

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA)

South Sudan

Country Programme Strategy

2025 – 2029



# Table of contents

---

## Contents

Executive summary.....	3
1. About Norwegian Church Aid .....	4
1.1 Norwegian Church Aid Globally .....	4
1.2 Norwegian Church Aid in South Sudan .....	4
1.3 Lessons learned .....	5
2. South Sudan Context .....	6
2.1 National context .....	6
2.2 Civic space and role of civil society .....	8
3. Country vision and long-term goals.....	8
3.1 Country vision: A Peaceful, Prosperous, Just and Sustainable South Sudan .....	8
3.2 Country-specific long-term goals.....	9
4. Geographical coverage .....	9
4.1 Selected geographic areas of engagement .....	9
4.2 Co-localisation and integrated programmes .....	10
5. Programme Focus .....	11
5.1 Save Lives .....	11
5.2 Build Resilience .....	13
Long-term goal: Women, men, youth, and persons with disabilities reduce their vulnerability, recover from economic, social, and climate-related shocks and disasters, and sustainably manage their resources .....	13
5.3 Seek Justice .....	15
5.4 Country Thematic Matrix.....	16
5.5 Cross-cutting commitments .....	17
5.6 Knowledge management and data-driven programming .....	17
6. Equitable partnerships for locally led development. ....	17
6.1 Local leadership and participation .....	17
6.2 A relevant and complementary partnership portfolio .....	18
7. Country Theory of Change.....	19
8. Map of geographic focus areas 2025-2029.....	20

## Executive summary

The South Sudan Strategy 2025-2029 outlines the strategic goals for Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) in the next five years focusing on saving lives, building resilience, and seeking justice. These goals will be realized through thematic pathways of Peacebuilding (PB), Economic Development and Food Security (EDFS), Climate Resilient Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (CR-WASH), and Gender Based Violence (GBV) interventions. All strategic goals align with NCA's Global Strategy which reflects NCA's core mission of eradicating poverty and injustice. The plan is tailored to a protracted scenario of fragility and development in South Sudan, embedded within the triple nexus of humanitarian, development, and peace with emphasis on localisation.

During the 2025-2029 strategic period, NCA will scale up area coverage to include new locations in greater Upper Nile, Central Equatoria, Warrap, and Bahr El Ghazal states through establishing equitable partnerships with local and national actors. In this way, NCA aims to consolidate the impacts of existing partnerships to promote localisation across all its thematic programmes which will involve progressive establishment of long-term engagements with local and national actors in thematic programme choices. At the national level, NCA will partner and coordinate with local faith and civil society actors to implement civic action and saving life interventions.

The NCA South Sudan Country Strategy for 2025-2029 emphasizes on building partnerships with faith actors and civil society organisations as a strategic approach to saving lives, building resilience, and seeking justice. These three strategic goals align with national policies, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This approach will focus on strengthening the capacities, partnerships, and coordination mechanisms with faith and civil society actors at local and national levels.

As issues in the African context often transcend national borders, the South Sudan country programme will link up and coordinate closely with the NCA Joint Africa Advocacy Programme (JAAP) to ensure rooted advocacy on relevant issues related to Gender Justice, Peacebuilding, Fighting Inequalities and Climate Justice.

Despite the stabilizing effect of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (Re-ARCSS) signed on September 12, 2018, and the subsequent formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity in 2020, certain provisions of the agreement face delay in implementation. However, both citizens and the international community anticipate that the country will maintain peace before and after the scheduled elections in December 2024.

NCA's strength lies in its institutional and organizational systems, particularly in programmes, operations, and finance. Competent NCA staff manage these systems at both Country and Head Offices. The organization is aware of the risks associated with the implementation of the South Sudan 2025-2029 strategy and has formulated mitigation measures to address operational and financial challenges that may arise during this period.

For the upcoming Strategic Period 2025-2029, NCA in South Sudan aims to build on work initiated in the previous strategic period by strengthening mutual partnerships with local community networks to collectively address the key challenges in South Sudan.

## 1. About Norwegian Church Aid

### 1.1 Norwegian Church Aid Globally

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is an independent humanitarian and diaconal organisation mandated by churches in Norway to fight for a more just world together with our partners around the globe. Our mandate is to save lives, build resilience, and seek justice to uphold human dignity and protect the integrity of Creation. We provide humanitarian assistance and protection in disasters, work for sustainable development in local communities, promote peace and reconciliation, and address the root causes of poverty, advocating for the fulfilment of human rights and just decisions by public authorities, businesses, and religious leaders. NCA provides support to the most vulnerable and those in need, regardless of their ethnicity, creed, political or religious affiliation. NCA prioritises working in long-term partnerships with local actors and organisations to enhance ownership and sustainability. As an organisation certified against the Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability, NCA places accountability to the people and communities we serve at the centre of our work. Committed to international ecumenical cooperation and development effectiveness, NCA is affiliated with the World Council of Churches and is a member of the ACT Alliance. The ACT Alliance is a coalition of churches and affiliated organisations working together in over 140 countries to create positive and sustainable change in the lives of poor and marginalised people.

### 1.2 Norwegian Church Aid in South Sudan

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) has a long history of presence in South Sudan, dating back to 1972 when it established operations in Torit, in Eastern Equatoria. Since 1972, NCA has expanded its presence to cover four additional states namely Warrap, Western Bahr El Ghazal, Central Equatoria, Upper Nile states and Greater Pibor Administrative Area. Throughout its presence in South Sudan, NCA has been committed to implementation of peacebuilding, climate resilience, water and sanitation, and gender-based violence programmes.

NCA's extensive history is rooted in its long-standing partnerships with faith-based actors primarily local churches, South Sudan Council of Churches, Caritas and ACT Alliance networks in South Sudan. NCA has also built strategic partnerships with different line ministries particularly Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare; Ministry of Peacebuilding; Water Resources and Irrigation; Ministry of General Education and Instruction, multilateral institutions, donors, and humanitarian coordination networks at national and state levels,

The upcoming strategy envisions a peaceful, just, and sustainable South Sudan which aligns with 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. NCA aims to achieve this vision through the promotion of just, peaceful, and inclusive societies (SDG 16); NCA's Climate Resilient WASH programme in South Sudan ensuring access to safe water and improved hygiene and sanitation behaviour, contributing to the realization of SDGs 1 and 6: Through the Gender-Based Violence strategy, NCA aims to empower women and girls by safeguarding and protecting their rights through gender and education programmes, as outlined in SDG 5, which underscores gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls. Other SDGs linked to the strategy include SDGs 2, 4, 13, and 17.

