



ANNEX: COUNTRY PROFILE SOUTH SUDAN

**Gap Analysis on Disability Inclusive
Humanitarian Action in Eastern Africa**

South Sudan's Disability Rights Commitment

The recent ratification of the UN CRPD in South Sudan has brought new hope for the rights of persons with disabilities in the country. This milestone was achieved through years of disability advocacy efforts and actions to push for the ratification of the UN CRPD, as well as other human rights conventions and treaties. On 24 February 2023, President Salva Kiir acceded to four international covenants, including the UNCRPD and its Optional Protocol, according to a press statement from his office. This is a significant step towards promoting and protecting the rights and inclusion of persons with disabilities in South Sudan¹.

Current humanitarian crisis

South Sudan is ranked 2nd in the INFORM country risk profile, with hazards and exposure ranking at 17th, with human-caused hazards being more prominent. For natural hazards, epidemics and floods range slightly more than 7 out of 10. In terms of other vulnerabilities, the country ranks 1st, with high overall socio-economic vulnerability and vulnerability of other vulnerable groups. South Sudan also ranks 1st in terms of coping capacities, both institutional and infrastructure-wise².

In February 2023, South Sudan had an estimated 9.1 million people in need of humanitarian assistance and protection services. 6.31 million people were estimated to be food-insecure, including 33,000 people in a state of catastrophe. Violent clashes between armed cattle keepers and host communities in several areas displaced and killed thousands of people. Measles outbreaks were confirmed in 26 counties in 10 states, with 4,635 cumulative cases and 47 deaths³.

As of December 31st, 2022, there were 2,229,657 IDPs in South Sudan, according to IOM and OCHA. The majority of refugees in South Sudan are from Sudan, accounting for 94% of the total, while Western Equatoria and Central Equatoria each have small percentages of refugees. The political environment in South Sudan remains complex and unpredictable, impacting displacement patterns. The government has maintained an open-door policy for refugees, and UNHCR has reaffirmed its no-return policy until the security, rule of law, and human rights situation improves. Since the conflict in December 2013, almost 4 million South Sudanese have been displaced, with 2.2 million refugees in neighboring countries and 2.2 million IDPs. South Sudan remains Africa's largest and the world's third-largest refugee crisis. The funding appeal for 2022 is \$214,826,162, but only 38% of that amount has been received, leaving a gap of \$133,593,118⁴.

¹ <https://www.hi.org/en/news/south-sudan-signs-international-covenants-on-rights-of-persons-with-disabilities-into-law>

² <https://drmkc.jrc.ec.europa.eu/inform-index/INFORM-Risk/Country-Risk-Profile>

³ https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-snapshot-february-2023?_gl=1*1bzit5k*_ga*MTIxNDEwNjY1NC4xNjc1NTIwMTk0*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTY4MzYyNjUwOC4xNi4wLjE2ODM2MjY1MDguNjAuMC4w

⁴ <https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/ssd>

Evidence and Data on persons with disabilities

Controversy surrounds the reported number of persons with disabilities in South Sudan, with a 2008 census stating they account for 5.1% of the population. However, due to the decades of conflict, poverty, and limited access to services resulting in various barriers that marginalize and exclude persons with disabilities have led to an increase in disability prevalence in South Sudan, it is widely believed the actual number is higher⁵. Unfortunately, there has been a lack of concerted efforts to address these issues and include persons with disabilities in the country.

According to official national statistics, a national projection of the population of South Sudan in 2023 is around 14,7 million⁶. However, there is no evidence of data collected through national census about the number of persons with disabilities in the country. There is a lack of official and up-to-date statistics on disabilities from various ministries.

A review of the HNO for South Sudan in 2023 has revealed that the global estimate of 15% for humanitarian needs is applicable in this context. This percentage remains consistent across different areas such as food security, WASH, and protection. Similarly, the 2023 South Sudan HRP aims to target 6.8 million across the country, with 1 million of those being persons with disabilities, requiring a total of US\$1.7 billion⁷. Looking more into the NRP 2023, it can be observed that the protection, food security and WASH clusters have identified that 15% of affected population includes persons with disabilities.

