

End-term Evaluation

20
25

South- Sudan Country Report

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Colophon

This country report was prepared by Catherine Aman, with coordination and technical guidance from the evaluation team of Impact House. The report forms part of the Right2Grow End-Term Evaluation (2020–2025), commissioned by the Right2Grow Consortium.

List of Abbreviations

Acronym	Full meaning
ACF	Action Against Hunger
B4V	Bridge 4Voices (advocacy approach)
BMET	Budget, Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking
BPHNS	Basic Package of Health and Nutrition Services
CBO	Community-Based Organization
CEGAA	Centre for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa
CIDO	Community Initiative for Development Organization
CRC	Child Rights Coalition
CSA	Climate-Smart Agriculture
CSBAG	Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EMAP	Engaging Men through Accountable Practice
ETE	End-Term (Endline) Evaluation
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
HMIS	Health Management Information System
ICCM	Integrated Community Case Management
IDP	Internally Displaced Person
IMNCI	Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illness
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IPC	Integrated Food Security Phase Classification
KII	Key Informant Interview
L&L	Linking & Learning
MCD	Monitoring, Context and Data (survey)
MEAL	Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Netherlands)
MIYCN	Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition
MoH	Ministry of Health
MtMSG	Mother-to-Mother Support Group(s)
MTR	Mid-Term Review
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NHP	National Health Policy (South Sudan)
NIS	Nutrition Information System
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OECD-DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development – Development Assistance Committee
R2G	Right2Grow Programme
RMNCH	Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health
SCI	Save the Children International
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SPEDP	Support for Peace and Education Development Programme
SSHf	South Sudan Humanitarian Fund
SSPA / SSPM	South Sudan People's Army / Movement
SUN	Scaling Up Nutrition (Movement)
THP	The Hunger Project
TIC	Theory of Influence/Change
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
TWG	Technical Working Group
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDOR	Universal Intervention and Development Organization
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
WUC(s)	Water User Committee(s)
WVSS / WVI	World Vision South Sudan / World Vision International

Summary

Right2Grow (R2G) in South Sudan (2021–2025) is a strategic partnership of Save the Children International, World Vision International, Action Against Hunger (ACF), Community Initiative for Development Organization (CIDO), Universal Intervention and Development Organization (UNIDOR), Support for Peace and Education Development Programme (SPEDP), Child Rights Civil Society Coalition (CRC), and the Centre for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa (CEGAA).) funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs that aims to reduce undernutrition among children under five and expand access to basic water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services through community empowerment, civil society strengthening, and evidence-based advocacy, and stakeholder engagement across Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states. The Endline Evaluation (ETE) covered the full 2021–2025 period, assessing progress across all four Theory of Change pathways (community demand/practice; CSO capacity and civic space; government policy/budget adoption; donor/actor coordination), as well as partnership dynamics, localization/“shift the power,” and collaboration with external actors (including Dutch Embassies). It applied OECD-DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, coherence, impact, sustainability), used feminist/participatory methods with Outcome Harvesting and contribution analysis, and conducted deeper substantiation in two hotspots (Bor South and Juba) to generate learning, strategic recommendations, and accountability to the Dutch MFA.

The evaluation pursued OECD-DAC questions on relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, coherence and examined accountability (to affected populations and partners), including transparency of decision-making, the use of community feedback/complaints mechanisms, and how learning informed adaptations to the South Sudan ToC and implementation. and as well reviewed how far the South Sudan ToC aligned with (and adapted to) contextual realities

The methodology used a mixed-methods, utilization-focused design grounded in feminist and participatory principles (outcome harvesting, contribution analysis, triangulated fieldwork, and systematic review of programme evidence), with attention to equity and safeguarding. Primary data collection targeted Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) plus an internal Mutual-Capacity Development (MCD) and Linking & Learning (L&L) survey. Field targets reached included 19 KIIs across national and sub-national stakeholders and 8 FGDs with 86 participants (including MtMSGs, Water User Committees, male/female community members, schoolchildren, and a reflection session). The partnership survey provided 92 responses (all countries merged), used here to triangulate partnership learning and collaboration.

Findings

- Relevance. The country ToC remained well-matched to community-identified priorities in the field of safe water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH), and child nutrition—delivered through trusted channels (chiefs, nurses, lead mothers) and community platforms that fostered local ownership.
- Effectiveness & impact. Evidence-based advocacy by trained CSOs (budget analysis, policy briefs) contributed to national public budget hearings (2023/24), establishment of a parliamentary WASH caucus, and a discernible shift in allocations (e.g., agriculture/food security +10% in 2024), while community platforms improved day-to-day practices and accountability. Effectiveness & contribution per ToC pathway. In South Sudan, CSOs applied capacities developed through MCD to contribute structured inputs to budget hearings, parliamentary committees and sector platforms. This reinforced more constructive and transparent interaction between civil society and public institutions, supporting the programme’s multi-level advocacy pathway.
- community mobilization to citizen demand and maintenance of services; coalition-building and more coordinated advocacy.
- Unintended (negative) effects as some men perceived women’s frequent meeting attendance as “neglect,” causing arguments and tighter controls on women’s mobility/participation. Among youth, new soft skills without immediate jobs or capital led to frustration and reduced motivation to stay engaged.
- Cross-cutting (gender, youth, climate/shocks). Gender-responsive platforms Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (MtMSGs) , Engaging Men through Accountability and Partnership (EMAP) -supported male groups, child clubs) widened participation; insecurity and flood-related access issues required flexible delivery and local leadership adaptations built into the fieldwork and programme approach.

- Impact. Policy dialogue became more substantive and transparent; communities reported improved WASH and nutrition behaviours and stronger grassroots accountability mechanisms.
- Impact (multi-level). Beyond community outcomes, the programme contributed to policy and budget spaces becoming more substantive e.g., parliamentary scrutiny using CSO evidence, and momentum around national policy processes (including the National Nutrition Policy launch in 2025).
- CSO capacities strengthened and were institutionalized (financial/reporting systems, advocacy routines, use of tools like BMET and Bridge 4Voices, learning briefs), improving coalition voice and sustained engagement.
- At community level, respondents reported improved WASH and nutrition behaviours and stronger grassroots accountability (functioning committees, feedback channels), supporting service use and maintenance. Overall, evidence indicates credible contribution across policy/budget influence, CSO capability, and community practice change.
- Perceived sustainability of achieved changes. Community-owned structures Mother to Mother Support Groups, Water User Committees) and CSO advocacy capacity were seen as durable; finance and supply-chain dependencies (e.g., spare parts, operational budgets) remain vulnerabilities.
- Factors contributing to sustainability & adaptation. Local leadership, use of local languages, trusted messengers, and iterative advocacy cycles Iterative advocacy cycles from listening to acting then feedback helped adjust tactics as conditions changed. When access/security issues arose, teams used flexible work-arounds (e.g., shifting venues/times, small-group/hybrid meetings) to maintain services and engagement. Together, these factors kept activities going, preserved community ownership, and allowed rapid adaptation to shocks. Reflections on sustainability aspects. Institutional (caucuses/hearings), social (community groups), technical (maintenance skills), and financial (budget lines) pillars advanced unevenly—social/institutional moved fastest; financial execution lagged.
- Coherence & partnership internal. Collaboration shifted from fragmented to shared ownership (Country Steering Committee, joint planning; inclusive roles for local CSOs).
- External coherence. Alignment improved with sector platforms such as Nutrition Cluster, WASH Cluster/Technical Working Groups (county/state), the National Nutrition Policy Task Force, and parliamentary processes including Budget & Finance Committee hearings, Health Committee briefings, and Water Resources/Environment Committee sessions in addition to advocacy messages became more consistent from community to national forums.
- Pair behaviour change with practical enablers: Community-owned platforms (water user committees, MtMSGs, village forums) and trusted messengers sustained hygiene/nutrition practices when backed by simple evidence tools (scorecards/BMET). To avoid backsliding where costs/availability are the bottleneck, link behaviour change to livelihoods/market access (e.g., affordable soap/chlorine, spare parts, home-garden inputs).
- Clarify roles to elevate CSO voice, but resource gaps persist. Role complementarity (national CSOs for mobilization/evidence; INGOs for technical backstopping; CEGAA for budget analysis; coalitions for joint asks) improved evidence quality and credibility in policy spaces. However, smaller CSOs need targeted resourcing (transport to hearings, data/printing, follow-up time) to participate consistently.

Conclusions & Recommendations

- Key conclusions. The ToC is valid but must stay adaptive to shifting context such as climate/flood shocks, civic-space and access constraints, leadership/turnover, partner capacity changes, budget cycles and funding gaps, and emerging policy windows. Noting that advocacy has measurably improved transparency and debate; community platforms deliver practical gains; partnership functioning matured toward localisation; fiscal/implementation constraints still slow translation of national wins into sub-national services.

Key recommendations (consultant's view).

Government (Parliament, MoFEP, line ministries) – Lead

- Institutionalise public budget hearings with written follow-up/resolutions and timelines.
- Maintain standing caucuses/committees that receive CSO evidence and track actions.

County/state authorities – Lead

- Link citizen priorities to county workplans/budgets; publish simple progress updates.
- Strengthen sub-national accountability (feedback desks, grievance channels, joint reviews).

CSO coalitions and local partners – Lead (with INGO backstopping)

- Run a continuous evidence-to-influence pipeline (community data, budget briefs, caucus engagement).
- Monitor budget execution and service quality; report back to communities (“You said–We did”).

R2G partners/INGOs – Support

- Invest in equitable localisation: flexible small grants, digital/reporting support, mentoring for smaller CSOs.
- Pair SBC with livelihood/market linkages (access to soap/chlorine, spare parts, home-garden inputs).
- Facilitate periodic, country-led ToC reviews and adaptive planning.

Donors (Dutch MoFA and others) – Enable;

- Fund core/flexible windows for local CSOs; underwrite hearing follow-ups and county accountability forums.
- Require/simple-reporting incentives for hearing action trackers and community

1. Background and introduction

1.1. Country context

South Sudan continues to face very low access to basic WASH services alongside fragile population data systems. Latest UNICEF/WHO JMP 2020 estimated figures compiled on UNICEF's¹ country data page indicate that only about 40% of the population use at least basic drinking-water services and 14% use at least basic sanitation services; a large share still relies on limited, unimproved, or surface sources for drinking water (38%, 11%, and 12%, respectively). These service gaps intersect with high child undernutrition: modelled estimates show 30% of children under five are stunted. The most recent official population count remains the pre-independence 2008 Population and Housing Census, which the National Bureau of Statistics still uses as the historical baseline for demographic tabulations².

Additionally, recurrent climate shocks especially large-scale flooding and heat waves now materially shape WASH and nutrition risks in South Sudan. In 2024, floods affected over 1,000,000 people across 42 counties (plus Abyei) and displaced about 271,000, cutting key supply routes and contaminating water sources³. In early 2025, extreme heat led the government to close schools nationwide, with reported classroom temperatures exceeding 42–45 °C, underscoring rising exposure to heat stress for children and educators⁴. Climate shocks (flooding and periodic dry spells) are also cited among principal drivers of acute food insecurity and malnutrition in recent national outlooks⁵. As such, the Government's First National Adaptation Plan (2021–2025) prioritizes resilience across sectors including WASH and health but implementation remains constrained by overlapping crises.

Humanitarian and macroeconomic indicators further underscore the severity of need. Food insecurity remains acute: 6.3 million people (49% of the population analysed) were in IPC Phase 3+ (Crisis or worse) from Sept–Nov 2024, with 6.1 million projected for Dec 2024–Mar 2025; in the same analysis cycle an estimated 2.1 million children were expected to suffer acute malnutrition in 2024/25, including 650,000 SAM cases⁶. Post-COVID economic stress is visible in the 91% inflation rate (2024) and in new World Bank poverty analysis showing 98% of South Sudanese lived below the national poverty line in 2025⁷, with extreme poverty affecting over two-thirds and vulnerability to poverty “quasi-universal.” Civic space remains repressed (CIVICUS), and the country is rated “Not Free” (score 1/100) by Freedom House actors that constrain civil society engagement in service delivery and accountability⁸.