**NCA's added value** is premised on its partnership approach that involves collaborating with local partners at national and local level. By engaging faith-based actors and local organizations, which have a deep understanding of local issues, as the capacity in creating local solutions for local challenges. NCA partnership model is anchored on localization emphasizing collaboration between international and local organizations to generate sustainable solutions for humanitarian and development challenges.

### 1.3 Lessons learned.

The following are the key lessons gained from the current and previous strategy which informs strategic choices in the new strategy.

**Humanitarian response:** The occurrence of a crisis in South Sudan is unpredictable and is spread across several geographical regions. Intercommunal conflict and natural hazards have been the primary drivers of displacements and deteriorating conditions in the region. Coupled with reduced humanitarian funds countrywide, the current circumstances put a strain on the provision of basic dignified needs and services. NCA increased collaboration with humanitarian institutional structures in South Sudan to expand response operation to areas with acute needs. The expansion of NCA to other geographical locations necessitated the need for extra staff, collaboration with additional partners, and the provision of operational support. While the expansion was driven by necessity, and due to insecurity incidents in Greater Pibor, Upper Nile and Warrap, NCA incurred significant losses in project assets. Evaluating implementation strategies with emphasis on shifting from static to mobile intervention is crucial in effectively addressing the needs of beneficiaries during displacement and recovery phases.

**Innovation:** Addressing evolving trends in global development and humanitarian interventions through innovation is an area that requires attention. NCA's programming has primarily focused on participatory and community-centered approaches, significantly assisting in the lifting of communities/rights from conflict-related disasters to safer environments. Nevertheless, the lack of funding for research into suitable technologies, such as community monitoring, sustainable market-driven initiatives, and cashless programmes, means that NCA's programmes remain financially demanding. To improve on this innovation gap, NCA will pilot innovative approaches to partnerships and programme interventions.

**Partnerships development:** NCA South Sudan's commitment to partnerships is evident through its ongoing support for locally led initiatives at both national and local levels. Despite investing in partner capacity building, the outcomes have been varied due to insufficient follow-up and partner commitment. The insufficient follow-up has been due to high number of partners exceeding existing NCA human resource capacity in finance, monitoring, and evaluation. Additionally, partners operating in remote areas with limited accessibility and communication infrastructure face constraints on providing accountability to NCA. Moreover, the conceptualisation of civil society strengthening has been limited to collaborating with national and local NGOs and faith-based organizations, overlooking the importance of working with local community structures. In this strategy, NCA will prioritize enhancing the capacity of local community structures, enabling them to actively participate in civic activities, life-saving efforts, and resilience-building interventions.

**Programme coherence:** The coherence between emergency response, long-term development, and advocacy is not sufficiently integrated within thematic programmes. This limitation is further exacerbated by inadequate guidelines on nexus programming. Although there have been instances where NCA programmes exhibited nexus programming, the success of these initiatives is not rooted in a systemised/structured nexus framework. To address this, there is need for enhanced internal coordination within programme teams during the planning and implementation of diverse initiatives at the field level. This coordination will ensure a more integrated and effective approach that cuts across emergency response, long-term development, and advocacy within NCA South Sudan's thematic programmes.

The integration of **women's economic empowerment initiatives in peacebuilding** as a peace dividend, not only strengthened social cohesion across diverse ethnic groups, but also improved the economic and social well-being of women. All the partnership demonstrated among different

stakeholders was crucial in peacebuilding endeavours, the engagement of duty-bearers was less yet is indispensable for achieving the desired outcomes of peace dialogues conducted within communities. While the implementation of UNSCR 1325 is necessary, there exists a notable gap in linking the relief and recovery pillar to emergency response. Thus, it is imperative to consider the interconnection of the three nexuses for comprehensive and effective peacebuilding efforts.

## 2. South Sudan Context

### 2.1 National context

With a population of approximately 10.9 million (World bank, 2024), South Sudan is one of the most volatile countries in Eastern Africa region. A conflict analysis report by NCA South Sudan (2023), highlights the impact of political, social, and economic deficits on the country's development. South Sudan's political landscape remains complex despite the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement (R-ARCSS), with key political figures struggling to ensure its full implementation. Although the ceasefire has helped to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation, the violence against civilians remains high, as documented by the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (2023). The R-ARCSS which has brought a glimpse of hope outlines crucial measures, such as integrating former rebels into the national army, establishing transitional justice institutions, and conducting nationwide consultations for drafting a permanent constitution. Unfortunately, the transition period has been extended thrice, slowing progress on key milestones. Apart from government forces and previously aligned rebel factions, several non-signatory armed groups operate in some parts of the country with their activities posing significant challenges to civilian safety and humanitarian efforts.

**Key Drivers of Conflict:** The World Bank's Fragile Situations list classified South Sudan as a medium-intensity conflict zone. It ranks 160 out of 163 countries in the 2023 Global Peace Index, indicating significant internal conflict and low peace levels (Humanitarian Review Report, 2023). The power struggles that involve inter-party conflicts, ethnic manipulation, and land disputes have overtime led to defections escalating violent conflicts impacting negatively on building sustainable inclusive communities. The unresolved land grievances continue to ignite tensions among ethnic group. The persistent extreme climate conditions, results in conflicts over pasturable land and water points. The disconnect between leaders and citizens has created mistrusts, while political patronage hampers service delivery. Cases of corruption and abuse of power have weakened justice systems fostering resentment. The endemic economic decline has hindered access to social needs, triggering conflicts within families. High illiteracy has led to political manipulation, and historical grievances have caused conflicts among different ethnic groups. Proliferation of weapons complicates disarmament, as elites manipulate cultural traditions, deepening mistrust and hindering reconciliation, hence fostering a cycle of poverty and displacement.

**Rights deficits:** Despite having abundant resources: arable land, substantial oil reserves, untapped water resources, and significant stocks of livestock and fisheries, South Sudan remains one of the poorest countries in the world. According to Sustainable Development Goals report released in 2023, South Sudan ranks 166 globally with the least SDG index score of 38.7% having failed to achieve sixteen targets of SDGs.

The NCA strategic programme choices are aligned to the following sustainable development goals which fall short of target for South Sudan.



