



Food and Agriculture  
Organization of the  
United Nations

LEARNING BRIEF 

Conflict and protracted crises

**South Sudan**

# Contributions to mitigating conflict between mobile pastoral communities

How the Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field Schools approach addresses conflict drivers and strengthens resilience in cattle camps



Funded by  
the European Union



**South Sudan**

# Contributions to mitigating conflict between mobile pastoral communities

How the Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field Schools approach  
addresses conflict drivers and strengthens resilience in cattle camps

## REQUIRED CITATION

FAO. 2024. *South Sudan: Contributions to mitigating conflict between mobile pastoral communities – How the Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field Schools approach addresses conflict drivers and strengthens resilience in cattle camps*. Conflict and protracted crises learning brief. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cd0173en>

The designations employed and the presentation of material in this information product do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) concerning the legal or development status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dashed lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. The mention of specific companies or products of manufacturers, whether or not these have been patented, does not imply that these have been endorsed or recommended by FAO in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned.

© FAO, 2024



Some rights reserved. This work is made available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 IGO licence (CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO; <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/igo/legalcode/legalcode>).

Under the terms of this licence, this work may be copied, redistributed and adapted for non-commercial purposes, provided that the work is appropriately cited. In any use of this work, there should be no suggestion that FAO endorses any specific organization, products or services. The use of the FAO logo is not permitted. If the work is adapted, then it must be licensed under the same or equivalent Creative Commons licence. If a translation of this work is created, it must include the following disclaimer along with the required citation: “This translation was not created by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). FAO is not responsible for the content or accuracy of this translation. The original English edition shall be the authoritative edition.”

Disputes arising under the licence that cannot be settled amicably will be resolved by mediation and arbitration as described in Article 8 of the licence except as otherwise provided herein. The applicable mediation rules will be the mediation rules of the World Intellectual Property Organization [www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules](http://www.wipo.int/amc/en/mediation/rules) and any arbitration will be in accordance with the Arbitration Rules of the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL).

**Third-party materials.** Users wishing to reuse material from this work that is attributed to a third party, such as tables, figures or images, are responsible for determining whether permission is needed for that reuse and for obtaining permission from the copyright holder. The risk of claims resulting from infringement of any third-party-owned component in the work rests solely with the user.

**Sales, rights and licensing.** FAO information products are available on the FAO website ([www.fao.org/publications](http://www.fao.org/publications)) and can be purchased through [publications-sales@fao.org](mailto:publications-sales@fao.org). Requests for commercial use should be submitted via: [www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request](http://www.fao.org/contact-us/licence-request). Queries regarding rights and licensing should be submitted to: [copyright@fao.org](mailto:copyright@fao.org).

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of FAO and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union.

Cover photo: © FAO/Stefanie Glinski

# Contents

Acknowledgements . . . . .	iv
Abbreviations . . . . .	v
Background . . . . .	vi
Context . . . . .	1
About the project. . . . .	4
Methodological approach . . . . .	5
The learning agenda within the monitoring, . . . . . evaluation, accountability and learning approach	6
Addressing the learning questions . . . . .	7
Do Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field Schools . . . . . contribute to mitigating conflict in cattle camps, and how?	7
How does the Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field . . . . . Schools approach influence the tradition and cultural norms of pastoralists in cattle camps?	13
Results and impacts . . . . .	17
How did Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field Schools . . . . . contribute to the resilience of mobile pastoral communities and households in South Sudan?	17
Testimonies and stakeholders' feedback . . . . .	19
Sustainability . . . . .	21
Replicability and upscaling. . . . .	22
Key learning and recommendations for programming . . . . .	23
Bibliography. . . . .	26
References . . . . .	26
Additional resources . . . . .	26

## Acknowledgements

This publication was developed by Charlotte Masselot and Frédérique Matras from the Knowledge Platform on Emergencies and Resilience (KORE) and Phillip Priestley from the Conflict and Peace Unit in FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER). Inputs were received from Danvers Omolo, Natalie Kapinga, Khang Chol, Wilson Makuwaza, Nimaya Mogga, Marco Nyariel and Jasper Okodi, FAO Office in South Sudan; Bettie Atyam, Alote Ewinyu, and Paul Opio, FAO Subregional Office for Eastern Africa; and Rebecca Pietrelli, OER Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning team. Graphic design support was provided by John Jackson, OER Resource Mobilization and Communication Team.

## Abbreviations

<b>CAHW</b>	community animal health worker
<b>CMDRR</b>	community-managed disaster risk reduction
<b>FAO</b>	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
<b>GNAFC</b>	Global Network Against Food Crises
<b>IPC</b>	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
<b>KORE</b>	Knowledge Platform on Emergencies and Resilience
<b>MEAL</b>	monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning
<b>OER</b>	Office of Emergencies and Resilience
<b>PLEFS</b>	Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field School
<b>UNESCO</b>	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization



## Background

The European Commission, in cooperation with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Food Programme, launched the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. As part of the Global Network, the European Union has supported the Organization since 2018 through a joint FAO-European Union Partnership Programme. This programme was designed to facilitate a catalytic effect on the humanitarian–development–peace nexus by forming strategic partnerships and conducting evidence-based, context-specific and innovative country investment interventions throughout Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Near East.

Country-level monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) plans were developed to track changes in resilience and food security indicators resulting from country investments. Within this framework, country-specific learning agendas have been designed to understand the enabling and/or limiting factors behind these changes and the conditions for replication and scaling up of potential solutions to food crises.

A learning brief documents how learning happened and what learning emerged from promising programme approaches promoting sustainable solutions to food crises, in order to support future programming, decision-making and resource allocation.

This learning brief documents the main lessons drawn from the South Sudan country investment project entitled Resilient Pastoral Livelihoods and Education implemented by FAO and its partners. It showcases key learning on the role of the Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field School (PLEFS) approach in enhancing the food security and livelihoods resilience of mobile pastoral communities and households in South Sudan's cattle camps. More specifically, **this learning brief explores how and to what extent an approach like PLEFS contributes to mitigating conflict and building resilience in pastoral areas.**

The document unpacks the various building blocks of the PLEFS approach, to identify the extent to which they constituted contributory pathways to sustaining peace. It presents measured impacts and effects, witnessed by leaders and members of cattle camps, about the transformation of conflict dynamics. It also identifies opportunities created by PLEFS to establish new paradigms among pastoralist communities, in the economic, social and cultural dimensions of cattle camp life.

A learning agenda is an engaging tool to mobilize various experiences and knowledge, building on relevant quantitative and qualitative data, analysis and information generated throughout the programme and project cycle, to support evidence-based learning and informed conclusions and recommendations.



## Context



While **95 percent** of the South Sudanese population depends on agriculture for their livelihoods, **nearly two-thirds (63 percent)** are affected by one of the worst food security and nutrition crises globally (FAO, 2022a).



The number of people in South Sudan facing high levels of acute food insecurity (Crisis or worse, Integrated Food Security Phase Classification [IPC] Phase 3 and above) increased from **6.5 million in May–July 2020 to 7.74 million by April–July 2022** (FSIN and GNAFC, 2023).

The Republic of South Sudan has been facing a situation of protracted crisis for several decades. It is highly vulnerable to shocks, from economic downturns to natural hazards and food chain crises, worsening an already dire humanitarian situation from years of conflict and intercommunal violence. The cumulative effect of these shocks, coupled with structural stressors including weak institutions and local governance, poor physical and economic infrastructure, and fragmented markets, exacerbate prevailing food insecurity and undermine agricultural livelihoods.

