CSRF County Profiles
Methodological Note

July 2020

Summary

The CSRF has developed county maps and profiles designed 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, 23, 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 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.

The information shown on the map 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 may 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 March 2020. They are provided simply to enable aid workers to reconcile information that was previously presented in relation to 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 and is not updated on a regular basis.

See below for more information on the references shared by all profiles. Users noting errors or omissions are encouraged to contact the CSRF at info@csrf-southsudan.org.

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 are not yet finalised; and Akoka County is not yet reflected in UN maps although it was created in 2010);
  - **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);
  - **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 based on projections. However, large scale returns to South Sudan following independence (2011) and displacement resulting from the civil war (2013-) have complicated projections. The figures presented in the county profiles derive from projections published by the
National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) in April 2015. In many instances, there are large discrepancies between these figures and projections included in the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) published in November 2019. Furthermore, there are some discrepancies within the population projections and calculations of People in Need (PIN) included in the HNO. For these reasons, imputed figures for the percentage of PIN included in the profiles should be interpreted with caution and are provided in the absence of more reliable statistical information.

- **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. Three 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.
  - **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 SPLA and SSPDF have been used interchangeably, however effort was made to ensure that SSPDF is used to refer to the military after the name-change took effect in August 2017.

- **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:


- **Roads**: Logistics Cluster (2019) Roads Access Maps from February 2019 and November 2019. These were chosen to reflect the end of the wet and dry season respectively. Available [here](#) and [here](#).\(^1\)


\(^1\) These were also complemented with the OCHA maps and through inputs from key informants.
Example screenshots of the county profiles