The scars of armed conflicts in 2013 and 2016, coupled with four consecutive years of flooding, and uncertainties in oil sector which accounts for 61% of South Sudan's GDP continue to affect South

Sudan economy (World Bank, 2023). The depreciation of local currency, which has decreased by 122% since 2022 has increased commodity prices worsening already dire economic situation. South Sudan faces a dire food insecurity situation, primarily due to reduced agricultural output and exorbitant food prices which worsens the hunger situation in the country, hence compromising the realisation of SDG 2 (no hunger). This problem is compounded by the adverse impacts of extreme climatic conditions and a deficiency in water infrastructure (Lasagna et al., 2020). The remittances from the diaspora estimated at over 1.2 million people globally, serve as a crucial lifeline for many South Sudanese families amidst the economic crisis. With underdeveloped banking sector, only 5.8% of the adult population have access to financial services with credit to private sector restricted (World Bank, 2023). The world bank report further highlights that South Sudan faces considerable risk of external and domestic debt which potentially has negative impact on its future economic outlook. The poor infrastructure, market integration, and agricultural investment has resulted in extreme poverty levels deepening the social inequalities in the country slowing down the realisation of SDG 1 (No poverty). Besides the widespread social and economic inequalities, the country grapples with multiple humanitarian crises, including severe droughts, floods, and displacements that have severely disrupted people's lives hence exposing people to spread of diseases thereby undermining their health (SDG 3). An estimated 9.4 million people (76% of the population) require humanitarian assistance with women and children hardest hit. The number of people in need of humanitarian assistance is projected to rise in the coming years due the conflict in neighbouring Sudan which has led to an influx of refugees and returnees. South Sudan also ranks low in the Human Development Index (HDI), with a south Sudanese girl likely to die at childbirth than finish school hence affecting progress of SDG 5. In addition, women face significant challenges in the workforce as they are less likely than men to secure waged and salaried employment. These challenges arise from rigid gender norms and social expectations, limiting the choices and opportunities available to women and girls (SDG 5). And 7% of the women aged 15-49 use modern family planning methods, with their agency and ability to determine their own paths constrained (World Bank, 2023). The country's susceptibility to climate change and natural disasters has slowed down socio-economic development (SDG 13). Severe droughts (2011, 2015) and floods (2014 - 2022) have resulted in deaths, displacements, and livestock losses, severely affecting livelihoods. Six million people lack access to safe water and treated water and soap in both urban and rural settlements with 11% having access to sanitation facilities (SDG 6). In addition, 75% practice open defecation with severe flooding destroying existing water infrastructure. The mobile and internet network coverage is limited. In fact, South Sudan is one of the countries without with own national fibre with private fibre networks from Uganda which is prone to outages and disruptions (World Bank, 2023).

**Stakeholders, Power, and Influence:** South Sudan's key **political actors** played a pivotal role in negotiating and endorsing the 2018 Revitalized Peace Agreement (R-ARCSS). Faith based actors exercise considerable influence in South Sudanese society, where over 60% of the population are Christians. Major churches, including the Catholic Church and the Episcopal Church of South Sudan, actively engage in nationwide peace messaging through bodies like the South Sudan Council of Churches (SSCC). Faith actors play a critical role in promoting forgiveness and reconciliation within communities, often risking their safety to mediate and facilitate dialogue amidst active conflict. The churches' efforts towards peace have positioned them to have a strong influence on peace processes in the country, a stance that is equally recognized and respected by the government and opposition. However, some critique religious leaders for not speaking out more forcefully against human rights abuses and the stalled implementation of the 2018 peace agreement.

**Women** are key contributors to South Sudan's fragile peace process. Women's rights groups and grassroots activists undertake prayer missions and advocate for women's protection and participation across political, social, and economic spheres. Women led organizations provide legal support for survivors of sexual violence and lead women's empowerment initiatives, from small business grants to agricultural training. Despite these efforts, there are concerns that women's critical priorities

related to transitional justice, constitutional reform, and gender-based violence continue to be sidelined during high-level peace negotiations.

**Youth** play a vital role in South Sudan's peacebuilding processes. While they are often seen as both perpetrators and victims, they are peacemakers and actively engage in community-level actions for reconciliation and sustaining peace. Youth facilitate intercommunal dialogues, creating spaces for youth from different ethnic communities to share stories, identify common priorities, and collaborate on peace projects that rebuild social bonds at the local level. **The traditional authorities** equally play a crucial role in resolving daily community disputes related to resource-based conflicts and family matters. They serve as a vital link between the government and communities, providing updates on various processes. However, like other actors, traditional authorities have faced accusations of inciting and mobilizing youth for violence.

## 2.2 Civic space and role of civil society

South Sudan's civic space is one of the most restricted globally, characterized by limitations on press freedom. The environment for a free and independent media is progressively diminishing, evident in the growing suppression of numerous media outlets. This crackdown is often a response to public opinions that openly criticize the government. In 2020, South Sudan was ranked in position 178<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries. However, suppression and clamp down on the media appeared to have slowed down in 2023. As of 2023, South Sudan's position on the 2023 Reporters Without Borders World Press Freedom Index was 118<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries. This marks a notable improvement from 2020 when it ranked an alarming 178<sup>th</sup> out of 180 countries. Despite this slight advancement, the overall trend indicates a shrinking space for free civil society and highlights the challenges faced by civil society organization and individuals who seek to exercise their right to free expression.

NCA has a long history of partnership with faith-based organizations, specifically with the churches in South Sudan. The churches have a legacy of maintaining a consistent presence in local communities, offering solidarity to the people during periods of conflict in South Sudan. This commitment has not only earned the churches credibility and legitimacy within South Sudanese society but has also positioned them as mediators, lobbyist for sustainable peace and justice in South Sudan.

International non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and national NGOs (NNGOs) play a pivotal role in South Sudan, contributing significantly to humanitarian assistance, development, and peacebuilding. Within local communities, INGOs engage in a wide range of activities, including addressing sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), education, water provision, economic empowerment, and social cohesion. Despite their commendable efforts, INGOs encounter challenges and restrictions. Government regulations and bureaucracy often hinder their operations, and insecurity poses risks to their staff. South Sudan Civil Society, although operating under government restrictions, remains a critical force for promoting peace and development. Independent civil society groups face frequent harassment from the duty bearers. Additionally, ethno-political divisions within the country limit their ability to foster unity beyond local communities and states. Media in South Sudan faces significant restrictions, with media outlets like Radio Miraya and the South Sudan Broadcasting Corporation (SSBC) persevering to report on the country's fragile peace process. However, media access remains limited, particularly for international journalists who face challenges in obtaining necessary accreditation. Country vision and long-term goals

## 3. Country vision and long-term goals

### 3.1 Country vision: A Peaceful, Prosperous, Just and Sustainable South Sudan.

The NCA in South Sudan envisions a nation characterized by peace, prosperity, justice, and sustainability. This vision is rooted in the NCA's commitment to fundamental values: human dignity, global justice, inclusive communities, integrity of creation, and compassion. NCA South Sudan strives



for a society where every citizen is respected and treated with human dignity. As a peaceful society, NCA desires for a South Sudan where conflicts are resolved peacefully, enhancing stability and harmony among its people. As a prosperous society, NCA roots for shared prosperity that ensures economic development benefits all citizens, regardless of their ethnic, religious, gender, race, and cultural differences. Regarding Justice, NCA advocates for fairness, equality, equity, and the protection and fulfilment of rights.