Furthermore, the country has experienced unprecedented flooding in recent years, notably in July 2019, adversely affecting the livelihoods of vulnerable households due to the loss of, and damage to, productive infrastructures and assets.

Livestock production is central to South Sudan's economy and to the sociocultural life of the rural population. Pastoralists are highly dependent on seasonal migration to access pasture and water for their livestock. The vulnerability of pastoralists is increasing with extreme climate events such as dry spells and floods; recurrent local conflicts and the resulting insecurity on migratory routes and constrained access to cultivated areas and markets; endemic livestock diseases; and limited access to basic services. Therefore, the gathering of remote pastoral communities in cattle camps constitutes an opportunity to strengthen local services and economies that are key to sustainably addressing risks, improving livelihoods and building resilience.

### Cattle camp



A cattle camp is comprised of many animals (cattle, sheep and goats) ranging from a few hundred to several thousand. They are owned by different households belonging to distinct clans and villages, and are aggregated to be migrated, watered, sheltered, grazed, as well as treated and vaccinated where access to inputs allows. Owners and herders share the responsibility for the security and management of their animals. Families are free to move and join another cattle camp. A cattle camp is headed by a leader selected by the families in the camp. The cattle camp leader is assisted by a committee, which regularly meets to make important decisions (such as deciding where the camp should move, if water or pasture are lacking or in the event of disease outbreak) and to resolve disputes in the camp. Cattle camps typically move to new locations after a few weeks, also depending on the security situation. Access to water and pasture is fundamental for cattle camps. In the dry season, cattle keepers move their livestock closer to the rivers and lowlands, and during the rainy season when the lowlands are flooded, they start migrating to higher and more populated areas until they are closer to their home villages.



Limited options for livelihoods diversification, engendered by low literacy and educational levels, as well as economic and food insecurity, play a key role in driving cattle raiding.

The operational context in South Sudan and in the project's area of intervention is both challenging and unpredictable. The stalled 2018 Peace Agreement, weak governance and recurrent shocks have contributed to a context of subnational insecurity. **Intercommunal violence, cattle raiding, revenge killings, and prolonged years of assets depletion and loss of livelihoods, impact the already fragile situation of vulnerable, poor and food insecure pastoralists.** Conflict-induced displacements exacerbate food insecurity and can contribute to concentrations of livestock, fuelling disputes over access to water and pasture, while increasing the risks of disease outbreaks. Natural hazards, including droughts and flooding, also disrupt mobility and traditional migratory routes. Competition over scarce water resources and overexploited pastures constitutes a significant driver of conflict and disputes, especially during the dry season when the concentration of cattle keepers and their herds leads to a higher risk of cattle raiding and revenge violence.

*“When you don't have enough to eat, you have to raid your neighbours to get cattle for survival.”*

**Marco Nyariel, Deputy Head of Rumbek Field Office and Animal Health Officer, FAO South Sudan**

Insecurity has a disproportionate impact on women and girls, who are at a heightened risk of sexual and gender-based violence, face restrictions on their freedom of movement and possess few avenues for self-realization. The extensive seasonal movement of pastoralists deprive them of access to basic services that are by default designed for sedentary living. As a result, only minimal livelihood support services and opportunities are available and accessible to members of pastoral communities, undermining their resilience.

## Sociocultural dimensions of conflict in cattle camps



In South Sudan, it is estimated that there are more livestock than people (Idris, 2018). Cattle are at the centre of socioeconomic and sociocultural life for pastoral communities, with a total livestock population estimated at 36 million (12 million cattle and 24 million goats and sheep). Maintaining and enlarging a herd, beyond merely a livelihood, is also a matter of prestige, an indicator of wealth and a social status marker. The high level of economic dependence on cattle, including as a means to pay a dowry, is a major driver of conflict. In recent years, the significant increase in dowry prices has incentivised cattle raiding.

*“If you don’t have enough cows, you will not get married.”*

**Marco Nyariel, Deputy Head of Rumbek Field Office and Animal Health Officer, FAO South Sudan**

There is an element of cultural acceptance of cattle raiding and revenge violence. Young pastoralists are considered both perpetrators and victims of revenge violence, from social pressure and instrumentalization to participate in such raids. Limited options for youth development, recreation and employment have contributed to widely held perceptions that “idle youths” are also more susceptible to participating in cattle raids. Young men are also often driven to join armed groups, as they know they can obtain cattle through conflict.

The circular nature of violence has the potential to escalate without the effective intervention of cattle camp leaders or state officials. Cattle owned by members of a cattle camp

are viewed as the community’s, so in the event of a cattle raid, the attack is a raid against the community.

*“If your brother has been killed in a road ambush, then you will lay an ambush to kill the person who did this, or his relatives. So the circle of revenge killing continues.”*

**Camp Management Committee member, Rumbek East/Naam-thok**

Consequently, though also due to an array of contextual factors, customary conflict management mechanisms have been weakened. While cattle would traditionally be given to resolve conflict, this method no longer has the same effect as parties continue to engage in disputes with one another. Resolving disputes between cattle camps can be inherently more complex and often depends on the nature of the bonds between the sections or cattle camp leaders.

*“Where the links between the sections or cattle camp leaders are weak, so are the conflict management mechanisms.”*

**Makuac Chol, Former Head of the project’s technical working group**

Conflicts between different tribes or ethnicities present significant risk of escalation due to the lack of intertribal or interethnic mechanisms to resolve such conflicts, which are estimated to have generated higher levels of civilian casualties than the national conflict (DPO *et al.*, 2020).

# About the project



## Geographical coverage

**21 cattle camps across eight counties in the Lakes and Central Equatorial states of South Sudan**



## Project implementation

**From January 2019 to December 2021 (36 months)**



## Beneficiaries

- ▶ **21 cattle camps constituting 21 PLEFS centres with dedicated centre management committees**
- ▶ **4 503 children, youth and adults enrolled in PLEFS learning sessions (2 812 male, 1 691 female)**
- ▶ **33 income-generating activity groups with 1 255 members (482 male, 773 female)**
- ▶ **33 village community banking savings groups with 979 members (450 male, 529 female)**
- ▶ **42 community animal health workers (CAHW)**
- ▶ **63 PLEFS community facilitators and county supervisors**
- ▶ **21 peace committees established and trained**



## Partners

- European Union
- UNESCO
- Norwegian People's Aid
- International Institute of Rural Reconstruction
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
- Ministry of General Education and Instruction
- Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries



