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*Drawing: Victor Lugala, USAID/South Sudan*

# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

JULY 31, 2020 – JULY 31, 2024

APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

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## **Acronym List**

|         |  |
|---------|--|
| CFA     | community focus area   |
| FSN     | Foreign Service National   |
| GoSS    | Government of South Sudan  |
| MEL     | monitoring, evaluation, and learning   |
| PEPFAR  | President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief   |
| R-ARCSS | Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan |
| PfRR    | Partnership for Recovery and Resilience  |
| R-TGoNU | Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity                                  |
| SGBV    | sexual and gender-based violence   |
| USAID   | United States Agency for International Development                                     |

## Introduction

The U.S. Government has a long history of supporting the people of South Sudan, including nearly \$5.6 billion in emergency humanitarian assistance since the civil war erupted in December 2013, and more than \$1.8 billion in development assistance since South Sudan's independence in 2011. Today, our humanitarian assistance keeps millions of people alive by providing emergency food; shelter; water, sanitation, and hygiene; nutrition; cash distribution; and health services to those in need. Despite our significant financial assistance, over half of the population still depends on emergency aid to survive and millions are displaced from their homes due to violent conflicts. Even with the bilateral donor community disbursing over \$605 million in humanitarian assistance in 2019 and the multilateral community almost \$650 million, more than two million people who need assistance are not receiving it.

On February 22, 2020, the major parties to the civil conflict that began in 2013 formed a Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (R-TGoNU). While this is a significant step on the path toward self-reliance, the road ahead is rough. Continued conflict, disease outbreaks, and increasingly frequent environmental shocks will further increase the need for emergency assistance over the coming years.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, continued annual U.S. Government assistance totaling hundreds of millions of dollars in humanitarian assistance is not sustainable and development assistance has trended downward. Yet recent work in resilience shows that with sustained investment and a community-centered and -led approach, each dollar invested in resilience and early response can yield nearly three dollars in reduced humanitarian spending and avoided asset losses.<sup>2</sup>

Learning from USAID's resilience programming globally and taking into account lessons learned and expertise from years of USAID operations in South Sudan, we plan to carefully lay the foundation for self-reliance, reducing high levels of humanitarian need that cannot sustainably and indefinitely be met. Despite recent political progress in establishing the beginnings of a transitional government, the absence of a functional government means that South Sudan's Journey to Self-Reliance starts at the community<sup>3</sup> level, boosting community and household-level resilience so that families are better equipped to weather the shocks that will inevitably come. **The Mission's four-year, scenario-based strategy will use a community-focused approach to help targeted households and communities move beyond a critical need for humanitarian aid and assume greater responsibility in shaping their own future.**

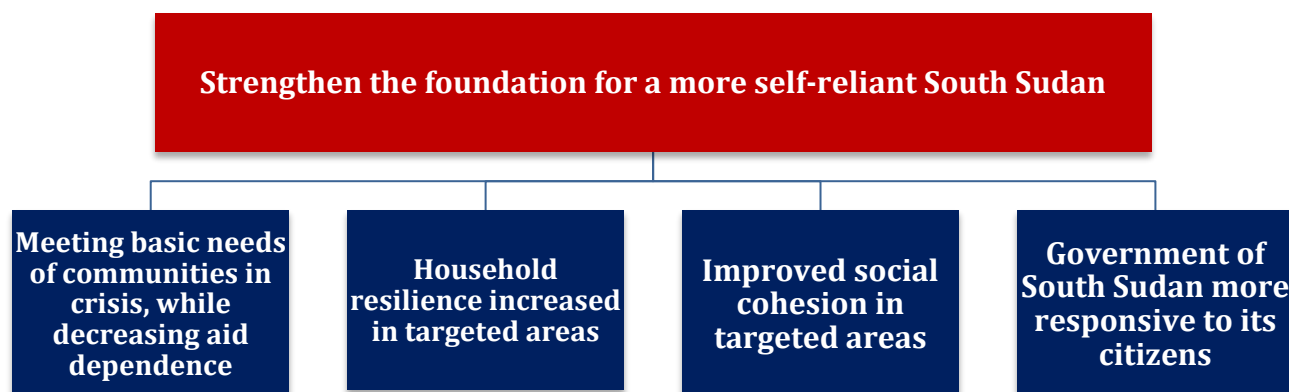
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<sup>1</sup> FEWS NET South Sudan Analysis, 2020

<sup>2</sup> <https://resiliencelinks.org/thematic-area/value-money>

<sup>3</sup> Please refer to page 15 for clarification of terminology.

Figure 1: South Sudan Strategic Framework Goal and Objectives



**Development Hypothesis:** The Mission posits that *IF* USAID/South Sudan focuses its resources in community focus areas (CFAs)<sup>4</sup> AND meets basic humanitarian needs and thereby prevents households from employing negative coping strategies that set them back on the development ladder; AND it boosts the resilience of households to shocks by boosting their ability and tendency to pursue diverse livelihood opportunities and employ positive planning and coping strategies in the face of shocks; AND it helps communities strengthen bonds within and between communities; AND it gives households and communities more responsibility and ability to control their development “journey;” THEN the CFAs will be less dependent on aid and will have a stronger foundation for eventual “self-reliance.” While USAID is restricted from providing assistance that benefits the central or sub-national R-TGoNU, the Mission still engages with government actors and recognizes that engagement with constructive elements of the government will be part of the long-term development solution. If the optimal scenario three emerges, and U.S. Government restrictions on supporting the R-TGoNU are relaxed or lifted, USAID/South Sudan will likely implement the Special Objective of the Results Framework involving assistance for the government. It should also be noted that despite our geographic focus, USAID programming will occur in other parts of the country based on emerging needs and will require coordination with R-TGoNU policy and engagement with government officials.

**Expected Outcomes:** At the highest level, the Mission seeks to build on community strengths to bolster a replicable model to reduce humanitarian need at the household

<sup>4</sup> Please refer to page 15 for clarification of terminology.

and community levels. The total population of the CFAs exceeds two million people (approximately one-sixth of South Sudan's population), of whom approximately 750,000 will benefit from USAID's layered, participatory resilience. Roughly 4.5 million (more than a third of the population) will benefit from broader assistance such as humanitarian assistance, PEPFAR interventions, and radio broadcasting.

Other outcomes include increased conflict sensitivity of humanitarian aid, improved inter-community relations and attitudes toward harmful norms such as sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), and improved governance.

**What's Different:** Two important elements of resilience that the Mission will focus on, as contextualized to South Sudan, are agency and social cohesion,<sup>5,6</sup> both of which are linked to social inequities and typically have an inverse relationship to conflict and trauma.<sup>7,8</sup> To do that, the Mission will re-shape its approach to adapt to the current operational reality. The "what" in this strategy—e.g., maternal and child health—will not change markedly from the previous strategy, but the "how" will change, as laid out below. The strategy will be operationalized by:

- Leveraging humanitarian assistance to build resilience: Humanitarian assistance represents the bulk of USAID's resources coming into South Sudan.<sup>9</sup> It serves a critical, lifesaving need—but it also fosters aid dependence. The Mission will ensure that humanitarian assistance is providing support to the people of South Sudan in a way that does not disincentivize engagement in development activities.
- Integrating trauma-sensitive approaches across the portfolio: Due to the country's long history of conflict and chronic instability, exposure to traumatic events is near-universal in South Sudan and can adversely affect development outcomes. Recognizing that men and women adopt different coping strategies to trauma, USAID will intensify efforts to tailor programs and participatory monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) implementation to reflect gender-sensitive trauma healing interventions.