### 3.2 Country-specific long-term goals

	<b>NCA global long-term goals</b>	<b>Country programme long-term goals</b>
<b>Save Lives</b>	Vulnerable and displaced people are protected, access life-saving services, and practice skills that enhance their personal safety, health, and well-being.	Vulnerable people affected by conflict have access to life saving services, are protected from harmful norms, and practice skills that enhance their well-being.
<b>Build Resilience</b>	Inclusive and cohesive communities withstand and recover from shocks and crises, manage their resources sustainably and equitably, and lift themselves out of poverty.	Women, men, youth, and persons with disabilities reduce their vulnerability, recover from economic, social, and climate-related shocks and disasters, and sustainably manage their resources.
<b>Seek Justice</b>	Civil society actors hold national and international decision-makers accountable and influence progressive policy, norm changes, and more equitable distribution of resources.	Civil society and faith-based organisations hold duty bearers accountable for ensuring a more peaceful and just society

## 4. Geographical coverage

### 4.1 Selected geographic areas of engagement

In the upcoming five-year period (2025-2029), NCA strategically focuses on specific geographic areas in South Sudan to address critical needs and challenges. NCA's strategic selection of these geographic areas is driven by a holistic approach that considers the humanitarian situation, long term development needs, access, levels of poverty and partners presence. NCA aims to address immediate needs, mitigate conflicts, and foster sustainable development, ensuring a comprehensive and targeted impact in South Sudan. The selection of these counties is driven by a comprehensive set of criteria, including: The following geographic areas have been chosen based on potential of national/local NGOs presence, local government presence, vulnerability, and existence of markets for livelihood activities.

State	County	Main reason
Eastern Equatoria	Kapoeta South	Accessibility, limited insecurity cases, strong local government structures, and community commitment ensuring sustainability.
	Kapoeta East	Presence of community and local government structures supporting project implementation.
	Torit	Accessibility, minimal insecurity incidents, local government structures, and a diverse population co-existing in urban and rural settings.

Warrap	Tonj North	Conflict-prone county where NCA will address challenges in delivering services to affected populations.
	Tonj South	New county for NCA. The county has significant unmet needs, where the key objectives will be focussed on addressing gaps left by other NGOs
	Gogrial East	The county is prone to conflicts where NCA objectives will be to consolidate gains and address critical services gaps especially within access to CR-WASH.
Western Bahr al Gazal	Wau	The county has needs arising from violence in 2016 and 2017, displacing communities and disrupting livelihoods.
	Jur River	Ongoing women economic empowerment activities initiated with NCA support, focusing on women-related activities.
Upper Nile	Baliet	The county faces persistent cattle-related conflicts, with returning residents seeking refuge after the post-2013 conflict.
	Fashoda	The county has a huge population of host communities, returnees, and IDPs with significant agricultural potential, addressing gaps in utilization
	Malakal	the county hosts IDPs and returnees in critical need of services, addressing land ownership disputes and fostering community trust.
Central Equatoria	Juba	The county has an ongoing GBV and women economic empowerment activity initiated with NCA support.

#### 4.2 Co-localisation and integrated programmes

The South Sudan programme will co-localize programme based on the following broad approaches:

- a) In locations where NCA implements projects collaboratively with faith-based actors and civil society organisations, it will jointly with community level structures such as Inter-Church Committees (ICCS) to cocreate projects. Due to NCA's local presence and proximity to ICCs, an accompaniment model based on mutuality and complementarity will be prioritised to ensure that churches activity engage in social and economic transformation of rights holders.
- b) NCA will seek collaboration with other stakeholders through active participation in the NGO Forum and sectoral clusters to leverage resources implemented by other agencies in the same

geographic locations. This collaborative approach recognizes that lasting impact requires coordinated efforts across all three domains.

- c) In locations where NCA directly implements projects, it will plan and implement multisectoral integrated programme activities that complement each other to achieve better outcomes in coordination with government, faith-based actors, and community level structures. The direct implementation will be in situations where NCA emphasis is on direct technical assistance to faith-based actors and civil society organisations.
- d) NCA will also pursue intra-sectoral integration to strengthen the capacity of faith-based actors and resource organizations in organisational development. This approach will involve seamless capacity support to partners by NCA staff with strong commitment to equitable partnerships based on equality, mutuality and complementarity while recognising and respecting partners values, autonomy, and independence of their identity. This will involve the identification of weak partner(s) with long term commitment to increase internal and organisational capacity.
- e) Triple nexus: The goal is to achieve **collective outcomes** that enhance safety, dignity, and resilience for the affected populations in prioritized locations. NCA underscores the interconnectedness between humanitarian, development, and peace actions. Throughout the strategic period NCA will enhance collaboration, coherence, and complementarity with faith-based organizations through equitable partnerships. Together with faith-based organizations at local and national levels, NCA will provide direct humanitarian assistance to affected populations by addressing immediate needs such as food, shelter, GBViE, and WASHiE. Recognizing that local faith-based organizations are the first responders in disasters situations in South Sudan, NCA jointly with them will identify and address capacity building gaps to effectively engage in humanitarian, development, and peace initiatives, thereby strengthening their contribution to collective outcomes. NCA humanitarian responses in South Sudan are focused on connecting the affected populations needs to development opportunities; while development needs to ensure that assistance reaches those furthest behind, which often includes populations affected by humanitarian crises. As the crisis enters recovery phase, NCA jointly with faith-based organizations will shift focus towards addressing long-term needs of the affected populations.

## 5. Programme Focus

### 5.1 Save Lives

Long-term goal: Vulnerable people affected by conflict have access to life saving services, are protected from harmful norms, and practice skills that enhance their well-being.

#### 5.1.1 What we want to change and for whom

Approximately 2.3 million people in South Sudan, including women, young girls, men, the elderly, and people with disabilities, are currently displaced. In addition, more than six million individuals need life-saving services. The affected population encounter rights deficits in the form of limited access to basic services such as water, shelter, food, sanitation, psychosocial support, and protection services. The host communities that receive the internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees are already overwhelmed due limited resources which cannot cope with the returnees from Sudan. The

faith-based organisations and local community structures who host majority of the affected population lack resources and capacity to cope with the influx.

