
Right to food in South Sudan

Daughters of Mary Help of Christians

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On February 20, 2017, the United Nations gave the alarm for the state of the serious food crisis involving the countries of the Horn of Africa, among which is *South Sudan*.

In fact it is almost three years since combat began again in December of 2011, that the food crisis in South Sudan continues to worsen and is now reaching unprecedented levels.

Almost 5 million people are in urgent need of food and nutritional assistance. 2.8 million people live in extreme need; 400 thousand are on the edge of misery, and more *than a million children under five years of age suffer grave malnutrition*. It deals with one of the most serious famines ever to hit the African continent.

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Pope Francis said, *"The sad news that reaches us from South Africa arouses particular apprehension, where, to a fratricidal conflict, is added a serious food crisis that condemns millions of people to starve to death, among whom are many children."* He added, *"At this moment more than ever, everyone's commitment is needed to avoid stopping only at declarations, but to give concrete help in food and to allow it to reach the suffering populations. May the Lord sustain these our brothers and sisters and all who work to help them"*.

THE ALIMENTARY CRISIS IN SOUTH SUDAN

As was foreseen by the United Nations in April 2016, the number of people who suffer alimentary insecurity has reached its height after a season of lean harvests, when the availability of food is lowest and the persistent drought only makes the situation more acute.

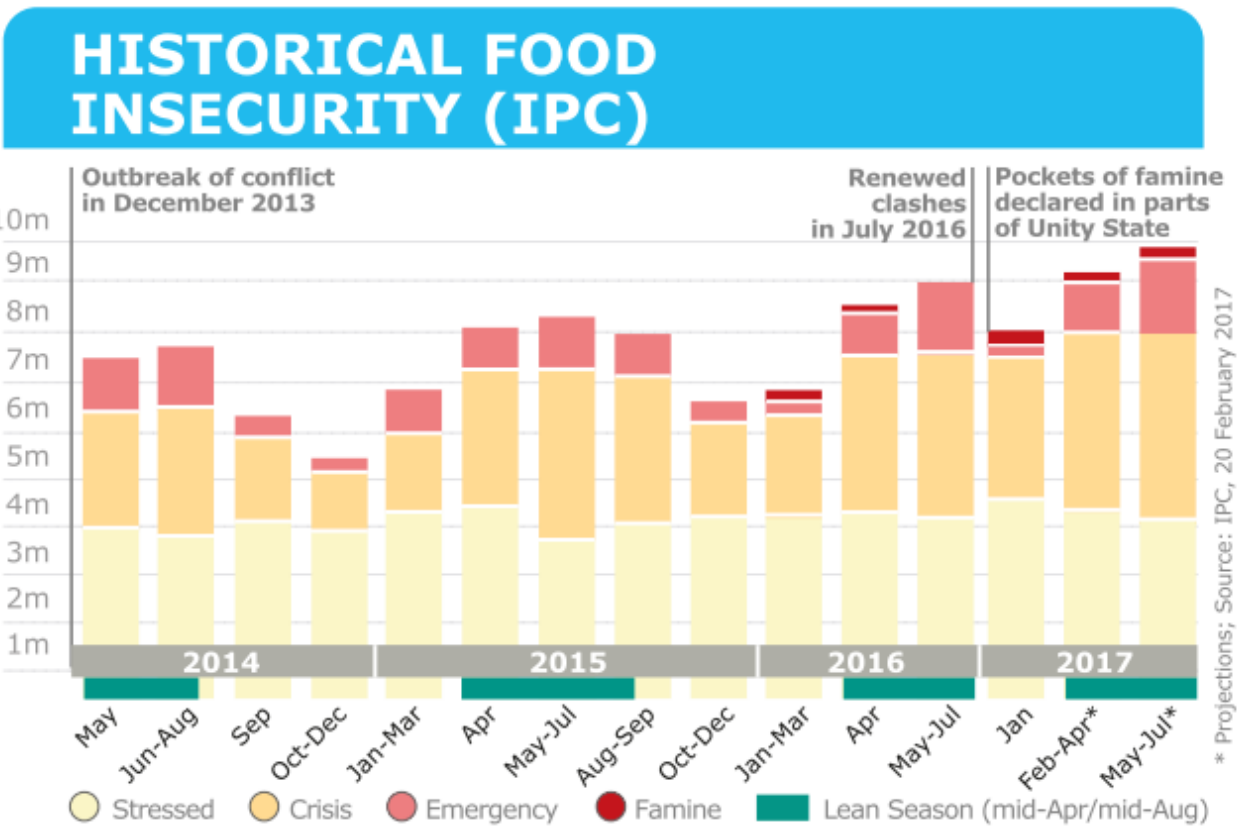
The actual food crisis is the fruit of many factors: drought, a collapsing economy, but above all, the civil war that broke out in December of 2013 and ended in 2016 with the actualization of an fragile peace agreement, that is practically only on paper. There is the risk that this situation can lead to an ever more uncontrolled violence.

