four surveyed counties, scoring 3.5 out of 5 on this indicator.

Subsistence farming stands out as the primary source of household income in Bor 48 per cent, followed by financial support from family members living elsewhere 12 per cent and income from livestock 12 per cent. Given that 60 per cent of Bor's respondents rely on subsistence farming or livestock rearing as their primary source of income, this high economic fragility, coupled with high levels of environmental fragility, has the potential to exacerbate existing challenges.

## Environmental Fragility

Bor presents the highest levels of environmental fragility. It is the county where access to water is more limited, with 37 per cent of respondents considering access to water in their communities as inaccessible (compared to the 15 per cent average). Moreover, for 77 per cent of respondents, water sources are not accessible for all community members. The main reasons reported among these respondents include an overall lack of water 40 per cent, distance 27 per cent, and non-functioning infrastructure 20 per cent.

This situation might exacerbate over time, as 72 per cent of respondents report increasingly frequent water shortages during the dry seasons, and an additional 90 per cent report changes in the timing of the seasonal rains.

In Bor, respondents identified severe flooding as the most prevalent environmental problem in the past two years 47 per cent, the highest of all counties. The next most common problems were drought 13 per cent and water pollution 10 per cent. Consistent with these results, Bor respondents rated severe drought and severe flooding as their greatest concern (3.92), remarkably above armed conflict (3.88) and violent crime (3.80) despite Bor scoring the highest in security fragility among the four counties.

A majority of respondents perceived other negative environmental changes that affect agricultural livelihoods. A total of 56 per cent reported that the land was becoming less fertile over time, and 62 per cent believe that overgrazing by livestock is causing damage to grassland.

A majority 60 per cent of Bor respondents believe that disposing of waste in the streets is a problem, higher than the average rate of 48 per cent, suggesting a relatively high level of awareness of the negative impact of pollution.

### Implications for Peacebuilding Programming

1. **Security Sector Reform Initiatives (SSR):** Given the pronounced security fragility in Bor County, coupled with the positive perception of formal security actors, incorporating SSR programming as part of peacebuilding initiatives is advisable. This could involve providing training and capacity-building for security forces and establishing community policing initiatives aimed at enhancing security and fostering trust within the community.

2. **Broad Stakeholder Engagement:** Due to the prevailing reluctance to openly discuss the recent conflict in Bor, it is advisable to prioritize trust-building measures in the initial phase. Engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including government officials, local authorities, civil society organizations, local communities, and traditional leaders, is essential. This engagement can gradually promote trust in government institutions and shift the perception of security actors as integral components of the peacebuilding process. During this initial phase, civil-civil dialogues could gain traction, as they garner substantial support among respondents. Once trust is established, other mechanisms, such as civil-military dialogues, can be considered.

3. **Fostering change in gender norms, masculinity and violence:** In Bor County, peacebuilding programming should incorporate addressing GBV as a cross-cutting concern., employing innovative attitude and behavior-change approaches to create genuine shifts in attitudes and norms surrounding gender, masculinity, and violence. Actively engaging men and male youth, including chiefs and community elders, over the long term, is essential to foster authentic changes in attitudes and practices.

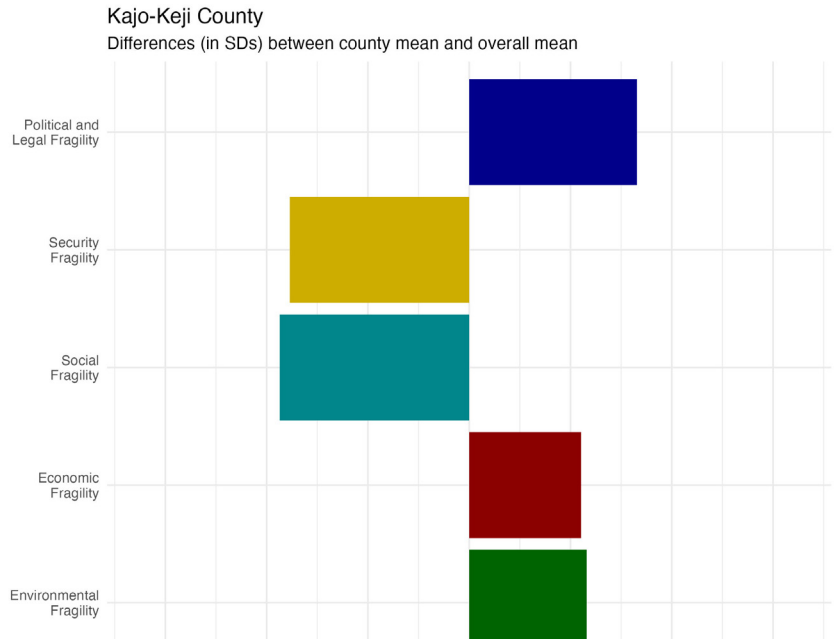
85. *Human Rights Watch, "'This Old Man Can Feed Us, You Will Marry Him': Child and Forced Marriage in South Sudan," (Mar. 7, 2013), https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/03/07/old-man-can-feed-us-you-will-marry-him/child-and-forced-marriage-south-sudan.*

4. **Direct Provision of Assistance Combined with Economic Diversification:** Progress through peacebuilding programming could be jeopardized given the high levels of security fragility and economic fragility, exacerbated by high environmental fragility. In parallel of peacebuilding activities, and considering the dire economic situation characterized by limited affordability and the inability to meet basic needs, direct assistance, including food or cash provision, should be provided to address immediate needs. Simultaneously, medium to long-term strategies should focus on diversifying economic activities through cash-for-work modalities.

5. **WASH Interventions:** To address the limited access to water in Bor County, it is recommended to promote sustainable Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) interventions aimed at repairing existing non-functioning infrastructure and establishing new infrastructure to improve water access and management in the community. Given the reported increase in floodings, changes in the timing of rains, and drought in the surveyed communities, creating climate-resilient communities which can effectively prevent, mitigate and address climate-related challenges, should be prioritized. These interventions might support mitigating conflict over access to water and between nomadic pastoralists and sedentary farmers which might increase over time considering the increasing impact of natural hazards in the county.