5.1.2 What we will do to achieve the change.

NCA South Sudan humanitarian response is aligned to NCA Global Humanitarian Strategy and South Sudan Emergency Response and Preparedness Plan which positions NCA South Sudan as first responder in delivering high-quality life-saving emergency assistance during the initial phase of acute crises within its key thematic sectors in WASHiE and GBViE. Adopting a triple nexus approach, all humanitarian response interventions by NCA in South Sudan will be designed to integrate long-term sustainable solutions aimed at fostering peace, enhancing development capacity, and strengthening level of preparedness and response capacity of the affected populations which include Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), Returnees, and Host Communities and particularly women, young girls, men, people with disability and the elderly. The GBViE services will entail providing comprehensive support to GBV survivors, establishing safe spaces for women and girls, distribution of dignity kits, access to emergency sexual and reproductive health services and strengthening of referral pathway systems. NCA will ensure GBV survivors, women and girls receive timely services through advanced case management, psychosocial support and crisis counselling and referred to other service providers. To ensure coherence, NCA will integrate the GBViE interventions into WASHiE (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) activities which include water supply, maintenance of water facilities, water treatment, distribution of water containers, and the setting up of emergency sanitation facilities. The food security activities involving the distribution of emergency food and non-food items and providing multipurpose cash will also target same affected population. Disaster Risk Mitigation capacity of faith-based organizations will be increased to ensure that humanitarian response is locally led.

NCA South Sudan will scale up its organizational and operational capabilities through active engagement in humanitarian coordination mechanisms, collaborating closely with Act Alliance, OCHA National and State Cluster Systems and local authorities in South Sudan. Proactive collaboration with faith-based organizations will be prioritized to ensure effective humanitarian interventions that resonate with the needs and aspirations of the affected population.

NCA will follow a comprehensive vulnerability assessment considering refugees, IDPs and host communities and the impact on basic services. NCA will commit to a multi-year plan to better guide short term and long term/static interventions, while ensuring immediate assistance to refugees, IDPs and host communities and simultaneously strengthening and promoting resilience in areas of GBV and WASH.

Primary thematic area(s)	Primary outcome areas	Supporting outcome area(s)
GBV CRWASH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 1.3 GBV services</li> <li>- 1.4 Sexual and reproductive health rights</li> <li>- 4.1 Accountable and sustainable CRWASH management</li> <li>- 4.2 Safe hygiene practices</li> <li>- 4.3 Inclusive and equitable sanitation services</li> </ul>	2.4 Protection of people and communities at risk

**Kommentert [TTB1]:** Add 5.3 food security?

## 5.2 Build Resilience

### Long-term goal:

Women, men, youth, and persons with disabilities reduce their vulnerability, recover

from economic, social, and climate-related shocks and disasters, and sustainably manage their resources.

#### 5.2.1 What we want to change and for whom.

NCA's South Sudan is committed to building resilience through addressing rights deficits in Peace building, CR WASH, Economic Development and Food Security, and Gender Based Violence. Climate change is an integral part of building resilience because it is an existential threat to water, economic development and Food Security which are fundamental to lifting people out of poverty and enhancing social protection. Due to social protection rights deficits, climate change will worsen poverty levels.

In peacebuilding, the rights deficits that NCA will address to build resilience include ethnic rivalries that ignite violence, competition over resources that lead to resource-based conflicts, border disputes and weak land governance structures that escalate social fragmentation, weak governance institutions, lack of peace dividends, corruption, weak legal systems and infrastructure resulting in delayed justice, wounds from the past resulting from traumatic experiences of war, harmful cultural practices contributing to cycles of revenge killings, proliferation of small arms, manipulation of the youth to violence, and economic crisis leading to high crimes and unemployment. As a result of these rights deficits, South Sudan has recorded high rates of homicide especially among women with majority of the cases perpetrated by intimate partners. In addition, a significant population feel unsafe walking at night. The corruption index is also among the highest in the world. All these rights deficits have meant that South Sudan is behind schedule realising SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions).

The rights deficits within Climate Resilience and Water and Sanitation (CR WASH) which NCA will address to build resilience include extreme climate shocks from prolonged droughts, floods, and elevated temperatures which have disrupted water and food systems contributing to inadequate access to water and food shortages. In addition, although activities like charcoal production and brickmaking generate income, they contribute to deforestation and increase vulnerability to droughts and floods further limiting rights to healthy environment.

According to a World Bank report in 2023, rights deficits on access to water are evident in limited access to a safe drinking water supply as over 60% of South Sudan population relies on unimproved sources such as unprotected wells and river water. Moreover, during the rainy season, the accessibility to basic water supply diminishes further, as floodwaters submerge water sources, rendering water points inaccessible. At a national level, only 10% of households have access to sanitation facilities, while a substantial 75% practice open defecation. Unsafe hygiene practices such as lack of handwashing facilities are prevalent. In addition, rights to physical safety of women and girls are threatened as they walk for long distances to fetch water which increases their risk to Gender Based Violence hence exposing them to risks of rights violations. Taken together, these indicators suggest that challenges towards the progress of SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation) persist in South Sudan.

As far as Economic and Food Security is concerned, the rights deficits include unemployment among the youth, lack of access to markets, underdeveloped financial institutions, underdeveloped private sector, poor roads, telecommunication and internet connectivity infrastructure, high illiteracy rates. In terms of food security, right deficits include lack of access to food, lack of extension services, inadequate irrigation coverage, natural disasters such as floods, malnutrition among children, lack of

access to markets, inadequate dietary and nutritional requirements for children leading to stunted growth, harmful environmental practices, inadequate policies on agricultural production. The adverse effects of climate change may force people to adapt negative coping mechanisms such as withdrawing children from school, selling productive assets such as livestock, land, etc (Ruiz *et al.*, 2019). These rights deficits point to challenges towards progress of SDG 2 is slow

On Sexual Reproductive Health and Gender Based Violence, NCA commits to address rights deficits which include gender inequality, lack of access to education for girls as 73% of girls in South Sudan are locked out of school, harmful cultural practices, dominant patriarchal structures, lack of access to modern family planning methods, inadequate schools for girls and female teachers, limited access to economic/income opportunities for women, and inadequate mitigation measures against violence against women and girls. Violence, abuse and exploitation of women and girls is an endemic problem in South Sudan with concerns of all forms of sexual violence, Forced/Early Child Marriage (FECM) Intimate partner violence and forced/early marriages are widespread, with food and economic insecurity exacerbating negative coping strategies within the family households. These indicators point to stagnation towards achieving SDG 5.