The National Health Policy (NHP) puts strong emphasis on community participation and ownership as a prerequisite for equitable service delivery and sustained behaviour change. It prioritises health promotion, citizen engagement, and the use of community platforms to improve preventive practices and demand for essential Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn and Child Health (RMNCH), nutrition and WASH services, including Integrated Management of Newborn and Childhood Illness (IMNCI) and Integrated Community Case Management (ICCM) at community level and primary care facilities. The policy also underscores tackling social and environmental determinants specifically safe water and sanitation as part of a multi-sector agenda for health improvement⁹.

The NHP recognises civil society and community-based organisations as key partners in service delivery, health promotion, and accountability, calling for mechanisms that build their capacity and integrate them into coordinated

¹ October 20, 2025, from <https://washdata.org/countries/south-sudan>

² UNICEF. (2025). South Sudan – Data (WASH & nutrition indicators). <https://data.unicef.org/country/ssd/>

³ OCHA. (2024, October 18). South Sudan: Floods snapshot.

⁴ Associated Press. (2025, February). South Sudan closes schools after extreme heat.

⁵ IPC. (2024, September). South Sudan: Acute food insecurity & malnutrition snapshot

⁶ IPC. (2024, Nov.). Countries in focus: South Sudan (projected IPC 3+ populations 2024/25).

<https://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/countries-in-focus-archive/issue-115/en>

⁷ World Bank. (2025). South Sudan – Country data (including inflation, 2024).

<https://data.worldbank.org/country/south-sudan>

⁸ CIVICUS. (2025). South Sudan – country profile (civic space rating: repressed).

<https://monitor.civicus.org/country/south-sudan/>

⁹ Government of the Republic of South Sudan. (2016). National Health Policy 2016–2026. Ministry of Health.

district-level planning and implementation. It encourages public–private partnerships and collaborative action across sectors¹⁰.

1.2. Programme overview

Right2Grow in South Sudan is an locally -led, multi-country advocacy programme funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Power of Voices Strengthening Civil Society) and implemented from 2021–2025. In South Sudan, Right2Grow collaborates with communities, community-based organisations and civil society to ensure every child under five is well-nourished and that no one is left without access to basic WASH services. The programme's objective is to bridge the gap between promising national policies and local realities by promoting behaviour and mindset change across levels from households to state actors so that decision-makers jointly address undernutrition in multisectoral, gender-sensitive and inclusive ways. The South Sudan country programme builds on existing local capacities and systems to sustain results over time.

The consortium combines international and national partners. At the global level, six core partners lead Right2Grow: The Hunger Project (THP), Action Against Hunger (ACF), Save the Children (Save), World Vision (WV), Max Foundation, and the Centre for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa (CEGAA). In South Sudan, the consortium is led by Save, with ACF, WV, Community Initiative for Development Organisation (CIDO), Child Rights Coalition (CRC), Support for Peace Education Development Programme (SPEDP), Universal International Development Organisation (UNIDOR), and CEGAA; a third-tier of local CSOs including the Jonglei Civil Society Network, Voice of Women, and the Non-Violent Youth Initiative play crucial roles in contextualising solutions and supporting sustainability.

This South Sudan partnership approach is explicitly designed to leverage local actors and systems while connecting to regional and global learning across the programme's countries.

Interventions are organised around four mutually reinforcing pathways in the country Theory of Change: (1) community mobilisation, (2) strengthening civil society organisations (CSOs), (3) engaging public authorities, and (4) mobilisation of international development actors. Activities under these pathways include building and sharing evidence; facilitating multi-stakeholder dialogue among nutrition, food security, health and WASH actors; and supporting people-centred, community-led approaches that open civic space and enable sustained accountability for WASH and nutrition service access and quality.

In practice, the South Sudan programme priorities include community behaviour changes for nutrition and WASH; CSO capacity-strengthening for evidence-based advocacy and budget engagement; structured engagement with county/state/national authorities on policy and financing; and linking with international partners to harmonise support. By aligning activities to these pathways, the consortium seeks medium-term outcomes where empowered communities and CSOs influence responsive public authorities, laying the foundation for the programme's longer-term ambition that all children under five are well-nourished and able to reach their full potential

1.3. Programme theory of Change

Right2Grow's country ToC for South Sudan starts from the ultimate goal that every child is able to reach their full potential, with the long-term impact that all children under five are well-nourished. To reach this, the medium-term impact expects that decision-makers jointly and effectively address undernutrition in a multisectoral, gender-sensitive and inclusive way, using people-centred and community-led approaches and "bridging the gap between promising national policies and local realities." Change is pursued through four pathways: (1) community mobilisation, (2) strengthening civil society organisations (CSOs), (3) engaging public authorities, and (4) mobilising international development actors. Across the pathways, the programme emphasises building and sharing evidence, knowledge and expertise so actors work in mutually reinforcing ways; success on these fronts is also expected to open civic space, a critical precondition for sustaining WASH and nutrition outcomes.

The country-level Theory of Change rests on a simple proposition: when CSOs and communities have the skills, resources, and platforms to participate meaningfully and when public institutions are challenged through evidence-based advocacy and inclusive dialogue policies and budgets become more transparent, equitable, and responsive to citizens' needs, especially those of women, children, marginalized groups and duty bearers become more

¹⁰ Government of the Republic of South Sudan. (2016). National Health Policy 2016–2026. Ministry of Health.

accountable. To catalyze this shift, the programme strengthens CSO and community capacity in budget analysis, policy engagement, advocacy, and organizational development; enables evidence-driven influence through policy briefs, budget monitoring, and research that inform parliamentary and ministerial decisions; embeds gender-responsive and inclusive approaches via Mother-to-Mother Support Groups, male support groups, child clubs, and women-led organizations; empowers communities to demand services and steward local solutions (e.g., water points, hygiene practices); and forges strategic alliances among CSOs, government, Parliament, and international partners to coordinate advocacy and amplify collective voice.

This change pathway is underpinned by several assumptions: that government counterparts remain open to dialogue; that CSOs can maintain independence and credibility; that communities will move from dependency to active participation; and that donor support continues to underwrite advocacy and capacity building. If these conditions hold, the intended impact is a more accountable and inclusive governance environment that delivers measurable improvements in nutrition, WASH, food security, and gender equality ultimately fostering stronger, more resilient communities.

1.4. Changes made after Mid-Term Review

The programmatic Theory of Change (ToC) offered a strong overall framework for tackling undernutrition and poor WASH conditions, yet its fit with several country-specific issues was only partial. Its core pathways community mobilisation, CSO strengthening, engagement of public authorities, and coordination with international actors aligned well with South Sudan's need for stronger civil society advocacy, improved government responsiveness and accountability, and community empowerment. The ToC's multisectoral and gender-sensitive orientation also resonated with South Sudan's realities, where nutrition, WASH, food security, and gender are tightly interconnected.

However, important gaps emerged. The anticipated role of the private sector proved limited, prompting a pivot toward community groups and VSLAs as the primary vehicles for change. The original ToC was developed before COVID-19, it could not have anticipated the pandemic's disruptions, subsequent adaptations were made to address these effects. Likewise, while expanding civic space and strengthening local–national linkages were explicit objectives of the programme, design assumptions about the pace and feasibility of change proved optimistic given the operating context. The anticipated role of the private sector was also more limited than envisaged, prompting a deliberate shift toward community groups and VSLAs as primary vehicles for change. Recurrent funding shortfalls further constrained delivery and required reprioritization.

In implementation, programme strategies nonetheless responded to local needs to a large extent. Access to basic services concerns were addressed through installing water points, promoting handwashing, and disseminating nutrition and WASH messages, using local languages and trusted figures (chiefs, nurses, lead mothers) to ensure reach during COVID-19. Communities shifted from dependency to active participation on service-delivery and accountability issues by organising meetings, demanding services, and co-managing local solutions strengthening ownership and accountability. CSOs received training in advocacy, budget analysis, and evidence generation to address policy and financing issues (e.g., county allocations for WASH/nutrition, O&M funding, and service quality), enabling policy briefs and contributions to parliamentary discussions that linked community priorities with national decision-making on gender and inclusion issues. Gender and inclusion were advanced through Mother-to-Mother Support Groups, male support groups, child clubs, and women-led CSOs, which broadened participation and addressed social norms that constrain it.

The MTR found limited progress with formal private-sector actors and recommended first mapping who is actually present and viable to engage in the states of operation. It also noted that, apart from small instances of household sales (e.g., produce from kitchen gardens), there was little evidence that existing private actors were being identified and mobilized through programme activities; the team had already flagged the need for a structured mapping to enable better engagement going forward.

In response, the programme turned from a “formal private sector first” model to explicitly strengthening community-level enterprises and micro-markets around nutrition and WASH. Practically, this means nurturing VSLAs and producer groups; supporting micro-ventures that sustain nutrition and WASH practices (e.g., seedling and soap production, tippy-tap/latrine hardware artisans, water-point caretakers); and linking groups to local buyers and service partners so communities can both apply the skills promoted by Right2Grow and generate income. This shift also addresses an MTR-observed gap: training sometimes outpaced access to inputs (e.g.,

seeds), which constrained households from operationalizing new practices; by bolstering local micro-supply chains, the programme closes this “last-mile” gap.

Into Bridge 4Voices also an approach to advocacy co-created and implemented by Right2Grow programme partners, still co-creates capacities with CSOs/CBOs (MCD), and added structured pathways for citizen voice to travel through facilitated public forums, social accountability dialogues, and media storytelling. The MTR highlighted early media work (consultations with the Union of Journalists; training of 19 journalists from 12 outlets; and subsequent field reporting that amplified community narratives on WASH and nutrition). The programme is institutionalizing this as a B4V “voice-to-policy” pipeline within implementation.

Consistent with the MTR and programme learning, the programme simplified ToC pathways to make them easier to operationalize and more responsive to county-level realities; it integrated the specific effects of COVID-19 in South Sudan; and it reinforced gender and inclusion (e.g., embedding MtMSGs, men’s groups and child clubs to directly tackle social norms). These refinements reflect the MTR’s emphasis on adaptive management and align with the country ToR’s guidance to integrate COVID-19 within the ToC.

According to the findings from the reflection session with programme team, since the mid-term review, collaboration became more structured and inclusive. The country coalition clarified roles across national lead partners, civil society organizations, and consortium members, and decision-making shifted toward shared ownership. The Country Steering Committee assumed a stronger role in planning and follow-up, which improved coordination and continuity between meetings. 67% of the Linking&Learning survey respondents considered sharing improved over the past two years within Right2Grow. In practice, partners increased the frequency of joint planning sessions where CSOs, government representatives, and consortium members aligned advocacy priorities and timelines. Budget monitoring exercises and policy-brief submissions were undertaken collaboratively, which strengthened the quality of evidence and the legitimacy of messages brought into national forums.

Acting on lessons from the review, the coalition prioritized governance and transparency reinforcing the Steering Committee’s oversight, formalizing decision records, and tightening accountability mechanisms. Communication channels between local and national partners were also improved so that grassroots evidence more consistently informs national-level advocacy and policy dialogue.

