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# Introduction

The Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility's (CSRF) **Better Aid Forum** (BAF) is a series of events and discussions with different stakeholders to consider the long-term objectives and ambitions of the aid sector in South Sudan. It focuses beyond the timeframes of ongoing political and security dynamics in order to drive collective analysis about the approaches and principles that should underpin international engagement in South Sudan over the longer term.

In June 2019, a two-day event, the **Better Aid Forum Experts Meeting**, was held in Nairobi to reflect on findings from the Better Aid Forum process thus far, and debate how long-term trends may shape South Sudan's context over the coming decades – and what this means for aid. The CSRF commissioned a number of input briefing papers that consider long-term trends underway in South Sudan, regionally, and globally that are likely to play a role in shaping South Sudan's future. This BAF Briefing paper on demography is the fourth publication of the BAF Briefing Paper series that also considers technology and innovation, economy, and climate change.

The population dynamics presented in this paper have serious implications for South Sudan's human development and political stability. Using census data and UN estimates, this briefing paper highlights South Sudan's recent demographic patterns and trends, starting in 2008 into 2050. The projections presented are based on an exponential growth<sup>1</sup> regime, and the analysis seeks to provide key insights for the aid community to stimulate their thinking on the nature and level of support likely to be needed in the country over the next 30 years. The analysis explores the implications of demographic changes on South Sudan's economy, social welfare, and human security. Finally, the brief provides both donors and domestic practitioners with actionable recommendations for present and future programming or planning.

At independence in 2011, South Sudan had 8.26 million<sup>2</sup> people (NBS 2009), with the vast majority being people under the age of 30 years. According to the Sudanese censuses conducted before the outbreak of the second civil war and South Sudan's subsequent independence, the southern population was 2.76 million in 1956, 2.8 million in 1973, and 5.27 million people in 1983. These numbers indicate an exponentially growing population in the region, despite experiencing the conflicts over the same periods.

Based on a projected growth rate of 3%, South Sudan's population in 2013 should have been 9.3 million people and increased to 11.3 million people in 2018. The 2013 conflict disrupted this growth trajectory, displacing at least 2.3 million people outside of the country as refugees and slowing

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<sup>1</sup> In exponential growth, a population's per capita (per individual) growth rate stays the same regardless of population size, making the population grow faster and faster as it gets larger. See <https://www.khanacademy.org/science/ap-biology/ecology-ap/population-ecology-ap/a/exponential-logistic-growth>

<sup>2</sup> 8.26 million comes from the 2008 census whose results were briefly contested. Nevertheless, the contest was considered politics and the results were considered valid for scientific and policy programming purposes. South Sudan subsequently adopted these results to draw electoral constituencies and allocate resources.



South Sudan's growth by over 2%. If the current Revitalised Agreement for the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) holds, these refugees are likely to return home by 2035, based on the returns trend observed during the CPA period. Should this happen South Sudan's population would regain its 3% of annual growth, and the country's population could increase to 12.6 million people by 2030, 16.77 million by 2040, and 22.6 million by 2050. Thus, a large proportion of the projected growth during the 2020–2050 period will likely come from return migration (see the next Section).

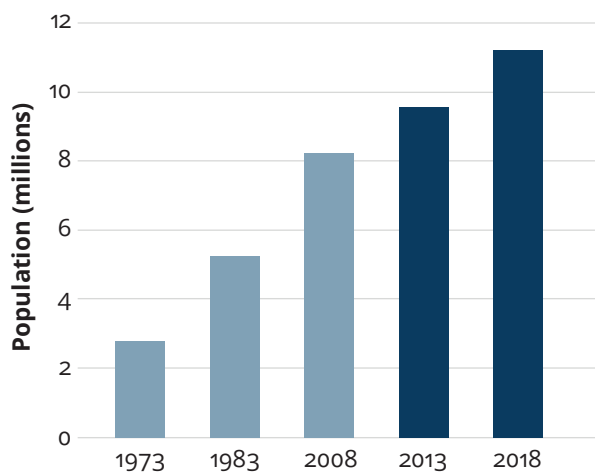
It is expected that the natural rate of population growth will have a modest bearing on South Sudan's

