

Without scaled-up humanitarian assistance 'more and more people' at risk in South Sudan

More funds are urgently needed to scale-up humanitarian assistance, particularly as some 50,000 people will face extreme food insecurity during the leans season, between May and July.

Already food insecure, Unity, Jonglei, Upper Nile and Lakes states risk famine if the overall situation deteriorates further and humanitarian assistance dries up.

"Unless we scale up humanitarian and recovery activities soon, more and more people will be at risk," said Simon Cammelbeeck, WFP's Acting Country Director in South Sudan.

Malnutrition levels are already critical and threaten to worsen, with some 860,000 children under age five severely malnourished.

"This is especially worrying as those most in need of assistance are malnourished women and children," Mr. Cammelbeeck lamented.

While the world's youngest nation has been mired in conflict for nearly all seven years of its existence, in early 2018 President Salva Kiir and his former Vice-President and his long-time political rival, Riek Machar, signed a peace accord, which has increased some access for UNICEF.

UNICEF has made "significant progress in treating severe malnutrition in children," with a recovery rate above 80 per cent, according to Andrea Suley, its ad interim Representative in South Sudan.

"Yet," she explained "our nutrition programme has a funding gap of 88 per cent," saying: "If funding is not timely secured, the children we know how to save may not make it."

The UN agencies have conducted relief operations since the conflict erupted in late 2013, including mobile teams travelling, usually by helicopter, to reach people in isolated areas.

"Sustained humanitarian support is required to address the immediate food assistance needs," said UN Humanitarian Coordinator in South Sudan Alain Noudehou, adding that it is also "critical to support resilience