South Sudan

Country Overview

Politics

South Sudan is a democratic republic of Central Africa. President Salva Kiir Mayardit was elected as South Sudan’s first president shortly after the country’s independence following its secession from Sudan in 2011. The country has two vice presidents, Taban Deng Gai, and the second vice president, James Wani Igga, who were both elected in 2016. Elections are supposed to occur every four years, but were postponed from 2015 to 2018 due to instability and violence across the country.¹

Economy

South Sudan is classified by the World Bank as a low income economy.² According the World Bank, South Sudan’s GDP contracted by 6.3 percent between 2015 and 2016 due to the current conflict.³ South Sudan’s GDP was the largest in 2011, at USD 17.8 million.⁴ South Sudan is the most oil dependent country in the world. Oil accounts for almost all the country’s exports and 60 percent of the country’s GDP. Export revenue from oil decreased due to both declining oil prices and low domestic production. Because of this, the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) is experiencing hyperinflation. Most of the country’s other natural resources remain untapped. Despite the country’s large oil reserves, 85 percent of the working population is engaged in non-wage work such as agriculture.⁵

Threats to South Sudan’s economy include underdeveloped infrastructure, debt from considerable military spending, revenue shortfalls due to decreased oil prices and productions, hyperinflation, lack of economic diversification, and reliance on foreign aid.⁶

Social/Human Development

There are a number of ethnic groups in South Sudan, including the Dinka people, who make up 35.8 percent of the population. The Nuer ethnic group is the second largest, at 15.1 percent of the population. The Shilluk, Azande, Bari, Kakwa, Kuku, Murle, Mandari, Didinga, Ndogo, Bviri, Lndi, Anuak, Bono, Lango, Dugotona, Acholi, Baka, and Fertit make up the rest of the population. The country’s official language is English, but Juba and Sudanese varieties of Arabic are widely spoken, as well as indigenous languages such as Dinka, Nuer, Bari, Zande, and Shilluk.⁷
The South Sudanese population is growing, according to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), 65 percent of the population is under the age of 25. Despite this, educational attainment is poor, with only 27 percent of men above the age of 15 literate, and only 16 percent of women in the same demographic are literate.

Poverty levels have increased since South Sudanese independence. The incidence of poverty in 2011 sat at 44.7 percent, and at 65.9 percent in 2015. This has also corresponded with an increase in depth of poverty. South Sudan’s GDP per capita was USD 1,700 in 2016, ranking 212 out of 230 globally. South Sudan’s Human Development Index score for 2016 was .418, ranking 181 out of 188 countries.


U.S. Department of State TIP Ranking: Tier 3

According to the U.S. Department of State 2017 Trafficking in Persons Report, there is trafficking or trafficking vulnerability in construction. Although not specified in the report, some of this construction may be associated with mineral fuels – the largest export sector. Children are vulnerable to trafficking in construction, rock breaking, and brick making.

Read the full TIP Report at: https://www.state.gov/j/tip/rls/tiprpt/countries/2017/271282.htm

Migrant and Other Vulnerable Populations

Since 2013, more than 900,000 South Sudanese have left the country due to violent conflict. The most common destination countries for migrants from South Sudan are Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, the United Arab Emirates, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. An estimated 270,000 South Sudanese nationals are living in Uganda’s Bidi Bidi refugee camp as of 2017.

The top sending countries for migrants to South Sudan are Sudan, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, and Kenya.

