



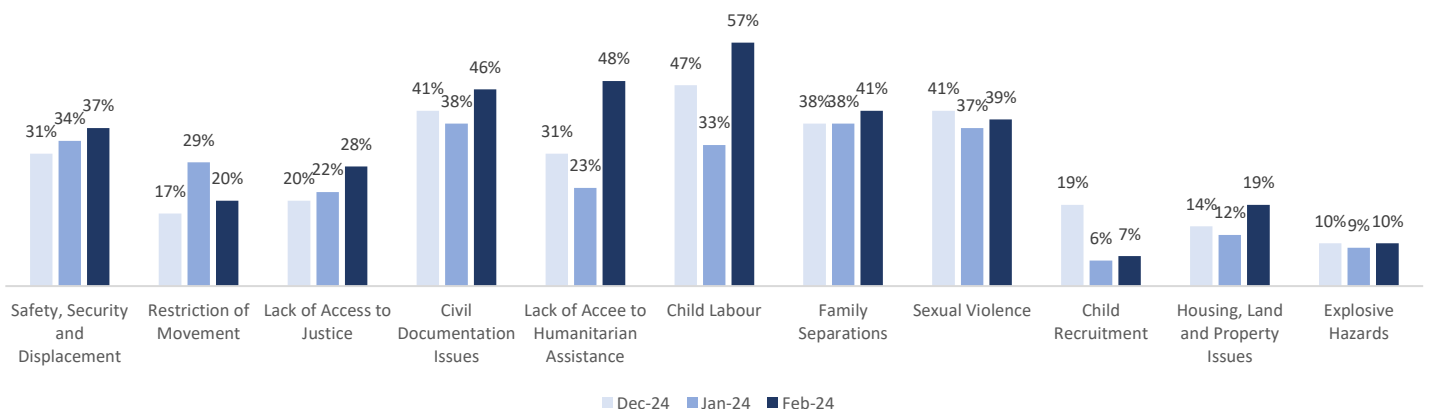
PHOTO: Protection Needs Assessment and Risk Monitoring activities conducted by DRC in SSD.

The Protection Monitoring System (PMS) in South Sudan is managed by the Protection Cluster and it relies on contributions by member organizations to collect data via a Key Informant Interview (KII) questionnaire at payam level across eleven thematic areas thereby monitoring the occurrence of protection violations, their scale and impact on communities over time. **In February 2024, protection monitors conducted 320 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) covering 89 payams in 23 Counties in 6 States.**

In 2023 and 2024, a significant global initiative was undertaken to establish a repository of secondary data including protection reports, known as DEEP (Data Entry and Exploration Platform). The DEEP is an open-source, collaborative online platform established for humanitarian secondary and qualitative data analysis. This initiative in the Protection Cluster, is supported through the Danish Refugee Council.

The protection monitoring data has been complemented with secondary qualitative data collated and structured on the [DEEP platform](#). The Secondary Data review provided contextual information for each of the identified risks, as well as complementing it with other assessments conducted or published in the period under review.

Protection Risks trends December 2023 - February 2024



Emerging Protection Risk Trends - Increasing numbers of people seeking durable solutions and core protection support, coupled with decreased humanitarian space in the country leads to protection risks and increase of challenges in accessing justice (from 20% to 28% of KI reports), accessing civil documentation (from 41% to 46% of KI reports), HLP issues (from 14% to 9%), accessing humanitarian assistance (from 31% to 48% of KI reports) as well as negative coping mechanisms such as child labour (from 47% to 57% of KI reports) and family separations (from 38% to 41% of KI reports). Safety and security environment also shows an increase of risk with 315 in December and 37% in February 2024.

Below follows a snapshot of the **top 5 reported protection issues** in February 2024:

CHILD LABOUR – reported by 57% of Key Informants in February 2024

Of the 320 Key Informants surveyed, 181 (representing 57%) identified child labour as a significant protection risk within their communities. Among these 181 KIs, 39% (approximately 71 KIs) observed that a majority of children in their areas are impacted by child labour. Alarming, 70% of these 181 KIs, which amounts to 127 individuals, highlighted that child labour predominantly affects households led by children, indicating a large presence of this vulnerable group.

The presence of many child-headed households and the lack of opportunities for adults are the most cited reasons for child labour. Of the 181 KIs, 67 (37%) noted the need for every family member to work to meet basic needs, indicating a strong need for government and development actors to intervene with livelihood programs and assist ongoing humanitarian efforts in mitigating this emerging protection risk. School dropouts, exploitation and abuse of children, and psychosocial impacts were the most reported effects of child labour.

