



Armed Conflict, Organised Violence, and Food Insecurity in South Sudan

February 2021

SAVING
LIVES
CHANGING
LIVES

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ENTERING 2020:

- 6-7 years of conflict, displacement, and protracted & increasing vulnerabilities
- Unprecedented floods in 2019
- Peace process uncertain; outlook of increased violence

IPC (JANUARY 2020)

Phase
5

40,000 people in
Catastrophe

Phase
4

1.11 million people
in Emergency

December 2013



December 2015



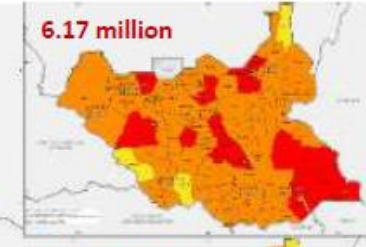
2017

2018

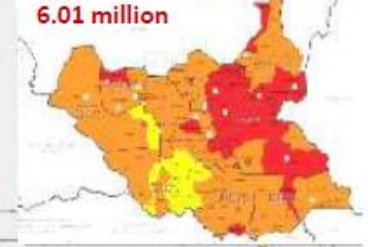
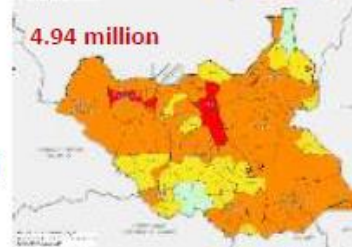
2019

2020

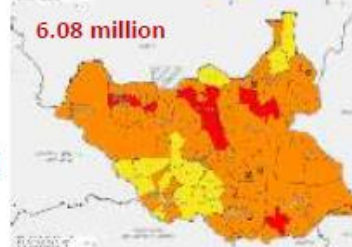
January
(current)



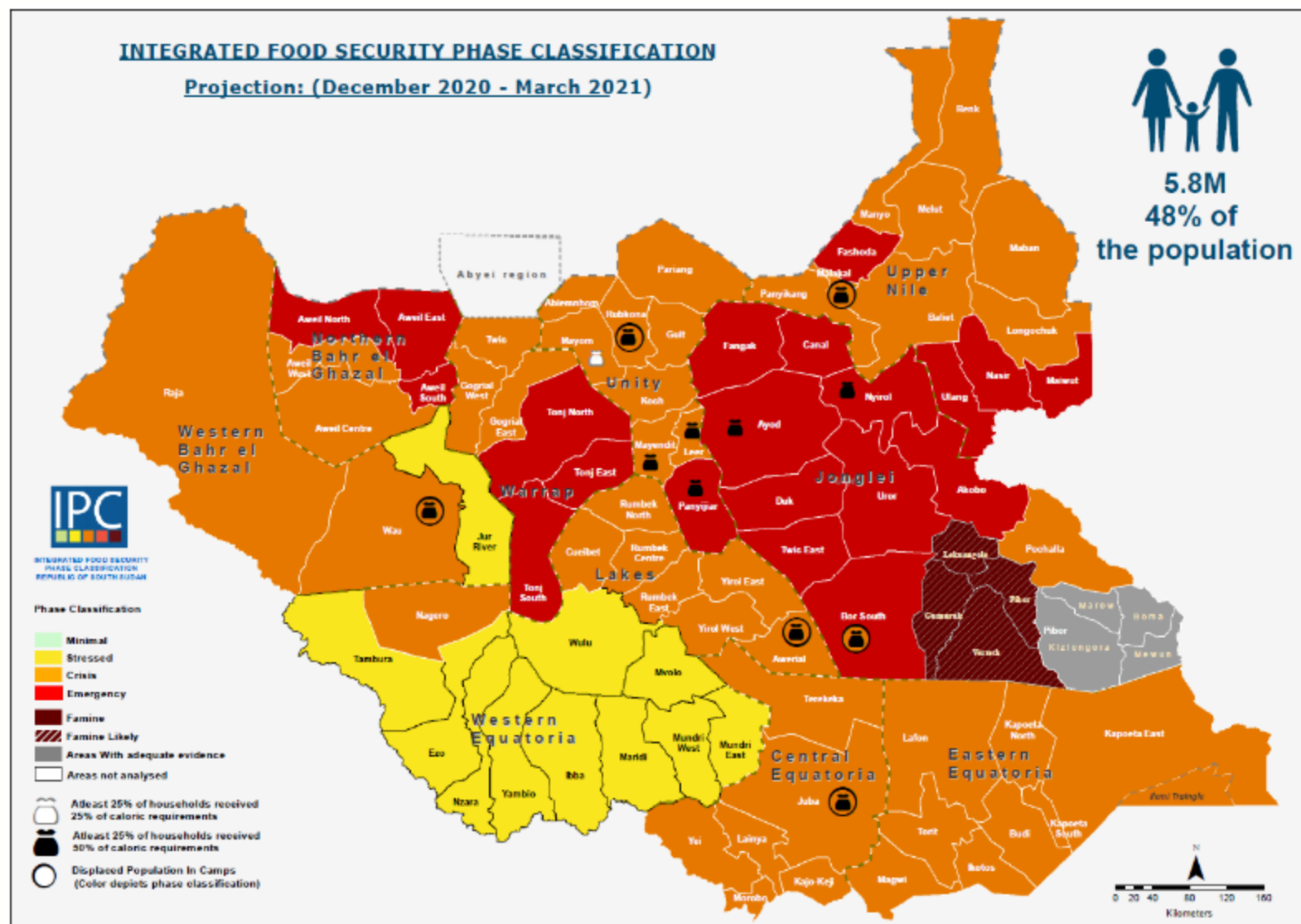
Feb-Apr
(1. Projection)



