



# The Impact of Climate Change on UN Peace Operations: Lessons from UNMISS

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Boutros-Ghali Observatory seminar on integrating environmental issues into peacekeeping operations

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## Outline

1. South Sudan's climatic realities
2. Operational impacts on UNMISS & Mandate Implementation
3. UNMISS Response: Climate, Peace and Security Team
4. Added Value and Impact of the CPS Approach
5. Lessons Learned and Strategic Outlook
6. Conclusion: Key takeaways and recommendations

# **1. South Sudan's climatic realities**

- The situation in South Sudan remains dire as climate shocks continue to be intense and widespread.
- This gets worse due to the El Nino with more floods, drought and heatwaves severely impacting highly vulnerable communities.
- It is estimated that there are 1.9 million IDPs in South Sudan as of February 2025 due to conflict, and 2.9 million returnees.
- According to the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for South Sudan, **7.7 Million people (57%)** are experiencing high levels of acute food insecurity (IPC3) (between April-July 2025), and **2.3 Million** are children.

**Country  
overview on  
climate,  
Peace &  
Security**

# Contrasting Hydrological expressions concurrently





- There is widespread crop failure and loss of entire cropping season due to climate impacts, increasing food insecurity resulting in conflict and criminality.
- The shifts in the rainy season patterns continue to disorient onset of seasonal cattle migration and late return migration, coinciding with farming periods and causing conflicts.
- Pastoralists displaced by floods cannot return to their places of origin, while Sudanese herders cannot return because of the ongoing conflict.
- These protracted displacements are causing violent conflicts over access to pasture and waterpoints with host communities, resulting in an upsurge in IDP numbers.

## Country overview on climate, Peace & Security

# Implications on Livelihood Systems



**TOTAL CROP FAILURE IN BOTH CASES**



An aerial photograph showing a significant area of flooding. A wide, straight, reddish-brown dirt road runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the top center. To the left of the road, there is a small village with several buildings, including a larger one with a corrugated metal roof, and many smaller huts. The surrounding land is green with trees and vegetation. To the right of the road, a large body of dark blue water has inundated the landscape, covering what was likely farmland or grazing pasture. The water is dotted with numerous small, green, lily-like plants. The overall scene depicts the impact of flooding on rural infrastructure and land use.

Farmlands and grazing pastures are affected by flooding





Flooding  
constitutes a  
major risk to  
nomadic  
practices





There is long residual effects of climate impacts e.g., post flooding



## 2. Operational impacts on UNMISS & Mandate Implementation



# Direct Operational Challenges for UNMISS

## Restricted Mobility and Patrol Disruptions

- Flooded roads and impassable terrain limit access to conflict-affected communities.
- Suspension of patrols for weeks/months reduces mission visibility and reach.

## Logistical Strain and Increased Costs

- Heavy reliance on helicopters and air assets raises costs and delays movement.
- Difficulties in troop rotations, engineering deployments, and resupply missions.

## Base Infrastructure and Site Vulnerability

- Mission bases and POC sites face recurring flood threats (e.g., Bentiu, Bor).
- Resources diverted to emergency infrastructure protection (e.g., dike construction)



Conducting regular patrols is compromised





Securing the runway of the airport - Evacuation





Pumping water out of the  
flooded military camp



# Impact on Protection of Civilians (PoC) Mandate

## Reduced Field Presence in High-Risk Areas

- Limited patrols reduce physical protection for civilians during crisis periods.
- Delayed response to early warning signs of violence or displacement.

## Increased Displacement and Strain on PoC Sites

- Climate-induced displacement from floods and droughts increases pressure on PoC sites and surrounding areas, straining shelter, water, and sanitation infrastructure and increasing internal security risks.

## Challenges in Reaching Vulnerable Populations

- Harsh environmental conditions limit UNMISS's ability to reach and protect civilians in remote or newly affected areas, increasing their exposure to violence and exploitation.

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- Safeguarding critical infrastructure



The Force Commander and his team



# Humanitarian Aid Delivery Complications

## Disrupted Access for Humanitarian Partners

- Flooded terrain and damaged infrastructure impede coordination and joint operations with humanitarian actors, delaying life-saving assistance.

## Interrupted Relief and Evacuation Efforts

- Difficulties in delivering food, medical supplies, and evacuating civilians from isolated or flooded areas compromise the humanitarian response and mission credibility.

## Challenges in Reaching Vulnerable Populations

- Harsh environmental conditions limit UNMISS's ability to reach and protect civilians in remote or newly affected areas, increasing their exposure to violence and exploitation.