growth rate until around 2040, when return migration slows, childhood survival improves, and fertility rates remain high. Whilst youth, aged 15–35, will continue to represent a majority, the aging population will also grow gradually in response to gains in living standards and life expectancy.<sup>3</sup> The growing populations of youth and the elderly will have an impact on governance and human development, the labour market, demand for health and education services, and expectations for decent retirement packages. A focus on policies and programmes that address youth needs and priorities over the next thirty years is paramount, to reduce poverty and address conflict drivers in the country, particularly in the rural<sup>4</sup> areas.

## Current demographic context and trends

To put the current and future demographic patterns and trends into context, it is first useful to consider how conflict, mortality and fertility affected South Sudan's population growth in the past. Because a population census happens every 10 or more years, it is customary in demography and other planning disciplines to use projections/hypothetical populations for the intervening periods. Figure 1 and Table 1 below provide an overview of South Sudan's population growth scenarios, both actual and hypothetical (projected/represented by dark blue) and will be referred to throughout the remainder of the paper.

**Figure 1. South Sudan's population, 1973–2018**



Sources: Author's estimates; data are from NBS. Dark blue represents projections or hypotheticals.

<sup>3</sup> According to the African Union Youth Charter, South Sudan does not have a defined age range for youth. [https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african\\_youth\\_charter\\_2006.pdf](https://www.un.org/en/africa/osaa/pdf/au/african_youth_charter_2006.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Changes associated with residence types (i.e., rural vs urban) are rather assumed based on longstanding scholarship on the matter, as there are no data to empirically assess these patterns.

**Table 1. South Sudan population, 1973–2018 (actual and hypothetical)**

	Actual				Hypothetical <sup>5</sup>	
	1973	1983	2008	Growth rate, 1983–2008	2013	2018
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,804,825</b>	<b>5,272,763</b>	<b>8,260,490</b>	<b>0.023</b>	<b>9,542,137</b>	<b>11,267,441</b>
0–4	82,421	770,294	1,308,691	0.028	1,505,037	1,730,841
5–9	418,535	717,463	1,300,145	0.032	1,529,444	1,799,183
10–14	471,500	566,493	1,059,057	0.035	1,260,210	1,499,569
15–19	275,836	685,331	874,111	0.011	923,618	975,930
20–24	251,028	646,994	723,186	0.005	740,421	758,067
25–29	224,359	573,902	688,225	0.008	716,198	745,308
30–34	272,024	373,820	542,101	0.018	593,173	649,056
35–39	192,374	340,467	475,413	0.016	514,634	557,090
40–44	199,627	195,854	348,116	0.031	406,678	475,091
45–49	120,497	166,978	278,844	0.027	318,825	364,538
50–54	109,028	88,054	201,863	0.052	261,409	338,521
55–59	64,238	52,232	123,794	0.055	162,818	214,144
60–64	40,129	37,034	118,667	0.088	184,413	286,584
65–69	32,057	28,941	74,351	0.063	101,759	139,271
70–74	19,096	10,997	61,493	0.184	154,051	385,925
75+	29,345	17,909	82,433	0.144	169,451	348,326

Sources: Author's estimates; data are from NBS.

The conflicts have had a significant impact on South Sudan's stability: since 1955, there have been only 19 years during which South Sudan has not experienced gross instability, with the signing of the R-ARCSS in 2018 ending the most recent conflict that erupted in 2013.<sup>6</sup> These recurring conflicts have had devastating demographic effects, with the 1983–2005 strife causing over two million deaths (76% of which were South Sudanese) and the displacement of millions more (Burr 2014; Rone 2003), while the 2013 bout resulted in approximately 400,000 deaths and the displacement of over four million people (Checchi et al 2018; USAID 2020). Despite mass

displacement and deaths caused by the 1983 conflict, the national census conducted in 2008 found that South Sudan's population had increased by approximately 3 million since 1983, from 5.27 million to 8.26 million people in 2008 (NBS 2011).