May-Jul
(2. Projection)



Projection: December 2020 – March 2021



- Six counties with IPC5 populations: Akobo, Tonj North, Tonj East, Tonj South, Aweil South and Pibor
- 22 counties in Phase 4+

PROJECTED DECEMBER 2020 - MARCH 2021

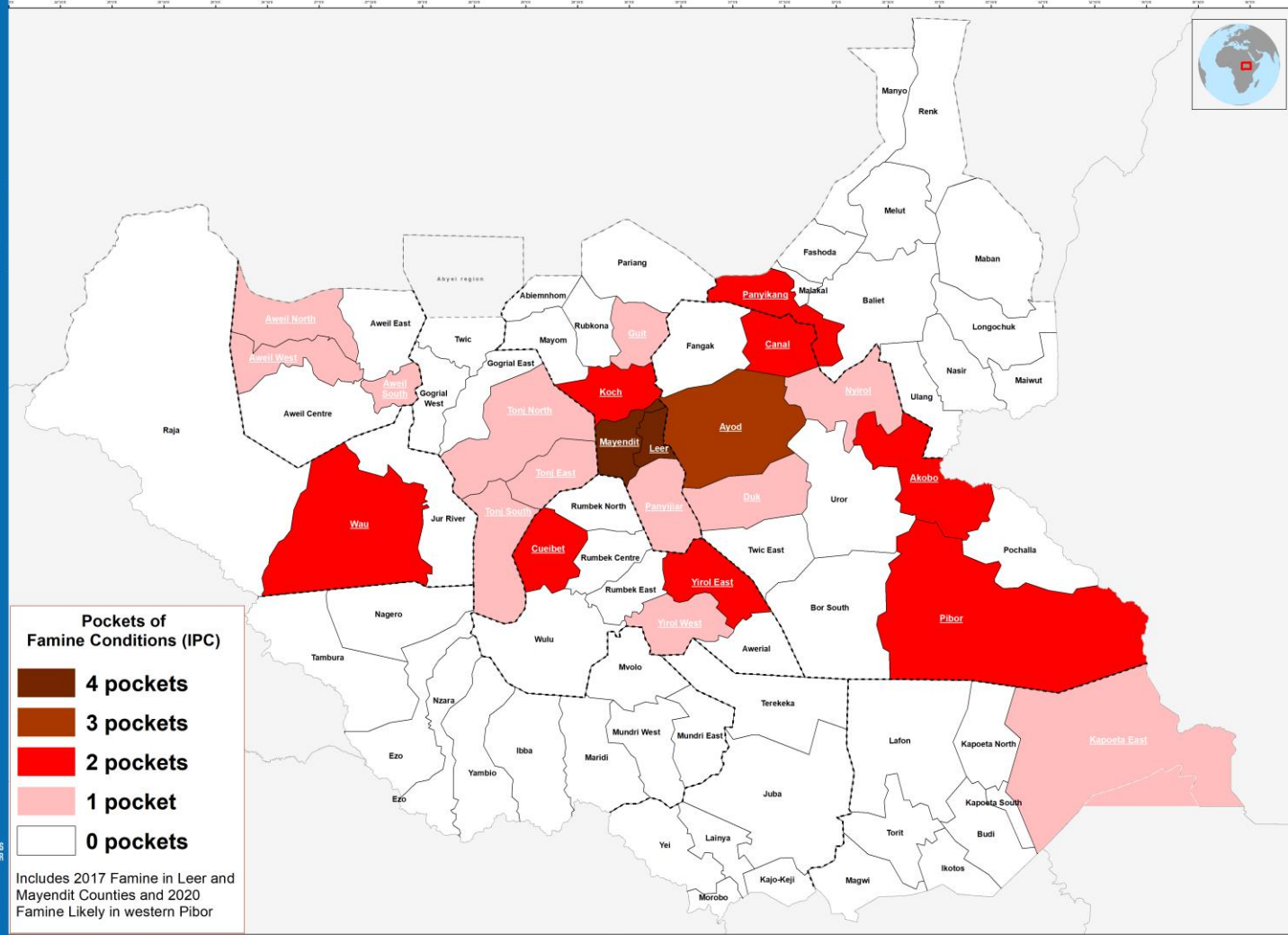
5.8M
48% of the population

People facing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 3+)

IN NEED OF URGENT ACTION

Phase 5	105,000 People in Catastrophe
Phase 4	1,728,000 People in Emergency
Phase 3	3,935,000 People in Crisis
Phase 2	3,866,000 People in Stressed
Phase 1	2,369,000 People in food security

Source: South Sudan IPC Technical Working Group, External Quality Review and Famine Review



Who is being left behind in South Sudan?

At least 37 pockets of famine conditions, one famine, and one famine-likely declaration have occurred across the country since January 2015 - predominantly the result of frequent and intense organized violence

Overlap Between Hotspots for Organised Violence and Food Insecurity

1. Organized violence in South Sudan involves the **deliberate targeting** (selective or holistic) of livelihoods and assets
2. Overlap conflict and food insecurity is often a byproduct of entrenched **inequity and isolation**
3. Organized violence **restricts mobility** with disastrous effects on food security and livelihoods
4. **Direct *and* indirect violence** impacts mobility and food security

Targeting of Livelihoods and Assets → Directly Creating Destitution

- Organized violence in southern/South Sudan consistently involves the deliberate targeting of livelihoods and livelihood assets
 - Low-resource commitment to force population movement (concentration and/or dispossession) and pay combatants
- **Holistic Targeting:** Central Unity, Greater Baggari, Jonglei
 - Stripping and destroying all assets regardless of the value to the perpetrator
 - Blocking, inhibiting, and otherwise rendering unfeasible all livelihoods and coping strategies; typically large scale and organized
- **Selective Targeting:** Lakes, Warrap
 - Predatory and violent looting for cattle, grain, and household items
 - Assets flow from the targeted communities to the raiding communities; scale may vary