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<sup>5</sup> USAID/South Sudan sees the elements of agency and social cohesion as being specific resilience challenges presented by the South Sudan context. They are rooted in the resilience sources of social capital, aspirations, and social inclusion. See the 2016 PROPEL Baseline Assessment Report. (<https://www.globalcommunities.org/publications/PROPEL%20Baseline%20Report%20Jan%202017.pdf>)

<sup>6</sup> While there are some instances in which conflict can result in increased social cohesion within communities, in general conflict and associated trauma result in reduced social cohesion and agency.

<sup>7</sup> See "Social capital and civil war: The Dinka communities in Sudan's civil war." (<https://academic.oup.com/afraf/article/109/435/231/61541>)

<sup>8</sup> Agency consists of self-efficacy, aspirations, and the confidence to adapt without resorting to harmful coping mechanisms. Social cohesion refers to bonds between individuals and is critical when adapting to change.

<sup>9</sup> South Sudan Heads of Cooperation Survey, United Kingdom Department for International Development, 2019.

- Focusing on the Household and Community: This strategy has identified CFAs in diverse locations across the country to enable layering of activities and the development of effective working relationships among stakeholders including USAID, implementing partners, and communities. “Community” focus hones the more common “geographic” focus—highlighting the importance of people and formal, and informal networks in the strategy. A community approach is critical to restoring the social fabric and building trust within and between communities.
- Working toward “convergence”: Convergence is the integration of evidence-based decision-making, community-based planning, and implementing partner and donor priorities in the pursuit of sustainable development outcomes. Together, these inputs increase household agency and strengthen community social cohesion—key components to building resilience and helping families progress beyond the need for assistance.
- Planning along scenarios: South Sudan is a dynamic context. The Mission developed a flexible strategic framework with three broad scenarios in mind. Certain elements of the Results Framework are included or excluded depending on what scenario the country (or certain sections of the country) is in, but as reality is unlikely to mirror exactly the scenarios as laid out, implementation of the framework will require clear understanding of triggers, continuous context monitoring, and flexible implementation approaches, including adapting and responding to some of the short- and long-term effects imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Alignment with and Preparing to Support the R-TGoNU: While USAID is currently restricted from providing assistance to the R-TGoNU, the Mission will continue to engage with it, particularly with individuals and bodies that are striving for positive change. Where U.S. and South Sudanese Government interests align, engagement will boost the achievement of common long-term objectives. If scenario three emerges, and USAID is permitted to assist the R-TGoNU, pre-existing positive relationships and a common understanding of common interests will hasten progress under this strategy’s Special Objective.

## I. Development Context

Since 1956, when Sudan became independent, the area that is now South Sudan has seen less than 20 years of peace. The most recent conflict began in 2013. Atrocities, including SGBV, were widespread. In 2020, approximately two-thirds of the population (7.5 million people) need humanitarian assistance.

South Sudan has the world's highest rate of maternal mortality;<sup>10</sup> the highest proportion of children out of school (69 percent of male and 75 percent of female primary school-aged children); and the second-highest level of corruption.<sup>11</sup> Youth, mostly unemployed, make up more than 70 percent of the population. A third of girls and women aged 15-19 have begun childbearing; 52 percent of women aged 20-24 got married before reaching 18. Development assistance has comprised 61 percent of gross national income<sup>12</sup> but falls far short of meeting all needs. The Mission's analysis of the country context highlighted a number of themes for which the strategy must account.

*Trauma:* Decades of conflict have left a legacy of near-universal psychological distress and at times trauma has been a driver of conflict. The renewed violence that started in December 2013 has further exacerbated the situation. While there are no official national statistics on mental health, an Amnesty International study points to an increase in the number of patients with mental health conditions since the start of the conflict. A 2015 study by the South Sudan Law Society and the United Nations Development Program found that 41 percent of respondents across six states and the disputed border area of Abyei exhibited symptoms similar to post-traumatic stress disorder.

*Youth:* About 51 percent of South Sudan's population is under 18 years of age and 72 percent is under 30. Youth experience high unemployment with women less able to access formal employment; unemployment figures that overlook underemployment paint a relatively rosy picture, with males at 20 percent unemployment and females at 17 percent.<sup>13</sup> Insufficient or no access to financial services, education (males lack sufficient access, but females face even greater obstacles to education), land, markets, and limited economic and political opportunities have led to high youth unemployment, swelling numbers of street children and male youth engagement in criminal activities,

<sup>10</sup> Data.worldbank.org: sources include UNICEF, State of the World's Children, Childinfo, and Demographic and Health Surveys.

<sup>11</sup> According to the 2019 Transparency International Corruption Perceptions Index.

<https://www.transparency.org/en/countries/south-sudan#>

<sup>12</sup> [OECD DAC Aid at a Glance.](#)

<sup>13</sup> Data.worldbank.org <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.UEM.1524.ZS?locations=SS>



rebellion, and community defense initiatives. More than 70 percent of the armed opposition groups are made up of mostly male youth between the ages of 16 and 32.<sup>14</sup>

*Gender:* South Sudan was ranked 181st of 189 countries in UNDP's 2016 Gender Development Index. While USAID's Women's Economic Empowerment and Equality data repository reveals the significant data gaps so common for South Sudan, existing indicators show that women's lack of access to economic resources and opportunities is pronounced and worse than regional averages.<sup>15</sup> In addition to facing the world's highest rate of maternal mortality, women in South Sudan lack access to family planning and reproductive health services. The armed conflict has exacerbated pre-existing inequalities and has made women, children, and men more vulnerable to violence, including SGBV. Child marriage is widespread; 52 percent of girls are married before turning 18 (nine percent by the age of 15), exposing them to health risks related to early pregnancy, and depriving them of education and livelihood opportunities. It should be noted that boys also sometimes marry early, and that the responsibilities thrust on them at an early age can have negative consequences.<sup>16</sup> Reports of human auctions, abductions, and sexual slavery are increasing. Women and girls also face rape and other forms of violence when trying to access humanitarian assistance, water, collecting firewood, and travelling long distances to farm. Domestic violence is common and SGBV within marriage is not legally recognized as a criminal offense. It is important to note that men play an important role in upholding, or changing, gender norms and other practices that affect women's and men's roles in society. When considering gender, USAID design processes and activity implementation will take this into account.

*Individual Agency and Social Cohesion:* USAID views social cohesion as the bonds that hold communities (bonding capital) and groups of communities (bridging capital) together. The term social cohesion is used purposely to indicate a narrowed focus of social capital more broadly. The Mission chooses to focus on social cohesion because community-level common values, beliefs, and behaviors have the ability to foster the development of formal and informal networks that enable residents to support each other in times of need—a critical need in South Sudan. An individual's sense of agency, as conceptualized by the Mission, refers to aspirations coupled with a distinct opportunity and desire to engage in the development agenda. Agency and social cohesion often manifest differently in men and women, and likely differ between generations.

<sup>14</sup> UNFPA/USAID 2019 South Sudan State of Adolescents and Youth Report

<sup>15</sup> <https://idea.usaid.gov/women-e3/south-sudan>

<sup>16</sup> Greene, Margaret and Ellen Stiefvater, 2019. Social and gender norms and child marriage: A reflection on issues, evidence, and areas of inquiry in the field. [https://www.alignplatform.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/align\\_child\\_marriage\\_thinkpiece.pdf](https://www.alignplatform.org/sites/default/files/2019-04/align_child_marriage_thinkpiece.pdf).

