

South Sudan

1 Country Overview and Key Facts



Population	13.3 Mio (2019)¹
Form of Government	Republic of South Sudan (Since 9 th July, 2011)
President	Salva Kiir Mayardit
Displacement of people both internally and to neighboring countries (since 2013)	4.3 Mio
Poverty rate	50.6 % (2016) ²
Life expectancy at birth	58 years (2019)
Average annual rate of population growth	3.1 % (2019) ³
Child marriage by age 18, (2006-2017)	52 %
National Language	English ⁴
Geographical Borders	Central African Republic (CAR), Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Sudan ⁵
Geographical Area	239,285 square miles
Capital City	Juba

¹ United Nations Population Fund, World Population Dashboard South Sudan, <https://www.un-fpa.org/data/world-population/SS>

² United Nations Development Programme, About South Sudan, https://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/countryinfo.html

³ United Nations Population Fund, World Population Dashboard South Sudan, <https://www.un-fpa.org/data/world-population/SS>

⁴ [https://www.unicef.org/esaro/UNICEF\(2016\)LanguageandLearning-SouthSudan-CaseStudy.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/esaro/UNICEF(2016)LanguageandLearning-SouthSudan-CaseStudy.pdf)

⁵ <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/which-countries-border-south-sudan.html>

2 State of Ethnic and Religious Groups

There is no accurate demographic data on minorities and indigenous groups in South Sudan. In 2008, the census was rejected by the then-governing semi-autonomous Government of Southern Sudan and a post-independence census has not been undertaken since 2011. With ethnic groups speaking more than 70 associated languages, there is substantial diversity in South Sudan. The main languages are English (official), Juba Arabic (lingua franca), diverse dialects of Nilotic, Nilo-Hamitic and Sudanic languages, including Dinka, Azande, Nuer, Shilluk. The main religions include Christianity, indigenous beliefs, and Islam. The largest linguistic groups define the Western Nilotes – Anuak, Dinka, Murle, Nuer, and Shilluk. They traditionally come from the Northern and Eastern areas of South Sudan, as well as from parts of South Kordofan, White Nile in Sudan and the Gambella region of Ethiopia. Further south in Equatoria, indigenous groups such as the Azande, Bari, Latuka, Madi, Moru, Taposa and Turkana can be found. They constitute a mixture of Sudanic, Eastern Nilotes, and other groups.⁶

3 Historical and Political Background

Historically, the area that is now South Sudan was dominated by Central Sudanic-speaking ethnic groups. The Nilotic peoples dominated the occupation of South Sudan as early as 3000 BC. Their expansion began around the 14th century following the collapse of major Christian Nubian kingdoms in what is now Sudan. Prior to the expansion of Egypt into southern Sudan in the 19th century, there were many different types of polities in southern Sudan. They consisted of highly structured kingdoms, such as the Shilluk and Azande, which constituted powerful regional forces in the pre-colonial Horn of Africa and Central Africa.⁷

Following the colonial era, in 1899 the British reached an agreement with Egypt that ushered Sudan into a period of joint Egyptian-British administration, called the *Anglo-Egyptian Condominium*, which would last until Sudanese independence in 1956. Due to a period of political turmoil in Egypt, the British took lead in establishing a colonial administration in Southern Sudan. In this time, the first Sudanese Civil War in 1955 striving for representation and more regional autonomy paved a complex path for the Southern part of Sudan during a time of the struggle for independence. Between 1955 and 2005, Northern and Southern Sudan experienced ongoing conflict and war.⁸

Subsequently, short-lived civilian governments between 1964 and 1969 were unable to end the civil war in the country's south. It was through church-sponsored mediation efforts and the signing of the Addis Ababa Agreement in 1972 that the first civil war ended. This resulted in the Southern Sudan Autonomous Region which existed until 1983. Peace did not hold for long. Lack of nation-building and an increasing