*Communities repair broken dike to stop flood waters from entering residential areas in Bor © IOM South Sudan/ Peter CATON*

# KAJO-KEJI COUNTY PROFILE




**232,657**
Estimated Total population

**21,653**
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

**53,109**
Returnees

## Key Findings

- Kajo-Keji presents the highest levels of political fragility as well as high levels of economic and environmental fragility.
- Highest political fragility, linked to fear of violence for expressing political views. Lowest level of support for women in leadership roles.
- Lowest security fragility, however lowest levels of trust towards army and police and presence of non-state armed actors.
- Lowest social fragility relative to other counties, however, Kajo-Keji has the highest percentage of respondents feeling discriminated against when accessing livelihood opportunities), high acceptance of GBV, and a very poor relationship between the community and nomadic pastoralists.
- High economic fragility, characterized by significantly lower average monthly incomes, limited income sources, and the majority of respondents struggling to meet basic needs.
- High environmental fragility, concerns over illegal logging and uncontrolled burning of grasses.

## Background

Kajo-Keji County is located in Central Equatoria State and shares a southern border with Uganda. The major ethnic group is the Kuku. The population relies primarily on subsistence and livestock farming.[86]

Prior to the outbreak of the second wave of conflicts in 2016, Kajo-Keji County was perhaps the most peaceful, thriving county relative to Yei, Wau, and Bor. The county historically attracted a diverse population due to its favorable climate and proximity to cross-border trade and migration routes with Uganda.[87] However, after the outbreak of conflict in July 2016, Kajo-Keji became one of the epicenters of fighting between the government and armed opposition groups.[88] Both government and opposition forces committed widespread human rights violations against civilians.[89] This conflict was triggered by several factors, including disagreements among local political elites and communities over land rights and the demarcation of the border with Uganda.[90] This conflict caused significant harm and insecurity, resulting in thousands of people fleeing their homes to live in camps for IDPs or in refugee camps in Uganda.[91]

Since the signing of the 2018 peace agreement, approximately 50,000 IDPs and refugees have returned to Kajo-Keji, but more than 21,000 are still displaced. Many families are separated across the border both involuntarily and voluntarily as a strategy to distribute risks and benefits. Some returnees from Uganda have left some or all of their immediate family in Uganda due to lack of confidence in the long-term security of Keji-Keji and send remittances across the border.[92]

Despite an overall improvement in security in the county, the area still sees periodic outbreaks of violence involving armed cattle herders,[93] other organized armed groups, and state security forces. There are also concerns about tightening restrictions on political participation, association, and speech.[94]

## Political and Legal Fragility

Kajo-Keji presents the highest levels of political fragility. Most of respondents in Kajo-Keji fear political violence, only 12 per cent of respondents would feel comfortable participating in a peaceful protest about a political issue (compared to 37 per cent average), and it is the county where respondents are the least comfortable expressing political opinions on a social media platform (13 per cent compared to 37 per cent average).

Although not the lowest across counties, trust towards the government is low: 46 per cent of respondents expressed lack of confidence in state government institutions and 50 per cent lacked trust in the national government; Delivery of services and ease of obtaining assistance from national and state governmental authorities is ranked below average. Local government is better perceived among respondents, but remains moderate, with 60 per cent of respondents having some confidence towards this institution.

Intention to vote in the next elections is the lowest across counties (14 per cent of respondents do not intend to vote) which could be linked to concerns about the safety of the voting process, or the risks associated with expressing political views generally. Twenty-two per cent of respondents do not consider the government to be capable of holding free and fair elections and an additional 31 per cent of respondents refused to answer the question. Despite this, most respondents believe that the next national elections, if held, are likely to have a positive effect on the stability of South Sudan 68 per cent.

Kajo-Keji has the lowest support for women in politics. A total of 23 per cent of respondents do not believe that women and men are equally capable of serving in leadership positions in the government (compared to 13 per cent on average). Similarly, 14 per cent believe that the 35 per cent quota for women in politics is either too high or that there should be no quota compared with the average of 7 per cent.

86. *Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, "County Profile: Kajo-Keji," https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county-profiles/.*
87. *Id.*
88. *Id.*
89. *Human Rights Watch, "Soldiers Assume We Are Rebels": Escalating Violence and Abuses in South Sudan's Equatorias" (Aug. 1, 2017), https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/08/01/soldiers-assume-we-are-rebels/escalating-violence-and-abuses-south-sudans.*
90. *Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, "County Profile: Kajo-Keji," https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county-profiles/.*
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93. *Sudan Tribune, "Civil society activist condemns killings in Kajo-Keji county" (Feb. 4, 2023), https://sudantribune.com/article270410/.*
94. *Jenifer James, "SPLM IO members root for more vibrant political space," The City Review (Jul. 12, 2013), https://cityreviewss.com/splm-io-members-root-for-more-vibrant-political-space/ (quoting an SPLM-IO representative as saying, "In Kajo Keji here people are having a spirit of fear because of the political situation that was not allowing them to come out openly today and practice their rights).*

## Security Fragility

Kajo-Keji presents moderate levels of security fragility. A total of 77 per cent of respondents consider that they live in a secure and safe community, and 65 per cent of respondents consider that the security situation has improved compared to last year.

However, these findings need to be read with caution as Kajo-Keji County grapples with persistent security challenges. The leading security concern is the potential for armed conflict (3.57 from a scale of 5), and 80 per cent of respondents report that non-state armed groups have threatened the community's security in the previous 12 months. Importantly, respondents in Kajo-Keji have the most negative views of the Army and police on almost every dimension-delivery of services, trust, and ease of obtaining assistance. Of particular concern, 57 per cent of respondents viewed the Army as currently contributing to insecurity even more than armed groups (40 per cent).

When it comes to publicly speaking about the previous conflict, Kajo-Keji County exhibits the second-highest level (53 per cent of respondents, compared to the 45 per cent average). Civil-civil dialogues are the preferred transitional justice mechanism, with 83 per cent of respondents expressing support. Ongoing civil-civil dialogues in the county might have contributed to this positive perception. This mechanism is followed by confessions by perpetrators (45 per cent) and rehabilitation programmes for perpetrators (41 per cent). Regarding the actors perceived as crucial for involvement in peacebuilding efforts, religious leaders (96 per cent), community leaders (83 per cent), and community members (75 per cent) are identified as the most important stakeholders.