**Conflict:** While there has been an overall reduction of political conflict at the national level, conflict continues to be a hallmark of South Sudanese social and political life. Since the start of the civil war in 2013, nearly every population area of the country has experienced conflict resulting from a complex and diverse range of factors. In some areas, violence has been tied to the national-level political conflict over control of the state and its resources, pitting formal rebel groups against government security forces and allied militias. In other locales, militarized communities clash over access to land and resources such as cattle and water. SGBV is commonplace and widely employed as a tactic of war. For this reason, it is important for donors and implementers to be aware of nuanced and shifting conflict dynamics and avoid exacerbating conflicts at all levels.

**Governance:** Institutions of government are weak—and in some cases non-existent. While there are the basic trappings of a state, including state and local governments, national ministries, and a judiciary and legislature, key decision-making processes are often opaque and exclusive. Governance failures have become a key driver of conflict and as such, sustained reform, inclusivity, transparency, and accountability will be critical to resolving the root causes of conflict.

**Shocks:** According to the USAID-funded Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) and other analyses, increased warming and high inter-annual rainfall variability (dryness and extreme flooding) will adversely impact agricultural production prospects and water resources in parts of Eastern Equatoria, Eastern Upper Nile, and Northwestern Bahr el Ghazal regions. Competition for natural resources also causes conflicts, and a changing climate with less predictable weather patterns will likely stoke additional tensions. Amid a changing climate, other shocks—such as locusts, disease outbreaks, population movements, returnees, and perhaps regional conflicts—are certain to continue.

**Regional issues:** Neighboring countries with entrenched interests have played a particularly weighty role in reinforcing the government's positions and prioritizing stability over lasting peace and reform. Sudan was instrumental in pushing the parties in South Sudan to reach the current peace agreement, although it still remains to be seen what role it will play going forward. Regardless, Sudan and South Sudan will continue to share a long and in some places disputed border, and rely on each other for oil sector proceeds as both countries seek to weather unprecedented global economic turmoil. Since playing a key role in the failed 2015 peace agreement, the regional Intergovernmental Authority on Development's role has waxed and waned, and recent involvement has tended to emphasize resolving impasses rather than finding mutually acceptable solutions that will support long-term peace. South Sudan will continue to rely heavily on its bordering countries, particularly Kenya, Uganda, and Ethiopia, for

major imports and access to banking and financial services, with varying degrees of access for marginalized populations including women. There are also large refugee populations in these countries, which in many cases have access to better health, education, and water, sanitation, and hygiene services, potentially complicating the return process for South Sudanese.

**U.S. Foreign Policy:** This framework's focus on reducing aid dependence and conflict puts it in line with a range of U.S. foreign policy strategies, including the National Security Strategy, the White House Africa Strategy, the Joint Regional Strategy, the Joint Strategic Plan, and, with its emphasis on reducing SGBV, the U.S. Government's Women, Peace, and Security Act and Strategy, and Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally. All of them recognize to some degree the importance of providing humanitarian assistance, albeit in a way that reduces aid dependence and enhances accountability to U.S. taxpayers.

The third pillar of the White House Africa Strategy is to make our aid more efficient and effective. A recent U.S. Government Trafficking in Persons Report notes that reducing conflict in South Sudan is one of the most important ways to reduce human trafficking.

Goal three of the Joint Strategic Plan is to promote American leadership. Through this strategy, USAID will demonstrate leadership by working with other donors to sharpen the way we plan and deliver humanitarian and development assistance by balancing our need to save lives and reduce suffering with our realization that aid cannot continue indefinitely.

### **Host Country Development**

**Policy:** South Sudan's [2018-2021 National Development Policy](#)—[Consolidate Peace and Stabilize the Economy](#) sets forth a number of guiding principles: peace, security, and rule of law; democracy and good governance; socio-economic development; and international compacts and partnerships. All elements of this strategy fit within this framework. However, the R-TGoNU's ability to implement these objectives is low to non-existent. As

#### ***Private Sector Engagement:***

Private sector development will, of course, be necessary for sustainable development in South Sudan, with obvious long-term ties to financing self-reliance. The Mission held a week-long PSE workshop to explore the opportunities and articulate its approach to PSE, outlined in its PSE Plan. There are opportunities, including in the humanitarian, health, and education sectors, although achieving anything at scale will be difficult given the status of the enabling environment, including significant macroeconomic challenges, poor access to credit, negligible economic infrastructure and human capacity. The vast amounts of humanitarian aid that flow into the country are a particular area that, if more aligned with private sector approaches, could bear fruit. Indeed, Development Objective 1 aims to use to boost local systems, including private sector systems markets.

already noted, current U.S. Government policy prohibits providing assistance to the R-TGoNU.

**Journey to Self-Reliance:** South Sudan is a poor performer in health, literacy, and economic indicators, particularly as related to women. Without the ability to work with the GoSS directly, the Mission must continue to look elsewhere to “redefine the relationship” and to boost its “commitment” and “capacity.” Therefore, **South Sudan’s Journey to Self-Reliance starts at the community level.** Our strategy responds to these challenges by emphasizing the provision of assistance in ways that help people become less dependent on humanitarian assistance.

*Financing Self-Reliance:* South Sudan fares poorly across most of USAID’s Financing Self-Reliance Country Profile indicators, particularly Enabling Environment for Private Investment, and Functioning Financial Markets. Moreover, **43 percent of the population lives on less than \$1.90 per day.** Virtually all of the government’s income comes from oil exports (98 percent of which go to China)—and income from these sales are the government’s only significant source of income since it lacks the capacity to tax its citizens.<sup>17,18</sup> The government has in recent years leaned heavily on loans from China.

**Other Prominent Development Actors:** China is by far the largest player in the oil industry, and virtually all of South Sudan’s production goes to the Chinese Government, often at bargain prices. In exchange for loans, many lucrative contracts go to China: for example, China loaned \$157 million to South Sudan, which paid for a Chinese firm to extend Juba Airport’s runway.

*Redefining the Relationship:* While USAID works closely with some elements of the R-TGoNU, Congress and the Administration prohibit support to it. Therefore, USAID continues to spur increased commitment and build South Sudanese capacity in other ways.

- *Branding, marking, and communication:* USAID will ensure branding, marking, and publicizing our assistance to the South Sudanese people, including through media engagement and social media, and in collaboration with the Department of State.
- *Highlight common commitments:* USAID will continue to acknowledge important areas of alignment between the U.S. Government and the R-TGoNU, particularly in the health and education sectors, and highlight accountability and progress around commitment and capacity.

<sup>17</sup> <https://idea.usaid.gov/fsr/south-sudan/>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/countries/southsudan/aid-at-a-glance.htm>

- *Civil society strengthening:* Civil society, inclusive of women and youth, is an important tool for demanding government accountability. The Mission will continue to support civil society, including media organizations, in this role.
- *Donor coordination:* This will be an important part of boosting humanitarian-development coordination and is thus a significant part of the strategy. Donor solidarity can also be extremely useful when seeking policy or policy implementation improvements from the government.

## **II. Strategic Approach**

USAID/South Sudan's four-year Strategic Framework is scenario-based, rooted in evidence and integrates humanitarian and development assistance to promote household and community resilience. The Mission will continue to support the people of South Sudan, but differently—helping households and communities in focused geographic areas move beyond a critical need for humanitarian aid and assume greater responsibility in shaping their own future. Key principles include:

### **A. Scenario Plan**

The Mission established three broad scenarios that depict the most likely range of situations in the country in the coming years. Each scenario reflects a number of factors and how they might influence one another—including conflict, security, governance, economy, food security, natural disasters, and disease outbreaks, including COVID-19. These factors affect our ability to operate and participate in sustainable, resilience-building humanitarian and development programs. The following scenarios illustrate stability snapshots the scenarios are built on and the implications for USAID programming:<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> For brevity, the scenarios are presented here as the topline level of stability and USAID's response.