⁶ World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, Minorities and indigenous peoples in South Sudan, July 2018, <https://minorityrights.org/country/south-sudan/>

⁷ World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People, Minorities and indigenous peoples in South Sudan, Background, <https://minorityrights.org/country/south-sudan/>

⁸ United Nations Development Programme, About South Sudan, https://www.ss.undp.org/content/south_sudan/en/home/countryinfo.html

amount of clashes between the Southern Sudanese *Ayanya* rebels and the Addis Ababa Leadership spiraled into a second Sudanese civil war. Decades of conflict only ended in 2005, when the Comprehensive Peace Agreement finally brokered peace between Southern rebels and the Government of Sudan. Later that year, a newly formed government restored Southern autonomy. South Sudan became an independent state on 9 July 2011, following a referendum that passed with 98.83% of the vote. In July 2011, the world's youngest nation was established and recognized by the world, as proven as per the country's accession to the United Nations, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.⁹

Nevertheless, South Sudan's birth as an independent state has been overshadowed by a devastating civil conflict along ethnic lines. The political instability presents a challenge for upcoming generations, brought any development progress to a standstill and led to mass displacement. South Sudan's most recent internal conflict began in December 2013 when a fight broke out between forces loyal to President Salva Kiir and opposition forces of former Vice President Riek Machar. Tens of thousands of civilians have been killed since the outbreak of the conflict, primarily by ethnic militias loyal to either side. Moreover, 2.2 million South Sudanese had to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, thus displacing roughly a sixth of the country's population. With repeated signing of peace agreements, conflict has ebbed but not ended.¹⁰

4 Economy

After the Republic of South Sudan became the world's youngest nation and Africa's 55th country, the conflicts lasting since 2013 have undermined the economic achievements and worsened the humanitarian situation. It is estimated that more than 4.3 million people have been displaced both internally and externally. The latest UN updates suggest that about seven million South Sudanese - more than half the population - are threatened by severe food insecurity, as of September 2018.

South Sudan is one of the most oil-dependent countries in the world, with oil accounting for almost the totality of exports and for around 60% of its gross domestic product (GDP).¹¹ At independence in 2011, South Sudan produced nearly three-fourths of former Sudan's total oil output of nearly a half a million barrels per day. The Government of South Sudan relies on oil for the vast majority of its budget revenues, although oil production has fallen sharply since independence. Oil is exported through a pipeline that runs to refineries and shipping facilities at Port Sudan on the Red Sea. The economy of South Sudan will remain linked to Sudan for some time, given the existing oil infrastructure. The outbreak of conflict in December 2013, combined with falling crude oil production and prices, meant that GDP fell significantly between 2014 and 2017. Since 2017, oil production has risen and currently stands at about 130,000 barrels per day.¹²

⁹ Initiatives of Change International, South Sudan, <https://www.iofc.org/south-sudan-initiative-south-sudan-facts-and-history>

¹⁰ World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous People, Minorities and indigenous peoples in South Sudan, Background, <https://minorityrights.org/country/south-sudan/>

¹¹ The World Bank in South Sudan, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview#1>

¹² Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, SOUTH SUDAN, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/od.html>

South Sudan's stands on the brink of economic collapse with inflation soaring and a parallel exchange market premium flourishing. Monetization of the fiscal deficit led to currency growth and high inflation, although there are indications that borrowing from the Bank of South Sudan had recently been limited. The year-on-year annual Consumer Price Index (CPI) increased by 88.5% between June 2017 and June 2018. The spread between the official and the parallel market exchange rates remains wide (44% in July 2018), despite the recent exchange rate appreciation. Security, public administration and rule of law spending have accounted for over 70% of the total budget over the past three fiscal years. By contrast, combined expenditures on health and education are estimated to make up around 6% of total government spending.

