



Against All Odds

South Sudan Safety Net Project



Acknowledgement



UNOPS and World Bank staff hold meetings with project oversight committees and beneficiaries in Bor county in Jonglei state.



This publication was prepared by the World Bank. The content was written by Ananda Paez Rodas (Social Protection Specialist) with inputs from Erina Iwami (Social Protection Specialist) and Sumaira Sagheer (Senior Communications Specialist). Photographs and quotes were provided by UNOPS.

Photographs were taken by Janet Maya Logo and Gasim Edward Togo. Sylwia Pecio edited and designed the final product.

We would like to thank UNOPS and the Government of the Republic of South Sudan for their support and contributions to this book.

Photo front cover

Labor Intensive Public Works beneficiaries work on a road access site in Narus, Kapoeta East.

Photo back cover

Female beneficiaries engage in the clearance of an access road in Kapoeta East County.



SSSNP registration team biometrically register a beneficiary in Juba County in Central Equatoria state.

Contents

Acknowledgements	3
Context in South Sudan	7
Social Protection in South Sudan	11
The South Sudan Safety Net Project	15
Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPW)	19
Direct Income Support (DIS)	23
Cash Plus Training	23
Key Results of SSSNP	27
Good Practices and Innovations of SSSNP	31
Adaptive Program Design	33
Vulnerability-Based Geographical Targeting	37
Behavioral Nudges Pilot	38
Gender Transformative Approach	41
Community Engagement and Capacity Building	44
Climate Adaptation	47
Beyond SSSNP and the Way Forward	48
1. Importance of Flexibility and Adaptability	48
2. Cash Plus and its contribution to human capital development	50
3. Accessible Delivery Systems and Strong Monitoring Mechanism	52
4. The Role of Community Engagement in Strengthening Project Performance	55
Looking Ahead	59



The project team visit the household of a potential beneficiary in Juba County in Central Equatoria state.

Context in South Sudan

In 2011, South Sudan became the world's youngest country. This heralded a positive change for people whose lives were continuously plagued by years of conflict and unrest. However, before peace and stability could fully set in, a renewed outbreak of violence in 2013 plunged the country into another cycle of war. As a result, conflict-induced poverty, displacement and trauma are widespread, affecting the fabric of South Sudanese society and posing a critical risk to its human development potential and ability to recover.

The nearly six years of conflict formally ended in September 2018 with the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan. While this signals another wave of hope for people, the search for stability remains elusive as vulnerable and disadvantaged households find themselves struggling to secure their livelihoods. Notwithstanding, the fragile economy,

rising inflation and exchange rate depreciation in times of global recession are giving rise to localized violence, crime and insecurity that persist in many parts of the country.

A sizeable population of South Sudan lives in abject poverty with considerable deprivation in education and health. Recurrent shocks such as climate-induced natural disasters, the locust outbreak of 2021 and the COVID-19 pandemic have largely affected market activity. As a result, loss of income and livelihood opportunities are pervasive in South Sudan. In 2021, poverty rose to reach a staggering 79 percent of the population, while the economy contracted by over five percent¹. Indeed, four out of five people in South Sudan live below the poverty line. Between April and July 2022, nearly two thirds of the population faced acute food insecurity and 1.3 million children were acutely malnourished². In 2021, floods displaced about 800,000 people

¹ World bank (2022). Towards a jobs agenda - south sudan economic monitor (february 2022): washington, dc

² Integrated food security phase classification. 2022. <https://www.Ipcinfo.Org/ipc-country-analysis/details-map/en/c/1155527/>

Covid-19 and the floods in Bor affected my son-in-law's employment. The cash we received has helped us to keep my grandchildren in school and buy food for the family."

*Chol Diing Anyieth , 80 years, visually impaired,
recipient of SSSNP's direct cash transfer
in Malou SouthQuarter Council, Bor
County, South Sudan.*



coming on the heels of years of erratic rainfall that affected 95 percent of the population that rely on agriculture.

South Sudan also has some of the world's lowest outcomes in education, health, and nutrition. A girl in South Sudan is more likely to die in childbirth than she is to finish high school³. A child born today in South Sudan will only reach 31 percent of her potential.⁴ Severe gender inequalities and social norms in South Sudan limit women and girls' access to opportunities, exposing them to high levels of gender-based violence, and putting their health and well-being at risk.

Harmful gender norms often result in girls being pressured into early marriages which further perpetuate the cycle of poverty⁵. Unfortunately, the provision of public services in health and education are limited. Government spending on social services is low and capacity constraints limit their reach. Where services are available, it is often difficult for people to access them due to high levels of communal mobility and displacement resulting from conflict, insecurity, and climate-in-

duced shocks. While support from development partners and the humanitarian sector is trying to fill the gap, it is not sufficient to cushion the economy amidst the growing health and economic crises. People also face financial limitations and a lack of awareness and knowledge about such services.

Despite challenges, potential exists to support the country's recovery from recent shocks and its future development. Direct support to cash-strapped households can help them to cope and work harder to bounce back and replace lost income opportunities. Regenerating household income is an answer for survival for the vulnerable. Over 70 percent of South Sudanese are under the age of 35 highlighting the importance of investing in the human capital of youth that will shape the country's future. While localized insecurity persists, the situation has improved since the peace agreement of 2018 and formation of the Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity (RTGoNU) in February 2020. The country is at a critical juncture to invest in promoting recovery and building resilience with hope and optimism to recover sustained and inclusive growth. ■

³ International Crisis Group. (2021). Toward a viable future for South Sudan. <https://www.crisisgroup.org/africa/horn-africa/south-sudan/300-toward-viable-future-south-sudan>.

