



UNMISS

UPHOLDING PEACEKEEPING IN A CLIMATE STORM

CONTEXTUAL FRAMING

Climate change is reconfiguring the landscape for conducting peace operations and humanitarian responses as observed in South Sudan. Three broad areas highlight how climate change and environmental pressures are impacting the protection of civilians (POC), a pivotal aspect of the UNMISS mandate. These include:

- i. Expanding the need for protection by increasing the number of people who need protection.
- ii. Constraining the ability to protect those who need protection, and
- iii. Changes in the patterns of occurrence and intensity of subnational violence and conflicts. For instance, a seasonal increase in the number of conflict hotspots, and the emergence of new flashpoints of conflict triggered by flood-induced displacement and congregation of communities that may have underlying differences in the same high ground locations, etc., that require the protection of civilians.

The interlocked and cyclical crises of climate shocks, displacement, migration, and conflict require a triple nexus of peace, humanitarian and development (PHD) approach for a comprehensive and sustainable solution to a multidimensional challenge.

This common framework entrusts a collective responsibility to safeguard and promote peaceful coexistence even in times of crises, such as flood impacts that cause unprecedented disruption of services, destruction of livelihood systems and infrastructure, and trigger forced displacement and migration of people. Under such emerging circumstances, reinforcing peacebuilding and protecting civilians is just as important as a humanitarian response. Otherwise, the outbreak of flood-induced conflict would have confounding effects on humanitarian responses, further constraining recovery and future resilience building. Thus, under the central coordination of the National Flood Preparedness and Response Planning, UNMISS has the complementary responsibility to underscore and secure the peace process within the framework of the National Flood Preparedness and Response Planning. While this aligns with its mandate, it is also tailored to ensure alignment with the implementation of the R-ARCSS.

UNMISS was therefore highly involved in the national task force that was delegated the responsibility of developing a national flood preparedness and response plan for 2024 to guide and coordinate national efforts, including at the state and county levels, in responding to the flood. In this regard, UNMISS conducted several activities as part of the 2024 flood response, summarized in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED DURING THE 2024 FLOOD RESPONSE

| TYPES OF ACTIVITY | TOTAL NUMBER | TARGETED LEVEL (INTRA- AND INTERSTATES ETC.) |
|--|--------------|--|
| Community sensitization and awareness raising | 66 | Intra- and interstates |
| Peace dialogues | 17 | Intra- and interstates |
| Identification of High grounds for community self-relocation | 300 | Intra- and interstates |
| Early warning and alerts | | Majority in Unity State |
| - Flood alerts | 70 | |
| - Displacement alerts | 64 | |
| - Conflict alerts | 32 | |
| Integrated Patrols | 150 | Intra- and interstates |
| Dykes | | |
| - Repairs and increasing the height to 4 meters | 72 km | Bentiu |
| - Construction of new dykes | 1.5 km | Bentiu (airstrip) |

Building on the lessons learnt in 2024, the following prioritized actions would be conducted by UNMISS for the 2025 flood response.

2025 PRIORITIZED ACTIONS FOR UNMISS FLOOD RESPONSE

- **Community Sensitization and Awareness raising:** UNMISS Civil Affairs Division would continue to rally other partners including development partners, NGOs, other UN Agencies, government officials, community leaders etc. in raising awareness of the community about the flooding in their locality and the implications and sensitizing them of the early actions they should take including the strategic use of high grounds for self-relocation. Timely and clear communication of risks and forecasts has proven crucial in mobilizing action and resources and guiding critical preparedness decisions. Leveraging deep local knowledge, community skills and experiences emerged as indispensable for mitigating climate-related conflict risks.
- **Peace Dialogues** focusing on mitigating conflict risks laid the foundation and a common ground for the self-relocation by communities forcefully evicted by the flood and the host communities. The dialogues often come up with resolutions and MOUs in regulating peaceful coexistence between the communities in the same location during the flood period. UNMISS facilitates these dialogues in support of communities, payams, counties, and state authorities as they are organized at different levels, and involve the participation of government officials, including county commissioners and governors. For instance, in Lakes State in 2024, there was a crucial peace dialogue between communities in Yirol and displaced cattle keepers from Unity State, and also between Panyijiar County and Lake State which resulted in a 21-point resolution. This intervention directly addressed rising tensions over scarce resources and land use, exacerbated by the floods, building on pre-existing challenges of cattle raiding and revenge attacks.