## Types of shock/crisis

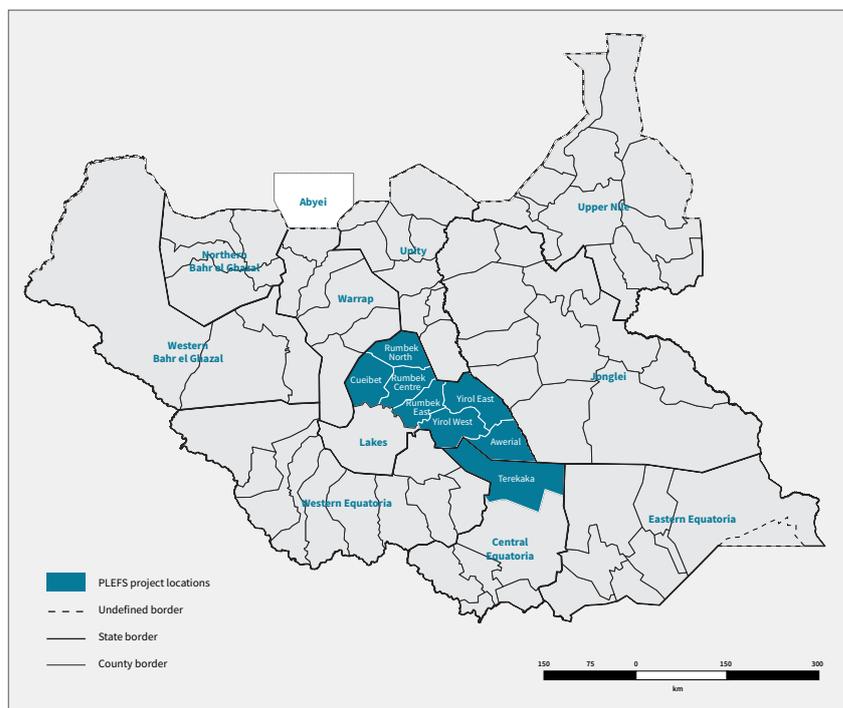
- Conflict and protracted crisis
- Forced displacement
- Animal diseases

From 2019 to 2021, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) co-implemented with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) a three-year project funded by the European Union. It was entitled the Resilient Pastoral Livelihoods and Education Project and came within the framework of the joint FAO-European Union Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC) Partnership Programme. The main objective of this country investment in South Sudan was to contribute to enhancing the food security, nutrition and livelihood resilience of pastoral communities in cattle camps, utilizing the Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field School (PLEFS) approach, and with two main outcomes:

1. Livelihood security of pastoral households is improved.
2. Communities are empowered to mitigate and prevent shocks, and institutional capacity is enhanced to deliver integrated pastoral services.

This country investment was the continuation of a first pilot phase implemented by FAO and UNESCO from 2015 to 2018 in 11 cattle camps and learning centres. The second phase presented an opportunity to enhance the PLEFS approach and expand its reach and impact, drawing on the learning from the first phase.

**Figure 1. PLEFS project areas**



Source: UN Geospatial. 2024. ssd\_admbnda\_imwg\_nbs\_20230829. [Shapefile]. Rome. FAO. Dashed lines represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement. Final boundary between the Sudan and South Sudan has not yet been determined. Final status of the Abyei area is not yet determined.

## Methodological approach

Education, literacy and rural livelihoods are intrinsically part of the conflict dynamic and chronic food insecurity within rural South Sudan, and especially within cattle camps. This situation led FAO and UNESCO to build the PLEFS approach, which revolves on their complementary mandates. Indeed, PLEFS is tailored to the local cattle camp context and integrates:

- The provision of essential learning and education services in remote areas, including literacy, numeracy, life skills and basic skills training.
- The delivery of livelihood skills transfer and the development of capacities at community and institutional levels, including production, marketing and business management in addition to asset creation.

PLEFS was designed on the assumption that **enhancing pastoralists' capital and diversifying their livelihoods would increase their food security and contribute to the sustainability and resilience of pastoral livelihoods, as well as localized peace.**

Building on the experience and learning from the first pilot phase (including numerous findings from surveys, assessments, as well as local and regional learning workshops), several opportunities and recommendations were identified to strengthen the PLEFS approach in cattle camps, which informed the design of this second phase (see Table 1).

**Table 1. Evolutions in the PLEFS programme approach**

Recommendation from Phase 1 (pilot phase)	Application in Phase 2 (GNAFC country investment)
To cover other hard-to-reach areas not often targeted by humanitarian and development interventions	<b>Geographical extension</b> for the provision of integrated learning and pastoral services from 11 to 21 cattle camps, and adoption of a <b>landscape approach</b> for natural resources management
To strengthen inclusion and engagement	<b>Targeting and inclusion of all categories of learners</b> (male and female children, youths and adults) with tailored interventions, curricula and engagement modalities (participation, consultation, decision-making)
To ensure a holistic response to challenges facing the cattle camp communities	<b>Adoption of a multirisk management approach</b> to address compounding challenges affecting local development through community-managed disaster risk reduction
To focus on an improved productivity approach and seize potential for viable profitable activities	<b>Inclusion of an income-generating component</b> and enlarged economic opportunities and decision-making role for women
To address conflicts between cattle camps and enhance cohesiveness	<b>Integration of more deliberate conflict-sensitive and peace-responsive activities</b> , especially through peace committees, peacebuilding curricula and dialogue, supporting the development of conflict management capacities

## The learning agenda within the monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning approach

A dedicated monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) plan has been designed to create a body of evidence to systematically assess the progress and achievements towards the desired objectives and impacts, through a set of indicators and processes involving stakeholders. Such an approach ensures that the information produced through project activities as well as monitoring and evaluation activities (for example baseline and endline studies and impact evaluation) supports adaptive management while the intervention is being implemented and serves the generation of learning. The South Sudan country investment MEAL plan was developed through a consultative process with the aim of tracking changes in the resilience and food security indicators, during implementation and at the end of the intervention.

Complementary to the MEAL plan, a learning agenda was developed to ensure that the learning generated from this experience and MEAL processes would support the production of evidence-based knowledge and would be documented, applied in the lifetime of the project and taken up in future projects. Therefore, the South Sudan country investment learning agenda was designed around the three learning questions (see below). Answers to these questions are presented later in the document.

### Overview of the learning generation process



#### Framing the learning



#### Generating the learning



#### Documenting and sharing the learning



#### Promoting use of the learning

The learning generated and documented in this brief results from a collaborative process between the FAO Office in South Sudan and the Conflict and Peace Unit, the Knowledge Platform on Emergencies and Resilience (KORE) and the MEAL teams within the FAO Office of Emergencies and Resilience (OER), and the Resilience Team for Eastern Africa. These teams jointly identified the need and opportunity to conduct a learning review, an exercise aimed at collectively reflecting on the progress made towards answering the learning questions and identifying further evidence and knowledge needs to deliver the learning agenda. On 4 August 2021, 63 participants across FAO and project partners joined an online virtual learning workshop, which marked a milestone in this learning journey. The FAO Representative in South Sudan and the OER Director officially opened the workshop and then participants unpacked each learning question, together made sense of the existing information and experiences feeding the learning agenda, and decided on several key actions to strengthen the evidence-base and analysis for the learning questions.

The role of the Conflict and Peace Unit has been instrumental in the learning approach. By steering the design of questionnaires and the analysis of qualitative data collected, to produce critical evidence to test assumptions on conflict mitigation and the project's relationships to, and effects on, conflict drivers. The methodology to produce evidence pertinent to the learning generation followed a mixed-method approach, combining econometric analysis of quantitative and qualitative data, collected through household surveys, focus group discussions and key informant interviews. It was conducted under the leadership of the South Sudan project team and MEAL specialists, with the support of hired and trained enumerators. The KORE team guided and advised the learning process and had a brokering role in strengthening and documenting the links between the programming approach and the learning agenda implementation, in collaboration with the MEAL team. The testimonies presented in this brief come from key informant interviews and focus group discussions held in nine cattle camps across seven counties targeted by the project, conducted in the framework of the endline study.