⁴ The HCI measures the human capital of the next generation and is defined as the amount of human capital that a child born today can expect to achieve throughout his/her life in view of the current risks of poor health and poor education in the child's country. See World Bank. 2020. Human Capital Index 2020.

⁵ UNICEF 2018. Gender Based Violence as cited in De Silva, S., Hasan, A., Ouedraogo, A., & Rubiano-Matulevich, E. (2020). Getting it right: strengthening gender outcomes in South Sudan. World Bank. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/34269>.



Anai Ayom Mading, a widow in Malou South is among the LIPW beneficiaries in Bor County in Jonglei state. She waters her garden every morning.



Social Protection in South Sudan

Social protection programs offer the potential to vulnerable households to improve resilience to shocks and increase investment in education, health, and nutrition. They support women's empowerment and provide them with access to income generating opportunities. Globally, it is estimated that safety nets contribute to 36 percent of the poor escaping extreme poverty¹. Sustained, predictable and longer-term safety nets help households make uninterrupted investments in their well-being as they cushion the impacts of shocks.

1 <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/safetynets#1>.

My family came from the village, and it was very difficult for us to manage. The cash from the project has helped us to adjust to city life. Whenever I receive this money I plan with my husband how to spend it effectively. Because we plan together, we live in harmony.”

Alek Barah Akoy , breadwinner of her family and recipient of the Financial Literacy Training as part of Cash Plus activities by SSSNP



The government of the Republic of South Sudan's vision for its social protection policy and program is set forth in the National Social Protection Policy Framework (NSPPF). While the NSPPF outlines the government's commitment, including the allocation of one percent of the national budget toward social protection services, government expenditure on social protection is still low. The social protection system in South Sudan is nascent where existing interventions are largely led by development partners. These are often fragmented with limited outreach.

In recent years the delivery of humanitarian cash transfers has increased in South Sudan, but the majority of assistance continues to be food aid. Since most humanitarian programs started as emergency responses, they are also short-term in nature and unable to build resilience among the poor and vulnerable over time. In the South Sudanese context, where needs far outpace available support, the demand for safety nets is high and have the potential for greater impact towards building resilience among poor and vulnerable households. ■





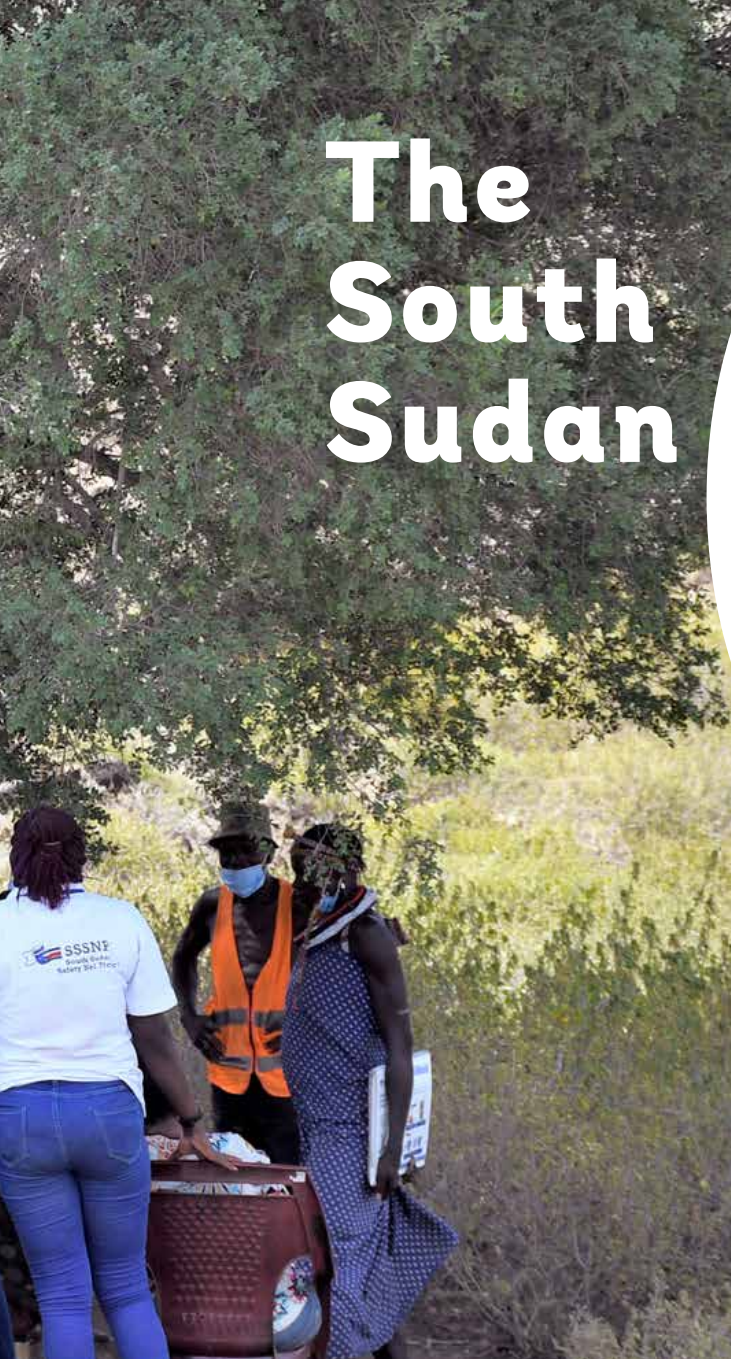
*Community mobilization meeting with beneficiaries in Lochwa Village
in Kapoeta East in Eastern Equatoria state.*

