

# Fighting for Breath in South Sudan

A CALL TO ACTION TO STOP CHILDREN DYING FROM PNEUMONIA

## Biggest killer,<sup>1</sup> yet forgotten

**Pneumonia is the world's leading infectious killer of children, claiming the lives of more than 800,000 children under the age of five every year, more than 2,000 every day.**

It is a shocking demonstration of pervasive health inequities disproportionately affecting the most deprived and marginalised children in low- and middle income countries. It represents a violation of children's right to survival and development, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Yet pneumonia has been largely forgotten on global and national health agendas. We can and must change this.

## It is possible to combat pneumonia

It is possible to deliver the necessary solutions to combat pneumonia to all children. It is possible through Universal Health Coverage (UHC) and equitable access to quality primary health care to prevent, diagnose and treat pneumonia. It is possible through better immunisation coverage to protect children from some of the leading causes of pneumonia. It is possible through good nutrition to help their bodies to fight off infections and respond to treatment, as well as to prevent underlying causes of pneumonia. It is possible through improved water, hygiene & sanitation, and reductions in air pollution to help address risk factors that can cause pneumonia. It is possible through ensuring access to integrated service delivery and life-saving low cost antibiotics at the community level and strengthening the availability and quality of referral level care, to combat pneumonia and save lives.

## Poverty and inequality aid and abet pneumonia deaths

Progress to address the number of children dying from pneumonia isn't fast enough or fair enough. Global/regional/national averages mask huge inequalities in countries. It is the poorest children who are most at risk because of high rates of malnutrition, and lack of access to basic quality health services for vaccinations, and diagnosis & treatment of common childhood illnesses. As a result, the poorest children are almost twice as likely to die before their 5th birthday compared to the richest. Innovations that could save hundreds of thousands of lives each year are not reaching children with the greatest need.

## 2020 is the year to act

There are clear actions that governments and the global community can and must take to improve child survival. The progress made so far is not enough, and comprehensively addressing pneumonia is key for child survival. With the impetus provided by the recently concluded UN High-Level Meeting on UHC in September 2019, The Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia in January 2020, the Gavi Replenishment Conference in June 2020 and the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit in December 2020 should all be used as key moments for governments to make strong commitments to accelerate progress on combatting pneumonia.

With just ten years left to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) – which require all countries to drive child deaths down to at least 25 per 1,000 live births – and only five years for the Integrated Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) pneumonia target - which requires all countries to drive child pneumonia deaths to below 3 per 1,000 births – now is the time to act. We need concerted action to improve policies, investment, innovations, and scale up evidence-based interventions, if we are to leave no child behind and to save lives. Not only is combatting pneumonia possible, it is a must – a must for every child to be able to fulfil their right to survive and thrive.

# South Sudan spotlight



## UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY<sup>2</sup>

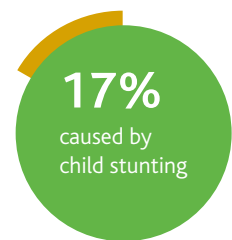
### GLOBAL TARGET

At least as low as **25** per 1000 live births is the SDG target rate for under five mortality by 2030.

### SOUTH SUDAN STATUS

**99** per 1000 live births, under-five mortality rate in 2018.

## HIGHEST RISK FACTORS FOR CHILD PNEUMONIA DEATHS IN SOUTH SUDAN, 2017<sup>3</sup>



## PNEUMONIA RELATED UNDER-FIVE MORTALITY<sup>4</sup>

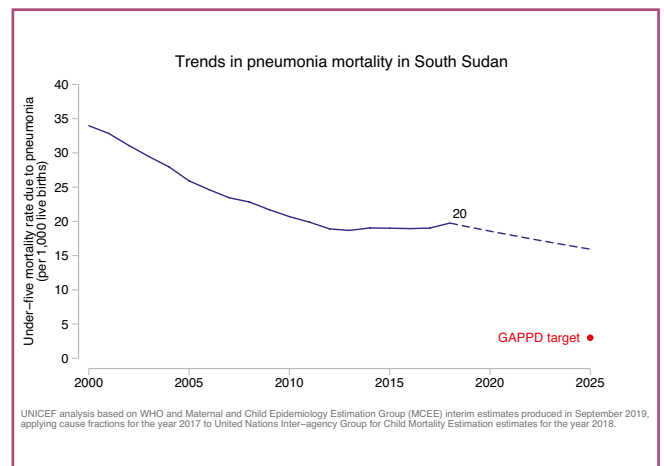
### GLOBAL TARGET

**3** per 1000 live births is the target pneumonia mortality rate for under-fives by 2025, as envisaged under the Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD).