- Instability:** Widespread violence or outright war, possibly triggered by the TGoNU's limited capacity and commitment to effectively implement the peace agreement. COVID-19, environmental shocks, and other infectious diseases further complicate this scenario, resulting in great uncertainty around donor and R-TGoNU priorities and commitments. Community, private sector, and donor partnerships are challenging. The U.S. Government footprint is largely limited to Juba or outside of South Sudan, which could significantly and negatively impact USAID's management capacity.
- Fragile Stability:** Chronic, localized conflict and periodic larger pockets of violence continue, possibly triggered by the stalling of the peace agreement. Pockets of stability create some opportunities for partnerships with other donors, the private sector and communities. COVID-19 restrictions and rhetoric may be extreme and have xenophobic undertones and contribute to intercommunal violence. Environmental shocks and other infectious diseases will continue to affect communities. In the absence of opportunities for national-level government partnerships, USAID focuses on local and non-governmental collaboration. USAID staff can reach some parts of the country and partners are able to access and work in most parts of the country.
- Moderate Stability (*Political*):** Chronic, localized conflict and violence may continue, but will not be widespread. Environmental shocks and other infectious diseases will continue, but increased collaboration with the R-TGoNU in our response may be possible. The R-TGoNU shows progress on R-ARCSS implementation. This scenario may lead the U.S. Government and international watchdogs to begin to support the R-TGoNU.

The Mission—with significant input from implementing partners—created these scenario plans that outline how programs will adapt in the event that the context changes significantly. Programs vary in the extent and nature of their adaptations. **The Development Objectives under this strategy's Results Framework all fall under one or more of the three scenarios; as the context changes and the feasibility of different approaches changes, the Mission shifts its stance and its programming.** Likely effects of the COVID-19 pandemic—both near term and longer term—are fully integrated into the scenario plan. It should be noted that the scenarios are conceptualized at the national level and therefore describe a plausible future state at the national level. It may be the case that each scenario manifests differently in various regions of the country.

The intent of the scenario plan is to help identify, distinguish between, and plan for events that require **strategic redirection** and those that require **activity-level adaptation**. The full scenario plan documents describe in more detail scenario-specific

implications for each development objective, including the multisectoral thinking behind these summaries, and links to COVID-19, political and security context, likely environmental shocks, and the corresponding adaptive management plans including USAID staffing and footprint responses.

## **B. Linking Humanitarian and Development Assistance; Resilience; and Do No Harm**

Today, our humanitarian assistance keeps millions of people alive by providing emergency food, shelter and health services to those in need. Despite three decades of significant financial assistance from the United States and other donors, over half of the population still depends on emergency aid to survive.<sup>20</sup> Even with the bilateral donor community disbursing over \$605 million in humanitarian assistance in 2019 and the multilateral community almost \$650 million; more than two million people still need assistance and are not receiving it.<sup>21</sup>

Yet conflict, disease outbreaks, and a projected higher frequency of environmental shocks (such as floods, droughts, and locusts) will likely further increase the overall need for emergency assistance over the coming years.<sup>22</sup> We need to focus on meeting these immediate needs in a way that does not undermine long-term objectives. This requires humanitarian and development leaders working together to serve long-term, sustainable objectives and do no harm.

Recent evidence shows that each \$1 USD invested in resilience interventions and early response to shocks yields nearly \$3 USD in reduced humanitarian spending and avoided asset losses.<sup>23</sup> Repeated shocks—whether they are related to climate, markets, conflict, population movements, or pestilence, prevent South Sudanese households from achieving a state in which they can be free from foreign assistance. It is incumbent upon USAID and its partners ensure that assistance enhances beneficiaries' and systems' resilience to those shocks.

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<sup>20</sup> As of January 2020, 7.5 million people (67 percent of the population) needed humanitarian assistance to survive, February 2020 USAID Fact Sheet.

<sup>21</sup> <https://explorer.usaid.gov/donor/south%20sudan/disbursements/2019>

<sup>22</sup> UNDP Human Development Report (2018)

<sup>23</sup> <https://resiliencelinks.org/thematic-area/value-money>, Statistic assumes a 15-year time-horizon.



### C. Community (Geographic) Focus

The strategy identifies CFAs where USAID/South Sudan will pursue intense coordination, layering of activities, and community engagement. [Note: In this document, “CFA” is used often interchangeably with “county,” but at times refers to a sub-county “targeted area.” Therefore, during implementation we will not refer to CFAs, but use the terms counties, *payams* (the first administrative division below county in South Sudan), and *bomas* (the administrative division below *payams* in South Sudan). In the 13 counties indicated in this document, and during implementation, we will choose some *payams* as “targeted areas.” The term “targeted areas” is significant, as it is the term used in the Development Objective results statement and therefore will define the area where baseline and results measurements will occur. It is important to note that during strategy development, the team was able to make decisions about where the strategy would be focused at a county level, but not at a more specific level (see page 16 for criteria used to choose counties). Nevertheless, the intention was to focus on a subset of the population in those counties. Therefore, selection of that subset (the “targeted areas” or selected *payams*) will occur during early implementation, as flagship activities begin implementation and their staff become familiar with the specifics of each county. During implementation, we will not refer to “community,” but instead use the terms “ethnic group” or “village,” depending on the intended meaning.]

The Mission posits that by more intentionally centering development efforts on individuals and communities, our development investments will be more relevant, sustainable and effective. This requires intense relationship building at the community level as resource limitations dictate a focused and sub-national footprint.

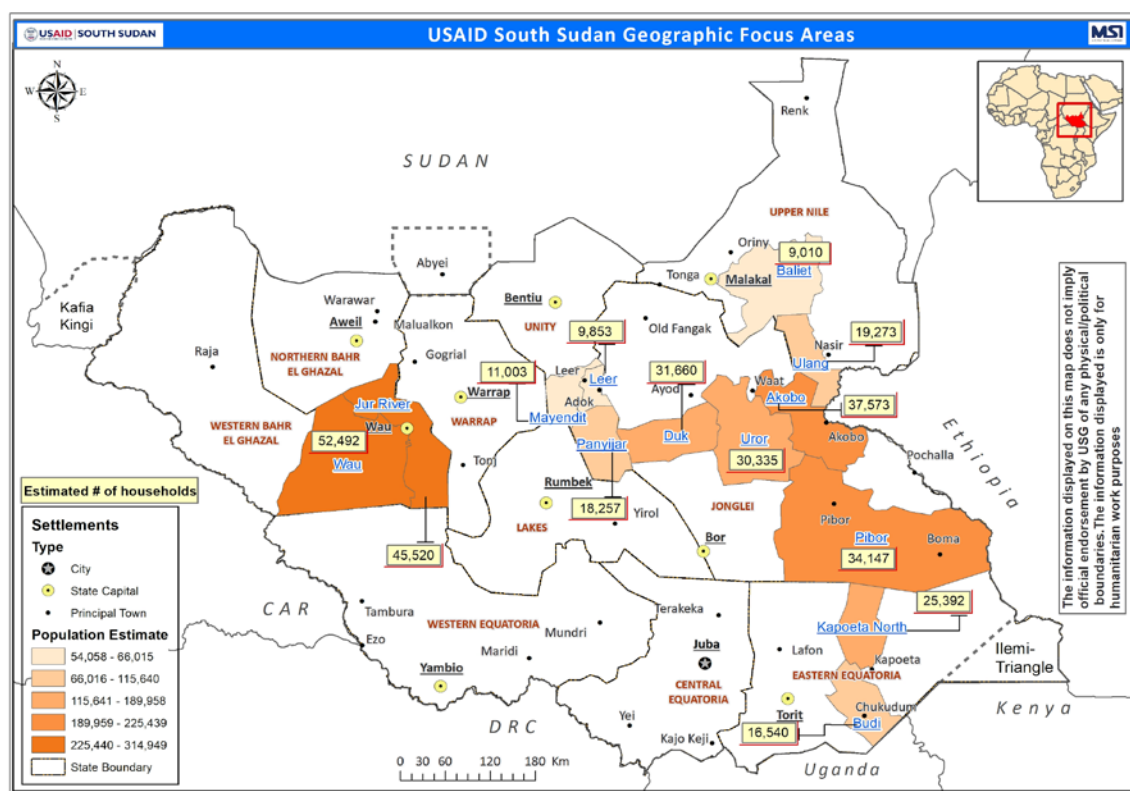
Focus counties include, funds permitting: Kapoeta North and Budi counties in Eastern Equatoria; Wau and Jur River in Western Bahr-el Ghazal; Ulang and Baliet in Upper Nile; Akobo, Duk, Pibor, and Uror in Jonglei; and Panyijar, Leer, and Mayendit in Unity State. These counties have a total population of approximately two million people. Targeted households will be a subset of this amount.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics data, 2019.