People have been forced to abandon the fields and herds, the primary sources of their sustenance. The cost of food has risen to the stars. In the face of the hunger and the repeated episodes of violence, many people have abandoned their villages.

The evacuees in Unity State struck by the conflict who, in order to survive eat fish and waterlilies, and with the receding water level, are exhausting the only sources of food that remain. Animal theft has deprived many people of animal products like milk.

The families are doing all they can to survive but they are running out of options. They have no means or possibilities for facing this catastrophe. Many areas where there is need are very difficult to reach because of safety concerns.

The ones most at risk are those who live in the conflict zones and the evacuees. In these areas, the rate of acute malnutrition among the children is over 30%, that is, more than twice the level by which a state of food emergency is officially declared. (Unicef sources)



THE REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN

The Republic of South Sudan became independent of the Sudan Federation on July 9, 2011. Its capital is Juba. It has a population of about 8 million people. More than 50.6% of the population in South Sudan actually lives on less than two dollars a day.

The conflict that broke out in Juba on December 15, 2013 worsened an already difficult humanitarian situation.

Even if South Sudan has many resources, beyond some enclaves of petroleum, it remains a relatively little developed country and is characterized by a subsistence economy. It is the most dependent country on petroleum in the world and represents 60% of its gross internal production. The drop in petroleum prices at the beginning of 2016 has aggravated the economic difficulties of the country even more.

The GDP per capita in 2014 was 1.11 dollars. 85% of the active population is involved in unsalaried work, above all in farming (78%). Since the end of 2014, it is estimated that the present conflict has cost up to 15% of the GDP. Military spending has increased, jeopardizing the availability of resources to furnish services and costs for the infrastructure that are so necessary.

The Southern Sudanese are poor (55% in the rural areas and 24% in the cities). The indicators of instruction and of sanitation are among the lowest in the world and reflect the impact of the lengthy conflict and the limited supply of social services. Even when the harvests are good, 20% of the population suffers food insecurity and needs emergency assistance. All the social sectors are faced with the same kinds of challenges.

The country is very young, with two thirds of the population under the age of 30 years. Almost 83% of the South Sudanese resided in rural areas before the recent conflict broke out that has displaced 3 million people.

Only 27% of the population 15 years old and above are literate, with a noteworthy disparity of gender: the rate of male literacy is 40% in comparison to 16% of the females; less than half of the children of primary school age attend school (51% of boys and 27% of girls).

The rate of infant mortality is 105 for every 1,000 live births. The rate of maternal mortality is 2.054 per every 100,000 births. Only 17% of the children are immunized. In a country with one of the highest rates of maternal mortality, there is only one qualified obstetrician for every 30,000 persons.

Only 55% of the population has access to sources of drinkable water. About 38% of the population must walk more than 30 minutes to find drinkable water; about 80% of the South Sudanese population has no access to any hygienic services.

The most difficult challenge continues to be life expectancy.

South Sudan is seriously lacking infrastructure and has some of the worst indicators for human development in the whole world. Harmful social and cultural practices for women aggravate the effects of the conflict and of marginalization. There are constant threats to internal and external security.

South Sudan is a poor region, in spite of its abundant natural resources, and this is due in great part to the prolonged conflict. Decades of marginalization and civil war have made South Sudan one of the most underdeveloped countries of the world. In the seven years of independence, the young African Country has not yet succeeded in leaving behind extreme poverty and the tribal tensions that have led to various attempts at coups and a kind of permanent civil war.