## Addressing the learning questions

Three learning questions were formulated for the South Sudan country investment learning agenda:

- **How does the PLEFS approach contribute to the resilience of mobile pastoral communities and households in South Sudan?**
- **Does PLEFS contribute to mitigating conflict in cattle camps, and how?**
- **How does the PLEFS approach influence the tradition and cultural norms of pastoralists in cattle camps?**

This learning brief takes the second learning question as an entry point, and draws linkages with the other learning questions, thus presenting response elements on the role of PLEFS as a peace-responsive, culturally sensitive, and effective resilience-building approach in the specific context of the targeted cattle camps.

### Do Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field Schools contribute to mitigating conflict in cattle camps, and how?

Cattle are at the heart of social, economic and cultural lives in cattle camps. According to the baseline survey, livestock is reported as the main source of income for 86 percent of surveyed households. Threats to cattle, which may assume the form of disease, theft or natural disasters, directly undermine the resilience and safety of households and lead to a vicious cycle of cattle raiding and revenge violence. Consequently, for pastoralists to live in a stable environment where negative coping mechanisms (such as resorting to violence and conflict) are minimized, requires:

- Healthier and more productive cattle and complementary sources of income and livelihoods.
- More educated and empowered cattle camp residents, especially youths.
- More effective community-level multirisk management mechanisms and spaces for dialogue and cooperation.

While acknowledging that conflict is driven by more structural causes (including the weak rule of law, the proliferation of weapons and the presence of non-state armed groups), the intervention sought to positively influence more localized conflict drivers specific to cattle camps, and associated with the economic context, sociocultural identity and practices, and natural resources and the environment (see Table 2).

The intervention sought to address localized conflict drivers through a variety of peace-contributing activities, such as:

- **Direct contributions:** they refer to activities having a clear and articulated peace contribution, such as the establishment of peace committees.
- **Indirect contributions:** they refer to activities having primary outputs other than peace – such as livelihoods diversification and education – though at the same time are perceived to contribute to reducing tensions, providing viable alternatives to engaging in violence and mitigating conflict.



©FAO/Albert Gonzalez-Farfan

**Table 2. Overview of structural causes and drivers of conflict in the intervention area**

	Economic context	Sociocultural identity and practices	Natural resources and the environment
Structural causes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weak economic infrastructure</li> <li>• High levels of inequality</li> <li>• Centrality of cattle to economic life</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional gender norms and patriarchal society</li> <li>• Cultural “acceptance” of cattle raids and revenge violence</li> <li>• Communitarian approach to defensive security (an attack on one herd/cattle keeper is an attack on the community)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Absence of, or limited, rural infrastructure (roads, water points, cattle corridors, public services)</li> </ul>
Localized drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very limited youth livelihood options</li> <li>• Vulnerability to shocks (human-induced and natural disasters)</li> <li>• Economic and food insecurity</li> <li>• Dowry price inflation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low levels of education and literacy affecting critical thinking capacities of youths</li> <li>• Weak inter-community conflict management capacities</li> <li>• Girls viewed as “property” through dowry</li> <li>• Girls “eloping” or impregnation prior to marriage</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased competition over scarce water and pasture resources (heightened during warmer months and exacerbated by extreme climate events like droughts)</li> <li>• Mobility to higher and more populated areas (heightened during the rainy season and exacerbated by floods)</li> <li>• Concentration of cattle keepers and livestock increases pressure on natural resources and livestock disease outbreak</li> <li>• Weak natural resource management mechanisms</li> </ul>

This section of the learning brief explores how PLEFS contributed to the mitigation of conflict. The various peace-contributing activities are classified against what FAO refers to as “contributory pathways to sustaining peace” (as explained in the below box), highlighting key achievements and perceived changes – as expressed by project stakeholders and cattle camp members – under each pathway.

## Contributory pathways to sustaining peace

In the framework of a global partnership, FAO and Interpeace have identified seven illustrative contributory pathways to sustaining peace (FAO, 2022b). Resilience interventions can contribute to several pathways through different, though interrelated, activities and outputs. The below three pathways were identified as the most relevant to the South Sudan country investment and the PLEFS approach:



### CONTRIBUTORY PATHWAY #2 Strengthened conflict management mechanisms

*IF people have stronger peacebuilding and conflict-resolution skills, and formal and informal mechanisms for conflict management are established or revived, THEN tensions and disputes will more likely be addressed in a non-violent manner and resource-related incidents will be reduced, BECAUSE community members will have increased capacity and willingness to prevent and resolve conflicts, and community members and local authorities will play their part effectively in preventing or mitigating conflict, and building peace locally.*



### CONTRIBUTORY PATHWAY #5 Improved relationships and joint problem solving

*IF relationships are improved and the capacity for joint problem-solving within and between communities is increased, THEN disputes will more likely be addressed in a non-violent manner and horizontal social cohesion (i.e. trust among people) will increase, BECAUSE there will be increased trust within and between communities, and more collaborative management of collective natural resources.*



### CONTRIBUTORY PATHWAY #7 Viability of agricultural livelihoods in conflict situations

*IF the viability of agricultural livelihoods in situations of conflict and insecurity is maintained, THEN the opportunity cost of involvement in violence will be increased, BECAUSE people’s key livelihood assets will be protected; they will have a more positive longer-term perspective; and they will not resort to negative coping strategies, including conflict and violence.*

For more information: FAO. 2022. *Operationalizing pathways to sustaining peace in the context of Agenda 2030 – A how-to guide*. Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc1021en>

## CONTRIBUTORY PATHWAY #2

### Strengthened conflict management mechanisms

#### PLEFS achievements

- **PLEFS centre management committees:**<sup>1</sup> The establishment and reinforcement of 21 centre management committees to oversee and support learning in targeted cattle camps, provide a platform for accountability, engagement and ownership, while fostering targeting and participation of marginalized vulnerable households and individuals.
- **Peace committees:** The establishment and training of 21 peace committees, deriving from centre management committees, to support the effective mitigation and resolution of disputes and conflicts. Trainings included modules on analysing conflict drivers in the local context, identifying relevant mitigation/resolution measures, conflict management and conflict transformation approaches, how to conduct peace dialogue meetings, etc.
- **Support to inter-camp dialogue** by peace committees, bringing together cattle camp leaders and customary conflict management mechanisms to discuss the root causes of conflict, and identify sustainable conflict mitigation measures.
- **Reinforcement of referral systems** to village chiefs in cases at risk of conflict escalation, and **mediation** between aggrieved parties, including with youths engaged in revenge violence.
- **Inclusive decision-making and dispute resolution** encouraging participation of, and collaboration between, residents of cattle camps to collectively resolve intra-camps issues,
- **Strengthening of community-managed disaster risk reduction (CMDRR)** mechanisms and development of 21 action plans to address multiple risks, including conflict.

#### Perceived changes

- Centre management committees and peace committees contributed to the resolution of disputes (over girls' elopement, access to water points, access to grazing lands, theft and fighting) and reductions in conflict levels, including revenge violence.
- Centre management committees and peace committees contributed to strengthening community mechanisms to address intra- and inter-community disputes and conflicts.
- CMDRR action plans led to demarcating cattle corridors and contributed to reduce disputes and conflicts during migration periods.