Major demographic factors shaping South Sudan's population size include mortality, fertility, and conflict-induced migration. In terms of 'headline figures', in 2008, the mortality rate per 1,000 population stood at approximately 21.2 (23.2 among males and 19.3 among females), the total fertility rate (TFR) was close to four children (3.87) (NBS 2011), and

<sup>5</sup> This is based on the assumption of a stable population growth rate between 2008 and 2013.

<sup>6</sup> The Sudan Civil wars ran from 1955–72 and 1983–2005, and the South Sudan Civil War from 2013–2018.

return migration following the conflict contributed approximately 1.4 percent of population growth. Moreover, South Sudan's rate of natural increase, defined as the difference between births and deaths divided by the mid-year population, was close to zero (0.008) in 2008, mainly as a consequence of high rates of infant and under-five mortality. This revelation suggests that natural processes (births and deaths) have had little influence in shaping South Sudan's short-term demographic trends. As a result, South Sudan's population growth during the CPA period (2005–2011) and immediately following independence is generally attributed to net migration, marked by influxes of returning refugees and expatriates from neighbouring states and abroad.

As Figure 1 and Table 1 illustrate, South Sudan's population should have been increasing by just over a million people every five years, representing a 2.3% annual growth rate. This would have resulted in an increase in the overall population, closing at 9.3 million by 2013 period, if the CPA conditions held, and rising to 11.3 by 2018. Instead, due to the 2013 conflict, the actual population of South Sudan in 2018 stood at approximately 9 million people, after discounting for 400,000 deaths and the 'missing' 2.3 million refugees living in neighbouring countries (Checchi et al 2018; USAID 2020). The impact of the 2013 civil war on South Sudan's population growth has, therefore, been very significant, with the population growth rate dropping from 2.3% at independence to 1% per year by 2018. Based on this reduced rate, it is estimated that South Sudan's population in 2020 actually stands at 9.25 million people, significantly lower than the 11.2 million people projected for 2018 (see Table 1). For planning purposes, this meant that investment by the government and donors in services and infrastructure would need to have been expanded to meet this increasing demand by a growing population following independence. Instead, the conflict disrupted and resulted in significant displacement and deaths. As the implementation of the R-ARCSS moves forward, it will be critical for future plans to consider investing in services and infrastructure, while treating recent reductions in population growth as an anomaly, rather than the norm.

Based on the two most recent censuses (1983 and 2008), and projecting forward to 2018, while South Sudan's under the age of 30 years population would have continued to represent over 65% of South Sudan's population, its share of the total population would have eventually declined by 5% between 2008 and 2018. Meanwhile, the population 60 years and older would have increased by 160 percent, from 336,944 in 2008 to 873,521 in 2018. Over the longer-term, factors such as declining fertility, improving child and maternal health, and an increasing aging population will contribute to this shift. This pattern reflects a common demographic reality – child mortality declines first, followed by declines in fertility, a combination that often triggers increased investments in quality of life, culminating in improved living conditions and people having fewer children and enjoying longer lives (see Table 1). During both periods, females would have constituted about 52% of the total population, with women of reproductive age representing 86% of the total female population. How are these trends reflected in South Sudan's regions?

Internal migration, though undocumented, plays an important role that should not be overlooked – it can have a considerable impact on both urban and rural populations, as young people often migrate to towns in search of education and employment opportunities. If the 2008 conditions held during the 2008–2018 period, Bahr el Ghazal region would have least grown, with its growth rate estimated at 0.08%, in stark contrast with Upper Nile and Equatoria, which would have grown at an average rate of over 3% each annually. In terms of estimated population figures, by 2018, there would have been 2.95 million people living in Bahr el Ghazal, 4 million in Upper Nile, and 3.7 million in Equatoria. These regionally differentiated population estimates possibly reflect patterns of increasing urbanization in favour of Upper Nile and Equatoria, with young people from Bahr el Ghazal attracted to these other regions in pursuit of education and employment. At state level, Warrap, Jonglei, and Central Equatoria, respectively, would have been the most populous, due to their increasingly urbanizing centres (Kwajok, Bor, and Juba, respectively).