### SOUTH SUDAN STATUS

**20** per 1000 live births, under five mortality rate due to pneumonia in 2018.

**20%** of child deaths were due to pneumonia in 2018, and it was **the biggest killer** of children under-five in 2017.



Pneumonia killed more than **7,640** children under-five in 2018 – more than **1** children every hour.

**3%** is the average annual rate of reduction in pneumonia mortality between 2000–2018, and at the same rate, South Sudan is expected to reach the **2025 GAPPD target later than 2050.**

## Health system strengthening to deliver strong primary health care and UHC to combat pneumonia<sup>5</sup>

The UHC Service Coverage Index is a measure of SDG indicator 3.8.1, which is a composite of essential health services. Countries should strive towards achieving 100% coverage to ensure health care for all citizens. To progress towards UHC, coverage of quality essential health services needs to be expanded with an emphasis on reducing inequities and strengthening health care facilities, to improve the quality of primary health care services. In South Sudan, the coverage of essential health services was just **44%** in 2016. For a country to progress towards UHC, coverage of quality essential health services needs to be expanded with an emphasis on reducing inequities.

South Sudan is ranked **3rd** of 178 countries in the Fragile States Index 2019 and has remained in the top five for the past 8 years. The Index looks at over 100 indicators to assess the various pressures which can make a country more fragile and vulnerable resulting in weaker systems. According to WHO, the estimated direct deaths from major conflict has been **19 per 100,000** people between 2012 to 2016. Good health and wellbeing (SDG3) are indivisible from peace, justice, and strong and inclusive institutions (SDG16), if rights to health are to be upheld

and sustained. Progress made in health can be halted or reversed, if conflict and insecurity continue unabated and if peace is not achieved. Ultimately, UHC and good health can only be built on a strong foundation of peace and resilient health systems.

According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the 2019 health financing requirements for South Sudan is \$USD120 million, but only \$USD20.6 million – a mere **26%** – of their requirement has been met. It is critical for South Sudan to receive predictable and long-term funding so that health systems can be rebuilt, enabling the removal of out-of-pocket payments to access health and nutrition services, at least for vulnerable populations and priority services. The more South Sudan continues to rely heavily on out-of-pocket payments, the harder it will be to achieve UHC.

Strong and equitable health systems are needed to adequately prevent, diagnose and treat pneumonia, and provide children with their basic human right to good-quality healthcare. UHC – where all children and their family have access to health and nutrition services, vaccinations and the medicines they need, without facing financial hardship – represents that right in action.



### GLOBAL TARGETS ON HEALTH FINANCING

**\$86** is the minimum recommended government spend/ person/year to provide essential health services as per WHO recommendations.

**5%** is the minimum recommended government spend on health as % of GDP as per WHO recommendations.

**57%** of government health expenditure should be on primary-level healthcare services as per WHO recommendations, as 90% of all health needs can be met at the primary health care level.

The SDG targets for large out of pocket (OOP) expenditure should not be more than

**10%** and to avert catastrophic OOP expenditure it should not be more than **25%** of total household expenditure or income.

