



Photo: FAO/ Stefanie Glinski

## The South Sudan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)

### *Informing cash programming in the face of market volatility*

Hunger and malnutrition levels are at historic highs in South Sudan: as of October 2020, **6.3 million people – more than 50 percent of the population** – displayed Crisis levels of food security **or worse** (Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC] 3 or higher).

A robust food security response is essential to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in the country. As part of this response, **cash and voucher assistance (CVA)** accounted for 16 percent of aid received in South Sudan by the end of 2020, which was met with a call for **consistent and standardized market monitoring to match the increased use of CVA**.

With a view to this, **the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)** was launched in South Sudan in August 2019, as a harmonised tool to provide frequent, localized data to inform cash programmes. Led by gFSC partner **REACH** through the Inter-Agency Cash Working Group (CWG), the JMMI is released as a **monthly factsheet and dataset** on indicators such as prices, stock levels, road and river conditions, and supply routes. Some 32 CWG partner organizations collaborate to collect information across roughly 40 locations in South Sudan.



Cash and voucher assistance (CVA) accounted for 16 percent of aid received in South Sudan by the end of 2020. Photo: FAO/Stefanie Glinski

With market functionality and prices highly volatile, it is important to ensure that CVA programmes are thoroughly evidence based, ideally through joint assessments and analyses. A dedicated **Technical Working Group (TWG)** collaboratively makes decisions on the types of indicators to be included in the JMMI, how

outputs are constructed and its strategic direction. The JMMI TWG is comprised of all CWG partners and other cash actors, fostering collaboration, information sharing and reducing duplication.

One example of how JMMI data are used is to **guide transfer values**: as the JMMI calculates a monthly Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) figure unique to each location, implementing partners can review their transfer values according to shifting marketplace prices.

South Sudan relies on imports for almost all non-food items (such as soap, jerry cans and mosquito nets), which unless distributed by an NGO require access to a marketplace to obtain.



Photo: WFP/Oscar Caccavale

Due to seasonal food depletion and limited domestic products, households also typically become more **dependent on markets for food** when harvested food stocks run out or access to livestock is limited, dangerously undermining vulnerable people's ability to secure sufficient nutritious food and putting millions of lives at risk.

In the context of South Sudan, which has seen a period of relative peace stretching from 2018 to the present, there has also been a recognized need to **supplement life-saving assistance with more sustainable platforms for development**. Cash has been identified as one modality that could help to increase the functionality of markets, by expanding domestic production, increasing financial access for vulnerable households, strengthening social cohesion between returnee and host community populations, and supporting protection case management (see the [2021 Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan](#)).

The continued investment by CWG partner organizations in the JMMI reflects the importance of evidence based CVA programming, particularly in a country where prices and market functionality can fluctuate dramatically in a short period of time. **Information gaps remain, however**, namely in substantive research into how markets are impacted by cash injections, protection concerns around distributions, and understanding aid preferences within the country.

As CVA expands in South Sudan it will be crucial to ensure that these information gaps are filled, through **ongoing joint assessments and habitual collaboration among CWG/Cluster members**.

*The Food Security Cluster (FSC) coordinates emergency support and livelihoods programmes across the country, working with local and international organizations to foster increasing resilience and self-reliance.*

**Find out more about this programme here:**

[South Sudan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative](#)

[South Sudan Cash Working Group](#)

[FSC Cash and Markets Working Group](#)

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***“Partners have been asking for timely, national level data for some time. Now we have 35 FSL Cluster partners collecting this from various markets – with REACH compiling, mapping and visualizing it all – so Cash WGs can get the information from the JMMI on a monthly basis. It’s hugely appreciated.”***

*Alistair Short, FSL Cluster Coordinator, South Sudan*

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