The South Sudan

Safety Net Project

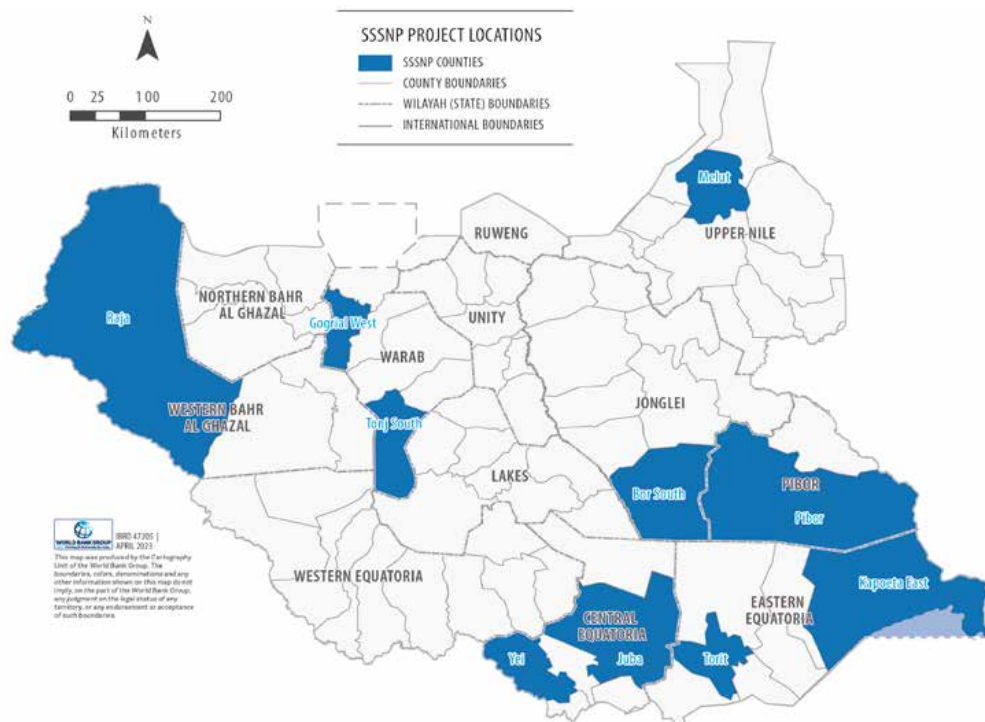
The South Sudan Safety Net Project (SSSNP) is a social safety net that aims to increase access to temporary income opportunities to poor and vulnerable households to help them meet their immediate needs and build resilience to shocks over time. SSSNP responds to rising needs among the poor and vulnerable of South Sudan who are faced with recurrent shocks in order to help them invest in their resilience and human capital.

The SSSNP was funded by the World Bank and implemented by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) on behalf of the government of the Republic of South Sudan.





*A UNOPS staff registers a woman in Juba County in Central Equatoria state.
She represents one of the 15,500 households targeted in Juba.*



The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare (MGCSW), and the Ministry of Finance and Planning (MoFEP) provided strategic guidance and support to UNOPS through the project lifecycle.

SSSNP built on the success and lessons learned of its predecessor project, the South Sudan Skills Development Project (SNSDP). Of the 10 counties¹ across the country where SSSNP was operational, seven of them had also been SNSDP locations

where some infrastructure and capacity has been built and was leveraged during project implementation. In addition to the seven SNSDP countries, SSSNP also expanded to three new counties: Raga, Yei River and Melut.

SSSNP has three main components:, including

- (i) Labor Intensive Public Works “Plus”,
- (ii) Direct Income Support, and
- (iii) Strengthening Safety Net Delivery Tools and Project Management

¹ The SSSNP counties are: Juba, Bor South, Tonj South, Gogrial West, Kapoeta East, Torit, Pibor, Raga, Yei River and Melut.



Labor-Intensive Public Works

Labor-Intensive Public Works (LIPW) gave beneficiaries who were physically able to work the chance to deliver community-based sub-projects to improve assets and infrastructure in their communities. Sub-projects were selected by communities themselves, with the participation of women, to ensure that their needs and preferences were considered. With the help of project staff, communities identified their communities' needs and priorities, and assessed the viability and relevance of different projects before choosing one.

Common LIPW sub-projects under SSSNP were: maintenance and rehabilitation of community roads, general cleaning, drainage works, construction and renovation of community facilities, and agroforestry.

Men's and women's daily obligations and preferences were taken into account when developing LIPW timetables and tasks. Women were given lighter tasks and worked fewer hours than men. Further, based on demand, on-site childcare was offered, and caring for children was counted as an LIPW task 🇸🇩



“

My favorite training was on WASH because what we learnt was very applicable to our daily lives. I learnt how to practice good hygiene practices at home like keeping water in a clean and safe place.”

Agok Machuer Thiech from Referendum A, recipient of WASH training as part of Cash Plus activities by SSSNP.



Lucia Nawi, a Master Trainer in Kapoeta shares key messages on WASH in Lochwa Village in Kapoeta East County in Eastern Equatoria state.



Beneficiaries pose for pictures in their kiosks set up using the cash received from the SSSNP in Kapoeta East County in Eastern Equatoria state.

Direct Income Support

Direct Income Support (DIS) was targeted to labor-constrained households that do not have any members who are physically capable of participating in LIPW. SSSNP targeted the most vulnerable households, such as those headed by children, the elderly, women, persons with disabilities or with chronic illnesses, to become DIS beneficiaries. DIS and LIPW benefits were equal and paid at the same time, but DIS beneficiaries were not required to participate in public works activities.

