



South Sudan //
Sub-Saharan Africa

Food for Assets South Sudan

Country Information

Population

10.7 Million
(World Bank, 2021)

Intervention Information

\$101.2 Million (USD)
Cost

UNFCCC National Adaptation Plan

Yes, 2021

2016-2019
Timeline

GINI

(Scale of 0-100)



(World Bank, 2016)

ND-GAIN Vulnerability Score (Scale of 0-1)

Unavailable from
ND-GAIN



Rationale for Selection

Cases were selected for review based on general screening criteria, including time frame of intervention, location of implementation, and evidence-based outcomes, as available. This intervention was highlighted for its approach to resilience building – addressing immediate food security needs while facilitating asset development for long-term resilience.



Outcome Area(s)

Food Security, Natural Capital, Livelihoods



Funding Partner(s)

World Food Program, Governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and Japan



Implementation Partner(s)

Government of South Sudan, World Food Program, Food and Agriculture Organization and local communities

Context of Intervention

After over fifty years of conflict, South Sudan declared independence in 2011. As the youngest nation, South Sudan has since grappled with a broad range of issues, including a deepening economic crisis, the swift devaluation of its currency, hard currency shortages, a heavy reliance on imports, a humanitarian crisis characterized by food shortages, a lack of healthcare services, and continued civil strife.¹ This ongoing instability disrupts the nation's economy and trade, exacerbating widespread poverty; over 50% of South Sudan's population lives below the national poverty threshold.¹

Livelihoods in South Sudan predominantly revolve around subsistence farming and herding. An estimated 95% of South Sudan's residents—over 11 million people—rely on sectors vulnerable to climate change, including agriculture, fishing, and forestry.² Recent tragedies, such as the East African drought and the famine in 2011 that killed over 250,000 and the severe flooding over the last five years that impacted more than 900,000 people, highlight the consequences of climate change.^{2,3} Furthermore, disasters have intensified food insecurity and internal conflicts, as communities battle over dwindling resources like fertile land and water. Since the post-independence conflict, the acutely food-insecure population has doubled in the last five years, and nearly two-thirds of the population facing recurring food insecurity conditions.⁴

Description of Intervention

Vulnerable populations in regions at higher risk for exposure to climate-related disasters are often in fragile and degraded environments. The World Food Programme (WFP)'s Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) initiative was created to bolster the recovery of livelihoods and enhance the ability of communities to withstand future crises, particularly in regions marked by severe food insecurity.⁵ As such, FFA aimed not only to provide immediate food or cash relief to those facing food insecurity, but also to build capacity and create physical assets that serves as a safeguard. This approach builds long-term resilience and better equips communities to address diverse challenges, whether of human origin or natural disasters.⁶

Since South Sudan's inception in 2011 (and as a part of Sudan since 1963), the World Food Program supported those affected by the on-going conflict, reaching even the country's remote regions. Recognizing the potential of food assistance as a peace-building instrument, WFP collaborated with a variety of local grassroots organizations over the selected states to launch the South Sudan FFA project. The FFA designed the four project pillars for South Sudan to address the underlying causes of food insecurity.²

- **Pillar I** focused on restoring the productive capacity of arable land. With agriculture an important livelihood historically, it was both relevant and feasible since it builds on existing knowledge and inclination.
- **Pillar II** focused on building and improving community infrastructure (accessible roads, road dykes, ponds, wells, etc.), with projects selected and prioritized through community discussions facilitated by WFP.
- **Pillar III** focused on natural resource management and climate change adaptation activities, such as flood control dykes, seedling production, and water channels. Once more, FFA supported feasible and relevant projects selected through facilitated community discussions.
- **Pillar IV** focused on capacity building and skills development, which is highly relevant in the largely illiterate society of South Sudan (27% literacy rate as of 2020).⁷ With an aim to lessen the gender inequality gap, the program targeted young women since many lack the necessary skills to generate income or support community development.

