

South Sudan: 'Fighting stop now' so millions can be spared from famine, say UN agency chiefs

24 May 2017 – Despite “appalling conditions” in South Sudan, it is not too late to save more people from dying, the head of the United Nations agriculture agency said today, joining the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)) chief in a call to all parties enmeshed in the country’s conflict to end the violence and work together to ensure access to food and other life-saving support.

José Graziano da Silva, head of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization ([FAO](#)) and WFP’s David Beasley made the call during a visit to the former Unity state, one of the areas in South Sudan worst hit by the current hunger crisis.

“We can still avoid a worsening of the disaster, but the fighting has to stop now,” Mr. Graziano da Silva said. “There can be no progress without peace. People must be given immediate access to food, and farmers need to be allowed to work on their fields and tend to their livestock,” he added.

Around 5.5 million people in South Sudan, or almost half the population, face severe hunger ahead of the lean season, which peaks in July. Of these, more than 90,000 face starvation with famine declared in parts of former Unity state while another one million teeter on the brink. The UN stresses that this unprecedented situation reflects the impact of ongoing strife, obstacles to delivering humanitarian assistance and declining agricultural production.

Both UN officials stressed that an immediate, massive response is critical, combining emergency food assistance and support for agriculture, livestock and fisheries.

‘The fighting must end’ so investment in children can begin, WFP’s Beasley

In the former Unity state, they visited people coping with the hunger crisis with the support of both agencies and met with people facing famine on Kok Island, a refuge in the Nile River where many people have sought shelter from fighting.

The two agency heads saw aid workers from international and local partner organizations distributing WFP food and nutrition treatments, as well as seeds and FAO fishing kits.

“Food, treatment for malnourished kids, kits that help people fish and grow vegetables – these are the difference between life and death for people we met in Unity state,” Mr. Beasley said. “But we can’t keep scaling up forever. The fighting has to end to make the kind of investments that give the children of South Sudan any hope for the future they deserve.”

'Saving livelihoods saves lives,' says FAO's Graziano da Silva

The two UN agency heads visited an FAO project aiming to provide women farmers and pastoralists with a place to process milk. With rising malnutrition levels across the country, the project is an innovative way to increase the availability of safe, quality milk and milk products – a major dietary staple and a source of protein vitamins and minerals, essential components for a healthy diet.

Mr. Graziano da Silva highlighted that saving livelihoods also saves lives, saying “South Sudan has great potential – it has land, water and courageous people. If it also has peace, then together we can work to end hunger.”

Both agency heads underscored the need for further international support to confront a \$182 million funding gap over the next six months.

Mr. Beasley assured that while WFP would continue to stand by the South Sudanese, its leaders “must show good faith by facilitating humanitarian efforts, including getting rid of unnecessary fees and procedures that delay and hinder aid.”