The *Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCISS)*, signed by the government, the opposition and civil society on September 12, 2018 in Addis Ababa, is seen as a fresh opportunity for South Sudan to build durable peace in the country. As a result, the government expects to resume full oil production to 350,000 barrels per day by mid-2019, as production has recently been restarted in the five oil fields that have been shut down since the conflict started in December 2013.

The main challenge going forward is to ensure all parties to the conflict remain committed to implement the new peace agreement. Subsequently, the government will be expected to tackle the underlying causes of the country's current macroeconomic crisis, improve food production, boost employment, build infrastructure and diversify the economy, among many other priorities to address.¹³

5 Industry and Infrastructure

South Sudan has little infrastructure – about 10,000 kilometres of roads but just 2% of them paved. Electricity is produced mostly by costly diesel generators and indoor plumbing and potable water are scarce. This presents less than 2% of the population access to electricity. About 90% of consuming goods, capital, and services are imported from neighbouring countries – mainly Uganda, Kenya and Sudan. Chinese investment plays a growing role in the infrastructure and energy sectors. Nevertheless, South Sudan does have abundant natural resources as it holds one of the richest agricultural areas in Africa, with fertile soils and ample water supplies. Further, the region currently supports 10-20 million head of cattle.

Poverty and food insecurity has risen due to displacement of people caused by the ongoing conflicts. With famine spreading, 66% of the population in South Sudan lives on less than about \$2 a day. About 80% of the population lives in rural areas, with agriculture, forestry and fishing providing the livelihood for a majority of the households. Much of rural sector activity is focused on low-input, low-output subsistence agriculture.¹⁴ In general, livelihoods are concentrated in low productive, unpaid agriculture and pastoralists work.¹⁵

¹³ The World Bank in South Sudan, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview#1>

¹⁴ Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, SOUTH SUDAN, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/od.html>

¹⁵ The World Bank in South Sudan, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview#1>

South Sudan is burdened by considerable debt because of increased military spending and high levels of government corruption. Economic mismanagement is prevalent. Civil servants, including police and the military, are not paid on time, creating incentives to engage in looting and banditry. South Sudan has received more than \$11 billion in foreign aid since 2005, largely from the US, the UK, and the EU. Inflation peaked at over 800% per year in October 2016 but dropped to 118% in 2017. The government has funded its expenditures by borrowing from the central bank and foreign sources, using forward sales of oil as collateral. The central bank's decision to adopt a managed floating exchange rate regime in December 2015 triggered a 97% depreciation of the currency and spawned a growing black market.

South Sudan's long-term challenges include rooting out public sector corruption, improving agricultural productivity, alleviating poverty and unemployment, improving fiscal transparency, particularly in regard to oil revenues, taming inflation, improving government revenues, and creating a rules-based business environment.¹⁶

6 Culture and the Challenge of National Cohesion

The culture and education sector is not funded by the state of South Sudan. Nevertheless, there is a small active circle of artists including writers, designers and musicians, mostly linked to universities, private companies and respective ethnic identities. The few local TV stations can exclusively be traced back to private initiatives for which grants and donor funds are raised.¹⁷

There are particular local art and cultural initiatives in South Sudan strongly following the aim to uphold activities which revitalize cultural heritage. One of them, the *Nuer Cultural Centre*, is located in the middle of *Protection of Civilians site (POCs)* in Juba, housing around 200,000 people who live under the protection of the United Nations. The initiative is led by Deng Nhial Chioh who runs the *Maale Heritage and Development Foundation*. Following Deng's perspective, war and displacement do not suspend interest in artistic and expressive cultures. If anything these circumstances make the arts even more vital to retain a sense of self and comfort. *Maale Heritage and Development Foundation* is one of number of initiatives in Juba, including the *Likikiri Collective* and *The Roots Project*, that have been exploring how South Sudan's rich cultural heritage can be used to address urgent questions about history, identity and resilience in the war-torn country.