Here, the Christians are persecuted and discriminated against. This is a rule and not the exception. The Minister of Religious Affairs, Shalil Abdullah, has stopped the construction of new churches affirming that a reduction in the number of faithful is taking place. His reasoning is that the few faithful do not need new churches.

However, things are not exactly like this. Since South Sudan, with a very large Christian majority, was declared independent, all the foreign Christians were expelled from Sudan where 70% of the population is Muslim. Many churches were destroyed with the excuse that they had to move from Khartoum to Juba.

Independence caused hundreds of thousands of deaths, evacuees, violence of every kind, and the destruction of practically everything.

War crimes and those against humanity based on ethnic origin and on presumed political affiliation of the victims has provoked the flight from their homes of a million people and has dragged the youngest country of the international community to the edge of a humanitarian disaster.

FMA PRESENCE IN SOUTH SUDAN

The presences of community of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (FMA) in the new state of South Sudan are 3: **Tonj**, **Wau** and **Gumbo-Juba**.

their mission has developed rapidly in these recent years. "We work in synergy and we breathe a climate of great unity and solidarity; we feel we are part of these people; we work for them and with them. What unites all of us are poverty, misery, and suffering".



The war between the north and the south has destroyed the schools that have become heaps of rubble for over thirty years. Thirty years without schools have left huge cultural gaps.

Hostility and the various gun battles between opposing factions continue to create anxiety and panic. The population flees in an uncontrolled way and to wherever they can.

The FMA are doing all that is possible to help the neediest and to accommodate many people. The people who are afraid pass the night in the classrooms of the mission and in the morning they return to their homes. It is easy to imagine the difficulties that come from this situation. Communication is hard; the curfew from seven in the evening to seven in the morning, food distribution, and humanitarian help remain problematic.

The FMA, together with the Salesians and the Sisters of Charity, have formed a Committee of Emergency Response (SER - Salesian Emergency Response). This method of operation seems to be the most efficacious and is allowing adequate cooperation for the most important relief operations in South Sudan.

Besides those who frequent our works, the FMA also take care of those who have been received in the nearby refugee camps where the greater part of the people are sick and without food. Their visits are also the occasion to encourage the refugees and witness to their closeness.

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians are present in South Sudan since 1983. They work for education, health, and the promotion of the woman at:

- GUMBO

It is a village near Juba, the capital. Before the referendum for independence, many people arrived from the area of Khartoum and from other places of Sudan. They were originally from this area, but about forty or fifty years ago, they left their land because of the war. Those repatriated from Khartoum have returned to this area without having a place to stay and have begun to build habitations of mud and grass.

Without work and without knowing English (they spoke Arabic in the North) thousands of persons have established themselves in Gumbo, among them are many women.

During the two years of peace, many women frequented the Promotion Center of the Salesian Sisters and began some economic activities which bettered their living conditions.

At present, there are also many families that arrived after the civil war that broke out in 2013.

At Gumbo, some women frequent the promotion center. They are in the camp of internally displaced people (IDP).

FMA ACTIVITY: nursery school, elementary school, youth activities, female promotion center, literacy courses, professional formation, and farming projects.

- WAU

The city of Wau is an urban center rich in cultural and linguistic diversity. Its inhabitants belong to the groups: Feeertit, Dinka, Luo and of Arabic ethnicity.

It is located about 650 kilometers west of Juba, the capital, and the largest city of the country.

Initially, Wau was a fortified base with a slave market. During the period of co-dominion, the city became an administrative center. During the second Sudanese

civil war, it was the see of the Sudanese armed forces garrison and was the scene of a long battle in the spring of 1998.

The war began again in the city in the spring of 2007, killing hundreds of people. The city is located along the road that unites North and the South Sudan. Many of the migrants that have returned to the North, stopped at Wau, thus notably increasing the population and the difficult situations.

FMA ACTIVITIES: two nursery schools, two elementary schools, youth activities, dispensary, maternity and obstetrics school, visits to the families, and parish animation.

- TONJ

The city of Tonj is in reality a rural village of South Sudan. The town was almost completely destroyed during the war, but now many people are returning to their land of origin from North Sudan. Of the 2 million South Sudanese residents in the North, about 320,000 have returned between October 2010 and July 2011. The town is re-populated and has become a rural city.

FMA ACTIVITIES: nursery school, elementary school, Center for Promotion of Women, literacy, professional formation, agricultural project for women from 6 different villages.

