



## EVALUATION

### Performance Evaluation for Accelerating Recovery & Resilience in South Sudan (ACCESS) Project - Upper Nile State, South Sudan

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**Cover photo:** Members from Paloch Payam VSLA during group their weekly savings meeting; September 24, 2022



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## Acronyms

ACCESS	Accelerating Recovery and Resilience in South Sudan
BHA	Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CDCs	Community Development Committees
CNA	Child No Adult
CoP	Chief of Party
COVID	Corona Virus Disease
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
EFSP	Emergency Food Security Program
FNM	Female No Male
FAO	Food & Agriculture Organization
FCS	Food Consumption Score
FFS	Farmer Field School
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FMA <sub>s</sub>	Farmer Market Association
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GoSS	Government of South Sudan
HH	Household
HDC	Humanitarian and Development Consortium
ICL	Infoscope Consulting Limited
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
IGAs	Income Generating Activities
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
HHS	Household Hunger Score
KII	Key Informant Interview
M&F	Male and Female
MHPSS	Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
MNF	Male No Female
NH	Nile Hope
NO	National Office
ODK	Open Data Kit
PLW	Pregnant and Lactating women
PPS	Probability Proportionate to size
SME	Small & Medium Enterprise
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Sciences
SSP	South Sudan Pounds
rCSI	Reduced Coping Strategy Index
SWEMWBS	Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale
S4T	Saving for Transformation
TOR	Terms of reference
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USD	United States Dollar
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WASH	Water Sanitation & Hygiene
WUA	Water Users Association
WFP	World Food Program
WV	World Vision
WVSS	World Vision South Sudan
WVUS	World Vision US

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Background:** Over the past 34 months, World Vision through USAID/BHA funding has been implementing a multi-sectoral project called Accelerating Recovery and Resilience in South Sudan (ACCESS) Project. This Multi-Year Emergency Food Security Project (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023 (36 months)) covered the counties of Baliet, Melut, Nasir and Ulang in the Upper Nile Region and aimed to assist vulnerable communities to promote and fortify their resilience to acute shocks and chronic stresses by building their absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities. The project's goal was to accelerate recovery and bolster resilience while providing essential complementary services that leverage existing World Food Programme (WFP), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), UNICEF and other USAID humanitarian assistance. The project purposes/objectives are to (1) Strengthen household livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and nutrition; (2) Strengthen community cohesion through improved disaster risk management, protection, mental health, and psycho-social support (MHPSS) services and (3) Strengthen coordination, systems, and learning on recovery and resilience. These initiatives are implemented in collaboration with two local sub-grantees namely Nile Hope (NH) and Humanitarian & Development Consortium (HDC). The project targeted 25,198 vulnerable households (about 151,188 individuals) across 23 Payams. The project is scheduled to phase out on February 29, 2024 and it is against this background that WVSS commissioned Infoscope Consulting Limited to conduct an Endline performance evaluation to assess the overall implementation, relevance, impact, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of the intervention focusing on all of its components.

**Evaluation objectives/questions** - Specifically, the evaluation sought to achieve 5 specific objectives: i) determine the final values for the project outcome and impact indicators; ii) assess how the project involved and benefited different community groups and the level of participation by women, children (boys and girls), people with disability and other vulnerable groups; iii) determine the extent to which the project's goal to accelerate recovery and bolster resilience by providing essential complementary services has been achieved; iv) assess how the strategy of leveraging existing WFP, FAO, UNICEF, and other USAID Humanitarian Assistance facilitated or hindered progress of work during project implementation; v) provide lessons learnt and best practices and recommendations on how program achievements may be sustained after the project phases out.

This final performance evaluation employed the standard OECD/DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability & coherence)<sup>1</sup>. Under each criterion, the evaluation sought to answer the following questions; - *Relevance*- did the project address priority problems faced by the target areas and communities and was the project consistent with recipient governments or agencies? *Efficiency*- were inputs (staff, time, money, equipment) used in the best possible way to achieve outputs; could implementation have been improved/was there a better way of doing things? *Effectiveness*- whether activities, outputs and outcomes have been achieved; *Impact* - what changes are observed in the lives of the target group because of the implementation of the project? *Linkages, Layering & exit strategy*- how sustainable are the programs' outcomes?

**Methods** - The evaluation was conducted using participatory quantitative and qualitative approaches consisting of a documentary review and a primary field data collection and analysis employing; review of secondary documents; Household Survey; Focus group discussions with project participants; Key Informant Interviews with project participants and stakeholders and field observations. A multi-stage cluster sampling technique was employed, and sample was proportionally distributed across the four counties. Households were selected using systematic random sampling technique based on approved

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/49756382.pdf>

beneficiary database. Data was collected from 18<sup>th</sup> to 23 October 2023 by trained enumerators using smartphones. 687 households from 23 Payams participated in the household survey. In addition, 29 FGD and 22 KII sessions were conducted. Data analysis was carried out at two levels; the first level involved descriptive analysis, that is frequency and percentage distributions, and measures of central tendency and dispersion (mean median, mode, range, standard deviation). Second-level analysis was also undertaken, that is, cross-tabulations, regression, correlations (associations and hypothesis testing) and test of significance. The T-tests was used to assess the statistical significance of the difference between the endline, and baseline estimates for indicators presented as mean or score, whereas Chi-square was used to assess the statistical significance of the difference between the baseline and endline estimates for indicators presented as proportion or frequency.

**Limitations** - Data collection was delayed in some project sites due to heavy rains experienced. The endline survey sampled 687 households (HHs), while the baseline sampled 584 HHs (after Renk County was expunged) hence comparability of endline-baseline was based on weighted data. All field locations in Baliat and Nasir were only accessible by river transport which delayed data collection. Lack of telephone network in most parts of the project sites limited the ability to communicate with the enumerators and offer timely feedback. This also meant that data from some locations like Baliat could not be uploaded on to the server on a daily basis for routine checks and verification. Ethnic animosity between communities residing in the study locations meant that some enumerators were not welcome to work in certain locations.

*The following are summarized key impact findings under each purpose and outcome.*

**Purpose 1: Strengthened household livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and nutrition.**

**Outcome 1.1: Improved household food production and storage**

The project has recorded a significant improvement in food security indices among the beneficiary households as shown by the significant (**P= 0.000**) improvement in household Food Consumption Score (FCS) from 19.0 at baseline to 29.6 at endline. Proportion of households facing moderate to severe hunger has also reduced significantly (**P= 0.000**) from 97.8% (baseline) to 77.4% (endline) while adoption of context specific improved crop management practices/technologies has seen significant (**P= 0.000**) increase from 32.2% (baseline) to 64.8% (endline).

**Outcome 1.2: Increased household income & economic empowerment of vulnerable groups**

The project supported the beneficiaries to engage in profitable and market-driven livelihood opportunities which has led to significant increase (**P= 0.000**) in the proportion of households involved in group-based saving and loan programs from 12.6% (baseline) to 37% (endline). Additionally, the proportion of beneficiaries in union who earned cash also increased from 29.8% (baseline) to 54.9% (endline).

*“In our group we saved 350,000 SSP in cash in our boxes today. This money was lent to some three members who have started business... the project trained us on VSLA management and how to identify new business opportunities—VSLA member, Ulang County.*

**Outcome 1.3: Strengthened nutrition and IYCF interventions and integrated WASH services.**

The proportion of children (6-36 months) who consume a diet of minimum diversity has improved significant (**P=0.000**) from 33.7% (baseline) to 54% (endline) while those (0-5 months) fed exclusively on breast milk has also seen a corresponding significant (**P=0.000**) improvement from 21.8% at baseline to 37.9% at endline. Further, significant (**P=0.000**) improvement was recorded in the proportion of household using basic drinking water services from 19.8% at baseline to 29.8% at endline while the proportion of household using basic sanitation services increased from 14.9% at baseline to 18.3% at endline. Additionally, the proportion of household with soap and water at hand washing station has also increased from 3.1% to 26.9% at endline.

“I know the WV project has done well here for example they supported the community in Ulang Payam by installing solar system to pump water to the elevated water tank. This water system is currently serving a huge population within Ulang Township and its environs.”- **Ulang County WASH Department focal person.**

**Purpose 2: Strengthened community cohesion through improved disaster risk management, protection and mental health psycho-social support (MHPSS) services.**

**Outcome 2.1: Strengthened community structures and early warning systems (EWS) for mitigating shocks.**

The positive impact of the project FSL activities on the household food production has translated into significant (**P=0.000**) reduction in the use of negative coping strategies (rCSI) among households from 42.7 at baseline to 12.6 at endline.

**Outcome 2.2: Strengthened community managed disaster risk reduction (CMDRR) systems.**

The project interventions in supporting community level disaster risk reduction initiatives had some positive impact in that the ability of the households to recover from shocks and stresses has significantly (**P=0.000**) improved from ARSSI of 1.3 at baseline to ARSSI of 3.6 at evaluation.

**Outcome 2.3: Equitable leadership systems and communal structures supported.**

The project provided training on conflict and risks mitigation and sensitized the community on early warning response for shock mitigation. This and other related initiatives has seen a significant increase (**P=0.000**) in the number of households that believe that local government will respond effectively to future shocks/stresses from 32% at baseline to 77.2% at endline.

**Outcome 2.4: Improved access to community based MHPSS resources and services to strengthen community cohesion.**

The project equipped participants with key DRR messages and re-activated community early warning response systems for shock mitigation. The impact of these initiatives are seen an increase in the proportion of community members taking part in collective actions from 34.1% at baseline to 48.1% at endline.

**Outcome 2.5: Strengthened Rapid Response (RR) capacity to save lives and alleviate human suffering during rapid onset shocks.**

The proportion of households reporting improved capacity to respond and recover from sudden onset of shocks has improved significantly (**P=0.000**) from 6.2% at baseline to 25.9% at endline.

**Purpose 3: Strengthened coordination, systems and learning to support recovery and resilience.**

**Outcome 3.1: Improved capacity of the community to coordinate, integrate knowledge and learning on recovery and resilience.**

The intra- and inter-community dialogue promoted by the project has seen significant improvement in the social capital index for households from 62.4 recorded at baseline to 65.7 at endline. There has also been a significant increase (**P=0.000**) in the proportion of people reporting improvements in their feelings of well-being and ability to cope at the end of the program from 49.8% (metric score-17.43) at baseline to 62.9% (metric score-22.0) at endline.

### **Sustainability**

To ensure sustainability the project worked with local government and community-based organizations, in coordination with other humanitarian and development actors and its local sub-grantees; Nile Hope and Humanitarian and Development Consortium to phase over once the grant ends. Additionally, the project has strengthened the capacity of community structures like CMDRR committees, FFS, Mother-to-mother care groups, and VSLAs through community focused design and skills building to ensure that the project outcomes can continue after the project close-out.

In line with the USAID transition strategy, several partners were identified to carry on with livelihood activities beyond the life of the current award. These included Education Development Center (EDC), which focuses on youth economic empowerment, and Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI), which is undertaking agricultural production and the DT-Global, which is mainly focusing on improving social cohesion. The agreed arrangement with BHA is to transfer humanitarian related interventions from the ACCESS project to the Restoring Lives and Building Resilience in South Sudan (RESTORE) project effective December 14, 2023.

The project engaged the County and state government line ministries and departments in open, transparent communication and collaboration to develop an appropriate transition plans. In this regards the project has taken a facilitative and supportive role as State and County authorities slowly took over direct implementation of interventions. A case inpoint is the active involvement of State and County authorities in the operation of the constructed water supply systems in Baliet and Ulang Counties.

Households have also been supported to transition from food production for household consumption towards income generation opportunities as they transition from the FFS to the FMAs. Youth and others have also been supported with skills and agricultural or fishery related livelihood strategies as well as off-farm and on-farm opportunities. Upon closeout, the program will leverage on the existing similar projects to ensure continuation of the activities.

### **Key Lessons Learnt**

- The peace nexus is a crucial component for the success of any sectoral program in the context of South Sudan. It is therefore imperative that future programs in similar contexts have conflict resolution and peace building component built in.
- The IGA component has proven very valuable in improving the lives of not only the group members, but also the community as a whole. For example, when IGA groups received grinding mills, the other members of the community equally benefit.
- The capacity of fisher folk groups to produce the required number of fish needed by the market remains low despite high market demands. This is a positive indicator to motivate further production.
- Understanding of the context is imperative for the proper program design and implementation of activities; more especially in terms of the security situation and the weather-related issues.
- Strengthened community support systems and social sustainability and engagement of committees has enhanced GBV case management and reporting at community levels.
- Prior in-depth discussions of community expectations and mobilization before an activity has shown to increase levels of satisfactions with program activities.
- Community dialogues and conferences that bring together large number of persons have helped to disseminate the messages of peace to the entire community faster than training activities.
- Engagement of youths and women in peace building activities has proved to be very vital in ensuring peace especially along the Sobat corridor Counties of Nasir and Ulang.

Drawing from the foregoing findings the following conclusions and recommendations are made under each purpose:

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

#### **Project management**

- **Project life cycle** –The project has improved resilience of individuals and communities to shocks and stresses. However, the project timeframe was not sufficient to fully sustain the gains made given the context in South Sudan where there exist myriad of challenges including insecurity, lack of supportive infrastructure, and human capital. Resilience programs such as ACCESS need a longer time to realize meaningful change. In the future, there will be a need to extend such projects to cover more than three years.

- **Partnership with line ministry staff** -Ideally the GoSS line ministry staff play a critical role in providing technical skills, support supervision and extension services to the community. However, because they are poorly remunerated, it becomes a challenge to engage them effectively in project implementation without providing them with facilitation. It would have been more impactful if the line ministry staff were adequately involved right from training to support supervision of project activities.

**Purpose 1: Strengthened household livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and nutrition.**

The project has made significant improvement in food security indices at the household's level thanks to the in-kind support in form of seeds, basic tools and refresher trainings of beneficiary farmers.

**Purpose 2: Strengthened community cohesion through improved disaster risk management, protection and mental health psycho-social support (MHPSS) services.**

The project interventions in supporting community level disaster risk reduction initiatives had positive impact in that the ability of the households to recover from shocks and stresses and training on conflict and risks mitigation.