These South Sudanese-led projects are hugely important for maintaining a sense of hope in the current crisis. Many people living in the POCs have fled from — and remained haunted by — traumatic experiences. Those who live and work on these sites say there is a great strain on mental health. The ongoing confrontation with war conflicts and several periods of protracted displacement has determined the last decades of the POC residents. The Maale foundation was founded in 2001 in a shanty town home to displaced Southern Sudanese on the outskirts of Khartoum. The name *Maale* meaning 'hello' or 'greetings' in Nuer language, was chosen to promote Southern Sudanese cultures and languages at a time when many displaced

¹⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, The World Factbook, SOUTH SUDAN, <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/od.html>

¹⁷ Auswaertiges Amt, Südsudan: Kultur und Bildung, <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/de/aussenpolitik/laender/suedsudan-node/kultur/244282?openAccordionId=item-244268-0-panel>

southerners feared for their existence. When the new civil war broke out in 2013, Maale became an organization in displacement once again. Deng was one of thousands of Juba residents who sought refuge at the UN mission. He began to organize a range of activities which include traditional dances, film screenings and heritage study classes for university students in the Juba POC.¹⁸

Looking at South Sudan's developments in Film and Media, the launch of the first Film Festival in 2016 in Juba needs was crucial. Following South Sudan's ratification of the 2005 Convention on the protection and the promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in January 2016, UNESCO supported the launch of the first Film Festival in South Sudan, which opened on 4 July 2016 in Juba and ran up to 7 July. Founded by South Sudanese filmmaker Mr. Simon Bingo and sponsored by USAID through *Internews*¹⁹, and the Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany in Juba amongst others, the Juba Film Festival showcases 30 films from South Sudanese and international filmmakers, including 11 films that are entered in the Film Festival Competition.²⁰

The richness of South Sudan's ethnic and cultural diversity in the context of how to form national cohesion has been highlighted in a report from 2011 by Jok Madut Jok who has served as Undersecretary in the Government of South Sudan's Ministry of Culture and Heritage, and is a professor of African Studies in the Department of History at *Loyola Marymount University*. The paper discusses how the new state will manage its cultural diversity with a view to bringing all its ethnic nationalities together, forming a national identity that can reduce the level of suspicion and ethnicity-based political rivalry. The information and analysis in the report are rooted in the author's academic research and interests, as well as his background as a civil servant in the Government of South Sudan. Throughout, he emphasises the ethnical diversity of South Sudan with its over seventy cultural and linguistic groups, rather celebrating them as a source of strength and enrichment of human endeavour. He thus prevents their loss in the discourse of exclusion, discord, and mutual incitement, often influenced by the state failing to combat ethnic violence and conflicts.

“Another major obstacle to realizing this dream of nationhood is ethnic conflict, and this is an obstacle that originates from the above-mentioned feeling of exclusion or domination of the state by some ethnic groups. Our people have been at conflict with each other for some time, but the conflicts of the recent decades, became more gruesome due to a combination of feelings of exclusion, diminishing resources and the long hands of our detractors in the North. So a country seeking unity, collective national identity and stability must have a clear policy to combat this ethnic violence, now that external forces will no longer have the ability to pit us against one another [...].”

¹⁸ The British Academy, Report by Dr. Zoe Cormack, “How the arts are vital to social projects and self-care in South Sudan”, June 2018, <https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/arts-vital-social-projects-self-care-south-sudan>