### SOUTH SUDAN STATUS<sup>6</sup>

**\$23** spent by the government on health per person in 2016.

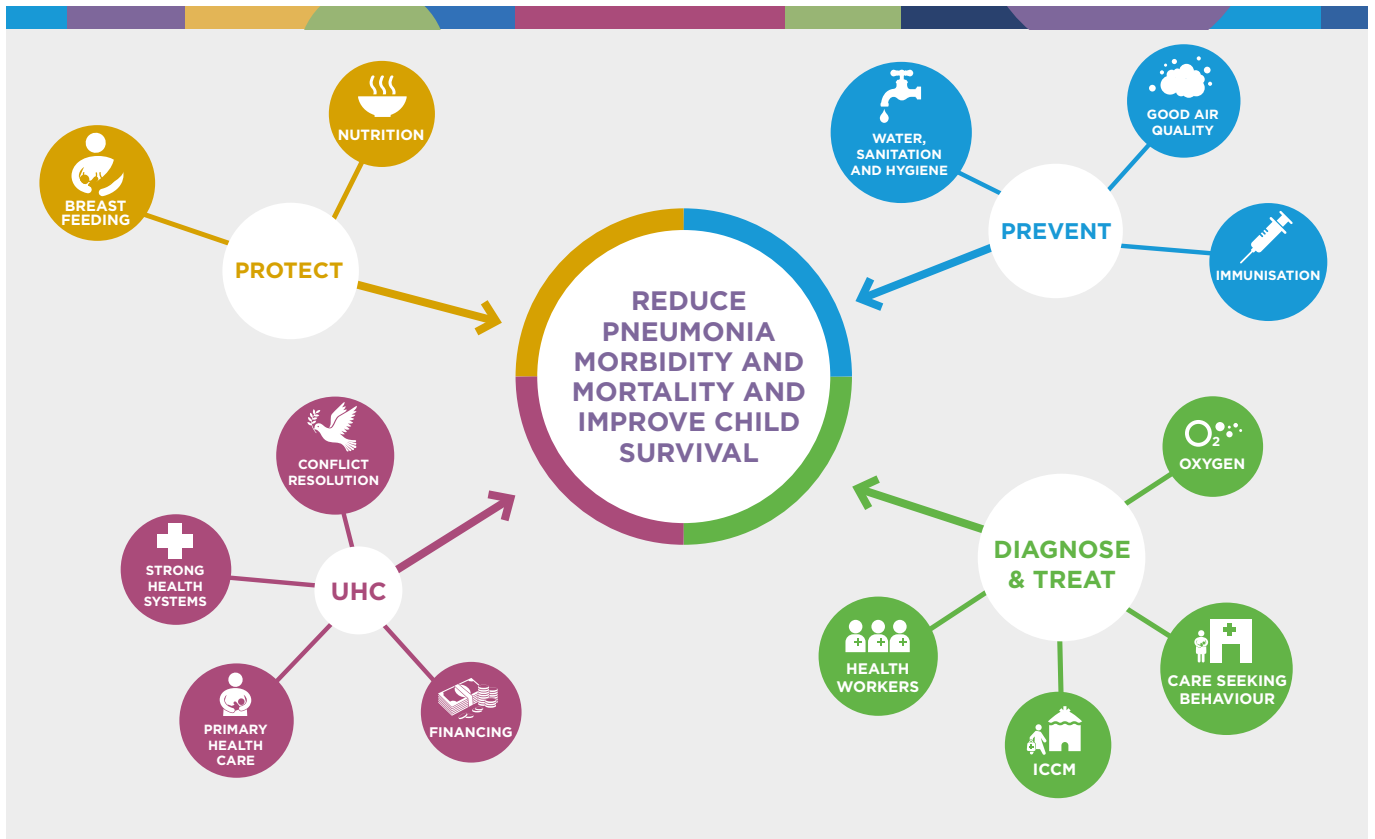
**USD 311 million** is total government expenditure on health in 2016.

**1.2%** of GDP spent on health by the government in 2016.

**..%** of the government's budget spent on primary health care. **No data available**

**44%** of total health spend is by the government; **16%** by donor assistance; and **5%** pre-paid private spending in 2016

**36%** of total health expenditure was out-of-pocket in 2016.



## PROTECT children by establishing good health practices from birth

Global Targets & Standards

**SDG 2.2:** By 2030, end all forms of malnutrition, including achieving by 2025, the internationally agreed targets on wasting and stunting in children under-five.

Reduce and maintain childhood wasting (weight for age) in under-five children to less than **5%** & ensure **40%** reduction in stunting (height for age) in under-five children as per the 2025 targets set in the 2012 World Health Assembly Resolution.

**2** ZERO HUNGER



Nutrition<sup>o</sup>

### South Sudan Status

#### Wasting

**12%** is the wasting rate for under-five children in 2019.

#### Stunting

**18%** is the stunting rate in 2019.

To remain on track to achieve SDG 2 in 2030, South Sudan needs to reduce stunting rates to **17%** by 2025.