**Purpose 3: Strengthened coordination, systems and learning to support recovery and resilience.**

The intra- and inter-community dialogues promoted by the project has seen significant improvement in the social capital index for households and reporting improvements in their feelings of well-being and ability to cope at the end of the program.

To sustain these gains made under the above purposes the project needs to;

- *In future there will be a need to extend such projects to cover more than three years to realize meaningful impact.*
- *The line ministry staff need to be adequately facilitated to offer support supervision of project activities.*
- *ACCESS project to consider sourcing for donor funding to upscale to other Counties with similar needs within Upper Nile or within South Sudan*
- *Partners need to strengthen and institutionalize community managed disaster risk reductions that could encourage the community to timely detect triggers and early signs of disaster and mitigate and/or respond timely. For instance linking the community managed DRR approach with existing customary leadership and institutions.*
- *Integrate the groups to similar ongoing or new resilience programs like Restoring Lives and Building Resilience in South Sudan (RESTORE) project with clear donor commitment to continue funding some of the activities. Where saving has been made the project can request for No-cost extensions for the activities to continue.*
- *Involve of State and County-based government technical and political actors in project transition plan for sustenance of the results achieved.*
- *Ongoing or new resilience programs like RESTORE project need to put more emphasis on the Counties that did not perform as well. For example, Balia County is still behind other Counties in achievement of most indicators.*

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background & Context

South Sudan continues to face extremely high levels of acute food insecurity, with over 60 percent of the population anticipated to face Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse outcomes. The widespread loss of productive assets due to years of conflict and floods continues to undermine households' capacity to cope with shocks and rebuild their livelihoods. Between May and October 2022, communities in Greater Upper Nile faced various shocks and stressors, including recurring conflict, violence, climatic shocks, and limited public service infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> Notably during this period, two high-intensity conflict periods drove large-scale displacement, limited humanitarian access, and had repercussions for affected populations' food security and livelihoods, and access to services.<sup>3</sup> In northern Jonglei and Upper Nile states, conflict between armed groups – which began in August 2022 – continued through December 2022 along the White Nile.<sup>4</sup> In Greater Pibor, mass violence in December 2022 and January 2023 sparked reprisal attacks in northern Jonglei in February and March 2023.<sup>5</sup> Displaced populations – inherently vulnerable – make up a considerable proportion of Greater Upper Nile's population: in Jonglei and Upper Nile states, internally displaced people (IDPs) constitute approximately 15% of each state's population. In Unity State, home to South Sudan's largest IDP camp located in Bentiu, Rubkona County, IDPs constitute nearly 34% of the state's population.<sup>6</sup> In October 2022, an estimated 3.77 million of 4.67 million people in Greater Upper Nile were classified as people in need (PiN), with 1.12 million facing emergency-level (IPC Phase 4) or greater food insecurity, and more than 60,000 people facing catastrophe level (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity. These numbers suggest that the seasonal, recurring, and unique shocks, which occurred between October 2022 and March 2023 – flooding, conflict, rising prices and displacement – likely substantially increased needs in some areas of the region. This occurred as humanitarian assistance, which can be used to adapt to and cope with shocks, decreased, potentially compounding the ability of affected populations to mitigate existing and nascent vulnerabilities.<sup>4</sup> Between October 2022 and March 2023, KIs in 53% of assessed settlements in Jonglei, 44% in Unity, and 42% in Upper Nile reported the occurrence of a negative event which impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods in the previous month. Out of the assessed settlements reporting such a shock across this period, the most commonly reported types of shock by proportion of assessed settlements were in Jonglei: persistent or flash flooding (42%), rising prices (16%), and conflict (9%); in Unity: persistent or flash flooding (75%); and in Upper Nile: flash or persistent flooding (35%) and conflict (34%).

### 1.2 Award Scope

This \$15,000,000 Multi-Year Emergency Food Security Project (October 1, 2020 – September 30, 2023) covered the counties of Baliet, Melut, Nasir and Ulang in the Upper Nile Region and aimed to assist vulnerable communities to promote and fortify their resilience to acute shocks and chronic stresses by building their absorptive, adaptive, and transformative capacities. The project targeted 25,198 households (151,188 individuals) in either IPC Phase 3 or Phase 4 food insecurity; it will phase out on February 29, 2024. The project was implemented in collaboration with two local sub-grantees namely Nile Hope (NH) and Humanitarian & Development Consortium (HDC). Table 1 below shows the list of list of Payams that were targeted under the ACCESS project per County.

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<sup>2</sup> OCHA. "Humanitarian Needs Overview South Sudan: 2022." February 2022; OCHA. "Humanitarian Needs Overview South Sudan: 2023." November 2022.

<sup>3</sup> Joshua Craze. "The Periphery Cannot Hold: Upper Nile Since the Signing of the R-ARCSS." November 2022. 46; United States State Department. "Joint Statement on Violence in Upper Nile and Jonglei States, South Sudan." 16 December 2022

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> OCHA. "Violent clashes in South Sudan intensify the humanitarian situation." 29 December 2022; REACH. "Akobo West and Waat Rapid Assessment." March 2023.

<sup>6</sup> IOM DTM. "South Sudan Baseline Round 12.": total population using IPC findings

**Table 1: List of Payams targeted under the project**

County	Payams
Melut	Bimachuk (Pariak); Paloich; Wunamum; Goldora; Melut; Thangrial; Panomdit
Baliet	Adong; Abwong; Nyongrial; Nyongkuach; Gelachel and Mijok
Ulang	Doma; Kurmuot; Ulang; Yomding
Nasir	Nasir; Maker; Dingkar, Jikmir, Kiech Kuon & Kuerenge-Ke

### I.3. Evaluation purpose & objectives

The purpose of the endline survey was to establish achievements for project performance indicators against which project successes were measured. The endline measurements were used to calculate change in these indicators and undertake a statistical test of differences in the indicators at completion of the project. The focus was on changes in the indicators pre- and post-implementation, but no conclusions about attribution or causation.

Specifically, this performance evaluation sought to achieve the following specific objectives:

- i) Determine the final values for the project outcome and impact indicators.
- ii) Assess how the project involved and benefited different community groups and the level of participation by women, children (boys and girls), people with disability and other vulnerable groups.
- iii) Determine the extent to which the project’s goal to accelerate recovery and bolster resilience by providing essential complementary services has been achieved.
- iv) Assess how the strategy of leveraging existing WFP, FAO, UNICEF, and other USAID Humanitarian Assistance facilitated or hindered progress of work during project implementation.
- v) Provide lessons learnt and best practices and recommendations on how program achievements may be sustained after the project phases out.

### I.4. Evaluation criteria and questions

This final evaluation shall employ the standard OECD/DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, sustainability & coherence)<sup>7</sup>. Under each criterion the evaluation shall seek to answer the following meta-questions;

**Table 2: Key Evaluation Questions and Methods of investigation**

Criteria	Main evaluation question	Sub-questions	Evaluation Method
Relevance	Did the project address priority problems faced by the target areas and communities and was the project consistent with recipient governments or agencies?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are the stakeholders’ opinions about the nature and quality of project implementation?</li> <li>○ Under what circumstances and/or in what contexts would the program be replicable, or could it be scaled-up?</li> <li>○ Were the appropriate Government Department officials involved?</li> <li>○ Was the project implementation strategy adjusted to accommodate field realities? If yes, in what way?</li> <li>○ Were the activities and outputs of the program consistent with the intended impacts and effects?</li> <li>○ Was the project in line with the needs and priorities of the most vulnerable and PLW targeted?</li> </ul>	Qualitative (FGD, KII, case studies)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/49756382.pdf>

<b>Efficiency</b>	Were inputs (staff, time, money, equipment) used in the best possible way to achieve outputs; could implementation have been improved/was there a better way of doing things?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Did the project have adequate and the appropriate resources (human, financial and capital) for implementation?</li> <li>○ If there were any lack/problem in resources/capacity, how was this addressed?</li> <li>○ Assess the communication structure in place and its effectiveness in supporting the implementation of the program.</li> <li>○ Were the quality control and accountability measures in place and consistently applied during the review, approval, and fund disbursement, monitoring and reporting phases?</li> </ul>	Qualitative (FGD, KII, case studies), desk review of project reports.
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Whether activities, outputs and outcomes have been achieved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To what extent were the objectives achieved?</li> <li>○ What were the main factors that influenced the achievement or not of the objectives?</li> <li>○ Did the M&amp;E system provide quality information that was appropriate and reliable in measuring the intended indicators?</li> <li>○ To what extent was the project model effective in terms of its design, appropriateness, management, and accountability?</li> <li>○ How effective was the project in terms of program delivery (coordination, cooperation, efficiency, standardization)?</li> <li>○ How appropriate were the strategies used to accomplish planned activities?</li> <li>○ Were humanitarian standards met and humanitarian principles followed? (Sphere, HAP, Codes of conduct)?</li> <li>○ What is the status/availability of community assets/structures and their utilization in resilience building/disaster risk reduction, protection, and peace building?</li> </ul>	Qualitative (FGD, KII, case studies), quantitative HH survey and desk review of performance reports.
<b>Impact</b>	What changes are observed in the lives of the target group because of the implementation of the project?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Has the project reached the expected number of participants and territorial coverage?</li> <li>○ To what extent has the project contributed to reduce participants' vulnerability level?</li> <li>○ Did the response reduce future vulnerabilities?</li> <li>○ What are the unintended positive and negative impacts of the project implementation?</li> <li>○ How satisfied are the communities with the response?</li> <li>○ Did the program demand more time from women?</li> <li>○ What do the men and other household members (in-laws etc.) think about women's participation in the program?</li> <li>○ What gender specific issues have been addressed?</li> </ul>	Qualitative (FGD, KII, case studies) and quantitative HH survey.
<b>Linkages, Layering &amp; exit strategy</b>	How sustainable are the programs' outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ To what extent did the project take advantage of other USG and non-USG investments in the same space to facilitate linkages with complementary services, layering with earlier investments, and implementing exit strategies to minimize the dependency on support?</li> <li>○ To what extent did the project align and integrate with host government social protection strategy/policy/service delivery?</li> </ul>	Qualitative (FGD, KII, case studies), desk review of project annual work plans and performance reports.

### 1.5. Evaluator Profile

This was an external performance evaluation conducted on behalf of WVSS by a team of Consultants from Infoscope Consulting Limited comprising experts from FSL, DRR and Nutrition Sectors.

### 1.6. Data collection overview

Data was collected from 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 by trained enumerators using smartphones. A total of 687 households from 23 Payams participated in the household survey. In addition, 29 FGD and 22 KII sessions were conducted.

## 2.0 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Study Design

The evaluation was conducted using a mixed-methods approach, both qualitative and quantitative approaches employing Review of documents; Household Survey; Focus Group Discussions; Key Informant Interviews; Case study Documentation; Observations & Photography. ICL conducted this evaluation using the one-group design, examining the projects participants “before and after” it has been in operation.

### 2.2. Desk review

The findings of the qualitative and quantitative data were triangulated against prior ACCESS project reports, GoSS and other partner’s documents. The following relevant documents were reviewed, including Activity/project proposal & Theory of Change; Programme Toolkit (updated M&E plan, including logic model, M&E Plan, ITT, workplans, DIP & Budget); Baseline report; Annual performance reports; Mid-Term Review/Evaluation report; Research and assessment reports; Success stories; Country Context Analysis; GoSS strategic documents and reports, SDG targets.

### 2.3. Quantitative Sampling Methodology

The quantitative survey employed stratified two-stage cluster sampling design with Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) for household survey respondents. The survey sampling targeted the Payams in the four targeted counties as the sampling frame and collected data on the same outcome indicators that were assessed at the baseline. The evaluation team use the same sampling frame, data collection instruments, level of statistical precision (95% CI), and statistical power (80 percent) as the baseline study. To ensure representation of samples allocated for each target County and clusters/enumeration areas, the sample size was proportionally distributed using Probability Proportional to Size (PPS) technique. This was to ensure that beneficiary households in the different clusters had the same probability of being selected despite their different beneficiary sizes.

#### 2.3.1 Sampling And Sample Size Calculation

The survey covered the ACCESS project intervention Counties namely Nasir, Ulang, Baliet and Melut. The formula for calculating sample size for the endline was predetermined as:

$$n_{initial} = D_{est} \left[ \frac{z_{1-\alpha} \sqrt{2\underline{P}(1-\underline{P})} + z_{1-\beta} \sqrt{P_{1,est}(1-P_{1,est}) + P_{2,est}(1-P_{2,est})}}{\delta} \right]^2$$

**Where:**

$n_{initial}$  = is the initial sample size required by the surveys for each of the two time points

$\delta = P_{1,est} - P_{2,est}$  = minimum effect size to be achieved over the time frame specified by the two surveys

$P_{1,est}$  = represents a survey estimate of the true population proportion  $P_1$  at baseline [If such an estimate is not available from prior surveys, 0.5 will be used]

$P_{2,est}$  = represents a survey estimate of the true population proportion  $P_2$  at end line

$$\underline{P} = \frac{P_{1,est} + P_{2,est}}{2}$$

$z_{1-\alpha}$  is the value from the normal probability distribution corresponding to a confidence level  $1-\beta$ .

For  $1-\beta = 0.95$ , the corresponding value is  $z_{0.95} = 1.64$ .

$z_{1-\beta}$  is the value from the normal probability distribution corresponding to a power level of  $1-\beta$ .

For  $1-\beta = 0.80$ , the corresponding value is  $z_{0.80} = 0.84$ .

$D_{est}$  is the estimated design effect (DEFF) of the survey =2.

The values to be used in calculating FCS and HHS sample size for multistage sampling are:	
$P_{1,est}$	50% (0.5)
$P_{2,est}$	40% (0.4)
$z_{1-\alpha}$	95% (1.64)
$z_{1-\beta}$	80% (0.84)
$D_{est}$	2
$n_{initial}$	610
Non-response adjustments	10%
$n_{final}$	687

Table 3 shows the population distribution by County, the number of ACCESS registered participants and the cluster sample size calculation using Probability Proportionate to size (PPS) based on ACCESS project participants. It's worth noting that Renk County was expunged from the baseline analysis after it became difficult for ACCESS to implement there.