### 5.2.2 What we will do to achieve the change

As Climate change is an existential threat, NCA will implement multisectoral programmes that focus on building resilience across all selected thematic areas. To build resilience in all these thematic areas, NCA will use a conceptual framework that integrates community disaster risk mitigation, adaptive and system wide programming, and triple nexus as alluded above. The implementation approaches will involve climate adaptation, livelihood diversification, capacity building, and financial inclusion.

For peacebuilding, NCA will enhance community resilience through mediation, dialogue, and capacity building. This will entail supporting inter-community dialogues, advocating for conflict management, and fostering cross-cultural exchange. NCA commits to facilitate the active participation of local and national faith-based organizations in peace initiatives, enabling them to contribute to conflict resolution and reconciliation processes. The NCA will continuously conduct these activities through increasing the capacities of faith-based organizations and civil society. By establishing community networks that promote cohesion and mitigate conflicts, NCA jointly with faith-based organizations will facilitate recovery from crises and facilitate peacebuilding. Once peace is reestablished, the NCA's focus will shift towards assisting displaced persons to return to their homes. This involves rebuilding essential assets, infrastructure, and services to a level where emergency response efforts gradually diminish, allowing for a gradual increase in resilience-building activities over time. Additionally, intergenerational dialogue, leadership training, and mentorship programs, especially for female role models, will be prioritized. NCA will also collaborate with faith-based organizations and civil society to address land and border disputes in a comprehensive manner.

Under the Economic Development and Food Security, NCA will emphasise on market-based approach focusing on value chains development through supporting vocational training for women and girls establishing savings groups and organizing awareness campaigns on women's rights particularly on economic and social rights. On food security, NCA will promote smart farming involving crop and livestock production using emerging farming technologies, support farmers groups with technical skills, adapt climate resilient farming in areas worst hit by floods, improve household incomes, etc

Under CR WASH, NCA will promote access to water and sanitation services with emphasis on climate resilience by supporting locally led WASH initiatives with emphasis on climate resilience. NCA will enhance capacities of water management structures on climate change elements of WASH. In addition, key stakeholders will be made aware of the impacts of climate change-related hazards on water and

sanitation services' resilience and equipped with strategies to mitigate these effects. As part of this effort, the exploration of solar and wind technologies will be integrated with alternative water-harvesting methodologies, such as large and small-scale rainwater catchments and storage facilities, as well as catchment protection, as alternatives to boreholes.

Regarding Sexual Reproductive Health and Gender Based Violence, NCA jointly with faith-based organisations will engage leaders to challenge harmful practices, facilitating dialogues to shift gender norms, and supporting initiatives promoting gender equality, providing case management and psychosocial support for GBV survivors, promoting comprehensive sexuality education and family planning. Additionally, NCA will support skills development and economic empowerment through various savings schemes, small finance services, promotion of women's participation in local industry, promotion of self-help groups as well as advocate for economic reforms that favour women.

NCA will enhance the capacities of ecumenical and interfaith networks in advocacy. In this regard, the CO will collaborate with the Joint Africa Advocacy Programme (JAAP) to strengthen the capacity of civil society in advocacy for peace and climate-related issues in South Sudan. This initiative will entail the establishments of strategic alliances and networks with key regional bodies such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the African Union (AU), and the East African Community (EAC) which are engaged in the South Sudan peace process.

To ensure scalability and sustainability, NCA will ensure that it builds capacity of faith-based actors and civil society organisations with a long-time commitment to consolidate and retain the programme outcomes within the communities.

Primary thematic area(s)	Primary outcome areas	Supporting outcome area(s)
GBV/Peace Building/CRWASH/EDFS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-1.1 Empowerment of women and girls</li> <li>-1.2 Transforming social norms and preventing harmful practice.</li> <li>-2.1 Social cohesion and psycho-social well-being</li> <li>-2.3 Inclusive peace processes</li> <li>-4.1 Accountable and sustainable CRWASH</li> <li>-4.2 Safe hygiene practices</li> <li>-4.3 Inclusive and equitable sanitation services</li> <li>-4.4 Sustainable water services</li> <li>-5.1 Economic empowerment</li> <li>-5.2 Climate-smart food production</li> <li>-5.3 Promoting food security.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3.1 Promoting civic space.</li> <li>- 6.1 Community resilience and disaster risk management</li> <li>- 6.3 Faith-based climate and environment advocacy</li> </ul>

### 5.3 Seek Justice

Long-term goal: Civil society and faith-based organisations hold duty bearers accountable for ensuring a more peaceful and just society.

#### 5.3.1 What we want to change and for whom.

South Sudan has had cycles of conflicts since independence in 2011. These conflicts have had a profound impact, leading to the weakening and fragmentation of local institutions that are meant to promote peace and justice. The struggles over land, ethnic divisions, and political tensions have collectively contributed to this complex situation of rights deficits in violence against women and girls,

children, fight against corruption, lack of accountability, and lack of inclusivity in peace process. In contrast, the SDG 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development by providing access to justice and building effective institutions at all levels. Therefore, to contribute to realisation of SDG 16, NCA jointly with faith-based organisations and civil society partners will build resilience through advocacy interventions codesigned to collectively promote rights and freedoms. NCA will emphasise on participation of women, youth in decision making particularly in local and national peace processes and institutions. The proliferation of small arms has escalated the violence associated with cattle-raiding. Sexual and gender-based violence, including rape, domestic violence, and harmful traditional practices, has been systematically employed as tools of violence against women and girls, inflicting severe physical, psychosocial, and emotional trauma. And faith-based organizations and civil society actors are unable to fulfil community expectations regarding the promotion of social cohesion. Persistent structural, cultural, and religious barriers impede women's participation in policy and decision-making in South Sudan.

### 5.3.2 What we will do to achieve the change.

To address rights deficits and build resilience in conflict affected societies, NCA will support peacebuilding initiatives that address root causes of injustice, abuse and exploitation of women and girls, combat proliferation of arms and light weapons by facilitating dialogue among communities and collaborating with local faith-based partners to improve social cohesion at local, national, and regional levels. Additionally, the strategy includes organizing inclusive peace forums involving diverse stakeholders, capacity building for faith actors in climate and environmental policy dialogue, advocacy for inclusion in formal peace process, collaborating with civil society for advocacy, and forming alliances to ensure diverse representation in peace initiatives and policymaking. NCA will collaborate with national and civil society institutions to identify advocacy issues entrenched within conflict structures at local and national levels. In pursuit of this objective, the CO, with technical support from JAAP, will create a meso-structure consisting of eminent individuals, drawn from influential youth, women, and men who can exert positive influence on peace outcomes within their communities.