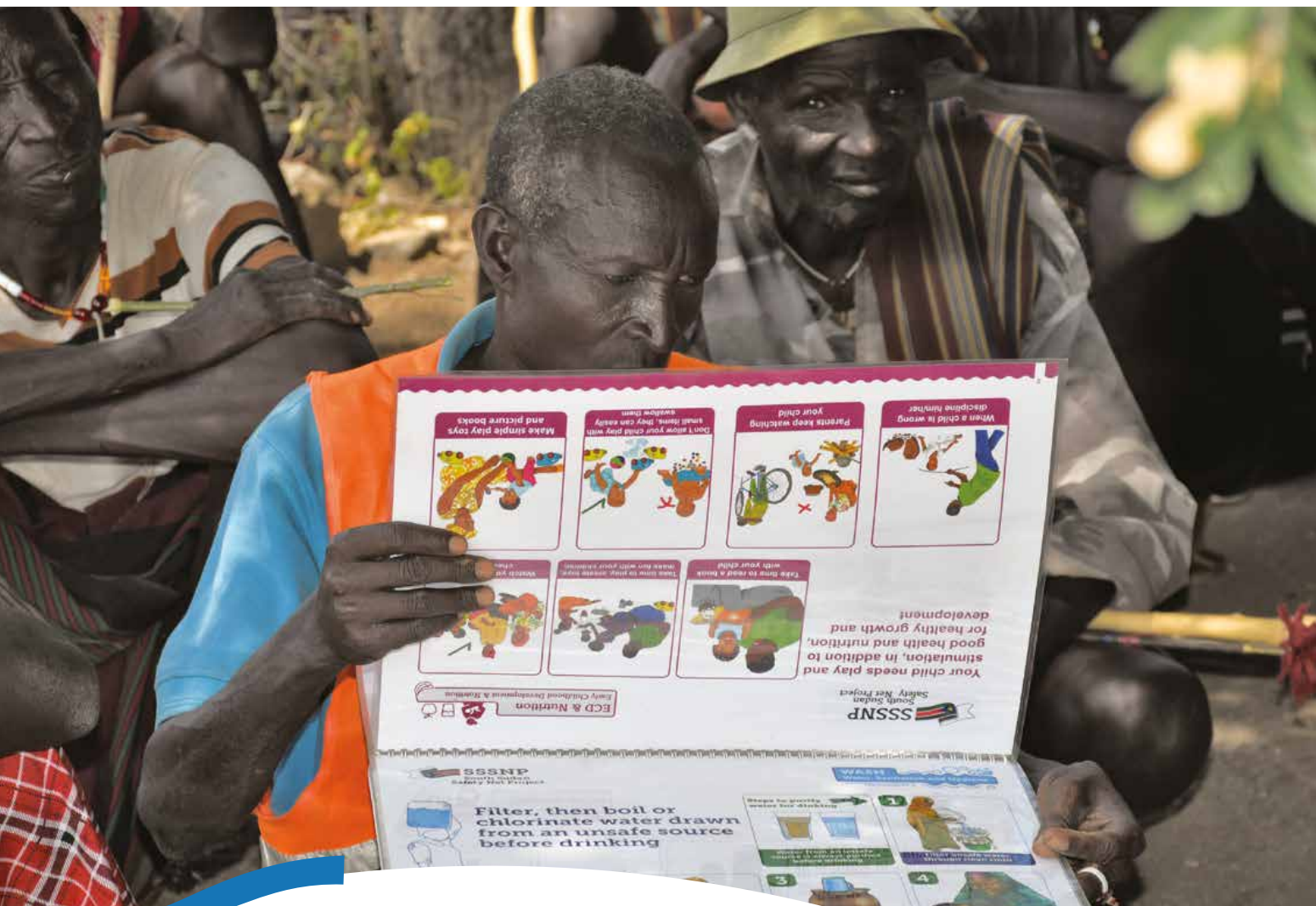
Cash Plus Training

SSSNP beneficiaries received cash plus trainings which are supplementary activities to income-generating opportunities that aimed at assisting beneficiaries to develop skills to utilize their


resources productively. Beneficiaries were thus trained in financial management, nutrition, early childhood development, and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

Cash plus sessions were counted as LIPW work-days, which meant that beneficiaries who took part were paid. They were optional, and recommended, for DIS beneficiaries. Beneficiaries and their communities have benefited from cash plus training by boosting their knowledge and promoting healthy behaviors such as water purification and healthy nutrition.

Cash plus trainings were delivered by beneficiaries who were trained as Master Trainers in the four thematic areas. Master Trainers were also trained in the principles of adult education to encourage an interactive learning environment during sessions. This included familiarizing Master Trainers with techniques for encouraging active engagement through interactive activities based on the personal experiences of trainees. This helps to contextualize key messages to each community's needs ■



Community members look at the picture cards with messages on Early Childhood Development in Kapoeta East County in Eastern Equatoria state.

A man, Micheal Maluk Kuol, is standing in front of a traditional thatched-roof hut. He is wearing a red t-shirt, light-colored trousers, and a bright yellow high-visibility safety vest. He has a colorful beaded necklace and a face mask hanging from his ears. In the foreground, there is a lush green vegetable garden. The background shows more of the village and a clear sky.

At first we were not good at financial management. Through the training we have learnt a lot on how to better manage money. I used the cash to buy seeds and started this vegetable garden."

Micheal Maluk Kuol, recipient of the Financial Literacy Training as part of Cash Plus activities by SSSNP.