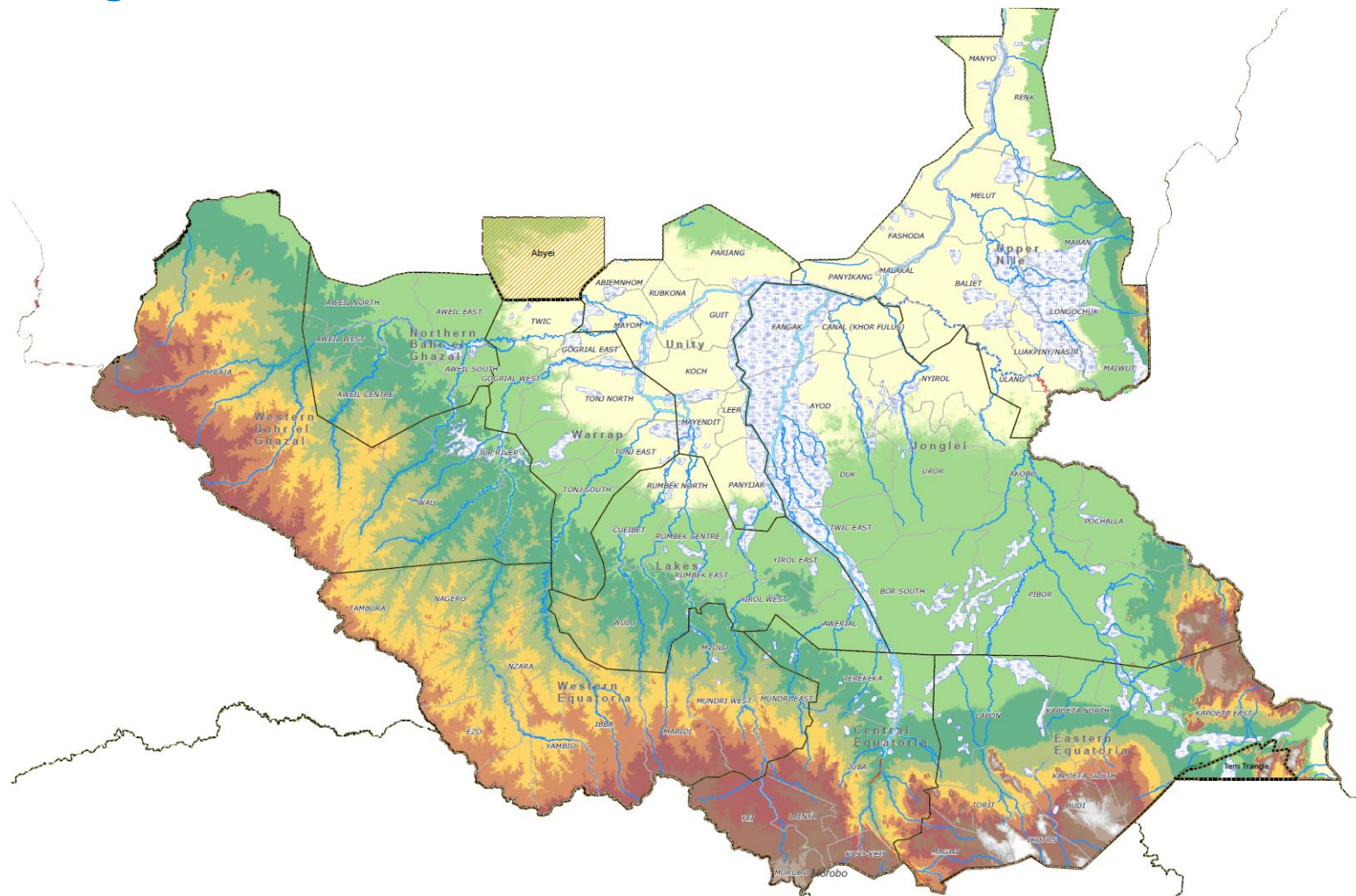


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Mobility as Key to Survival

- Mobility as critical resource that can expand and contract in relation to hazards
- Limiting mobility = forcing communities to choose between physical security and food security
- Overlap conflict and hunger = often byproduct of entrenched inequity and isolation





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Direct and Indirect Violence and Impact on Mobility

Direct violence as the real-time use of violence against people, the seizure and destruction of assets

- Military offensive
- Large-scale raid
- Seasonality

Indirect/structural violence as the perceived credible threat of violence, often over time

- Armed group presence and patrolling
- Patterns of direct violence
- Ideas, narratives, and actions that structure communal and other relationships and interactions
- SGBV

