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# The Face of Famine in South Sudan: A Call to Bridge the Humanitarian- Development-Diplomacy Divide

by *Faustine Wabwire*

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**“I believe firmly that the reason for foreign assistance must be to end the need for its existence, and that means working to end the root causes of famine, conflict, and insecurity, and helping to build resilient communities and families and governments as well.”**

– *Mark Green, Administrator, USAID*

## SUMMARY AND HIGHLIGHTS

The situation in South Sudan is desperate and urgent. The fact that the crisis is largely man-made means that it is within human power to end it. At the very least, we can save the lives of millions of people currently on the verge of starvation. But the window of opportunity is very limited. We must act decisively, now, not later.

The country's most immediate need is to end the brutal and senseless conflict that has displaced more than one-third of the population. To prevent future famine and lay a strong foundation for the world's youngest nation, the United States and the global community should adopt a multi-pronged approach: while humanitarian assistance is important, it is not enough to stabilize and resolve the larger political crisis in South Sudan. Saving the lives of people at immediate risk must be connected with peace

building and with efforts to protect and rebuild livelihoods, or ways for people to earn a living through economic participation. This includes investments in agriculture, nutrition, social protection, and entrepreneurship. To ensure stability and prevent the country from spiraling into further conflict, the United States and development partners should bolster diplomatic engagement and conflict resolution efforts at the local level.

Now is the time for the United States to bridge the humanitarian-development-diplomacy divide by establishing a whole-of-government strategy to guide its engagement in fragile and conflict-affected areas. We know that strengthening the capacity of local systems and institutions of governance is a prerequisite for achieving the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals.

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## Introduction

In 2017, famine and near-famine conditions were reported in four countries: South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, and parts of northeastern Nigeria.

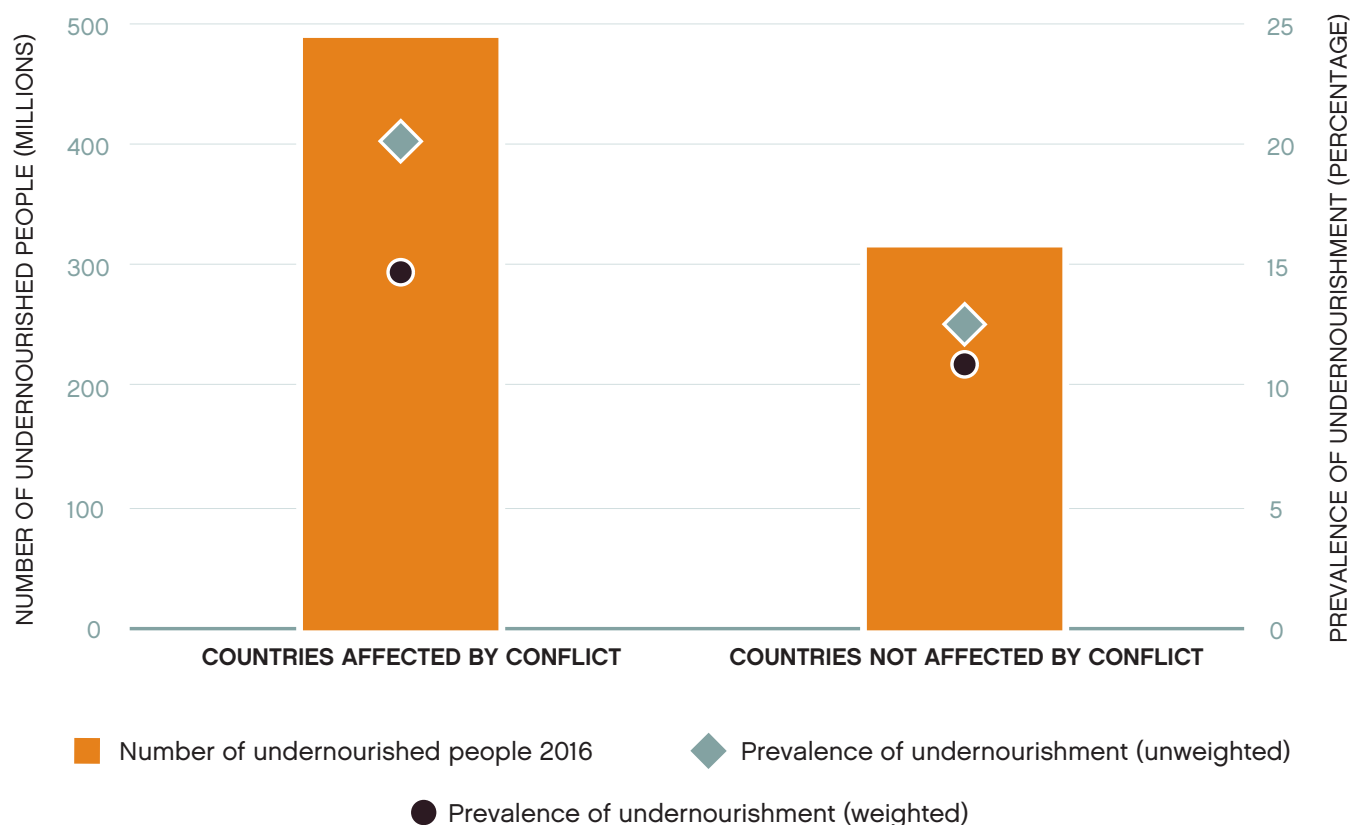
The United Nations declared famine in two counties of Unity State, South Sudan, in February 2017. Famine is a technical term based on the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC). The crisis must meet specific criteria to be considered famine (IPC stage 5). These include, for example, indicators such as the rate of acute malnutrition among children under 5. If famine is declared, acute malnutrition affects at least 30 percent of young children.

People trying to survive a devastating hunger emergency are not likely to notice whether they are in a stage 5 situation or a stage 4 “near-famine” situation. Even before a famine is declared, conditions are deadly. In the only other famine of this century, in Somalia, famine was officially declared in July 2011—but half of the 260,000 deaths took place before then. Conversely, the famine designation in the two South Sudan counties was lifted in June 2017, but this did not mean that families or communities noticed any improvement. In fact, in February 2018, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) warned that famine conditions were once again imminent. The number of people in need has risen 40 percent from a year ago.<sup>1</sup>

In 2017, more than 20 million people in South Sudan, Yemen, Somalia, and northeastern Nigeria lived in near-famine conditions. In 2018, a further 10 million people will join them on the brink of starvation unless the international community acts thoughtfully and swiftly.

The crisis in South Sudan is due to conflict. War has destroyed crops, health centers, and other necessities of life; trapped people in areas with no food; and caused the near-collapse of the economy. Near-famine conditions in the other countries are also largely due to conflict, poor governance, and, in the case of Somalia, drought related to climate change.

FIGURE 1: **The Majority of Chronically Food-Insecure People Live in Countries Affected by Conflict**



Notes: Prevalence and number of undernourished people in low- and middle-income countries with and without conflict, 2016.

Source: FAO

FIGURE 2: Who's at Risk of Being Left Behind by Development Progress?



Source: ODI

Women and children are most vulnerable to the effects of food insecurity, malnutrition, and conflict. Today in Yemen, 1.4 million children are currently at imminent risk of death from malnutrition, and a child dies every 10 minutes, according to the UN. Children who survive malnutrition in early childhood face lifelong damage to their health and their physical and cognitive development. *Even short bouts of hunger and malnutrition carry long-term consequences.*

Conflict and hunger are inextricably linked. In 2016, the number of hungry people increased for the first time in more than a decade—from 777 million in 2015 to 815 million in 2016, although this was still less than the 2000 figure of about 900 million. The increase was in large part because of conflict and climate change. Sixty percent of the world's hungry people are living in countries affected by conflict; of those, 122 million are children.<sup>2</sup> This reality underscores the assertion made by Amartya Sen, renowned scholar and 1998 Nobel Prize Laureate in Economics. In his work on poverty and famine, Sen made a bold declaration: “No famine has ever taken place in the history of the world, in a functioning democracy.” More studies have validated the link between famine on one hand, and weak institutions and poor governance on the other.

In 2015, the international community adopted the ambitious and visionary Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include ending hunger and all forms of malnutrition by 2030. Goal 16 is to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. It underscores the principle of *leaving no one behind* as critical to achieving the SDGs. Nowhere is the challenge of meeting the SDGs greater than in countries affected by war or other armed conflict. All the countries on the verge of famine are also considered fragile or conflict-affected states.

Fragile and conflict-affected countries and regions present unique challenges. It takes time to rebuild trust and the institutions that have been eroded, if not destroyed, by conflict. Because of the time required, enabling post-conflict societies to recover requires sustained political will—both in the country and in the international community—and patient investors.

According to the UN, humanitarian operations in the four countries required more than \$5.6 billion in 2017, of which at least \$4.4 billion was urgently needed to meet the immediate needs of the 20 million people at risk of starvation.