Table 3: Sample size

County	Population	ACCESS Participants	Sample Size
Melut	126,691	2,102	99
Baliet	56,348	3,573	168
Ulang	137,691	5,100	239
Nasir	286,628	3,852	181
Total	607,358	14,627	687

## 2.4 Qualitative Sampling Methodology

### 2.4.1 Focus Group Discussions

In addition to the household survey, the consultant held a total of twenty-nine (29) Focus Group Discussions after preliminary analysis of the quantitative data. The FGDs were conducted with groups of registered ACCESS participants, through the collection of a range of opinions and perceptions. The number was limited to 5-8 participants and ensured adequate time, approximately 45 - 60 minutes.

The groups were gender-segregated and included: male adult alone, female adult alone, mixed group adult (men/women), mixed group of youth (boys and girls). The discussions revolved around resilience and livelihood related topics/questions on agriculture productivity, nutrition, WASH, SMEs, DRM, social cohesion and related topics. The following target groups were covered during FGDs.

- M2M support group members-4
- Crop farmer group members- 4
- VSLA members -3
- IGA Group members-4
- Livestock group members – 4
- Fisher-folk group members – 4
- Water User Committee members- 2
- CMDRR committee members – 4

### 2.4.2 Key Informant Interviews

All key stakeholders that participated in the ACCESS project implementation were involved in the study. A total of twenty two (22) KIIs were conducted during field data collection exercise. The following is a list of the stakeholders that were reached for Key Informant Interviews:

- World Vision South Sudan ACCESS Project key staff
- Sub-grantee partner staff (NH, HDC)

- Directors of line ministries (Agriculture, Health and Water Resources, Livestock and Fisheries)
- County/state government officials, RRC/ROSS Coordinator at County level.
- Community leaders (Camp leaders, Payam leaders, etc)
- Lead mothers
- Lead community nutrition volunteers
- Community representatives
- The interviews were conducted by the consultant team of experts. The KIs were recorded during the interview process and translated as needed. Table 4 below shows the number of key informant interviews conducted per County.

Table 4: Number of key informants per County

County	Number of key informants
Melut	6
Baliet	5
Ulang	5
Nasir	6
Total	22

## 2.5 Ethical considerations

The below ethical considerations were adhered to during the survey process:

- Participation in the survey was voluntary.
- Informed consent was sought before data gathering and consent forms signed by respondents.
- Anonymity, confidentiality and safeguarding of survey data was guaranteed.
- Quantitative data was obtained from a randomly selected representative sample.
- There were no risks and benefits for individual participants.
- The culture, norms and traditions of study populations were respected.
- Views and opinions of the different survey subjects were respected.
- Prior permission was received for taking and use of visual still/moving images.

## 2.6. Field data collection

Data was collected from 18<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023 by trained enumerators. Quantitative survey data was captured real time using android phones installed with ODK app platform using open data server. Data were captured offline and later uploaded to WV server at the end of each day where possible. The interviews and discussions were conducted mainly in Arabic, and then translated back to English. Typically, the FGDs were conducted by a facilitator and a note taker using pre-determined, distinct focus group guides with relevant themes. The interviews were conducted using a predetermined guide with open ended questions for specific informants.

## 2.7. Data quality control

A range of approaches were used to ensure quality and validity of data collected. A systematic process of respondent selection was ensured and for transparency, the analytical procedures and processes are reported as fully and truthfully as possible. To ensure validity of research instruments this study adopted content validity to assess how relevant the instruments captured specific study questions. To minimize random error, the study ensured that all items accurately addressed the questions. To ensure validity, the instruments were pre-tested before the actual study commenced.

The methodologies were also designed to deliver high standard data according to research standards and ethics. The enumerators' training emphasized the importance of ethical practice, care and attention to detail in interviewing and recording responses. Strict supervision, guidance and backstopping were done by the Lead Consultant and the entire team. During fieldwork, daily reporting meetings were organized to address any data gaps and quality concerns. The work of the interviewers was checked at the end of each day and any problems were thus rectified in the field. Daily data quality

checks were done at the end of the day to address quality lapses. Further cleaning with logical checks was carried out on the completed data sets prior to analysis.

## **2.8 Training of Research Assistants, pre-test and finalization of tools**

Enumerators with previous research experience and the ability to speak Arabic in addition to the local languages were recruited by the WV in consultation with the lead consultant to undertake field data collection in the 4 counties. Training of associate consultants took place in Juba and thereafter each associate consultant traveled to train his/her field team of enumerators at the respective Counties. During the training; the evaluation objectives, approach and the standard data collection procedures to be implemented during the survey were reviewed in detail. The instruments review did not only entail the reading and discussing of each of the questions, but also included plenary mocking sessions by the enumerators to assess the flow, consistency and appropriateness of the phrases and terms used.

The other issues covered during training included the general background of the project, why the survey is being undertaken in the identified target areas, survey samples (target respondents, sample points and sizes), survey timelines, client expectation of the data collection team, the communication protocol during the survey, data quality control during the survey, modalities for handling challenges and related issues, logistical plan in the survey, payment terms, and the applicable contracts.

Pretesting was done externally covering Payams not targeted for support under the ACCESS project before debrief with all the participants to review the observations, experiences and challenges that might be encountered. This exercise informed the final changes made in the data collection tools and/or approach implemented during the actual data collection phase.

## **2.9 Data processing & analysis**

Both descriptive and inferential analysis of data from the survey was carried out by use of SPSS and MS Excel for quantitative data. Data analysis, whenever appropriate, has been segregated by location and sex. The collected data has therefore been collated, analyzed and interpreted in a coherent and systematic manner, using detailed data / information analysis method(s). All the indicators under investigation were analyzed on gendered consideration as per USAID/BHA guidelines i.e. Male & Adult HH – M&F, Adult Male no Adult Female – MNF, Adult Female No Adult Male household – FNM and Child No Adult Household - CNA.

The qualitative data collected through discussions and key informant interviews was coded first before content analysis. Information from the desk review, interviews, discussions, observations and survey findings were integrated using question by answer matrices method to facilitate comparisons. Responses were coded and analyzed for themes and compared to validate quantitative results and identify any possible findings not included in the quantitative results.

The quantitative data obtained from the ODK were exported to both Excel and the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 22.0. The analysis using SPSS software involved summary, presentation (tabulation and charts) and descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies). Frequencies and percentages were calculated to describe the basic data characteristics.

Cross tabulations have been used to show the relationship between two or more survey questions. In this survey, a combination of several research methods were utilized to get the wide view of the labor market and thus triangulation was a significant tool. Triangulation facilitated validation of data through cross verification from two or more sources.

## **2.10 Limitations**

In spite of the multiple methods utilized and the data explored in execution of this endline evaluation, the following limitations are acknowledged:

- The Endline sampled and analyzed 687 HHs, while the baseline sampled 687 HHS but analyzed 584 HHs hence comparability of endline-baseline was based on weighted dataset. This was due to the WVSS management decision to exclude Renk County from ACCESS project implementation after the baseline data collection.
- All field locations in Baliet and Nasir are only accessible by river transport which is extremely slow, and this delayed data collection. In mitigation the consultant ensured enumerators were recruited and worked in their local Payams and covered slightly fewer HHs per day to minimize movement.
- Lack of telephone network in most areas of the project sites limited the ability to communicate with the enumerators. This also meant that data could not be uploaded on to the server on a daily basis for routine checks and verification. In mitigation the teams were accompanied by trained Field coordinators from the consulting team to ensure data quality.
- Ethnic animosity between the communities residing in the study locations meant that some enumerators were not welcome to work in certain locations. In mitigation the Consultant worked closely with WVSS staff and the local Payam administrators to ensure enumerators only worked in their own communities where their safety was guaranteed.

### 3.0 FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 3.1 Characteristics of the study population

Findings show there were more female (79%) than male (21%) respondents as the survey was designed to target caregivers who happen to be women. In total, 9,000 persons were living in the respondents' households at the time of the evaluation. About 83% of the survey households had children 6-23 months old members. The mean age for survey respondents was 34.4 years with the lowest age being 18 years and the highest, 79 years. Majority (44.1%) of respondents fell in the 18-30 years age range (male-29.9%; female-48.1%), followed by 29.9% who were in the 31-40 years age bracket (male-32.0%; female-29.3%), while 17.8% were 41-50 years and 6.6% are in the age range 51-60 years above (Table 5).

On gendered household type male adults and female adults (M&F) were the majority (80.3%), followed by 12.4% adult female but no adult male (FNM); 5.2% adult male but no adult female (MNF) and 2.0% child no adult (CNA) households. On marital status; 81.6% (males-84.8%; female-80.7%) of the respondents were married or living together; 9% (males-6.8%; female-9.6%) were widowed; 6.4% (males-7.3%; female-6.1%) were single. Another 2.4% were separated while only 0.5% were divorced (Appendix 7.3). Overall literacy level of respondents stood at 28.8% (male 46.2; female-23.8%) implying 71.2% could neither read nor write. On education level attained; 71.2% (male-53.8%; female-76.2%) of the respondents never attended school; 22.4% (male-31.2%; female-19.7%) attained primary education and 5.3% and 0.8% completed secondary and tertiary education, respectively.

Description	Nasir	Ulang	Baliet	Melut	Total
Average household size	12.46	19.18	7.07	9.8	13.1
% of households with a child 0-23 months	60.2%	47.7%	31.1%	53.5%	47.8%
Sex of beneficiary (male)	12.7%	15.5%	24.8%	20.2%	17.6%
Sex of beneficiary (female)	87.3%	84.5%	75.2%	79.8%	82.4%
Sex of respondent (male)	19.9%	24.7%	17.9%	19.2%	21.0%
Sex of respondent (female)	80.1%	75.3%	82.1%	80.8%	79.0%
<b>Gendered household type</b>					
Male adults and female adults	72.9%	88.3%	79.8%	75.8%	80.3%
Adult female no adult male	19.9%	4.2%	16.7%	11.1%	12.4%
Adult male no adult female	4.4%	3.8%	4.8%	11.1%	5.2%
Child no adult	2.8%	1.3%	3.6%	0.0%	2.0%

**Table 5: Household socio-demographic characteristics**

**NB:** Beneficiary refers to the registered ACCESS beneficiary; Respondent may be any responsible adult in the adult in the beneficiary HH.

## 3.2 Relevance and Impact

### 3.2.1 Relevance

From its onset, the project ensured the beneficiary targeting criteria and processes were appropriate, transparent, and properly implemented. Analyses of qualitative data reveal that the program was designed to target people of different age, gender and ethnic groups to increase their access to secure, conflict-sensitive livelihoods. The project also ensured beneficiary selection was based on existing sectoral needs and not status (host community, IDPs, and returnees). This not only ensured a more appropriate area-based response to a displacement affected community but was in line with gender and conflict sensitivity principles and lessened the risk of any tension that could be caused by support. Review of the logical framework and interviews with beneficiaries and stakeholders revealed that the activities and outputs of the program consistent with the intended impacts and effects.

The evaluation process paid utmost attention to satisfaction of beneficiary needs in terms of adequacy and appropriateness of interventions provided and the nature and quality of project implementation. Review of qualitative data revealed that the project was overwhelmingly appreciated by the beneficiaries and stakeholders as it answered to their most felt needs in the context of South Sudan. Feedback from beneficiaries and stakeholders revealed that interventions benefited the welfare of women (mostly widows) and children in the target communities through promoting improved farming practices, community managed disaster risk reduction, group-based saving and loan services, peace-building, hygiene promotion, maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN) and caring practices. Further analyses reveal that the program of the nature of ACCESS is replicable under the leverage of peace nexus in many areas of South Sudan and other conflict-sensitive contexts. Analysis of key informant interviews reveal that the program can be scaled up in other counties of Upper Nile State and other states to help stem the incessant suffering of the population.

Further analysis revealed that appropriate Government Department officials were involved in the project implementation. Interviews with the project team revealed that all activities were implemented in very close planning, collaboration and coordination with line government ministries and department at State, County and Payams levels. Further analysis show that the project implementation strategy was adjusted to accommodate field realities. The project employed the adaptive management approach, enabling it to monitor the context and be able to adapt appropriately and this is how it pulled out from Renk County after it became apparent the context then did not allow for effective implementation. Other adjustments made were the scale-up support to FSL groups to start their income after interventions that bore more fruits than had initially expected. Additionally, a dam that was initially planned for construction in Melut to provide water for human consumption, cattle and irrigation was moved to Baliet after conducting feasibility assessments. They revealed that Melut was not a potential location due to the oil fields and lack of a permanent water sources being far from the River Nile.

### 3.2.2 Impact

**Purpose 1: Strengthened household livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and nutrition.**

**Outcome 1.1: Improved household food production and storage.**

Overall the project activities and outputs have delivered impact on household food security as shown by the significant positive changes in the outcome indicators under this purpose. In line with the project theory of change, increased food production translated into increased food consumption/utilization by the beneficiary household members. The impact of which is shown by the significant (**P= 0.000**) improvement in the Food Consumption Score (FCS) from 19.0 at baseline to 29.6 at endline, meaning beneficiary households are now consuming more diversified food items as a result of the project interventions. Another testament of the project impact is the significant reduction in the number of households facing moderate to severe hunger from 97.8% (baseline) to 77.4% (endline). A significant

majority (64.8%) of beneficiary farmers has adopted context specific improved crop management practices/technologies compared to the baseline (32.2%). For example, adoption of improved agronomic practices (early planting, spacing, thinning, weeding, row planting) has improved from 48.9% at baseline to 63.6% at endline.

*‘We learned together as a group in the FFS things like; line planting of crops and we later did the same on our individual farms. I can tell you the crops were growing very well and the harvest was much better than before. We have surplus to sell in the market and the money we got helped us to pay other bills like schools fees’. -FGD with FFS-Nassir County*

### **Outcome 1.2: Increased household income & economic empowerment of vulnerable groups**

**Group based savings & loan-**The project put a lot of effort in marketing and promoting group-based savings and loan groups by supporting the formation and capacity trainings of VSLA groups and providing them with VSLA kits. The impact of this is seen in the significant increase in the number of household involved in group-based saving or loan programs from 12.6% at baseline to 37% at endline.

