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Summary

The CSRF has developed county maps and profiles to support aid workers to build a stronger understanding of the context in South Sudan. This short note sets out the core features of the profiles, information on how information was compiled, and notable caveats to support users in interpreting information.

Q. What features are available on the CSRF county profiles?

The CSRF county profiles include the following functions:

- An **interactive map** containing basic information on geographical features, roads, and settlements that can be searched;
- An overlay of different **boundaries** (10, 10+3, 21, 28, 32) designed to enable aid workers to reconcile information that was previously presented in relation to these alternative configurations;
- Summary **profiles** of all 78 counties (alongside a profile for the disputed Abyei area) containing information on demographics, livelihoods, infrastructure, conflict dynamics and accessibility.

The map and county profiles can be accessed [here](#) or a low-bandwidth version of the profiles without the map can be accessed [here](#).

Q. How have the maps and boundaries been compiled?

The maps have been generated using digital maps of geographical features, roads, settlements and boundaries provided by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in South Sudan. A link to the most recent UN OCHA map at the time of publication (July 2023) is also provided in each profile.

The information shown on the maps does not imply official recognition or endorsement of any physical, political boundaries or feature names by the CSRF, United Nations or other collaboration organisations. We recognise that some boundaries are disputed and unclear, and there are likely to be some errors in the way these boundaries are drawn or located settlements are located on the map. The implications of these are explained below.

Administrative boundaries showing the boundaries of 10, 21, 28 and 32 states in particular are historical or proposed configurations that did not reflect the position of the Government of South Sudan or parties to the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCISS) as of July 2023. They are provided simply to enable aid workers to reconcile information that was presented in previous research and reporting based on these alternative configurations.

CSRF and affiliated organisations are not liable for damages of any kind related to the use of this data. Users noting errors or omissions are encouraged to contact the CSRF at info@csrf-southsudan.org.

Q. How have the county profiles been compiled?

The county profiles have been compiled using a combination of publicly available data sets, reports and triangulated information provided by key informants with insight into the situation in each county. The commonly cited data sets and sources are presented below. The CSRF thanks the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) for originally producing county profiles in 2016 and enabling the CSRF to use these as a basis for the current county profiles. This information was updated by CSRF in early 2020, with the profiles updated again in January 2022 and again in mid-2023 (with the exception of the conflict dynamics sections, updates for which are forthcoming in late 2023).

See below for more information on the references shared by all profiles. The CSRF extends its thanks to a number of organisations that provided valuable input or data which feature in the county profiles (or in previous iterations of the profiles) and have also informed this methodological note. These include Girls Education South Sudan, the International Organisation for Migration, the Norwegian Refugee Council, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), REACH, World Food Programme, the World Health Organisation, and WorldPop.

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Q. What else might I need to know when using the county maps and profiles?

The process of compiling the CSRF county profiles raised a number of methodological challenges. We have sought to address these in as accurate and sensitive manner as possible without making the profiles too long or complex. These issues are listed here to support users in interpreting and using the maps and county profiles:

- **Administrative boundaries:** Many administrative boundaries in South Sudan are not mapped comprehensively or consistently. In some cases, administrative boundaries are established without consideration of local geography or consultation with local communities, which can lead to a divergence between formal records and local perceptions of boundaries. In other cases, new administrative units (especially payams) are created by sub-national authorities without being recognised or approved by higher authorities. In yet other cases, there is a lag between the creation of these new administrative units and their consistent reflection in administrative documents. For all these reasons, the maps accompanying the CSRF county profiles must be treated with caution and triangulated with other sources wherever possible. Particular issues to note include:
 - **Municipal areas:** The UN OCHA maps do not recognise municipal areas that are administered separately from or jointly by county authorities (e.g. the map places Aweil Town in Aweil West County, but should in fact be reflected as a separate administrative unit);
 - **New administrative areas:** The exact boundaries of new administrative area boundaries have not yet been determined or reflected in reporting (e.g. Greater Pibor and Ruweng Administrative Areas were created in February 2020 but the boundaries for these are not yet finalised);
 - **New (and contested) counties:** Akoka County was established within north-west Balia County in 2010. However, it has only recently been reflected in some government datasets. It is not yet reflected in UN or government maps, nor are its payams listed in National Bureau of Statistics (NBS)

documentation consulted in the course of research for the county profiles. The limited information available on Akoka and lack of maps available for Akoka County mean that it is not presented with its own profile. Please see the profile for Baliet County for further information.