Both forms at a certain level **restrict freedom of movement**

- Ability to utilize range of livelihoods and coping strategies
- Self-limiting behaviours



Greater Tonj, Jonglei & Aweil

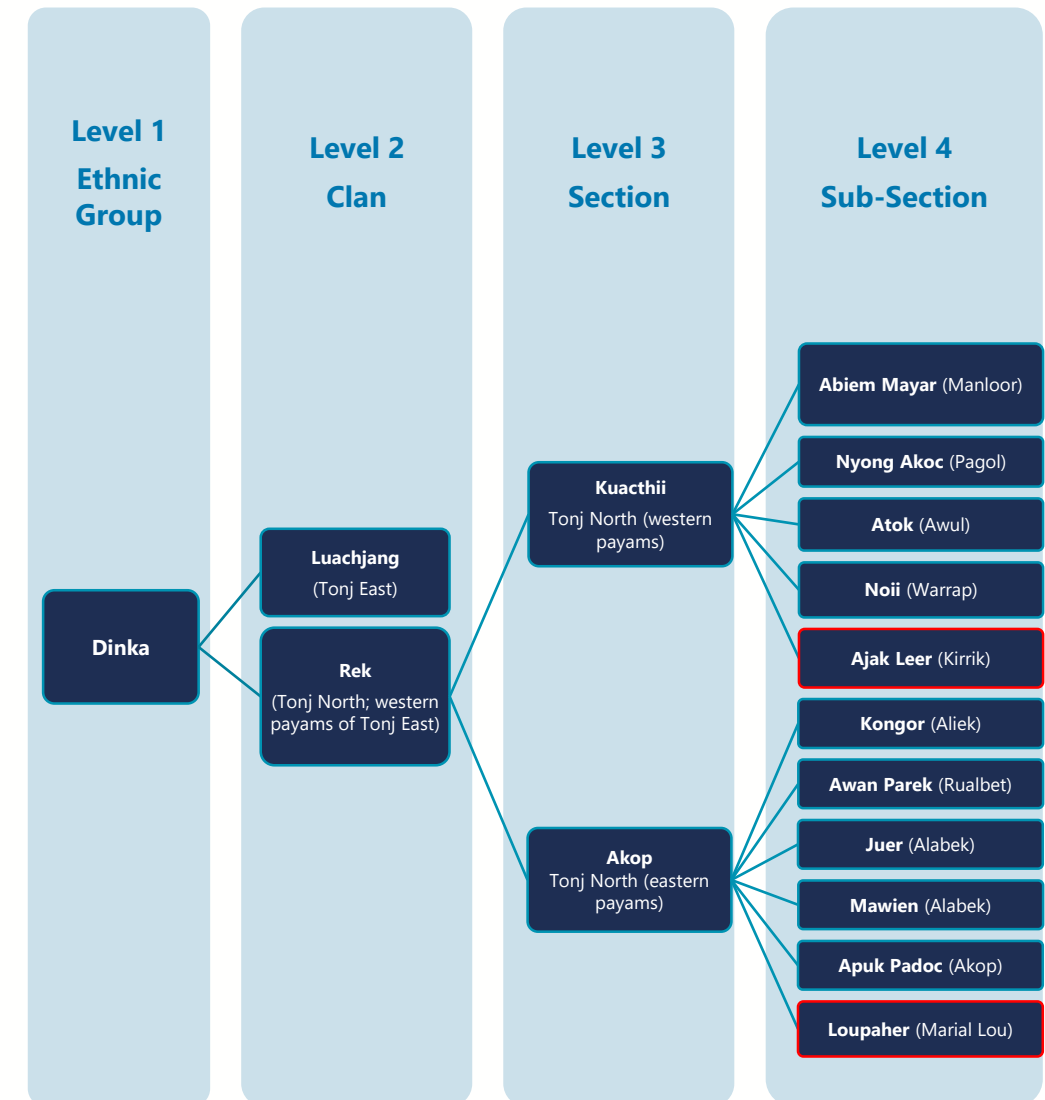
Conflict in Greater Tonj; Not Simply “Communal”