## South Sudan: The world's youngest country urgently needs help

On July 9, 2011, South Sudan gained independence from Sudan, becoming the world's newest country. The 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) ended more than two decades of war between rebels in the south of Sudan and the government in Khartoum. Between the signing of the CPA and independence, South Sudan made important progress in state-building. National and

state governments were formed along with key institutions that are necessary to ensure the rule of law, such as police, judicial, and prison systems.

According to the World Bank, there was social and economic progress as well:

- The number of children enrolled in primary school increased six-fold between 2005 and 2012, from 300,000 to 1.8 million
- Infant mortality decreased by 25 percent
- The number of skilled midwives grew
- Polio was eradicated

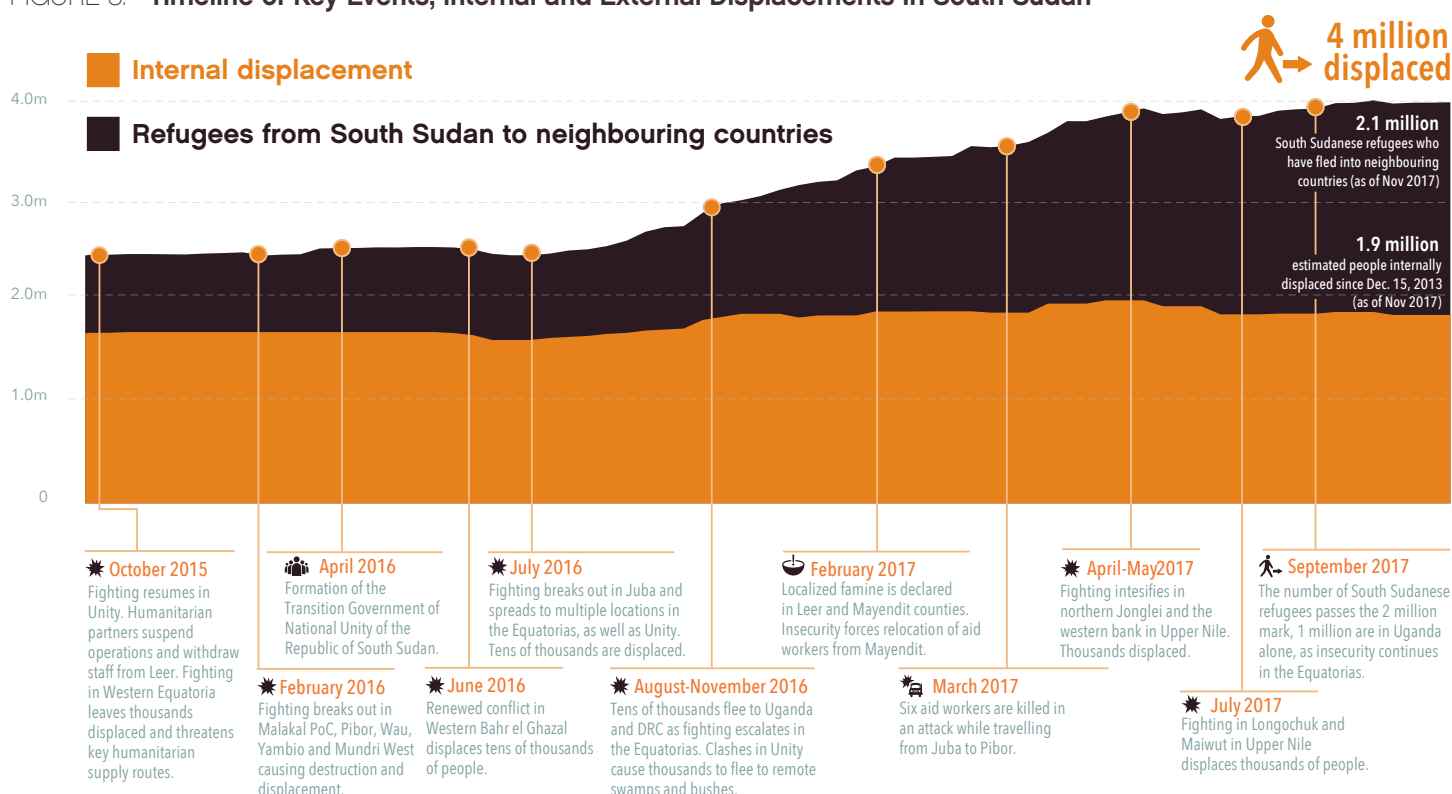
Unfortunately, the independence celebration was short-lived, and all progress has been halted or reversed. In December 2013, two years after emerging as an independent state, South Sudan plunged into conflict when rivalry between the country's president, Salva Kiir, and his former vice president, Riek Machar, turned violent.

In August 2015, after peace negotiations, both parties signed the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS). But the agreement did not end the fighting, which has spread across the entire country, now splintered along ethnic, political, and regional lines. More than 4 million people—approximately one-third of the entire population—have fled their homes. The conflict has affected nearly everyone and exacerbated deep economic and social problems in a country whose human development indicators (e.g., life expectancy) were already among the weakest in the world.

### THE HUMAN AND ECONOMIC COSTS OF THE CONFLICT

South Sudan has fertile soil and significant oil deposits. Its economy is dependent on exporting oil—more so than any other country in the world. Oil is nearly all that South Sudan exports, and it generates about 60 percent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP). Oil

FIGURE 3: Timeline of Key Events, Internal and External Displacements in South Sudan



Source: Humanitarian Response



revenue will be available for a limited time, however: World Bank estimates based on current reserves project that oil production will steadily fall, becoming negligible by 2035.<sup>3</sup>

In 2016, South Sudan's oil-dependent economy faced multiple major shocks, including the eruption of conflict in Juba, disruptions in agricultural production, and a significant drop in international oil prices (from \$49.79 per barrel in June 2016 to \$46.06 per barrel by November 2016). The poor performance of the economy triggered a severe fiscal and economic crisis. The cost of basic necessities, particularly food, "skyrocketed."<sup>4</sup>

According to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, the Central Bank has no reserves, and the limited oil and non-oil revenues are spent on loans for military and security spending. Throughout 2016, the South Sudanese pound (SSP) depreciated rapidly, reaching an all-time low in September 2017, when U.S. \$1 was worth more than 180 SSP. The cost of living has risen exponentially, with South Sudan's annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) increasing by 835.7 percent between October 2015 and October 2016—the highest year-on-year inflation rate in the world.<sup>5</sup>

Prices of staple foods, such as sorghum, maize, and beans, are at record highs. The price of sorghum in Juba was 596 percent higher in October 2016 than in October 2015, and 1,177 percent above the five-year average price.

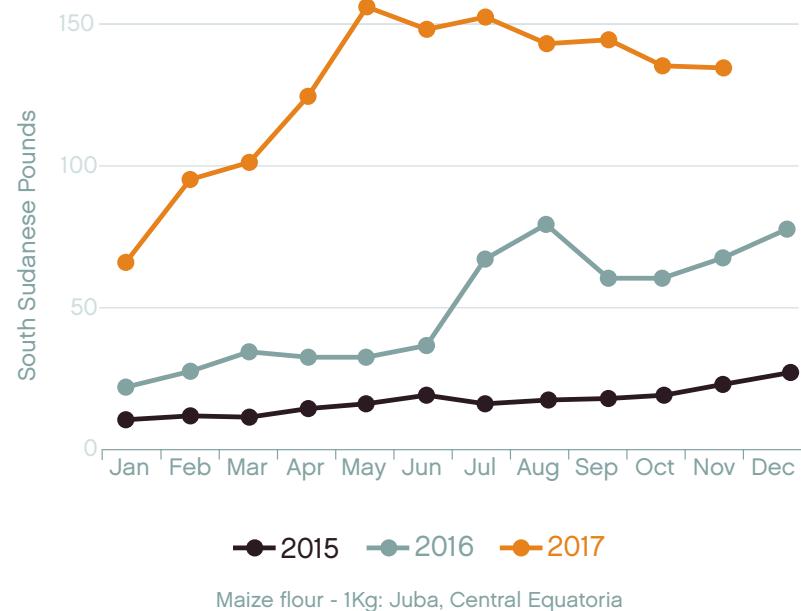
The human cost of the conflict is enormous. Poverty has risen significantly—from 44.7 percent in 2011 to a World Bank estimate of 66 percent in October 2016.<sup>6</sup> Poverty is also deeper than in the period before the conflict.

Only 27 percent of all those ages 15 or older are literate, according to the World Bank. Moreover, there is a significant gender disparity, indicating few educational opportunities for generations of women: the male literacy rate is 40 percent, while the female literacy rate is just 16 percent. Other indications of the country's poverty include a very high infant mortality rate (105 per 1,000 live births, meaning that more than 10 percent of all babies born alive die before they are a year old), and a high maternal mortality rate of 2,054 per 100,000 live births. Children are



A young fisherman in Terekeka, South Sudan. The country has abundant natural resources—armed conflict is the reason millions of lives are at stake.

FIGURE 4: Increase of Prices for Staple Foods



Source: CLIMIS South Sudan, Nov. 2017

vulnerable to dangerous childhood illnesses, with 83 percent not fully immunized.

