



## Quarterly Report (October 2021- December 2021)

### 1. Project Overview

<b>Project Name</b>	Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency Program in South Sudan (SAFER)
<b>Implementation /Funding Mechanism (Cooperative Agreement/ Contract /Grant)</b>	Grant
<b>Activity Start/ End Date</b>	4 August 2021 to 3 August 2022
<b>Name of Prime Implementing Partner</b>	The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
<b>Name of Implementing Sub-Partner</b>	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), Peace Corps Organization (PCO)
<b>Contract/Agreement Number</b>	Grant NO. AID-668-IO-17-00001
<b>Geographical Location</b>	The Republic of South Sudan
<b>Prepared for USAID/South Sudan, Juba C/O American Embassy, Kololo Road</b>	Dr. Takele Tassew/ Lemi Lokosang
<b>Reporting period</b>	1 October 2021 to 31 December 2021
<b>Financial Expenditure for the Reporting Period</b>	TO BE SENT SEPARATELY AS AGREED
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## **2. Executive Summary**

### **a) Key achievements in this reporting period**

#### **Staffing:**

- No staffing changes were made in this reporting period.

#### **Contracts and Letters of Agreement (LoAs):**

- The LoAs for SAFER I were closed and final payments were completed to the now-former implementing partners (IPs).

#### **Assessments:**

- The End-Line Assessment for SAFER I and the Baseline Assessment for SAFER II was conducted in the reporting period and the final reports will be shared in the next quarter.
- The Market and Water Demand Assessments were conducted in the reporting period and the final reports will be shared in the next quarter.

#### **Trainings:**

- In November 2021, a Training of Trainers (ToT) was conducted by FAO technical staff with 12 staff from new SAFER IP, PCO, and two new FAO field office staff in Wau (a total of 10 male, 4 female). The training was designed to disseminate FAO expertise in Good Agricultural Practices (GAP), such as composting, row planting, micro-irrigation, Integrated Pest Management (IPM), bed preparation, optimizing post-harvest practices to prevent loss, and business development skills.
- In Western Bahr el Ghazal (WBeG), 22 lead farmers/community facilitators (16 male, 6 female) and in Eastern Equatoria (EE), 15 lead farmers/community facilitators (12 male, 3 female) were trained on GAP.
- All 51 groups in the five new project areas (21 in Wau and Jur River Counties, WBeG, 20 in Duk and Uror Counties, Jonglei, and 10 in Kapoeta North County, EE) were trained on GAP.
- Ten groups in Jonglei State (120 male, 180 female) and 11 groups in WBeG State (158 male, 172 female) were trained on dry season vegetable production and irrigation techniques.
- In both Jonglei and WBeG States, 25 enterprise groups developed business plans which outline the groups' leadership structure, financial/savings and marketing plans.

#### **Input delivery:**

- In WBeG, vegetable seed kits comprised of onions, cabbage, and green pepper seeds, were distributed to all 11 groups (5 in Wau, 6 in Jur River).

### **b) Key lessons learned, challenges encountered in this quarter, recommendations, and windows of opportunities**

#### **Key lessons learned:**

#### **Challenges in this reporting period:**

- The COVID-19 resurgence in South Sudan, as around the globe, presented further challenges as government restrictions, supply chain delays, and widespread sickness continued. Despite the challenge, the SAFER IPs and field offices have performed admirably during this time, making sure trainings are done safely and within the planned time frames.
- Severe flooding in Jonglei has displaced beneficiaries and intensified food insecurity in the region. FAO continues to monitor and assess the situation and mobilize emergency resources. For SAFER, flooding has caused issues with accessibility, but placing staff directly in difficult-to-reach counties, such as Duk and Uror, has helped the project continue as planned.
- Prolonged drought conditions in Kapoeta North intensified food insecurity among the community due to poor harvests at the end of the main season; SAFER farmers were among those affected. Due to the dire

nature of the situation, FAO connected these groups to World Food Programme (WFP) to ensure they received food rations to fill the gap in dietary needs left by the severe weather.