- Violence often plays out at local level between clans and sections; common narrative by govt and humanitarian community is that clashes are ‘communal’
- However, consider political exploitation of local rivalries in greater Tonj and instrumentalization of identities to marginalize or drive displacement of certain communities:
 - Intensification Dinka-ethnopolitics have exacerbated Tonj conflict dynamics
 - SSPDF vs. SPLA-IO dynamics
 - National political maneuvering with local consequences



Tonj North

- **Conflict at first and second levels**
 - Dinka Rek; historically mobilize together against other identity groups (e.g., Nuer of Mayom, Koch; Luo of Jur River; Dinka Luachjang of Tonj East).
- **Conflict at third level (section)**
 - **Divisions within the Rek** permeate conflict dynamics;
 - Alliance of Kuachthii sections from western payams (greater Awul) and alliance of Akop sections from eastern payams (greater Rualbet).
 - Alliances supported by rival Juba elites; partisan intervention by security forces exacerbates insecurity and constrains access
 - 2021 dry season likely resurgence of violence between Kuachthii and Akop
- **Conflict at fourth level (sub-section)**
 - **Within Kuachthii section:** historically between the Noi sub-section (of Warrap) and the Ajak-leer sub-section (of Kirrik); resurgence of violence in December 2020; escalation likely;
 - **Within Akop section:** historically between the Apuk Padoc and Awan Parek sub-sections (of Akop and Rualbet) and the Loupaher sub-section (of Marial Lou)



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Tonj South & Tonj East

- **Tonj South**

- Rek Dinka; Mobilization against the Luo of Jur River (in particular communities from Wathalel, Yar, Tonj South, and Jak)
- Presence of SPLA-in Opposition in Jur River
- Divisions within the Rek Dinka clan affect conflict dynamics
- Epicenter of the conflict is Mayangnok payam; Thony section of Mayangnok against the Yar (of Wathalel and Yar), the Muok (of Tonj South), and the Apuk Juwiir (of Thiet and Jak) sections
- 2020 violence affected access to FDPs and led to exclusion of Thony from food assistance by hostile groups

- **Tonj East**

- Luachjang and Rek Dinka; Mobilization against Nuer of Unity, Rek of Tonj North; Gok of Lakes
- 2020: alliance of Luachjang sections vs. alliance of Rek sections; Continued into the 2021 dry season; exacerbation likely as a result of changing migration routes due to conflict
- Likely aggravated by partisan involvement NSS, MI, SSPDF; potential violence around county commissioner appointment
- Affecting access and humanitarian assistance: e.g. In July, greater Ananatak communities were prevented from reaching FDP in Paliang by Luachjang Dinka; In retaliation, Ananatak youth burned down Romic market; last week WFP prevented from reaching Paliang (Luachjang) warehouse by Rek community.



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December 2020: Clear Signs of Severe and Extreme Food Insecurity

- **Aftermath of Proximate Shocks – Major Floods and Persistent Conflict**
 - Little to no harvest; floods came before crops reached maturity
 - Livestock massively affected
- **Diminishing Coping Capacity**
 - Most communities living off fish, wild fruits and leaves, market goods (selling of cows; HH members working in urban centers)
 - Distress migration: individuals to urban centers, fishing and cattle camps; some instances of community migration to urban centers, Tonj and Wau.
 - Several villages completely destroyed; large numbers of tukuls, and several villages abandoned
- **Community Early Warning**
 - Consistent comparisons to 1998 famine; 2020 generally given as comparable hunger, but much fewer livestock, restricted freedom of movement internally, and overall lower coping capacity
 - “If there is peace in April, we will farm”; concerns around conflict and a third year of unprecedented flooding
 - Widespread concern of famine risk (or extreme levels of food insecurity) from February onwards (wild foods gap, diminishing fish supply, no harvest); Onset lean season 2-3 months early