Water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) statistics are also troubling. Just over half (55 percent) of the population has access to an improved source of drinking water, 38 percent must walk more than 30 minutes each way to collect drinking water, and only 20 percent have access to a toilet facility.<sup>7</sup>

Although early warning and a robust humanitarian response prevented localized famine in the Leer and Mayendit areas (see map below), food insecurity has reached unprecedented levels and many people are still on the brink of famine. In September 2017, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) reported a record high of 7 million people facing acute hunger in South Sudan, including 1.7 million people on the brink of famine. The situation has worsened since then. The latest estimates are that more than 1 million children younger than 5 are acutely malnourished, including more than 273,600 suffering from severe acute

malnutrition (SAM).<sup>8</sup> Reports indicate that since December 2013, 2 million people have been displaced within South Sudan and an additional 2 million have fled to neighboring countries.

Violence and insecurity in villages and along major roads have disrupted farming and trading, leaving communities with no access to hard currency for imports and food. There are widespread reports of sexual violence, including rape and gang rape, perpetrated by men from all parties to the conflict.<sup>9</sup> Child labor and child marriage are on the rise as more families are in desperate need of the bride price they receive in exchange for their daughters.<sup>10</sup>

Ongoing insecurity, including an uptick in fighting, has caused communities to abandon farms and hampered efforts to distribute seeds and tools. In addition, adverse weather and flooding continue to damage roads and disrupt transport networks, hindering the movement of commodities to some parts of the country.<sup>11</sup> It was an ominous sign that 3.7 million people were food insecure in October 2016—immediately after the fall harvest. This was an increase of 1 million people compared to the same period in 2015. Food security experts had warned that the benefits of the harvest would be short-lived.<sup>12</sup>

**“This will require determination and a commitment to use all the tools at our disposal to compel the parties to choose peace. We must continue to push for a peaceful resolution to the conflict with as much unity and pressure as we can apply. We must also continue to call for protection and humanitarian concerns to be addressed immediately, and for unhindered access to civilian populations.”**

—Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary General, 2017 UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on South Sudan

## THE WAY FORWARD: POLITICALLY-INDUCED PROBLEMS CALL FOR POLITICAL SOLUTIONS

It is widely acknowledged that the South Sudan food emergency is man-made. Human actions, particularly the proliferation of armed factions and militia groups, continue to make humanitarian response extremely difficult and restrict access to markets, farms, and medical services. Aid workers are also faced with exorbitant “visa fees.” The world’s newest country is now also one of the most dangerous places to be an aid worker—far riskier than Afghanistan, for example. So far, 85 aid workers have been killed since the conflict started in 2013, including 18 in 2017.<sup>13</sup>

The complexity of the crisis in South Sudan underscores several longstanding challenges facing

the global humanitarian system. Resolving these problems will require bridging diplomatic, emergency, and long-term efforts. Saving the lives of people at immediate risk must be connected with peacebuilding and with efforts to protect and rebuild livelihoods, or ways for people to earn a living.

### INADEQUATE: THE STATE OF THE HUMANITARIAN SYSTEM

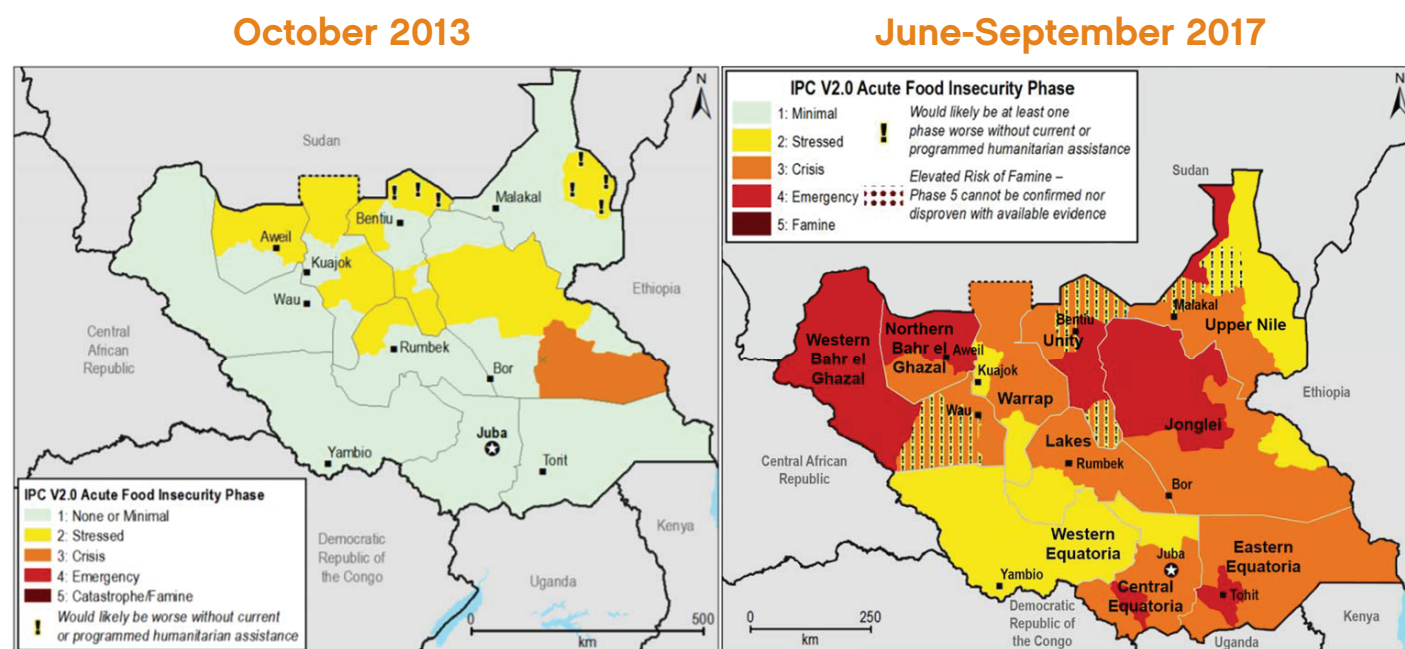
In 2016, the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit was held in Turkey, just a year after 193 countries adopted the ambitious SDG agenda. The summit convened world leaders, ministers, businesses, civil society, and academics to reaffirm the key requirement for achieving the SDGs—to leave no one behind—and to explore how to achieve this in practice. It will require new ways of working together.

Then-UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon issued a report<sup>14</sup> ahead of the summit that reflected this spirit that *business as usual* is no longer sufficient. The report declared, “Preventing conflicts and finding political solutions to resolve them is our first and foremost responsibility to humanity.” It stressed the need for all stakeholders—including civil society, partner countries, donors, and businesses—to “move beyond the comfort of traditional silos, work across mandates, sectors, and institutional boundaries, and with a greater diversity of partners toward shared results.”

Further, the report calls for fundamental shifts that would enable this to happen. It refers to them as the five core responsibilities:

- Provide global leadership to prevent and end conflict
- Uphold the norms that safeguard humanity
- Leave no one behind
- Change people’s lives—from delivering aid to ending need. This will require three fundamental shifts in the way the global humanitarian and development community works:
  - Reinforce, don’t replace, national systems
  - Anticipate, do not wait for, crises
  - Transcend the humanitarian-development divide
- Invest in humanity, including by strengthening the capacity of local systems to build resilience and mobilize humanitarian response in fragile situations

FIGURE 5: Conflict and Food Insecurity in South Sudan



Source: Africa Centre for Strategic Studies

The Secretary-General's report came at a time when the world's largest humanitarian crisis since World War II was unfolding right before our eyes: armed conflict and climate change have forced more than 60 million people to leave their homes and live as displaced people in their own countries or refugees in other countries. The crisis illustrates that our fragmented global approaches to peacebuilding, humanitarian relief, and development are costly and inadequate. Overwhelming evidence indicates that humanitarian crises have increased in number and severity due to conflict, extreme weather events related to climate change, and other disruptions.

Among other indications is the fact that international food assistance expenditures have grown in scale and coverage. A very sobering 2017 report<sup>15</sup> by the World Food Program (WFP) indicates that insecurity is expensive: high levels of instability in most of the 80 countries where WFP works raised its costs by a total of \$2.24 billion. According to the report, conflict, climatic shocks, and poor food delivery networks are associated with instability.

Existing global approaches and institutions cannot adequately respond to the growing number of humanitarian emergencies that have become protracted crises—crises that never reach a point where they can be considered “over” and therefore seem to become “permanent emergencies.”

Because hunger crises—and the people caught in them—have longer and longer timeframes, global assistance must shift to a longer timeframe as well. Even once a family has been able to resume farming, it takes time for a farm destroyed by conflict or natural disaster to become productive enough to feed the family with enough left over to help feed people in urban areas.