### Opportunities & Recommendations:

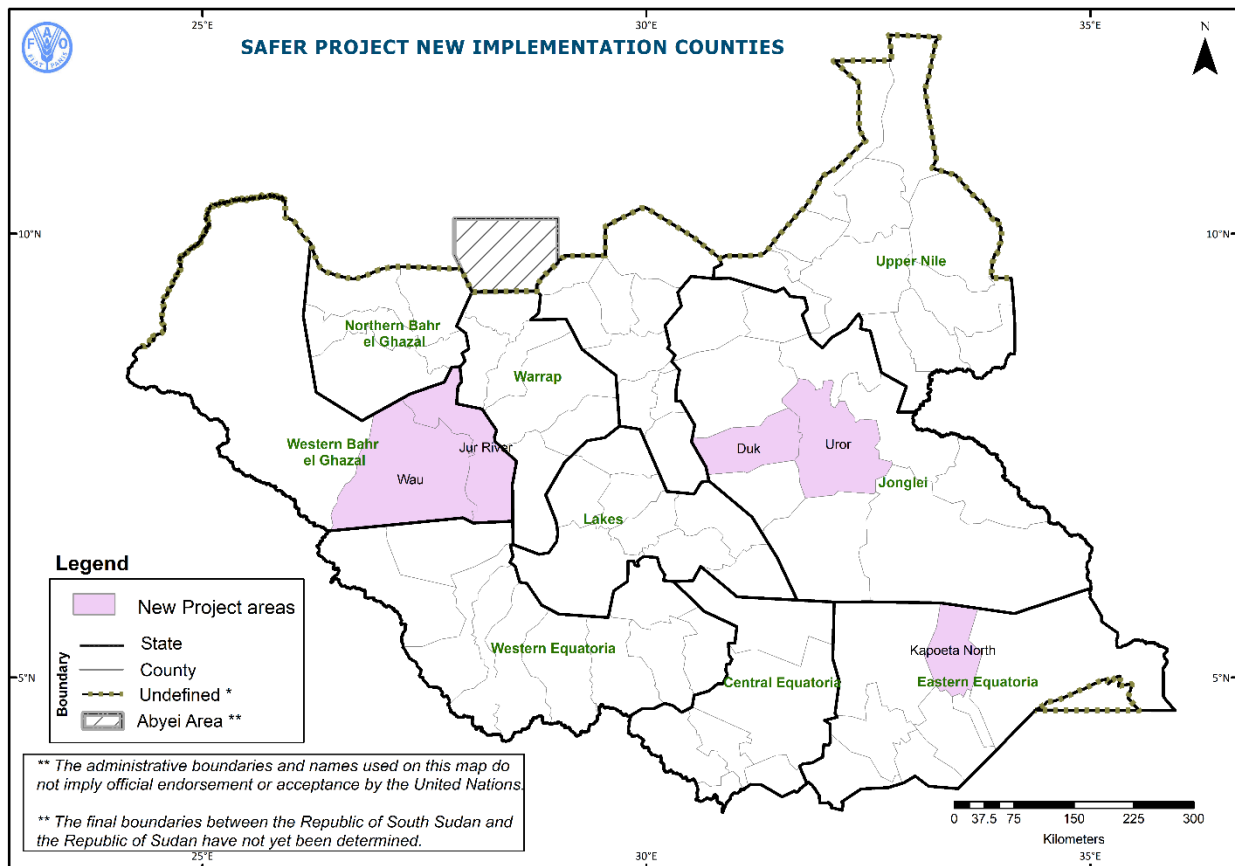
The inception phase of SAFER II has presented a number of opportunities for programming in counties that have been largely left out of livelihood development initiatives:

- In Jonglei and Western Bahr el Ghazal (WBeG) states, fisheries hold great interest and economic potential, however, there is a significant lack of infrastructure in place. This is not unique in the context of South Sudan, but it still stands to be said that there is opportunity to develop this value chain through the supply of fishing equipment and storage/refrigeration facilities.
- Throughout the five new project areas, there is a clear lack of technical knowledge on agricultural techniques. The majority of SAFER groups are receiving this knowledge for the first time. The recommendation is that care is taken to ensure such communities new to these activities are receiving proper technical expertise, and frequent formal and informal follow-ups. For example, the SAFER project conducted a ToT on GAP to the new IP in Wau to ensure this partner received the same expertise passed down from top researchers at FAO, all the way to the community level.