Children make up 40% of South Sudan's population and are among the most vulnerable groups in the context of food insecurity, as they are at heightened risk of negative coping mechanisms, including child labour and early marriage, as families adapt to meet their food needs.¹ Data shows that children living in food insecure households, or households that do not generate enough income to save each month, are more likely to engage in child labour.² Therefore, as food insecurity levels in South Sudan are projected to be higher than recent years, it is expected that households will continue to resort to negative coping mechanisms such as child labour³.

LACK OF ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE – reported by 48% of Key Informants in February 2024

Of the 320 Key Informants (KIs), 155 (48%) flagged issues concerning access to humanitarian assistance. Out of these 155 KIs, 43% noted that the risk affects many or most people in their communities.

Among these, 63 of the 155 KIs reported that all groups were equally affected, while 40 highlighted that the elderly, women, girls, and people with disabilities were particularly affected. Additionally, 36 KIs stated that internally displaced persons (IDPs) or returnees were mainly affected, which is especially concerning since most returnees are heavily dependent on assistance from the host community for food and income⁴. The lack of assistance may impact social cohesion, especially in areas with IDPs and returnees.

According to a rapid needs assessment conducted on IDPs, returnees, and host community in Ayod County, Jonglei state (11 Jan – 17 Jan 2024), the majority of respondents (84%) agreed that unequal access to sources of livelihood is a challenge for living peacefully in the community. While this assessment was conducted in one county it likely reflects the situation in other areas hosting displaced populations.⁵

Most KIs said the main reason for lack of access was lack of food distribution or registration cards. Disruption to food assistance has been reported in the Greater Bahr el Ghazal and Greater Upper Nile regions.⁶ On the other hand, 63 KIs mentioned corruption and bribery as an issue impeding vulnerable groups' access to humanitarian assistance. Data also shows that conflict also negatively

¹ FAO, FSC, PC 27/07/2023

² ILO, 11/10/2021

³ FEWS NET, 14/03/2024

⁴ Ibid

⁵ UNCDR, 01/02/2024

⁶ FEWS NET, 14/03/2024

impacts humanitarian access. Active hostility incidents between armed groups in the Abyei Administrative Area, Warrap and Unity states impacted humanitarian movements.⁷

Lack of access to or the disruption of humanitarian assistance can contribute to higher food insecurity levels for households dependent on assistance, especially for households in remote, insecure, and inaccessible areas such as Lokoramach and Thorochoch of Lekuangole Payam, Vuveth of Gumuruk Payam, and Maruwo of Verteth Payam, which are receiving limited to no food assistance.

The KIs reported WASH, food and shelter/NFI services as the most unavailable humanitarian assistance. At the same time, they reported crime, school drop-out, early marriages and alcohol/drug abuse as the most common coping strategies adopted by the communities.

CIVIL DOCUMENTATION ISSUES – reported by 46% of Key Informants in February 2024

Of the 320 Key informants (KIs), 146 (46%) considered the lack of access to documentation as an issue affecting their communities.

The three most commonly cited barriers to accessing civil documentation include unaffordable administrative fees, lack of understanding of the process, and distance to and accessibility of registration offices (especially in rural areas). These issues require the attention of governmental or development actors to augment current humanitarian efforts. Most Key Informants (KIs) highlight the ability to be employed, register SIM cards, access banking services, and secure education for children as the most common effects of the lack of documentation.

It is noteworthy that KIs mentioned passport as the most sought document followed by ID and birth certificate.

FAMILY SEPARATIONS – reported by 41% of Key Informants in February 2024

Of the 320 Key Informants surveyed, 131 (41%) noted the presence of family separations in their communities. More than half of these informants (51%) claimed that family separations were a sporadic occurrence, while 18% considered it an issue facing many or most families.

Of particular concern was the mention of women and girls as the most affected groups. Women and girls often face limited opportunities for earning a livelihood compared to their male family members. When separated from close male relatives, who typically have higher income-generating potential, these families can struggle to access financial resources for essentials like school fees and basic needs. This situation can further exacerbate the family's vulnerability to economic shocks.⁸ Further to this, adolescent girls and women are at higher risk of GBV in such circumstances.

Security and safety, family disagreements and violence as well as lack of access to education were cited as three most frequent contributors to family separations. It is worth noting that UNICEF data shows that child protection actors also report family separation as tightly linked to food insecurity⁹.