*“In our group we saved 350,000 SSP in cash in our boxes today. This money was lent to some 3 members who have started various businesses like selling tea..... the project trained us on VSLA management and how to identify new business opportunities.” –VSLA, in Ulang County*

**Cash Earnings-**The project supported the establishment and training of small businesses/enterprises and the engagement in identified viable sectors/value chains. This has impacted positively as shown by the increased number of beneficiaries earning cash from 29.8% at baseline to 54.9% at endline.

*“ACCESS project brought two (2) grinding mills for income generation to SME group members in Pariak and Melut Payams. Income from the grinding mills help the members to pay for other needs like school fees for their children, buy books and other food items they lack.” -KII with Payam Administrator-Melut County*

### **Outcome 1.3: Strengthened nutrition and IYCF interventions and integrated WASH services**

The project established and trained mother to mother support groups on exclusive breastfeeding, kitchen gardening, dietary diversity, hygiene practice, complementary feeding, MUAC screening, construction of Tippy Tap among others. These actions have translated into the significant improvement (**P=0.000**) in the proportion of children aged 6-36 months who consume a diet of minimum diversity from 33.7% at baseline to 54% at endline. The same impact has been seen in the increased number of children 0-5 months fed exclusively on breast milk from 21.8% at baseline to 37.9% at endline.

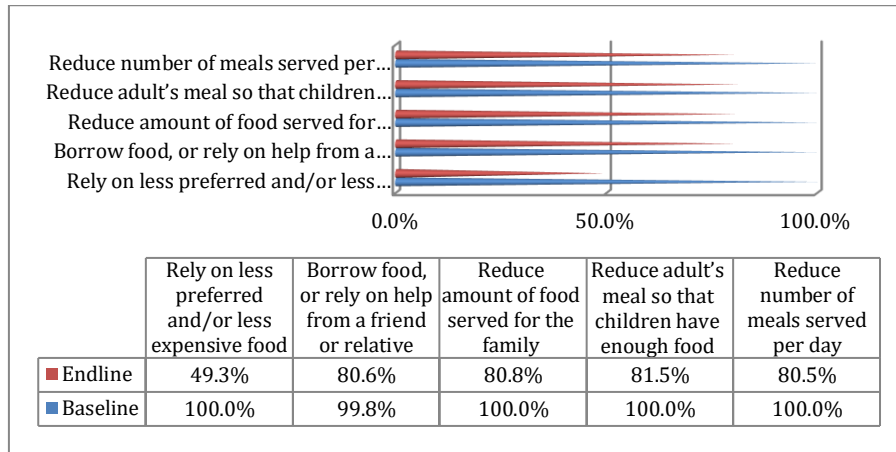
The project investment in water infrastructure mainly through rehabilitation of existing water works and capacity building training of the water user committees has resulted into significant increase (**P=0.000**) in the proportion of household using basic drinking water services from 19.8% at baseline to 29.8% at endline. On sanitation the project interventions around construction of latrines for vulnerable community members and passing of key hygiene messages has seen a significant increase in the proportion of household using basic sanitation services from 14.9% at baseline to 18.3% at endline. Additionally, the proportion of household with soap and water at hand washing station has also increased from 3.1% at baseline to 26.9% at endline.

*“I know the WV project has done well here for example they supported the community in Ulang Payam by installing solar system to pump water to the elevated water tank. This water system is currently serving a huge population within Ulang Township and its environs.” -Ulang County WASH Department focal person*

**Purpose 2: Strengthened community cohesion through improved disaster risk management, protection and mental health psycho-social support (MHPSS) services.**

**Outcome 2.1: Strengthened community structures and early warning systems (EWS) for mitigating shocks**

The positive impact of the project FSL activities on the household food production has translated into significant (**P=0.000**) reduction in the use of negative coping strategies (rCSI) among households from the reduction in the reduced coping strategy index from 42.7 at baseline to 12.6 at endline. Figure 1 shows a significant reduction in the use of the use of negative coping strategies to food insecurity between baseline and endline.



**Figure 1: Comparison of coping strategies at baseline and endline**

**Outcome 2.2: Strengthened community managed disaster risk reduction (CMDRR) systems**

The project interventions in supporting community level disaster risk reduction initiatives has had some positive impact in that the ability of the households to recover from shocks and stresses has significantly (**P=0.000**) improved from 1.3 at baseline to 3.6 at evaluation. The project trained participants and subsequently distributed assorted tools including; hand hoes, pickaxes, megaphones, spades, and trumpets. These tools facilitated community members in the construction of dykes, and flood diversion channels.

*“We were trained on disaster preparedness and learnt how to make dikes in preparation for floods. We were also taught the importance of maintaining peace and from the training we have been actively preaching peace messages through churches and community public gathering aimed at enhancing peaceful co-existence.” -FGD discussant - Ulang County*

**Outcome 2.3: Equitable leadership systems and communal structures supported**

In a bid to build capacity of local government staff to respond to community shocks, the project provided training on conflict and risks mitigation. This and other related initiatives has seen a significant increase (**P=0.000**) in the number of households that believe that local government will respond effectively to future shocks/stresses from 32% at baseline to 77.2% at endline.

**Outcome 2.4: Improved access to community based MHPSS resources and services to strengthen community cohesion**

The project formed and trained early warning committees, which conduct sensitizations, to participants with key DRR messages, identify indigenous and current early warning response mechanisms and re-activated community early warning response systems for shock mitigation. The impact of these initiatives are seen an increase in the proportion of community members taking part in collective actions from 34.1% at baseline to 48.1% at endline.

**Outcome 2.5: Strengthened Rapid Response (RR) capacity to save lives and alleviate human suffering during rapid onset shocks.**

The proportion of households reporting improved capacity to respond and recover from sudden onset of shocks has improved significantly from 6.2% at baseline to 25.9% at endline. This has been realized through cocktail of intervention activities undertaken by the project through awareness raising session that helped to disseminate messages and information on the correct utilization, control and management of the shocks and stresses.

**Purpose 3: Strengthened coordination, systems and learning to support recovery and resilience.**

**Outcome 3.1: Improved capacity of the community to coordinate, integrate knowledge and learning on recovery and resilience.**

There has also been a significant increase (**P=0.000**) in the proportion of people reporting improvements in their feelings of well-being and ability to cope at the end of the program from 49.8% (metric score-17.43) at baseline to 62.9% (metric score-22.0) at endline. The result of which is evident in the significant improvement in the social capital index for households from 62.4 recorded at baseline to 65.7 at endline (**P=0.000**).

**3.3. Effectiveness**

**Purpose 1: Strengthened household livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and nutrition.**

**Outcome 1.1: Improved household food production and storage**

**3.3.1. Food Consumption Score (FCS)**

Food Consumption Score (FCS) is a frequency weighted diet diversity score calculated using the frequency of consumption of different food groups consumed by a household during the last 7 days before the survey. To compute the FCS, the consumption frequencies are summed and multiplied by the standardized food group weight. Households are then classified into three food consumption categories: poor, borderline, and adequate food consumption, using the adjusted thresholds of the FCS (poor: 0 - 28; borderline: 28.1 – 42, and acceptable: > 43).

Overall, the findings (Table 6) show a statistically significant (**P=0.000**) improvement in household mean FCS from 19.0 at baseline to 29.6 at endline. The proportion of households with acceptable FCS has significantly (**P=0.000**) increased for 14.6% at baseline to 31.9% at endline while those with poor and borderline food consumption score has also reduced significantly (**P=0.000**) from 85.4% at baseline to 68.1% at endline. This positive change is attributable to the contribution the ACCESS project has made in the project locations by reaching more farmers through delivering basic and refresher trainings on improved farming techniques and post-harvest management techniques through farmer field school and kitchen garden approaches which translated into increased crop production.

**Table 6 : Food Consumption Score of beneficiary households**

Food Consumption Score	Baseline	95% CI	Endline	95% CI	Sign 95%
Mean food consumption score for the total HHs	19.0	(17.5, 20.5)	29.6	(27.6, 31.5)	<b>P=0.024</b>
% HHs with poor food consumption score	69.3%	(66.0, 73.7)	52.1%	(48.3-55.9)	<b>P=0.000</b>
% HHs with borderline food consumption score	16.1%	(13.3, 19.5)	16.0%	(13.3-19.0)	<b>P=0.001</b>
% HHs with acceptable food consumption score	14.6%	(18.9, 25.9)	31.9%	(28.4-35.5)	<b>P=0.000</b>

Analysis of qualitative data reveal that in the FY 22-23 alone the project established and trained four seed multiplication groups one from each County on seed quality, seed selection, best crop agronomic practices and weed control. In total, 151 farmers (M=126 & F=25) were reached through the trainings.

Following the training, all the four groups were provided with foundation seeds that included Maize, Sorghum, Cow peas and Beans seed varieties which are well adapted to the agro-ecological setting of the targeted Counties in Upper Nile State. These seeds were utilized to establish 7.5 acres of Maize, 3 acres of Sorghum and 2.5 acres of Cowpeas of seed multiplication plots. Additionally, the project trained and supported five (5) fisher-folk groups of 50 members (F=18 & M=37) with newly constructed canoes and accessories like nets and nets in Nasir, Baliet, Melut and Ulang counties. These were meant to facilitate fishing activities along the Nile and Sobat rivers for income generation.

On cross-tabulation with gendered household type, the findings (Table 4) indicate an overall statistically significant improvement ( $P=0.000$ ) from baseline in FCS across all the gendered household categories. Households with Female No Male adults did better (32.0) compared to baseline (17.4). Additionally, Male and Female (MNF) households also recorded a relatively highest FCS of 31.2 compared to baseline (19.6). However, value reported for MNF and CNA households should be supported by large sample size as this sample is not adequate enough to tell the actual value for the two categories (Figure 2).

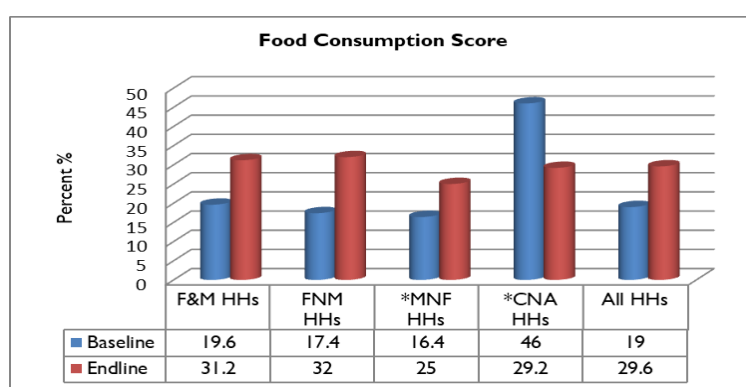


Figure 2: FCS for surveyed households, by gendered HH type

Further analyses of qualitative data revealed that the project collaborated with the four County Departments of agriculture and food security and trained 8 farmer groups, with 207 (F=149 & M=58) participants on climate-resilient agronomic practices including mulching, double digging, intercropping, sack mound gardening, pruning, thinning, and staking among others. Additionally, they were trained on phyto-sanitation and crop protection practices related to the management of pests and diseases utilizing eco-friendly and locally available materials such as red chili and neem tree extracts. These extracts are considered effective in the management of insects such as the fall army worm which are common amongst the communities in Upper Nile. Additionally, the participants also had their capacity built on post-harvest technology and crop handling processes. All these initiatives worked in synergy to bring about increased productivity among beneficiary households.

*“We received training from ACCESS project on improved farming technologies are row line planting, pest control, seed multiplication, nursery bed and transplanting. We applied what we learnt on our farmers and the yield increased so much meaning more food for our household members.” -FGD with Farmer Field School Members- Baliet County*

### 3.3.2. Household Hunger Scale

HHS is a food deprivation scale that measures the percent of households experiencing hunger. To collect data for this indicator, the person in the household in charge of food preparation is asked about the frequency with which three events were experienced by any household member in the last four

weeks: 1) No food at all in the house 2) Went to bed hungry 3) Went all day and night without eating<sup>8</sup>. The responses to the questions are coded and summed into a numerical score (with a minimum possible score of 0 and a maximum possible score of 6) representing three levels of hunger: Little to no hunger (HHS score = 0 to 1); (2) Moderate hunger (HHS score = 2 to 3); and (3) Severe hunger (HHS score = 4 to 6).

From the findings (Table 8) the proportion of households facing moderate to severe hunger has significantly decreased from 97.8% at baseline to 77.4% at endline (**P= 0.000**) with no case of severe hunger reported. Further analyses show a corresponding significant (**P=0.000**) increase in the number of households facing little to no hunger 2.2% (baseline) to 22.6% (Endline). This finding corroborates the results from the FY23 annual survey which found that the prevalence of moderate hunger had declined from 97.8% at baseline to 76.1% whereas in the same period, the prevalence of households experiencing little to no hunger improved from only 2.2% to 23.9%. This positive change is attributable to the contribution made by the ACCESS project in reaching more farmers through a plethora of multi-sectoral activities spanning basic and refresher trainings on improved farming techniques and post-harvest techniques through farmer field school and kitchen garden approaches which translated into increased crop production.