“

*My favorite training was on Early
Childhood Development (ECD).
I learnt about childcare, breastfeeding
positions, different periods of breast-
feeding and exclusive breastfeeding.”*

**Nyandeng Makuach Deng from Referendum A,
recipient of ECD Training as part of Cash
Plus activities by SSSNP.**

Key Results

Over the course of the project, SSSNP has demonstrated positive improvements in the life of communities across locations. It reached 423,051 people in 65,045 households across 10 counties in South Sudan, providing 93 total cash transfers of US\$ 23.5 million. 93 percent of project beneficiaries said that SSSNP enhanced their quality of life. Over 77 percent of households reported that the cash transfer enabled them to purchase assets and essential goods and services that they would have been unable to access without it. In addition, LIPW sub-projects helped build and strengthen community assets with 378 sub-projects providing communities with long-lasting benefits.

Through cash plus trainings, SSSNP also played a role in encouraging behaviors that support human capital development. For example, beneficiaries

reported a nine percentage point increase in exclusive breastfeeding. Interestingly, beneficiaries spent the majority of their cash transfers on food (almost 98 percent of households), education (85 percent of households), and health (77 percent of households), indicating that households prioritize human capital investments. Beneficiaries reported that cash plus trainings were relevant and useful in their daily lives because they complemented their pre-existing household priorities and gave them the means to concentrate on them.

Cash plus trainings were also associated with positive behavior change on financial inclusion. Beneficiaries reported that the training on financial inclusion was highly applicable to their daily lives. Many individuals indicated that learning to manage their money enabled them to plan better and save for emergencies.

Prior to receiving the training, many participants believed they could not save because they were poor. However, they soon understood that they could save if they prioritized and budgeted their spending. Over the course of the project, there was a 26 percentage point increase in the number of households that saved. There was an 18 percentage point reduction in the sale of assets to buy food or basic goods.

Beneficiaries and communities valued early childhood development (ECD) and nutrition trainings

and felt more empowered to care for their children's health and development. For example in Bor county, beneficiaries mentioned that traditionally, pregnant women were not allowed to eat protein, eggs or milk as it was believed that a large baby would cause complications during birth. However, after receiving the cash plus training, participants understood that proper nutrition during pregnancy and breastfeeding was essential to the health of both mother and baby. Indeed, many households reported changing their nutritional practices and applying what they learned during cash plus trainings 🇸🇩



“

From the money I received, I baked cookies and processed peanut butter for sale. I also used some of the money to buy seeds for cultivation and bought three goats, which will produce milk, and once sold, will bring my family more money.”

Nyayom Lual LIPW beneficiary from Gogrial West, South Sudan.





A family in Gogrial West County in Warrap state eat breakfast at their home. This household is among those targeted under Labor Intensive Public Works.

Good Practices and Innovations

In a context characterized by fragility, conflict, and violence where circumstances can change swiftly, SSSNP embraced innovation and adaptability in order to quickly respond to many unforeseen challenges. Over the course of more than three years of project implementation, SSSNP beneficiaries were affected by several shocks including the COVID-19 pandemic, economic volatility, locust invasion, flooding, and outbreaks of localized violence. The adaptive design and implementation features of the SSSNP allowed it to adjust to these shocks and yield useful lessons relevant to a variety of contexts 🇧🇩



Appeals Committee members wait to receive complaints from project beneficiaries
 at a payment site in Bor County in Jonglei state.

Adaptive Program Design

The ability to adjust LIPW and DIS caseloads in response to local contexts was one of the key adaptive features of SSSNP. In the event of a significant shock in a particular county, the project could increase the number of beneficiaries in that location by reducing the number of beneficiaries in other counties. This feature was initially implemented in Juba county in July 2020 at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on the urban poor, it was determined to increase the number of beneficiaries in Juba, a predominantly urban area.

This enabled SSSNP to respond in hard-hit urban areas and tailor its assistance to a specific shock by providing unconditional cash transfers to vulnerable households. SSSNP also integrated adaptable features that allowed the project to temporarily exempt beneficiaries from public

works requirements. In practice, this allowed the project to provide LIPW beneficiaries with temporary or permanent unconditional cash transfers to ensure that payments continued even when public works were no longer viable. In 2021, for instance, Bor South experienced the worst flooding in forty years, which displaced many beneficiaries, submerged entire neighborhoods (along with their LIPW sites), and in some cases prevented access to key areas. In response to this, SSSNP temporarily suspended LIPW requirements in affected communities. In instances where payment sites became inaccessible, field-based staff coordinated with communities to shift payment sites to more convenient locations. Beneficiaries reported that the SSSNP cash was particularly valuable during the floods, allowing them to cover unforeseen needs such as shelter and food.



A female beneficiary pushes a wheelbarrow at an LIPW site in Bor Town in Jonglei state. To mitigate floods, communities in Bor County dug channels to prevent their homes from flooding.



In addition to its adaptive design, SSSNP's implementation modalities accounted for the volatile context. The SSSNP was implemented using a four-phased approach. Project implementation began in Juba county in July 2020. It then gradually expanded to first mover counties (Bor South, Gogrial West and Torit), second mover counties (Tonj South, Kapoeta East and Pibor) and finally third mover counties (Raja, Melut and Yei). This approach, along with a robust monitoring and evaluation system, allowed the project to identify lessons learned in earlier counties, which were then used to inform adaptations in later counties. This resulted in an iterative process that fostered innovation, since successful initiatives tried in first mover counties were subsequently implemented in second and third mover counties ■



A beneficiary collects cash from SSSNP paying agent.

Vulnerability-Based Geographical Targeting



The Project Targeting Index (PTI) is a composite index combining objective indicators of needs and impact potential. It provides a method based on evidence for ranking priority areas for new project locations in accordance with project objectives and priorities. The PTI is particularly important in conflict affected countries where poverty is widespread and resources are scarce. It is also a flexible tool that can be adapted as needs or situations change, by adding or removing indicators and changing their weight to align with different objectives.