Figure 2: Community Focus Areas



Some CFAs, in Eastern Equatoria and Western Bahr-el Ghazal, will be pre-existing Partnership for Recovery and Resilience (PfRR)<sup>25</sup> areas or hybrid PfRR-CFA coordination zones. In these areas, USAID implementing partners will coordinate with other PfRR partners according to PfRR guidelines. Other CFAs will not be current PfRR areas. These will include the Sobat River corridor, Akobo County, and some counties in Unity State. The Mission used a number of criteria to select these areas, including but not limited to: historical food insecurity, as measured most recently through the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification system; presence of Community Engagement Centers, a USAID-supported asset that facilitates community engagement; likelihood to attract returns; urban centers that represent an opportunity for economy of scale and private sector engagement; and whether USAID humanitarian assistance awardees would be active in the area. In selecting the CFAs, the Mission also ensured that they included areas at risk of conflict; and that the areas were spread among the different regions of the country to avoid concerns over ethnic favoritism.

Each CFA will have a coordination hub, operated jointly by a USAID implementing partner and other stakeholders. These hubs may be pre-existing Civic Engagement Centers, community-owned buildings, or the like. This clustering of activities will

<sup>25</sup> See Section E for description of PfRR.

facilitate the layering of humanitarian and development programs, as well as integration to achieve cost savings, programmatic synergies, and beneficiary time savings.<sup>26</sup> It will also provide a location where USAID and implementing partners can engage with community stakeholders.

While USAID will concentrate its resources in helping selected communities, the country's dynamic state means USAID programming may occur outside the CFAs such as PEPFAR programs, the Health Pooled Fund, and large-scale provision of humanitarian food assistance and emergency response activities responding to emerging needs. Humanitarian assistance will be delivered where needed, but in the CFAs, particular effort will be made to not only implement humanitarian assistance in systems-sensitive ways, but to improve humanitarian-development "nexus" programming and enable households to "climb the ladder." Programs operating outside the CFAs will also coordinate with other donors and implement activities in ways that boost agency and resilience.

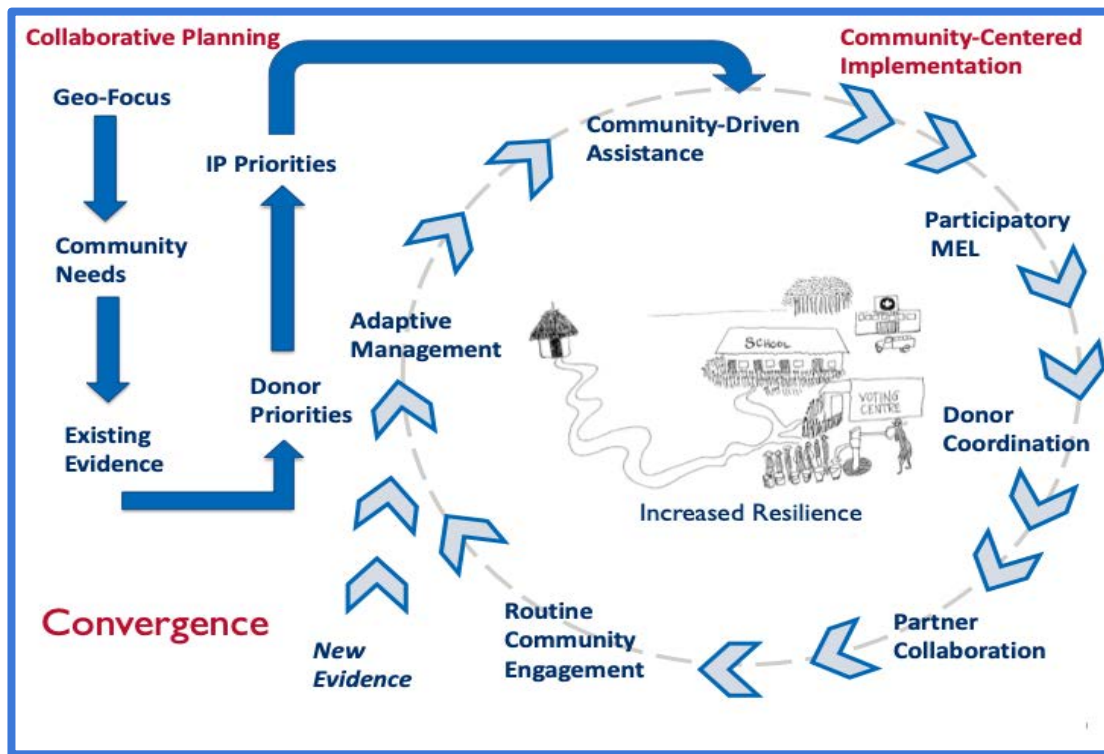
#### **D. Convergence**

USAID/South Sudan defines **convergence** as the integration of evidence-based decision-making, community-based planning and layered household-level interventions, and implementing partner and donor priorities in the pursuit of sustainable development outcomes. CFAs, intense collaboration among various stakeholders, and a shared vision among stakeholders are all necessary to achieve convergence.

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<sup>26</sup> 2018 Stakeholder Analysis, Social Impact for USAID/Malawi, 2018.

Figure 3: Convergence



Convergence requires partners to not only share the same or complementary goals, but to agree on how to achieve them and to channel evidence into decision-making in Juba and the CFAs. A common understanding of the evidence surrounding the sources of resilience, and how best to feed that evidence into decision-making is essential. Another key component of achieving convergence is employing participatory MEL practices to boost accountability and ownership.

### E. Donor Coordination

South Sudan received \$1.5 billion in foreign assistance last year, from a wide range of donors. While donors do cooperate, and clusters and working groups are active, the vast amount of money, the urgency behind often life-saving humanitarian aid, and the complex, sometimes inaccessible environment mean that achieving consensus on solutions can be challenging.