1.5. Description of endline evaluation process

Primary data collection was carried out in two hotspot sites Bor South (Jonglei State) and Juba (Central Equatoria) selected to reflect diverse geographies, stakeholder dynamics, and concentrations of harvested outcomes. Respondents included government officials, civil society organization (CSO) representatives, , community leaders, religious leaders, and private-sector actors (15 KIIs); community members (women, men, youth), CSO staff, Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (MtMSGs), and community-based organizations (CBOs) through 4 FGDs; a reflection session with country programme staff and alliance partners; and a partner survey of implementing partners (Save the Children, World Vision, CIDO, SPEDP, UNIDOR, CRC and ACF). Ethical safeguards included informed consent, confidentiality, safeguarding, and anonymization where appropriate.

The evaluation applies a participatory, mixed-methods design with a strong qualitative emphasis, combining Outcome Harvesting (core monitoring approach), contribution analysis, and triangulated KIIs/FGDs with a structured review of secondary data (annual reports, MCD & L&L surveys, activity records) and a country Theory of Change (ToC) review. The approach is utilization-focused and equity-sensitive, integrates feminist and participatory evaluation principles (power-sharing, intersectionality), and is organized against OECD-DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, coherence, impact, sustainability). Sampling is purposive/stratified by role, gender, and geography; limitations (e.g., access constraints due to insecurity/flooding, social desirability, recall bias, documentation gaps) are mitigated through neutral facilitation, triangulation, adjusted sampling, and independent substantiation of selected outcomes.

The Endline Evaluation (ETE) spans the full programme period (2021–2025) and focuses on advocacy results and systems change across WASH, nutrition, gender inclusion, and civic space, policies and budgets with attention to localization and partnership dynamics. Key questions address: (i) relevance (fit and quality of the ToC and responsiveness to community/policy needs); (ii) effectiveness (intermediate outcome results and progress

toward donor indicators); (iii) coherence & partnership (added value of consortium and external collaborations, adaptive management, Dutch Embassy value added, localization/shift-the-power); (iv) impact (long-term and unintended changes); and (v) sustainability (prospects, factors, local ownership, policy/budget continuity, and local authority pledges).

The evaluation covers January 2021–September 2025 for outcomes (with reporting and finalization by 15 October 2025). Primary data collection was scheduled for July–August 2025; beginning fieldwork before 1 July ensured adequate time for stakeholder scheduling and independent substantiation of harvested outcomes, and to mitigate seasonal access risks (insecurity/flooding) that could otherwise constrain reach. Because the field window closed in July, very late Q3/Q4 2025 activities may have been partially captured through document review rather than primary field verification; such cases have been transparently noted as post-field updates in the analysis.

Out of 87 total respondents, 12 from South Sudan participated in the Linking and Learning survey, with strong representation from local partners, 66% (n=8). Participating organizations were Support for Peace and Education Development Programme (SPEDP) (3), Community Initiative for Development Organization (CIDO) (2), Save the Children International (2), Universal Intervention and Development Organization (UNIDOR) (2), Child Rights Civil Society Coalition (1), World Vision (1), and Action Against Hunger (1) (Figure 1). By location, 66.7% (n=8) of respondents were based in the capital, 16.7% (n=2) at headquarters, and 16.7% (n=2) at the local level. Their roles included Community Mobilization/Programme Manager/Technical Expert (4), Programme Coordinator (3), Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) (2), Senior Management (1), Right2Grow Project Officer (1), and Communication/Linking & Learning Focal Point (1). Regarding tenure in the programme, 41.7% (n=5) have been part of Right2Grow since its inception, 50% (n=6) for more than one year, and 8.3% (n=1) for less than a year (Figure 2). Overall, 58.3% (n=7) have been in the programme for a year or less, an important consideration when interpreting the subsequent analysis.

2. Methodology

2.1. Approach

The End-Term Evaluation (ETE) applied a participatory, mixed-methods design with a strong qualitative core, anchored in Outcome Harvesting and contribution analysis to assess the programme's plausible contribution to observed changes across the four pathways of the Theory of Change (ToC). The design unfolded in four phases: (1) document/literature review; (2) primary data collection; (3) analysis and validation; and (4) reporting and dissemination. Methods included key informant interviews (KIIs), focus group discussions (FGDs), field verification, community mapping, process tracing, and systematic review of programme evidence (harvested outcomes, Monitoring-Context-Data survey results, activity records). Tools and sampling were finalized in an evaluation matrix aligning questions, tools, sources, and timelines. The approach was utilization-focused and equity-sensitive, guided by feminist and participatory evaluation principles (power-sharing, intersectionality, inclusion of marginalized groups), and organized against OECD-DAC criteria (relevance, effectiveness, coherence, impact, sustainability).

The ETE built on outcomes harvested by the country programme up to Q1-2025 and conducted independent substantiation of a purposive sample (e.g., high-impact or unexpected outcomes; multi-partner contributions; areas with evidence gaps). For each selected outcome, the team triangulated documentary proof, KIIs/FGDs, and site checks, and applied contribution analysis to test alternative explanations, rating the strength of evidence transparently. Sustainability considerations and progress markers were examined alongside substantiation to link intermediate results to longer-term prospects.

Consistent with the ToR, the programme ran an internal technical and organizational capacity assessment (online questionnaire) led by the Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) team, with results compared to baseline and the Mid-Term Review (MTR). In parallel, a Linking & Learning survey (led by the L&L team) documented what partners had learned and adopted; both data streams fed into the ETE to complement outcome evidence and explain variation in results over time. Findings informed the partnership review (coherence, added value, localization/ "shift the power") and helped interpret enabling factors for policy influence and service improvements.

In line with contextual milestone during the evaluation period, during Q2 2025, the Government of South Sudan launched the country's first National Nutrition Policy (officially announced around 12–13 June 2025). Given its direct relevance to Right2Grow's objectives, this evaluation notes the policy as a contextual development that may influence interpretation of reported outcomes, particularly in advocacy and systems change. We did not attribute results solely to this policy but considered respondent perceptions of its implications for coordination, financing, and service delivery in nutrition and WASH.

The ETE was implemented by Q&A (South Sudan) with a global lead (Impact House/Results in Health) to align with global guidance while adapting to context. Ethical procedures included informed consent, confidentiality, safeguarding, and "do no harm," with particular care in restrictive civic-space settings (e.g., anonymization, safe venues, off-site/remote options). The design emphasized sufficient and independent sources and triangulation to reduce bias and enhance credibility.

Selection criteria prioritized; (i) relevance to Right2Grow outcomes and contribution pathways; (ii) coverage of diverse geographies and implementation contexts (including Bor South and Juba); (iii) balance of stakeholder types (government, CSOs/CBOs, INGOs, private sector, community members) and roles (decision-makers, implementers, and beneficiaries); (iv) inclusion of women, men, and youth to enable gender and age perspectives; (v) tenure and familiarity with the programme to ensure informed responses; (vi) availability and willingness to participate, with language accessibility; and (vii) safeguarding considerations (risk level, ability to speak freely, and absence of conflicts of interest).

Table 1: Qualitative Respondents Reached

Key Informant Targets Reached								
NO	Category	Juba		Bor		Total		
		F	M	F	M	F	M	
01	Community Chief	0	0	0	2	0	2	
02	Woman Leader	0	0	1	0	0	1	
03	CSO Representative	1	1	1	3	2	4	
04	Community Health Worker	0	0	0	1	0	1	
05	Private sector - VSLA Chair	0	0	1	0	1	0	
06	State Ministry of Health	0	0	0	1	0	1	
07	Youth Leader	0	0	0	3	0	3	
08	County Health Department	0	0	0	1	0	1	
09	Religious Leader	0	0	1	1	1	1	
10	Member of Parliament	0	1	0	0	0	1	
						4	15	
Total						19		
Focus Group Discussion targets								
No of FGDs								
Category of FGDs			No of participants in the FGDs					
			Juba		Bor		Total Respondents	
			F	M	F	M	F	M
01	Male Community Members	1	0	0	0	6	0	6
02	Mother to Mother Support Groups	2	0	0	12	0	12	0
03	Water User Committee	2	0	0	12	0	12	0
04	Female Community Members	1	0	0	6	0	6	0
05	School children	1	2	2	0	0	2	2
06	Reflection session	1	5	4	0	0	5	4
Total			7	6	30	6	37	12

8 FGDs in total	86 FGD Participants
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The sample of 8 FGDs (86 participants) and 15 KIIs achieved thematic saturation for the evaluation questions within the two hotspot sites and stakeholder groups (government, CSOs/CBOs, INGO partners, community representatives). During the final interviews and FGDs, no new codes or substantively novel themes emerged, indicating redundancy. Saturation was further supported by triangulation (documents, MTR findings, partner survey) and maximum-variation purposive sampling (gender, role, and organizational type). We note that, while adequate for evaluating contribution pathways and outcomes, this reflects evaluation-level saturation rather than exhaustive, programme-wide saturation across all states and years. As a mitigation, we integrated longitudinal document evidence and partner survey data to capture multi-year dynamics.

Verification of testimonies. Quotations were drawn from KIIs/FGDs conducted under verbal consent, documented via the tick-box on the questionnaire; each instrument bears the facilitator's name with date and location. We submit redacted notes (no personal identifiers including quotes in the report. The original, non-redacted instruments were stored securely and will be shared with the final report. Given low feasibility of signatures, consent was documented as witnessed verbal consent using the tool's tick-box; additionally, the facilitator's name on the instrument serves as the attesting party.

2.2. Bias and limitations

In South Sudan, security sensitivities that happened along Bor-Juba Road, and scheduling difficulties especially with government offices limited site coverage or delayed interviews. Consequence: a risk of sample skew toward more accessible locations/stakeholders and under-representation of hard-to-reach voices. Mitigation: flexible data-collection windows, additional local researchers, remote KIIs, and replacement sites where needed; any remaining gaps were flagged as limitations when interpreting generalizability.

Communities/ stakeholders who benefited from the programme could have over-reported positives; partners who helped deliver outcomes could have confirmed their own results during substantiation. Consequence: potential overestimation of programme influence. Mitigation: programme staff were excluded from respondent sessions; anonymity was guaranteed; independent substantiators and non-partner witnesses were sought; alternative explanations were tested via contribution analysis; and confidence ratings were documented for each outcome.

Purposive sampling (by geography, actor type, or pathway) risked omitting quieter constituencies (e.g., women with caregiving burdens, persons with disabilities). Consequence: partial perspectives on equity and inclusion. Mitigation: samples were stratified by gender, age, disability, role, and location; local languages and trusted facilitators were used; women-only/youth-only groups were scheduled; and inclusion was cross-checked through L&L and MCD datasets.

Given the complex, multi-actor ecosystem, strictly attributing change to a single actor was inappropriate. Consequence: risk of over-claiming. Mitigation: a contribution lens was adopted from the outset, explicit causal logic tests were applied, and contribution strength was rated using transparent criteria and rival explanations; where evidence was insufficient, results were classified as plausible but unconfirmed. Advocacy topics were sensitive; participants may have self-censored. Consequence: potential under-reporting of barriers and social desirability bias. Mitigation: anonymization, safe/neutral venues, remote options where needed, careful question phrasing, and strict adherence to informed consent, confidentiality, and protection protocols were employed. No audio/photos. Audio recording and photography were not used due to context and participant preference; testimonies were documented through contemporaneous notes under witnessed verbal consent. To mitigate, the team maintained an auditable trail (consent tick-box and dated facilitator notes).

The evaluation addressed these risks through design safeguards (independent substantiation, triangulation, inclusive sampling), documented limitations transparently, and graded confidence in findings. Where limitations materially affected a specific evaluation question, this was stated explicitly and reflected in the strength of conclusions and recommendations.

3. Findings

3.1. Relevance

3.1.1 Quality and evolution of the country ToC

Overall, the country Theory of Change (ToC) was of good quality and closely aligned with the issues surfaced in the “rich pictures.” Its emphasis on improving water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and nutrition practices directly matched community priorities around clean water, hygiene, and child feeding. Equally, the pathways on transparency, participation, and evidence-based advocacy reflected local concerns about accountability and government responsiveness (e.g., budget hearings, a WASH caucus). The ToC also mirrored community empowerment goals moving from dependency to active participation while maintaining a gender-sensitive, community-led approach that elevated women’s roles, child clubs, and inclusive structures.