Direct beneficiaries of these activities are:

PLACE	ACTIVITY	No. BENEFICIARIES
GUMBO	Nursery School	225
	Elementary School	822
	Youth Activities	400
	Promotion of Women	150
WAU	2 Nursery Schools	288
	2 Elementary Schools	1786
	Youth Activities	150
	Dispensary	More than 150 daily
TONJ	Nursery School	132
	Elementary School	354
	Youth Activities	250
	Promotion of Women	260

THE RIGHT TO FOOD

The Daughters of Mary Help of Christians personally touch the food drama of every day. When they are not able to guarantee a meal for the children in their schools, the only one for many of them, they witness their wasting away; they see them fade away, and in not a few cases, faint in class because they have no strength. Many of them come a long way on foot to reach the school.

To be allowed to frequent school is the only opportunity for these children to build a future that we hope will be better. This is the reason we try to give them quality instruction, seeking better teachers, even though it is difficult to find those who are prepared in a country that for too long has been between wars and emergencies and because of this, there are no more scholastic structures able to prepare teachers.

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Objective

To combat hunger and guarantee the right to healthy and sufficient alimentation, we must offer the children who frequent the FMA schools one meal a day. But it is also urgent to help the poorest nuclear families, because the meal eaten at school is not enough; even the parents need strength to care for their family, especially in such a dramatic situation.

- ⇒ Furnish one meal a day for the more than 1,200 children of the four primary schools of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians.

The distribution of food will be effectuated on the school days, from Monday to Friday (two days rice and beans, two days polenta, one day lentils and rice).

- ⇒ Furnish the families with what is necessary for a month's requirements.

Description of the cost for alimentation

Total cost for meals for every primary school, including the costs for transportation, wood for cooking, and the stipend of the cooks for 1,200 (less than the reality, but to simplify the price list and be able to give a global and detailed idea).

- Gumbo – Juba “St. Vincent de Paul Primary school” - 600 children \$ 10.653
- Wau “Auxilium kindergarten and primary school” - 600 children \$ 11.653
- Wau “St. Joseph Kindergarten and Primary school” - 600 children \$ 11.653
- Tonj “Bakhita Kindergarten and Primary school” 300 - children \$ 6.327

TOTAL \$ 40,287

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- ⇒ **1 daily meal** for one child for the **whole scholastic year** **30 euro**
- ⇒ Guarantee the needs of **1 family** (5/6 persons) for **1 month** **80 euro**
- ⇒ Guarantee the needs of **1 family** (5/6 persons) for **3 months** **240 euro**
- ⇒ Guarantee the needs of **10 families** (5/6 persons) for **1 month** **800 euro**



Detailed Budget

	Single Price SSP	Amount per sack	Number of sacks per week for 600 children	Number of sacks for a month for 600 children	Costs for a month for 600 children in SSP	Exchange Rate \$ / SSP	Cost for a month for 600 children in USD	Total for 10 months (1 school year) for 600 children in \$	Total for 1 year of school for all 1200 children of the 4 schools
Sugar	1.600	50kg	1.00	4.00	6.400	35	182,86 \$	1.828,57 \$	6.400,00 \$
Beans	1.900	50kg	1.00	4.00	7.600	35	217,14 \$	2.171,43 \$	7.600,00 \$
Lentils	1.300	20 kg	1.00	4.00	5.200	35	148,57 \$	1.485,71 \$	5.200,00 \$
Rice	1.400	50kg	1.00	4.00	5.600	35	160,00 \$	1.600,00 \$	5.600,00 \$
Corn flour	1.100	50kg	0.33	1.33	1.467	35	41,90 \$	419,05 \$	1.466,67 \$
Oil	1.000	20L	0.50	2.00	2.000	35	57,14 \$	571,43 \$	2.000,00 \$
Salt	5	0,25 gr	1.00	4.00	20	35	0,57 \$	5,71 \$	20,00 \$
Cooks' salary	2				4.000	35	57,14 \$	571,43 \$	2.000,00 \$
Wood to burn					7.000	35	200,00 \$	2.000,00 \$	7.000,00 \$
Transport to Wau & Tonj									3.000,00 \$

39.287		1.065,33 \$	10.653,33 \$	40.286,67 \$
				36.243,70 €



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