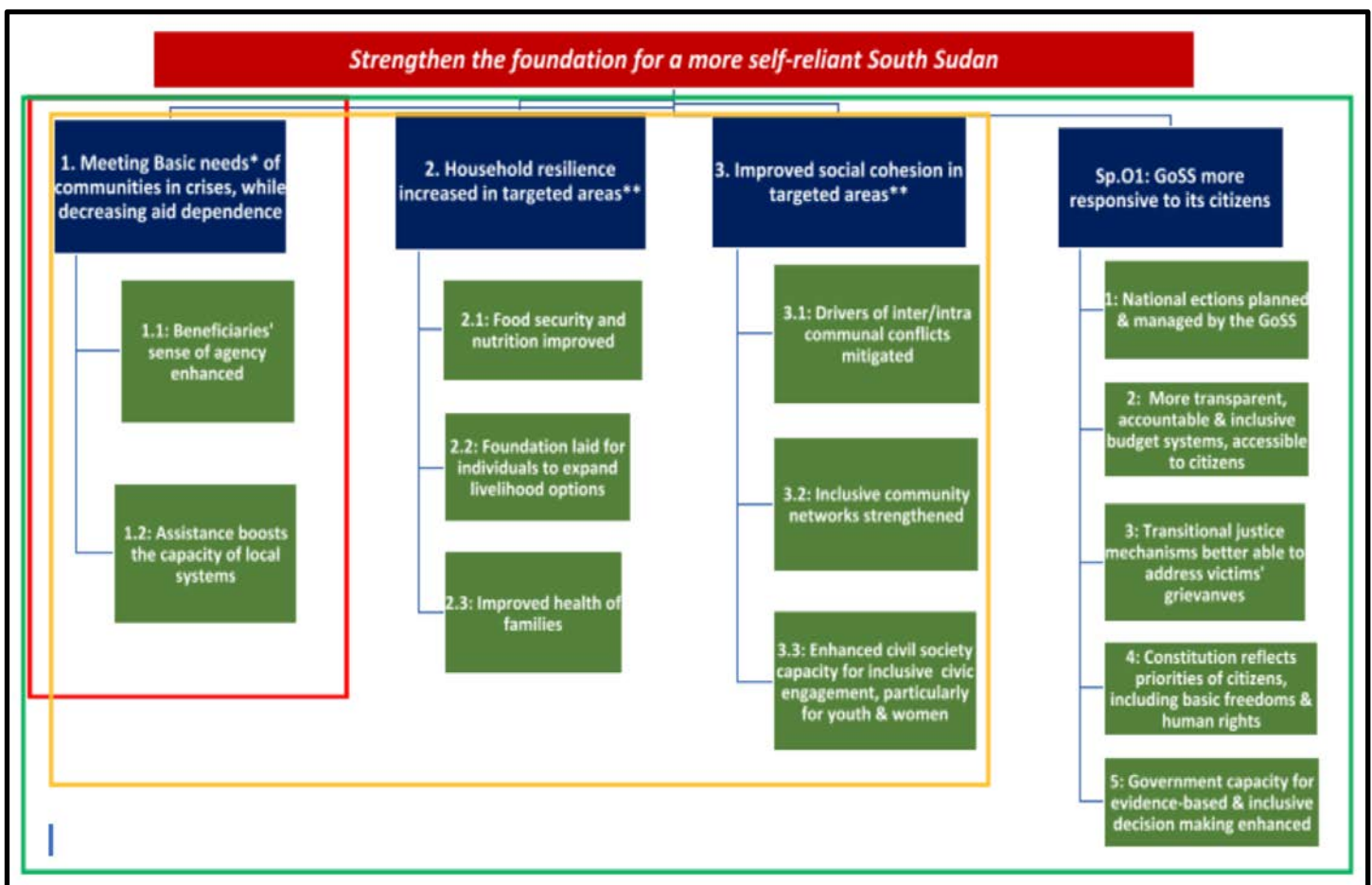
- PfRR is an initiative involving dozens of donors, UN organizations, and implementers that collaborate at the community level. USAID championed PfRR's establishment and intends to work with PfRR in a number of its focus

areas, although much work remains before these changes can be considered sustained, widespread, and effective.

- Increasing the synergies between humanitarian and development assistance, and increasing the frequency with which South Sudanese transition from the former to the latter, must be a focus of donor coordination over the coming years to reduce humanitarian needs.

### III. Results Framework

Figure 4: The Results Framework; colored boxes represent scenarios 1-3



#### Scenarios:

**S1: Instability:** Broad conflict or outright war, peace agreement fails; **S2: Fragile Stability:** Large pockets of conflict but peace agreement remains intact; **S3: Moderate Stability:** Moderate national stability with low levels of periodic local conflict, peace agreement being implemented roughly to plan.

**Goal: Strengthen the foundation for a more self-reliant South Sudan.**

*If basic household needs are met in ways that boost local systems and decrease aid dependence, AND individuals' and households' ability to pursue diversified livelihoods is improved, AND communities are more harmonious within themselves and with other communities, THEN households and communities will have a stronger foundation on which to build self-reliance.*

One of the key metrics for this goal will be humanitarian need. Given the projected increase in returnees, the nascent and weak government, and the anticipated growth in shock frequency in line with scientific climate projections, the Mission does not necessarily expect the total need to decrease, but rather the amount of need will be less than it otherwise would have been, given the number of and frequency of shocks, due to increased household and community resilience.

**Development Objective 1: *Meeting basic needs of communities in crisis, while decreasing aid dependence.***

*If USAID changes the way it provides humanitarian assistance, by focusing on increasing beneficiaries' sense of agency and positioning communities to transition to development, then we will help decrease aid dependency and transition people toward the development spectrum while still meeting the basic needs of those in crisis.*

South Sudan will continue to need emergency assistance in the coming years. The U.S. Government has already programmed nearly \$5.6 billion in emergency humanitarian assistance since the civil war erupted in December 2013, and more than \$1.8 billion in development assistance since South Sudan's independence in 2011—which has saved millions of lives. However, without sufficient grounding in local systems, this support has contributed to a culture of aid dependency at the systems level if not the individual level. The Mission will continue to provide life-saving assistance, but with a greater emphasis on strengthening beneficiary agency and accountability, and using local systems to help avert the humanitarian need over the coming years. To the extent possible, we will build in disaster risk-reduction interventions and systems strengthening components into emergency aid.

***Intermediate Result (IR) 1.1: Beneficiaries' sense of agency enhanced.*** Decades of war, abject poverty, forced migration, and reliance on aid have impacted many South Sudanese' sense of agency and left them feeling powerless. Aspirational thinking about one's future is critical to stopping the negative coping mechanisms to environmental and

man-made shocks that foster aid-dependency. Going forward, USAID will continue to positively impact the sense of individual agency of those with whom we work. This includes helping people understand, react to and manage trauma and involving beneficiaries throughout the planning, implementation and assessment of our assistance.

***Intermediate Result 1.2: Assistance boosts the capacity of local systems.*** USAID

will leverage and strengthen nascent, local systems instead of bypassing them. Currently, South Sudan imports most of its food from neighboring countries given limitations in infrastructure and labor, which does not encourage local food production. As outlined in the Mission's private sector engagement plan, purchasing food from local markets and utilizing more South Sudanese private sector actors and other entities in the implementation of assistance will advance humanitarian and development objectives while supporting local systems. Fully utilizing its influence and convening power, USAID will foster this same systems-centric ethos in its partnerships, like PfRR, and leverage other donor investments to share the burden of development and humanitarian assistance.

***Scenario Plan:*** USAID/South Sudan expects that humanitarian assistance and activities under this objective will be necessary to some degree throughout the four-year Strategic Framework period. In **Scenario 1**, more resources would be programmed to Objective 1, while other activities under Objective 2 and 3 would be scaled back, depending on the scope of the conflict or other shocks.

**Development Objective 1 Outcomes: Humanitarian assistance supports development**

- Food assistance procurement and delivery is market-aware and strengthens the capacity of local systems.
- Humanitarian assistance delivery integrates psychosocial support and community engagement into assistance delivery; humanitarian assistance-development assistance nexus is supporting the effective transition of services as targeted populations transition up the "development ladder."