The fluidity and composition of South Sudan's refugees and returnees across borders over the last two decades and anticipated until 2035 are also significant when considering key demographic trends. According to UNHCR, the majority of the externally displaced are women and children, with 63% of South Sudanese refugees being under the age of 18. In 2020, the estimated 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees represented 8.9% of the total global refugee population (UNHCR 2018). In the coming decades, it is hoped that most of these refugees will eventually return home, although this is likely to be dependent on whether the current peace agreement holds, and adequate social services are provided. During the 2005–2012 period, nearly 1.9 million South Sudanese returned to South Sudan from camps in northern Sudan, Uganda, Kenya, and Ethiopia (IOM 2012). During the same period there

was also an influx of nationals from other East African countries into South Sudan in search of employment and business opportunities, forming an important source of growth.

It is to be noted that displacement “within and from South Sudan is driven by civil war and critical food insecurity,” according to the IOM.<sup>7</sup> Nonetheless, current evidence indicates an upward trajectory in return migration, with 107,848 South Sudanese returning home from refugee camps in Ethiopia and Uganda in 2019 alone. This rate of return may dramatically increase if the security situation in the country improves (IOM 2020). The return of large numbers of refugees over the next decade could present significant implications for both socioeconomic and physical security, as competition over limited resources or services could arise, an issue elaborated upon in the section below.

## Peering into the future: South Sudan's demography by 2050

What does all of this mean for the economy, human security, and social services? Policy interventions will benefit from an increased understanding on the role of demographic dynamics on these sectors.

A forecast of South Sudan's potential population until 2050 is presented in Table 2. Following the referendum and subsequently, independence, South Sudan's population was expected to grow at a rate of 2.3%. Instead, due primarily to the upsurge in violent conflict, the average growth rate dropped to approximately 1% – displacement and fatalities resulted in this drastic reduction. By 2020, the population is estimated to have rebounded to about the same level as in 2013 due primarily to refugee returns. During the 2020–2030 period, if the ground conditions are conducive, it is estimated that approximately 170,000 South Sudanese<sup>8</sup>, the

**Table 2. South Sudan's population, 1973–2050<sup>9</sup>**

Year	Population
1973	2,804,825
1983	5,272,763
2008	8,260,490
2013	9,251,731
2018	8,967,441
2020	9,256,444
2030	12,577,290
2040	16,765,197
2050	22,630,649

Source: Author's estimates; data are from NBS and IOM.

<sup>7</sup> <https://migrationdataportal.org/de/regional-data-overview/eastern-africa>

<sup>8</sup> This estimate is based on the annual average of refugee returns over the 2012–2019 period.

<sup>9</sup> The figures for years 2013–2050 are estimates and projections

majority of whom women and children, would be returning to the country per year. This will likely contribute to the growth rate rebounding and ranging between 2.3% and 3% annually. As a result, by 2030 South Sudan's population may by then be about 12.6 million people. Additionally, while refugee returns are likely to wind down between 2030 and 2035, South Sudan's population growth rate may stand at 3% annually, due to the return of both women of childbearing age, as well as young people,

especially young girls, who will be entering their childbearing years. By applying a rate of 3% annually from 2030 onward, it can be projected, using an exponential growth model, that by 2050, South Sudan's population would have almost tripled from its 2008 population – increasing by 3.3 million between 2020–2030, 4.2 million 2030–2040 and 5.8 million between 2040–2050. By this measure, South Sudan's population is forecasted to reach 22.63 million by 2050.

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## What does this mean for South Sudan's Economy?