Under SSSNP, the PTI used three types of indicators to identify the most vulnerable counties.

These included poverty and vulnerability indicators (i.e. poverty rate, food insecurity and malnutrition rates), conflict and displacement indicators (i.e. prevalence of IDPs and number of conflicts), and development level and access to social services indicators (i.e. presence of functional clinics and schools). Using these metrics, the PTI classified all South Sudanese counties according to their needs. This ranking was used by the government of the Republic of South Sudan to select the three new project locations¹. This guarantees that project locations are chosen in a fair and technically sound manner based on project priorities, requirements, and feasibility ■

1

These refer to the SSSNP third mover counties of Raja, Yei and Melut

Behavioral Nudges Pilot

SSSNP piloted behavioral nudges interventions in one location (Bor South) to increase households' investments in human capital development. In partnership with Ideas42, the pilot began with an assessment of barriers preventing beneficiaries from spending their cash transfers in accordance with their preferences and needs. Despite the fact that beneficiaries typically have priorities or plans for how to spend their cash transfer, they are rarely able to carry them out due to obstacles such as high levels of stress and scarcity. It also revealed that an identity of poverty limits beneficiaries' expectation of what they might accomplish, forcing them to frequently abandon their ambitions after receiving the cash.

On the basis of these insights, the behavioral nudge piloted in Bor consisted of an activity carried out during cash plus training sessions to help beneficiaries consider their goals and set priorities for spending their next cash transfer. Participants were provided with a worksheet and a set of stickers with pictures depicting objectives

such as “food”, “home repair”, “education”, “agriculture”, “health”, “livestock”, “business” and “other/blank”. Then with the assistance of their Master Trainers, participants identified their priorities and completed the worksheet using stickers or hand-drawn images. They were asked to keep the worksheet as a reminder of their plans in a large manilla envelope and two smaller paper envelopes which they labeled according to their stated priorities, in order to set aside funds for each of these goals.

The results indicated that the behavioral nudge was likely effective. For instance, there was a four percent increase in beneficiaries setting clear priorities and a six percent increase in spending directed toward these priorities. Those who received the behavioral nudge spent seven percent more of their cash transfers on their predetermined priorities.

63 percent of participants communicated what they had learned with others in their communities,

indicating that the behavioral intervention may have an effect on a larger network. The pilot also found that the cost per beneficiary of the intervention ranged between USD 1.43 and USD 2.50 depending on the mode of implementation. Given the low costs and positive outcomes, there is a great opportunity to expand the programme 🇲🇻



Beneficiaries participating in the behavioral nudges pilot in Bor South county, Jonglei state.



Gender Transformative Approach

The SSSNP implemented a gender transformative approach in all phases of project delivery. SSSNP adopted a multi-faceted approach to gender mainstreaming based on the assumption that social safety nets have the potential to encourage gender-transformative behavior through their in-depth involvement with communities. The cornerstone of SSSNP's gender transformative

approach was the development and implementation of a Gender Action Plan which reviewed the entire project cycle to identify opportunities for gender transformative activities. This involved gender mainstreaming and sensitivity as well as GBV prevention, mitigation, and response. Priorities included ensuring that women's groups and female beneficiaries were consulted



A beneficiary displays a placard during a World Bank and Government high level visit to Yei River County in Central Equatoria state.

throughout project implementation, particularly on decisions around the selection of LIPW projects, timing of LIPW and cash plus activities, and payment locations. A comprehensive gender awareness raising strategy was also implemented across activities, such as LIPW, payment and cash plus training. During each of these activities, project staff on the ground and/or Master Trainers raised awareness about gender issues and GBV, as well as shared information about the project's Grievance Redress Mechanism.

The Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) was another important component of SSSNP's gender strategy. A GRM is a system by which grievances, feedback, and questions can be submitted to the project in a transparent and confidential manner. While the majority of grievances submitted to GRM's are operational in nature, such as those related to payment delays or questions about eligibility for the project, the GRM was designed to capture and process sensitive grievances. Sensitive grievances could include reports of GBV, fraud or corruption. To ensure GBV-sensitivity, the GRM was designed using a survivor-centric approach that prioritizes survivor's safety,

confidentiality and empowerment. SSSNP's GRM was designed to be both GBV-sensitive and operational within a fragile context like South Sudan. This required a lean yet efficient system to capture and process grievances in all ten project locations. The GRM utilized two primary channels: (i) Community-based Appeals Committees (ACs) with female GBV focal points, and (ii) a toll-free national hotline. The project ensured that these channels were separate and easily accessible to men/boys and women/girls in rural and urban areas.

The GRM was fully integrated into the project Management Information System (MIS) through a GRM module in which grievances were logged, processed, and closed. This allowed the project to track the processing of grievances and facilitate monitoring by generating reports automatically. This was accompanied by a strong emphasis on awareness raising of the GRM among communities. Monitoring data suggests that beneficiaries' awareness of gender and GBV issues, as well as their trust in and willingness to use the GRM, increased significantly over the course of the project ■

“

From the Cash Plus training I have learnt how to plan to better manage my finances. I plan to invest it to improve the lives of my family members. I value the money I receive from the project. I also received GBV training. I know that violence between a couple is not good.”

Maker Mach from Referendum A in South Sudan who received Cash Plus and GBV Training from SSSNP.



Community-Centric Approach

Community Engagement and Capacity Building (CECB) was central to the project. The CECB plan was implemented through a toolkit that guided all engagement with communities and beneficiaries with an emphasis on fostering local capacity and sustainability. Local and traditional authorities, youth and women groups, and civil society organizations were consulted on the project's objectives and design. This engagement was guided by a conflict-sensitive approach in which project teams mapped all relevant stakeholders in each county, as well as risks and sources for potential conflict. This helped to inform a contextually appropriate approach to community engagement.