*“The participation of women in centre management committee meetings was often greater than that of men.”*

**Marco Nyariel, Deputy Head of Rumbek Field Office  
and Animal Health Officer, FAO South Sudan**

1 Good practices from Kenya, South Sudan and Uganda informed the development of camp management committees and combined key elements from PLEFS parent-teacher associations, the Alternative Basic Education for Karamoja (ABEK) and Pastoralist Field Schools in Kenya and Uganda. See for example: FAO. 2018. Improving pasture management in arid and semi-arid lands in the Horn of Africa through Pastoralist Field Schools. Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/I8855EN/i8855en.pdf>

## CONTRIBUTORY PATHWAY #5: Improved relationships and joint problem solving

### PLEFS achievements

- **Provision of education curriculum and equipment** in 21 PLEFS learning centres with 63 facilitators/teachers; development of literacy, numeracy and life skills contributing to improve livelihood and social prospects and increase the opportunity cost of youth engaging in violence. For example, access to education through PLEFS stimulated interest to pursue studies in the formal school system in nearby (satellite) government schools (7 percent of total learners).
- **Implementation of co-curricular activities** through games, sports, etc. in the learning centres, enabling learners to relieve stress, create cohesion and embrace peaceful coexistence.
- **Provision of sensitization** through radio programmes, community cinemas, to raise awareness on the negative impacts of insecurity on livelihoods and change attitudes towards violence.
- Set-up of **exchange visits and dialogue platforms** to improve understanding and cooperation between cattle camps, especially between CAHWs ahead of massive vaccination campaigns to ensure maintenance of peaceful conditions within and across cattle camps.
- **Association** of parties to the conflict, whereby youths, many of whom had been involved in cattle raiding and/or revenge violence, come together to learn and be trained as CAHW, thus creating meaningful connections and changing mindsets between youths in different camps.
- **Creating incentives for peace**, as the diversification of livelihoods through income-generating activities lead to new trade opportunities of dairy products and vegetables between communities. Youths and women were prominent in establishing such linkages and win-win relationships.
- **Mobilization of women and youths** to participate in cattle camp activities by PLEFS centre management committees.

### Perceived changes

- Education and peace messaging have contributed to a change in perceptions on the use of violence.
- Improved numeracy and literacy have improved livelihoods prospects. This perception can be confirmed by the results, which show that the percentage of literate beneficiary heads of households increased by 28 percent (from 13 to 41 percent) while the increase in the non-beneficiary group was negligible (2 percent).
- Levels and extent of contact and understanding between youths from different cattle camps increased through CAHWs.
- Dialogues held between leaders of cattle camps through exchange visits improved communication and understanding between leaders.
- The adoption of an inclusive approach translated into increased economic autonomy and participation in community decision-making bodies for women.

*“Members of cattle camps rarely met members of other cattle camps and when they did so, it was at the end of a gun. Thanks to the project, members of different cattle camps started to meet through sports game, exchange visits and other joint activities.”*

**Isaac Bwire, South Sudan Country Manager  
International Institute for Rural Rehabilitation**

## CONTRIBUTORY PATHWAY #7

### Viability of agricultural livelihoods in conflict situations

#### PLEFS achievements

- **Community animal health workers:** Provided training for a network of 42 CAHWs and provision of start-up kit to improve livestock health and productivity.
- **Prevention of various livestock diseases** by trained CAHWs:
  - surveillance: routine monitoring of livestock diseases and outbreaks reporting;
  - treatment and mass vaccination campaigns in, and beyond, beneficiary cattle camps (to 620 976 cattle, 470 400 sheep, 777 540 goats, 239 donkeys and 180 540 poultry);
  - contribution to CMDRR process on animal disease prevention; and
  - access to animal health services is reported to have increased in the duration of the project (by up to 63 percent of surveyed beneficiary households at endline compared to 40 percent at baseline).
- **Income generation:** Development of 33 income-generating activity groups and sustainable business models (milk processing, fish and vegetable production, seed banking) supported by marketing and business management training. The average number of income sources increased from 1.9 to 2.7 for participants to the project, while for non-beneficiaries the change was negligible (1.71 to 1.78). This result confirms the effective impact of the project towards income-generating activities for selected PLEFS group members that were engaged on various themes, such as milk, fish and vegetable production and marketing.
- **Provision of cash assistance and agropastoral inputs and assets** supporting the strengthening and diversification of income and food sources.
- **Financial services:** Establishment of 33 village community banking savings groups as a safety net with weekly saving schemes to increase access to credit and mitigate negative coping mechanisms.
- **Rehabilitation/construction** of water sources, installation of solar pumps and establishment of water management committees to increase availability and strengthen equitable access to water for herders and farmers in the dry season.
- **Institutional capacity development**, with 24 county supervisors seconded from line ministries (Ministry of General Education and Instruction, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security and Ministry of Livestock and Fisheries), deployed, equipped and trained to promote, coordinate and deliver integrated pastoral services.

#### Perceived changes

- Livelihoods and income sources were diversified and enhanced, thus reducing some of the economic drivers of cattle raiding, whereby viable income-generating activities reduced the economic incentives to engage in violence, or conversely, the opportunity cost of engaging in violence was increased.
- Increased income deriving from new income-generating activity and entrepreneurship skills, as well as increased savings, loans and business investment capacity from village community banking savings groups.
- Increased availability of, and access to, water along cattle routes for farmers and livestock keepers reportedly contributing to a reduction in disputes.
- Improved animal health and productivity, and a reduction in the likelihood of livestock disease outbreaks.
- Increased livelihoods alternatives for youth, which community leaders in PLEFS-targeted cattle camps link to their witnessing a reduction of youth involvement in revenge killings and cattle raids.

*“Many youths who used to lead cattle raids are now engaged in agriculture and fishing. [The creation of small businesses is keeping youth] away from getting into conflict.”*

**Woman in the Cueibet Aluelic/Achol Malek cattle camp**

## Some entry points for a multirisk management approach in South Sudan's cattle camps



© FAO/Stefanie Głinski

In addition to the above three contributory pathways to sustaining peace, the South Sudan country investment applied a multirisk management approach to engaging with cattle camp communities, predominantly:

- **At project formulation stage: Seeking the engagement of cattle camp populations in, and building trust around, the proposed PLEFS approach.** The project teams met with a variety of stakeholders and individuals with extensive knowledge and experience of the realities of life in cattle camps. Initial reticence took about a year to overcome, with people gradually showing up to meetings without their weapons. The high demand from many cattle camps to be included in the project at times created some tensions. The project hence worked with local authorities and cattle camp leaders to better understand and collectively map needs, vulnerabilities and risks, to inform the project's targeting criteria and foster a participatory and transparent decision-making process.
- **At project launch: Completing a risks analysis during the first two months of the project to reflect on local risks and their factors.** Such community-based identification of risks, including conflict risks, informed the activities to implement in the project. For example, community consultations identified access to water points as a driver of conflict, leading to the inclusion of new activities such as the construction and rehabilitation of additional water harvesting infrastructures and the set-up of community-based water user committees to manage access and resolve disputes. Such risk analysis also helped to foster acceptance of the project and ensured that some of its components would not be a trigger for additional resistance or conflict. This was particularly the case for project components targeting women and girls, initially seen as threatening the camp culture.
- **During project implementation: Supporting and enhancing local capacities in an integrated approach to risk mitigation and management.** This was carried out using the CMDRR approach to implement action plans resulting from the above risks analysis, and by supporting existing mechanisms and developing local capacities rather than creating new leadership mechanisms. For example, customary conflict management mechanisms directly involved in the resolution of disputes and conflicts internal to cattle camps were bolstered through raising awareness, training, etc. The project also created opportunities for women and younger people to be involved, ensuring more equitable representation, and contributing to more effective and durable opposability of ruling.