	PEOPLE IN NEED	TARGETED PEOPLE	PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
PROTECTION	5.6 M	2.9 M	15%
FOOD SECURITY	8.3 M	6 M	15%
WASH	6.1 M	3.1 M	15%

(Humanitarian Response Plan, South Sudan, 2023)

In terms of Protection, the regional office reported some progress in capturing disability data in UNHCR databases. However, there is still a need for capacity building to ensure accurate data capture. They are also working to capture regional data on disability inclusion to improve levels of inclusion. The March 2023 monthly report of Protection Monitoring System (PMS) in South Sudan indicated that persons with disabilities are the most affected by difficulties related to their housing, land, and property rights⁸.

⁵ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5af96f2fe5274a25dbface4c/Disability_in_South_Sudan.pdf

⁶ <https://nbs.gov.ss/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Population-projections-for-South-Sudan-2020-2040-1.pdf>

⁷ <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/us17-billion-needed-support-most-vulnerable-south-sudan-2023>

⁸ <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-pms-protection-monitoring-monthly-report-february-2023-field-testing-period>

According to the Food Security and Nutrition Report (2020)⁹, an estimated 5.2% of the population live with at least one injury, 6.6% are 'mentally disabled', 12.7% are chronically ill, and 15.7% are physically disabled. However, the reporting indicates that standardized approaches and language are not being applied. Mainstream and disability-focused organizations report minimal practices related to the use of the WGs. Therefore, particular attention should be given to data collection and analysis, with data disaggregated by age, gender, and disability forming the basis of every project. Furthermore, information sharing and data on the risks, barriers, and vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities, especially in remote regions that are difficult to access, are essential.

The Inter-Sector Needs Assessment was conducted as a complementary data collection to the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring System plus data collection, with coordination between these two processes. Disability questions were asked at the household level, but only provided baseline data. Moreover, in 2021, the IOM's DTM collaborated with organizations representing persons with disabilities to launch a survey in Tonj South and Aweil South in Warrap and Northern Bahr El Ghazal States, focusing on urban areas¹⁰. The aim of the survey is to gather information on direct access issues and assist humanitarian partners. The ongoing efforts to collect insights and experiences from persons with disabilities are significant in ensuring the development of humanitarian programs that address the challenges faced by this group.

Planning & Coordination related to disability inclusion

This study analysed several questions related to disability inclusion in humanitarian action in South Sudan. It focused on two main areas, such as (1) the extent to which disability inclusion is anchored in existing HRP, and (2) existing working groups or coordination mechanisms that could provide support and knowledge to all staff members regarding disability inclusion.

Based on available evidence, the existing comprehensive mention of disability inclusion in humanitarian response plans across different sectors, including protection, food security and WASH, and the constant efforts to improve it, suggest a positive direction towards better disability inclusion in humanitarian responses. On the other hand, there is currently no task force on disability inclusion, but it has been recognized that close collaboration with disability inclusion-focused organizations is critical for providing technical assistance, particularly where internal focal points are not fully integrated into institutional cluster set-ups.

The Protection Cluster's objective is to provide critical protection assistance and services, tailored to many vulnerabilities, including age, gender, and disability. Their target for 2023 is to reach 3.2 million people, a 10% increase from 2022. To achieve this, they prioritize strengthening the Protection Monitoring System and enhancing identification of the most vulnerable.

⁹ https://fscluster.org/sites/default/files/documents/fsnms_r25_final_report_25_june_2020.pdf

¹⁰ <https://dtm.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-disability-access-inclusion-survey-tonj-south-county-september-october-2022>

Children, including those with disabilities, are exposed to various protection risks, and the Protection Cluster aims to address this. In addition, housing, land, and property activities will ensure safe housing for all, including persons with disabilities, while observing due diligence considerations for security of tenure.

In interviews with protection cluster staff, it was recognized that a few months ago, the cluster recognized disability inclusion as an opportunity and met with Humanity and Inclusion (H&I) to discuss consortium projects with local organizations. They have integrated disability inclusion aspects in the questionnaires, Key Informant Interview index forms, and WGQs into their projects. The cluster is currently in the third phase of projects and is being supported by HI through monthly partnership meetings which could lead to the creation of a Task Force on disability inclusion for protection risks. The cluster has a mobile integrated protection team and has invited HI and other groups to draft Terms of References. The cluster has a huge platform and provides monthly thematic presentations to increase understanding about disability and intersectionality.

According to the South Sudan WASH Cluster¹¹ - Strategic Operational Framework - April 2023, disability is recognized as one of the core attributes of the wider principle of non-discrimination, and the approach used is mainstream protection with a focus on GBV mitigation and disability inclusion. Disability inclusion is also included in Accountability and Quality Assurance and Disability Inclusion Check. The South Sudan WASH Cluster provides Disability Inclusion technical guidance and WASH Cluster Disability Inclusion Guidance, which take into consideration intersectional factors such as age and gender. Projects are field monitored against the Accountability and Quality Assurance indicator and the question "to what degree does the organization carry out meaningful consultations with different groups?"