## Social Fragility

Kajo-Keji presents the lowest levels of social fragility, with the highest percentage of people feeling discriminated against when accessing livelihood opportunities (almost 50 per cent of respondents compared with an average of 27 per cent). Of respondents who reported experiencing discrimination, 71 per cent are returnees. Tensions between host community and returnees seem to be driven by competition over access to livelihoods only, as most of respondents consider the relationship between host community and returnees as "good" (50 per cent), and it might be related to the already depleted economic situation in the area (Kajo-Keji scores the highest in economic fragility), where host community and returnees see each other as "competitors" when accessing limited economic opportunities.

A total of 32 per cent of respondents agreed with the statement that "someone from an ethnic group that is different from the majority of the community would have trouble fitting in." Only 50 per cent would feel comfortable living next to someone who is an outsider to the community.

Social fragility is also reflected in gender inequality and attitudes toward GBV. The percentage of respondents who believe that GBV is always acceptable (16 per cent) is the same as the average for all counties, but a higher-than-average percentage believe that GBV is acceptable within a marital relationship (30 per cent compared with the average of 11 per cent). Although most respondents 73 per cent believe that child marriage is never acceptable, 14 per cent believe that it is acceptable to gain money or cows for bride price, and only 50 per cent of respondents consider that women should not be allowed to own land independently of their husband or other male relatives.

## Economic Fragility

Kajo-Keji County faces high levels of economic fragility, marked by a notable disparity in average monthly income compared to other counties, with an average income of 6,485 SSP, significantly lower than the county average of 11,920 SSP. The primary sources of income for respondents in Kajo-Keji include occasional daily labor (46 per cent) and agriculture, livestock, or fishing (44 per cent), with 65 per cent relying on subsistence farming as their main source. Notably, there are limited alternative sources of income reported, highlighting the challenges in income generation within the county.

A substantial 66 per cent of respondents in Kajo-Keji struggle to meet their basic needs, surpassing the county average of 39 per cent. Furthermore, the purchasing power of respondents is severely constrained, with 81 per cent indicating insufficient funds for food, compared to the average of 74 per cent.

## Environmental Fragility

Kajo-Keji County exhibits high levels of environmental fragility, characterized by various challenges related to natural resources and climate. Among the most commonly reported incidents are the uncontrolled burning of grass, experienced by 33 per cent of respondents in the past two years, and illegal logging, reported by 25 per cent of respondents. Additionally, drought is a significant concern, affecting 18 per cent of the population.

This environmental fragility is closely linked to changing land use perceptions within the county, with a significant 77 per cent of respondents indicating that land use is evolving, compared to the average of 54 per cent. The primary attributed cause of this change is the expansion of farming areas. Furthermore, 60 per cent of respondents believe that excessive grazing is causing damage to grasslands. The impact of climate change is evident, as 95 per cent of respondents agree that the timing of seasonal rains has shifted, surpassing the average of 79 per cent. Additionally, 60 per cent of respondents note an increasing frequency of water shortages during the dry season.

Concerning access to water, 31 per cent of respondents find water in their communities insufficient, while an additional 45 per cent report it as seasonally accessible. An alarming 66 per cent of respondents state that water sources are inaccessible for all households in their communities, primarily due to distance (44 per cent), but also due to water scarcity (25 per cent) and water quality concerns (21 per cent). Notably, Kajo-Keji County stands alone in reporting significant water quality issues among the surveyed counties.

## Implications for Peacebuilding Programming

1. **Addressing Fears of Political Violence:** Due to the high levels of political fragility in Kajo-Keji linked to fears of violence towards political participation, civic education and dialogue initiatives that focus on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, and the peaceful resolution of political disputes should be encouraged. Political stakeholders need to continue to be included in peacebuilding efforts to support the trust-building of these actors among community members. Forums such as community policing meetings should be capitalized on to discuss how to create a safer environment around the electoral process at the community level. The establishment of community-led monitoring systems to report violations and abuses related to political violence could also be envisioned.

2. **Security Sector Reform:** Due to the negative perception of the Army and police among community members in Kajo-Keji, it is important to advocate for and support security sector reform efforts to enhance the professionalism and accountability of security forces. This may include training on human rights standards and principles of non-violence. Security actors need to be involved in peacebuilding processes to foster trust across groups.

3. **Transitional Justice:** Despite the tense security situation and army mistrust, the openness to speak about the last conflict among respondents (the highest across counties) is seen as a room of opportunity. Civil-civil dialogues garner broader support but also other initiatives such as confessions by perpetrators and civil-military dialogues accepted by respondents, and could help reduce army and police mistrust. These efforts should be led by religious leaders and community leaders as they are seen as the most trusted actors.

4. **Local Peacebuilding Capacities**: Thus, strengthening local peacebuilding capacities by working with local civil society organizations and community leaders, by building skills in conflict resolution, peace advocacy, and violence prevention should be encouraged.

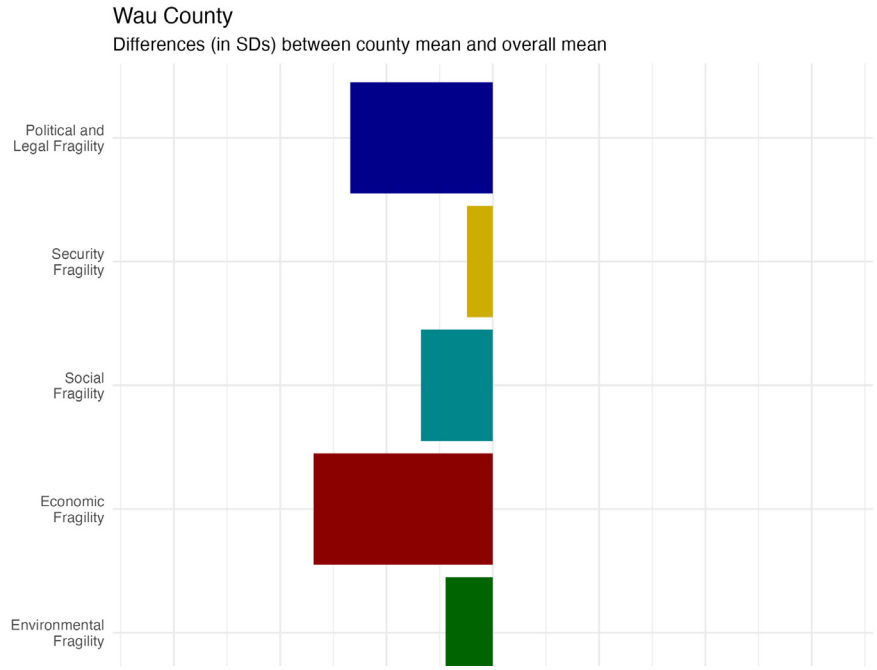
5. **Innovative attitude and behavior-change approaches to GBV:** Kajo-Keji presents the lowest acceptance of women in politics, high levels of acceptance of GBV, and gender-biased views on land ownership. These findings highlight deeply ingrained social and gender norms that influence various aspects of society. To address these issues effectively, it is crucial to implement innovative attitude and behavior-change approaches that foster genuine shifts in gender, masculinity, and violence norms. Building trust among community members and leaders is paramount in achieving this transformation.