South Sudan's economy has suffered major disruptions since independence. Nonetheless, in an April 2020 press release, the World Bank estimated that the economy enjoyed 3.2% growth in Fiscal Year 2018/2019. However, the Bank noted that inflation in 2019 stood at 170% and warned that if the R-ARCSS collapsed, the country's economy could return to recession.<sup>10</sup> Since then, the COVID-19 global pandemic has inevitably impacted upon South Sudan's economy, due to disruptions in supply chains (and accompanying price rises), the drop in oil prices, and the overall slowing of the global economy. Economic growth and investment are essential for improving labour market conditions, implementing poverty reduction programmes, and contributing to sustainable peace in the country.

Currently two-thirds of South Sudanese aged 15–24 years enter the labour market every year and 19% of those actively engaged in job search do not find work (Guarcello et al. 2011). However, when the 'disillusioned', i.e. those who are frustrated and give up job search, are included, this number rises to 30%. In addition, the bulk of former refugees who gradually return to the country are often relatively

young and will also require jobs and skills generating opportunities. To put this challenge into perspective, returning young South Sudanese will be reintegrating into a society where at least 80% of the population currently live below the international poverty line of less than USD1.9 per day, up from 51% in 2009 (World Bank 2020).<sup>11</sup>

Should the political situation in South Sudan worsen once more in the coming decades, the economy will undoubtedly deteriorate. Without a stable economy, this will leave the vast majority of youth unable to find sustainable employment, meaning that more people will remain in poverty, and leaving the country with a sizeable proportion of its growing number of young people restless and discontented. As commonly observed within South Sudan and elsewhere, jobless young people can be a risk factor that can contribute to increased levels of social unrest and potentially contribute to increased levels of conflict. Recent upsurges in sectarian violence in Jonglei for example, primarily perpetrated by youth groups, is likely to be, in part, associated with the very high rates of youth un- and under employment (Guarcello et al. 2011).

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<sup>10</sup> <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/04/02/south-sudan-economic-analysis-shows-growth-promise-amid-fragility>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

# What does this mean for South Sudan's social services?

## Health

South Sudan's current health infrastructure is unprepared to meet the demands of rapid population growth. According to the Ministry of Health's *Health Sector Development Plan (2012–2016)*, in 2011, there were only 1,487 health facilities in the country, of which only 1,147 were functional.<sup>12</sup> Of these, 37 were hospitals (3 teaching hospitals, 7 state hospitals and 27 county hospitals), 284 were Primary Health Care Centres (PHCCs), 792 were Primary Health Care Units (PHCUs), with the remaining 34 facilities being private, specialized or military facilities. The MoH reported that approximately 44% of the population lived within a five-kilometre radius of a functioning health facility, however, using the population estimates for 2013, this would mean that at the state level, each state or county hospital serves approximately 272,000 people. While there have been some improvements since 2011, the country's population remains significantly underserved.

South Sudan's health indicators remain the poorest in the world, marked by significant rates of morbidity

and mortality, as depicted in Table 3 below. Based on the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and World Health Organisation (WHO)'s reports, nearly 800 per 100,000 women die during childbirth in South Sudan; 75 infants out of 1,000 live births do not make it to their first birthday; approximately 91 out of 1,000 children under the age of five die before reaching their fifth birthday; and the average life expectancy for South Sudanese at birth is 57 years. The major causes of death in South Sudan are infectious diseases and accidents (including road traffic accidents) and violence. The 2008 Census indicated that deaths from accidents or violence accounted for over 25% of total deaths in the country at the time. Moreover, modern family planning access in South Sudan is modest, with a contraceptive prevalence of 4.7% only as of 2016, (Kane et al. 2016), and this is unlikely to have significantly improved since then. Social norms are a major impediment to developing and making available responsive sexual and reproductive health programs, presenting further challenges for population management. While there has been some improvement since 2013, given the South Sudanese population's significant health

**Table 3. Health statistics**

Indicator	2006	2010	2015
Maternal mortality ratio (deaths/100,000 live births)	2054	2054	789
Infant mortality rate (deaths/1,000 live births)	102	75	–
Under-five mortality rate (deaths/1,000 live births)	135	105	90.7
Stunting (prevalence)	34.4%	28%	–
Underweight (prevalence)	32.9%	31%	–
Life expectancy at birth (years)	–	59	57.3

Data Sources: South Sudan Household Survey 2006 and 2010/WHO 2015.