The post-MTR refinements to the TIC were relevant and moderately significant for programming, clarifying contribution pathways (e.g., voice-to-policy), sharpening priorities, and improving sequencing and MEL feedback for adaptive management. Evidence of improved focus (more structured citizen–state interfaces and media engagement) was observed, though impact was tempered by uneven uptake across partners and the late stage of implementation.

That said, several context-specific gaps limited the fit of the original, programmatic ToC. The domestic private sector proved weaker than anticipated, making it an unreliable driver of change. Major shocks including recurrent funding gaps were not initially embedded, even though they became defining constraints in South Sudan. In addition, shrinking civic space and weak linkages between local and national government shaped how advocacy could be conducted, necessitating more grounded, locally led strategies.

In response, the country ToC was adapted over time. Private-sector engagement was de-emphasized in favor of community-based approaches such as Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) and start-up capital support, which better matched local realities. These adjustments sat alongside practical examples of alignment and progress: civil society organizations (CSOs) trained in budget analysis and policy engagement produced research papers and briefs that informed parliamentary debate on agriculture and food-security allocations, and communities (e.g., in Mayendit) organized to demand clean water services, resulting in the installation of water points. Collectively, these adaptations strengthened the ToC’s relevance and usability in a fluid, resource-constrained context.

3.1.2 Alignment of ToC with key national & global issues

Right2Grow’s country Theory of Change is explicitly framed around ending undernutrition and expanding access to basic WASH, directly advancing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals of; SDG 2: Zero Hunger, SDG 3: Good Health and Well-Being, SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation while addressing post-COVID setbacks to food systems and health services.

The programme’s Theory of Change (ToC) maps directly onto Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan, 2011 (as amended) as follows;

- Rights to health, WASH and a safe environment. The ToC’s focus on reducing undernutrition and expanding basic WASH aligns with the Constitution’s Bill of Rights, which obliges “all levels of government” to promote public health and provide free primary health care and emergency services, and sets environmental stewardship as a state duty. These provisions give a clear legal basis for ToC pathways that strengthen primary health services, hygiene, and community risk-reduction.
- Civic participation, association and access to information. The ToC’s empowerment of civil society and communities’ tracks with constitutional guarantees of freedom of assembly and association, the right to participate and vote, and the right of access to official information. These rights underpin evidence-based advocacy, citizen monitoring of services and budgets, and inclusive decision-making core mechanisms in the ToC.
- Decentralization and local accountability. The ToC’s community-driven approach fits the Constitution’s decentralized system of government and the mandate to establish empowered local governments that

promote participation, civic education, gender mainstreaming, and community involvement in service delivery and natural-resource decisions. This decentralization is exactly where the ToC positions community platforms, user committees, and CSO coalitions to co-produce and oversee services.

- Public finance transparency and equitable allocation. The ToC's budget-advocacy pathway is anchored in constitutional principles for equitable sharing of national wealth, and in institutions like the Fiscal and Financial Allocation and Monitoring Commission and the National Audit Chamber, which are tasked with transparent, fair intergovernmental transfers and audit of public accounts. CSO budget tracking and policy briefs envisioned in the ToC reinforce these constitutional duties.

South Sudan's National Health Policy (NHP) 2016–2026 prioritises inter-sectoral collaboration on the determinants of health food security and nutrition, water and sanitation, education, poverty and gender barriers and calls for scaled interventions, stronger partnerships, increased health budgeting, and better HMIS/M&E. The NHP's vision and objectives to deliver the Basic Package of Health and Nutrition Services (BPHNS) and move towards universal health coverage require community participation, multi-sector policy action and alignment of partner programmes with national priorities.

The program puts South Sudan within a six-country (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Mali, South Sudan, and Uganda) partnership and leverages regional/pan-national advocacy coalitions such as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) CSO movement, which the programme engaged to influence national multi-sector nutrition planning and budget debates linking country action to wider regional/global advocacy

The country ToC reflects the most salient issues raised in community evidence ("rich pictures") notably access to safe water and sanitation, improved nutrition practices, community empowerment and accountability, and gender/inclusion. Community-level results substantiate these pathways: Water Use Committees and local actors helped construct or maintain water points and flood-resilient platforms and cascaded WASH practices, signalling ownership and bottom-up accountability. Kitchen demonstration gardens led by Mother-to-Mother Support Groups expanded diet diversification and spurred household food production and income-earning from surplus produce tangible practice changes aligned with ToC expectations.

The ToC's capacity-strengthening and evidence-based advocacy pathways have proven valid. Civil society organisations trained in budget analysis and advocacy produced policy briefs and engaged Parliamentary budget committees; consortium members were invited to the national budget reading clear signs that the pathway from CSO capacity, evidence-based advocacy and influencing decision-making is functioning.

At national level, sustained engagement contributed to policy and budget processes (e.g., the Nutrition Policy committee; commitments to review WASH/food-security allocations), confirming a credible pathway from advocacy to policy influence. At community level, mobilisation platforms (e.g., Water Use Committees, support groups) translated training into service-demand and local solutions (latrine construction requests; maintenance of water points), validating the community-empowerment pathway.

Several assumptions largely held: (i) Government openness to dialogue evidenced by invitations to national budget sessions and formation of multi-stakeholder policy processes; though implementation can be slowed by personnel turnover. (ii) CSO credibility and independence reflected in respected engagements with ministries and committees. (iii) Community willingness to participate seen in WUC activity and household uptake of nutrition/WASH practices. Two assumptions were weaker: (iv) Private-sector capacity to drive change evidence of mobilising existing firms was limited, and partners identified the need for basic market mapping; accordingly, country strategy leaned more on community-based enterprise and savings groups than on private-sector partnerships. (v) Stable funding environment national nutrition/WASH financing constraints persisted, threatening the translation of policy wins into implementation.

3.1.3 Responsiveness of programme strategies

Programme strategies were highly responsive to the immediate priorities of communities across Bor South, Pariak, and Baidit. Women consistently highlighted how the establishment of Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (M2MSGs) enabled them to learn and apply improved nutrition practices. A participant in Baidit explained: "...we share with each other how to prepare porridge with greens and groundnuts. One mother had a malnourished child, and after

applying what she learned, the child recovered.” These testimonies illustrate the practical and life-saving impact of knowledge transferred through peer learning structures.

Men also confirmed that strategies responded well to household and community needs by improving access to clean water and sanitation. In Bor South, one man reflected: “...we now have clean water closer to home, and men have joined women in fetching it. This was not common before, but we see the benefit when families work together.” Such reflections confirm that strategies were not only service-oriented but also responsive to shifting gender roles, enabling more equitable household responsibilities.

Youth perspectives further reinforced responsiveness, noting that they had become respected agents of change in their communities. A youth leader in Pariak explained: “...we are teaching others about hygiene, and we feel respected for it.” At the same time, youth emphasised unmet needs, particularly in livelihoods, with one young man in Baidit observing: “...we gained skills in nutrition, but with no capital to start small businesses, we feel discouraged.” This shows that while strategies effectively responded to educational and behavioural needs, they were less aligned to structural barriers of unemployment and poverty.

Nevertheless, unintended tensions also emerged, particularly related to women’s participation in community activities. As one man in Pariak explained: “...some husbands felt neglected when their wives attended many meetings, and arguments increased.” These dynamics underline the need for careful integration of gender-transformative strategies with household engagement to mitigate backlash.

Programme strategies responded effectively to local community needs by improving access to nutrition, WASH, and knowledge platforms while fostering equitable gender norms and youth agency. However, structural vulnerabilities including food insecurity, youth unemployment, and occasional household tensions constrained the full responsiveness of these approaches.

Reflection session with programme staff highlighted that safe water access, basic hygiene, caregiver practices, and food access for young children were the immediate community needs addressed by the program. They pointed to the roll-out of Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (MtMSGs), community cooking demos, and kitchen demonstration gardens as the most visible, practical changes formats that helped caregivers adopt MIYCN practices and diversify diets, while also creating an entry point for livelihood gains (sale of vegetables). Training and equipping Water User Committees (WUCs) was described as essential in places where partners had left or floods/insecurity constrained services; WUCs took on pump maintenance and kept water points functional. The same staff noted that using local languages and trusted figures (chiefs, nurses, lead mothers) during COVID-19 helped messages stick and reach the most vulnerable.

Team members during the reflection session said the programme’s evidence-based advocacy steadily moved from ad-hoc asks to more structured policy engagement: CSO capacity strengthening in locally led advocacy, budget analysis and policy brief writing, regular dialogue with sector platforms (e.g., SUN CSO movement), and targeted advocacy on normative instruments. They cited outcomes such as the government decree (via the Nutrition Cluster) regulating the marketing of breast-milk substitutes/infant foods, and the use of CSO products in parliamentary discourse on agriculture and food-security allocations, as signals that budget and policy conversations are now more grounded in local evidence. Ongoing relationship-building with ministries and coordination among local CSOs/CBOs were viewed as crucial enablers to keep budget tracking and hearings responsive to community-identified needs.

Reflection session with programme staff highlighted that, the programme’s strategies substantially strengthened the policy and budgeting environment by strengthening civil society capacity and deepening government engagement. Partner civil society organizations (CSOs) were supported to produce evidence-based policy briefs and research papers that were submitted to Parliament and line ministries, helping to shape deliberations. This engagement contributed to the establishment of a WASH caucus in Parliament and informed the Ministry of Education’s green school construction guidelines, showing how advocacy translated beyond budget lines into policy development. The programme also helped institutionalize national public budget hearings (2023/2024), improving transparency and creating space for citizens and CSOs to participate in debates, while alliances with networks such as Civil Society Budget Advocacy Group (CSBAG) from Uganda and the Center for Economic Governance and Accountability in Africa (CEGAA) amplified grassroots messages and strengthened links to national decision-making.

On the budgeting side, targeted trainings in budget monitoring and expenditure tracking (BMET) equipped CSOs to engage effectively in national processes and to hold duty-bearers to account with credible evidence. Their advocacy was associated with a 10% increase in the agriculture and food security allocation in 2024, a concrete shift in priorities. Sustained CSO advocacy underpinned the move to public budget hearings, the WASH caucus kept water, sanitation and hygiene high on the agenda, and enhanced analytical skills made CSO positions more persuasive in policy dialogues together demonstrating a clear pathway from capacity building to tangible budget and policy outcomes.

Guided by the Theory of Change, the programme responded to priority needs voiced in communities by improving everyday access to safe water, sanitation, and child nutrition information, and by doing so through channels people trust. Teams supported the installation/maintenance of water points, promoted handwashing, and disseminated clear nutrition and WASH messages in local languages through respected figures such as chiefs, nurses, and lead mothers an approach that proved especially effective during COVID-19. In parallel, facilitation of community meetings and user platforms helped shift mindsets from dependency to active participation, with groups organising around durable solutions and demanding better services strengthening local ownership and accountability.

The programme also built the voice and agency of civil society and ensured that women, men, girls, and boys could participate meaningfully. Civil society organisations were trained in advocacy, budget analysis, and evidence generation, enabling them to produce policy briefs and engage credibly in parliamentary discussions that link community priorities to national decision-making. Inclusion was operationalised through gender-sensitive platforms Mother-to-Mother Support Groups, male support groups using the Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP) approach, child clubs (open to girls and boys), and water user committees with women and men in decision roles. Training and dialogues intentionally included both female and male CSO representatives so that skills in policy engagement and budget monitoring were shared across genders. Together these strategies broadened participation and addressed social norms that limit it.