**Table 7: Percentage of households experiencing hunger, by sex of direct beneficiary.**

Hunger Scale	Time	F&M	FNM	*MNF	*CNA	All HHS	Sign at 95%
Little to no hunger	Endline	24.3%	14.1%	13.9%	14.3%	22.6%	<i>P=0.000</i>
	Baseline	1.2%	5.1%	3.8%	-	2.2%	
	95% CI	(20.8, 28.1)	(7.5,23.4)	(4.7,29.5)	(1.8, 4.2)	(19.5, 25.9)	
Moderate hunger	Endline	57.8%	75.3%	61.1%	71.4%	59.8%	<i>P=0.000</i>
	Baseline	98.8%	94.9%	96.2%	-	97.8%	
	95% CI	(53.5, 61.9)	(64.7, 84.0)	(43.5, 76.9)	(41.9, 91.6)	(56.1,63.5)	
Severe hunger	Endline	0.0%	0.0%	05.0%	0.0%	0.0%	<i>P=0.000</i>
	Baseline	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	
	95% CI	(14.8, 21.4)	(5.0, 19.2)	(12.1, 42.2)	(1.8, 4.2)	(14.8, 20.7)	
% HHs with moderate/severe hunger	Endline	75.7%	85.9%	86.1%	85.7%	77.4%	<i>P=0.000</i>
	Baseline	98.8%	94.9%	96.2%	-	97.8%	
	95% CI	(71.9, 79.2)	(76.6,92.5)	(70.5,95.3)	(57.2,98.2)	(74.1, 80.5)	
Number of HHs	Endline	552	85	36*	26*	687	
	Baseline	420	137	49*	1*	584	

Further analyses of qualitative data from FGDs and Key informants revealed that beside the direct support received from ACCESS project in the form of capacity building training, the project also assisted five (5) farmer groups, that comprised of 45 (F=15 & M=30) members with fish drying kilns in Nasir County. Additionally, the project established two demonstration plots in Ulang and Doma Payams all situated in Ulang County. In total, 50 participants (F=44 & M=6) were engaged in the establishment and management of these demonstration plots. The plots were planted with improved varieties of Maize, Red Sorghum and Cowpeas. Furthermore, the project distributed light post-harvest handling

<sup>8</sup> FFP Indicator Handbook, January 2020

equipment that included 5 plastic sheets and 5 hermetic bags to 4 farmer group with 94 (F=46 & M=48) members from all the four Counties of implementation.

*“ACCESS distributed seed for crops that took a shorter time to mature. We can now buy clothes for ourselves and family members, pay school fees and medication compared to those years when we used to rely mostly on humanitarians. We are also able to open different business as individuals and group and are generating us income. We now have enough fish for both foods at home and for market to generate us money.” -FGD participant –Ulang County*

### **3.3.3. Improved Agricultural Management or Technology Practices**

Findings show a statistically significant improvement ( $P=0.000$ ) in the proportion of households that have adopted context specific improved crop management practices/technologies from 32.2% at baseline to 64.8% at endline. For example, adoption of improved agronomic practices (early planting, spacing, thinning, weeding, row planting) has improved from 48.9% at baseline to 63.6% at endline. The same trend is seen in the increased adoption of; mulching from 5.9% to 25.4%; drip irrigation from 0.7% to 22.7%; post-harvest handling & preservation from 16% to 30.2% and improved crop storage facility from 2.1% to 30.3%. Adoption of improved livestock management practices also increase significantly from 27.1% at baseline to 37% at endline while natural resource management has also seen increased adoption by the project participants from a mere 1% at baseline to 45.9% at endline. This improvement in adoption of improved agricultural management practices among the farmer households can be attributed to the contribution of ACCESS project (Appendix 7.3).

Analysis of qualitative data show that the project collaborated with four County Departments of agriculture and food security and trained eight farmer groups, with 207 (F=149 & M=58) participants on good agronomic practices i.e. phyto-sanitation and crop protection practices related to the management of pests and diseases utilizing eco-friendly and locally available materials such as red chili and neem tree extracts. These extracts are considered effective in the management of insects such as the fall army worm which are common amongst the communities in Upper Nile. The participants also had their capacity built on post-harvest technology and crop handling processes.<sup>9</sup>

From FGDs with Farmer Field School (FFS) members across the project sites reveal that they received capacity building trainings from ACCESS project on practices such as; early planting spacing, gapping/thinning, line planting intercropping/mixed cropping, pruning, weeding among other. They intimated that they have adopted some of the improved practices on their farms and have seen positive results in form of increased yields.

*“We learned together as a group in the FFS things like; line planting of crops and we later did the same on our individual farms. I can tell you the crops were growing very well and the harvest was much better than before. We have surplus to sell in the market and the money we got helped us to pay other bills like schools fees”. -FGD with FFS-Nassir County*

*“The technologies promoted by ACCESS were favorable to the environment and that most of the beneficiaries adopted it very well and they practice it in the community. For example, mulching, application of local pest control such as the use of neem leaves and ash were adopted very well.” -FGD with FFS-Ulang County*

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<sup>9</sup> WV South Sudan ACCESS-720BHA2|CA00004 – Annual Report - October 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

### Outcome 1.2: Increased household income & economic empowerment of vulnerable groups

Under this indicator the project supported 1,500 HHs focusing on improving vulnerable women, men and youth capacity to save money, engage in borrowing, develop business skills, and participate in markets for on farm/off-farm products. The project was targeting poor HHs for financial success and sustainability using the WV Savings for Transformation (S4T) model.

#### 3.3.4. Group Based Saving And Loan

The evaluation sought to establish the proportion of households participating in group-based saving, microfinance and lending programs and see if there has been any change since the ACCESS project started working in the target locations. The findings (Figure 3) show a statistically significant improvement ( $P=0.000$ ) in the number of household involved in group-based saving or loan programs from 12.6% at baseline to 37% at endline. Further analysis shows a corresponding significant increase ( $P=0.000$ ) in those who saved cash from 35.3% (baseline) to 69.3% (endline) and those who took loans from the group also increased from 27.7% (baseline) to 70.6% (endline). This achievement is attributable to the contribution made by the ACCESS project in marketing and promoting group-based savings and loan groups in the project area. This was done through supporting the formation and capacity trainings of VSLA groups and providing them with VSLA kits.

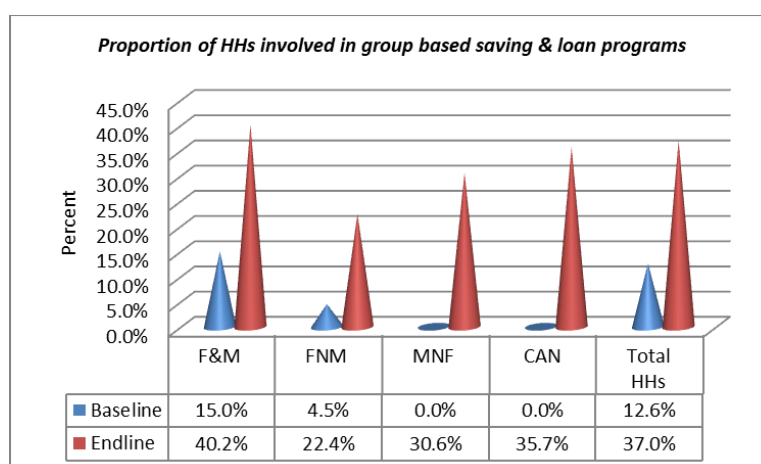


Figure 3: Proportion of household involved in group-based saving or loan programs.

Analysis of qualitative data show that ACCESS provided capacity building training to the VSLA groups in areas such as; VSLA methodology, group dynamics and leadership, literacy, numeracy, financial management and record keeping, Constitution development, First saving meeting, First loan disbursement meeting and First and loan repayment meeting in the counties. Additionally, the project monitored record keeping and various activities of Village Savings and Loan Associations in the Payams across the four targeted Counties. Interview and focus group discussions with VSLAs across the project sites, reveal that they pulled savings from sales of agriculture products, fish sales, and other voluntary savings by members of mother-to-mother support care groups, disaster risk reduction management committees members among others.

To strengthen transformative business skills among farmers and other vulnerable groups, the project trained small and medium enterprises (SME), on market-driven small and medium enterprises (SME) business start-up skills, produce marketing, value addition, record keeping and financial management. The project also distributed two (2) grinding mills for income generation to SME group members in Pariak and Melut Payams – all in Melut County. The two groups assisted have a total of 30 (F=20 & M=10) members. Additionally, the project distributed assorted restaurant start-up items to four (4) small and medium enterprises (SME) groups in Nasir and Ulang Counties. The four groups comprised a total of 40 (F=22 & M=18) participants.

This has resulted into many beneficiaries taking credit to invest in farm activities, selling tea, opening shops/businesses and restaurants. The youths that are engaged in VSLAs are able to save money for school fees and become more innovative in business, which also reduces the likelihood of them being involved in violent crime. VSLA has generated sizeable amount of liquidity in the project is explore digitizing the VSLA activities in partnership with mobile money platforms.

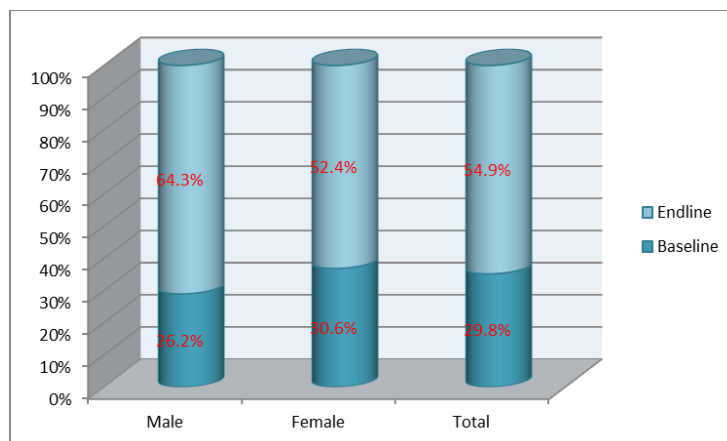
Focus group discussions with varied VSLA groups revealed that the group-based savings and loaning approach has been received very well among the beneficiaries and has resulted into positive economic benefits to the members of the VSLA group as shown in the FGD excerpts below.

*“In our group we saved 350,000 SSP in cash in our boxes today. This money was lent to some 3 members who have started business..... the project trained us on VSLA management and how to identify new business opportunities.” -VSLA, in Ulang County.*

*“ACCESS project brought two (2) grinding mills for income generation to SME group members in Pariak and Melut Payams. Income from the grinding mills help the members to pay for other needs like school fees for their children, buy books and other food items they lack.” -KII with Payam Administrator-Melut County*

### 3.3.5. Access To Cash

The evaluation sought to establish the proportion of women and men in union (married or living with someone) who earned cash or combined cash and in kind for the work<sup>10</sup> they had done in the previous twelve months preceding the survey. The findings (Figure 4) show a significant improvement in the proportion of men and women in union who earned cash in the previous twelve months from 29.8% at baseline to 54.9% at endline. Further analysis established a statistically significant difference between baseline and endline baseline values (**P=0.000**). Analyses of qualitative data show that ACCESS project supported the establishment and training of small businesses/enterprises and supported them to engage in identified viable sectors/value chains which translated into increased number of beneficiaries finding work and earning cash to support income generation.



<sup>10</sup>Work includes, but is not limited to agricultural daily wage labor, off-farm daily wage labor, income generation activities, sale of goods produced or processed outside the home or at the home, homestead garden or farm (e.g., vegetables, eggs, fish, livestock, artisanal goods), or petty trading, participating in cash for work, food for work, or conditional cash transfers and/or productive safety net programs. For this indicator, work does not include caring for one’s own children, cooking, cleaning or doing other routine chores for one’s own household (e.g., fetching water, collecting firewood) or being involved in agricultural production solely for household consumption.

**Figure 4: Percent of respondents earned cash for the work, by sex and age**

Further analyses show that the ACCESS project supported the beneficiaries to establish small businesses or enterprises and provided capacity building training on small business management skills, diversified livelihoods and records keeping assessing the operating environment and business plan development skills.

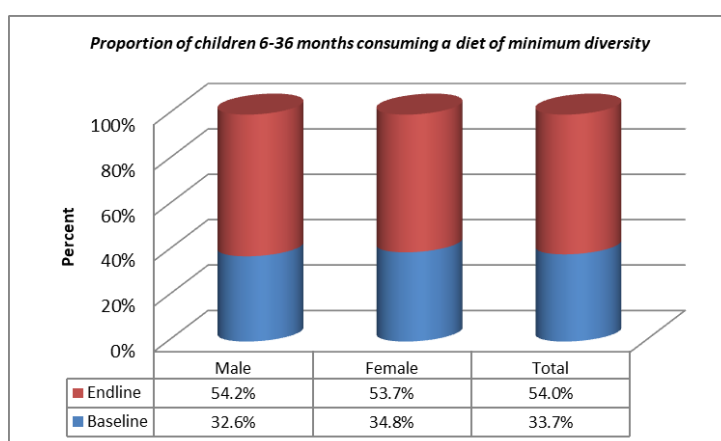
*“We received materials like sewing cloths and we learnt how to use the tailoring machine, and this is helping our families now, we are able to add on food and buy clothes for our children.” -FGD discussant - Nassir County*

**Outcome 1.3: Strengthened nutrition and IYCF interventions and integrated WASH services**

**3.3.6. Minimum Dietary Diversity for Children 6-36 months of age (MDD-C)**

The minimum dietary diversity for children measures the prevalence of children 6–36 months old who received five or more of 8 food groups including breast milk. The survey covered a total of 149 children 6-36 months. In this survey, MDD-C analysis was computed based proportion of children 6-36 months old who received five or more different food groups based on a 24-hour diet recall with breast milk.

Findings (Figure 5) show a statistically significant improvement (P=0.000) in the proportion of children aged 6-36 months who consume a diet of minimum diversity from 33.7% at baseline to 54% at endline.<sup>11</sup> This improvement can be attributed to the contribution the project made through multi-sectoral approaches like training on resilient, nutrition sensitive agricultural and fishery practices and Maternal Infant and Young Child Nutrition (MIYCN) messages) that worked in synergy to bring about these positive changes.



**Figure 5: Proportion of children aged 6-36 months who consume a diet of minimum diversity.**

The adoption of modern agricultural practices increased food production among the beneficiary farmers, while at the same time key nutrition messages were also being passed to encourage households to grow diverse crops/vegetables to ensure dietary diversity and proper food utilization at the household level. Analysis of qualitative data show that during home visits the program reached children 0-59 months and pregnant and lactating women (PLW) with nutrition-specific interventions

<sup>11</sup> The baseline data was missing the breastfeeding information/data for 6-23 months hence a limitation.

through community nutrition volunteers. Additionally, the project food security and livelihoods staff partnered with County Agricultural extension workers and trained lead mothers on nutritious crops, vegetable gardening and diversification of food sources with the aim of boosting household dietary diversity.