However, we don't usually think of crisis responses as lasting years, much less as having no fixed end date. That is why more political support, as well as more financial investment, is needed to make long-term development a higher priority. Because prevention is less costly—in human life and suffering, in money, in time—than responding to events that have already happened, a more effective approach will focus on building resilience and addressing the root causes of shocks. To be most effective, an initiative should emphasize strengthening human and institutional capacity, and it should work in concert with diplomatic strategies such as conflict prevention, mediation, and peace building.

FIGURE 6: Response Plan/Appeal Snapshot for 2018

## US\$1.72bn total requirements of plan



## US\$108.0m total funding to South Sudan (2018)



Source: United Nations Office of Humanitarian and Coordination Affairs (UNOCHA)



## STIMULATING LOCAL MARKETS THROUGH SOCIAL PROTECTION

Of course, humanitarian aid alone cannot end conflict, nor can it fully respond to the devastating impacts of conflict on individuals, their livelihoods, and national economies, which linger for decades. But taking a longer-term approach by integrating development efforts, such as investing in social protection and social safety nets, into emergency assistance can be a game-changer by reducing the risk of recurrence of costly crises. Stimulating local markets with cash transfers and helping countries rebuild infrastructure by supporting labor-intensive public works can both be components of a broader social protection program. Each would help build and strengthen the productive asset base so that the country can move forward economically. In short, the new approach must prioritize safeguarding livelihoods and institutions as well as saving lives.

Social protection programs, such as cash transfers, school feeding programs, and public works and infrastructure projects, provide a much-needed cushion against severe shocks such as conflict, which can and does devastate the livelihoods of entire communities and the economies of entire countries. If well-targeted and integrated with humanitarian and long-term development initiatives such as those in nutrition, agriculture, health, and education, these programs enable communities to invest in profitable economic activities that, in turn, allow people to build assets and also contribute to wider national economic gains.

For example, education for refugee and displaced families will help them contribute to their communities when they return, in addition to ensuring that an entire generation is not left behind in the meantime. Another example: ensuring that displaced families have access to appropriate maternal and child nutrition interventions in the critical 1,000-day window for human nutrition, from pregnancy to age 2. Good nutrition during this period of a child's life contributes to building a stronger, healthy foundation for communities. It increases people's productivity, and therefore their incomes as well, in both the short and long terms. These examples show that humanitarian and development actions fit together naturally.

As emphasized in Bread for the World Institute's earlier analysis, "Strengthening Local Capacity: The Weak Link in Sustainable Development,"<sup>16</sup> increasingly complex conflicts and fragile situations require careful, strategic interventions. It is important to bridge the humanitarian relief-development assistance divide more effectively by strengthening the capacity of local institutions and systems such as agriculture, education, judiciary, and police. Stronger capacity means that they will be better able to advance and sustain broad-based development gains against hunger, malnutrition, and poverty, as well as to foster peace. Such a shift to emphasize local capacity is necessary to adapt to the changing nature of crises, but demands strong commitment and bold action at global and local levels. It is noteworthy that bringing the two types of assistance together is no small feat. One barrier to achieving synergy in the humanitarian system is the stove-piping of funding. Excessive earmarking also complicates efforts to coordinate humanitarian and longer-term efforts.

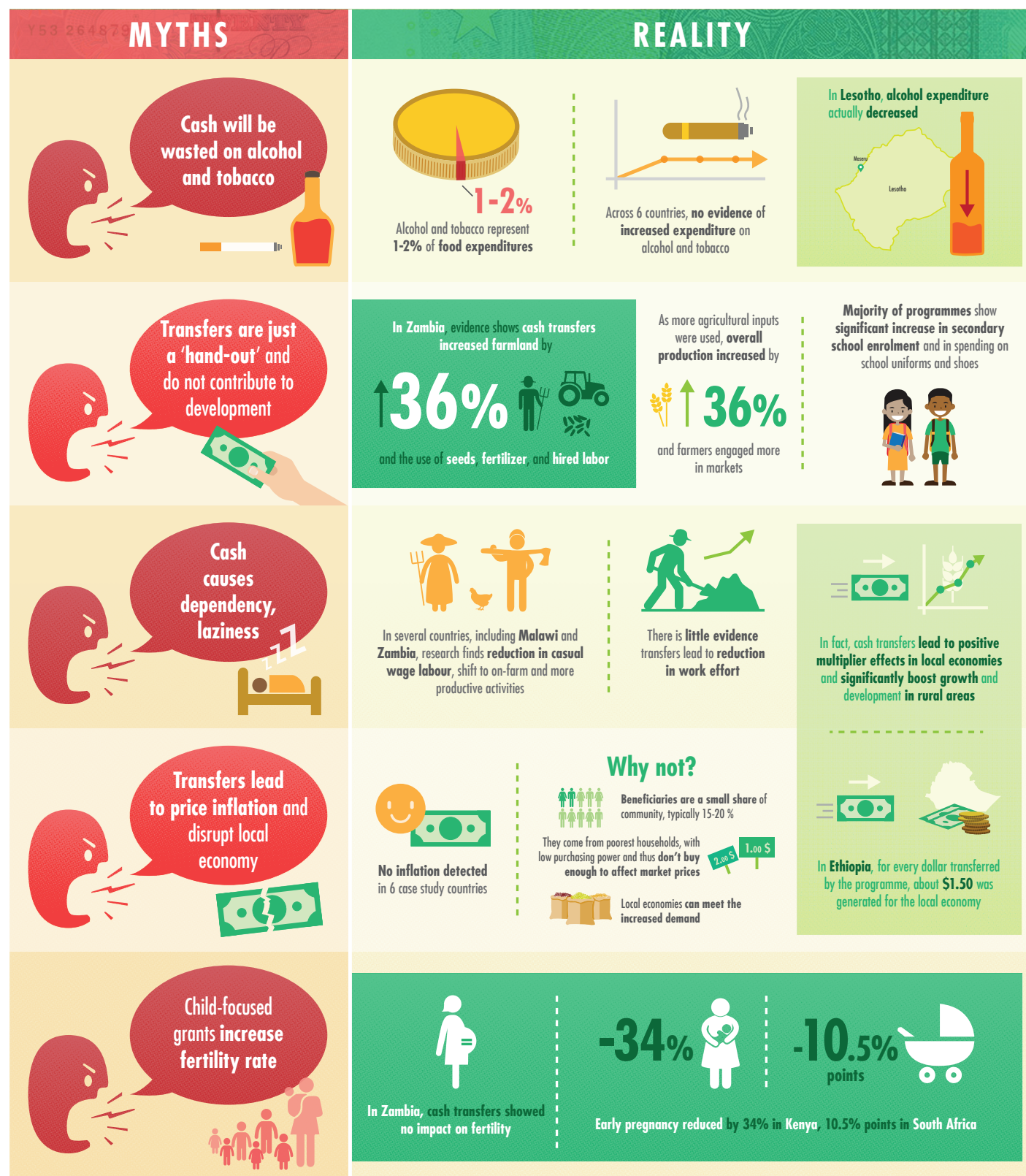
Furthermore, at the root of every conflict is a sticky political issue. The international community must commit to bridging the continuum by offering both short-term emergency response and long-term efforts such as investing in economic activities and agricultural systems. Each must be accompanied by a core ingredient: peace-building and conflict transformation. In complex crises like South Sudan's, humanitarian actors likely cannot influence many or most of the external factors that fuel the conflict, such as high levels of corruption and the flow of weapons into the country. It is extremely challenging for negotiators to help identify solutions that are

The post-conflict recovery of northern Uganda is a positive example. Two decades of conflict between government forces and the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) led to mass displacements coupled with surges in poverty, food insecurity, and malnutrition. WFP food assistance to internally displaced persons (IDPs) in northern Uganda peaked at 1.9 million in 2007. Following the retreat of LRA forces from northern Uganda in 2006-07, people returned to their hometowns. The framework of the government-led Peace, Recovery, and Development Plan for Northern Uganda coordinated significant investments in sustaining peace and promoting recovery. Food security and nutrition in northern Uganda have improved substantially since the end of the conflict, and WFP phased out food assistance to people in the region in 2010.

Source: FAO, 2017. *State of Food Security and Nutrition*

FIGURE 7: **Cash Transfers: Myths vs. Reality**

Cash transfers are an effective form of social protection, as these examples show.



Source: UNICEF

agreeable to all warring parties but do not compromise important humanitarian principles. But this does not mean that it's not important for outside interventions to reflect the complex reality, rather than continue to act as though livelihoods are compartmentalized into humanitarian and development phases.

Amid intense conflict over the U.S. budget and proposals to cut U.S. foreign assistance, we must remember that the unique challenges presented by fragile and conflict-affected countries such as South Sudan require that scarce resources be used where they matter most—in building human and institutional capacity to reduce the immense human suffering and wasted resources caused by war. Future humanitarian emergencies must be prevented.

The necessity of preventing future hunger crises and starvation deaths is widely acknowledged. The conclusions of the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit support this priority. The UN Secretary-General's Advisory Group of Experts on the Review of the Peacebuilding Architecture<sup>17</sup> recommends that 1 percent of the core funding from assessed contributions to the UN Peacebuilding Fund be allocated to peace operations.