6. **Direct Assistance Combined with Targeted Economic Recovery Interventions Seeking Economic Diversification**: Given the county's highest levels of economic fragility and in light of the dire economic situation, direct assistance should also be provided to address immediate needs and alleviate

financial hardship. Moreover, to address the prevalent discrimination faced by returnees when seeking livelihood opportunities, it is crucial to implement targeted interventions. One effective strategy is the implementation of quotas for returnees in economic reactivation activities, especially considering the expected increase in the number of returnees in the area. Addressing this discrimination is paramount to prevent potential community tensions. As observed in the context of social fragility, returnees often feel discriminated against when seeking access to livelihood opportunities in the area. To mitigate potential tensions, job creation initiatives must be prioritized, extending beyond farming to create a more comprehensive and sustainable approach to economic development. Economic recovery activities should also focus on diversifying sources of income, as the county is currently heavily reliant on farming or occasional casual labor. This diversification is particularly crucial due to the county's high levels of environmental fragility, exacerbated by uncontrolled land clearing for agricultural purposes.

*Beneficiary supported by crop and livelihood assistance in Kajo Keji under the RSRTF project © IOM South Sudan/ Bombe JOSEPH*

# WAU COUNTY PROFILE




**320,144**
Estimated Total population

**26,390**
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

**178,302**
Returnees

## Key Findings

- Overall, Wau presents moderate levels of fragility across the five dimensions.
- Lowest levels of political fragility linked to higher-than-average levels of trust, confidence, and ease in obtaining assistance from government authorities.
- Moderate levels of security fragility: A total of 97 per cent of respondents feel secure in their communities, and 81 per cent believe security has improved compared to last year; furthermore, formal conflict resolution actors are engaged in dispute resolution more regularly in Wau than in the other counties.
- Low levels of social fragility: High levels of acceptance across population groups, low feelings of discrimination, significant community organization involvement, and lowest acceptance of GBV and child marriage.
- Low levels of economic fragility, with the highest levels of respondents able to cater for their basic needs, and a notable presence of formal employment.
- Low levels of environmental fragility, although Wau grapples with water access issues, water-related hazards, land degradation, wildlife changes, and tension between pastoralists and farmers.

## Background

Wau is located in Western Bahr el Ghazal State. Wau has greater religious and linguistic diversity than other counties in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State due, in part, to its history as a major hub for education,[95] essential services like healthcare, and domestic and cross-border trade with Sudan and Uganda in commodities including sugar, salt, clothing, oil, and flour.[96]

Wau Town, which was previously the capital of Wau County, is still home to many important government institutions and services. The government's decision to move the county capital from Wau Town to Bagari in 2012 was controversial and is believed to have fueled tensions that eventually led to violence in 2016.[97]

Several sites for Protection of Civilians (PoC) were established in Wau after local clashes resulted in the internal displacement of approximately 70,000 people in 2016,[98] and another 22,000-25,000 people in 2017.[99] However, since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCISS) in August 2018, the security situation in Wau has improved-although there are still occasional incidents of violent crimes.[100]

## Political and Legal Fragility

Wau exhibits relatively low levels of political fragility, which can be attributed to higher-than-average levels of trust, confidence, and ease of obtaining assistance from government authorities.

In terms of confidence in government authorities, 5 per cent of respondents expressed no confidence in local authorities (compared to the average of 16 per cent), 6 per cent in state authorities (compared to the average of 20 per cent), and 15 per cent in national authorities (compared to the average of 28 per cent). This suggests a relatively positive perception of government authorities in Wau County.

Respondents in Wau exhibited higher trust levels in all government authorities-local, state, and national-compared to the survey average, with ratings for local government at 4.6 (compared to the average of 4.2), state government at 4.7 (compared to the average of 4.0), and national government at 4.6 (compared to the average of 3.9). Additionally, respondents found it easier to obtain assistance from these authorities, with ratings for local government at 4.5 (compared to the average of 4.1), state government at 4.7 (compared to the average of 3.9), and national government at 4.7 (compared to the average of 3.7).

The urban nature of Wau, along with the presence of key government institutions in Wau Town, likely contributes to the relatively positive perception of government accessibility in the county. However, it is essential to note that despite these above-average scores, overall levels of confidence, trust, and ease of obtaining assistance from government authorities remain low. This could reflect the strength of the opposition in Wau, represented primarily by the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-in-Opposition (SPLM-IO), and recurring conflicts between the opposition and government forces. In May 2023, SPLM-IO officials accused the government's police and other national security personnel of intimidation and interference with its efforts to register party members.[101]

Wau County also stands out for its strong support for women in politics. A total of 95 per cent of respondents believe that both men and women are equally capable of holding leadership positions in politics, and 97 per cent express support for the 35 per cent quota for women's representation across government institutions or would like to see it increased.