***Development Objective 2: Household Resilience Increased in Targeted Areas.***

*If USAID is intentional in layering and sequencing development assistance intended to expand livelihoods, diversify diets, improve food security and nutrition, and address basic health and education outcomes, then households will be better able to meet their own needs.*

Resilient households have the ability to mitigate, adapt to, and recover from shocks and stresses in a manner that reduces vulnerability. Improving household resilience requires coordinated, gender-sensitive programming that ensures targeted households have access to expanded livelihood opportunities, nutritious foods, education opportunities, health services and psychosocial support (which recognizes the prevalence of SGBV in society) that increases individual aspirations and self-reliance.

**Intermediate Result 2.1: Food security and nutrition improved:** Food insecurity is a ubiquitous risk in South Sudan, caused by widespread violence, conflict, displacement, lack of economic opportunities, poor governance and climate variabilities. The declining agricultural production and the reliance on expensive foreign food supplies have contributed to severe insecurity. Around 860,000 children are estimated to be acutely malnourished. Less than 15 percent of the population has access to improved sanitation, and 41 percent to safe water; key factors in nutrition levels. USAID will focus on increasing the production of nutritious foods and improving access of vulnerable households, along with improved water, sanitation and hygiene practices to improve nutrition outcomes at the household level.

**Scenario Plan:** Under **Scenario 1** (Instability), DO2 would be scaled back, depending on the severity or location of the conflict. Under the Fragile Stability (**Scenario 2**) or Moderate Stability (**Scenario 3**), the Mission would move toward this Development Objective.

**Intermediate Result 2.2: Foundation laid for individuals to expand livelihood options:** Accessing quality education helps individuals diversify or alter livelihood choices. Due to a number of reasons, including conflict, cultural practices such as early marriage, and food insecurity, many South Sudanese have never had the opportunity to enroll in school and fewer than 10 percent of primary school learners remained at school long enough to attain functional literacy and numeracy. Of particular concern are the vast number of out of school youth including internally displaced people, returnees, and ex-combatants who have few working skills and little market access.

Post-traumatic stress disorder related to conflict, SGBV, and more; lack of support structures; and limited social skills hinder youth (re)integration into post-conflict economic, social and civic life. USAID will focus on accelerating youth's access to education to improve functional literacy and numeracy rates, especially among girls; as well as equip young South Sudanese with soft skills that will help households become more economically productive.



**Intermediate Result 2.3: Improved health of families:** Seventy percent of deaths in South Sudan are caused by curable diseases such as malaria, respiratory tract infections and diarrhea. Access to quality healthcare remains a challenge with only 20 percent of the population able to reach a hospital in 24 hours and less than half of the country's health facilities deemed functional. Domestic violence is common and SGBV within marriage is not a criminal offense under local law. In addition to supporting health service delivery via the Health Pooled Fund and advancing the battle against HIV/AIDS, USAID will help ensure that targeted households have greater access to immunizations, life-saving commodities, and SGBV and family planning services, even in the absence of functioning health facilities. It will also promote and boost healthy behaviors that improve the wellbeing of families, especially that of mothers and small children. Not all USAID health programming will invest in all of the CFAs, and in these cases, effort must be made to link families to alternate services.

#### **Development Objective 2 Outcomes:**

- Households are better able to meet their own needs.
- Increased utilization of health services leading to improved health for mothers and children.
- Adopted social and behavior changes that lead to improved health outcomes and increased economic opportunities, and reduce negative coping behaviors at the household level, such as early marriage and SGBV.

#### **Development Objective 3: Improved social cohesion in targeted areas**

*If inter and intra-communal drivers of conflict are mitigated, community-level institutions and networks are strengthened and inclusive, and civil society capacity and civic engagement is enhanced, then social cohesion in South Sudan will be increased.*

In the South Sudan context, USAID views social cohesion as the bonds that hold communities (bonding capital), and groups of communities (bridging capital), together, often through common values, beliefs, interests, and behaviors. These common principles facilitate the development of formal and informal networks that enable residents to support each other in times of need, and there is evidence to suggest that increased social capital has the ability to positively influence conflict prevention practices.<sup>27</sup> Given the rending of the social fabric in South Sudan after decades of war and instability, we acknowledge that this will be an incremental process. USAID's priority will be to support communities' rebuilding, expansion and strengthening of

<sup>27</sup> Sanginga, P. C., R. N. Kamugisha, and A. M. Martin. 2007. The dynamics of social capital and conflict management in multiple resource regimes: a case of the southwestern highlands of Uganda. *Ecology and Society* 12(1): 6. [online] URL: <http://www.ecologyandsociety.org/vol12/iss1/art6/> (Based on a qualitative review of 700 dispute cases in Uganda).



networks in targeted areas. At the community level, we will work with men, women, and youth including household beneficiaries, community leaders and local service providers to build trust in one another, manage tensions, and strengthen the capacity to guide and provide services for community members. Connecting an inclusive, diverse range of local leaders and organizations to national civil society movements will also help to ensure that local issues are considered and advocated for at the highest level.

***Intermediate Result 3.1: Drivers of inter/intra communal conflicts mitigated:***

Conflict at communal levels often revolves around resources (natural, economic and human) and local competition for power, with cycles of retaliation that increase violence, atrocities, and displacement. For example, cyclical cattle raiding, historically small-scale and a traditional practice among pastoralist communities in the region, has become more violent and exacerbated by multi-causal factors such as the proliferation

**Scenario Plan:** Under **Scenario 1**, DO3 would be scaled back, depending on the severity or location of the conflict. Under the Fragile Stability (**Scenario 2**) or Moderate Stability (**Scenario 3**), the Mission would work towards this Development Objective.

of arms; exploitation by political elites of ethnic divisions; erosion of traditional authorities' power; and rising bride-prices. Communal conflicts increasingly do not happen in isolation from national politics and formal power structures. USAID will continue to work to mitigate conflict and address the underlying drivers through community driven approaches, working with and empowering

local actors to facilitate meaningful dialogue and actions to promote a more peaceful coexistence that is in line with the 2017 Women, Peace, and Security Act. Women must be an integral part of these efforts.

***Intermediate Result 3.2: Inclusive community networks strengthened:*** At a community level, strong involvement and engagement from a range of stakeholders, including women and youth, in supporting emergency preparedness, contingency planning, recovery efforts, and the oversight and implementation of basic services is an important step to building community self-reliance. USAID will work with existing informal and formal community structures and work to strengthen the linkages and interdependence between and among them. USAID support will foster greater community participation and ownership in the delivery of health, education, and food security services and the management of local resources— contributing to the sustainability of life-saving services.

***Intermediate Result 3.3: Enhanced civil society capacity for inclusive civic engagement, particularly for youth & women:*** South Sudan defines a civil society organization (CSO) as an NGO and a non-profit organization that has presence in

public life, expressing the interests and values of their members or others. CSOs play a constructive role in public affairs in South Sudan. They contribute to the search for peace and stability, public policy formulation and implementation, protection of human rights, and fundamental freedoms, information dissemination, and delivery of life-saving humanitarian assistance to targeted populations in the country. USAID will continue to support key CSOs and citizen leaders to take collective action to positively engage in restoring social peace at the community and national level. USAID will orient efforts under this Intermediate Result such that youth and women—as individuals, through youth and women-oriented advocacy organizations, or otherwise—can advance advocacy objectives related to peace, human rights, resources, and governance.

### **Development Objective 3 Outcomes:**

- Strengthened, inclusive community networks.
- Increased commitment and capacity of communities to help the most vulnerable and manage future development investments.
- Reduced level of conflict in targeted areas.

### ***Special Objective 4: Government of South Sudan (GoSS) more responsive to its citizens:***

*If the Unity Government shows commitment to the peace agreement and makes good faith efforts to improve governance in the interests of its citizens, then U.S. support for continued efforts along these lines will improve inclusive governance and help the country along the road to self-reliance.*

**Scenario Plan:** The interventions under this Special Objective would only be activated given significant improvements in national-level governance, and would require substantial interagency consultation.