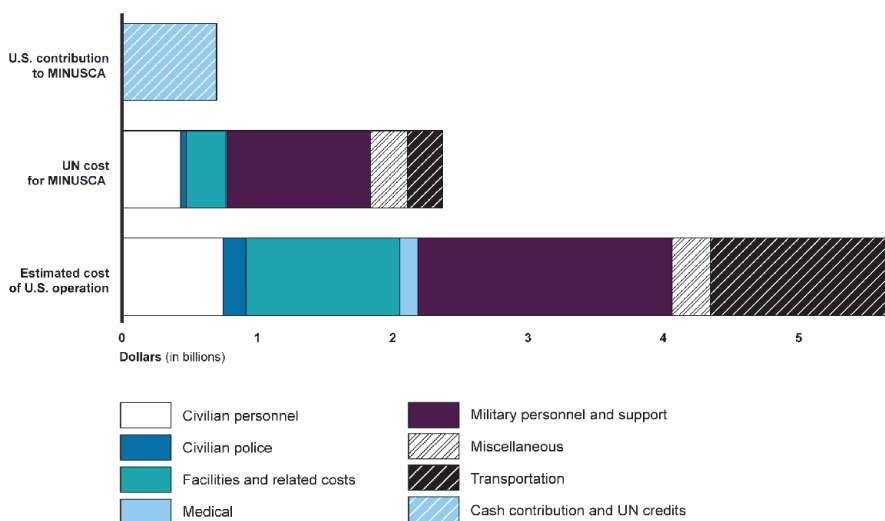
U.S. gains in peace and security through multilateral initiatives such as the UN Peacebuilding Fund far outweigh the costs of multilateral contributions. Newly released evidence confirms this: in 2017, Congress asked the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to compare the cost of a UN peacekeeping mission with the cost of a similar U.S. military deployment. Congress wanted to know how much a hypothetical deployment of U.S. troops would cost compared to the deployment of UN peacekeepers to a global hotspot.

For the study, GAO selected the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in the Central African Republic, known as MINUSCA.<sup>18</sup> The findings were staggering. Conducting the equivalent of MINUSCA with U.S. troops would cost nearly eight times as much as the United States contributed to MINUSCA over the same time period—nearly \$5.7 billion and \$700 million respectively.<sup>19</sup>

Bread for the World Institute's 2017 Hunger Report, "Fragile Environments, Resilient Communities,"<sup>20</sup> also underscores the urgency of prevention efforts and calls for greater flexibility and expanded USG engagement with other governments, multilateral actors, and civil society in fragile countries. In support of such a focus on flexibility, Bread for the World Institute also worked with partners to outline "Principles for Strategic Transitions from Development Aid"<sup>21</sup> that inform the evolution of a new approach to relationships between the United States and partner countries. While "transitions from aid"—or "graduation"—is the goal, the Principles for Strategic Transitions caution against a "one-size-fits-all" approach. They emphasize the need to strengthen the capacity of local systems and institutions, which takes time. Efforts to sustain peace after conflict, in particular, require aid with realistic program cycles that reflect the nature of conflicts today: increasingly long, complex, and intractable.

The following section offers short-term and long-term recommendations for the U.S. government. They are based on broad consultations with individuals and networks<sup>22</sup> familiar with the situation on the ground in South Sudan, as well as the broader scope of the conflict.

**FIGURE 8: Comparison of U.S. Contribution to MINUSCA, UN Cost for MINUSCA, and Estimated Cost of a Hypothetical U.S. Peacekeeping Operation in the Central African Republic, April 2014 through June 2017**



Legend: UN=United Nations; MINUSCA=Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic.

Source: GAO analysis of United Nations and Departments of Defense and State data. | GAO-18-243



## Short-Term Efforts to End Violence and Promote Stability

The situation in South Sudan is desperate and urgent. The fact that the crisis is largely man-made means that it is within human power to end it. At the very least, we can save millions of lives—people currently on the verge of starvation. But the window of opportunity is very limited. We must act decisively, now, not later.

The country's most immediate need is to end the brutal and senseless conflict that has displaced more than one-third of the population, so that people can return to their homes and resume farming to prevent additional periods of near-famine conditions. However, the warring parties have shown no interest in stopping the suffering and death of innocent children, men, and women.

Immediate actions the United States could take include:

### PROTECT FOOD-SECURE AREAS AND HUMANITARIAN ACCESS CORRIDORS

South Sudan is not all insecure and unlivable; there are areas that are relatively peaceful. Support for agricultural production, service delivery, stronger infrastructure, and skills for market-based jobs are critical investments in the country's post-war future. In the meantime, however, it is most important to protect communities that have produced or purchased food from raids and attacks by armed factions.

### ENSURE ACCESS TO GOOD NUTRITION, ESPECIALLY AMONG PREGNANT WOMEN AND YOUNG CHILDREN

To prevent the conflict from further compromising the long-term health, well-being, and productivity of South Sudan's current and future generations, the international community must prioritize sufficient nutritious food for people in the critical 1,000-day window between pregnancy and age 2. Malnutrition among pregnant and lactating women, babies, and toddlers causes damage to health and development that cannot be reversed with a healthy diet in later childhood or adulthood. Nutrition education should be integrated into cash-transfer programs to increase the use of critical services for both mothers and young children, where these are available: prenatal and post-natal care, well child visits, and participation in nutrition knowledge sharing practices.

### IMMEDIATELY BAN SELLING WEAPONS INTO SOUTH SUDAN

Violence erupted in South Sudan in December 2013. To date, the UN Security Council and the broader international community have made no concrete progress toward ending the conflict. The Security Council is divided, failing to reach agreement that, for example, banning the supply of more weapons would be a smart thing to do. As in other conflict situations, war profiteering is thriving in South Sudan. Governments that support an embargo have been discouraged by the indecision and lack of strong leadership for an embargo in the years since the war began.

*"The U.S. position has flip-flopped on this issue so many times that governments that oppose an embargo have not had to use their veto power, and governments that support one feel burned by the U.S. and thus do not champion the issue. The deadly status quo thus continues."*

—John Prendergast, Enough Project

On February 5, 2018, however, the United States announced it would support an arms embargo of South Sudan. The United States should commit to working with a "coalition of the willing" to articulate terms and a time frame to have an arms ban in place.

Another challenge in South Sudan is corruption, particularly money laundering. This is perhaps an even bigger problem than the arms trade since cash enables combatants to purchase weapons. The United States, regional and international banks, and neighboring countries need to adopt a joint policy of imposing sanctions on companies, networks, and officials involved in money laundering and other crimes.

In August 2017, the United States imposed sanctions on six officials closely tied to the Kiir government. Although this is a good first step, a more effective strategy would extend targeted sanctions to officials who use government resources to buy weapons that are intended for use against civilians. Such sanctions could include freezing bank accounts, denying visas, and seizing property. Sanctions could help deter others and ultimately save more of the country's limited resources for postwar reconstruction.



## SUPPORT AND FACILITATE AN ACTION PLAN FOR A PEACE DEAL

South Sudan's civil war has changed from a conflict between two main opponents—President Salva Kiir and his ousted former deputy, Riek Machar—to a fragmented war that includes combatants from several other militia groups, further complicating and hampering the task of ending the fighting. After fighting escalated in July 2016, opposition leader Machar was forced to flee the country. Since then, the conflict has deepened, becoming increasingly a conflict along ethnic lines and spreading to previously peaceful areas.

Unfortunately, regional peace efforts have stumbled. The 2015 Peace Agreement is not fully backed by the two original parties to the conflict. This complicates neighboring countries' positions. During much of 2016, Uganda, Ethiopia, and Kenya adopted less useful bilateral approaches since there was no regional mechanism for negotiations. Machar remains in exile in South Africa, excluded from any regional peace processes. However, his party, the SPLA-IO, is still very active in the country, as are many combatants who are loyal to him.

At this juncture, the only truly viable alternative to the failed 2015 peace agreement is to support a more inclusive peace agreement. It must accomplish two things at the same time: broaden the push for peace, and create incentives that will secure the cooperation of the numerous armed groups that are not directly tied to Kiir or Machar. The United States should step up its leadership and press for inclusive mediation through high-level diplomatic engagement in the region. However, efforts to be inclusive must maintain a delicate balance:

*“What we don’t want to do is to encourage a greater degree of conflict or arming of groups in order to be relevant and have a place at the table.”*

—David Shearer, UN Special Representative for South Sudan

The lack of a coherent mediation strategy is one sign of the inadequacy of global community efforts to end the war. There is also now a history of failure—earlier attempts have been unproductive at best. Perhaps the most egregious example came when, after the 2015 peace agreement was signed, the United States and later the African Union made efforts to discourage former Vice President Riek Machar—a key party to the war—from returning to Juba. This has emboldened the other main faction, led by President Salva Kiir, to avoid serious negotiations with any of the armed factions.

Two children carry water in Leer, Unity State, South Sudan, parts of which have been declared famine-affected.