As issues in the African context often transcend national borders, the South Sudan country programme will link up and coordinate closely with the NCA Joint Africa Advocacy Programme (JAAP) to ensure rooted advocacy on relevant issues related to Gender Justice, Peacebuilding, Fighting Inequalities and Faith-based Climate and Environment Advocacy.

Primary thematic area(s)	Primary outcome areas	Supporting outcome area(s)
Peacebuilding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 2.1 Social cohesion and psycho-social well-being</li> <li>- 2.2 Conflict resolution</li> <li>- 2.3 Inclusive peace processes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 3.1 Promoting civic space.</li> </ul>

### 5.4 Country Thematic Matrix

GBV	CRWASH	EDFS	PB
1.1 Empowerment of women and girls	4.1 Accountable and sustainable CRWASH management	5.1 Economic empowerment	2.1 Social cohesion and psycho-social well-being
1.2 Transforming social norms and preventing harmful practice.	4.2 Safe hygiene practices	5.2 Climate-smart food production	2.2 Conflict resolution



1.3 GBV services	4.3 Inclusive and equitable sanitation services	5.3 Promoting food security	2.3 Inclusive peace processes
1.4 Sexual and reproductive health rights	4.4 Sustainable water services		

### 5.5 Cross-cutting commitments

**Women’s Rights and Gender Equality:** NCA South Sudan will be contributing to the Women Peace and Security agenda with a particular focus on program implementation within the thematic areas of GBV, Peacebuilding and Humanitarian Response. NCA recognizes the pivotal role of gender equality in sustainable development. NCA will actively promote and prioritize women's rights, ensuring their equal participation in decision-making processes, and addressing gender-based disparities. Our choice of thematic areas in Economic development and Food security and GBV for example will help focus NCA’s efforts towards empowering women economically, socially, and prevention of harmful practices against women, fostering an inclusive environment that recognizes and values the contributions of all genders.

**Protection of the Environment:** Environmental sustainability will be integral to our work. NCA will implement programmes that prioritize the protection of the environment, acknowledging its importance for current and future generations. Our initiatives will be designed to minimize environmental impact, promote sustainable practices, and contribute to the overall well-being of communities through responsible resource management. The office will ensure that projects undertake g environmental screening with a humanitarian oriented tool such as the NEAT before and after project implementation to ensure that our activities don’t have adverse impacts on the environment.

**Conflict Sensitivity:** Recognizing the fragility of the context in South Sudan, NCA will approach its interventions with a keen understanding of conflict dynamics. We commit to implementing programmes that are conflict-sensitive, ensuring that our actions do not inadvertently exacerbate tensions or contribute to conflict. Periodic conflict analysis will be undertaken to ensure informed decision making and to avoid any unintended harm through our program. By engaging with local communities and understanding their needs, we aim to promote peace and stability, fostering sustainable development in a conflict-sensitive manner.

### 5.6 Knowledge management and data-driven programming

Recognizing the complexities of the South Sudanese landscape, NCA will strengthen its monitoring, evaluation, Accountability and Learning section: to ensure the program has tools and skill set to learn from the programmes. To achieve this, robust data collection through surveys, interviews, and focus group discussions will be routinely administered, analysed, and used to fine tune the program in the strategic period. NCA MEAL will establish continuous feedback loops for real-time adjustments and learning. Furthermore, we will collaborate with academic institutions and cross-sectoral partnerships to enrich our perspective, foster innovation as well as adjust to evolving contexts within South Sudan. Capacity building in Monitoring, Evaluation and knowledge management systems will be part of our partners’ capacity building plans

## 6. Equitable partnerships for locally led development.

### 6.1 Local leadership and participation

Our strategy revolves around empowering local partners, particularly faith-based and civil society

actors in South Sudan. Emphasis will be on fostering local collaborations, a partnership approach enhances mutual accountability among partners and NCA. Adopting a hybrid model, with a triangular structure encompassing Rights holders empowerment, partners/civil society strengthening, and NCA providing accompaniment at all levels/stages of the partnership, NCA will support equitable partnerships with local faith-based organisations and civil society groups through jointly identifying gaps and strengthening local actors' capacity, financing, and coordination. Through capacity-building initiatives and cocreation of projects, NCA South Sudan will equip its partners with the necessary skills for implementation, and monitoring of projects. We will focus on capacity building tailored to the organisational leadership and technical programme support, as well as training staff in line with continuous capacity assessment (PAT) and monitoring of partners. The partners will be involved from the onset of the programme design, implementation: whereby they will have opportunities to influence the design and implementation approaches of the country program. Regular feedback sessions, community consultations, and inclusive planning forums will be established to ensure transparency. The CO and its partners will work together to create channels for open communication such as complaints handling mechanism, community feedback sessions etc. maintaining a commitment to accountability and responsiveness to the communities we serve.