- **Contested boundaries:** Some state and international boundaries are contested by relevant authorities or local communities (e.g. parts of certain payams are claimed by two or more counties). In certain cases important infrastructure may be claimed by multiple administrations (e.g. in Manga Port, claimed by counties in both Unity State and the Ruweng Administrative Area).
- **Lists of payams:** The list of payams reported by the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and used by the UN may omit payams that have been newly created by Governors or County Commissioners. Where key informants have identified this discrepancy, the profiles provide two lists of payams.
- **Population numbers:** The last census was carried out in Southern Sudan in 2008. All population numbers dated since 2008 are estimates. However, large scale returns to South Sudan following independence (2011) and displacement resulting from the civil war (2013-2018) and ongoing subnational conflict have complicated projections. The figures presented in the county profiles derive from three sources:
 - **Fifth Sudan Population and Housing Census (2008):** The 2008 census covered the entirety of Sudan, including Southern Sudan. The census was [controversial](#) upon release, with the government of Southern Sudan disputing the total population count for Southern Sudan offered by the census (which put the population of the region at 8.26 million). Notably, the census also took place prior to large-scale returns of South Sudanese from Sudan, which accelerated in 2011. The 2008 census is however the most recent census, with no new census data available since South Sudanese independence in 2011.
 - **National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) Population Estimation Survey (PES) 2021:** The 2021 PES was released in April 2023, with technical and financial support provided from a number of UN agencies (principally the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)), donors, and other partners (including academic institutions, WorldPop, and South Sudanese government ministries). Unlike most other methods, this is not a census nor a projection from the 2008 census, but instead a survey aiming to provide a new estimate population based up a stratified randomised sample of 1,536 sites. Estimates are based primarily on remote sensing (via the use of satellite imagery to assess the number of structures within a gridded area). This provides a baseline population model, which is then expanded through statistical modelling to non-sampled areas, before being adjusted for IDPs (using the International Organisation for Migration’s (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM)). The 2021 PES was [controversial](#) upon release (see [here](#)) due to significant differences in the estimated distributions of population contained in the 2008 census and the new 2021 PES. Such changes are highly sensitive due to the potential implications on political processes and resource implications. [Concerns](#) were also raised regarding the remote sensing methodology and soundness of underlying assumptions. The NBS has [clarified](#) that the 2021 PES is intended to be used primarily for the planning of development and services, and should not be used for planning for the forthcoming elections.
 - **UN OCHA 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) 2022 population estimates:** Annual HNOs include population estimates – determined by a Population Working Group (comprising OCHA and other UN partners) in consultation with the NBS – that take the 2008 census as their baseline.

Annual updates to the population estimation model take into account birth and death rates (using UNFPA data), population movement (using IOM DTM and UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) data), and an assessment of conflict dynamics. The data is then disaggregated by population group (non-displaced, IDPs, and returnees). Further details of the UNOCHA HNO methodology can be found [here](#). Note that UN OCHA will be dropping this method for the 2024 Humanitarian Programming Cycle and will instead adopt the 2021 NBS PES estimates to determine the population estimates in the 2024 HNO.

- **County headquarters:** There is no unified formal list of county headquarters in South Sudan. In most cases the county headquarters are well-known by local actors and consistently reported by the media and humanitarian agencies; however, in a small number of cases, the county headquarters have moved and/or are contested by different communities within the county. Such contested county headquarters are noted in the 'conflict dynamics' section of the profiles themselves.
- **Ethnic groups:** The listing of ethnic groups in South Sudan is sensitive. The profiles list ethnic groups because of their importance in shaping language, livelihoods, culture and inter-communal dynamics in the relevant county. While these were originally based on existing maps of ethnic groups in South Sudan (such as [this](#) OCHA map and [this](#) UNDP map), these have been updated based on discussions with key informants from those counties to provide a greater level of granularity at the clan/sub-clan level, to reflect the diversity of ethnic groups present in certain counties, and to correct perceived mistakes. Four caveats are important to note:
 - **Pastoralist groups:** Pastoralist communities that migrate through the counties for only a small part of the year (generally due to dry/rainy season cattle movements) are generally not reported as a distinct ethnic group in those counties. Instead, the temporary presence of these groups is noted in the livelihoods and conflict dynamics sections of the profiles, and their presence should be taken into account by those seeking to engage communities in these areas in order to promote more inclusive programming.
 - **Clans:** The social organisation of several groups (notably the Dinka and Nuer) are based upon clan systems, organised along patrilineal lines (i.e. with membership of a group being traced along the male line of a family). Beneath the level of the clan are various sections, and often beneath these are smaller sub-sections and sub-sub-sections. There is often a lack of consensus and/or more detailed information regarding the lower levels of these lineage systems, particularly at the sectional or sub-sectional level. Moreover, the identity of clans and sections is not static, and may change over time. For instance, some sections may regard themselves as distinct and as constituting a new clan in their own right, and this can create further complications with regards to presenting information on clans and sections. Where it has been possible to establish information on clans, sections, and lower levels of lineage systems (through the use of credible sources, and with verification from key informants from the area in question), information on sections (and sometimes sub-sections) has been included in the relevant profiles.
 - **Individuals or non-settled groups:** The presence of individuals from minority groups who have moved to a given county on a short-term basis or in small numbers – such as traders or migrant workers in towns – is generally not considered sufficient to list their ethnic group as 'present' in the county. Instead, ethnic groups listed in the county tend to reflect communities that have a longer term residency status in the county and have settled in

sufficient numbers to form a community (even if this is still a small minority relative to larger groups).