UN OCHA

An inclusive peace is the only way out for South Sudan. The way forward is for all parties to uphold the highest standards of global humanitarian law, to work toward solutions that will end the conflict, and to support the country in its reconstruction efforts.

Any meaningful peace efforts should include the government, the main armed opposition factions, key political parties, and civil society actors, to include displaced people and survivors of sexual violence. The peace process must also support an intercommunal reconciliation strategy and reject the idea of dealing only with the “guys with the biggest guns.” The United States should press the African Union and the United Nations to assume leading roles in a fresh peace process, because the divisions among South Sudan’s neighboring states will make it extremely difficult for the 2015 framework to lead to any success.

## Long-Term Development and Peacebuilding

Fragile states and countries experiencing conflict require a differentiated approach from those not in conflict. To address the unique challenges presented by fragile and conflict-affected states, the USG should develop a whole-of-government strategy to coordinate efforts that prioritize peacebuilding. This should include working with local actors and multilateral agencies as well as other appropriate partners. The principles below should guide formulation of the USG engagement strategy within South Sudan and other countries in similar or related situations:

### ACT QUICKLY BUT THOUGHTFULLY TO BRIDGE THE HUMANITARIAN-DEVELOPMENT DIVIDE

Bread for the World Institute empathizes that donors should allow for greater flexibility in funding and programming to ensure that humanitarian assistance meets immediate needs, builds resilience, and fosters peace. One important area where flexibility is needed is food aid. Locally purchased food and cash vouchers help people get food more quickly, avoid disrupting local markets, and save money by reducing shipping costs. More people can be reached more quickly with less funding. The situation in South Sudan also calls for additional flexibility to adapt activities and priorities when the nature of the conflict changes and therefore save both lives and livelihoods.

While emergency aid is vital right now, we must think beyond the current crisis and lay the foundation for long-term peace and stability. Investing in nutrition can be one powerful way to bridge the short-term to long-term divide. Along with other fragile states and situations, South

Sudan’s rates of acute malnutrition are among the highest in the world. Unfortunately, treatment for malnutrition is only available in the country’s few health facilities, which are widely scattered and cost more than most families can afford. A study by the United Nations Fund for Children indicates that an estimated 250,000 children will be affected by severe acute malnutrition in 2018 as famine conditions persist across the country.<sup>23</sup> Without prompt treatment, up to half of these children will die—deaths that are entirely preventable.<sup>24</sup>

**“Bullets and guns will not restore South Sudan. We have thousands of acres of fertile land, but we need help to cultivate them and grow our own food.”**

—Bishop Joseph Garang Atem,  
Episcopal bishop of the Diocese of Renk

There are a few promising initiatives to save more lives. For example, key actors such as the Eleanor Crook Foundation, the U.S. Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, and the Children’s Investment Fund Foundation have joined together to identify and expand new ways to reach more children at home<sup>25</sup> or where they live. Recent conversations at the Scaling Up Nutrition Global Gathering<sup>26</sup> in Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, centered on effective efforts to treat malnutrition by investing in local organizations that best understand their local contexts. Prior resources allocated to local women’s groups in Nepal to help them build household food security, manage their food supplies, and identify early signs of malnutrition paid off when the Nepal earthquake struck. The groups were able to identify key signs of malnutrition and enable children to access

treatment more quickly. It is not surprising that, in turn, fewer deaths and disabilities from early childhood malnutrition enabled the community to recover from the earthquake more quickly.

It is crucial to invest in human capital and institutional capacity in South Sudan. This includes supporting the efforts of local community organizations and networks, which in most cases are the first responders but receive little or no support from international funders.

We know that building capacity takes time, yet donors remain focused on short-term outcomes. For example, social protection programs are critical to progress on preventing or reducing the severity of hunger crises in the region.<sup>27</sup> Providing regular and predictable cash transfers to poor households often plays a critical role in terms of filling immediate food gaps, while also helping improve livelihoods by alleviating constraints on people's productive capacity. U.S. investments in fragile and conflict-affected situations should prioritize the need for effective coordination and patient capital. A persistent obstacle to sustaining this progress is the fact that development partners, including the United States, operate short-term, three- to five-year development program cycles—yet achieving meaningful outcomes takes time. This crisis provides an opportunity for the administration and Congress to rethink and review the program time frames and priorities.

#### **HUMANIZE, DON'T MILITARIZE, THE U.S. INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS BUDGET**

The administration's fiscal year 2018 budget proposed reducing State Department funding by roughly a third and cutting foreign assistance by about 29 percent. Reports indicate that this would cut aid to Africa to \$5.2 billion from its current level of \$8 billion. The proposal would include a cut of at least \$1.1 billion to programs that provide antiretroviral drugs for people living with HIV—nearly 20 percent of their current funding.<sup>28</sup> The same report shows that the cuts would lead to the deaths of at least 1 million people in sub-Saharan Africa and around the world.

The budget proposal would start to establish a pattern of spending more U.S. taxpayer dollars on the military and less on humanitarian, development, and diplomacy assistance in Africa. Proponents argue that this is important to national security. But retired senior U.S. military leaders were among the first to denounce the administration's proposed cuts in humanitarian funding to expand military spending.

More than 120 retired 3- and 4-star generals signed and submitted a letter<sup>29</sup> to Congress in February 2017 that emphasized that cuts to foreign aid would hurt the Pentagon: "The military will lead the fight against terrorism on the battlefield, but it needs strong civilian partners in the battle against the drivers of extremism—lack of opportunity, insecurity, injustice, and hopelessness."

They understand that cuts to humanitarian and development assistance create conditions that make it easier for militia groups to exploit desperate and vulnerable young people, exacerbate conflict and extremism, and perpetuate the need for costly U.S. military intervention.

A meaningful policy and budget strategy should prioritize giving communities the tools to meet their aspirations: strengthening local capacity and governance institutions; investing in agricultural infrastructure to boost food security, nutrition, and economic productivity; and



A woman prepares a meal of weed leaves for her family. Humanitarian relief food rations have been reduced due to lack of funds.



expanding access to education to develop human capital. The proposed budget cuts would diminish core development funding, functions, and capacity. In addition, they would confuse—rather than clarify—lines of authority and accountability for U.S. diplomacy and development programs, by prioritizing short-term political gains over crucial long-term investments in diplomacy, economic growth, and development.<sup>30</sup>

The administration should fill key State Department positions that are currently vacant, since the absence of people in these posts hinders diplomacy efforts. In particular, the State Department needs an Undersecretary for Africa.

Initiatives such as the U.S. Institute for Peace’s civil-military interagency training exercises can help train leaders to find diplomatic solutions to conflict. The exercises convene both military and civilian officials, and both government and non-government actors, to simulate a specific area of conflict and how it might be resolved.<sup>31</sup>

*“The reason I moved into the democracy and government space is that you can’t get over the finish line on any of the broad goals we have on poverty relief, tackling hunger, or tackling the great afflictions of our time if you don’t have responsible, citizen-oriented, and responsive government.”<sup>32</sup>*

—Mark Green, USAID Administrator

## INVEST IN WOMEN AND YOUTH THROUGH ENTREPRENEURSHIP, EDUCATION, AND SKILLS BUILDING

Investing in human capital is critical to preventing an entire generation from being destroyed. Skills and education options for youth, both boys and girls, and support for women who are in many cases the sole heads of households will help preserve some resources for the postwar nation.

South Sudan has one of the world’s youngest populations: two-thirds of the population is under the age of 30.<sup>33</sup> Helping to ensure that young women and men can pursue empowering, productive economic activities in the post-conflict period is critical to preventing exclusion and resentment. Some actions that could help include expanding land rights, access to credit, education, and employment opportunities so that young people can be integrated or reintegrated into productive working life.

Local capacity-building efforts—for example, literacy and numeracy programs and skills-building through vocational training—help build a foundation for gainful employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for youth. Facilitating youth participation in development committees and youth-led organizations helps ensure that their specific needs are considered while strengthening their leadership abilities. One such platform is the Global Youth Innovation Network (GYIN),<sup>34</sup> which currently connects youth, both boys and girls, in 88 countries and five continents.

South Sudan, like any other conflict-affected country, must recognize that securing peace, promoting social progress, and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms all require the active and meaningful participation of all people in society. Social exclusion and marginalization can have far-reaching negative consequences—for individuals, and for the entire economy. Women and youth bear the brunt of the impact of conflict and other crisis situations. They are also usually left out of viable reconciliation and negotiation efforts. This is despite the evidence that women’s participation in peace and security agreements improves the likelihood that peace will last.<sup>35</sup>

## SUPPORT REFUGEE HOST COUNTRIES

When U.S. diplomats and aid workers engage meaningfully with local actors, they gain a deeper understanding of the local contexts, opportunities, and challenges. Low- and middle-income countries host the vast majority—84 percent—of today’s record numbers of refugees around the world.<sup>36</sup> Ethiopia, Kenya, and Uganda are all among the world’s top 10 refugee host countries. Recent estimates indicate that Uganda hosts more refugees than any other country in Africa. Most of the refugees in Uganda have fled conflict, hunger, and water scarcity in Somalia and South Sudan. The number of South Sudanese refugees in the region has passed the 2 million mark, and about 900,000 Somali refugees continue to live in camps and urban centers in Ethiopia and Kenya.