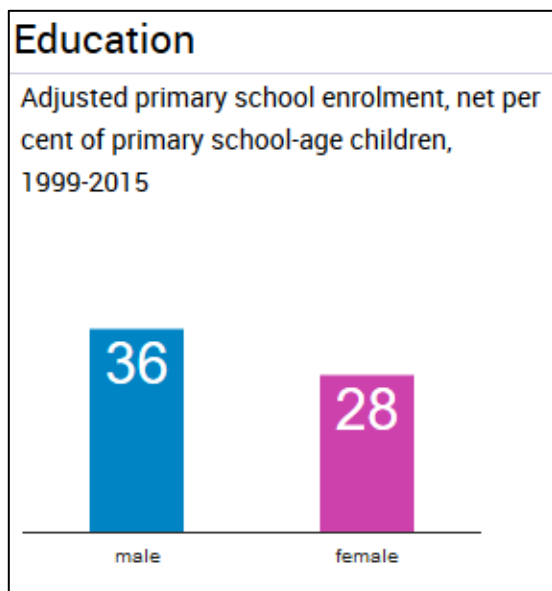
¹⁹ *Internews'* work in South Sudan is funded by USAID through the i-STREAM project (Strengthening Free and Independent Media in South Sudan). *Internews* South Sudan also receives funding from the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF), the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), World Vision through UKAid's Disaster Emergency Preparedness Program (DEPP), and the US State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (BPRM). (<https://internews.org/where-we-work/south-sudan>)

²⁰ UNESCO Regional Office for Eastern Africa, http://www.unesco.org/new/en/nairobi/about-this-office/single-view/news/unesco_supports_south_sudans_first_film_festival/

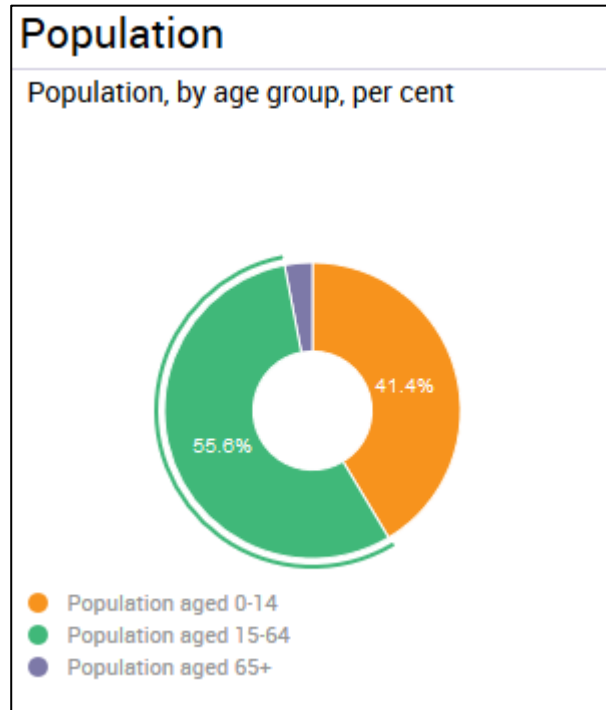
The importance of cultural centers: One might be tempted to think that these are not really the priority in the face of growing poverty, lack of health care, child mortality, malnutrition and other such calamities. But some of the causes for this poverty situation are rooted in being a nation without deep collective psyche. One thing that is going to offer that opportunity to become a nation is to see our shared history, culture, and identity, all displayed side-by-side in cultural centers. [...]

Nations that are culturally diverse also confront the question of finding symbols to rally around, symbols that transcend their ethnic, linguistic and political differences. Right now, South Sudan seems most divided by the fact that we do not have an indigenous national language. This is something that the government might have to reflect upon, and do it soon. In my view, developing a national language, whether it would be a hybrid of a number of local languages, similar to the Indonesian model, or adoption of English as everyday language, for government business, and medium of instruction in schools, will require open dialogue with all Southern communities.”²¹

7 Diagrams



World Population Dashboard South Sudan,
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World Population Dashboard South Sudan,
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By Sina Weber & Verena Kasirye-Büllesbach

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²¹ Diversity, Unity, and Nation Building in South Sudan by Jok Madut Jok, in: United States Institute of Peace (USIP), Special Report 2011, <https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/Diversity%2C%20Unity%2C%20and%20Nation%20Building%20in%20South%20Sudan%20%28Jok%29.pdf>

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