### Sub-national Status<sup>7</sup>

#### Wasting

**20%** is the wasting rate for under-five children in Jonglei State in 2019.

**4%** is the wasting rate for under-five children in Western Equatoria State in 2019.

#### Stunting

**30%** is the stunting rate among under-five children in Western Bahr el Ghazal State in 2019.

**10%** is the stunting rate among under-five children in Unity State in 2015.

Global Targets & Standards

**50%** rate of exclusive breastfeeding for the first 6 months as per the 2025 targets set in the 2012 World Health Assembly Resolution.



Breast feeding<sup>o</sup>

### South Sudan Status

**75%** is the exclusive breastfeeding rate in 2018.

### Sub-national Status

**35%** is the exclusive breastfeeding rate among babies in El Buheyraat and Jonglei States and **47%** in Eastern Equatoria State in 2017.

# PREVENT pneumonia in children by addressing underlying causes

Global Targets & Standards

**SDG 3.2:** End preventable deaths of newborns and children under 5 years of age, with all countries aiming to reduce under-5 mortality to at least as low as **25** per 1,000 live births by 2030.

**90%** national and at least **80%** district or equivalent administrative unit coverage for vaccination by 2020 as per the Global Vaccine Action Plan (GVAP)

**DTP3** (Diphtheria-tetanus-pertussis), **Hib3** (Haemophilus influenzae type B) and **PCV3** (Pneumococcal Conjugate) vaccines included in the national immunisation programme.

**3** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Immunisation<sup>10</sup>

## South Sudan Status

**43%** DTP3 vaccine coverage among 1-year-olds in 2019.

**43%** Hib3 vaccine coverage among 1-year-olds in 2019.

**PVC3** has not yet been introduced in South Sudan in 2019.

## Sub-national Status

Pentavalent vaccine (Penta3) coverage among 1-year-olds in 2019

**18%** in Jonglei State,

**59%** in Bahr El Ghazal State,

**87%** in Western Equatoria.

**PVC3** has not yet been introduced in the 10 States in South Sudan in 2019.



Global Targets & Standards

**SDG 6.1:** Achieve universal and equitable access to safe and affordable drinking water for all by 2030.

**SDG 6.2:** Achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all and end open defecation, paying special attention to the needs of women, girls and those in vulnerable situations by 2030.

**6** CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Water, sanitation and hygiene<sup>11</sup>

## South Sudan Status

**41%** People using basic drinking water services in 2017.

**11%** People using at least basic sanitation services in 2017.

**..%** People with basic hand washing facilities at home in 2017. **No data available**

**63%** People practicing open defecation in 2017.

## Sub-national Status

**35% rural & 65% urban** people using basic drinking water services in 2017.

**5% rural & 37% urban** people using at least basic sanitation services in 2017.

**No data available**

**75% rural & 12% urban** people practicing open defecation in 2017.

Global Targets & Standards

**SDG 7:** 100% access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all by 2030.

**SDG 3.9:** Substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals; air, water and soil pollution and contamination by 2030.

**10** Micro grams per cubic metre of air ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) should be the mean annual exposure to Fine Particulate Matter ( $\text{PM}_{2.5}$ ) as per WHO Air Quality Guidelines.

**7** AFFORDABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY



**3** GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Air Pollution<sup>12</sup>

## South Sudan Status

**<5%** people with primary reliance on clean fuels and technologies in 2017.

**46** micro grams per cubic metre of air ( $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ ) is the mean annual exposure to  $\text{PM}_{2.5}$  pollution in urban settings in 2017.

## Sub-national Status

**Data not available**

**Data not available**

# DIAGNOSE & TREAT children who become ill with pneumonia

Global Targets & Standards

**SDG 3.12:** Substantially increase health financing and the recruitment, development, training and retention of the health workforce in developing countries, especially in least developed countries and small island developing States.

3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



**44.5** per 10,000 people is the minimum number of skilled health workers required to deliver quality health services as per WHO recommendations. The estimated shortage of health workers is 18 million by 2030.

Health workers<sup>13</sup>

## South Sudan Status

**12** doctors, nurses, midwives and pharmacists per 10,000 people in 2017.

**YES** – Since 2013 when ICCM was rolled out across South Sudan, Community-Based Distributors (CBDs) have been mandated to dispense amoxicillin to treat simple pneumonia.

## Sub-national Status

*Data not available*

**YES** – the Boma Health Initiative (BHI) is currently being rolled out in all 10 States and it will ensure trained BHWs (Boma Health Workers) at the community level.