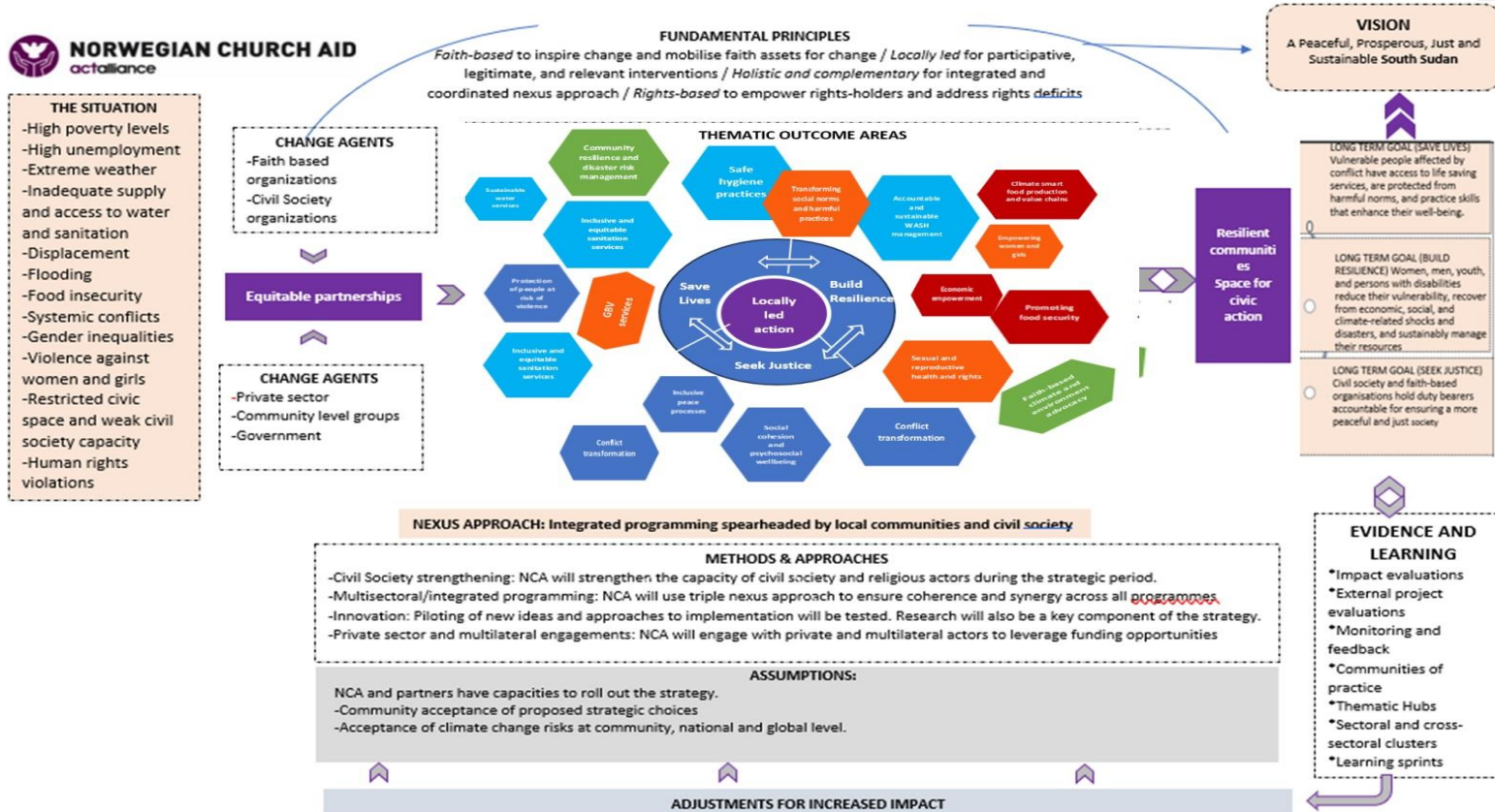
## 6.2 A relevant and complementary partnership portfolio

In implementing the Country Programme Strategy, our focus is partnerships with a diverse range of faith-based and civil society organizations (CSOs) and actors that align with the contextual needs and values of NCA. We prioritize partnerships with organizations deeply embedded in local communities, as their proximity allows for a more nuanced understanding of community dynamics, cultural sensitivities, and immediate needs. Additionally, collaborations with national and international NGOs bring broader perspectives, technical expertise, and access to resources that can complement and enhance the impact of our initiatives.

Faith-based actors play a pivotal role in our strategy. Recognizing the influential and trusted position of faith-based organizations within communities, we leverage their networks and moral authority to promote social cohesion, peacebuilding, and community resilience. Faith-based actors will actively engage in community-led initiatives, contributing to the holistic development of individuals and fostering an environment conducive to sustainable change. Their involvement is integral to promoting values of justice, equality, and compassion.

The success of our strategy hinges on effective collaboration with a spectrum of stakeholders. To this end, we will actively engage with knowledge-based institutions such as universities, research organizations etc. to harness specialized knowledge, to ensure evidence-based practices, government agencies to align with national development priorities, and private sector partners to explore innovative solutions and sustainable economic opportunities. These collaborations will enrich the programmatic landscape, facilitating knowledge exchange, scalability, and the co-creation of initiatives that address the root causes of challenges faced by South Sudanese communities.

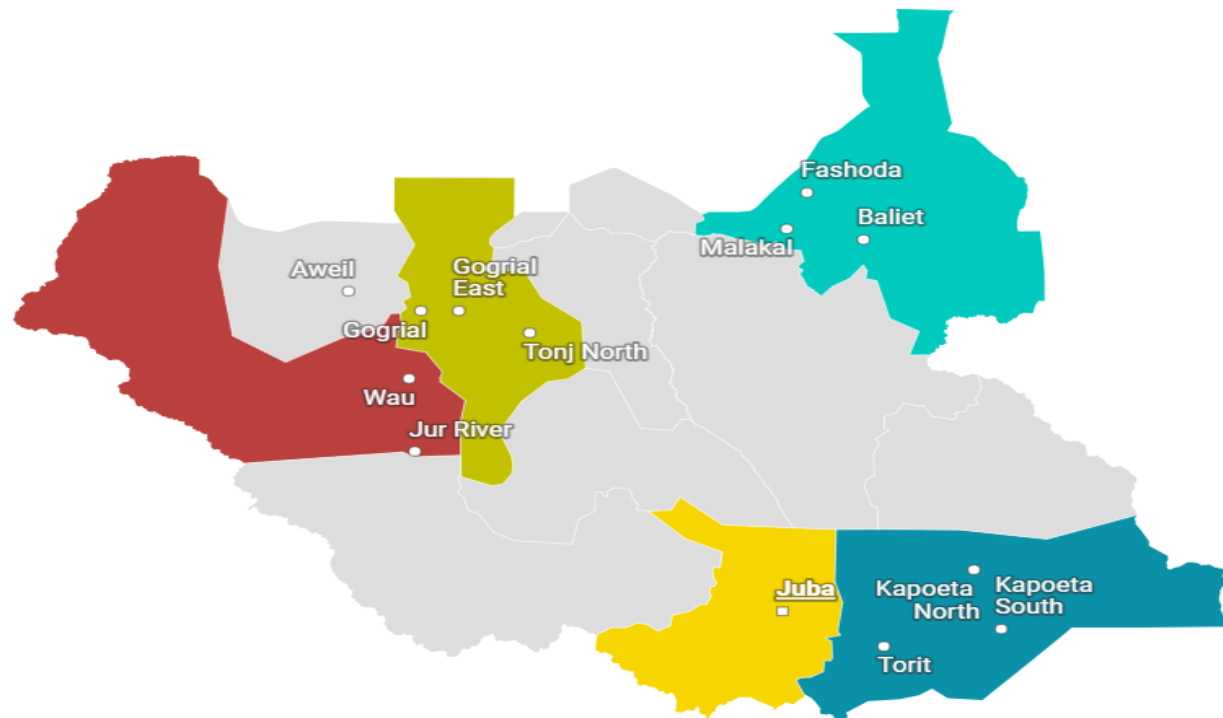
## 7. Country Theory of Change



8. Map of geographic focus areas 2025-2029

### NCA South Sudan Geographic Focus Areas 2025-2029

CENTRAL EQUATORIA    EASTERN EQUATORIA    UPPER NILE    WARRAP    Western Bahr el Ghazal



Map data: © OCHA · Get the data · Created with Datawrapper