SEXUAL VIOLENCE – reported by 39% of Key Informants in February 2024

Of the 320 Key Informants (KIs) surveyed, 124 Key Informants (39%) reported sexual violence as major protection violation in their communities. Among these 124, 56% flagged it as sporadic occurrence, indicating intimate partner violence as prevalent. This finding is consistent with the average findings of the GBVIMS findings for 2023. However, 12% of these informants reported it as an occurrence faced by many or most community members. Additionally, 57 KIs (46%) mentioned fear of stigma as the most likely reason for lack of reporting. Among those who report incidents of sexual violence, health centres and Police are the most cited institutions in which survivors report incidents of sexual violence.

In a survey conducted in Yei County, 45% of the households reported experiencing threats of GBV against women and girls. Specific threats reported included rape (32%), sexual assault (26%), physical assault (23%), forced marriages (20%), and other (17%).¹⁰

More specifically, refugees and returnees from Sudan are at risk. As of February 2024, reports from Renk indicate that overcrowding at the transit and reception centres continues to exacerbate protection risks, with an increase in reports of sexual violence. This is

⁷ OCHA 19/01/2024

⁸ OHCHR, 21/03/2022

⁹ UNICEF 31/08/2023

¹⁰ AVSI 09/02/2024

occurring while the demand for case management exceeds the capacity of protection partners. Similar accounts have been reported in Maban, Upper Nile State, and Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal, where poor facilities and the lack of safety infrastructure, particularly streetlights, in the new settlements are posing sexual violence risks to women and girls.¹¹

38 KIs (30% out of the 124 KIs) note asking humanitarians for assistance and using community compensation mechanisms (29% of KIs) as most frequent coping mechanisms for GBV survivors.

The prevalence of GBV in South Sudan to a great degree is related to food insecurity and conflict, exacerbated by flooding and limited livelihood opportunities.¹² Cultural beliefs, lack of knowledge, and adoption of harmful practices are also some of the contributors to the violence against women.¹³

The South Sudan National Police Service, under the Ministry of Interior, has reactivated standing order No. 003/2024 which specifically regulates the process of filling out Form No. 8 in cases of injuries resulting from criminal acts, including sexual and gender-based violence. It is important to note that, as per the reactivated order, **it is not mandatory to fill out Form No. 8 before providing medical assistance to survivors of gender-based violence.** Copy of the order is available [HERE](#).

Key Findings and Messages/Recommendations by the Protection Cluster South Sudan PROMO working group:

- Insufficient income opportunities are recurring root causes of various protection risks. There is an urgent need for action, particularly in fundraising for income-generating activities tailored to women-headed households, to effectively tackle these risks.
- Insufficient civil documentation significantly hampers vulnerable groups' access to housing, land, property rights, as well as government and development initiatives. Immediate and sustained efforts are required to improve documentation uptake through awareness campaigns and the removal of access barriers. A multi-sectorial and area-based mitigating approach is needed in locations where social cohesion is disrupted by unequal access to humanitarian assistance.
- Women and girls experiencing family separations should be prioritized for humanitarian aid and guaranteed access to specialized protection services.
- Advocating against preferential access to humanitarian assistance is crucial for risk reduction, as it disrupts social cohesion and fuels inter-communal violence. Implementing an area-based, needs-centered approach to assistance is critical for preserving social cohesion and upholding the principle of "do no harm."
- Access to registration for humanitarian assistance is a significant barrier for vulnerable individuals, particularly pregnant and new mothers, the elderly, and people with disabilities. Advocating for the importance of protection and collaborating closely with registering agencies is essential to ensure access for the most vulnerable. This strategy should be reinforced, and key points reiterated at HCT and ICCG forums, with an emphasis on the commitments made under the centrality of protection strategy.
- It is the responsibility of all police personnel to ensure immediate medical care for survivors of gender-based violence. Filling out Form No. 8 should not be a prerequisite for providing medical services. GBV AoR Field Coordinators, Protection Cluster Field Coordinators, and partners should support the printing and distribution of the reactivated order in remote areas and ensure its incorporation into their awareness-raising sessions.

¹¹ OCHA 12/02/2024

¹² AVSI 09/02/2024

¹³ Development Initiatives 01/02/2023

Organizations contributing to the PMS in the reporting period:

Danish Refugee Council, Norwegian Refugee Council, Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Hope Restoration South Sudan, INTERSOS Humanitarian Aid Organization, International Organization for Migration, Agency for Women and Children Development, Mission to Alleviate Suffering in South Sudan, Humanitarian & Development Consortium, Humane Aid for Community Organization, and Development Consortium and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. **Thank you to all the member organizations for their contributions!**

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