<sup>12</sup> Republic of South Sudan (2012), Ministry of Health: Health Sector Development Plan 2012–2016. <https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/>

[gina/sites/default/files/SSD%202012%20HEALTH%20SECTOR%20DEVELOPMENT%20PLAN%202012-2016.pdf](https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/sites/default/files/SSD%202012%20HEALTH%20SECTOR%20DEVELOPMENT%20PLAN%202012-2016.pdf)



needs and projected population growth over the next decades, improving child nutrition, reducing the maternal mortality rate, waterborne diseases, and malaria cases, as well as improving access to quality services in basic health facilities, should be a priority.

Looking to 2050, if the population grows as projected, the current health system is likely to be overwhelmed unless additional investments are promptly made. First, with a growing population, coupled with gradually improving living standards, demand for sexual and reproductive health services will increase, as more educated women begin to take control of their fertility decisions. Secondly, since South Sudan is a relatively young society, provision of adolescent health services will be an important tool for combating teenage pregnancies, poor maternal and infant health, and intergenerational poverty. Thirdly, the number of the elderly is currently growing by at least 6% annually and health services that meet the needs of this particular demographic group will be of importance. Fourthly, as the country urbanizes, rural-urban migration is likely to heighten, which will place considerable pressure on the limited health services available in the urban centres. Finally, the last refugees returning from camps in the region will likely arrive in South Sudan around 2035, and as return migration winds down, at least 2 million South Sudanese will have resettled back home. This could result in competition and conflict over access to limited health services, especially in sectors such as WASH, sexual/reproductive, and adolescent health.

## Education

Education is another priority sector for investment if it is to meet South Sudan's increasing demands due to its projected population growth over the next thirty years. In 2008, less than 30% of South Sudanese were literate (NBS 2009), and by 2018, this had risen to only 34.5%.<sup>13</sup> Just prior to independence, South Sudan's net attendance rate for primary

school aged children was only 23.5%<sup>14</sup>, and the 2018 literacy rate for females 15 years and above was 28.8%, while for males over 15 years was 40.3%<sup>15</sup>, all of which are low by both international and regional standards. The 2013 conflict negatively impacted on access to universal education: following the outbreak of conflict in 2013, elementary schools lost on average 18.5% of their annual enrolment (Mayai 2020). In Jonglei, Upper Nile, and Unity, approximately 70% of schools closed in the early days of the conflict, which translated into approximately 400,000 children having their education disrupted, with the majority of them moving to internally displaced or refugee camps for safety (Hodgkin and Thomas 2016).

Over the next thirty years (2020–2050) the population of school-aged children in South Sudan is expected to grow by at least 3.5% annually, and there are concerted efforts to increase access to education, particularly for girls (Crawford, 2017). While it is important to focus on improving access to both primary and secondary education, given the projected increase in the youth population and the challenges with access to education, ensuring that youth have skills suited to the emerging labour market will be critical. Investments in technical training, as well as traditional schooling at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels, will be needed. A lack of investment in skills-building programmes for youth can lead to political and social disturbance and an upsurge in conflict. However, skills alone are not enough. Training programs that do not align with the prevailing labour market demands could be equally wasteful, as highly trained youth who do not find meaningful work can become a source of instability. This was most dramatically demonstrated by the 'Arab Spring', which was sparked and fuelled by frustrations amongst young people who suffered the lack of economic and employment opportunities in their countries (LaGraffe 2012; Hoffman and Jamal 2012; Steer et al. 2014; Bricker and Foley 2013; Hilker 2011).