At the institutional level, programme strategies addressed critical gaps in planning, budgeting, and accountability across national and sub-national government systems. State officials emphasised that training and mentoring strengthened technical capacity. A nutrition focal person at the State Ministry of Health explained: "...we are now using data to guide nutrition planning. Before, decisions were ad hoc, but the training helped us align with standards." Similarly, county health officers described improved accountability: "...we have learned how to track services and prepare reports for submission. This makes us more accountable to the Ministry." These accounts demonstrate that strategies directly responded to the need for evidence-based planning and reliable reporting systems.

Regarding budget support, Right2Grow's role focused on engaging parliamentary actors in dialogues on budget priorities. As one budget committee chairperson in Juba noted: "...we are now able to scrutinise budgets and ask ministries to account for resources. Before, we accepted what was presented without question." Such reflections confirm that programme strategies were responsive to the institutional demand for stronger budgetary governance and prioritisation of maternal and child health in national debates.

Civil society organisations also confirmed that strategies met their need for greater legitimacy and influence in governance spaces. A CSO leader from Bor reflected: "...we are no longer just attending meetings as observers. We now sit at the table and present evidence from the community." This shows that programme strategies strengthened the voice of civil society in policy and budget dialogue, making decision-making more inclusive.

Donors and international partners further highlighted responsiveness at the systems level. A development partner in Juba stated: "The programme created spaces for joint planning where we align with government priorities, which was not happening before." This demonstrates how strategies facilitated alignment between government, CSOs, and donors, ensuring that national policies were more reflective of community realities.

Despite these achievements, challenges persist. Financing limitations remain a key barrier to translating improved planning into consistent service delivery, while smaller grassroots CSOs continue to struggle with limited resources and digital capacity. Donors also admitted that while coordination has improved, actual implementation still follows external funding cycles rather than nationally harmonised plans.

Programme strategies were responsive to the need for stronger policies and budgets by enhancing government capacity, civil society influence, and donor alignment. However, sustainability of these gains is hindered by structural financing constraints, uneven CSO capacity, and continued dependence on external facilitation.

3.2 Effectiveness and impact

3.2.1 Effectiveness and contribution per ToC pathway

3.2.1.1 Community level

In Bor County, community participants consistently recognised the programme's role in improving knowledge, practices, and access to services in nutrition, WASH, and livelihoods. Women's groups were the most vocal about progress in maternal and child nutrition. A woman in the Pariak FGD reflected: "...before, many mothers did not exclusively breastfeed, and we did not know which foods were good for children. Now we have been taught, and our children are healthier." This progress corresponds with Annex 2 indicators, which show a notable rise in households practicing exclusive breastfeeding compared to baseline.

Men's FGDs also acknowledged positive outcomes, often emphasising WASH and shared responsibilities. A man in Bor South explained: "...we now have clean water closer to home, and men have joined women in fetching it. This was not common before, but we see the benefit when families work together." This testimony aligns with Annex 2 outcome indicators on improved access to safe water.

Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (M2MSGs) strongly highlighted their peer-to-peer role. A Baidit participant reported: "...we share with each other how to prepare porridge with greens and groundnuts. One mother had a malnourished child, and after applying what she learned, the child recovered. We see our knowledge saving lives." Such stories confirm Annex 2 evidence of improved child nutrition outcomes, particularly reductions in moderate malnutrition.

Youth voices offered a different lens, stressing that knowledge gains were not always matched by opportunities. A youth leader from Pariak Boma noted: "...the programme has given us knowledge, but we still face hunger because there are no jobs or farming inputs. Awareness alone cannot solve the food gap." This illustrates how advances in awareness may not fully translate into outcomes without addressing broader livelihood barriers.

Participants also described shifts in health-seeking behaviour. Families now seek care earlier and more consistently, with even fathers taking children to clinics. A man in Bor South explained: "...we used to wait for children to get very sick before going to the clinic. Now, even fathers take children early because we learned the importance." Such reflections are consistent with Annex 2 improvements in early care-seeking for childhood illnesses.

Shifts in gender roles were widely reported. Women observed that men are increasingly engaged in childcare and water collection. One woman in the Pariak FGD remarked: "...before, men never cared about childcare. Now, some fathers take children to the clinic and even help fetch water." This resonates with programme indicators on male involvement in nutrition and WASH practices, showing a gradual move towards more equitable household responsibilities.

While progress was evident across all sites, variations emerged. In Pariak, stronger shifts were reported in gender roles and hygiene practices. In Bor South, participants emphasised WASH improvements, while in Baidit the most vivid accounts related to nutrition recovery, largely attributed to the M2MSGs.

These site-level differences likely reflect variation in the intervention mix, intensity, and maturity, plus context. In Pariak, gender dialogues were more consistently integrated into community forums, reinforcing shifts in roles alongside hygiene messaging. In Bor South, a stronger emphasis on WASH hardware and hygiene campaigns (functioning water points, active committees) yielded visible sanitation gains. In Baidit, more mature and active MtMSGs, with closer linkage to facility counselling, underpinned vivid nutrition-recovery stories. Differences in local leadership support, partner capacity, timing of activities, and recent shocks (e.g., flooding/market access) further shaped results observed in each site. Together, these reflections confirm that programme outputs such as training of M2MSGs, establishment of water points, and awareness campaigns translated into tangible outcomes

including improved breastfeeding, better diets, healthier children, cleaner environments, and more balanced gender roles.

Despite this progress, sustainability remains fragile. Women across FGDs noted that while they now understand the importance of exclusive breastfeeding and balanced diets, food insecurity limits consistent practice. One woman in Pariak explained: "...We know what is good for children, but in the dry season we cannot always provide these foods." Similarly, men acknowledged awareness of balanced diets but stressed the challenge of hunger during poor harvests. These reflections reveal a gap between improved knowledge and the ability to consistently apply it under conditions of scarcity.

Community ownership of WASH facilities was another area of progress. A chief in Pariang Boma explained: "...this time, the boreholes are maintained because people know they are ours." Reflection sessions reinforced this sense of ownership, though systematic evidence on long-term functionality remains limited.

At the same time, unintended effects were observed. In Bor South, some community members expected ongoing material support, leading to frustration when it ended. Expectations in Bor South stemmed from legacy humanitarian norms and inconsistent expectation-setting. Early visible inputs signaled a continuing pipeline, while messages about the time-bound scope and duration of support may not have consistently reinforced across community forums and leaders. Male participants in Pariak noted that women's increasing involvement in community activities sometimes generated household tensions. Youth in Baidit expressed discouragement, explaining: "...we gained skills in nutrition, but with no capital to start small businesses, we feel discouraged." These findings underline the importance of managing expectations and addressing intra-household dynamics alongside knowledge transfer.

Overall, community narratives provide compelling evidence that the programme has improved nutrition, WASH, and gender relations, while also fostering agency among women and youth. The Baidit contribution story, where M2MSG members collectively supported the recovery of a malnourished child, illustrates how peer-to-peer learning and solidarity directly translated into life-saving outcomes. As one group leader reflected: "...we showed her how to use what little she had, and the child gained weight. We proved to ourselves that our knowledge works."

These stories highlight not only improvements in individual and household wellbeing but also emerging cultural shifts, where men are engaging more in childcare, youth taking leadership in hygiene promotion, and communities taking ownership of local facilities. Yet they also emphasise fragility: expectations of aid, persistent food insecurity, and livelihood gaps continue to threaten the durability of these gains.

The following present the Evidence Gap Map and the results of the Outcome Mapping exercise, organized for both the country level and the community level.

- Dec 2022 - Targeted community engagement (JCSN & VOW; Lualdit, Baidit, Pariak, Bor South). Sessions with MtMSGs, youth, church leaders, and chiefs promoted personal/kitchen hygiene and kitchen gardening (crop choice, composting, watering). Mobilisation used calls, CNVs, and church gatherings. Communities reported fewer hygiene-related illnesses, cleaner compounds, and more regular handwashing/safe food handling. Kitchen gardens increased fresh produce and dietary diversity, with some cost savings and petty income; groups formed for gardening and clean-ups, integrating routines at household level. Documentation (session reports, attendance, photos) verifies activities and outcomes
- Demonstration gardens & seed saving (SCI; Pariak, Baidit, Lualdit). MtMSG mothers learned seed selection, drying, and storage (okra, amaranthus, Jew's mallow; occasionally onion), shifting toward local seed sovereignty and diversified home plots. Results: steadier food availability, better child/maternal diets, and occasional seed sharing that strengthened solidarity and biodiversity.
- 2023 – Mass awareness on harmful norms (JCSN & INTERFID SSD, with SCI). Mixed-group dialogues challenged taboos restricting foods to pregnant women, girls, and children. Reported changes included more open discussion on gender equality/food justice and removal of food restrictions, "...now women and children can eat eggs and fish heads", signalling early behavioural shifts.

- 4–5 May & 23 Aug 2023 – Nutrition & WASH trainings (SCI; 45 participants). Topics: balanced diets, exclusive breastfeeding, home gardening/meal planning, food hygiene, safe water/handwashing, sanitation. Reported changes: more handwashing with soap, safer water handling, latrine use, and greater diet diversity via home-grown foods; improved practices on exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding. Despite cultural/resource barriers, communities expressed commitment to sustaining routines.
- 24–25 Nov 2023 – Mass awareness campaign (JCSN & ISS, with SCI; Baidit PHCC/IDPs, Lualdit PHCU). Messages covered exclusive breastfeeding, complementary feeding, dietary diversity/micronutrients, safe water, sanitation, and CLTS. Mobilised via churches/phone/CNVs. Participants reported immediate behaviour shifts more consistent handwashing and diversified meals for children and pregnant mothers—alongside strong interest in maintaining practices.

3.2.1.2 Civil society organisations

Civil society actors reported clear gains in visibility, credibility, and participation in nutrition/WASH governance. Leaders described moving from peripheral attendance to active, evidence-based engagement in county/state platforms. “...we are no longer just observers. We sit at the table and present community evidence,” a JCSN chairperson noted. Capacity strengthening, mentoring, and Linking & Learning events improved internal systems (financial management, reporting) and external influence (policy dialogue, budget hearings). As EWGO’s ED put it: “We learned to manage funds transparently; communities now trust us because we report back and involve them.” Additionally, local knowledge has been valued, captured, and documented in Right2Grow learning briefs, ensuring visibility and sustained access to bottom-up programmatic learnings that are useful for ongoing and future programming.

Programme outputs (advocacy training, reporting formats, budget analysis support) translated into outcomes in responsiveness and accountability. CSOs described stronger brokerage roles: “Communities bring water and health issues to us, and we channel them to county offices,” a women-led group explained. Reflection sessions confirmed reduced duplication and stronger coalition voice through networked action.

Outcome Mapping shows behavioural shifts, proactive evidence uses, coalition-building, and constructive engagement with government. “...we now approach offices with data, not just complaints,” a CSO leader in Bor said. “...yet the Evidence Gap Map highlights risk to sustainability: limited financial independence, staff retention, and digital capacity especially for smaller grassroots actors who feel overshadowed. “Sometimes the big NGOs dominate the space, and our voices are lost,” one participant observed.

As bottom line, CSOs have progressed from peripheral actors to credible partners, with strengthened systems and influence reflected in participation and performance metrics. However, institutional resilience remains uneven, without targeted support for financing, proposal development, and digital capacity particularly among smaller CSOs recent gains in advocacy and accountability may be hard to sustain.

Mutual Capacity Development/CSO Capacity Assessment

South Sudan shows a generally strong base (majority “low need”) but with clear gaps that merit targeted support. The highest training needs (33%) are in participatory data collection, community-based private-sector engagement, and working with marginalized groups and inclusive decision-making areas that require practical, field-tested tools and facilitation skills. Secondary gaps (27%) appear in community-led, gender-sensitive development and WASH–Nutrition basics, while community mobilization is comparatively strong (only 20% high need). Priorities should be short, practice-oriented trainings, paired with on-the-job coaching and peer exchange; where possible, leverage high-performing country teams (e.g., Burkina Faso/Bangladesh) for mentorship, and embed gender and participation checklists to standardize quality across interventions.