Based on an analysis using the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), WFP selected 8 states for the FFA program. Inclusion in the program required households to fall under IPC Phases 3 and 4, so selection was based on those with the highest rates of households in Phase 3/4. After poor uptake in the first year (35% achieved for targeted food aid and 57% for intended cash assistance), the program achieved close to or over 100% for each respective goal in the following years. Impressively, the FFA's impact was evident when poor and borderline Food Consumption Score (FCS) decreased, dropping from 70% in 2016 to 46% in 2018 for households in the program.¹ Reports indicated that FFA increased productive capacity of agricultural lands, strengthened community facilities, enhanced technical skill sets, and fostered capabilities to adapt to climate change.

WFP uses a three-pronged approach to resilience building, which includes: national level integrated context analysis; sub-national seasonal livelihood programming; and local level Community-Based Participatory Planning (CBPP). The CBPP approach used in the process engages affected communities in dialogue to identify and prioritize needs so that program responses are tailored.⁸ Through two to five-day discussions, this process served as a collaborative platform, uniting vulnerable communities and local authorities. As a transparent and structured approach, CBPP ensures the FFA program aligns with community needs and has community ownership. The CBPP process outcomes showed wide acceptance by various stakeholders, especially in the target communities. Furthermore, the CBPP approach honed vulnerability assessments by spurring community leaders to identify their most vulnerable members. These collaborative evaluations encompassed market analyses, agricultural product studies, seasonal calendars, feasibility assessments for proposed assets, and evaluations of local security and accessibility.¹

Intervention Funding

Organized through the World Food Programme, the primary funding sources for the Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) program included the governments of the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and Japan. Total program expenditure for FFA in South Sudan from 2017 to 2019 amounted to over \$101 million USD.

Based on the approach, the FFA project also made considerable progress in empowering women and promoting gender equality. The FFA project's gender mainstreaming approach focused on equal representation of women during the planning and management processes, ensuring at least 50% of project participants were women and implementing gender-sensitive/responsive approaches in all activities. The project's Complaint and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) was also useful in addressing cases of gender-based discrimination throughout the project. It included a hotline, help and feedback desks at every distribution point, community outreach activities, and a database to track and capture follow-up activities. A Rapid Gender Assessment commissioned by WFP in 2019 provided a gendered analysis of the FFA program to better understand how women and men at different lifecycle stages experience and benefit from the project activities¹ and to generate recommendations to advance gender equality in future FFA programming.

Outcomes from the Intervention and Dissemination

The World Food Programme's Food Assistance for Assets intervention is promising for its approach to resilience building – addressing immediate food security needs while facilitating asset development for long-term resilience.

Food and Cash Assistance

As a basic humanitarian effort, the FFA benefitted between 400,000 to 600,000 people annually, with women and girls constituting 54% of this demographic. From the intervention years of 2016 to 2019, the program distributed more than 60% of its targeted food aid and nearly 80% of its targeted cash assistance. Impressively, the FFA's impact on assets and resilience was evident when Food Consumption Scores improved for the most vulnerable, dropping from 70% in 2016 to 46% in 2018 for households in the program.¹

Increased Income for Target Communities

Through boosting productivity, FFA effectively enhanced beneficiaries' income. In 2019, over 60% of intervention participants from 6 of the 8 states identified new sources of income; this was predominantly diversified through enhanced agricultural activities such as crop, vegetable, and fish farming, which was facilitated by improved infrastructure. Furthermore, income not only diversified, but increased; over 70% of the interviewed households reported a rise in income as well. Together, this underscores the project's impact on enhancing and diversifying agricultural productivity. A key strategy involved empowering beneficiaries to expand their cultivable land. Possession of three feddans (1.26 ha) of cultivable land emerged as a crucial condition for program exit. FFA enabled each household to acquire an additional .7 hectares on average; expanding land area for 81% of the participants reporting augmented harvests since joining FFA.¹

Improved Social Cohesion

Community engagement during the design and implementation of the project had a positive impact on reducing local conflicts, strengthening social networks, increasing ownership of constructed community assets, and improving overall social cohesion. Group activities became an effective platform to discuss issues related to gender equality and increase women's knowledge and technical skills regarding agricultural practices; this also led to improved intra-household dynamics, and empowered women's role in decision-making. Women gained more respect and recognition for their important role in the community through participating with men in different project activities and women increased their participation in the decision-making processes around community needs and priorities.¹