**YES** – BHWs are mandated to dispense Amoxicillin dispersible tablets 250 mg at the community level.

Global Targets & Standards

**ICCM** (Universal Integrated Community Case Management) to prioritise the most deprived and marginalised, removing financial and non-financial barriers to access.



ICCM<sup>14</sup>

## South Sudan Status

**YES** – ICCM was rolled out in South Sudan since 2013. ICCM has been phased out and these services will now be delivered through the BHI.

**YES** – Both Amoxicillin dispersible tablets 250 mg and syrup are on the essential medicines list.

## Sub-national Status

**YES** – the BHI is currently being launched in all States and commits to covering 30% of the population living >5 km from a health facility with BHI services by the end of 2019. BHI includes treatment of common childhood diseases (malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoea).

**YES** – Amoxicillin dispersible tablets 250 mg is available for use by BHWs in selected Bomas in all 10 States.

Global Targets & Standards

**Oxygen** levels in children should be monitored by trained CHWs (community health workers) who can refer them in time to primary and secondary health facilities which have oxygen supply.



Oxygen<sup>15</sup>

## South Sudan Status

**NO** – community health workers have not been mandated to use pulse oximeters.

**YES** – Payam PHCCs at the secondary level have medical oxygen availability.

## Sub-national Status

**NO** – none of the 10 States are yet to mandate community health workers to use pulse oximeters.

**YES & NO** – only 46% of the 1029 facilities which were assessed across the 10 States have medical oxygen availability in Payam PHCCs in 2018.

Global Targets & Standards

**90%** pneumonia care seeking behaviour by 2025 as per the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD). All children with pneumonia symptoms should be taken promptly to an appropriate health facility.



Care seeking behaviour<sup>16</sup>

## South Sudan Status

Only **48%** children with pneumonia symptoms were taken to a health facility in 2010.

## Sub-national Status

Children under-five with pneumonia symptoms taken to a health facility in 2010

**32%** in Northern Bahr El Ghazal and **64%** in Central Equatoria,

**33%** from the poorest and **66%** from the richest households.



# Fighting for Breath: The Global Forum on Childhood Pneumonia, January 2020

**Pneumonia is the world's deadliest infectious killer of children and the ultimate disease of poverty.**

Each year 800,000 of the world's poorest and most vulnerable children die from the disease – more than 2000 every day. The overwhelming majority of these deaths are preventable. Yet fatalities are declining slowly – far too slowly for the world to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goal pledge to 'end preventable child deaths by 2030'. Changing this picture will require more than a reaffirmation of the SDG promise. The children whose lives are at stake need a bold agenda backed by urgent action.

On 29-31 January 2020 in Barcelona, Spain, over 300 participants – including ministers and senior planners from high-burden countries, major development donors, UN and multilateral agencies, non-government organisations, corporate and philanthropic leaders and the pneumonia research community – will come together to as part of an effort to build that agenda and galvanise national and international action.

[stoppneumonia.org/latest/global-forum/](http://stoppneumonia.org/latest/global-forum/)

## A Global Call to Action on Childhood Pneumonia

- 1. Develop pneumonia control strategies** as part of wider plans for universal health coverage and commit to reducing child pneumonia deaths to fewer than three per 1,000 live births, the target set by the Integrated Global Action Plan Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD).
- 2. Strengthen quality primary health care and action on pneumonia** as part of national multi-sectoral plans and through integrated strategies (including nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and air pollution), including at community level, focusing on the most deprived and marginalised children.
- 3. Increase domestic government investment in health and nutrition** (to at least 5% of GDP on health) and ensure that increased spending improves access to child health and nutrition services, including by removing user fees, addressing non-financial barriers to accessing care, and prioritising primary health services.
- 4. Improve health governance** by ensuring accountability, transparency and inclusiveness in planning, budgeting and expenditure monitoring, including for pneumonia control strategies.
- 5. Accelerate vaccination coverage** by supporting Gavi's 2020 replenishment and ensuring the investment drives more equitable vaccination coverage and improves vaccine affordability.
- 6. Enhance overseas development assistance** by increasing allocations to child health services and advancing the achievement of universal health coverage (aligned with national priorities and plans), including through pledges as part of Gavi replenishment and Nutrition for Growth.
- 7. Engage the private sector to improve access** to affordable, quality vaccines, diagnostic tools, new antibiotics, medicines and medical oxygen, especially for the most deprived and marginalised children.
- 8. Measure and report progress in achieving universal health coverage** to build stronger health systems which deliver quality primary health care and reduce child deaths, including from pneumonia, as well as against SDG child survival and GAPPD targets.
- 9. Prioritise research, development and innovation** to improve access to the most affordable and cost-effective pneumonia prevention, diagnosis, referral and treatment technologies and services.
- 10. Champion multi-sectoral partnerships** between the child health and nutrition communities and the broader infection control, clean air, water, sanitation and hygiene, and development financing communities.