#### c) Qualitative and Quantitative results

As SAFER II is still in its first phase, results will start to come in the following quarters. The results of the Baseline, Market, and Water Demand Assessments will be shared when finalized.

#### d) Map of project implementation of SAFER II



### 3. Project description and introduction

#### a) Introduction and background

The Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency (SAFER) project is working to bridge the nexus in South Sudan between humanitarian and development programming through promoting sustainable livelihoods of

vulnerable households and populations. SAFER focuses on supporting livelihoods and building resilience and recovery by addressing household, community, and agriculture sector level vulnerabilities that lead to food and nutrition insecurity among resident communities, returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).

The project has three main pillars to address these challenges: (i) restoring and diversifying livelihoods, (ii) restoring and strengthening agricultural production practices and (iii) strengthening community and intercommunal resource sharing and management practices.

On 3 August 2021, the SAFER project effectively began a new phase, referred here to as SAFER II, in which the project shifted operations to five new areas; Duk and Uror Counties of Jonglei State, Kapoeta North County of Eastern Equatoria State (EES), and Wau and Jur River Counties of Western Bahr el Ghazal State (WBeG).

#### **b) Achievements in this reporting period (in-line with most recently revised work plan)**

During the reporting period, the project achieved several results, as outlined below:

#### **Output 1: Household and community livelihoods restored and diversified**

##### ***Sub-output 1.1: Production enterprises diversified***

##### ***Activity 1.1.1: Community-based participatory planning (CBPP) to identify enterprise choices in the different project locations***

In October 2021, the CBPP exercise was conducted in all five SAFER project counties to determine beneficiary groups to receive support, as well as viable local enterprises and value chains, and the challenges, and opportunities found in each community. Each meeting was led with FAO guidance on CBPP through FAOSS field staff and IP's where relevant, and attended by pertinent county and payam government, locally-active NGO staff, and community leaders (including women and youth group leaders). The information gathered through the CBPP exercises was then used to guide training and input needs.

- In Jonglei State, 25 beneficiaries (20 male, 5 female) in Duk County, and 25 beneficiaries (18 male, 7 female) in Uror County were identified through the CBPP exercise. Through the meetings, it was determined that fisheries, dry season vegetable and crop production, and Village Savings and Loans (VSL) were of the most interest and economic viability in the counties.
- In Wau and Jur River Counties of WBeG, 20 groups (ten in each county) were identified through the CBPP exercise, including five beekeeping groups, five fishing groups, and ten crop production groups.
- In Kapoeta North County of Eastern Equatoria State, ten groups were identified through the CBPP exercise, including three vegetable, five crop production, and two beekeeping groups.

##### ***Activity 1.1.2: Support enterprise groups in business plan development***

In both Jonglei and WBeG States, 25 enterprise groups developed business plans which outline the groups' leadership structure, financial/savings and marketing plans.

##### ***Activity 1.1.3: Support establishment and or strengthening of producer groups/agro-processing/grain marketing groups/cooperatives***

In WBeG, vegetable seed kits comprised of onion, cabbage, and green pepper seeds, were distributed to all 11 groups (5 in Wau, 6 in Jur River), totalling 330 households.

##### ***Activity 1.1.4: Procurement and distribution of inputs, tools and equipment for identified livelihood enterprises***

In the reporting period, all procurement orders were placed. While some inputs have already arrived in the Juba warehouse by the end of year, distribution is planned for the second phase of SAFER II.

##### ***Activity 1.1.5: Provide training on enterprise development and business skills***

Ten enterprise groups comprised of 300 beneficiaries (120 male, 180 female) in Uror and Duk counties are to receive training.