The project also established sixteen community nutritious demonstration vegetable gardens in collaboration with mother-to-mother support groups (MTMSGs) in Baliet, Melut and Ulang Counties. A total of 45 MTMSGs members participated in the establishment of the gardens. In the FY 22-23 the project also procured and distributed assorted tools and seeds to 60 (F=60) Mother-to-Mother support groups (MTMSGs) in Kurmuot and Yomding Payams in Ulang County. These inputs facilitated dry season farming activities along the banks of the Sobat River. ACCESS also established and trained mother to mother support groups on maternal infant young child nutrition (MIYCN) and hygiene promotion besides cooking demonstration sessions aimed at developing and testing the acceptability and feasibility of nutrition recipes for young children and family feeding. The participants gained skills and knowledge on how to utilize and prepare diverse complementary foods.

*“Yes we were taught during cooking demonstrations on how to enrich porridge using eggs, paste, and pulses for our children below 2 years of age... as a result our children now appear healthier than before”. -FGD with M2M Care Group-Melut County*

### 3.3.7. Exclusive Breastfeeding

In total, 281 children 0-5 months of age were included in this survey. Analysis for prevalence of exclusive breastfeeding was computed on a weighted sample. The finding (Figure 6) show a statistically significant (P=0.000) improvement in the proportion of children 0-5 months fed exclusively on breast milk from 21.8% at baseline to 37.9% at endline. However this figure is still lower than the national average-69% projected by UNICEF 12. It is notable that exclusive breastfeeding rate is relatively much higher in girls compared to boy possibly due to the traditional belief in the project that boys cannot survive of breast milk alone. Even though the endline value is still lower than the South Sudan national average of 69% projected by UNICEF 13, it points to the impact ACCESS project has made in promoting this life-saving practice in the project sites.

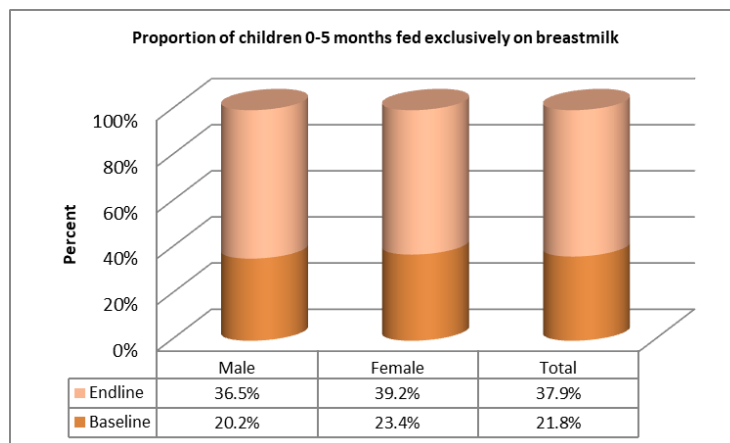


Figure 6: Proportion of children 0–5 months fed exclusively on breastmilk.

<sup>12</sup> UNICEF, August 2020.

<sup>13</sup> UNICEF, August 2020.

Analyses of qualitative data show that in the FY 22-23 alone sixteen (16) mother-to-mother support groups (MTMSGs), comprising of 243 (all females) participants were trained on exclusive breastfeeding, dietary diversity, hygiene practice, complementary feeding, MUAC screening methodology, construction of Tippy Tap, child spacing and counselling among others. The community nutrition volunteers and nutrition officers facilitated the sessions during home visits and support group sessions. The project deliberately involved the male in nutrition activities which contributed to improved feeding practices. Topics discussed in the sessions equipped women with knowledge and skills on EBF and other nutrition practices which they disseminate other mothers in the community the result of which was the increase in the prevalence of EBF in the project sites.

*“The group was established on 17th of December 2022 by WVSS. We are 30 members. The purpose of the group is raising awareness on nutrition, hygiene and care for children by young mothers. We have been teaching/passing to community members messages on MIYCN and WASH practices for example frequent hand washing. We are also helping the pregnant and lactating mother with messages on good nutrition feeding to the children.” -FGD with CHWs-Baliet County*

### 3.3.8. Access To Basic Drinking Water Services

Finding (Figure 7) show a significant increase (P=0.000) in the proportion of household using basic drinking water services in the project area from 19.8% at baseline to 29.8% at endline. This figure is still lower compared to 50% reported national average<sup>14</sup>. Nasir County had the highest proportion (44.7%) of HH using basic water services, followed by Melut (40%). The low score in Baliet could be due to the fact that the water system was under renovation at the time of the evaluation. This improvement is partly as a result of the contribution of the project investment in water infrastructure mainly through rehabilitation of existing water works and capacity building of the water user committees in the project area.

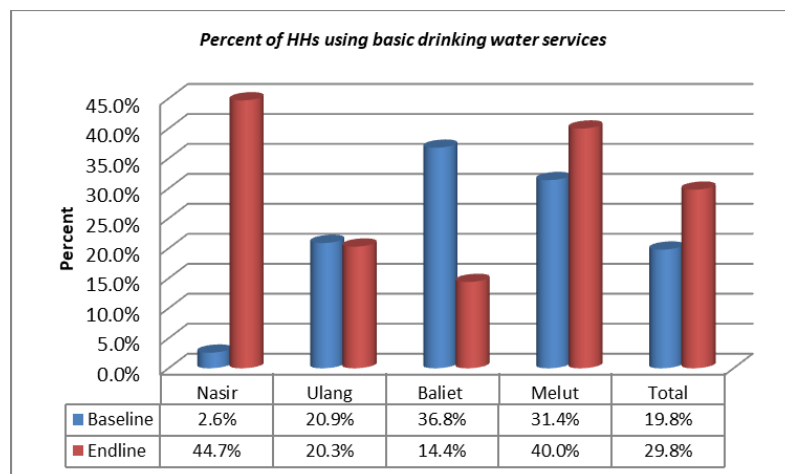


Figure 7: Percent of households using basic drinking water services

Analyses of qualitative data reveal that in the FY 22-23 alone the project completed the construction of a solar-powered elevated water supply system in Ulang Payam, Ulang County. The water system has capacity to supply 32,000 liters of clean water at full capacity and is currently serving a population of 700 households (estimated 4,200 individuals) from Ulang Township. The project also trained two local water point operators charged with managing the

<sup>14</sup> UNICEF, August 2020

facility while working closely with the area water committee and the County authorities for sustainability. Additionally, the project undertook the construction of the multi-purpose water treatment plant at Gelachel Payam, in Baliet County. The construction of five roof water harvest systems was completed at Kopuot Primary School in Ulang, Ulang Health Center and another one at Yomding Primary School – all in Ulang County. All these are serving to improve water supply and hygiene through facilitation of hand washing for pupils and persons using the above-mentioned facilities. The project also completed construction of roof water catchment systems at Baliet PHCC and at Baliet Primary School. FGD with various water committees revealed that availability of water by the project has played a big role in boosting growing of dry season crops like Okra, tomatoes and Sukuma.

*“Water Management Committee was formed on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2023 by World Vision South Sudan. They are 10 members, 5 males and 5 female.... We now plant dry season crops such as tomatoes, okra, maize and Sukuma and irrigation systems are used to water the crops.” -Water Management Committee-Baliet County*

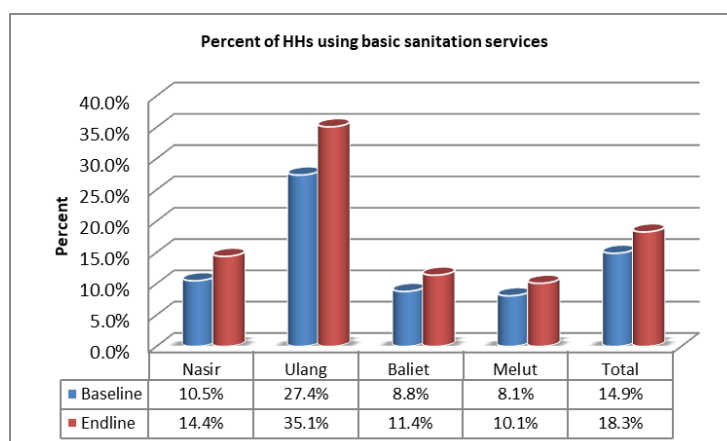
The hygiene promotion activities undertaken by the project has seen a significant increase in the proportion of household treating water by chlorination from 55.5% at baseline to 73.4% at endline.

*“I know the WV project has done well here for example they supported the community in Ulang Payam by installing solar system to pump water to the elevated water tank. This water system is currently serving a huge population within Ulang Township and its environs.” -Key Informant – Ulang County WASH Department focal person*

### 3.3.9. Access to basic sanitation service.

Finding (Figure 8) shows an increase (P=0.000) in the proportion of households using basic sanitation services in the project area from 14.9% at baseline to 18.3% at endline. It is notable that this figure is comparable to the 17% recorded nationally. About 68.7% of the sanitation facilities were being shared by other households. The project made significant contribution in the area of sanitation through hygiene promotion and construction of latrines at institution and target households of vulnerable community members.

Analysis of qualitative data reveal that in the FY 22-23 alone the project supported the construction of 33 blocks of semi-permanent latrines including three in Jikmir Payam, 3 in Kuerenge-ke Payam, 3 in Ulang and 3 in Melut and another 3 in Yomding Payam. Additionally, others were completed in Maker, Paloich and Nasir Town Payams while the construction of another 15 semi-permanent latrines had also been completed by end October 2023. Further analyses show that by the end of September 2023, thirteen (13) VIP latrine blocks had also been completed across the project area (Ulang -4; Melut-4 and Baliet -5). These latrines were constructed in Primary schools and health facilities and have greatly served to improve the hygiene and sanitation of these institutions.



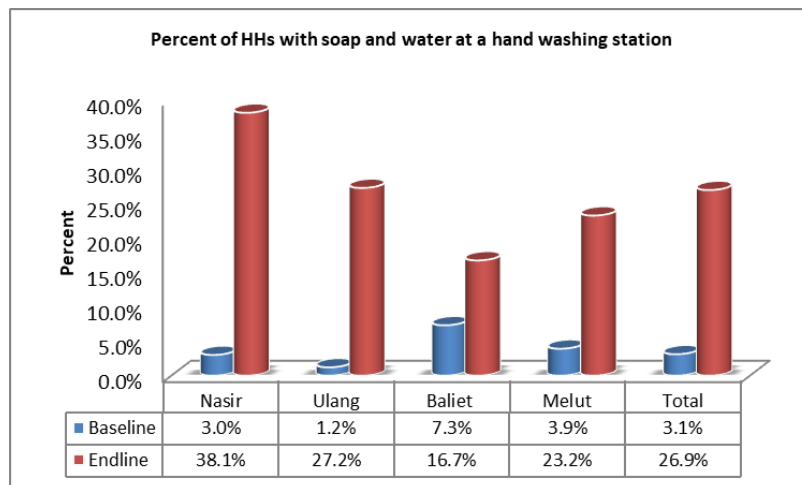
**Figure 8: Percent of households using basic sanitation services**

Analyses of data from KIs with a representative of the County Department of Health reveal that despite these efforts by WV and other humanitarian agencies, open defecation is still rampant in the project area and more still needs to be done by all partners to arrest this situation.

*“WV has done a good job in constructing latrines in institutions and for some few vulnerable households. But the situation is still bad. You will only find latrine in the homes of the government officials like the commissioner and maybe an army general but not private homes, at least you will also find latrines at the facilities like schools and health facilities constructed by the organizations but in rare cases that you will find latrines in private home as 90% of the population go to open defecation with exception of the NGO compounds.” -Key Informant – Nasir County WASH Department focal person*

### 3.3.10. Soap and water at a handwashing station

For this indicator the respondents were asked to show where members of their household most often washed their hands. Thereafter the survey team observed for presence of water and a detergent at the hand washing station on premises. Finding (Figure 9) show a statistically significant increase (**P=0.000**) in the proportion of household with soap and water at hand washing station from 3.1% to 26.9% at endline. The positive change recorded can be attributed to the contribution made by ACCESS project through numerous hygiene promotion sessions conducted across the projects locations.



**Figure 9: Percent of households with soap and water at a handwashing station**

Analysis of qualitative data reveal that in FY 22-23 alone the project conducted 40 hygiene promotion sessions across 28 Payams in the four Counties reaching 6,267 (M=2,444 & F=3,823) individuals with hygiene messages. The campaigns focused on raising awareness on key hygiene messages which included hand washing at critical times to prevent water borne diseases and COVID-19. Community members were also sensitized on the importance of latrine usage and dangers associated with Open Defecation (OD). Additionally, the project formed and trained four (4) hygiene clubs in Yomding and Ulang Payams in Ulang County, in addition to Gelachel and Abwong Payams in Baliet County. Each hygiene club comprise of 12 members. In total, 48 (F=24 & M=24) members were trained. Further in response to widespread flooding the grant collaborated with the WASH Cluster and secured WASH NFIs which were distributed to 3,297 households that included 1,997 and 1,300 households from Nasir and Ulang County respectively. Each household received 2 bars of soap, 60 sachets of water treatment tablets, 1 water filter cloth, 1 20L bucket with tap and 1 20L bucket without tap. The WASH NFIs distribution was preceded by a detailed initial rapid needs assessment (IRNA) which was conducted by WV in coordination with UNOCHA, INGOs, CBOs and County authorities between October and November in the two Counties.

“Yes, we were taught by staff from WV during our monthly M2M support group meeting on the importance of handwashing before we feed our babies, before we prepare food for the baby and after cleaning the baby’s feces. As a result, we have realized that incidences of diseases in children have greatly reduced so much after we practiced what we were taught”.

-FGD with M2M Support Group-Melut County

**Purpose 2: Strengthened community cohesion through improved disaster risk management, protection and mental health psycho-social support (MHPSS) services.**

**Outcome 2.1: Strengthened community structures and early warning systems (EWS) for mitigating shocks.**

### 3.3.11. Reduced Coping Strategy Index (rCSI)

The rCSI is a proxy indicator of household food insecurity that is based on a list of behaviors (coping strategies). The index reflects both the frequency of each behavior (i.e. how many days over the last 7 days the coping strategy was used by any member of the household) and severity (i.e. how serious the strategy). The rCSI is based on a list of five food-related coping strategies that the household used in the seven days prior to the survey. The survey households were asked to report on what coping strategies they used during the past 7 days prior to the interview and if there have been shortages of food or money to buy food. To compute the rCSI, the coping strategies are summed and multiplied by their standard weight.