Although there doesn't seem to be a Task Force for disability inclusion, considerable efforts are being made to mainstream it. The South Sudan Wash Cluster Indicator Framework (HRP 2023) aims to reduce community members' exposure to environmental hazards through the construction of disaster-resistant structures and infrastructure. This activity has two indicators, including the number of disability-inclusive sanitation facilities designed and barrier analysis conducted for disability inclusion. The number of barrier analysis reports shared and improved designs for latrine, and the number of facilities built for 'people with special needs' based on area analysis are also included. This framework is used for reporting by partners. Overall, implementation efforts are being made to ensure disability inclusion and GBV mitigation in WASH projects in South Sudan¹². However, the definition of persons with disabilities used by the South Sudan WASH Cluster Monthly Meeting may not fully align with the UN CRPD, which recognizes disability as an evolving concept and includes a range of impairments and societal barriers.

¹¹ <https://response.reliefweb.int/south-sudan/water-sanitation-hygiene>

¹² Ibid, 45

In regards to Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) cluster¹³, staff emphasizes the importance of protection in their interventions and the need for inter-sectoral collaboration and support. From 2018 to 2021, the cluster had several presentations and trainings focused on disability inclusion in emergency response. HI presented on disability inclusion in September 2020, while the Norwegian Refugee Council presented on the disability inclusion in January 2018. Additionally, the FSL Cluster received training on disability inclusion as part of the Humanitarian Programme Cycle 2021 training. However, staff recognizes the need for continuous support in this area.

Interviewed staff also highlight the importance of data collection and analysis, particularly with regards to vulnerability analysis that includes persons with disabilities. However, they note that there is a gap in the HRP as there is no disability inclusion task group for food. The FSL Cluster in the HRP 2022 prioritizes communication and community engagement, including addressing the vulnerabilities of many groups such as persons with disabilities. The cluster has also focused on linking food security and child protection with other topics to ensure disability inclusion and the use of community feedback mechanisms. The cluster collects AAP and GBV indicators monthly through 5W reporting by partners.

Participation of Persons with Disabilities and their representative organisations

Interviews with representatives of the OPD in South Sudan, South Sudan Union of Persons with Disabilities (SSUPD), showed that there are significant gaps in the organization's involvement in humanitarian action. The country has faced multiple conflicts, and one of the major challenges is the lack of effective linkages with the UN and state actors. Despite the assumption that persons with disabilities are among the most vulnerable, there is no precise report or data to support this claim. Moreover, there is no effective coordination and communication among actors in this area.

The OPD's new strategy focuses on raising awareness about Article 11, in partnership with International Disability Alliance. However, communication with states is still lacking, and there is no preparedness or service provision plan for persons with disabilities. The organization believes that it needs to be capacitated and involved in clusters work in order to effectively participate and advocate in the humanitarian response. This involves promoting inclusive awareness and preparedness, as well as building the resilience and economic empowerment of persons with disabilities. This OPD advocates for the promotion of international humanitarian law and human rights law for persons with disabilities in situations of natural disasters or armed conflicts. Additionally, it emphasizes the need for greater involvement of persons with disabilities in global warming campaigns, as disasters have a negative impact on the increasing rate of impairments.

¹³ <https://fscluster.org/south-sudan-rep>

The African Disability Forum (ADF) supports their capacity development at various levels, but the organization faces significant challenges due to a lack of funding and manpower to actively participate and advocate across the cluster approach. It is worth noting that the interviewed OPDs in other targeted countries are members of a continental OPD network and have the potential to play a significant role in applying the African Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People's Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹⁴ concerning articles related to the situation of risks. The ratification of this protocol provides a framework for promoting and protecting the rights of persons with disabilities in Africa, including addressing the challenges and risks they face in humanitarian contexts. By leveraging the network of OPDs and adhering to the provisions of the protocol, Eastern Africa can further strengthen disability inclusion efforts and advance the rights and well-being of persons with disabilities in humanitarian responses in their respective countries.

Interviews showed that the OPD in South Sudan, with support from OVCI, organizes monthly partnership meetings with other disability organizations to improve coordination and collaboration. However, all actors involved would like to take this to the next level and engage more with humanitarian actors in order to better protect the rights of persons with disabilities in humanitarian context.