The Strategic Framework is aligned with the timeframe for the standing up of the South Sudan Unity Government and implementing the R-ARCSS, including preparing for national elections in 2023. Currently, the U.S. Government is restricted from supporting the GoSS. Should the GoSS take measurable steps to demonstrate its

increased commitment to addressing drivers of conflict and promoting more democratic and accountable institutions, then USAID could support the host government, helping to propel some of the priorities set forth in the R-ARCSS. The nature and modalities of this assistance would depend to some degree on U.S. policies that restrict support for the GoSS, but it could include:

- Supporting national elections planned and managed by the GoSS.

- Fostering more transparent, accountable and inclusive budget systems, accessible to citizens.
- Strengthening transitional justice mechanisms to better address victims' grievances.
- Developing a constitution that reflects priorities of citizens including women and youth, including basic freedoms and human rights; and
- Enhancing government capacity for evidence-based and inclusive decision making.

#### **Special Objective 4 Outcome**

- Improved governance, as reflected in progress made towards implementing the Revitalized Peace Agreement.

## **IV. Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning**

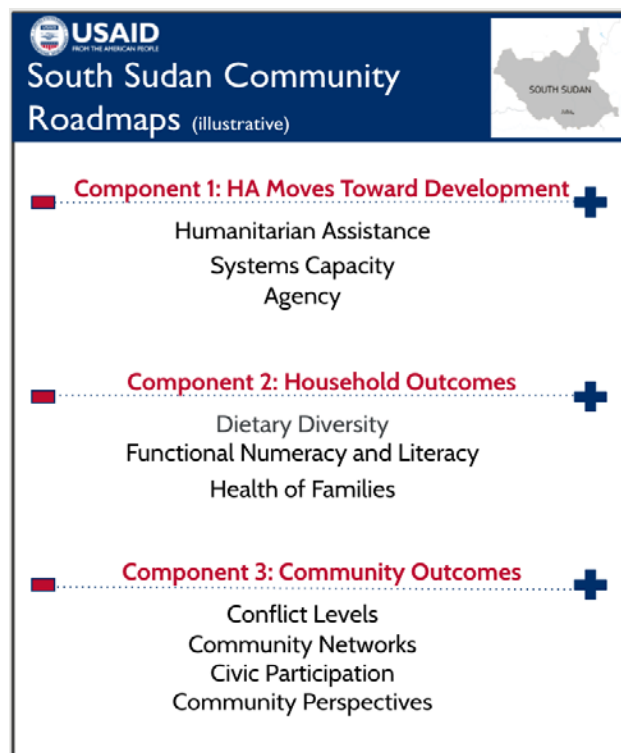
The strategic framework outlined above will require intense community engagement, coordination, and consistent and intentional use of evidence to inform decision-making by communities, implementing partners, USAID, and other stakeholders. Under this strategic framework, MEL is intended to enhance collaborative, effective and timely adaptive management practices and foster a culture of learning throughout the Mission, the partner community, CFAs, and the wider donor community. To do this, the MEL approach will emphasize data curation and creation for evidence-based decision-making, participatory (including gender-sensitive) MEL methods at all levels of the Program Cycle, and community-based outcome measurement.

**Data Curation and Creation for Evidence-Based Decision Making:** Acquiring quality and reliable data is a challenge in South Sudan, making evidence-based decisions difficult. To address this issue, the strategic framework takes a proactive approach to the curation and interpretation of existing data, collaboration and pooling of data collection resources among implementing partners and donor partners, and the creation of primary, sex-disaggregated data, when needed. Such efforts are necessary to make clear sense of a multi-faceted data landscape, characterized by contradictions and knowledge gaps. The outcome of this effort will be a functional “data center,” available to USAID Staff, implementing partners and external stakeholders for the purposes of enhanced, evidence-based decision-making.

**Participatory MEL Methods:** To reflect the strategic emphasis on community participation and agency, participatory (including gender-sensitive) MEL methods will be a key focus of the overall MEL approach. The strategic framework will operationalize this by incorporating such approaches into functional documents like the Performance Monitoring Plan; encouraging activity level MEL to utilize community feedback into their

own activity MEL plans; establishing an accessible online data portal for USAID, implementing partners, and communities; and the use of “community roadmaps,” described below.

**Community-Based Outcome Measurement:** In South Sudan, where the government is nascent, the road to self-reliance—or its grassroots equivalent—must involve efforts at the sub-national level. To that end, the Mission is developing “community roadmaps” that will both involve communities in the MEL process and track outcomes at the community level. Community roadmaps will use primary and secondary data sources to develop indicators around humanitarian assistance, systems capacity and agency (Objective 1); dietary diversity, functional numeracy and literacy, and health of families (Objective 2); and conflict levels, community networks, civic participation, and community perspectives (Objective 3). Understanding the degrees to which we increase agency and social cohesion and, conversely, reduce aid dependence are fundamental learning questions. Findings will inform future programming and help us understand if and when USAID can shift focus to a new geographic area or community.



*Figure 5: The Community Roadmap Model will track metrics in the CFAs and will involve community feedback mechanisms to increase beneficiary agency, and accountability on the part of implementers and donors.*

**Knowledge Management:** In a Mission with frequent U.S. Direct Hire turnover owing to standard one-year tours in Juba, Foreign Service Nationals (FSNs) are especially critical for knowledge management compared to posts with longer tours. The Mission is developing a standard in-brief and out-brief system for arriving/departing staff, and it has established the FSN Advisory and Leadership Council, composed of senior FSNs from each office, to guide decision-making and ensure the coherent programming and implementation of this strategy over time and across staff.

The Mission’s Performance Management Plan is in process and will be completed after the approval of the strategy. The Mission’s Learning Agenda and illustrative indicators are outlined in the Results Framework Matrix and was shared with Washington in

February. USAID will further refine the indicators, and establish targets, in its Performance Management Plan.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mission finds itself in a position in which data collection efforts—in particular, the household survey and the community engagements necessary to develop community scorecards—will likely take longer than would otherwise be expected. While the Mission is poised to begin implementing the strategy as soon as it is approved, some of the data collection and other MEL elements that facilitate community engagement in the development process may take longer to start, particularly with current movement restrictions associated with COVID-19.

## **V. Management Resources and Structure**

**FSN Advisory Leadership Council:** To capitalize on FSN knowledge and capacities, the Mission created the FSN Advisory Leadership Council in early 2020. This nascent, cross-cutting body will guide strategy and project design by continuously exploring major contextual issues and trends affecting the design and impact of USAID's strategy, programs and projects. It will also serve an important knowledge management function at a Critical Priority Country Mission where U.S. Direct Hire turnover is high due to one-year tours, thus maintaining USAID/South Sudan's business continuity and programmatic momentum during periods when USAID's American footprint has been reduced during times of widespread conflict or other natural pandemics such as COVID-19.

**Development and Humanitarian Alignment:** The harmonization of development and humanitarian assistance is a key piece of this strategy. Therefore, it is important that USAID humanitarian and development staff, not only in Juba but also in Washington, work seamlessly and with a shared goal. The Mission plans to continue practices that foster humanitarian-development collaboration, including joint development assistance-humanitarian assistance FSN field trips; Mission-wide portfolio reviews; and the elevated role of the Resilience Working Group (humanitarian and development staff) in strategy and design processes.

## **VI. Annexes**

Annex 1: [Climate Risk](#)

Annex 2: [Journey to Self-Reliance Road Map for South Sudan](#)