At aggregate level findings show a statistically significant ( $P=0.000$ ) reduction in the use of negative coping strategies (rCSI) among households from 42.7 at baseline to 12.6 at endline (male-11.2; female-12.9). On disaggregation by gendered household, the findings (Figure 10) show that FNM households had the highest mean rCSI of 11.90 while MNF households a relatively lower reduced coping strategy index (15.0) implying those households facing relatively higher negative coping behavior as compared to the other groups.

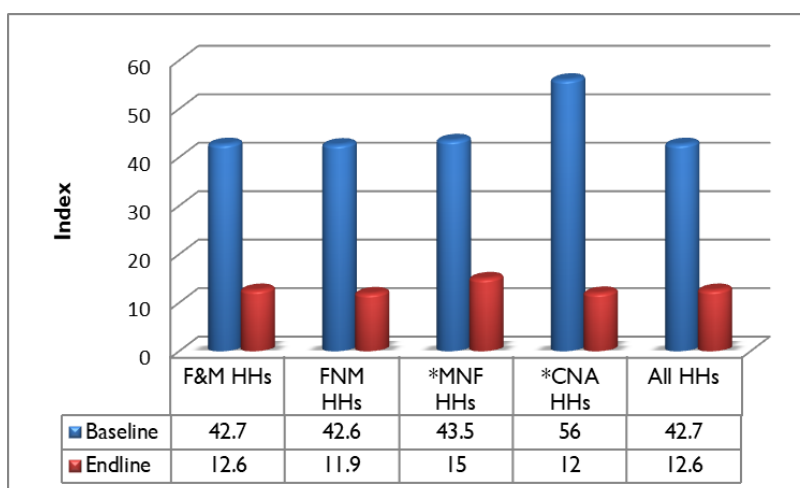


Figure 10: rCSI for surveyed households, by household composition

Analyses of qualitative data revealed that the reason for the reduction in the use of negative coping strategies to food scarcity among the project participants a testament to the positive impact of the ACCESS FSL activities on the household food production. For example, in FY 22-23 alone the project reached 1,129 (F=642 & M=487) households on nutritious crops, food diversification and vegetable gardening across all the targeted Counties with trainings. Following the trainings, the project distributed vegetable seeds to 630 (F=424 & M=206) households in Nasir town Payam, Kuerenge-ke, Jikmir and Maker Payams in Nasir County as well as in Doma, Ulang, Yomding and Kurmuot Payams in Ulang County. The project also partnered with County department of agriculture and food security and school authorities and established twelve (12) school gardens in Baliet, Melut and Ulang Counties.

## Outcome 2.2: Strengthened community managed disaster risk reduction (CMDRR) systems

### 3.3.12. Ability to recover from shocks and stresses

The ability to recover from shocks and stresses index (ARSSI) is an estimation of the ability of households to recover from the typical types of shocks and stressors that the household experienced in the 12 months preceding the survey. To estimate the indicator, respondents were asked a series of binary response questions for 16 contexts specific different shock/stressors that their households experienced and the perceived severity of each shock on the household income and food consumption.

Findings (Table 8) show that the ability of the households to recover from shocks and stresses has significantly ( $P=0.000$ ) improved from ARSSI of 1.3 at baseline to ARSSI of 3.6 at evaluation. Although, the endline estimate is higher than at baseline, still shows low ability of the households in the ACCESS project sites to recover from shock/stress. The main shocks affecting members of the community in the project area include; floods, high food prices and inter-communal violence. Review of documents and interviews with key informants and FGD participants attributed this improvement to the contribution made by ACCESS project multi-sectoral intervention activities.

Category	Baseline	N	CI at 95%	Endline	N	CI at 95%	Sign at 95%
M&F households	1.4	420	(3.303, 3.314)	3.69*	552	(3.667, 3.668)	$P=0.000$
FNM households	1.2	137	(3.315, 3.357)	3.69*	89	(3.669, 3.669)	$P=0.000$
MNF households	1.3	26	(3.303, 3.365)	3.69*	36**	((3.667, 3.669)	$P=0.000$
CNA Households	1.0	1	(3.263, 3.338)	3.69*	14**	(3.665, 3.669)	$P=0.000$
Total Household	1.3	581	(3.306, 3.317)	3.67*	687	(3.667, 3.668)	$P=0.000$

Table 8: ARSSI mean score for gendered households.

Further analysis reveal that to support community level disaster risk reduction initiatives, the project trained participants and subsequently distributed assorted tools included (hand hoes, pickaxes, megaphones, spades, and trumpets) to 150 (F=50 & M=100) participants in the three Payams of Adong, Abwong and Gelachel all in Baliet County. These tools facilitated community members in the construction of dykes, and flood diversion channels. The megaphones and trumpets distributed have been used as early warning response systems tools to enhance effectiveness of communicating community early warning such as during flash floods, attack from other armed groups amongst other rapid onset disasters.

*“We were trained on disaster preparedness and learnt how to make dikes in preparation for floods. We were also taught the importance of maintaining peace and from the training we have been actively preaching peace messages through churches and community public gathering aimed at enhancing peaceful co-existence.” -FGD discussant - Ulang County*

## Outcome 2.3: Equitable leadership systems and communal structures supported

### 3.3.13. Effectiveness Of Local Government Response To Shock

The evaluation sought to assess the readiness and responsiveness of local government institutions to effectively respond to future shocks. The respondents were asked if they believed the local government had capacity to respond to future shock in a timely and effective manner. The finding, (Figure 11) shows a statistically significant increase ( $P=0.000$ ) in the number of households that believe that local government will respond effectively to future shocks/stresses from 32% at baseline to 77.2% at endline. Further disaggregation by gendered household type show that Male No Female households were highest (84.3%) followed by Female and Male (77.5%), FNM (71.7%) and CNA (62.5%). In a bid to build capacity of local government staff to respond to community shocks, the project provided

training on conflict and risks mitigation for 50 (M=28 & F=22) participants drawn from Melut and Adong Payam in Melut and Baliet County respectively. The training covered conflict analysis, risks management, types of conflicts and how to identify conflict issues/triggers within communities and equipped the participants with knowledge and skills on peace building.

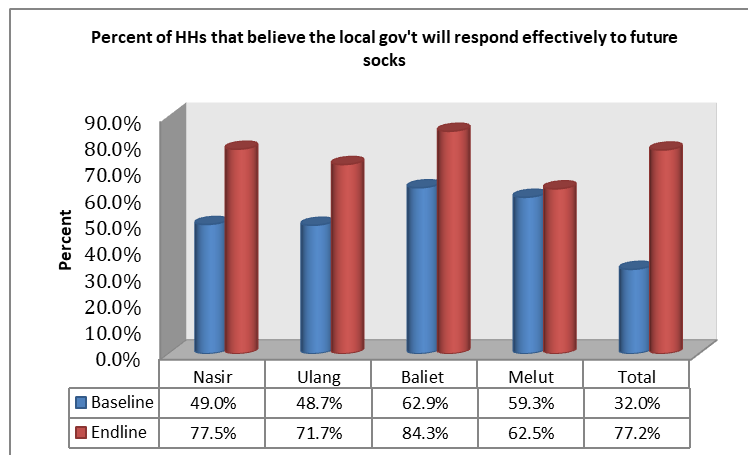


Figure 11: Percent households that believe local government will respond effectively to future shock

Analyses of qualitative data reveal that the project strengthened the capacity of the community to identify report and respond to early warning identifiers. In this regard in FY 22-23 alone the project held eleven (11) community-level disaster risk reduction dialogues in Ulang, Baliet, Nasir and Melut Counties. In total, 1,129 (F=462 & M=667) participants attended the dialogues. Amongst the major community shocks mapped during these DRR dialogues were floods, droughts, conflicts, and wildfires. Participants comprised of chiefs, religious leaders, youths, women, persons with disabilities, elders, IDPs and government authorities. Following these dialogues, three community early warning response plans were developed to raise awareness and mitigate these common negative issues.

**Outcome 2.4: Improved access to community based MHPSS resources and services to strengthen community cohesion**

**3.3.14. Community participation in collective actions**

Collective Action is a form of strategic collaboration that takes an intentional and agreed-upon process that engages interested parties to take joint actions in support of shared objectives or a shared issue. Collective Action can tackle complex development problems through an organized approach to find and implement different and sustainable solutions. The Collective Action approach identifies and actively involves relevant stakeholders to address the development challenges and opportunities of interest<sup>15</sup>. Findings (Figure 12) show that a statistically significant increase ( $P=0.00$ ) in the proportion of community members taking part in collective actions from 34.1% at baseline to 48.1% at endline.

<sup>15</sup> <https://usaidelearninglab.org/collective-action-usaid-programming>

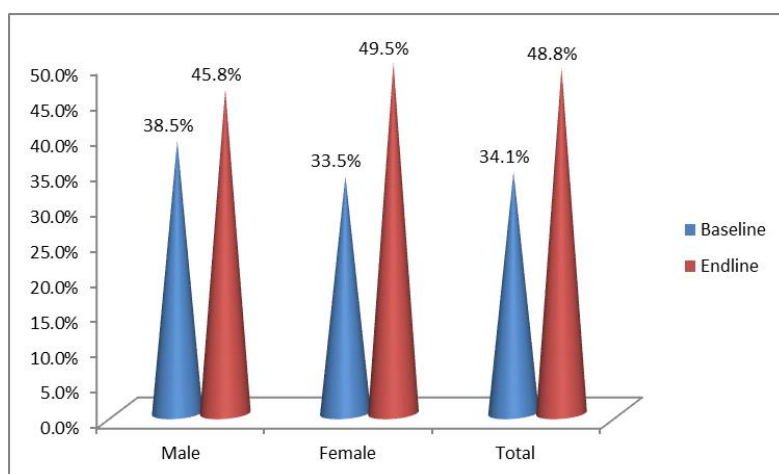


Figure 12: Proportion of households that participated in collective action.

Analyses of qualitative data reveal that the project formed and trained 11 early warning committees, comprised of 458 members (M=248 & F=210). Consequent to their formation, the structures conducted three sensitizations, in which they were able to reach 936 (M=473 & F=463) participants with key DRR messages, identified indigenous and current early warning response mechanisms and re-activated community early warning response systems for shock mitigation. Through the engagements, the participants identified indigenous and current early warning responsesystems, data was generated and used to develop a Payam-specific flood early warning response plans.

**Outcome 2.5: Strengthened Rapid Response (RR) capacity to save lives and alleviate human suffering during rapid onset shocks.**

**3.3.15. Shock Response**

Findings (Figure 13) show that the proportion of households reporting improved capacity to respond and recover from sudden onset of shocks has improved significantly from 6.2% at baseline to 25.9% at endline. Analyses of qualitative data reveal that a total of 1,255 people (M=778 & F=477) from the different Payams within the four targeted Counties were reached through awareness raising session that helped to disseminate messages and information on the correct utilization, control and management of the natural resources available in their communities with great emphasis on their relevance to human life and livestock/animals and how they can be utilized equitably.

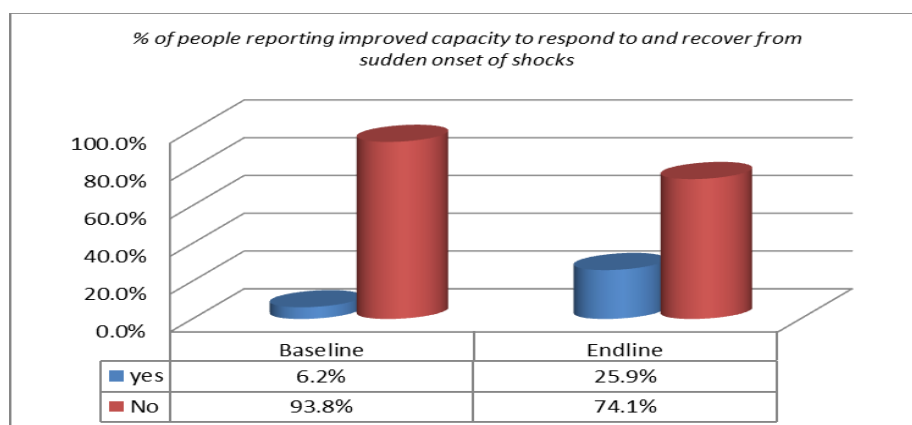


Figure 13: Percent of people who report improved capacity to respond and recover from sudden onset of shocks.

Furthermore, the project conducted community sensitization and awareness sessions on natural resources management in Kuerenge-ke Payam - Nasir County and in Yomding and Ulang Payam – Ulang County. The community awareness promoted the conservation of the environment and

fostered sustainable exploitation of natural resources in the community and built capacity of the community members on natural resources management including mechanisms of disaster risk reduction. The engagements reached 480 ( $F=213$  &  $M=267$ ) participants. These persons have since been engaged in using climate information for the implementation of risk-reducing actions to improve resilience to climate change such as dyke construction.

**Purpose 3: Strengthened coordination, systems and learning to support recovery and resilience.**

**Outcome 3.1: Improved capacity of the community to coordinate, integrate knowledge and learning on recovery and resilience**

**3.3.16. Wellbeing**

The study adopted the Short Warwick- Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale (SWEMWBS), the Office of National Statistics (ONS) subjective well-being questions and a question on social trust, which is known to be a key factor for wellbeing. The SWEMWBS is scored by first summing the scores for each of the seven items, which are scored from 1 to 5. The total raw scores are then transformed into metric scores using the SWEMWBS conversion table<sup>16</sup> which can be found here:

The findings show a statistically significant increase ( $P=0.000$ ) in the proportion of people reporting improvements in their feelings of well-being and ability to cope at the end of the program from 49.8% (metric score-17.43) at baseline to 62.9% (metric score-22.0) at endline. Further disaggregation by gendered household type (Figure 14) show that Male No Female households were highest (84.3%) followed by Female and Male (77.5%), FNM (71.7%) and CAN (62.5%).