There were an estimated 2.87 million persons of concern in South Sudan in 2016, including over 262,000 refugees and over 1.8 million internally displaced persons.
Migrants to South Sudan

- Sudan: 552,391
- Uganda: 140,607
- Democratic Republic of the Congo: 82,755
- Ethiopia: 12,786
- Kenya: 9,558
Exports and Trade

South Sudan’s top export in 2016 was mineral fuel by a large margin, followed by commodities not elsewhere specified, oils and oleaginous fruit, wood and articles of wood, machinery and mechanical appliances, coffee, electrical machinery, printed book, articles of jewelry, and animal or vegetable fats.¹⁸

Top Commodity Exports (USD/Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mineral fuels</th>
<th>1,455,878</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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¹⁸
The top importers of all goods from South Sudan include China, the United States, the Netherlands, Japan, and Germany.¹⁹
Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors Analysis

Legal/Policy Risk Factors

Level of Legal Protection for Civil Liberties and Workers’ Rights

Freedom of Association

The South Sudanese transitional constitution provides the right of workers to organize, but the U.S. Department of State has reported that the government does not respect these rights. In 2016, the South Sudanese president signed a bill into law that places severe restrictions on civil society organizations ability to engage with the public, and created tedious registration requirements and heavy fines for non-compliance.  

Working Conditions

South Sudan has no laws to stipulate a national minimum wage. There is a Civil Service Provision Order that outlines the rights and obligations of public sector worker, and give the Ministry of Labor, Public Service, and Human Resources the ability to set the schedule of salary rates. Only unskilled workers are legally required to receive overtime pay after working more than 40 hours a week. There is no standard workweek for private sector employees. There are no laws to dictate what working conditions are considered to be acceptable. The Ministry of Justice reported receiving no labor violation cases in 2015.

Discrimination

The law does not prohibit discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, religion, political opinion, national origin or citizenship, social origin, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, language, or HIV-positive status. The U.S Department of State has reported that discrimination has occurred on all of the listed characteristics. Members of the Murle ethnic group, as well as women, have experienced notable discrimination in employment.

Forced Labor

The law does not prohibit all forms of forced labor, and the government reportedly does not effectively enforce laws relating to forced labor.
Child Labor

The law sets the minimum age for employment at 14 years generally, but at 15 years for “strenuous work,” and 12 for “light work.” Strenuous work includes mining, working in factories, night shift work, and employment in prisons and the military. The U.S Department of State has reported that penalties for violating child labor laws are not a sufficient deterrence to violations and that the government does not enforce child labor laws.24

Civil Society Organizations

The U.S. Department of State has reported that human rights groups and NGOs are provided significant rights and access from some branches of government but not others. NGOs have reported “increased entry of government representatives without judicial authorization into their properties,” and that these officials have “often confiscated personal documents and equipment.”25 Freedom House reports that two laws implemented in 2016, the Non-Governmental Organizations Act and the Relief and Rehabilitation Act, give the government further justification to intimidate civil society organizations and activists.26

Ratification of ILO Conventions Related to Human Trafficking or Rights of Workers and Migrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conventions</th>
<th>Status</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ILO 29 Forced Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 87 Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 98 Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 100 Equal Remuneration</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 105 Abolition of Forced Labor</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 111 Discrimination</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 138 Minimum Age</td>
<td>In force</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 181 Private Employment Agencies</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 182 Worst Forms of Child Labor</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ILO 97 Migration for Employment</td>
<td>Not ratified</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Political Risk Factors

Political Instability or Conflict

South Sudan scores a 113.9 in the 2017 Fragile State Index, making it the most fragile state in the 2017 index.28

Millions have been killed and tens of thousands have been displaced by conflict since 2013. The civil war stems from a political struggle between President Kiir, who is backed by members of the Dinka ethnic group, and former Vice President Riek Machar, who is supported by members of the Nuer ethnic group. A peace agreement was signed in 2015 but violence has continued. Parties to the conflict have committed grave human rights violations and violence against civilians.29 According to the Council on Foreign Relations, “armed groups have targeted civilians along ethnic lines, committed rape and sexual violence, destroyed property and looted villages and recruited children into their ranks.”30 The conflict has also caused food shortages that have been exacerbated by drought, causing a severe food crisis.31

Level of Crime and Violence

The U.S. Department of State has reported that crime in South Sudan’s capital, Juba, is critical.32 The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reported a homicide rate of 13.9 homicides per 100,000 people, higher than the African average.33