Working with refugee-hosting countries and communities is key to protecting the host countries and even entire regions from destabilization. Evidence from the World Bank indicates that failure to respond to the hosts' needs causes disruption in local economies and increases both instability and the likelihood that conflict will spread beyond national borders. In areas where food is available and markets are functioning, U.S. assistance should move toward providing cash-based transfers to people in need. These enable people to buy their food at local markets and thus support the local economy.

To the extent possible, donor assistance should support opportunities to build relationships across ethnic lines in refugee camps—for example, by integrating schools and teaching conflict management skills to ease tensions and help prevent future violence.

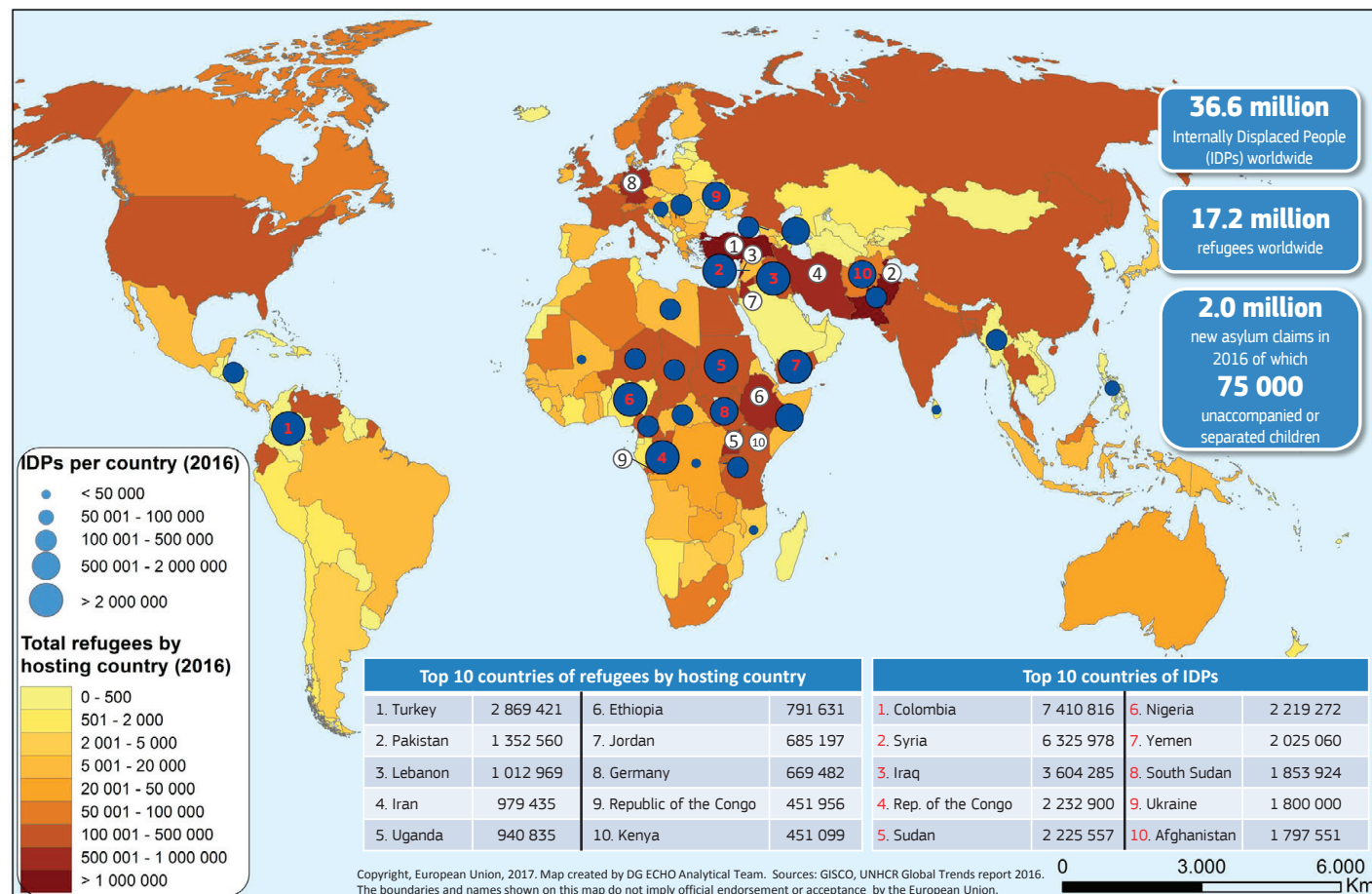
### UNDERSTAND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY, SUPPORT CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT

Local, regional, and global geopolitical interests in resources—particularly oil—are fueling the conflict in South Sudan. This complicates neighboring countries' efforts to work toward a meaningful regional solution. It also means that a peace agreement must include a strategy to reduce the impact of groups and institutions that, while they appear peripheral, enable the war<sup>37</sup> to continue. This includes, for example, oil companies and international banks that procure sophisticated weapons for any of the warring parties.

The UN, with the African Union (AU) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), convened a high-level meeting in September 2017, a side event to the UN General Assembly in New York, to agree on collective measures to support the revitalization of the South Sudan political process and bring the fighting to an end.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for global efforts to identify how the international community can best support regional efforts aimed at revitalizing the peace agreement,

FIGURE 9: Refugees by Hosting Countries in 2016



Source: UNOCHA

especially through the newly-established High-Level Revitalization Forum,<sup>38</sup> as well as how they can pressure the warring parties to come to the table and accept the international community's efforts to negotiate an agreement. South Sudan's First Vice-President, Taban Deng Gai, attended the meeting and expressed the commitment of the Transitional Government of National Unity<sup>39</sup> to restore peace and unity to the people of his country.

The meeting opened an opportunity for the United States to work with IGAD to support national and regional negotiation efforts by ensuring that all parties linked to fueling the war are held accountable.

### **CONTRIBUTE HIGH-LEVEL U.S. LEADERSHIP**

There have been calls for a special envoy to South Sudan. This is because, with intense fighting now entering its fifth year, there is the possibility that without effective diplomacy, the war could continue indefinitely. Even in addition to the widespread destruction and famine inside the country, the conflict in South Sudan is also creating significant security and humanitarian concerns for the United States and regional bodies.

Emphasizing that no single embassy or geographic bureau can manage the complexity of the crisis,<sup>40</sup> experts say the situation demands high-level involvement to buoy the U.S. State Department's peacemaking efforts. Perhaps this is not particularly surprising given South Sudan's own recent history—no fewer than six special envoys were required to help negotiate and implement the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) that ended the 30-year civil war between Sudan and the region that became South Sudan.<sup>41</sup>

The recently released USG National Security Strategy<sup>42</sup> recognizes the need for investments in food security and global health and for sustained efforts to enable women and girls to press for gender equity. It also calls for focused assistance to help countries mobilize their own resources to promote growth and stability. It would be impossible to carry out these activities if the administration's unprecedented proposed budget cuts or a similar congressional proposal were enacted. The growing number of vacancies in our highly specialized development and diplomatic agencies will also prevent the United States from implementing its own recently developed national security strategy.

### **LOCALIZE DEVELOPMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORTS**

Community-driven approaches, such as working through a local faith institution, school, or clinic, have worked well in many conflict zones. Such institutions are often able to operate in areas where external aid agencies may be received with hostility or suspicion. During the 2011 famine in Somalia, for example, local women's groups were critically important. They managed to reach areas where conflict was ongoing to provide food to starving communities.

Institutional and local capacity building is essential to promoting stability and preventing the country from spiraling into further conflict. Building the country bottom-up is perhaps the only truly viable option. The Local Government Act<sup>43</sup> and the Development Committees established at the Boma, Payam, and County levels in rural areas, as well as the quarter, block, and municipality levels in urban areas, have proven vital. Building conflict resolution and management skills among elected members and traditional leadership could potentially keep conflict from intensifying.

To help rebuild South Sudan once the fighting ends, the United States should work as closely as possible with affected communities, the South Sudanese diaspora, neighboring countries, other donors, and the private sector to improve access to education, new technologies, knowledge, and skills. Agricultural research and extension programs should pay attention to affected communities' significant hardships as unpredictable weather patterns—a result of climate change—cause growing resource scarcities on top of the destruction of the war years. Efforts must focus on increasing communities' capacity to adapt and respond to the shocks, while also providing the necessary support—such as social protection and financial and technical assistance—to cushion families against additional stressors. This way, there are short-term objectives, with outcomes that can be communicated, but they are built into a longer-term strategy.