The formation of community-based project committees was a vital aspect of developing local capability. SSSNP utilized six committees at various levels. While higher level committees

consisted of civil servants, community-based committees consisted of volunteers from beneficiary communities. Community-based project committees were responsible for the selection of LIPW projects, beneficiary targeting, and oversight. Throughout the duration of the project, committee members were engaged in extensive and recurrent training, as well as experience exchange workshops across SSSNP locations. Through this process, committee members were able to build new skill sets, such as interpersonal skills and community management. This approach enhanced the local ownership and sustainability of the SSSNP through the additional involvement of local leadership.

During the implementation phase, the project encouraged community mobilization through involving cross-sections of beneficiary communities.



Yar Aluong Aman, SSSNP Financial Literacy Training recipient used the knowledge from the sessions provided to start a vegetable business.


This fostered better understanding of project features, such as eligibility criteria for DIS and LIPW, registration, payments process, GRM, as well as rights and responsibilities of beneficiaries. In addition, the SSSNP's capacity for community mobilization led to raising awareness around crucial issues such as gender, GBV, and investing in human capital development (i.e. education, health, nutrition) ■



Climate Adaptation

Many communities in SSSNP project locations were hit by periodic climate-induced shocks such as drought and floods. Against this backdrop, beneficiaries in many areas chose projects that focused on climate adaptation. Many LIPW projects focused on climate adaptation, such as drainage canals and dykes. In the case of SSSNP, climate adaptation was driven by communities

and beneficiaries, rather than being incorporated into the project's design. Beneficiaries reported that climate-adaptive LIPW assisted in mitigating the impact of climate-induced shocks. The SSSNP experience offers a valuable lesson in understanding communities' preferences as well as the potential for climate adaptation through public works programs ■

A photograph of a man, Tong Kooch, standing in a warehouse or storage area. He is surrounded by numerous large sacks of groundnuts, some in white and others in blue. He is wearing a white t-shirt with red trim around the neck and sleeves. He has a serious expression and is looking slightly to the side. The background shows more sacks and wooden beams of the structure.

From the cash I received from the project, I hired laborers who helped me clear my field where I cultivated ground nuts. At the end of the season, I harvested 76 sacks of ground nuts which I plan to sell during the dry season.”

**Tong Kooch, LIPW beneficiary from
Gogrial West**

Beyond SSSNP and the Way Forward

SSSNP is coming to an end, but it is not the end of South Sudan's journey in social protection.

SSSNP's successor, the Productive Safety Net for Socioeconomic Opportunities Project (SNSOP), which will be implemented by the Government

of the Republic of South Sudan, will continue to strengthen and expand social protection coverage in the country. SNSOP will draw heavily on SSSNP's experiences and important lessons learned.

1.The Importance of Flexibility and Adaptability:

In fragile and conflict-affected contexts such as South Sudan, it is crucial to develop initiatives that are adaptable and flexible in the face of un-anticipated circumstances. Developing long term resilience requires ensuring swift delivery and continued assistance. In the case of SSSNP, the adaptive design process was primarily led by two sources of information. The first was the World Bank's prior experience in implementing projects in South Sudan, as well as similar experience of

other development and humanitarian partners that were routinely shared through the donor coordination platform. The second source consisted of comprehensive, county-specific assessments that informed implementation techniques that ensured continuity of payments notwithstanding disruptions in project activities.

Operating in fragile and conflict-affected situations poses a risk, necessitating the development of



I was registered by the project because am a widow with children in school who need tuition. From the money I received, I expanded my field like never before and harvested four sacks of groundnuts, seven sacks of simsim and four sacks of Sorghum.

Mary Nyalang, LIPW beneficiary from Gogrial West

innovative solutions that can minimize such risks. During SSSNP, a number of beneficiaries had concerns regarding the safety and accessibility of payment sites. While cash transfers under SSSNP were restricted to physical cash delivery, future safety net interventions, such as SNSOP, could introduce a new cash delivery method, such as mobile money payment to mitigate risks. Digital payments would not only help to address risks of insecurity, they would also enable transparency and efficiency in delivery of payment processes, minimizing risks of fraud. Moreover, they would also contribute to financial inclusion by increasing the use of mobile payments. With the country's ecosystem and infrastructure gradually developing, select urban areas may be most suited for the mobile money payment pilot.

2.Cash Plus and its contribution to human capital development

The SSSNP experience has shown that cash plus trainings and behavioral nudges assisted in yield-

ing results that may serve as the foundation for long term behavioral change. There was a noticeable spillover effect, referring to the diffusion of information beyond the target beneficiaries into their households and communities. Beneficiaries reported that they often shared what they had learnt with family members and acquaintances in the community. For instance, when both male and female beneficiaries were asked if information on pregnancy and breastfeeding was useful to them despite not having young children, the majority responded affirmatively and explained that they still shared this information with those in their households or communities for whom it was applicable. Similarly, some local leaders indicated that the cash plus trainings also influenced the behavior of non-beneficiary households in their communities. In some regions, for instance, the formation of savings groups expanded significantly.

SNSOP will therefore draw on this experience to expand cash plus interventions in order to continue supporting behavior change, particularly among households with young children. The provision of comprehensive complementary social measures is a key component envisioned under the SNSOP. This component builds on the success of SSSNP's



SSSNP beneficiary attends to a customer at her market stall at Marol Market in Bor Town in Jonglei state.

cash plus activities and behavioral nudges to provide more intensive assistance to households with children under the age of five. For instance, an important finding from SSSNP's cash plus activities was the significance of engaging both men and women in positive behavior change, as they both play essential roles in the household and community. On this basis, SNSOP's complementary social measures will actively engage both beneficiaries and their spouses in order to encourage men's active participation in child rearing.