UNDERSTANDING VIOLENCE IN JONGLEI

- **Why? – Overlapping layers of objectives**
 - **National:** opposition fragmentation, growing schism in government security forces (SSPDF, NSS, MI), remnants Cobra Faction in SSPDF, IO, SSOA; **Sub-national:** localization of armed actor orientation as incumbent govt/IO frontline becomes latent, marginalization; **Localized:** intra-ethnic and intra-community,
- **Who? – Consider actors and social scope**
 - **Actors:** Lou White Army as professionalizing community militia; lower internal cohesion among other groups incl. Bor Youth and Gawaar Nuer and Murle raiding groups; highly partisan govt/IO forces; divergent actions of Div 8 and remnants Div 10 and Brigade 23 - separate command in Bilpam; Alleged NSS provision of weapons to Murle
 - **Social scope:** Dinka, Nuer, Murle; Consider lineage systems of central-southern Jonglei: differential contributions of Hol, Nyarweng, Twic, and Bor Dinka; Lou, Gawaar, Jikany Nuer; Murle society: age-sets, clans, red chiefs; involvement largely lowland Murle; ongoing age-set and clan violence
- **How? – These are not simply cattle raids**
 - **Raids:** Violent asset-stripping; small arms, light weapons, some heavy weapons; stage-and-raids; territorial control (key towns and pasture areas)
 - **Targeting:** military targets; consider symbolism of Pieri attack; selective targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure; prioritization of maximum civilian casualty and damage to community assets over raiding of cattle (Pieri, Pajut)
 - **Continuous, credible threat of violence:** Murle mobilization; Lou Nuer mobilization; effect on livelihoods and assistance
- **Where? – Perceived exclusion from key resources**
 - Across Jonglei and the GPAA, survival is achieved through physical, social, economic, and political linkages and interdependence – premised on the free movement of people, livestock, and goods.
 - Some of the most physically isolated areas of South Sudan, exposed to major climactic shocks in South Sudan; perceived or real exclusion from key resources influences conflict dynamics in various way, as it leads to changing migration patterns and atypical livestock concentrations.

THE CHANGING NATURE OF CONFLICT IN JONGLEI

- **R-ARCSS:** produced new problems for protection and humanitarian access (or return to CPA period?)
- **Civil war:** systematic denial of humanitarian access to greater Akobo and Pibor/Boma
- **2019 – 2020:** resumption of organized violence in central-southern Jonglei and the GPAA; interruption of humanitarian access; 635MT looted; instrumentalization of violence by politicians in Juba

Rethinking how we operate:

- **Understanding violence:** frameworks like ICV prevent productive engagement with belligerents; consider dynamics between sub-national and national
- **Understanding community:** accountability structures; ethnographic understanding of actors and decision-making processes
- **Dialogue is not enough:** Increasing recognition that dialogue is not sufficient to sustain peace; Moving towards peace requires concrete progress in reducing both violence and hunger simultaneously, according to the perceptions of the communities themselves

Aweil South: Structural violence affects food insecurity

- Over the last thirty years (particularly during Sudan civil war and again since 2005) displacement, elite land capture, and increased marketisation of the economy left NBeG highly dependent on grain imports, and thus more fragile to shocks caused by flooding, drought, currency inflation, and Covid-19 restrictions.
- High-level, political-economic control NBeG consolidated in political class of former NCP members, closely connected to elites in Khartoum, Kordofan, and Darfur; incl. familial ties to the militias that organized against the SPLA during the second civil war; State and county positions appointed from within SPLM (loyal to Malong?); military elite from Warrap and Lakes
- Elite resource capture, patterns of dispossession, iniquitous land ownership, centralization of wealth = all forms of structural violence underlying food insecurity



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1. Organized violence in South Sudan involves the **deliberate targeting** (selective or holistic) of livelihoods and assets (Jonglei, Greater Tonj)
2. Overlap conflict and food insecurity is often a byproduct of entrenched **inequity and isolation** (Jonglei, Greater Tonj, NBeG)
3. Organized violence **restricts mobility** with disastrous effects on food security and livelihoods (Jonglei, Greater Tonj)
4. **Direct and indirect violence** impacts mobility and food security (Jonglei, Greater Tonj, NBeG)