In November 2021, a ToT was conducted by FAO technical staff with 12 staff from new SAFER IP, PCO, and two new FAO field office staff in Wau (a total of 10 male, 4 female). The training was designed to disseminate FAO expertise in GAP and business development skills. The training was facilitated by FAO staff from the region, further adding to their understanding of the local context and challenges faced by SAFER farmers. It is also part of the continuing initiative by FAOSS to support South Sudanese national NGO's (such as PCO) in building capacity and expertise.

### ***Sub-output 1.2: Local value chain activities supported***

#### ***Activity 1.2.1: Facilitate training for small scale construction (improved seed granaries/storage facilities or agro-processing machinery sheds/housing)***

This activity is planned for the second phase of SAFER II once groups have been fully established and trained in GAP and business skill basics.

#### ***Activity 1.2.2: Procurement and distribution of post-harvest equipment, tools and inputs (milk, grain, nuts and vegetable, and fishery post-harvest machinery)***

In the reporting period, all procurement orders were placed, while some inputs have already arrived in the Juba warehouse by the end of year. Distribution is planned for the second phase of SAFER II.

#### ***Activity 1.2.3: Training of trainers for community technicians in installation, operation/use, and maintenance of agro-processing machines***

This reporting period was focused on the procurement of agro-processing machines and the identification of community technicians who will be trained in the next project phase. Community technicians were identified in all five project counties, along with the FAO and PCO technicians who will conduct the trainings.

#### ***Activity 1.2.4: Mobilize the groups for and assist the community facilitators in training groups/beneficiaries in use, maintenance and management of post-harvest technologies including food handling and hygiene***

As mentioned above, mobilization has begun for the community technicians and the groups who will be receiving the post-harvest technologies. Distribution is set to begin in January 2022.

### ***Sub-output 1.3: Market access improved***

#### ***Activity 1.3.1: Conduct market and situational assessments in each state to determine technical capacity, knowledge chains, and market status***

Market assessments were conducted in all five SAFER counties. Assessments will be shared in the next quarter.

#### ***Activity 1.3.2: Establish market linkages activities for various enterprises including seed and grain producers, vegetables, and fish products***

All ten groups in WBeG have established four Memorandum of Understanding (MOU's) between SAFER cooperatives and traders/vendors in honey and honey products, fish, cereals, and vegetables. The agreements were reached after a market linkage workshop held in Wau, with 21 cooperatives from the area participating. The workshop consisted of 63 participants (5 buyers, 58 sellers).

In Kapoeta North, representatives from two sorghum production and processing groups (1 male, 1 female) met with eight local traders and county extension staff to form linkages and discuss further marketing opportunities surrounding sorghum in the county.

#### ***Activity 1.3.3: Provide groups with intensive training in business skills, with specific focus on establishment, management and monitoring of savings schemes/repair and maintenance funds***

In Jonglei State, one crop production group (14 male, 16 female), two fishing groups (42 male, 18 female), five other enterprise groups (100 male, 50 female) were trained in entrepreneurship, financial management, and record keeping.

## **Output 2: Good agricultural production practices restored and strengthened**

### ***Sub-output 2.1: Sustainable crop production promoted***

***Activity 2.1.1: Provide technical assistance to farmers to adopt good agricultural practices through appropriate technology transfer modalities, technologies and practices (farmer field schools, demonstration plots, etc.) and provision of a customized input package***

Demonstration plots were established in all five project counties (4 in Kapoeta North, 6 in Wau and Jur River, and 10 in Duk and Urur Counties) which will support SAFER-trained lead farmers and groups in disseminating information to their surrounding communities on sustainable agricultural practices.

***Activity 2.1.2: Support the capacity building of identified community facilitators (lead farmers, village facilitators)***

Fourteen community facilitators/lead farmers (12 male, 2 female) in Kapoeta North County, and 22 lead farmers/facilitators (16 male, 6 female) in Wau and Jur River Counties were identified and registered.