<sup>13</sup> World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/south-sudan>. Accessed 8 October 2020

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF [https://data.unicef.org/resources/data\\_explorer/unicef\\_f?ag=UNICEF&df=GLOBAL\\_DATAFLOW&ver=1.0&dq=SSD](https://data.unicef.org/resources/data_explorer/unicef_f?ag=UNICEF&df=GLOBAL_DATAFLOW&ver=1.0&dq=SSD).

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<sup>15</sup> World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/country/south-sudan>. Accessed 8 October 2020.

# What does this all mean for the aid community?

If there is no further outbreak of widespread national conflict and the population growth rate stabilizes at 3% per annum, South Sudan's population is projected to grow to 22.6 million by 2050, a 275% increase over its 2008 population. Similar to other countries in Africa, this population growth will be driven by a 'youth bulge', but South Sudan will also have an increasing number of older people if life expectancies improve – both trends will bring their own challenges. To cope with the projected growth in the younger population, investment will be needed in education, training and other jobs generating skills, while improving access to quality health services that respond to the needs of both young people and an increasing elderly population will also be critical. The location of services will also be critical, as urban populations, due to migration, could also increase, bringing with them additional demands for key services and opportunities. However, ensuring that these services are made available to rural populations would reduce access constraints and could reduce pull factors for urban migration. As new demographic realities emerge, their implications for the economy, human security, and social services need to be well understood by the international aid community and policy makers.

- **Support the conduct of a housing and population census.** Having a clear picture of South Sudan's population will contribute to an improved, longer term planning to ensure that necessary services are available. This is overdue. New information allows the government and partners to plan accordingly, especially in the realms of services and political representations. Due to the country's fiscal challenges, conducting a census will require significant support from the UN and other donors.

- **Aid practitioners should investigate and reflect upon the link between unemployed male youth and violence within context analyses at an inception stage and design their programmes that address this.** Youth un- and under-employment, particularly amongst young men, could be a destabilizing factor in South Sudan. Programming should seek to understand and address this by providing livelihood and employment opportunities for young men.
- **Recognize the possible tensions at community level that can result from exclusively targeting women in livelihood programming.** Ensuring that women have the skills and resources needed to independently generate their own income is critical to South Sudan's longer-term development. However, the needs, priorities and frustrations of young men also need to be addressed – failure to do so will not only result in unnecessary tensions between women and men (who feel excluded), but also misses the opportunity to ensure that young men also have a meaningful stake in a peaceful South Sudan.
- **Resources should be committed toward technical education that covers a wide range of South Sudan's current development priorities.** The prevailing youth unemployment rate in the country is socially and politically unsustainable and can have taxing consequences for socioeconomic mobility. Improving access to technical education and providing youth with marketable skills takes a shorter period to attain and can offer immediate socioeconomic returns.

■ **Support agricultural development (including fisheries and livestock) and associated value added industries.** At least 80% of South Sudan's population currently depend on subsistence agriculture. As such, an increased investment in agriculture and value-added industries will create both livelihood opportunities in rural areas, as well as employment opportunities in urban areas for youth, particularly young men.

■ **Improving access to and the quality of education and health services and employment opportunities needs to be balanced between rural and urban settings to reduce the potential for unsustainable and destabilizing urbanization.** Urbanization is a global phenomenon, and it is often young people who move to urban areas in search of better opportunities. Given the predicted 'youth bulge' in South Sudan's population, ensuring investment is balanced between urban and rural areas will both help to provide youth with opportunities within their home areas, as well as contribute to preventing an unsustainable, and destabilizing migration to urban areas by youth.

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The Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF) develops and tests innovative approaches to helping the aid community in South Sudan better integrate conflict sensitivity into their work. The Facility, which is funded by the UK, Canada, Switzerland and the Netherlands governments, supports the building and practical application of knowledge around conflict sensitivity through research, analysis, trainings, mentorship and dialogue.

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*Cover photo: Photo project participants discuss how images tell stories, Kuajok, Warrap State, South Sudan.*

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