## SUPPORT INCLUSIVE LOCAL PEACE-BUILDING, DIALOGUE, AND RECONCILIATION

Formal negotiations to end the war in South Sudan have lost momentum, but all is not lost. At both the local and national levels, reconciliation campaigns are under way. For example, President Salva Kiir initiated The National Dialogue in December 2016 and officially launched it in May 2017. According to The SUDD Institute, “The Dialogue is led by a Steering Committee of over one hundred people, with a nine-person leadership comprising two co-chairs, a deputy co-chair, a rapporteur, two deputy rapporteurs, and three members.”<sup>44</sup> Members of civil society have called for The Dialogue to be expanded to other regions to help build trust in this government initiative.

Neighboring countries have a significant role to play in encouraging dialogue in South Sudan, but a regional effort is needed, rather than separate bilateral initiatives. Outside stakeholders should prioritize interventions that promote peace and reconciliation at the local level. These potential facilitators include neighboring countries, the African Union, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD—comprising Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Somalia, and Sudan), the United Nations, the United States, and such national partners as the United Kingdom and Norway. All mediation efforts need to prioritize an end to tension, violence, and insecurity to prevent further destruction of lives, livelihoods, and national institutions.

Informed by our analysis of the South Sudan crisis, we recommend these approaches:

- **Representative system of government that reflects national character**

A major problem that undermines peace and reconciliation efforts in South Sudan is lack of inclusion and integration of all parts of the population. Analysts within and outside South Sudan have observed the *ethnicization* of various government agencies and the military. Government agencies are staffed mostly by people from the same ethnic group, undermining trust in these institutions among people from other ethnic groups. A representative government would ensure ethnic balance and representation that reflects the national ethnic and gender composition of the country. This strategy was proven to work in the Arusha Agreement<sup>45</sup> that helped resolve the conflict in Burundi.

- **Local reconciliation processes**

Conflict resolution programs at the local and regional levels are critical to reconciliation and should accompany national efforts for greater inclusion and intentional integration. The people of South Sudan are familiar with the Wunlit Peace and Reconciliation Process of 1999,<sup>46</sup> which brought together the Dinka and Nuer peoples of Western Bahr el Ghazal and Western Upper Nile. This process initially engaged the chiefs and later the local communities. Though labor-intensive and costly (meeting facilities and food for participants were both needed), the Wunlit Process helped to bring about agreement between and among affected ethnic communities. Traditional ceremonies framed the discussion of issues and the suggested solutions. Engaging local people in the preparations also meant that they had “skin in the game.” Such initiatives, when conducted within appropriate cultural contexts, can boost trust and reconciliation.

- **The Church and the Action Plan for Peace**

The South Sudan Council of Churches is currently leading a promising peacebuilding initiative, the Action Plan for Peace.<sup>47</sup> The advantage here is that the Council of Churches, as the only institution trusted by the entire South Sudanese population, could foster cooperation across ethnic groups. The Action Plan for Peace aims to support political peace processes by mobilizing stakeholders at the national and international levels, providing safe spaces for gatherings, and facilitating dialogue and reconciliation. This is a golden opportunity to offer a large-scale reconciliation campaign, strengthen the capacity of local organizations to participate in the negotiation process, and offer supportive services to survivors of trauma.<sup>48</sup> Though the initiative is promising, support from the United States and other actors would go a long way to defend it against outsider “spoilers,” including any interference from the government of South Sudan.

- **Acceptable mediator**

*“Since the signing of the failed 2015 Agreement, the U.S. and later, the African Union, basically discouraged the leader of one of the two factions, former Vice President Riek Machar, from ever returning to Juba, thus inadvertently emboldening the other faction, led by the current president, Salva Kiir, to avoid serious negotiations with any of the armed factions. To compound their mistakes, the internationals didn’t press hard enough to include civil society in any meaningful peace efforts, provided little support to any kind of intercommunal reconciliation strategy, and only have dealt seriously with the guys with the biggest guns.”*

—John Prendergast, The Enough Project

The nature of this conflict demands mediators who can demonstrate impartiality, are respected by the communities, and bring commitment to justice and peace for all. The New Sudan Council of Churches was involved from the beginning of the Wunlit Process, setting a precedent for the South Sudan Council of Churches to facilitate such a process. In addition, Pope Francis is working with some South Sudanese faith leaders.

Pope Francis recently appointed Cardinal Peter Turkson prefect of the newly-established Vatican Dicastery on Integral Human Development. Cardinal Turkson oversees the Vatican’s advocacy on justice and peace, economic inequality, and global solidarity.

The church needs to play a more active and constructive role in ensuring the legitimacy and inclusiveness of leaders tasked with implementing justice and reconciliation processes. All stakeholders must do a better job of identifying who are legitimate representatives of specific perspectives. For example, someone who is tapped to represent “women” in peace processes cannot necessarily accurately and appropriately convey the perspectives of displaced people and/or survivors of sexual violence, simply because they all happen to be female.

The United States could provide more diplomatic and financial support to facilitate national and local peace initiatives.

## Conclusion

The process of development is fundamentally political. The global effort to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is a tremendous opportunity, since political will to strengthen systems and institutions would help achieve these broader development goals. Strong and representative institutions can provide countries and communities with much-needed capacity to cope with the inevitable external shocks such as droughts—*without* costly large-scale emergency assistance and *without* increasing the risk of conflict. Fair laws that are clearly articulated and enforced help promote respect for human rights, reduce the number of grievances, and boost the participation of all members of society in development and peace building.

Complex crises call for the U.S. government’s commitment to a systems-thinking approach, guided by both the administration and Congress, which uses all available tools, including political/diplomatic engagement and budgetary support. U.S. leadership in the drafting and adoption of the SDGs boosted the global community’s commitment to SDG 16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Meeting SDG 16 is a prerequisite for sustainable national and global security. Now is the time for the United States to renew its commitments to policy and funding to bridge the humanitarian-development divide in its responses to fragile and conflict-affected states. As Bread for the World Institute’s 2017 Hunger Report cautions, we cannot end hunger and prevent future famines without investments in country systems and institutions of governance.

A comprehensive review of U.S. diplomacy and development assistance, conducted with an understanding of country contexts, will contribute to global stability while also achieving U.S. national interests. The policy should ensure that U.S. government investments not only serve U.S. interests, but equally support stronger local private sector and civil societies and partner country institutions. This will facilitate the necessary conditions to spur broad-based economic growth, end hunger and extreme poverty, and prevent future famines.

A strengthened U.S. government local capacity policy should prioritize local ownership and sustainability of development efforts, with the understanding that local capacity development requires



genuine partnership. Genuine partnership includes engaging local stakeholders throughout a program's design, implementation, and evaluation of development outcomes. It should also prioritize the advocacy needs of local institutions, including supporting their ability to track foreign assistance and their own government's budgets. Where possible, it should also channel aid through local civil society partners.

The way forward out of the conflict in South Sudan, and in other fragile and conflict affected countries, is complex but necessary to end the conflict and prevent famine. This paper has laid out a number of recommendations on South Sudan specifically. The following are some priority actions:

- **Provide more and improved assistance.**

Increase flexible, needs-based funding for the South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan and the South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan, which are both underfunded.

- Where possible, purchase food locally and/or regionally, both to reduce the cost of humanitarian assistance and to stimulate local and regional markets.
- In the medium term, begin to build the capacity of local grantees to implement cash programming.
- Support host countries—The conflict in South Sudan is causing one of the world's fastest-growing refugee crises, second only to Syria's. Providing humanitarian assistance to the large number of South Sudanese people who have fled to neighboring countries is essential to sustaining regional stability, particularly within and among the refugees' host countries. Assistance for host countries' systems and infrastructure should be included in humanitarian efforts—e.g., for nutrition, education, health, and agriculture. Excluding the hosts puts a very heavy burden on the limited resources of countries that have already taken in hundreds of thousands of people who are not their citizens. It also raises the level of tension between refugees and host communities.

- **Support enforcement of an arms embargo.**

The recent appointment of an Assistant Secretary of State for Africa is a step toward a more effective U.S. diplomatic response to the conflict in South Sudan. Consistent U.S. leadership could persuade the UN Security Council to enforce an expanded global arms embargo. The United States should work with other countries to stop the sale and/or importation of any additional weapons into South Sudan. The international community should also combine efforts to curtail illicit financial transfers and money laundering by national, regional, and international networks, including banks.

- **Support efforts to reach a peace agreement.**

Humanitarian assistance is important, but it is not enough to stabilize and resolve the worsening situation in South Sudan. Leaders from the United Nations and donor countries have urged President Kiir to participate in peace negotiations. There is consensus among donor countries that the South Sudanese government is as much to blame for the violence and the resulting famine as the opposition.

- Support the efforts of local peace negotiators. This is crucial to rebuilding trust and understanding among individuals and governing institutions. Without building peace at the local level, the risk of a proliferation of armed groups increases.
- Facilitate broader, more inclusive participation in the ongoing government-led national dialogue, with the goal of its becoming more credible and focused on building trust between citizens and the government.
- Use diplomacy to ensure that the government and all opposition groups allow humanitarian aid to reach communities affected by hunger and malnutrition.

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