- Support State- and County-level **Flood Management Committees**: At the national and sub-national levels, the Climate, Peace, and Security team will provide support to state and county flood management committees by providing analysis, extensive sensitization and awareness raising activities among local authorities and communities regarding flood dynamics, and the strategic use of high grounds for self-relocation.
- **The Provision of Alerts**: The Climate, Peace, and Security team will continue to execute the Flood Management and Conflict Sensitivity Dashboard and Database to track flood impacts, population movements, and coexistence dynamics, providing conflict, displacement, and flood alerts to guide mitigation actions.
- Monitoring changes in floodwater levels. Collecting measurements of the heights of the floodwater in specific locations by the Force is crucial for planning patrols. Knowing how quickly the floodwater is receding is very important in guiding the return of displaced communities from the various high ground locations where they were taking refuge.

- **Conduction of joint integrated patrols:** To continue executing the core responsibility for the Protection of Civilians, joint patrols will be conducted, especially in areas where communities have congregated and taken refuge from flooding. To circumvent the impact of flooding on conducting regular patrols, UNMISS Force is obligated establish several temporary bases within a 10km radius as opposed to the standard 100km radius, to remain in close proximity to communities during this period.



- **Dyke repairs and construction** would continue to be carried out by UNMISS, especially within the premise of facilitating the protection of civilians. This could be instrumental in safeguarding IDP camps such as in Bentiu in 2022, instead of undertaking evacuation of camp residents from rising floodwater. Similarly, key roads and passages are only secured with dykes during flood periods.
- Supporting the maintenance and protection of critical infrastructure, such as air strips and helipads is also crucial to enable air travel for the delivery of supplies and humanitarian assistance.
- Tracking the utilization of **High grounds** by communities and pastoralists: Over 300 high ground locations of varying elevations were identified and validated for self-relocation by communities across the country in escape of the 2024 flooding. These high grounds would be continuously monitored for their vulnerability to increasing floodwater levels, outbreaks of conflicts, and diseases, etc., so that actions could be taken. The security and law enforcement in these high ground locations are under the custody of the national and state governments.

CONCLUSION

There is a central role and vested interest for UNMISS to be continuously engaged in the national flood preparedness and response planning co-led by the Minister of Humanitarian and Disaster Management on behalf of the government of the Republic of South Sudan, and the DSRSG/HC/RC on behalf of the UN. The criticality in this engagement lies in ensuring and upholding the protection of civilians and measures for safeguarding peace in the National Flood Preparedness and Response Plan, as core aspects of the UNMISS Mandate, and ultimately for the realization of the peace agreement. There is great complementarity between peacekeeping and humanitarian actions in responding to the needs of communities in conflict and fragile context.

PHOTOS

Photo 1: Ghanaian Peacekeepers Foster Unity in Bentiu

Photo 2: Mongolian peacekeepers brave floods to reach a remote community on the outskirts of Bentiu

Photo 3: Displaced women call more support network for protection

Photo 4: Indian engineers repair flood-damaged supply route between Malakal and Renk

Photo 5: To prevent conflict erupting, the United Nations Mission in South Sudan hosted a peace conference to find local solutions to climate, peace and security challenges.

THE CLIMATE, PEACE AND SECURITY TEAM

The climate, peace and security programme in South Sudan, is an integral part of the Climate Security Mechanism (CSM) operating within an interagency framework that includes UNMISS, UNDP and UN Resident Coordination Office (UNRCO). The Climate, Peace and Security Team consists of the following members: Senior Climate Security Advisor, Johnson Nkem; Climate Security Expert (Programming), Ratia Tekenet; Climate Security Expert (Data Analytics), Lucas Destrijcker; and Climate Security Analyst, Gloria Taban.

The implementation of the programme focuses on integrating and enhancing climate, peace and security perspectives into the activities of various units, sections, funds, agencies, and programs. Key collaborators include the Civil Affairs Division (CAD) for response actions, and JOC and JMAC for security analysis and early warning systems. Programmatic support includes initiatives such as the Peacebuilding Fund projects, the South Sudan Reconciliation, Stabilization, and Resilience Trust Fund (RSRTF), and UNDP's Peace and Community Cohesion Projects, among others.

DISCLAIMER

The names of state, county, towns, payams etc., and their administrative jurisdictions are based on official national documents, and do not necessarily represent the positions or perspectives of the institutions, agencies and partners that supported this activity.