# The partnership to combat pneumonia

Save the Children, UNICEF and Every Breath Counts Coalition are working in partnership to fight one of the greatest – and gravest – health challenges facing children around the world – childhood pneumonia. The partnership will galvanise support to put pneumonia on the global health agenda; stimulate national action; and mobilise the donor community to ensure that we achieve the SDG goal on child survival and the Global Action Plan for Pneumonia and Diarrhoea (GAPPD) target of three child pneumonia deaths per 1,000 live births by 2030.

## References:

1. **Biggest killer:** UNICEF analysis based on WHO and Maternal and Child Epidemiology Estimation Group interim estimates produced in September 2019, applying cause fractions for the year 2017 to United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation estimates for the year 2018; Convention on the Rights of the Child
2. **Under-Five Mortality:** National under-five mortality rate data source is United Nations Inter-Agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (IGME) (2019); All other child mortality data comes from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Global Burden of Disease, Health-related SDGs-Viz Hub; **Note:** Due to the unavailability of recent national representative household survey data, this profile has incorporated subnational estimates from the Global Burden of Disease estimates from the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME). Please note that the input data, methods and years for these estimates differ from the IGME 2019 estimates and caution should be exercised when comparing data between these sources.
3. **Risk Factors for Pneumonia:** The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Global Burden of Disease
4. **Pneumonia Related Under-Five Mortality:** UNICEF analysis based on WHO Maternal and Child Epidemiology Estimation Group (MCEE) interim estimates produced in September 2019, applying cause fractions for the year 2017 to United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation estimates for the year 2018; WHO Global Health Observatory – Causes of Child Death 2017
5. **Health Systems Strengthening:** The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Global Burden of Disease 2016 - Health-related SDG Indicators 1990-2030; Fragile States Index 2019; WHO Global Health Observatory; HDX-OCHA Services; South Sudan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010
6. **Health Financing:** The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Global Health Spending 2016
7. **Sub-national Status:** The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Africa Child Growth Failure Geospatial Estimates 2015; The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Africa Exclusive Breastfeeding Prevalence Geospatial Estimates 2017
8. **Nutrition:** Round 23 of Food Security and Nutrition Surveys, July 2019; 2025 target calculated based on WHO methodology
9. **Breastfeeding:** Round 23 of Food Security and Nutrition Surveys, July 2019; The Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) - Africa Exclusive Breastfeeding Prevalence Geospatial Estimates 2017;
10. **Immunisation:** Administrative Coverage Data till 30th September 2019, Government of South Sudan
11. **WASH:** WHO/UNICEF JMP (2019) Progress on household drinking water, sanitation and hygiene 2000-2017
12. **Air Pollution:** WHO Global Health Observatory - SDG7.1; World Development Indicators (based on Brauer, M. et al. 2017)
13. **Health Workers:** IHME-GBD 2017, Health-related SDGs-Viz Hub; UNICEF annual report, South Sudan, 2014; BHI revised guidelines and roll out plan (draft), 2019
14. **ICCM:** BHI revised guidelines and roll out plan (draft), 2019; Basic Package of Health and Nutrition Services in Primary Health Care (BPHNS), 2019; South Sudan Essential Medicines List 2019
15. **Oxygen:** Service Availability and Readiness Assessment (SARA), South Sudan MoH, 2018; Basic Package of Health and Nutrition Services in Primary Health Care (BPHNS), 2011
16. **Care Seeking Behaviour:** WHO Global Health Observatory; South Sudan Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey 2010

Photo credit: Save the Children  
Lucia and her one-year-old daughter, Monday, attend the Paringa food distribution centre, Kapoeta South, Kapoeta County, South Sudan.

January 2020

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