

SOUTHERN SUDAN

A referendum on independence is a watershed moment for Southern Sudan and Africa. With over 20 years of experience in the region, the International Rescue Committee aids over half a million southern Sudanese while helping them to prepare for the future.

Background

On January 9, 2011, Southern Sudan is due to hold a referendum in which its people will decide whether to remain part of a united Sudan—Africa's largest nation—or to secede and become the world's newest independent country. Whatever the outcome, Southern Sudan faces major long-term challenges.

After decades of civil war and neglect, Southern Sudan is one of the poorest and least developed places on earth. Since the signing of the 2005 peace agreement—bringing an end to one of Africa's longest running wars, which claimed more than

2 million lives—Southern Sudan has had to rebuild from scratch.

Millions of Southern Sudanese are dependent on food aid, maternal mortality rates are among the worst in the world and one child in seven dies before the age of five. Much of the region's economic and social infrastructure was left in ruins. There are few functioning schools and hospitals.

Southern Sudan will continue to need the support and assistance of the international community for many years to come.

How the IRC helps

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been one of the largest providers of aid in Southern Sudan for more than 20 years. The IRC aids communities devastated by war with emergency relief and reconstruction assistance and with programs focusing on health care, education, rights and reintegration, and ways to reduce violence against women. The IRC also helps local communities develop the ability to support and sustain themselves.

The IRC works in six Southern Sudanese states: Central Equatoria, Eastern Equatoria, Western Equatoria, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity and Lakes.

In Southern Sudan, maternal mortality rates are among the worst in the world and one child in seven dies before the age of five.



Photo by Christopher Scott/The IRC.

How the IRC helps



Photos by Christopher Scott/The IRC, Sophia Mwangi/The IRC

The IRC is working with the government to improve the education system. Community health providers, trained by the IRC, treat common childhood diseases in their own villages.

What we're doing in Sudan

Health Care

- ▶ Most Southern Sudanese have little or no access to basic health care. The IRC supports the Ministry of Health by running 54 primary health care facilities. These clinics offer basic services to address the diseases that are common in Southern Sudan.
- ▶ Maternal mortality rates in Southern Sudan are among the highest in the world. The IRC promotes "safe motherhood" among pregnant women and new mothers by providing prenatal and postpartum care and training in safe delivery. Couples can also receive family planning counseling.
- ▶ The IRC is training a network of home-based community health providers who can identify and treat the three leading killer diseases of children under 5 years of age: malaria, pneumonia and diarrhea. So far, 1,714 people have received the training.

Women and Girls

- ▶ Decades of war have left a legacy of violence, especially against women and girls. The IRC helps raise awareness of the causes and consequences of violence by supporting community groups where women can speak out through songs, drama and radio programs. The IRC also supports literacy classes for women and provides psychosocial, medical and legal support to survivors of violence.

Rights and Reintegration

- ▶ Following the 2005 peace accord, more than 2 million uprooted people returned to Southern Sudan. To help them rebuild their lives, the IRC offers counseling, job training and education. The IRC advises returnees on their rights and responsibilities as citizens and trains community leaders and government officials on the importance of upholding human rights, especially those of returnees.

Education

- ▶ War has devastated Southern Sudan's educational system. The literacy rate overall stands at 24 percent but only 12 percent for women. A 15-year-old girl has a greater chance of dying in childbirth than completing her education. In Northern Bahr el Ghazal, which hosts a large number of returnees but has few schools, the IRC is working with the Ministry of Education to construct classrooms, train teachers and develop and improve educational policy and administration.

The Referendum and After

- ▶ The IRC is prepared to respond rapidly to any emergencies that might arise during and after the January referendum and has developed plans to ensure that its programs will continue to provide services to the people of Southern Sudan.
- ▶ The IRC is extending its health services to care for an expected influx of people returning from the north to Southern Sudan.
- ▶ The IRC has stockpiled medical and basic humanitarian supplies that will ensure that its teams can assist people in need as quickly as possible.
- ▶ In the event of an influx of refugees from Southern Sudan, IRC teams in neighboring Kenya, Ethiopia and Uganda are prepared to provide water, sanitation and hygiene, and services for women and children.
- ▶ The IRC's global Emergency Response Team is on standby to assist. Its members are trained and experienced specialists in responding to humanitarian emergencies.

The International Rescue Committee responds to the world's worst crises and helps people to survive and rebuild their lives. Founded in 1933 at the request of Albert Einstein, the IRC offers lifesaving care and life-changing assistance to individuals uprooted by war or disaster. At work today in over 40 countries and 22 U.S. cities, the IRC restores safety, dignity and hope to millions who are struggling to endure. The IRC leads the way from harm to home.