## How does the Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field Schools approach influence the tradition and cultural norms of pastoralists in cattle camps?

While pastoral communities are largely excluded from accessing basic and social services, pastoralist women and girls face double marginalization and discrimination in their livelihoods and social relations because of a strict gender code imposed by the patriarchal culture and norms of South Sudan traditional societies. The concept of intersecting identities and inequalities plays its full role when looking at the very nature of cattle camps. There is a critical skills gap for women and girls that translates into a gendered and generational division of labour in herd and household management strategies and in the ownership, use and distribution of assets. With cattle being the main asset governing South Sudan's social, economic and cultural life, it is owned by male household heads, in the name of the family or lineage group, and decisions about the sale and disposal of cattle are for men to make. In addition, the focus on girls' value in marriage and dowry payments directly affect girls, ostensibly viewed as property, often guarded until they are married and denied the opportunity to attend or finish school. Girls over ten years old are particularly disadvantaged as their roles are limited to the camp territory and mobility beyond the cattle camp is severely restricted, limiting their access to education opportunities or the skills, knowledge and services they will need to thrive and to keep themselves and their families healthy. Extensive seasonal movements further undermine the resilience capacities of pastoralist girls by causing interruptions to their education cycles and further diminishing livelihoods opportunities.

Acknowledging the importance of understanding better the effect of the PLEFS approach on traditions and cultural norms of pastoralists in cattle camps, a dedicated learning question was formulated as part of the country investment learning agenda. It allowed unpacking of the gender dimensions of the PLEFS approach, and identifying areas of PLEFS where a stronger gender-sensitivity lens could be applied – to bring about attitudinal and behavioural change towards women and girls. Those are:

- **Basic education:** fostering acquisition of basic literacy and numeracy to address marginalization and discrimination; establishing co-curriculum groups in PLEFS learning centres such as girl learners' club.
- **Raising awareness:** mainstreaming gender considerations into PLEFS teaching curriculum combined with education campaigns; fostering attendance and retention of women and girls in PLEFS learning sessions.
- **Livelihoods diversification:** building entrepreneurship skills, promoting income generation activities and access to markets; establishing village community banking and savings groups. Both the income-generating activities and village community banking savings groups had a majority of female participants (around 55–60 percent). Income-generating activities and village community banking savings groups played a major role in increasing resilience, with a **12 percent increase in access to financial services** between baseline and endline among beneficiary

households. **The average number of income sources increased from 1.9 to 2.7**, confirming the impact of the project on diversification of income sources for selected PLEFS members engaged in milk, fish and vegetable production and marketing activities (FAO, forthcoming).

*“Women used to collect wild food during the rainy season and faced many challenges: rape, wild animals, long distance travelling... Thanks to their participation in the project, they can now grow their vegetables around their home.”*

#### **Woman in the Yirol West/Jokpek cattle camp**

- **Representation:** enhancing women’s participation to play a more active role in planning and decision-making in the household and community; increasing the number of women as facilitators in the literacy and livelihood classes.
- **Enabling environment:** addressing health, hygiene and menstrual hygiene needs of women and girls in their domestic and learning environments, for example through the production of reusable sanitary pads to enhance attendance and participation; reducing safety risks for women and girls along roads from cattle camps to markets.

*“If a poor man elopes with a girl whom the parents have put hopes on for getting cows, it will cause serious fighting.”*

#### **Camp Management Committee member, Cueibet/Aluelic**

Participants in focus group discussions often cited premarital impregnation and elopement of girls as a trigger for conflict. However, community leaders gradually saw the benefit of a more inclusive approach towards women in improving the lives and livelihoods of the whole community. They acknowledged the tangible benefits of women and girls’ enrolment in education and literacy programmes and income-generating activities. They appreciated that these changes were not threatening the cultural norms, for example by not disrupting the traditional division of labour, but rather enhancing women’s participation in livelihoods activities that are culturally accepted, such as the production and sale of milk, fish and vegetables. Income-generating activities provided women with a degree of financial autonomy, which in turn enabled them to integrate community decision-making bodies in the centre management committees and peace committees. The project adopted a gradual approach: first encouraging attendance and then seeking avenues for effective participation. **Awareness raising and sensitization within the cattle camps preceded women’s involvement, and the early benefits of livelihoods diversification activities provided further cause among camp leaders for their inclusion.** In the end, women’s participation in these meetings was perceived as often greater than that of men, although they remain significantly underrepresented in decision-making roles.

*“Everything was a negotiation.”*

#### **Ezana Kassa, former Project Manager, FAO South Sudan**

Income-generating activities provided women with a degree of financial autonomy, which in turn enabled them to integrate community decision-making bodies.

## The role of education

It was Nelson Mandela who said, “education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world” (Mandela, 1990). It is therefore significant that cattle camp residents’ lack of education is considered a factor in the limited ability of youths to think critically and identify other livelihoods pathways, and their susceptibility to instrumentalization and engaging in violence.

*“The most affected group are youths due to their serious engagement and participation in the conflicts.”*

### Woman in the Terekeka/Khartoum cattle camp

In the framework of PLEFS, UNESCO developed separate curricula for children, youths and adults tailored to the nomadic pastoral lifestyles (both in content and in logistics, enabling easy movement of learning materials during relocation of the cattle camps and PLEFS learning centres). Literacy, numeracy and life skills constituted key learning pillars, providing education essentials to improve livelihoods prospects and encourage critical thinking.

Cross-cutting education components of PLEFS included sensitization on gender, HIV/AIDS, conflict resolution and peacebuilding, and applied approaches like caregiving, games and sports competition. In nearly 70 percent of the focus group discussions, held as part of the endline study, participants reported that basic education and life skills programming had:

- **Positively influenced conflict levels** as “learning [is] keeping people occupied” – Solomon Bekele, UNESCO Project manager in South Sudan.
- **Triggered a change in perception of the use of violence.**
- **Provided alternatives to deleterious cycles of cattle raiding and revenge violence.**

The PLEFS approach is thus serving as a peace agent to promote peacebuilding and social cohesion (UNESCO, 2022) and is standing out as a good practice in providing more sustainable pathways for pastoralist youths’ self-realization, now and into the future.



## Results and impacts

### How did Pastoralist Livelihoods and Education Field Schools contribute to the resilience of mobile pastoral communities and households in South Sudan?

Supporting livelihoods (whether human, social, natural, financial and physical) in contexts of protracted crisis and chronic violence contributes to the resilience of households to withstand shocks and stresses, and addresses some of the socioeconomic drivers of conflicts and food insecurity. The project's baseline study confirmed that households' ownership of assets (both productive and non-productive), transfers and income sources were positively and significantly associated with their food security status (in relation to both food consumption score and household dietary diversity score). In the specific context of cattle camps, livestock ownership, size of land cultivated, membership of associations and basic education, are positively associated with the resilience capacity index.