Delivering humanitarian supplies with trucks is impractical





Humanitarian Services - Efforts for food delivery to communities trapped in their homes

# Impact on Peacekeeping and Community Engagement

## Heightened Inter-communal Conflict

- Competition over grazing land, water, and fertile soil intensifies due to resource scarcity, fueling intercommunal clashes that require frequent UNMISS intervention, patrols, and support to local mediation.

## Emergence of New Conflict Hotspots

- Displaced communities relocating into new or contested territories create fresh tensions with host populations. UNMISS is increasingly called upon to prevent, de-escalate, or mediate these localized conflicts.

## Interrupted Dialogue and Reconciliation Processes

- Climatic shocks often force postponement or cancellation of field-based engagements and dialogue forums, disrupting efforts to build trust and address grievances at the community level.



### 3. UNMISS Response: Climate, Peace and Security (CPS) Team

# UNMISS Mandate: Resolution 2779 – Adopted by the Security Council at its 9913<sup>th</sup> meeting on 8 May 2025

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**Preamble:** *“recognizing the adverse effects of climate change, ecological changes, land degradation, food insecurity, and natural disasters, among other factors, on humanitarian and stability in South Sudan”.*

**Mandate:** 3(vi)(b)(i) creating the conditions conducive to the delivery of **humanitarian assistance**: among others ...*“including by providing gender-sensitive risks assessments on the adverse effects of climate change, recognizing that flooding, drought, and other environmental changes affect men, women, boys and girls differently”.*

**Reporting:** 23. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on implementation of the UNMISS mandate and the obstructions UNMISS encounters in doing so in a comprehensive written report to be *submitted* within **90 days**.....

*“**Analysis of risks** associated with **climate change** that may adversely impact **peace** and **security** in South Sudan, and implementation of the UNMISS mandate”.*

UN  
Security  
Council -  
Directive  
s  
For CPS



- Integrated Climate Security Risk Analysis
- Data Collection & Mapping
- Early Warning Systems
- Contextual Briefings & Capacity Building
- Enabling Cross-Pillar Integration
  - Embeds CPS into protection of civilians, humanitarian coordination, and peacekeeping operations.
- Supports Strategic Partnerships
  - Works with UNCT, government (e.g., Relief and Rehabilitation Commission), and regional actors on flood response, displacement, and natural resource-related tensions.

**How the CPS  
Team  
Increases  
Understanding**

# Distribution of high grounds across the States

States	High grounds in Counties	High grounds in Payams
Central Equatoria	5	21
Eastern Equatoria	8	11
Jonglei	7	41
Lakes	8	31
Northern Bahr el Ghazal	5	13
Pibor	6	12
Unity & Ruweng AA	7	53
Upper Nile	8	37
Warrap	6	13
Western Bahr el Ghazal	0	0
Western Equatoria	4	11
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>243</b>





The Military is stretched to the limit



Construction of dykes



## 4. Added Value and Impact of the CPS Approach



Informed and  
Anticipatory Deployment  
Decisions



Emerging Partnership  
with Force on Climate-  
Sensitive Operations



Collaboration with  
UNPOL Anti-Cattle  
Raiding Unit



Strengthened Community  
Engagement through CAD



Enhanced Inter-Agency  
Coordination



Integrated Planning and  
Reporting Mission-Wide

**Added Value  
and Impact of  
the CPS  
Approach**



## 5. Key Lessons and Strategic Outlook

- Climate is a conflict risk multiplier and operational constraint
  - Must be systematically integrated into peacekeeping analysis and planning.
- Multidisciplinary teams like CPS add operational and strategic value
  - Field-informed, cross-pillar work improves mission foresight and responsiveness.
- Collaboration is critical for impact
  - Stronger partnerships across Force, UNPOL, CAD, and external actors enable preventive action.
- Early warning must include climate indicators
  - Seasonal forecasts and environmental data should inform patrols, engagement, and risk mitigation.
- CPS needs to be institutionalized
  - Beyond ad hoc initiatives: integrate into mandates, reporting frameworks, and planning cycles.

**How the CPS  
Team  
Increases  
Understanding**



## 6. Conclusion and Key Takeaways

# Key Takeaways

**Climate change is reshaping the operational landscape of peacekeeping.**

It affects mobility, mandate delivery, protection efforts, and community stability.

**UNMISS is responding through innovation and integration.**

The CPS team supports early warning, planning, and cross-component coordination.

**Effective climate security responses require mission-wide collaboration.**

All mission components (Force, UNPOL, Civilians) and external partners each play a role in managing risk.

**Institutionalizing CPS is essential for future peacekeeping effectiveness.**

Systematic climate integration in mandates, reporting, and resource planning is critical.



# Activities of the Military engineering corps



**Thank You**