- **Sensitive names:** There are several spellings or names for some groups. Differences in names often arise from groups using a word in their own language to refer to themselves that is not widely used by humanitarian agencies (e.g. Shilluk/Chollo). In some cases, outsiders' names for these groups are contested or regarded as offensive by some members of the community (e.g. 'Jur Chol' means 'Black Stranger' in Dinka and is often used to refer to members of the Luo around Northern Bahr el-Ghazal). Despite being widely used, this latter type is referred to with inverted commas ('...') to emphasise the sensitivity.

The inclusion of certain ethnic groups in the profiles are not intended to endorse claims to indigeneity or autochthony. The CSRF recognises that current settlement patterns reflect decades of forced and voluntary population movements and are often contested by multiple communities. The CSRF has endeavoured to capture these dynamics within the profiles, but understands that the scope of this project does not allow for a full and comprehensive accounting of these issues.

The listing of ethnic groups should therefore be triangulated when working at a local level and inclusive approaches taken to avoid perpetuating mono-ethnic representations of counties or legitimising the claims of currently dominant groups.

- **Names of armed groups:** The names of various groups have changed over the time period discussed in the profiles. The terms Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and South Sudan People's Defence Forces (SSPDF) have been used interchangeably to refer to the armed forces of South Sudan, however an effort has been made to ensure that the term SSPDF is used to refer to the military after the name-change took effect in August 2017. The profiles use the term Sudan People's Liberation Army – In Opposition (SPLA-IO) to refer to the main armed group that has opposed the government between December 2013 and September 2018 (when the Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) was signed), and which has been involved in a number of subnational conflicts since 2018. Specific reference is made to significant factions of the SPLA-IO (e.g. the Kitgweng and Aquelek factions) where appropriate. Most discussion of armed groups is located in the 'conflict dynamics' sections of the profiles, though reference to these groups is also made in other parts of the profiles, including in discussions of infrastructure and humanitarian conditions.
- **References and Reports:** The final two sub-sections of each profile include citations and links to relevant publications on each county. The "References" section refers to reports or documents referenced directly in the text of profile. The "Reports" section represents a listing of publicly-available reports, assessments or publications with a focus on the particular county or with a relevant regional/thematic focus. While the reports tab does not capture the full listing of every report published for that county, those that are featured are publicly-available.

Q. What sources were commonly used for the county profiles?

References for sources specific to each county are included in the county profiles themselves. However, generic sources used across all county profiles include the following:

- **2008 census population:** SSCCE (2009) *5th Sudan Population and Housing Census - 2008 Priority Results*. Southern Sudan Centre for Census, Statistics and Evaluation. 26 April 2009. Available [here](#).
- **2021 population estimate:** NBS (2023) *South Sudan Population Estimation Survey 2021: Summary Report Modelled Estimates*. South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). 3 April 2023. Obtained directly from OCHA, also available [here](#).
- **2022 population estimate:** UN OCHA (2022) *South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023: Excel dataset*. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). 6 December 2022. Available [here](#).
- **Displacement figures:** IOM (2023) *Displacement Tracking Matrix: Mobility Tracking Round 13*. Data collected July-August 2022. International Organisation for Migration. Available [here](#).
- **Livelihood zones:** FEWSNET (2018) *Livelihoods Zone Map and Descriptions for the Republic of South Sudan (Updated)*. August 2018. Famine Early Warning Systems Network. Available [here](#).
- **Food security projections:** IPC (2022) *South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Analysis, July 2022 – July 2023*. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification. Published 23 November 2022. Available [here](#).
- **Government and UN-recognised payams:** NBS (2023) *South Sudan Population Estimation Survey 2021: Summary Report Modelled Estimates*. South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics (NBS). 3 April 2023. Obtained directly from OCHA, also available [here](#).
- **Roads:** Logistics Cluster (2022/2023) Roads Access Maps from November 2022 and February 2023. These were chosen to reflect the conditions during the wet and dry seasons, respectively. Available [here](#) and [here](#).¹
- **Airstrips:** UNHAS (2022) *UNHAS Weekly Schedule – 1 December 2022*. United Nations Humanitarian Air Service. Available [here](#).
- **Airstrips:** MAF (2023). *MAF South Sudan Destinations*. Mission Aviation Fellowship International. Available [here](#).
- **River transport:** Logistics Cluster (2023). *South Sudan - Transport Plan as of 19 June 2023* (available [here](#)) and *South Sudan - River Transportation Network Diagram, June 2023* (available [here](#)).
- **Health facilities:** WHO (2022). *South Sudan Health Service Functionality Dashboard*. World Health Organisation. Available [here](#).
- **Schools:** SAMS (2022). *Schools Attendance Monitoring System*. Obtained direct from Girls Education South Sudan.

¹ These were also complemented with the OCHA maps and through inputs from key informants.

Example screenshots of the county profiles