The project's impact evaluation revealed that **the resilience index of the beneficiary population improved from 39 to 51**. The percentage of households at an acceptable level of food consumption score also progressed by 12 points during the implementation period (FAO, forthcoming).

Additionally, there has been **a general improvement in the project area in terms of agricultural assets and inputs used compared to non-targeted cattle camps, and increased access to animal health services**, which illustrate enhanced community functional literacy and institutional capacity to promote and deliver integrated pastoral services. The project thus demonstrated that even in the presence of repeated shocks and stressors, it is possible to improve household resilience and food security through a holistic and innovative approach (FAO, forthcoming).

With regards to the project's contribution to mitigating conflicts and creating a more peaceful environment in which pastoralist men, women, girls and boys can thrive; the following results can be highlighted:

- The endline survey has shown that significantly less households involved in PLEFS reported the death of a household member from conflict or conflict-induced displacement (respectively 24.5 and 32 percent), compared to non-beneficiary households (respectively 32.8 and 39 percent) over a 12 month timeframe.
- Throughout the duration of the project, respondents declaring that their household had been affected by the theft of agricultural assets, crops or livestock, reduced from 10.2 percent at baseline to 3.7 percent at endline.
- The baseline survey had identified that conflicts in the project area arise when youths in cattle camps disagree about the management, distribution and protection of natural resources (mainly pasture and water). At endline, 37 percent of respondents said that their household had not experienced any conflict related to pasture and water over the previous 12 months.

Even in the presence of repeated shocks and stressors, it is possible to improve household resilience and food security through a holistic and innovative approach.



©FAO/Albert Gonzalez Farran

There has been a general improvement in the project area in terms of agricultural assets and inputs used, and increased access to animal health services.

- Perceptions of safety have also positively evolved. The share of respondents agreeing with the statement “the level of conflict/violence increased a lot compared to last year” reduced from 44 to 31 percent over the duration of the project. The change appears to be even more meaningful for women: 71 percent of women targeted by the project disagreed/strongly disagreed with that affirmation, compared to 47 percent of women in the control group. One in two women who did not participate in PLEFS felt that the level of conflict and violence had increased, while nearly three out of four women in PLEFS-targeted cattle camps felt that the level of conflict and violence had decreased.

Finally, as highlighted in the project’s impact evaluation, **integrating conflict management and conflict mitigation into emergency and resilience programming remains critical to ensure lasting changes and safeguard any development gains** (FAO, forthcoming).

## Testimonies and stakeholders' feedback

### Mangeth Benyther Ater



*“Before, I was a warrior. I led violent cattle raids. I took what I wanted. I had never been to school before PLEFS. I saw in learning a chance to make things easier. Now I am in Primary Level 4 and I have learned a new enterprise – cereal banking. I bought groundnuts when the prices were low, then sold them when the prices were high. I used the profit to buy food for my family. I have purchased five goats and they have produced more goats. If there is a time of hunger, we cannot starve.”*

#### **Mangeth Benyther Ater**

Chairperson of the PLEFS Community Management Committee for the Manyiel Cattle Camp

38 years old, two wives, nine children

### Akucjur Maluong Chol



*“I started working with the PLEFS programme when I was moving with the cattle, but shortly after the project started, some violence broke out. There were guns here and there, so we thought, ‘Why don’t we go to the village for protection?’ One of the people from our cattle camp owns this land, and with PLEFS, we learned how to grow vegetables. It worked out so well. Next year we hope to plant 10 hectares.”*

*“It is hard to start a business. You have to learn some math and keep a ledger of your income and your expenses – there is a lot that goes into success that I did not know. But twenty of us from the Manyiel cattle camp did it. Twenty of us now have businesses.”*

#### **Akucjur Maluong Chol**

Chairperson of the Manyiel Village Savings and Loan Association

41 years old, eight children



©FAO/Andreea Campeanu

### James Dok Marial



©FAO

*“I have two siblings who live in town and go to school. My parents chose me to care for the animals, so I never got to go. I started studying with PLEFS because I wanted to learn how to read names and numbers so I could make calls on my cellphone. I always had to ask someone to help me and it was annoying. Then I really enjoyed the classes. So even after I could use my phone easily, I kept going. Now I am studying science, social science, math, and English. I never imagined I would be able to read a sentence. But I can do it.”*

**James Dok Marial**

Cattle keeper with the Warabye Cattle Camp

23 years old



©FAO/Andrea Campeanu

## Sustainability

The South Sudan country investment has obtained satisfying achievements while consolidating the outcomes from the first pilot phase at greater scale and in a longer-term perspective, by reinforcing the household- and community-level interventions with institutional-level capacities. **Community-based mechanisms such as learning centres and the centre management committees, animal health workers, peace committees, water management committees, and savings groups, all constitute solid established foundations to sustain education, livelihoods and peacebuilding activities** with a high level of ownership and dedicated support from line ministries and their decentralized agents at county level. The PLEFS approach is also demand-driven with many pastoral communities across the country advocating for the maintenance and extension of these services. In addition, there is unfolding keen interest by some donors, hence continuity with a third phase would be a valuable and fruitful, not to say necessary, strategy to maintain services.

The PLEFS approach constitutes an inspiring example of a humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach intervention.

In terms of **environmental, social and economic sustainability**, future programmes in the area should seek to monitor the longer-term effects of the PLEFS intervention, for example and particularly around potential disputes that may arise from livestock diseases outbreaks or competition over natural resources. Two potential consequences of improved animal health may have to be watched, to mitigate unintended negative effects or threats to the social and environmental sustainability of the project's outcomes. Indeed, while improved animal health may increase animal productivity and decrease mortality, it may also contribute to larger herd sizes, placing further demands and stress on scarce **water and pasture resources**. Where conflict management mechanisms are weak, conflict could become more likely. Larger herd sizes can also translate into increased competition over girls' marriage, and both disrupt their enrolment in school and contribute to cattle raiding.

Finally, some concerns were expressed with regards to mandatory schooling for children and the longer-term effect on the **culture and**

**traditions** of cattle camps – as children have access to and progress with their education, many of them might abandon cattle camp life to explore studies and employment opportunities in town, so the cattle camp tradition may not survive within the next generations. Therefore, valorizing traditions, indigenous knowledge and practices, and making pastoralism attractive and rewarding for young people, as part of PLEFS, is critical to safeguard the cattle camp culture as a central component of South Sudan's agricultural heritage and identity.

## Replicability and upscaling

In light of the interesting findings and positive reported impacts of the PLEFS approach in the beneficiary cattle camps, expanding the approach through follow-up interventions would ensure continuity in the acquisition of literacy, life skills and livelihoods essential for pastoral communities in South Sudan. The baseline survey identified that potential replicability and upscaling of the PLEFS approach should incorporate a natural resource management module as part of the education and training curricula. This could help prevent overuse of forest products and develop tree nurseries as an additional income-generating activity, thus encouraging reforestation by cattle communities near the rivers where they take their animals for grazing.

PLEFS constitutes a flagship initiative, and its scaling up should be supported to meet the literacy and livelihoods needs of millions of children, men and women within mobile pastoral communities.

Generally speaking, implementing partners in this project confirmed during the August 2021 learning review workshop that PLEFS constitutes a flagship initiative, and that **its scaling up should be supported to meet the literacy and livelihoods needs of millions of children, men and women within mobile pastoral communities**. They formulated the wish to have a bigger discussion around what is collectively achieved and learned, and how to expand the scale of the approach and its impacts to all South Sudanese cattle camps.