### Security Fragility

Wau presents moderate levels of security fragility across surveyed counties. A total of 97 per cent of respondents

95. *The University of Bahr El Ghazal. See Wagdy Sawahel, "Salary Dispute: Professors Call Off Strike for the Moment," University World News Africa Edition (Apr. 13, 2023), https://www.universityworldnews.com/post.php?story=20230411132505500*
96. *REACH, "Wau County: Food Security and Livelihood Profile - Western Bahr el Ghazal State, South Sudan, May-July 2017" (Jul. 31, 2017), https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/wau-county-food-security-and-livelihood-profile-western-bahr-el-ghazal-state.*
97. *Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, "County Profile: Wau," https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county-profiles-intro/.*
98. *UNMISS (2016), "Security Council Press Statement on Fighting in Wau, South Sudan," https://press.un.org/en/2016/sc12431.doc.htm.*
99. *REACH, "Wau County: Food Security and Livelihood Profile - Western Bahr el Ghazal State, South Sudan, May-July 2017" (Jul. 31, 2017), https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/wau-county-food-security-and-livelihood-profile-western-bahr-el-ghazal-state.*
100. *UNMISS (2022), "Wau neighborhood receives new police station funded by UNMISS," https://unmiss.unmissions.org/wau-neighbourhood-receives-new-police-station-funded-unmiss.*
101. *Alhadi Hawari, "Police-SPLM-IO Trade Blame Over Party Activities in Wau," Eye Radio (May 25, 2023), https://www.eyeradio.org/police-splm-io-trade-blames-over-party-activities-in-wau/.*

in Wau consider that they live in a secure community, and only 3 per cent consider their community unsafe (compared to 25 per cent on average). 45 per cent of respondents consider their community as very stable (compared to 19 per cent on average). Moreover, 81 per cent of respondents consider the security situation to have improved compared to last year, contributing to an overall feeling of safety in the community.

Formal conflict resolution actors, particularly police, seem to enjoy a better perception in Wau than in other counties. Although as in the other counties, the chief of the village would be the first actor to reach out to solve a dispute (37 per cent), followed by family and friends (25 per cent), a significantly higher percentage of respondents in Wau would seek help from the police (21 per cent, compared to 10 per cent on average) or the court (7 per cent, compared 2 per cent on average). In the hypothetical scenario in which an outsider steals cattle from the respondent's family, as many as 58 per cent of respondents in Wau answered that police would be the preferred actor from which to seek help. There were no significant gender differences between male and female responses in their preferences among these different actors.

When asked about discussing the last conflict publicly, the majority of respondents in Wau County (57 per cent) replied that it is better for people to speak publicly about what happened during the conflict, whereas 28 per cent preferred to avoid doing so (compared to 47 per cent on average). In terms of justice mechanisms necessary for long-term peace after conflict, Wau County respondents prioritized civil-civil dialogues (66 per cent), followed by confessions by perpetrators (47 per cent), then civil-military dialogues (35 per cent).

### Social Fragility

Wau exhibits low levels of social fragility relative to other counties. Among the respondents, 60 per cent express a strong sense of acceptance by the community, while 96 per cent believe that community members live together peacefully. In comparison, only 3 per cent of respondents feel they do not live in a peaceful community, which is significantly lower than the average of 7 per cent.

Feelings of discrimination when accessing services and livelihoods are noticeably lower in Wau. Only 7 per cent of respondents report experiencing discrimination when accessing services, as opposed to the average of 17 per cent. Similarly, the disparity in accessing livelihood opportunities is significantly lower, with only 10 per cent of respondents facing discrimination (compared to 27 per cent on average).

A remarkable aspect of Wau is the significant presence of community organizations among surveyed households, with 45 per cent of respondents having a family member involved in a community organization.

The results also indicate high levels of trust and a willingness to help neighbors in Wau. A total of 80 per cent of respondents express trust in their neighbors, while 75 per cent state people are willing to help their neighbors. Furthermore, the survey reveals that 76 per cent of respondents believe that community members treat each other with equal respect.

Acceptance of GBV proves to be lower than average in Wau, with 81 per cent of respondents stating that it is not acceptable under any circumstances (compared to 68 per cent on average). Similarly, 79 per cent of respondents express the view that child marriage is never acceptable (compared to 68 per cent on average).

Regarding relationships within the community, the findings display a positive outlook. The relationship between IDPs and host community members receive good or very good ratings from 79 per cent of respondents, the highest rating across all counties. Similarly, 83 per cent of respondents rate the relationship between returnees and host community members as good or very good. Moreover, 80 per cent of respondents express readiness to live alongside individuals from different ethnic groups, while 77 per cent feel that outsiders from the community are treated respectfully.

These results demonstrate a positive acceptance of diversity and a lack of discrimination based on displacement status or ethnic background within the community. This may be attributed to the urban setting, where the strong attachment to land is presumably less pronounced. Nevertheless, it is important to approach these findings with caution and to consider potential limitations. For instance, when examining the relationship between farmers and pastoralists, 57 per cent of respondents rate it as poor or very poor, which is higher than the average of 47 per cent. It is essential to recognize that the social landscape comprises multiple identity layers that may not have been fully captured in the survey.

## Economic Fragility

Wau presents low levels of economic fragility. Twelve per cent of respondents are not able to cater to their basic needs, compared to the survey average of 39 per cent. However, only 11 per cent report being able to fully cater to their needs, while the remaining 77 per cent can simply meet most or some of their needs.

Wau County also presents the highest levels of satisfaction with family financial situations, scoring 4.1 out of 10, compared to the survey average of 2.8. Similarly, it records the highest satisfaction with living standards, scoring 3.7 out of 10, compared to the survey average of 2.9.

Respondents in Wau County primarily derive their income from formal employment or business ownership, comprising 32 per cent of the total. This is notably higher than the average of 12 per cent across the surveyed counties. Subsistence farming, on the other hand, is the primary source of income for 21 per cent of respondents in Wau, compared to the average of 51 per cent across the counties. The urban setting of Wau likely contributes to a more diversified range of job opportunities. Nonetheless, there is still a reliance on casual labor (12 per cent) and petty businesses (9 per cent). Unemployment is stated as the main concern for respondents (3.7 out of 5).

## Environmental Fragility

Wau exhibits one of the lowest levels of environmental fragility among counties. However, issues related to water access and water-related hazards are prevalent. Despite better access to water reported in Wau, with 62 per cent of respondents indicating that all households in their community have access to water (compared to 53 per cent on average), only 25 per cent of households enjoy year-round access to water, with 26 per cent having access only seasonally. Furthermore, water-related hazards, including drought (experienced by 24 per cent of respondents in the past two years), pollution of water sources and rivers (20 per cent), and waterborne diseases affecting humans or livestock in the area (15 per cent), have been widespread in these communities.