3. Accessible Delivery Systems and Strong Monitoring Mechanism

In conflict-affected countries, many of the poor and vulnerable reside in remote and difficult-to-reach rural areas with limited connectivity and access to services. Because of this, the effectiveness of project implementation is largely dependent on delivery systems that are easily accessible. The systems used to facilitate the implementation of social protection benefits and services are known

as delivery systems. Typically, they cover the whole project cycle, from registration to beneficiary exit, and include targeting and registration, payments, grievances redress, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), among others.

In the case of SSSNP, ensuring that the payment system, M&E system and GRM were accessible and functional in the South Sudanese setting was of special importance. For instance, SSSNP payments were delivered by a payment agent, who deployed teams to each of the 10 project locations. While all payments were generated in the project management information system (MIS) to ensure transparency and accountability, benefits were paid out in cash to beneficiaries within SSSNP counties. To guarantee accessibility, field staff selected payment locations in consultation with beneficiaries. Safety and accessibility for women, people with disabilities and the elderly were crucial factors to consider. Beneficiaries were encouraged to register an alternate (a substitute) who could collect payments on their behalf in the event they were unable to do so themselves. The GRM was also designed to be accessible to beneficiaries by providing them with two channels to choose from to lodge a grievance. Efforts were made to increase understanding



The beneficiary observes COVID-19 protocols at a construction site. The project provided masks, water and soap at all Labor-Intensive Public Works sites to prevent the spread of the virus.



A beneficiary poses for pictures in her kiosks set up using the cash received from the SSSNP in Kapoeta East County in Eastern Equatoria state.

and awareness of the GRM and how to utilize it, as these channels were designed to provide support in local languages.

The M&E system was also designed to be operationally appropriate for South Sudan. SSSNP adopted the World Bank's Geo-Enabling Initiative for Monitoring and Supervision (GEMS) to develop a digital M&E system that was embedded in project activities to minimize field-based staff's additional workload. By embedding M&E tasks into project activities, field staff were able to enter data and information into offline versions of monitoring tools while performing field work and subsequently upload data and information to a server from their offices. This also ensured that data was uploaded often and

that the Juba-based project team had immediate access to data collected on the ground. This was essential for delivering an accurate assessment of progress in all field sites, even in areas with weak network, and it allowed the project team to anticipate challenges and develop solutions. The SSSNP M&E framework also emphasized the periodic collection of inputs from beneficiaries. This allowed the project to interact directly with beneficiaries in order to learn their perspectives on the project's success, challenges and potential for improvement. By combining embedded monitoring activities with specialized door-to-door data collection exercises, the project was able to acquire a wealth of information and feedback from beneficiaries, which was prominently featured in lessons learned.

4. The Role of Community Engagement in Strengthening Project Performance

The SSSNP experience shows that community participation is essential for enhancing project implementation. For instance, community engagement activities provided insights into

the challenges faced by beneficiaries in each context and how modifications in the design or implementation could assist to mitigate them.



Beneficiaries display a placard, appreciating the project in Yei River County in Central Equatoria state in May 2022.

The behavioral nudges intervention clearly displayed the beneficiaries' approach to their financial management decisions and revealed that despite receiving a cash transfer, many beneficiaries still struggled to spend in accordance with their priorities. In this case, engaging beneficiaries directly enabled the project to design a behavioral intervention that addressed this issue, and positive feedback from beneficiaries suggests that it was largely effective.

Strengthening local capacity was essential to the successful implementation of the project because SSSNP largely built on community structures. These community members received in-depth training on the cash plus themes of financial literacy, WASH, ECD, and nutrition, which positions them as experts in their communities and may allow chances to facilitate sustainable livelihood opportunities. Indeed, anecdotal evidence suggests that Master Trainers were crucial in extensively disseminating their cash plus knowledge beyond beneficiary groups to other members of the community, increasing the project's reach.

This strategy proved essential when solving implementation challenges. For instance, due

to a lack of monetary incentives, members of community-based committees were not motivated to carry out their responsibilities, which posed a significant issue for SSSNP. Although the project provided non-monetary incentives such as training, paraphernalia, awards, and opportunities to share experiences, they were insufficient to persuade members to continue to carry out their numerous responsibilities. As a result, there was a high rate of volunteer turnover, and in some cases, committee members refused to address conflicts or grievances.

In light of the fact that community-level committees play an essential role in project implementation and monitoring as well as community mobilization, this experience highlights the need for an alternative approach. In order to establish a fair and satisfactory compensation strategy, the project consulted with communities and committee members to understand their challenges and needs. Despite the fact that this strategy is still in the process of being developed, feedback from community members has been crucial to ongoing improvements in project implementation 🌍



Beneficiaries welcome World Bank and Government Officials in Yei River County in Central Equatoria state during a high level visit.

Looking Ahead

As South Sudan attempts to emerge from years of strife, and works to achieve the goals of a secure and stable peace, it still has some distance to go. In order to move forward and upward, it will require investments and interventions such as SSSNP and SNSOP. These are crucial for providing a cushion to vulnerable and marginalized communities, and also in paving the way to uplift lives to achieve the larger objectives of human capital development, access to education, health services, and economic opportunities for inclusive development.

Supporting the government of the Republic of South Sudan in its mission to improve the lives of all South Sudanese—women, girls, boys, elderly and the most vulnerable among them—the World Bank is committed to bolstering a reliable and predictable social safety net system to uplift the lives and livelihoods of the people of South Sudan ■



