



21 July 2014 - While the crisis is pushing the country towards a [hunger catastrophe](#) , WFP and partners race to [expand food assistance](#) to reach communities living in very remote and hardly reachable areas.

Cut off by conflict and seasonal rains that have made roads virtually impassable, it is the first time aid has reached the desperate people of Koch County since fighting in South Sudan broke out in December.

Even before the war, Koch was considered one of the most food-insecure areas of the country. Now, it is also hosting thousands of people displaced by fighting and facing shocking levels of hunger.

Many tukul homes have been burned in the fighting, and people have taken to living in the bush and surviving on wild grasses and vegetables. Women report being raped and assaulted as they walk through dangerous areas in search of food. The town market has little for sale, and graffiti covers the wall of a small, abandoned medical clinic.

In response to these appalling circumstances, a team of emergency workers and supplies had flown into Koch town a few days earlier to provide urgent assistance. Planes air-dropped bags of cereals and pulses, and helicopters delivered cans of vegetable oil and highly nutritious

blended foods for small children. Humanitarians from WFP, UNICEF and the NGO World Relief hit the ground and began assessing and registering people, setting up a food distribution site and treating children who suffer from malnutrition.

But Koch is not alone in needing this urgent help. With ongoing concerns about the looming hunger catastrophe across South Sudan, WFP and its partners are expanding their rapid response teams. There are currently 50 staff operating in five other locations, focusing on the conflict-affected states of Jonglei, Unity and the Upper Nile. So far, emergency teams have reached 28 remote areas, and new teams are being assembled to reach still more.

“Funding this enormous, complex emergency response remains a major challenge”, says WFP Country Director Joyce Luma. “We urgently need funds and partners to be able to expand coverage and establish a fixed presence in remote areas to support food and nutrition activities if we are to have any chance of avoiding an impending disaster.”

*Source: WFP*

*UNRIC's library backgrounder on [South Sudan](#)*