In total, 64 per cent of respondents believe that the land is becoming less fertile every year, while 60 per cent have witnessed a reduction in forested land, and an additional 60 per cent agree that wildlife is undergoing changes in the area. Although subsistence farming is less common in Wau compared to other counties, it still serves as the primary source of income for 21 per cent of respondents.

Furthermore, 69 per cent of respondents express concerns that excessive grazing is causing damage to grasslands, which exceeds the average of 58 per cent, thereby reflecting the negative interactions between pastoralists and farmers highlighted in the social fragility findings.

Given the increasing number of natural hazards and the long-term impact of climate change, there is a potential for escalating tensions and conflicts related to land use among social groups.

### Implications for Peacebuilding Programming

1. **Readiness for Transitional Justice Mechanisms:** Given the overall feelings of safety and a higher willingness to discuss past conflicts in Wau, the county presents an opportune environment for transitional justice activities, integrated within a broader portfolio of peacebuilding efforts. The existing trust in formal political and security actors, including government at national, state, and local levels, as well as the police, suggests the potential for their direct and active involvement as stakeholders in the process, alongside community members, leaders, and civil society organizations (CSOs).

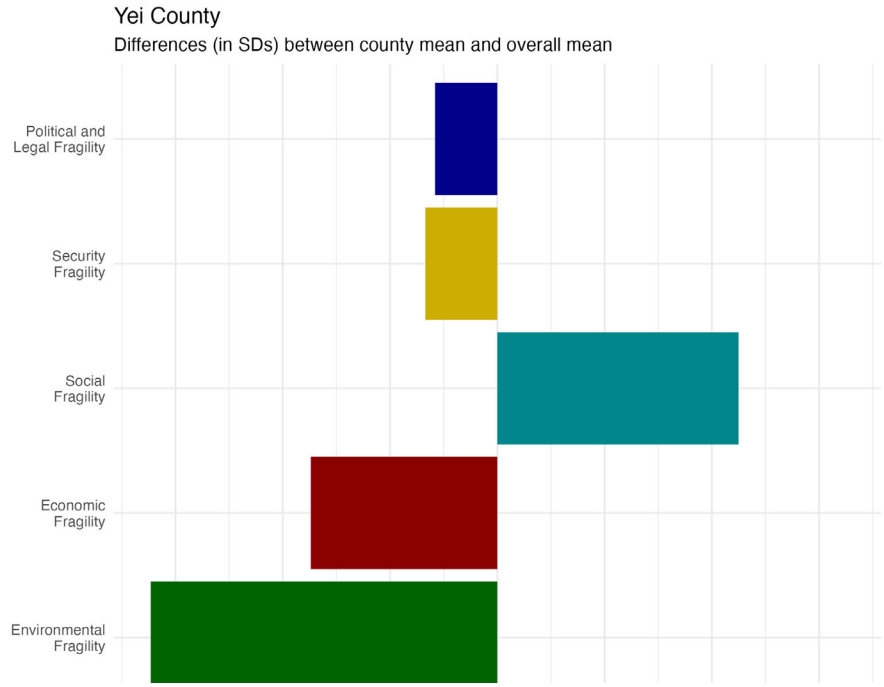
2. **Economic Stability for Sustainable Peace**: To support the peacebuilding interventions, economic interventions aimed at creating long-term, stable employment opportunities should be introduced. These interventions can help establish an enabling context for sustainable peace and reconciliation by promoting socio-economic stability in the county.

3. **Comprehensive Conflict Analysis:** While social fragility findings offer a positive outlook across displacement groups, it's essential to recognize potential limitations, as these findings may not capture existing grievances among other social groups. Therefore, conducting a comprehensive community-level conflict analysis before, during, and after programme implementation is recommended. Particular attention should be placed on existing tensions between pastoralists and farmers which might rise over time due to the increasing impact of climate change and natural hazards.

4. **Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction:** Recognizing the increasing frequency of natural disasters and the accelerating impacts of climate change, it is vital to acknowledge their potential to heighten tensions and conflicts over land and water use among different social and ethnic groups. These findings emphasize the intricate links between economic, social, and environmental vulnerabilities. Consequently, it is imperative to prioritize the development and implementation of a comprehensive DRR strategy across programmatic interventions. This proactive approach is essential for mitigating the risk of community tensions arising from these challenges and fostering resilience in the face of climate-related threats.

*Beneficiaries of IOM's cash-for-work programme to communities affected by conflict in Wau © IOM South Sudan/ Aleon VISUALS*

# YEI COUNTY PROFILE




**302,189**
Estimated Total population

**73,238**
Internally displaced persons (IDPs)

**83,844**
Returnees

## Key Findings

- Overall, Yei has the highest levels of social fragility; moderate levels of political and security fragility; and the lowest levels of economic and environmental fragility.
- Moderate levels of political fragility, with concerns regarding the delivery of services, ease of obtaining assistance, and the government's capacity to hold free and fair elections, despite strong intentions to vote and optimism about the impact of elections.
- Moderate security fragility: Most respondents feel that safety in their communities has improved but perceive non-formal armed groups and the Army as contributing to insecurity.
- Highest social fragility, marked by perceived poor relations between host community, IDPs and returnees, and tensions with pastoralists.
- Lowest levels of economic fragility, however 25 per cent of respondents struggle to meet basic needs and 73 per cent lack sufficient funds to purchase food. Subsistence farming dominates as the primary income source for 70 per cent of respondents, the highest across the four counties
- Lowest level of environmental fragility, linked to better access to water in the communities and less exposure to natural hazards as compared to the other surveyed counties.

