

South Sudan Overview – Programming from CRS July 2021

Context

In South Sudan, government changes and social unrest have disrupted livelihoods and limited access to food and income. Most families are unable to pursue traditional livelihoods. Concurrently, many people who fled conflict are now returning home and food and water resources are being stretched even further. About 6.97 million people—60% of the country's population—is expected to face acute food insecurity, with at least 1.36 million people struggling to survive. The county of Pibor has been heavily effected, due to extremely limited accessibility and longstanding conflict. Most families in Pibor collect their water from contaminated swamps and streams.

In early 2020, at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government of South Sudan introduced strict public health measures to counter the spread of the virus. This included prohibiting large gatherings, closing recreational centers and clubs, and restricting public transportation to encourage physical distancing. The government also implemented a curfew and only allowed essential businesses to remain open under strict public health measures. In May, the government lifted the curfew and reopened nonessential businesses on the condition that they enforce physical distancing, face mask-wearing and hand-washing. Unfortunately, the early easing of health measures contributed to a rise in COVID-19 cases in South Sudan.

About Caritas Internationalis member Catholic Relief Services (CRS)

CRS, a U.S. member of Caritas Internationalis, has been a leading international humanitarian agency since 1943. We partner with local institutions and communities around the world to end poverty, disease, hunger and injustice. CRS is registered in South Sudan as an International Non-Governmental Organization and has operated in-country since the 1970s. CRS implements an integrated, multi-sectoral program portfolio of humanitarian and development assistance. CRS is among the largest International Non-Governmental Organizations in South Sudan and anticipates mobilizing over 89 million USD in Fiscal Year 2021 to assist at least 1.5 million people. In South Sudan, CRS has more than 800 staff, with its main office in Juba and 38 field locations across the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, Jonglei, Lakes, Eastern Equatoria, and Central Equatoria States.

Strategy and Approach

In South Sudan, Caritas Internationalis member CRS provides life-saving assistance to conflict and natural disaster-affected communities through crosscutting programming. When disaster strikes, In the spirit of the Caritas mission to support those in greatest need, CRS assists communities to meet their basic needs for food, water and shelter. To accelerate recovery, CRS supports agricultural production, natural resource regeneration, health and nutrition.

Once stabilized, Caritas Internationalis member CRS co-invests with communities to build long-term resilience, market opportunities and skills to improve livelihoods security. Our programs in South Sudan address food security and livelihoods; water, sanitation and hygiene; health and nutrition; microfinance and adult literacy; trauma awareness and social cohesion; disaster risk reduction; and emergency response.

We aspire to save lives and alleviate suffering. We work to accelerate the end of poverty, hunger and preventable disease. And, we seek to cultivate just and peaceful societies. Our goals are interrelated and mutually reinforced, always placing the dignity of the human person at the center.



1. Food Security and Livelihoods

Caritas Internationalis member CRS delivers seasonal conditional food assistance through **Food for Assets** projects, which integrate trauma awareness and social cohesion with disaster risk reduction and livelihoods programming. In 2021, CRS will deliver an estimated 8,645 metric tons of food commodities donated by the United States Agency for International Development to communities in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, Eastern Equatoria and Jonglei States.

Caritas Internationalis member CRS also helps agricultural communities in South Sudan to recover from natural disasters and conflict, rebuild their productive assets, and engage with markets on equitable terms. Our **Pathways to Prosperity** approach helps farmers build sustainable livelihoods through a phased process of recovery, rebuilding and long-term growth. Our approach promotes systemic change. We support the transfer of new and improved agricultural practices by providing access to seeds, tools, trainings and extension services.

- Using a group-based approach that is gender responsive and conflict sensitive, CRS engages young men and women on commercial farming and preferred alternative livelihood options. This outlet for unemployed youth helps direct their focus away from armed conflict and towards productive income generating activities.
- Fishery groups receive fishing equipment, as well as training to enhance product quality and group earnings.
- Livestock producers gain access to veterinary services through a network of trained, equipped and supervised Community Animal Health Workers.
- Through an innovative secondment program, Field Extension Agents provide technical and extension services to farmers, herders and fisherfolk, while also building their technical and management capacity.

This work helps vulnerable communities transition from dependence on emergency relief to engaging in a central role in their recovery and prosperity.

2. Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) are critically important for women, men, girls and boys affected by disaster and conflict. Caritas Internationalis member CRS works to improve hygiene practices and increase access to safe, sustainable water and sanitation services. CRS helps families to gain equitable access to safe water through rehabilitation and installation of water systems that meet family and livelihood needs. We also improve water supply to verify that the biological, chemical and physical parameters of water are tested immediately following the creation of a new water system, and regularly thereafter. This helps to ensure that systems are serviceable over the long-term. CRS trains Water User Committee members and caretakers from the local community to operate, repair and maintain these water systems.

Hygiene education and sanitation promotion are essential in the prevention of water and sanitation-related diseases. CRS uses various communication channels, including household visits by trained hygiene promoters, meetings with religious and community leaders (who in turn share messages during gatherings), and community events like dramas, songs and competitions to reach the appropriate audience.

Caritas Internationalis member CRS has made significant strides in improving latrine coverage at the household level. We also support institutional WASH services at nutrition centers, health facilities, markets and schools. This work ensures sustainable access to water and sanitation for communities

At least 215,000 people are benefitting from water points improved by Caritas Internationalis member CRS.