Beyond direct partners involved in PLEFS, there is increasing demand for the approach to be extended to other states. In fact, PLEFS was piloted in 2020 by FAO in Western Bahr-el-Ghazal with support from the United Nations Multi-partner Trust Fund for Reconciliation, Stabilization and Resilience. Other partners have expressed interest in providing support.



©FAO/Andreea Campeanu

## Key learning and recommendations for programming

Including both direct and indirect contributions to peace proves to be an effective and all-encompassing approach to transforming conflicts where those constitute a main driver of chronic food insecurity and malnutrition. The systematic establishment of conflict and dispute resolution mechanisms, such as peace committees, significantly contributed to mitigating risks of violence and conflict through peace dialogues, exchange visits, etc. However, this must go hand in hand with other forms of support to targeted communities designed to strengthen individual, household and collective resilience capacities. Here, education and livelihoods diversification for all segments of the population was paramount to establishing favourable conditions to reducing tensions and enhancing peaceful coexistence within and between cattle camps.

The integrated approach of PLEFS combining education and functional literacy, income generation and savings schemes, disaster risk reduction, animal health and conflict mitigation, **provided pastoralist men, women, girls and boys with the necessary skills and services to build their resilience.** The focus on actively mainstreaming youth engagement significantly contributed to conflict mitigation by creating new opportunities for them, changing their attitudes and behaviours towards violence and limiting their participation in violent activities – thus tackling the likelihood of conflict at its roots with arguably a durable effect for generations. The integration of a natural resource management component would further sustain peaceful coexistence to reduce competition while supporting the creation of additional income generation activity.

The development of peace-responsive MEAL frameworks, drawing on the findings from conflict and context analysis, is needed to ensure that contributions to peace are properly monitored and documented. Some difficulty for establishing this learning brief resided in the limitation of robust quantitative data to assert the peace-contributing dimensions of PLEFS. The alternative was thus to retroactively reconstitute the “contributory pathways to sustaining peace” and to collect qualitative data

through focus group discussions and key informant interviews that would confirm the intended impacts and fill the evidence and learning gaps. Gathering localized and diversified perspectives contributed to a better understanding of conflict causes and drivers, pathways to address them, and impacts on households and livelihoods in the intervention areas.

**The PLEFS approach constitutes an inspiring example of a humanitarian–development–peace nexus approach intervention.**

The PLEFS approach: saves lives and livelihoods and protects people against the adverse effects of shocks that dramatically affect their food security and safety; addresses multidimensional and structural challenges and contributes to essential development gains; and delivers critical peace contributions to mitigate the outbreak, continuation and escalation of conflicts. Additionally, it builds on partners' complementarity, ensuring coherence and adaptability of actions to effectively reduce needs, vulnerabilities and risks for mobile pastoral communities – not only within those targeted by the project, but allowing others to benefit from the pastoral services established and strengthened through an area-based approach.

## Implications of COVID-19

The outbreak of COVID-19 in 2020 and the preventative measures in place caused disruptions to the project's implementation with movement restrictions, closure of schools and a ban on social gatherings, while most of the planned activities required social interaction and physical proximity among the targeted communities and within PLEFS learning centres. This led to delays in the implementation of some activities and affected the education, training and skills development components.

Besides requesting a no-cost extension of the project to the European Union to complete activities, FAO and its partners developed **COVID-19 radio awareness and preventive messages** targeting cattle camp communities. The messages were broadcast in collaboration with Radio Good News in Rumbek. The reopening of the PLEFS learning centres in September 2020 was done with strong consideration of COVID-19 mitigation measures, including physical distancing and handwashing.



## References

- DPO/DPET/PBPS Civil Affairs Team.** 2020. *Preventing, Mitigating & Resolving Transhumance-Related Conflicts in UN Peacekeeping Setting. A survey of practice.* United Nations. [https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/transhumance\\_and\\_un\\_pkos\\_final\\_web.pdf](https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/transhumance_and_un_pkos_final_web.pdf)
- FAO.** 2022a. *South Sudan: Humanitarian Response Plan 2022.* Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc0534en>
- FAO.** 2022b. *Operationalizing pathways to sustaining peace in the context of Agenda 2030 – A how-to guide.* Rome. <https://doi.org/10.4060/cc1021en>
- FAO.** (forthcoming). *South Sudan – Resilient Pastoral Livelihoods and Education Project Impact Evaluation Report.* Rome.
- FSIN and GNAFC.** 2023. *Global Report on Food Crises 2023.* Rome. <https://www.fsinplatform.org/global-report-food-crises-2023>
- Idris, I.** 2018. *Livestock and Conflict in South Sudan.* K4D Helpdesk Report 484. Institute of Development Studies. Brighton. p.5. <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/20.500.12413/14316>
- Mandela, N.** 1990. *Speech at Madison Park High School, Boston.* 23 June 1990. <https://www.oxfordreference.com/display/10.1093/acref/9780191843730.001.0001/q-oro-ed5-00007046>
- UNESCO.** 2022. *UNESCO and FAO trains Pastoralist Livelihood and Education Field School (PLEFS) community facilitators and supervisors in Rumbek, South Sudan.* In: *UNESCO.* Paris. [Cited 29 January 2024]. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-and-fao-trains-pastoralist-livelihood-and-education-field-school-plefs-community-facilitators>

## Additional resources

- FAO.** 2017. *Linking community-based animal health services with natural resource conflict mitigation in the Abyei Administrative Area.* Rome. <https://www.fao.org/in-action/kore/good-practices/good-practices-details/en/c/1026219>
- FAO.** 2018. *Improving pasture management in arid and semi-arid lands in the Horn of Africa through Pastoralist Field Schools.* Rome. <https://www.fao.org/3/I8855EN/i8855en.pdf>



## LEARNING BRIEF SERIES: UNPACKING THE LEARNING

What is being learned, and how, to strengthen resilience-building

This product, developed by the Knowledge Platform on Emergencies and Resilience (KORE), in FAO's Office of Emergencies and Resilience, is available on [its portal](#). KORE provides normative and methodological guidance and supports the generation of learning, documentation of good practices and dissemination of evidence-based knowledge to inform strategic and programmatic decision-making.

This work falls under the remit of the Global Network Against Food Crises (GNAFC), an alliance of humanitarian and development organizations launched by the EU, FAO and WFP at the 2016 World Humanitarian Summit. GNAFC was founded to step up joint efforts to address food crises along the humanitarian-development-peace nexus and continue to raise global awareness and commitment from all relevant actors.

GNAFC offers a coherent coordination framework to promote collective efforts in analysis and strategic programming for more efficient use of resources to prevent, prepare for and respond to food crises and, ultimately, support collective outcomes related to SDG 2 for lasting solutions to food crises.

Through its work, GNAFC facilitates a fundamental transformation in the way international and local actors interact to holistically address food crises worldwide.

## Contact

.....  
FAO Representation in South Sudan  
FAO-South-Sudan@fao.org  
Juba, South Sudan

.....  
Office of Emergencies and Resilience  
Conflict-Peace-Analysis-Unit@fao.org  
KORE@fao.org  
[www.fao.org/in-action/kore](http://www.fao.org/in-action/kore)  
Rome, Italy

.....  
**Food and Agriculture Organization  
of the United Nations**