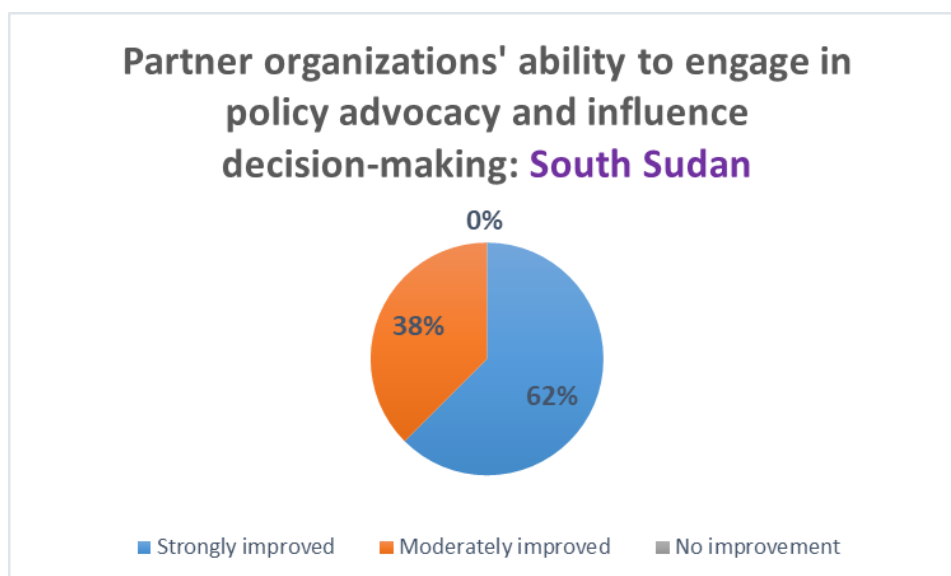


Figure 1: Partners organizational ability to engage in policy advocacy and influence in South Sudan

South Sudan partners also report universal gains in policy advocacy capacity: 62% indicate they strongly improved and 38% report moderate improvement, with no respondents citing no improvement. This reflects broad strengthening of advocacy skills and influence, with nearly two-thirds achieving substantial progress and the remainder showing steady advancement (Figure 1).

In South Sudan, CSOs' educational role shows exceptionally strong progress, with 100% of respondents indicating that it has strongly improved. CSOs' communicative role has also improved substantially across countries, with

South Sudan reporting universal gains: 100% indicate moderate to strong improvement, predominantly at the strong level.

Case Study 1: Catalyzing the South Sudan Nutrition Policy

For many years, South Sudan lacked a single, government-owned instrument to align nutrition standards and guidance across programmes. Partners relied on multiple guidelines such as CMAM and IMNCI/ICCM, leading to fragmented implementation and uneven coordination. Against this backdrop, the Nutrition Policy was conceived to consolidate direction, clarify roles and responsibilities, and embed cross-sector linkages with health, WASH, education, livelihoods and social protection.

As the Project Lead, Save the Children with support from an external consultant steered the process of the development of the nutrition policy from a fragmented policy landscape to a government-owned Nutrition Policy that now anchors action across health, WASH, education, livelihoods, and social protection.

A project staff mentioned that “...we convened the Ministry of Health early, with the DG for Primary Health Care leading and the Nutrition Director chairing the technical process. We set up a multi-stakeholder Steering Committee, drafted the ToR, and contracted an independent consultant.

To make localization real, not rhetorical the program embedded a UNICEF focal point to work with the external consultant for mentorship and brought state partners into two national consultations (situational analysis and validation). Despite staff turnover and shifting institutions, we secured multi-sector endorsements and launched the policy on 12 June.

The result is a coherent vision, clear roles, and a platform that links MIYCN, CMAM, and community systems, moving partners from parallel play to aligned delivery. What remains is the operationalization package including a costed plan, a results framework tied to the Nutrition Information System, and a financing map. That is the bridge from policy to impact and the momentum now exists to cross it.

Improvements are also evident in CSOs' representational role. No respondents reported “no” or “slight” improvement, while 100% indicated progress. This finding points to broad gains in CSOs' ability to represent their constituencies. The next step is to convert the remaining moderate improvements into strong ones through targeted mentoring, peer exchange, and increased opportunities to practice representation in formal multi-stakeholder forums.

CSOs' cooperative role has likewise strengthened in South Sudan, although a small gap remains: 12% report only slight improvement, compared to 88% reporting strong improvement. This suggests the need to further institutionalize cooperation mechanisms, for example through formal MoUs, joint workplans, and referral or coordination protocols, to move these modest gains toward stronger outcomes.

Overall, partners in South Sudan express the greatest confidence in their technical expertise, while funding remains the weakest pillar. This highlights the need to prioritize resource-mobilization and financing strategies—particularly in Burkina Faso and South Sudan—while leveraging strong technical capacities and partnership networks to sustain and scale results.

However, capacity development has been uneven. Larger, more established CSOs reported greater improvements in technical capacity and external recognition, while smaller community-based organisations still struggle with financial systems, proposal writing, and staff retention. A grassroots CSO representative explained, “...the training helped us, but we cannot always apply the knowledge because we lack resources and staff.” This indicates that while programme strategies elevated overall CSO capacity, disparities remain between stronger and weaker organisations.

CSOs increasingly view themselves as knowledge brokers linking communities with national platforms. Several respondents expressed pride that their reports and data are being used in county and state planning meetings. A

women's network leader in Bor remarked, "...decision-makers now quote our findings." These reflections show that the programme built internal capacities and positioned CSOs as legitimate contributors to policy dialogue.

Overall, the surveys confirm that the programme strengthened civil society capacity and fostered greater collaboration, while also pointing to ongoing challenges in ensuring equitable growth across different types of organisations. Without continued investment in smaller, grassroots actors, capacity gaps may widen, limiting the inclusiveness of civil society's contribution to nutrition and WASH outcomes.

Capacity strengthening approaches under the Right2Grow programme were widely credited by CSO partner organizations as essential for enabling meaningful policy engagement, budget advocacy, and community mobilization. Respondents consistently emphasized that they would not have achieved their advocacy results without the technical trainings, tools, and mentorship provided through the programme.



Figure 2: Partner organizations' ability to engage in policy advocacy and influence decision-making

The data collection process revealed compelling stories of how civil society organisations have transformed through their engagement with the programme, demonstrating improved internal capacity and greater credibility and influence in external spaces. One of the most striking stories came from the Executive Director of Voice of Women (VOW) in Bor, who recalled moving from being marginalised in county planning processes to becoming a recognised actor: "...after the training and mentoring, we are invited to speak on nutrition and women's needs. Our contributions are recorded, and sometimes they influence decisions." The Executive Director of the Empowering Women and Girls Organisation (EWGO) described how internal accountability practices strengthened legitimacy: "through programme support, we now prepare financial and activity reports regularly. Communities tell us they trust us more because we share information openly." From a network perspective, the Secretary General of the Jonglei Civil Society Network noted, "...before, we worked alone and sometimes competed for attention. Now, we coordinate and present joint statements. Government takes us more seriously when we speak together." A local women's association in Bor South added that training in documentation enabled their report on water challenges to be discussed at the county office: "for the first time, our voice reached decision-makers."

Mutual Capacity Development (MCD) played a supporting role in strengthening CSOs' ability to engage in evidence-based advocacy. Through a combination of technical training, mentoring and peer learning, partners strengthened capacities in budget analysis, policy brief development and the use of advocacy tools such as BMET and Bridge4Voices. These capacities enabled CSOs to engage more credibly in parliamentary hearings, policy dialogue and coalition advocacy, contributing to their transition from peripheral actors to recognised partners in nutrition and WASH governance.

While the programme significantly strengthened the capacity and visibility of civil society organisations, several unintended effects were also reported. Stronger advocacy occasionally strained relations with officials “some government officials feel threatened by the way CSOs are now questioning budgets.” Increased visibility led to capacity overload for small teams, “expectations on us increased, but our staff are few.” Competition sometimes surfaced as larger NGOs dominated shared spaces, and new reporting standards, while improving transparency, created technical hurdles for groups with limited IT access. Addressing these risks will require resourcing for smaller actors, fair convening, and right-sized compliance to protect collaboration gains.

Linking and Learning

In terms of the findings from the Linking & Learning survey conducted by the Right2Grow Global teams reinforced the qualitative insights shared by CSOs.

Out of a total of 87 respondents, 12 respondents from South Sudan participated in the Linking & Learning survey, with a strong representation of local partners (66%): Support for Peace and Education Development Programme (SPEDP) (3), Community initiative for Development Organization (CIDO) (2), Save the Children International (2), Universal Intervention and Development Organization (UNIDOR) (2), Child Rights Civil Society Coalition (1), World Vision (1), and Action Against Hunger (1) (Figure 1). Eight (66.7%) of the respondents were from the capital, 2 (16.7%) from the HQ and a similar number from the local level. Their roles were Community mobilization/ Programme manager/ Technical expert (4), program coordinator (3), Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability and Learning (MEAL) (2), Senior management (1), Right2grow Project Officer (1) and Communication/ Linking & Learning focal point (1). Five respondents (41.7%) have been part of the Right2Grow programme since its inception, while six (50%) have participated for more than one year, and one respondent (8.3%) for less than a year (Figure 2). This means that 58.3% of respondents have been in the programme for a year or less, an important factor to consider when interpreting the following analysis.

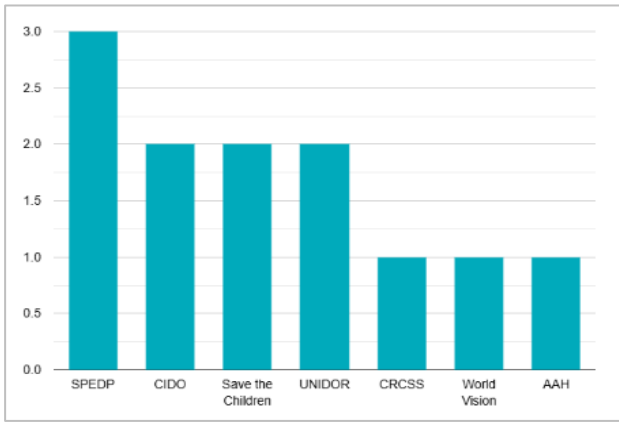


Figure 3: Name of respondent organization in South Sudan

The

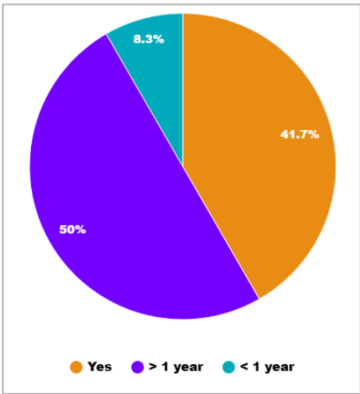


Figure 4. Participation since the beginning of the programme

respondent profile was predominantly male (72%), with females representing 27% and 1% preferring not to disclose. This imbalance indicates that men’s perspectives are likely overrepresented in the findings. Future rounds should aim for more balanced participation, for example by targeted outreach or scheduling adjustments to improve women’s response rates.