***Activity 2.1.3: Provide technical training to facilitators on crop production techniques such as micro-irrigation, soil water management, integrated pest management, seed production, etc.***

The following were trained on GAP, such as composting, row planting, micro-irrigation, IPM, bed preparation, and optimizing post-harvest practices to prevent loss:

- 22 lead farmers/community facilitators (16 male, 6 female) in WBeG;
- 15 lead farmers/community facilitators (12 male, 3 female), in EE.

***Activity 2.1.4: Provide technical training to groups on crop production techniques such as micro-irrigation, soil water management, integrated pest management, seed production, etc.***

All 51 groups in the five project areas were trained on GAP. All groups, no matter their focal enterprise (fisheries, livestock, etc.) have and will receive support in agriculture to aid in the diversification of livelihood activities as well as ensuring more adequate food security and dietary diversification to their households.

***Activity 2.1.5: Support farmers in adopting improved and sustainable irrigation techniques for dry season vegetable production***

Ten groups in Jonglei State (120 male, 180 female) and 11 groups in WBeG State (158 male, 172 female) were trained on dry season vegetable production and irrigation techniques such as mulching to cover the soil and reduce water evaporation and increase soil health, as well as the sunken beds/basins used to retain moisture.

## **Output 3: Community and intercommunal resource sharing and management practices strengthened**

### ***Sub-output 3.2: Increased water access for livestock and farmers***

***Activity 3.2.1: Identify existing water sources and undertake a water demand assessment for livestock watering and vegetable production***

Water demand assessments were performed in each of the five project counties. The final reports are being finalized for January 2022. The initial results have already allowed project staff to begin formation of water management committees and hold discussions with communities on water source management and irrigation techniques, especially as the dry season begins in South Sudan.

***Activity 3.2.2: Support the establishment of water management committees (WMC) and provide training on water management techniques and conflict mitigation.***

This reporting period focused on the initial identification and assessment of water sources in SAFER target communities, and the establishment of at least half of the planned committees. The following was completed:

- Three WMCs were established in the three target payams in Kapoeta North County, consisting of a total of 15 members (6 male, 9 female);

- Eight WMCs were established in Wau and Jur River Counties consisting of a total of twenty members (9 male, 11 female).

#### **Challenges in this reporting period:**

- The COVID-19 resurgence in South Sudan, as around the globe, presented further challenges as government restrictions, supply chain delays, and widespread sickness continued. Despite the challenge, the SAFER IPs and field offices ensured trainings are done safely and within the planned time frames. Most trainings during this time were done outdoors, with smaller groups, practicing social distancing and handwashing.
- Severe flooding in Jonglei has displaced beneficiaries and intensified food insecurity in the region. FAO continues to monitor and assess the situation and mobilize emergency resources. For SAFER, flooding has caused issues with accessibility, but placing staff directly in difficult-to-reach counties, such as Duk and Uror, has helped the project continue as planned.
- Prolonged drought conditions in Kapoeta North intensified food insecurity among the community due to poor harvests at the end of the main season; SAFER farmers were among those affected. Due to the dire nature of the situation, FAO connected these groups to World Food Programme (WFP) to ensure they received food rations to fill the gap in dietary needs left by the severe weather.

#### **Opportunities and Recommendations:**

The inception phase of SAFER II has presented a number of opportunities for programming in counties that have been largely left out of livelihood development initiatives:

- In Jonglei and WBeG states, fisheries hold great interest and economic potential, however, there is a significant lack of infrastructure in place. This is not unique in the context of South Sudan, but it still stands to be said that there is opportunity to develop this value chain through the supply of fishing equipment and storage/refrigeration facilities.
- Throughout the five new project areas, there is a clear lack of technical knowledge on agricultural techniques. The majority of SAFER groups are receiving this knowledge for the first time. The recommendation is that care is taken to ensure such communities new to these activities are receiving proper technical expertise, and frequent formal and informal follow-ups. For example, the SAFER project conducted a ToT on GAP to the new IP in Wau to ensure this partner received the same expertise passed down from top researchers at FAO, all the way to the community level.

