

STRUCTURED SUMMARY

ENHANCING PASTORAL ADAPTATION STRATEGIES IN WAU AND JUR RIVER COUNTIES, SOUTH SUDAN

Resilience to recurrent climate, economic and social shocks and crises

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Motivation

Communities in Wau and Jur River Counties in Western Bahr el Ghazal State, South Sudan face escalating droughts, conflict and economic shocks that repeatedly erode livelihoods. Understanding how households adapt amid overlapping crises is vital to designing effective, locally grounded policies that strengthen resilience and long-term recovery.

Purpose

We examined how social groups, differing by gender, wealth and status, respond to shocks in Wau and Jur River Counties. We sought to: document adaptation; assess the effectiveness of local coping; and generate evidence-based insights to inform interventions that strengthen community resilience and inclusive development planning.

Approach and methods

Between March and April 2024, we held key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) with men, women and youth across Wau and Jur River Counties to capture diverse experiences and perceptions of adaptation. Data were thematically analysed to identify the communities' coping strategies, how these differed by gender, and their context-specific resilience strategies.

Findings

Communities are diversifying beyond traditional farming and livestock keeping, adopting new livelihoods such as beauty salons, tea selling, restaurants and small trade to survive economic and climate shocks. While drought and conflict continue to disrupt production and provoke land disputes, livelihood flexibility is key to resilience. Gender roles are shifting as women enter income-generating activities and providing financially for the family. Women are engaged in income-generating activities such as trade, operating cafes, or vegetable production and sales. Communities' use of local peace frameworks like the Marial Bayi Agreement help manage tensions but face political constraints. Resilience depends on promoting climate-smart practices, inclusive economic diversification and peace-building interventions coordinated between local authorities, community leaders and national and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Policy implications

- Policies should strengthen climate adaptation and conflict resolution while promoting diversified and gender-inclusive livelihoods.
- Government and partners must establish seasonal weather and climate early warning systems that support climate-smart agricultural practices for crops and livestock.
- Increased use of frameworks like the Marial Bayi Agreement can reduce land and resource conflicts.
- Economic diversification through vocational training, business development and financial inclusion, especially for women and youth, is essential.
- Increased collaboration and communication between government, NGOs, community leaders and private sector actors to improve complementarity and integration of investments to enhance impact, prevent duplication and foster locally-driven resilience across South Sudan's vulnerable agro-pastoral communities.

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