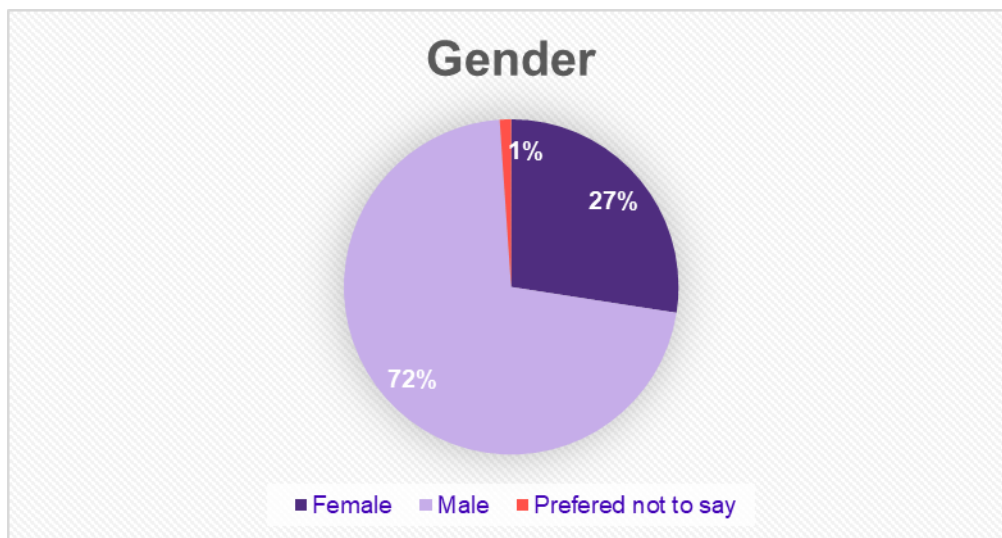


Figure 5: Gender of Respondents

Learning perceptions remained exceptionally strong and aligned with the mid-term review: 100% of respondents reported they still have a clearer understanding of what learning means in Right2Grow and why it matters, and they cited its value for continuous improvement, collaboration, monitoring, and sustainability. As one respondent put it, "Learning in the Right2Grow enhance collaboration, informs adaptive advocacy, and strengthens capacity for more effective nutrition and WASH outcomes." Another added, "Narratives and feedback from stakeholders that highlight the project's contributions, as well as identify areas for improvement and the required adjustments. These insights enabled the project to tailor its implementation to the local context, ensuring the sustainability of the approaches employed." A third emphasized the tracking benefit: "L&L tracking has greatly supported in tracking activities which could not easily remembered using reports only." Mirroring this, 100% felt learning has become more intentional within their organizations and the consortium (vs. 90% across all six countries), noting practical steps such as "Linking and learning partner focal points... nominated to document learning... and share it with the country linking and learning focal point." and "We have incorporated the L&L methodologies into our MEAL tools."

The same positive trend applied to sharing: 100% in South Sudan (and 94% across the six countries) said learning is now shared more intentionally than at start-up. Partners described a growing learning culture through exchange visits, cross-learning activities, and routine reflection platforms "The monthly meetings, semi-annual & annual reflection meeting, regional and global learning events." They also highlighted facilitation and tools "The Right2Grow consortium L&L focal person has facilitated workshops that brings all partners to share lessons learnt from their various locations on R2G projects including challenges faced." and "There was a form developed and shared monthly to the Linking & Learning country focal person to help all member partners adapt to the best advocacy practice." Learning has been consciously contextualised "It has been quite intentional because as Right2Grow consortium, we had exchange visits (external & internal) and knowledge sharing sessions which are used and adopted for specific context in relation to climate change." Organizationally, practice is deepening "Internally, SPEDP encouraged Right2Grow team in sharing of lessons learned, best practices, and successful strategies... and created a platform for open discussions about challenges... while identifying solutions to improve programming."

Right2Grows's learning strategy centred on continuous documentation and integration of lessons to improve effectiveness and impact. To keep efforts focused and actionable, partners at country level selected a single learning theme; in South Sudan, consortia teams chose: "Stakeholder collaboration towards achieving Right2Grow objectives and ensuring sustainability." Most respondents 11 of 12 (91.7%) said documenting this theme improved its implementation, while 1 (8.3%) was unsure. As one partner noted, "Documented lessons has helped partners in coming up with solutions to challenges to improve programme activities across the locations of R2G project in South Sudan."

As familiarity with the learning cycle grew, teams also documented learning from specific activities, not only the theme; 100% reported that this enhanced implementation, especially by surfacing challenges and “bad practices” for systematic follow-up and adaptation. Partners highlighted how documentation informed course correction “It has helped us improve in where we did not find things going on well as well as informing our programming.” and enabled replication across counties “Documenting good practices in Right2Grow activities helps partner recognize effective strategies that can be replicated or scaled up. In Panyijiar, documenting how M2MSGs sustained attendance through cooking demonstrations led to this approach being adopted in Koch and Leer counties.” All respondents (100%) wished to replicate at least one documentation approach; 75% preferred a combined theme-plus-activity model and 25% favoured activity-only documentation. With 66% of respondents being local partners, this appetite signals strong prospects for sustaining the learning approach and its tools beyond the programme’s lifetime.

Lessons from the Right2Grow Linking & Learning process in South Sudan were applied most to improve ways of working (91.7%) and to inform or inspire other partners/colleagues (91.7%), showing strong diffusion of practice and internal adaptation. A large majority used learning to design or adapt activities and programme components (75.0%), while two-thirds applied it to update methodologies (66.7%) and to support lobbying/advocacy activities (66.7%). Fewer organisations leveraged learning directly for proposal writing (41.7%), suggesting further scope to translate learning into resource mobilisation narratives (Figure 4)

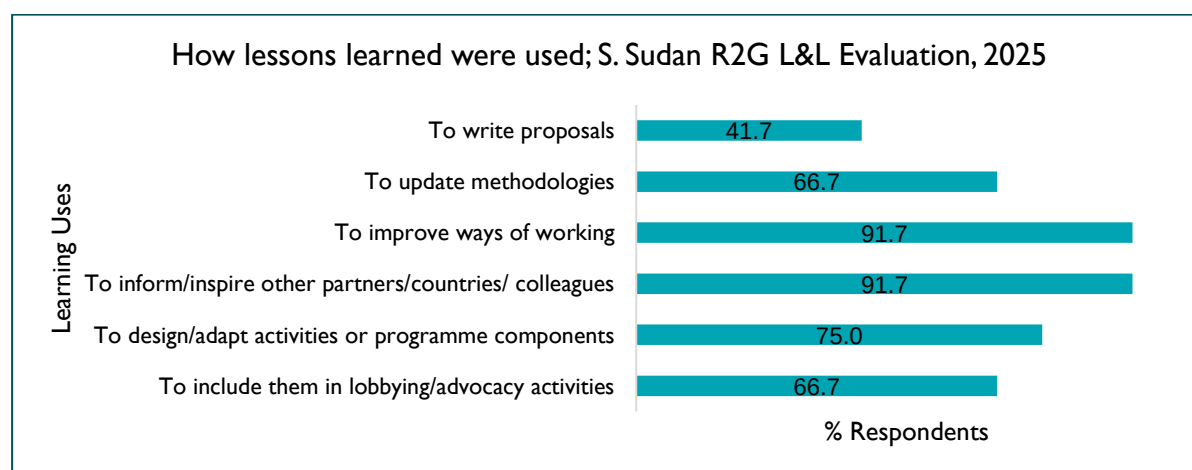


Figure 6: How lessons learned were used; S. Sudan R2G L&L Evaluation, 2025

Survey responses show that learning was applied most frequently to design or adapt activities and programme components (n=64) and to improve ways of working (n=60). Many partners also used learning to inform or inspire peers across countries and organisations (n=49) and to feed into lobbying/advocacy (n=47). Updating methodologies (n=40) was common, while proposal writing (n=20) was the least-cited use. Only one respondent said they hadn’t used the learning at all and one reported “other” uses indicating broad uptake and practical application across the consortium (Figure 6).

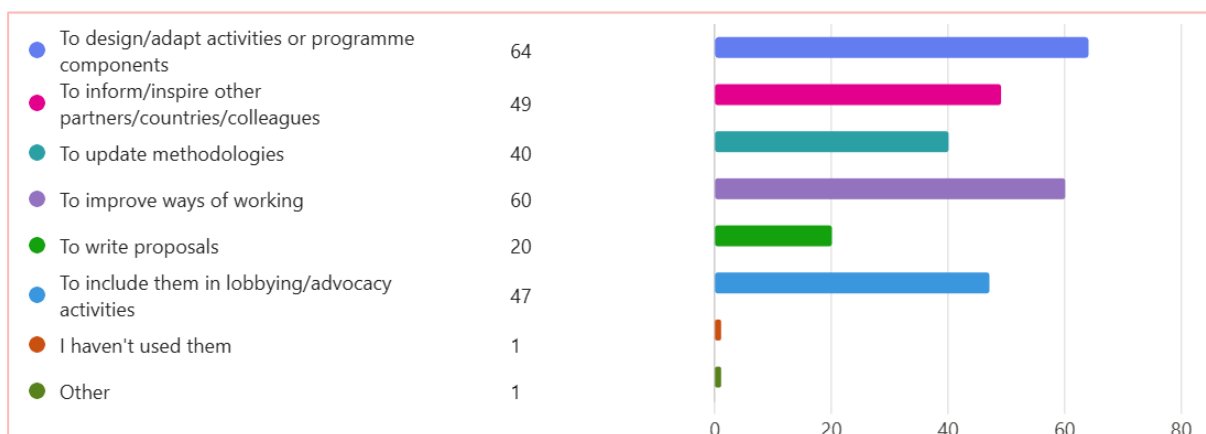


Figure 7: Use of lessons learned - all respondents combined (87)

Perceptions of cross-country sharing and exchange over the past two years are broadly positive but mixed. A combined 58.3% of respondents (33.3% strongly agree; 25% agree) feel sharing has improved, while 41.7% are neutral and no one disagreed. The absence of negative views suggests real gains; however, the large neutral share signals uneven participation or benefits, indicating a need to further institutionalize exchanges (e.g., regular communities of practice, peer visits, shared repositories) and reduce practical barriers such as bandwidth, travel costs, and competing workloads (Figure 7).

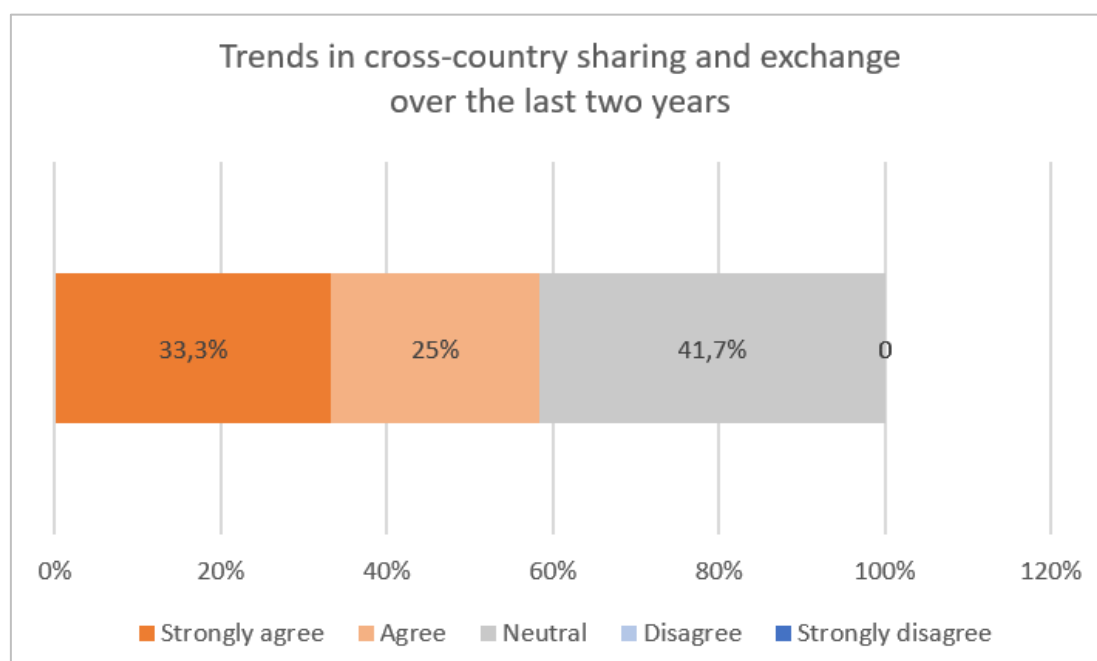


Figure 8: Trends in cross-country sharing and exchange over the last two years in South Sudan

Among the experience-sharing channels assessed by 12 respondents, the highest-impact avenues were the Learning Week and Grow Together Sessions (both 41–42 total weighted score), closely followed by cross-country visits (39–40). The Grow platform (32) provided moderate value, while the WhatsApp group (25) ranked lowest. Taken together, the results suggest that immersive, structured, and interactive formats multi-day learning events, facilitated peer sessions, and in-person exchanges deliver the greatest payoff, whereas light-touch, asynchronous channels are useful but less transformative. Prioritising budget and planning for Learning Weeks, Grow Together cohorts, and targeted cross-country visits then using the platform and WhatsApp to sustain momentum would maximise knowledge transfer and adoption (Figure 8).