#### **4. Management and administrative issues**

##### **Staffing:**

- No staffing changes were made in this reporting period.

##### **Contracts and Letters of Agreement (LoAs):**

- The LoAs for SAFER I were closed and final payments were completed to the now-former IPs.

#### **5. Collaboration, Learning and Adapting (CLA)**

##### **Collaboration:**

###### *Who were involved?*

UN Agencies: WFP

Governmental: State Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Animal Resources, and Fisheries, State Ministry of Cooperatives and Rural Development, State Ministry of Health and Relief and Rehabilitation Commission

NGOs: PCO and NRC.

FAO has a large field presence as well as a network of vetted international and national NGOs that further expand its reach throughout the project area.

##### **Learning:**

###### *The result of collaboration:*

- Farmer groups increased their production and income;
- Nutritional security for vegetable growers improved;



- Attitudes have changed towards the viability of year-round growing in most areas as use of improved agricultural techniques have allowed SAFER farmers to continue activities through the dry season.
- Regular coordination at local level with the humanitarian organizations within the project areas through the Humanitarian Coordination Forum and the Food Security and Livelihood Cluster (FSL Cluster) helps to bridge humanitarian aid and the project interventions hence enable local communities/farmer households to re-engage in production relatively quickly;
- Regular liaison and good working relationship with the local authority, public extension institutions and the public sector created a good will for the project both amongst the local government functionaries and local communities as well as supported a relatively safe working environment for the project staff;
- Functional platforms, especially at the state or county level helps to bring all development partners/projects together to keep each other informed, avoid duplication and complement field work to the extent possible (the humanitarian Coordination Forum, Project Management meetings, and Natural Resource Management Committees meeting); and
- Socially inclusive and conflict sensitive community mobilization approach secured an impactful involvement of beneficiaries in project implementation and monitoring (CBPP and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)).

#### *What was learned?*

There is need to continue working in collaboration with different partners to improve community resilience as one sector cannot address all community problems and yet the issues they face in regards to their livelihoods are interrelated.

Knowledge sharing with government counterparts creates a conducive working environment and builds confidence in FAO programming in the region.

#### **Adaptation**

##### *What can be improved and how?*

- Further improving relationships and technical capacity of local governments with frequent meetings and updates on project development. The capacity of the local government could be enhanced by training and equipping with motorcycles, tablets for data collection, extension materials and extension assistance at every payam;
- Scaling up networking and widening the network coverage by liaising with more development organizations and exchange of knowledge in project areas. This will further improve program complementarity especially between emergency and development programming; and
- Field monitoring and establishing contact with beneficiaries during shift to direct implementation. This could be done by widening the network of the AAP system.

## **6. Conflict sensitivity**

FAO South Sudan continuously monitors conflict throughout the country. Implementing partners and FAO field offices in SAFER project areas continue to cite conflict and the subsequent lack of accessibility as the primary cause of delay in activity monitoring and input and training deliveries. In the last and current reporting periods, there has been an escalation of tensions, armed conflict and intercommunal violence (ICV).

Because of the fragility of security and peace across South Sudan, the project implementation has remained conflict sensitive as much as possible:

- a) Socially inclusive and conflict sensitive community mobilization approach was used to secure an impactful involvement of beneficiaries in project implementation and monitoring (CBPP approach);
- b) Consistency was maintained throughout the project implementation as conflict affected communities need awareness raising, training, and time to overcome mutual suspicion, fear, and distrust of each other, backed up by a robust, transparent, and quick grievance redress system to nurture harmony and social cohesion (AAP system);
- c) Elite capture of project benefits was prevented, by employing a participatory community-based beneficiary identification process to reach the needy farmer households that are food insecure;
- d) Aware of the ongoing conflict and contest over access to resources; women (given the important role they play in agriculture), IDPs, and vulnerable groups are not left behind and efforts were made to ensure that they actively participate and benefit from the project interventions i.e. information, seeds and inputs distribution, technical knowledge, training, extension services, and access to productive assets; and

- e) Aware of gender parity; the project management applies innovative and gender-sensitive strategies to:
  - (i) ensure access to land and security of tenure to all targeted groups, and (ii) where necessary, work with IDPs through a social contract with the Boma and Payam level leadership.