## Background

Yei County is located in Central Equatoria State along South Sudan's southern border with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Uganda. There is a history of cross-border trade and migration between agrarian communities living in the three countries, whose populations also share ethnic ties.[102] The main ethnic groups residing in the county are Kakwa, Bari, Mundu, Avok'aya, Makaraka, Pajulu and Baka.[103] Yei has long been a flashpoint for ethnically-motivated violence by non-state armed groups as well as state security forces, resulting in harm to civilians. The SPLA (renamed the "South Sudan People's Defense Forces" in 2018[104] ) has repeatedly clashed in Yei with the National Salvation Front (NAS), a non-signatory rebel group that has also been accused of serious crimes against civilians, including extortion at checkpoints,[105] attacks on humanitarian convoys,[106] abductions,[107] and killings.[108] Other organized armed groups have also conducted attacks on civilians.[109]

Due to its proximity to the border with Uganda and the DRC, Yei serves as a significant hub for South Sudan's trade routes, and small businesses were thriving in Yei Town prior to the outbreak of conflict in 2016.[110] The main livelihoods in Yei are farming of coffee, beans, maize, sweet potatoes, and cassava.[111] Yei was historically known as a "bread basket" for Juba and surrounding areas, but the resumption of fighting in 2016 significantly disrupted agricultural livelihoods and food security.[112] Conflict limited access to land for farmers and hindered trade routes that were essential for small businesses to survive, forcing many people to flee their homes to neighboring Uganda.[113]

As conditions in IDP and refugee camps worsened and the security situation in South Sudan improved, displaced persons began to return to Yei. As of August 2022, approximately 83,844 people have returned. The top three reasons for returning home were: a reduction in aid in the areas of displacement, an improvement in livelihoods, and an improvement in the security situation.[114] High levels of displacement and subsequent returns have contributed to widespread land disputes,[115] as have other factors like tenure formalization policies, which were intended to clarify ownership but counter-productively fueled competition over land and other natural resources.[116]

Despite an overall improvement in stability since 2016, Yei continues to face security challenges including raids by armed cattle herders from other areas, who disrupt farming activities and are perceived as a threat to community safety.[117]

## Political and Legal Fragility

Yei presents moderate levels of political fragility. Respondents show moderate levels of confidence in government, Notably, 39 per cent have a lot of confidence in the state government, compared to the 25 per cent average. Similarly, 38 per cent of respondents express a lot of confidence in local government, compared to the 30 per cent average; and 36 per cent towards the national government, exceeding the 24 per cent average.

However, when it comes to the delivery of services, Yei County falls below the average ratings. The national government scores 3.9 out of 10, compared to the 4.2

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102. *Kate Meagher, "The Hidden Economy: Informal and Parallel Trade in Northwestern Uganda," Review of African Political Economy 17, no. 47 (1990): 64–83.*
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111. *UN Peacekeeping, "A tale of an empty bread basket in Yei, the once land of abundance" (Jan. 25, 2019), https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/tale-of-empty-bread-basket-yei-once- land-of-abundance.*
112. *Id.*
113. *Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, "County Profile: Yei," https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county¬¬¬_profile/yei/.*
114. *IOM DTM, "Return and Reintegration Survey in South Sudan's Former Breadbasket: Central Equatoria State: Kajo-Keji, Morobo, Lainya and Yei Counties," IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (Mar. 9, 2023): 11, https://dtm.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-return-and-reintegration-survey-south-sudans-former-breadbasket*
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average, while the state government scores 4.0, below the 4.3 average. The lowest rating relative to the average is for local government, with 4.1 compared to the 4.6 cross-county average. Additionally, for ease of obtaining assistance, Yei County lags behind the average, with 3.2 compared to the 3.7 average for the national government, and 3.6 compared to the 3.9 average for the state government.

Despite relatively positive views of local authorities, support for decentralization is low, with 19 per cent of respondents believing that state affairs should be managed by the national government, compared to the 13 per cent average.

When it comes to elections, Yei stands out as the county where most respondents lack confidence in the government of South Sudan's ability to hold free and fair elections, with 25 per cent expressing doubt, despite 88 per cent of respondents planning to vote in the next elections. Moreover, it is the county where the highest percentage of respondents(72 per cent) believe that holding elections will have a positive effect on the country, surpassing the average (66 per cent). Nearly half of respondents(49 per cent) do not feel comfortable expressing political opinions on social media, and 49 per cent would not feel safe attending a peaceful political protest, indicating a degree of apprehension regarding political expression and assembly.

Support for women in political leadership roles is high at 83 per cent overall, but there is a notable percentage of respondents (17 per cent) who believe that women should not occupy these positions (compared to an average of 13 per cent).

## Security Fragility

Yei has moderate security fragility. Although most respondents (74 per cent) believe that they live in a safe community, and 68 per cent consider that the safety in their communities has improved compared to last year, respondents are concerned about crime in the area (41 per cent) and fear crime in their own home (51 per cent).

A significant majority of respondents (79 per cent) view armed groups as contributing to insecurity, and 44 per cent reported presence of these groups in their communities in the past 12 months. 38 per cent of respondents also considered the Army to be a source of insecurity. Trust in the Army (3.7 out of 10, compared to 4.0 on average) and in the police (4.0, compared to 4.2 in average) is the lowest across counties. However, fears of violent crimes (rated at 2.5 out of 5, compared to the average of 3) and armed conflict (rated at 2.6, versus the average of 3.2) are relatively low.

Since Yei has experienced periods of relative stability interrupted by extreme violence in the past, it is possible that respondents perceive the community as safe on a day-to-day basis but see the presence of formal and non-formal security actors as a potential source of outbreaks of violence.

A majority of respondents are supportive of both civil-civil (56 per cent) and civil-military dialogue (69 per cent) mechanisms that seek to build trust between different social groups and between civilians and the Army. High support for civil-military dialogue might reflect support for ongoing processes known to community members. However, nearly half of respondents (48 per cent) also believe that it is better to refrain from talking about the conflict, suggesting that some respondents may have concerns that such discussions can reopen old wounds and increase the risk of further conflict.

## Social Fragility

Yei has the highest social fragility relative to other counties. The host community's relationships with returnees and IDPs appear to be worse than average in Yei. A total of 19 per cent of respondents describe the relationship with returnees as poor or very poor, compared with an average of 8 per cent. A slightly lower percentage (16 per cent) describe the community's relationship with IDPs as poor or very poor, compared with the average of 7 per cent. The relationship with pastoralists is viewed even more negatively, with 42 per cent of respondents answering poor or very poor. Most likely, this reflects concerns about cattle raiding.