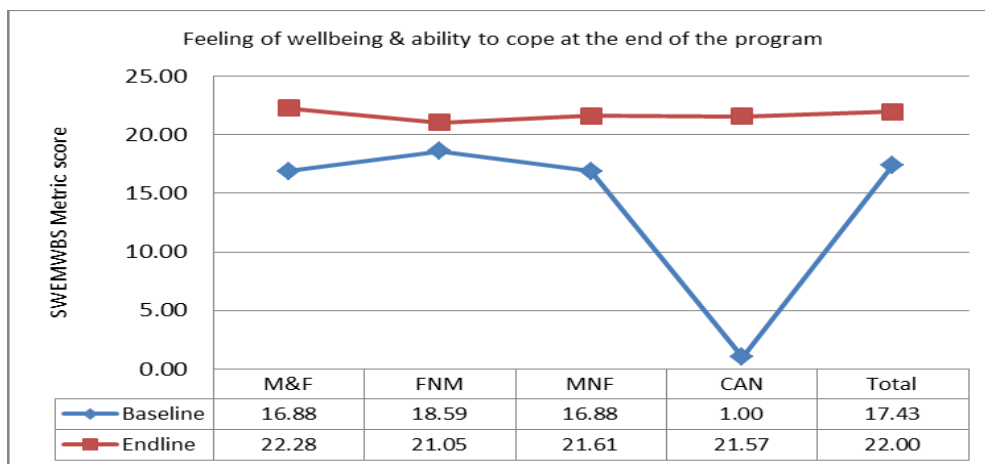


Figure 14: percent of people reporting feelings of well-being and ability to cope at the end of the program.

**3.3.17. Social Capital Index**

Social capital index is a household resilience indicator that measures the ability of households to leverage on social networks for support to mitigate of the impact of shocks and stresses on their

16

[https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/using/howto/swemwbs\\_raw\\_score\\_to\\_metric\\_score\\_conversion\\_table.pdf](https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/sci/med/research/platform/wemwbs/using/howto/swemwbs_raw_score_to_metric_score_conversion_table.pdf)

households. The indicator is constructed from two sub-indices: *Bonding Social Capital* measures the degree of bonding among households within their own communities and *Bridging Social Capital* measures the degree of bridging between households in the area to households outside their own community.

From the findings (Table 9) the social capital index for households has improved significantly from 62.4 recorded at baseline to 65.7 at endline (**P=0.000**). Further analysis shows that social capital is relatively higher within community (68.2) than across different community (63.2). To test, the relationship between the two indexes, a bivariate analysis was computed. The result indicates that there is high positive correlation between the two indices ( $r=0.857$ ,  $P=0.000$ ,  $N=20$ ).

**Table 9: Index of social capital at the household level**

Category	Baseline	N	CI (95%)	Endline	N	CI (95%)	Sign at 95%
Social bonding capital index	66.4	581	(64.3, 68.5)	68.2*	687	(66.4, 70.0)	P=0.000
Social bridging capital index	58.3	581	(56.1, 60.5)	63.2*	687	(61.3, 65.2)	P=0.000
Social capital index F&M HHs	63.5	420	(61.4, 65.7)	65.5*	552	(63.5, 67.4)	P=0.000
Social capital index –FNM HHs	61.7	137	(53.1, 70.3)	62.8*	89	(55.3, 70.1)	P=0.000
Social capital index –MNF HHs**	45.3	26*	(33.2, 57.3)	74.6*	36*	(66.3, 83.0)	P=0.000
Social capital index –CNA HHs**	41.8	1*	(27.4, 56.3)	67.7*	14*	(50.6, 84.8)	P=0.000
<b>Overall index</b>	<b>62.4</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>(60.3, 64.4)</b>	<b>65.7*</b>	<b>687</b>	<b>(63.9, 67.5)</b>	<b>P=0.000</b>

\*\* Inadequate sample size: \*  $p<0.05$

The improvement in social capital index is attributed to the contribution made by ACCESS project in fostering a wide range of intra- and inter-community dialogues that has resulted into peaceful coexistence of community members within and outside their localities. These dialogue sessions have enabled to support communities to identify gaps and opportunities to address differences, and to build and maintain peace within themselves. The dialogue sessions were useful in sharing information on key issues at the community level and provided a platform for discussing local solutions to managing and preventing conflicts. It also offered a platform and strengthened community member's sense of belonging and connection by building relationship with their leaders.

Interview with ACCESS program staff revealed that the program supported the CMDRR committees to conduct issue-based community dialogues to promote social cohesion in their communities. Some of the dialogues have included chief forums, gender dialogues, youth dialogues, and inter-generational dialogues aimed at promoting peaceful coexistence within communities. The project sponsored the commemorated the International Peace Day in Baliet and Melut Counties on September 29, 2023. The event was attended by women groups, peace committees, traditional dancers, women committees, and school children. The celebration helped to sensitize communities on the importance on peace and how community social cohesion and harmony can be strengthened. An estimated 350 persons attended the celebration in both locations.

### 3.3.18. Complimentary Services

The evaluation sought to establish the proportion of ACCESS project participants receiving complementary services from WFP, UNICEF and FAO or any other USAID-supported humanitarian agency. Finding show that of the project participants had received complimentary services from other USAID and non-USAID agencies in the previous 12 months reduced from 71.7% at baseline to 58.5% at endline. The types of assistance received (Appendix 7.3) include; food-based assistance, cash-based assistance and non-food items. This was expected to reduce given the fact that ACCESS interventions plugged the gap that existed before implementation.

### 3.4. Efficiency

Interviews and discussions with respondents in the community revealed that the implementation went according to their most urgent needs taking into account the context in South Sudan. All set targets were being met as the end of September 2023 about 85% of the budget being spent. Interview with staff intimated that the donors support really enabled the delivery the project as per the plan, and that there was no top up funding. They added that the USAID grant had some flexibility in moving funds from some budget categories. Overall the project had adequate and appropriate human resources for implementation though some changes were made by creating new positions to enable efficient and timely delivery of the project.

However it is worth noting that certain factors inhibited adherence to schedules, among them being the delayed roll-out of activities in some project sites due to insecurity posed by threats of revenge-killings. The situation was exacerbated by frequent flooding in most parts of the project sites which slowed project implementation as road became impassable and the river became the only viable means of transport. River transport takes longer; distance is costlier and risky as the speed boats would sometimes break down in the middle of the river in areas without telephone network.

Analysis of qualitative data shows that the communication structure was in place and was found to be very effective in supporting the implementation of the program across the four counties. The project Chief of Party engaged with the local mission, (USAID/BHA) at South Sudan level, while the WVUS core-team (Senior Program Manager, Food Security and Livelihoods, the Senior finance Officer and the Senior Grant and Contract Officer) would engage with the donor at Washington DC level for any project implementation updates, challenges and request for approvals. At the project level there was constant engagement with the zonal program manager and the operations director in Juba for any support or updates. There were monthly update meetings with USAID/OHA and with the sub-grantee partners (HDC and NH) staff on the project implementation updates, challenges and way forward.

Further analyses reveal that all the quality control and accountability measures were in place and were consistently applied during the review, approval fund disbursement, monitoring and reporting phases of the project. Additionally every fiscal year the ACCESS project carried out the annual outcome monitoring survey to track progress towards intended outcomes and support in generating information for annual results report.

*“Yes, we have coordination office in Ulang which coordinates the communication between head office and field office, whenever there is an important issue that need to be communicated, all the channel for communication are available.” - KII Project staff-Ulang*

### 3.5. Sustainability

The evaluation explored the various exit strategies that were incorporated into program design, which of those strategies were implemented and how they were perceived by the beneficiary population. Analysis of the qualitative data shows that to ensure sustainability the project worked with local government and community based institutions, in coordination with other humanitarian and development actors. As a consequence the project has strengthened the capacity of community structures like CMDRR committees, FFS, Mother-to-mother care groups, and VSLAs through community focused design and skills building to ensure that they can continue implementing the activities after the project close-out. All activities were implemented in very close planning, collaboration and coordination with line government ministries and department at State, County and Payams levels. In implementing these activities, the project maintained a more facilitative role and allowed the Government technical staffs to take lead – hence enabling them gain better skills and competency that will continue to be useful upon eventual closure of the grant.

The project further strengthened its engagement and involvement of local structures like community

development committees (CDCs), complaints help desks (CHDs), child protection committees (CPCs) in addition to strengthening its coordination with its local sub-grantees i.e. Nile Hope and Humanitarian and Development Consortium to phase over to them once the grant ends. Additionally, the project had engagements that involved USAID funded partners meant to review the readiness of transitioning from resilience programming to development assistance.

These engagements involved a range of multi-year emergency grants and development assistance partners funded by USAID. In line with the USAID transition strategy, several partners were identified to carry on with livelihood activities beyond the life of the current award. These included Education Development Center (EDC), which focuses on youth economic empowerment, and Development Alternatives Incorporated (DAI), which is undertaking agricultural production, and productivity. The agreed arrangement with BHA is to transfer humanitarian related interventions from the ACCESS project to the Restoring Lives and Building Resilience in South Sudan (RESTORE) project effective by the end of the first quarter of FY2024. A cost-modification was approved by BHA which will enable the RESTORE project to expand its coverage into the ACCESS project locations.

To measure and monitor the project's progress and achievement of defined goal and targets, the project has conducted semi-annual and annual outcome monitoring surveys. The project has also identified indicators of transition of certain capacity building activities specific to each of the sub-grantees and gradually engaged these partners more especially under peace building activities' especially in the Sobat Corridor. The project and government line ministries and departments were deliberately engaged in open, transparent communication and collaboration to, and appropriate transition plans were developed. The project's drive towards transitions has been carefully tailored, including continually and systematically moving towards a more facilitative and supportive role as State and County authorities slowly take over direct implementation of interventions. A case in point is the active involvement of State and County authorities in the operation of the constructed water supply systems in Baliet and Ulang Counties.

As part of the transition plan, implementation of interventions and results were consistently monitored to ensure that programmatic targets are met and data used to adjust transition phasing of support, as needed, depending on whether programmatic targets were under achieved or exceeded. As part of the transition process and capacity building, the project's M&E systems were also strengthened to conduct and sustain data collection and analysis.

### **3.6. Lessons Learnt**

- The peace nexus is a crucial component for the success of any sectoral program in the context of South Sudan. It is therefore imperative that future programs in similar contexts have conflict resolution and peace building component in-build it them.
- The IGA component has proven very valuable in improving the lives of not only the group members but the community as a whole. For example, when IGA groups received grinding mills, the other members of the community equally benefit.
- The capacity of fisher folk groups to produce the required number of fish needed by the market remains low despite high market demands. This is a positive indicator to motivate further production.
- Understanding of the context is imperative for the proper program design and implementation of activities more especially in terms of the security situation and the weather-related issues.
- Strengthened community support systems and social sustainability and engagement of committees has enhanced GBV case management and reporting at community levels.
- Prior in-depth discussions of community expectations and mobilization before an activity has shown to increase levels of satisfactions with program activities.

- Community dialogues and conferences that bring together large number of persons have helped to disseminate the messages of peace to the entire community faster than training activities.
- Engagement of youths and women in peace building activities has proved to be very vital in ensuring peace especially along the Sobat corridor Counties of Nasir and Ulang.

## 4.0. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### **Project management**

- **Project life cycle** –The project has improved resilience of individuals and communities to shocks and stresses. However, the project time frame was not sufficient to fully sustain the gains made given the context in South Sudan where there exist myriad of challenges including insecurity, lack of supportive infrastructure and human capital. Resilience programs such as ACCESS need a longer time to realize meaningful change. In future there will be a need to extend such projects to cover more than three years.
- **Partnership with line ministry staff** -Ideally the GoSS line ministry staff play a critical role in providing technical skills, support supervision and extension services to the community. But because they are poorly remunerated, it becomes a challenge to engage them effectively in project implementation without providing them with facilitation. It would have been more impactful if the line ministry staff were adequately involved right from training to support supervision of project activities.

### **Purpose 1: Strengthened household livelihoods, agricultural productivity, and nutrition.**

The project made significant improvement in food security indices at the household's level thanks to the in-kind support in form of seeds, basic tools and refresher trainings of beneficiary farmers.

### **Purpose 2: Strengthened community cohesion through improved disaster risk management, protection and mental health psycho-social support (MHPSS) services.**

The project interventions in supporting community level disaster risk reduction initiatives had positive impact in that the ability of the households to recover from shocks and stresses and training on conflict and risks mitigation.

### **Purpose 3: Strengthened coordination, systems and learning to support recovery and resilience.**

The intra- and inter-community dialogues promoted by the project have seen significant improvement in the social capital index for households and reporting improvements in their feelings of well-being and ability to cope at the end of the program.

To sustain these gains, recommendations include:

- Extending future projects to cover more than three years to realize meaningful impact.
- Line ministry staff be adequately facilitated to offer support supervision of project activities.
- ACCESS project consider sourcing for donor funding to upscale to other Counties with similar needs within Upper Nile or within South Sudan.
- Partners strengthen and institutionalize community managed disaster risk reductions that could encourage the community to timely detect triggers and early signs of disaster and mitigate and/or respond timely. For instance, linking the community managed DRR approach with existing customary leadership and institutions.
- Integrating the groups to similar ongoing or new resilience programs like Restoring Lives and Building Resilience in South Sudan (RESTORE) project with clear donor commitment to continue funding some of the activities. Where saving has been made the project can request for No-cost extensions for the activities to continue.

- Involving State and County-based government technical and political actors in project transition plan for sustenance of the results achieved.
- Ongoing or new resilience programs like RESTORE project need to put more emphasis on the Counties that did not perform as well. For example, Baliet county is still behind other Counties in achievement of most indicators.

## 5.0 ANNEXES

### 5.1 Appendix 1: Evaluation TOR



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Evaluation\_for\_ACC

### 5.2 Appendix 2: FINAL EVALUATION INDICATOR TABLE



Final Evaluation  
Indicator Table.doc

### 5.3 Appendix 3: Tables



ACCESS  
TABLES...docx

### 5.4 Appendix 4: ACCESS Log frame



WV South Sudan  
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### 5.5 Appendix 5: Data Collection Tools



ACCESS Tools\_1710  
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### 5.6 Appendix 5: inception report



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tion-Inception\_Repor

### 5.7 Appendix 5: dataset



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