## **7. Resilience**

FAO continues to lead the way in resilience measurement through the Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis (RIMA) tool, making a complex topic easier to assess and measure. The SAFER project focuses on supporting livelihoods and building resilience and recovery by addressing household, community, and agriculture sector level vulnerabilities that lead to food and nutrition insecurity. The Midterm Results Assessment and the SAFER I End Line Assessment have both concluded that SAFER beneficiaries have achieved a higher level of resilience than non-beneficiaries.

## **8. Crosscutting issues**

### **3.1. Gender (ADS 205)**

Women continue to be at the forefront of successful project activities. Female beneficiaries make up 54 percent of all SAFER beneficiaries and have demonstrated how empowering female-dominated groups and producers can benefit the larger community. Interviewed women in SAFER farming groups have stated that the respect they receive from their income-generation and resulting household support has shifted household gender roles.

### **3.2. Youth**

SAFER acknowledges the demographic context within the country and focuses special attention to the fact that South Sudan's youth makes up the majority of the population. This work includes the support and encouragement of youth enterprise and production groups. The SAFER project aims to train and educate the next generation of producers and entrepreneurs on sustainable and resilient practices.

### **3.3. Environmental Procedures and Compliance (ADS 204)**

Pursuant to the SAFER project document, all the activities are implemented in accordance with all relevant FAO environmental policies and procedures, in particular, all applicable environmental impact assessment and monitoring procedures. Likewise, the Draft South Sudan Environmental Protection Bill requires an Environmental Social Economic Assessment (ESIA) to be conducted when the lead agency deems the project may have various levels of an impact on the environment. This is in line with the South Sudan environment policy, which provides guidance and direction on the effective management of the environment to all stakeholders including the FAO.

### **3.4. Global Climate Change (GCC)**

The backbone of the SAFER project is the promotion of sustainable land use. FAO and its partners work with community institutions to build their capacity in managing natural resources through providing knowledge on the status of these resources, and through enhancing their role in directly administering and utilization of these resources. FAO South Sudan continues to raise awareness of climate change and its effects on the South Sudanese community.

### **3.5. Partnership relations**

FAO continues to work closely with implementing partners to ensure a constant exchange of knowledge and capacity which will ultimately benefit the project communities.

The SAFER project has previously coordinated the Partnership for Resilience and Recovery (PfRR) in Yambio, Aweil, Rumbek, and Bor. The PfRR consists of development partners, UN agencies, and NGO's, and represents a unified, multi-sector approach to reducing vulnerability and building resilience through four main principles: (i) coordination, (ii) collaboration, (iii) co-location, and (iv) commitment.

### **3.6. Branding, marketing, outreach and communications and dissemination (ADS 320)**

FAO continuously publishes success stories and project photos through a number of organizational channels such as the FAO South Sudan Twitter and FAO in Emergencies website.

## 9. Annexes

### Annex 1: SAFER Project Photos

#### 13. Glossary

ANR	Assisted Natural Regeneration
CBAHW	Community-based Animal Health Workers
CBPP	Community-based Participatory Planning
EMMP	Environmental Mitigation Management Plan
ESIA	Environmental Social Economic Assessment
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FAW	Fall Army Worm
FES	Fuel Efficient Stove
FFS	Farmer Field School
GBV	Gender-based Violence
ICV	Inter-communal Violence
IPM	Integrated Pest Management
ITF	Input Trade Fair
LoA	Letter of Agreement
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NRMC	Natural Resource Management Committee
PFRR	Partnership for Recovery and Resilience
RIMA	Resilience Index Measurement and Analysis
RCI	Resiliency Capacity Index
SAFER	Sustainable Agriculture for Economic Resiliency Programme
TOR	Terms of Reference
ToT	Training of Trainers
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VSL	Village Savings and Loans
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WMC	Water Management Committee