Scaling and Replicability

WFP's model for community resilience, on which FFA is built, rests on principles that are replicable across different contexts. It is also scalable within a country. With the South Sudan example, FFA scaled the program in South Sudan to 8 states, with the program reaching over 85% of its targeted population. As a result of its success, the WFP plans to incorporate phase two of the project in its Country Strategic Plan cycle of 2023 to 2027.¹ The evaluation of the first FFA was primarily conducted to inform the planning of the second phase, showing the WFP's commitment to improving the implementation and making it even better in the next phase.

Considerations

Adaptable Transfer Modalities in Dynamic Contexts

In volatile contexts like South Sudan, initiatives such as FFA should offer participants choice regarding preferred transfer modalities. The region's active conflict often impedes economic ventures, making direct transfers of food or tools more practical than cash. FFA evaluations indicated distribution timing issues in several areas. During dry periods, escalating food prices outpaced the cash transfers, which undermined participants' purchasing power. Regular assessments to gauge the efficacy of chosen modes of transfer and adaptability are essential to address these challenges effectively.

Gender Analysis in Asset Selection

Inclusivity, particularly with regard to gender, have shown to be an important component of community resilience. For better outcomes in this area, programs such as FFA would integrate gender analysis in project design. Given that women in vulnerable communities often have extensive familial responsibilities, their full participation in certain project activities may be obstructed. In the example for South Sudan, activities that coincided with weeding and harvest seasons were generally inaccessible to women due to their traditional responsibilities. Despite overall improvement in targets, the project evaluation demonstrated a decline in the achievement of targets for female beneficiaries, which was 82%, contrasting with an over-achievement for male beneficiaries, which was 113%. Programs such as FFA must consider these factors for equitable project participation and benefits.

Enhancing the Quality of Input Investments

For the sustainability and efficiency of these types of projects, a substantial investment in superior quality seeds, tools, and farming implements is vital. Such quality implements, especially tools usable over multiple seasons, significantly boost sustainability. The main objective of these projects is resilience through asset creation; hence, making farmers spend a large portion of their profits on tool replacement is counterproductive. Feedback from FFA participants highlighted that the tools they acquired endured a maximum of two farming seasons, with traditional hoes favored over international standards. Additionally, top-tier seeds not only promise increased yields but also enhance food security. The South Sudan FFA project faced recurrent germination issues; given the expertise of organizations like the FAO in seed quality and their support in local seed production, collaborations in this realm should be considered at the beginning.

Citations

¹ Coombs, D., Brewin, M., Bouka, M., & Abina, C. (2021). Decentralized Evaluation: Programme Activity Evaluation of Food Assistance for Assets (FFA) Project in South Sudan. World Food Programme <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000129091/download/?ga=2.129825484.135447679.1696435662-1005199109.1680479500>

² Government of South Sudan, (2021). South Sudan First National Adaptation Plan: <https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/South-Sudan-First-NAP%20.pdf>

³ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, (2022). B. Cheshirkov. "Devastation in South Sudan following fourth year of historic floods." <https://www.unhcr.org/us/news/briefing-notes/devastation-south-sudan-following-fourth-year-historic-floods>

⁴ United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund, (2022). "Hunger and malnutrition being driven by climate crisis and conflict in South Sudan."

⁵ Building Resilience through Asset Creation. (2013). Rome, Italy: World Food Programme Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/food-assistance-for-assets>

⁶ Food Assistance for Assets. (2023). World Food Programme Retrieved from <https://www.wfp.org/food-assistance-for-assets>

⁷ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, (2020). "South Sudan commemorates International Literacy Day (ILD)."

⁸ Part 3: Community-based Participatory Planning. (2014). Rome, Italy: World Food Programme Retrieved from <https://documents.wfp.org/stellent/groups/public/documents/communications/wfp264473.pdf>