Disability Inclusive Humanitarian Programming

In South Sudan, humanitarian actors are implementing both mainstream and targeted approaches to address the vulnerabilities of affected population, particularly those with disabilities. AVCI (The Association of Volunteers in International Service) is a humanitarian organization that is working to create better conditions for children with disabilities in schools, by raising awareness at the community level and collaborating with other organizations such as CBM, OVCI, and ICRC. AVCI also participates in the Food Security and Nutrition Cluster, as well as working with organizations like WFP and UNICEF on food security and livelihood projects at the central level.

OVCI is another organization in South Sudan that is specifically focused on rehabilitating persons with disabilities, particularly children in rural areas. They employ experts in fields such as hearing and speech therapy, social work, and community outreach to provide comprehensive care to persons with disabilities. OVCI's projects aim to empower persons with disabilities through mobility and advocacy, and they work with other organizations such as HI, LFTW to achieve these goals.

However, despite these efforts, there is still a need for more capacity building and data collection to advance the inclusion of persons with disabilities in humanitarian action in South Sudan. Some international organizations are setting up special focal points to make their projects and programs more inclusive, and humanitarian staff are participating in training courses to increase their awareness and capacity in inclusive humanitarian action.

¹⁴ <https://au.int/en/treaties/protocol-african-charter-human-and-peoples-rights-rights-persons-disabilities-africa>

But there is a particular need for data to be disaggregated by age, gender, and type of disability, and for more information sharing and data on the risks, barriers, and vulnerabilities of persons with disabilities, particularly in remote regions. Moreover, persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities need to become more involved in humanitarian action. OVCII calls for support to disseminate information and capacity building for mobile teams to provide early detection and referrals for persons with disabilities, including those coming from affected zones.

Light for the World takes a distinct approach by incorporating DIFs to expand the scope of disability inclusion efforts. DIFs are persons with disabilities themselves and can provide technical support to humanitarian organizations on disability inclusion. They have trained the staff of 16 organizations and have provided tools and practical advice beyond training, such as accessibility assessments and inclusive teaching skills. Moreover, staff trained on disability inclusion can become ambassadors of disability inclusion, even after leaving their organization, and help to transform programming at a higher level in new organizations.

Funding is a challenge for the INGOs involved in the cluster work as they face areas that are under-funded. General protection looks at protection monitoring and advocacy, but other agencies focus on targeted inclusive processes. Many agencies do not look for guidelines on UN CRPD or mainstream advocacy notes. The cluster appreciates protection mainstreaming and safe programming, but only targeted and specialized approaches are being used in South Sudan, which is under-funded. Overall, the cluster is working towards increased disability inclusion and aims to improve protection for all.

Overview of Findings

Area	Findings/Good examples	Identified Gaps	Potential Actions
Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent application of global estimates for persons with disabilities in HRPs, limited disaggregated data in existing tools and assessments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Limited data collection on persons with disabilities, resulting in a lack of evidence and understanding of their protection risks and vulnerabilities. - Reported difficulties related to housing, land, and property rights for persons with disabilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen the Protection Monitoring System for accurate data capture. - Enhance identification of the most vulnerable, including persons with disabilities. - Collaborate with disability inclusion-focused organizations to provide technical assistance.
Food Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent application of global estimates for persons with disabilities in HRPs, with some recent assessments taking into account persons with disabilities - Conducted trainings and presentations on disability inclusion in emergency response. - Focus on linking food security and child protection with other topics to ensure disability inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Need for better data collection and analysis, including vulnerability analysis for persons with disabilities. - Need to strengthen disability inclusive measures among cluster partners. - Absence of a Task Force for disability inclusion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strengthen the capacity of food security actors in disability mainstreaming and engagement of persons with disabilities. - Provide accessible and user-friendly information on food security programs and initiatives to persons with disabilities.

Area	Findings/Good examples	Identified Gaps	Potential Actions
WASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consistent application of global estimates for persons with disabilities in HRP. - Recognition of disability as a core attribute of non-discrimination. - Technical guidance and Disability Inclusion Check provided. - Field monitoring against the Accountability and Quality Assurance indicator. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Definition of disability may not align with the UN CRPD (WASH Cluster Monthly Meeting). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conduct barrier analysis for disability inclusion. - Improve designs for sanitation facilities for persons with disabilities. - Increase meaningful consultations with different groups, including persons with disabilities.