Yei respondents are most likely to disagree with the statement "people around here are willing to help their neighbors" by a significant margin (24 per cent compared with an average of 11 per cent). Yei respondents are also the most likely to disagree with the statements that "people around here can be trusted" (30 per cent compared with an average of 12 per cent for all counties), "people treat all others in the community with equal respect" (21 per cent compared with an average of 11 per cent), "I would be willing to live next to a person of a different ethnic group" (24 per cent compared with an average of 13 per cent), and "I would feel comfortable living next to a person who is an outsider to the community" (21 per cent compared with an average of 14 per cent).

## Economic Fragility

Yei County exhibits the lowest levels of economic fragility. While this level is lower than the average, it's noteworthy that 25 per cent of respondents still cannot meet their basic needs (compared to the average of 39 per cent). Additionally, 73 per cent of respondents report not having enough money to purchase food.

In Yei County, subsistence farming is the primary source of income for 70 per cent of respondents, which is higher than the cross-county average of 51 per cent. Remarkably, only 5 per cent of respondents engage in commercial farming. Crop diseases are identified as the main problem affecting food crop production, with 48 per cent of respondents citing this issue.

## Environmental Fragility

Yei presents the lowest levels of environmental fragility, linked to better access to water and less exposure to natural hazards. A substantial 51 per cent of respondents describe water accessibility in their community as consistent throughout the year, surpassing the average of 26 per cent. Furthermore, when water is accessible, it is available to all households in the community, according to 66 per cent of respondents.

Yei County has been less exposed to natural hazards in the past two years compared to other counties. The main incident reported is river or water source pollution (36 per cent), followed by uncontrolled burning of grass (17 per cent). However, it's important to note that 17 per cent of respondents also reported conflicts related to access to water, which is high compared to other counties. This might be linked to the existing tension among pastoralists and members of the community, described in the social fragility section.

## Implications for Peacebuilding Programming

1. **Strengthening Social Cohesion:** Strengthening social cohesion among host communities, IDPs, and returnees is of paramount importance in Yei, given its status as the area with the highest levels of social fragility and a growing influx of returnees. As returns are expected to continue increasing, it is critical to address this issue comprehensively in all interventions in a cross-cutting manner.

2. **Enhancing Social Cohesion via Community-Led Planning and Prioritized Infrastructure Initiatives:** Engaging in consultations that include community members, returnees, and IDPs to deliberate on the rehabilitation priorities for light infrastructure within the community offers an opportunity to strengthen social cohesion. These discussions foster a sense of shared ownership over the projects, involving and benefiting all segments of the population.

3. **Seed Grants for Economic Diversification and Promotion of SMEs**: Given the moderate levels of economic fragility in Yei, there is a valuable opportunity to initiate economic recovery efforts through the provision of seed grants. These grants can be directed towards supporting the establishment of small enterprises, aiming to diversify the local economy beyond traditional farming activities. These grants are to target IDPs, returnees, as well as members of the host community and encourage joint entrepreneurship to foster social cohesion.

4. **Continuing Peacebuilding Initiatives**: Peacebuilding efforts in the area, which is currently perceived as relatively safe and stable but still hosts numerous state and non-state armed forces, should be reinforced to sustain the gains achieved. It is crucial to ensure the continued engagement of all non-formal and security actors in the peace process. Most of the respondents express support for ongoing civil-civil and civil-military dialogue mechanisms, underscoring the importance of maintaining and strengthening these initiatives. By promoting inclusivity and cooperation among various stakeholders, the region can consolidate its progress towards lasting peace and stability.

5. **Promote the Establishment of Intercommunal Mechanisms to Manage Access to Water Resources:** To mitigate conflicts between host communities and pastoralists over water access in Yei County, it is imperative to promote the establishment of intercommunal mechanisms. These mechanisms should be designed to facilitate the effective and equitable management of water resources by various community groups. By fostering cooperation and shared responsibility, such mechanisms can not only address immediate access issues but also promote long-term peace and sustainable water management practices, thereby contributing to the overall well-being of the region.

# WAY FORWARD

In navigating the complex landscape of multidimensional fragility in South Sudan, this study has offered valuable insights that support the design and implementation of peacebuilding interventions in the country

1. **Localized Approach:** There is no one-size-fits-all solution to multidimensional fragility challenges. The survey findings reveal significant variation in fragility levels across the four counties, highlighting the need for a localized approach. Peacebuilding and development interventions under the HDPN approach must be tailored to the unique challenges faced by each community. Assessments such as this one are an important tool for accurately assessing the needs and concerns of individual communities as well as differences between communities.

2. **Integrated Approach:** In addition to variation in fragility levels between the four counties, the survey also reveals important variation within communities in the severity of the five dimensions of fragility: political/legal, social, security, economic, and environmental. These dimensions are closely related in South Sudan and require an integrated and holistic approach.

3. **Balancing Short- and Long-Term Interventions:** The survey findings indicate the necessity for a balanced combination of short- and long-term interventions. While immediate humanitarian needs must be met, efforts should also focus on the long-term need to strengthen the legitimacy and capacity of South Sudan's government and reduce its dependency on external aid. This requires a strategic shift towards initiatives that empower local communities, enhance self-sufficiency, and promote economic growth.

4. **Peacebuilding and Development Are Both Critical Components of South Sudan's Efforts to Achieve Lasting Stability and Prosperity in a Context of Multidimensional Fragility:** These objectives are interlinked and mutually reinforcing, and both require sustained commitment, resources, and close collaboration between the government, civil society, and international partners in order to succeed.

5. **Need for Further Research Building on this Baseline Pilot Survey:** This study is a first step toward measuring and understanding multidimensional fragility in South Sudan. Like any baseline survey, it has limitations and can only provide a snapshot of fragility at this particular moment in time. Follow-up surveys in the same four counties would provide insight into whether and how patterns of fragility change over time, and would enable more rigorous analysis of correlations between different dimensions of fragility. The questionnaire developed for this study could easily be implemented in other counties and adapted to other countries affected by fragility.

## IOM SOUTH SUDAN

https://southsudan.iom.int

isspsu@iom.int

New Industrial Area,
Northern Bari,
Juba, South Sudan

facebook: iomsouthsudan

Twitter: @IOMSouthSudan



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