3. Health and Nutrition

CRS strives to strengthen access to quality primary healthcare and nutrition services in the most rural and remote communities. We use an integrated systems approach, working at the individual, household, community and county levels to improve health and nutrition outcomes. Primary healthcare services are delivered through seven mobilize medical units and 41 static nutrition centers.

CRS health and nutrition programs provide:

- treatment of communicable and non-communicable diseases
- maternal and child health
- community-based management of acute malnutrition

Caritas Internationalis member CRS has delivered 2,000 health consultations per month.

CRS uses the Care Group Model—an internationally recognized community-based peer education platform—to build community capacity to address undernutrition and other key causes of mortality among children under five years. The model uses a multiplier effect at the

village level by engaging men and women in the dissemination of key health and nutrition messages. CRS also links with other sectors, including WASH and Food Security & Livelihoods, to address the underlying causes of poor health and well-being. Through social behavior change communications, CRS promotes the adoption of improved hygiene practices that reduce cognitive and behavioral underdevelopment and inter-generational undernutrition.

Caritas Internationalis member CRS has reached 16,000 people per month with essential nutrition services.

4. Microfinance and Adult Literacy

CRS has prioritized savings-led microfinance to help people develop the financial assets and skills necessary to address food insecurity. Through community-led savings and lending groups, credit is generated by participants' savings. This provides them with access to capital to start new businesses, pay school fees and medical costs, improve their housing, and purchase seeds, tools and livestock. Access to basic financial services provides a safety net for the poorest, most vulnerable families in the community. They are better able to buy and sell in the local markets, thereby reducing their dependency on aid, and building their self-reliance.

CRS supports activities in rural communities that empower adults and strengthen individual and community resilience. The Regenerated Freirean Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques approach helps adults build their literacy and numeracy skills. The learning is based on relatable situations and events, helping to promote active dialogue, meaningful participation, and empowerment.

In these activities by Caritas Internationalis member CRS, 325 groups have collectively saved 307,235 USD.

5. Trauma Awareness and Social Cohesion

CRS supports communities to reconnect and build resilience in the face of the catastrophic impact of conflict-related trauma. Social cohesion at the family and community levels requires more than the absence of conflict. It calls for the reknitting of social ties severed by violence.

CRS integrates trauma awareness, stress management and social cohesion training into livelihoods activities. This helps to build the ability of individuals and communities to manage stress, reduce conflict, and have greater capacity to adapt. CRS strengthens local mechanisms for dialogue and reconciliation by training staff, partners, traditional leaders, youth, local government authorities and program participants on conflict mitigation and resolution. We focus on people-to-people solutions—where social capital is used as a core driver for building resilience to conflict.

Through our Food for Assets projects, we connect communities in conflict with shared interests in common projects. This helps to alleviate violence and address the issues that divide them. Working to achieve a shared goal, different ethnic groups have united to rehabilitate schools,

open roads and dig water-harvesting reservoirs. In the process, participants are developing more than infrastructure: They are repairing ties severed by conflict.

6. Disaster Risk Reduction

Drought, flooding and an inability to get crops to markets can decimate family livelihoods and prolong the cycle of poverty. CRS, in partnership with communities, helps to design mechanisms for infrastructure development to mitigate the impact of shocks related to climate and conflict.

CRS employs a community-managed Disaster Risk Reduction approach to develop community capacity to plan, mitigate, and respond to conflict and climate-related shocks. We train inclusive and representative community committees with a focus on natural resource management, early warning and early response systems. These groups learn to identify threats and define which assets would alleviate the dangers posed by an onslaught of rains or a prolonged dry season.

CRS works with local communities to identify their strengths and resources when mapping recurring hazards using Participatory Disaster Risk Assessments. Rival communities then partner to identify and collaborate on mutually beneficial projects to mitigate the effects of natural shocks and stressors—such as water-harvesting ponds, feeder roads and flood protection dikes—and are compensated through conditional food assistance.

Efforts by Caritas Internationalis member CRS have helped to establish access to 3,284 miles of roads.

7. Emergency Response

CRS delivers conditional and unconditional emergency cash and food assistance to communities affected by food insecurity. Our cash and food assistance programming includes population-wide distributions, school feeding and nutrition support. In 2021, CRS will deliver an estimated 32,866 metric tons of food commodities donated by the United Nations World Food Program to communities in Jonglei and Lakes States.

Through our emergency response programming, CRS helps communities to rebuild their lives through a wide array of support tailored to local context and needs. We respond directly or through support to local partners. We work in close collaboration with other actors and the affected communities and government authorities, prioritizing protection and the needs of the most vulnerable, and promoting meaningful, community-led engagement.

In 2021, Caritas Internationalis member CRS will deliver food assistance to 1 out of 6 people in need in South Sudan.

In South Sudan, CRS emergency response programming covers:

- Emergency food and cash assistance
- Emergency shelter

- Construction of temporary water and sanitation facilities, hygiene promotion, and distribution of emergency household kits
- Emergency health and nutrition services

In 2021, Caritas Internationalis member CRS will distribute 3.7 million USD distributed to mitigate the economic impact of COVID-19.