Level of Corruption

The Transparency International Corruption Perception Index scores South Sudan as a 11 out of 100, where a 0 signals “Highly Corrupt” and a 100 signals “Very Clean.” South Sudan is ranked 175 out of 176 on that index.34 The U.S. Department of State has reported that corruption is endemic in all branches of government.35 Freedom House reports that corruption is extremely common with regard to the oil industry and government officials. In 2016, the UN reported the former South Sudanese Minister of Petroleum and Mining had used funds from the national oil company to supply the military and armed ethnic militias.36

Socio-Economic Risk Factors

Level of National Economic Development

South Sudan is scored in the low human development category, according to the UN Human Development Index, with a rank of 181 out of 188 and a score of .418. South Sudan’s Human Development Score is lower than all of its neighbors but the Central African Republic.37
Level and Extent of Poverty

South Sudan has a high level of poverty with 69.6 percent of the population living in multidimensional poverty, according to the UN. The UN did not provide an inequality adjusted Human Development Index score for South Sudan in 2017.38 South Sudan’s gross national income (GNI) per capita was USD 820 in 2015, a 19 percent decrease from the country’s 2014 GNI per capita of USD 1,010, and an even greater decrease from the country’s 2010 GNI per capita of USD 1,060.39

Degree of Gender Inequality

The UNDP Gender Inequality Index did not score South Sudan in 2015, nor did the World Economic Forum’s Global Gender Gap Report. The maternal mortality rate in 2015 was 789 deaths per 100,000 live births. For 2017, this number is 2,054 per 100,000 live births.40 The adolescent birth rate (births by women between the ages of 15 and 19) is 69.5 per 1,000 women. Women hold 24.3 percent of seats in parliament.41

The transitional constitution provides for gender equality, but widespread societal discrimination, as well as pervasive gender-based violence limited practical implementation.42 The transitional constitution provides women with the right to own property, but this right may not be respected in traditional justice systems. Rape and sexual harassment are both illegal, but the law is reportedly rarely enforced. Access to information and tools regarding reproductive health is extremely limited, both due to societal stigma and low female literacy rates. The U.S. Department of State has reported that women experience discrimination in employment, pay, credit, education, inheritance, housing, and ownership and management of businesses or land.43

Only 39 percent of primary school students and 32 percent of secondary school students are girls. Girls often face the threat of gender based violence at school.44

Landlessness and Dispossession

The UN High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reports that there are 2.87 million reported refugees, IDP’s, and returnees in South Sudan in 2016.45 Conflict in South Sudan has forced many to flee their land due to safety concerns.46

Environmental Factors

According to the World Health Organization, 40 percent of the population of South Sudan is severely food insecure due in part to an extremely damaging drought.47 In February of 2017, the U.N. declared a famine in two parts of the country.48
Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Key Commodity Supply Chains

Mineral Fuels

Mineral Fuels Overview

Oil accounts for nearly all of the nation’s revenues. Although oil production is located in South Sudan, the pipelines run north and Sudan controls most of the infrastructure for export.49

Documented Trafficking in Persons Risk Factors in Mineral Fuels

Parties to the conflict have focused on taking control of oil fields and oil producing regions.50 A UN panel of experts noted that the conflict has become a “multi-faceted war where allegiances shift rapidly,” in part due to “access to resources.”51 The large-scale displacement – over two million people in total – caused by the conflict creates a risk for trafficking. The conflict has also been linked to trafficking and forced recruitment of child soldiers by both government and rebel forces.52 UNICEF has estimated that between 15,000 to 16,000 children have been exploited by the parties to the conflict. According to Human Rights Watch, child soldiers in the Sudanese conflict are starved, denied an education, traumatized and killed.53 UNICEF reported in 2016 that recruitment of child soldiers had been intensifying.54

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Endnotes