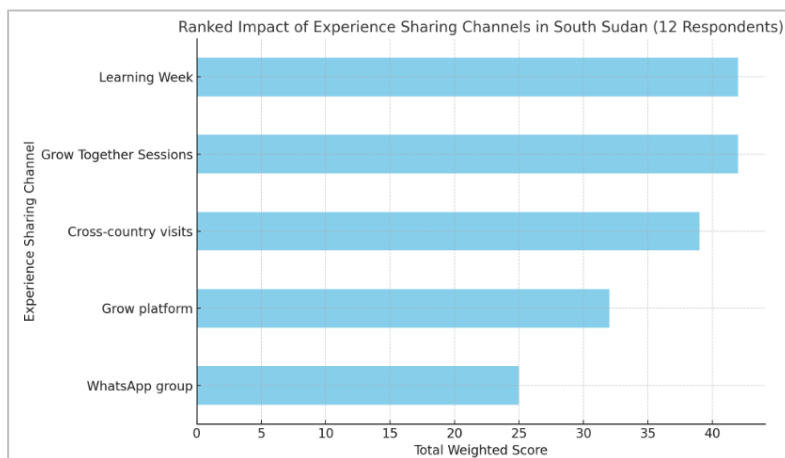


Figure 1:. Ranked impact of experience sharing channels in South Sudan

Training uptake and quality. Eleven respondents (91.7%) reported receiving a Linking & Learning (L&L) training during their Right2Grow engagement, while one (8.3%) had not despite being involved since inception. Of those trained, 81.8% attended in-person and 18.2% online. Satisfaction averaged 7.8/10 overall 8/10 for face-to-face vs 7/10 online—indicating an effectiveness edge for in-person delivery. Participants highlighted the value of the March 2024 South Sudan workshop for deepening concepts, processes, and tools, but noted limited time: “The learning training has helped building staff and partner capacity to reflect, adapt and improve programming... encouraging culture of asking what worked, what didn’t and why.” At the same time, others stressed schedule and modality constraints: The training was massive but the scheduled days for the training were not enough to cover all the content. “I participated in the learning training once, therefore planning for this training twice a year would help to improve the knowledge and skills of a program implementer.” “Some participants were online and could be better on face-to-face.”

Cascading, sustainability, and the learning cycle. The training was cascaded nationally and locally including to third-tier CSOs with 21 people trained; however, staff turnover saw many trainees move to non-R2G organisations, creating a sustainability risk. All respondents agreed on the need to strengthen partners’ documentation skills “To ensure sustainability and strengthen the culture of documenting learning to inform project and program design.” A five-step learning cycle (identify a question, document, package, store and share & use) was introduced to structure practice. 11/12 respondents knew of the cycle (largely via training), yet only 41.7% could correctly order all steps evidence that further capacity-building is needed to embed consistent application and maximise impact.

Opportunities for improvement center on sustained, practical capacity-building: participants recommended offering the Linking & Learning training twice a year and over a longer duration, with regular refreshers to reinforce concepts and ensure durable skills. While mistakes in sequencing the learning cycle have not derailed practice, they signal the need for ongoing follow-up and quality checks on the uptake of tools and methodologies. Crucially, the training should embed hands-on application having participants practice all five steps of the learning cycle to deepen understanding and drive consistent, confident use across teams.

A learning toolbox mapping specific tools to each step of the learning cycle was developed in year two by the L&L technical support team. Mid-term findings in South Sudan showed low awareness of the toolbox, with respondents asking for more guidance and training on tool use for capturing and documenting lessons. In response, the team delivered a hands-on Linking & Learning training in March 2024; however, because of time constraints, tools were presented but not fully practiced. Subsequently, 83.3% of respondents reported using the toolbox; one respondent “did not know” and another “was unaware” of its existence. Average satisfaction among users was 7.8/10 a level participants linked less to tool complexity and more to limited practice captured in the comments “The tools are user friendly and understandable.” and “Needs for refresher training.”

Sustained use and improvement need. All users (100%) said they intend to continue using the toolbox after Right2Grow, and that previously unaware expressed willingness to adopt it once received. As one respondent noted, “The tools were ok in capturing the lessons learnt, challenges and solutions but the end of the project will

however enable the organisation use these tools for other projects as they are suitable in capturing clear lessons learnt although needs further revisions/improvement to match with other projects in future.” Another urged scale-up: “Roll out the training to the other partners and encourage the use of the learning tools.” To maximize uptake and quality, one training session is not sufficient; regular hands-on refresher training and in-person support should be prioritized across the programme especially for new and local staff to embed consistent practice throughout the learning cycle.

Of the 12 respondents, 6 (50%) said “Yes” they received the support/training; 4 (33.3%) said “Yes, but not enough,” indicating a sizeable demand for deeper or more frequent inputs; 1 (8.3%) reported “No, but I wish I had,” showing an unmet need; and 1 (8.3%) noted “No, but I did not need it.” Overall, access was widespread but insufficient for one-third, suggesting value in expanding duration, dosage, or reach to ensure everyone receives adequate support (Figure 8).

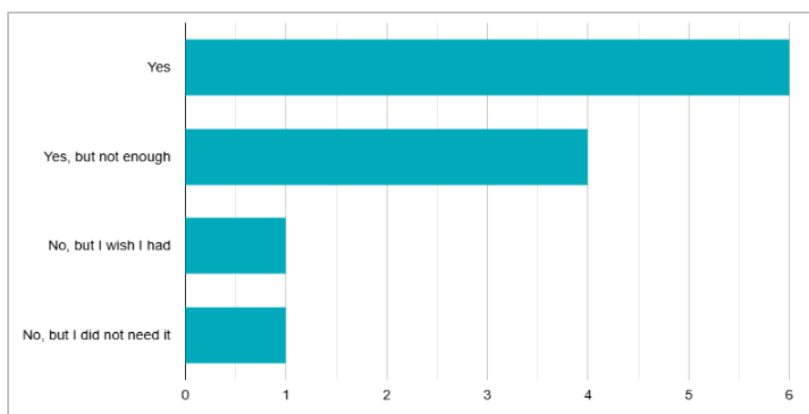


Figure 2: Support received from the L&L team

The support received from the Linking & Learning team, especially from the country L&L focal point, was appreciated and added value to the consortium's learning journey. More support from the L&L technical support team at global level would have been appreciated. The respondent who did not receive any support but wish he had, found that the L&L team was not available.

“I received support from Linking & Learning country focal person, which I highly appreciated. One of key area was he organized workshop for consortium partners to share their lessons learned and challenges on linking and learning practices. The presentation from different partners helped team reflect on successful strategies for integrating nutrition-sensitive approaches into WASH programming, hence, helped team better track and share lessons learned across partners.” “Intensive capacity building for right2grow from global team was missing.”

Opportunities for improvement focus on time and continuity and onboarding: establish regular engagement and follow-up cycles to generate richer insights and sustain learning over time, and systematically share Linking & Learning focal-point contacts and orientation materials with all new programme staff to ensure consistent uptake from day one.

According to respondents in South Sudan, future programmes should prioritize: (1) cross-country sharing and exchange (top-ranked, score 32), to accelerate peer learning and adaptation; (2) wider rollout and coaching on Linking & Learning (L&L) tools and methodology (score 29); and (3) a curated, accessible Learning Catalogue to capture and reuse proven practices (score 21). Mid-tier priorities include regular country reflection workshops (score 14) and targeted learning trainings (score 13). While still valued, large events such as Learning Week (score 6) and Grow Together Sessions (score 5) were ranked lower, suggesting resources should first reinforce ongoing, practical exchanges and tool use, complemented by periodic national reflections and tailored trainings (Figure 9).

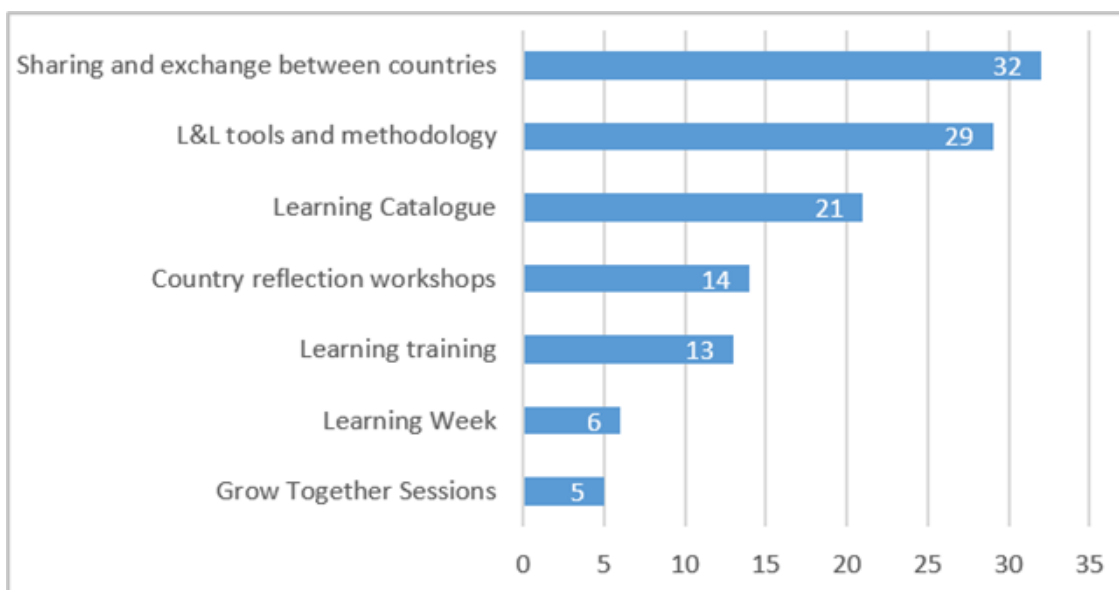


Figure 3: Practices to be prioritized in future programmes according to respondents in South Sudan

Across all six countries, respondents want future programmes to prioritise cross-country sharing and exchange and learning training (both 55), signalling a strong demand for regular peer interaction and skills building. Next are L&L tools and methodology (52) and country reflection workshops (48), emphasising practical, in-programme coaching and structured reflection. A consolidated Learning Catalogue (41) and periodic Learning Weeks (37) are valued but secondary, while Grow Together Sessions (19) and other options (1) rank lowest. Overall, the pattern points to investing first in continuous capability development and peer exchange, supported by accessible repositories and occasional larger learning events (Figure 10).

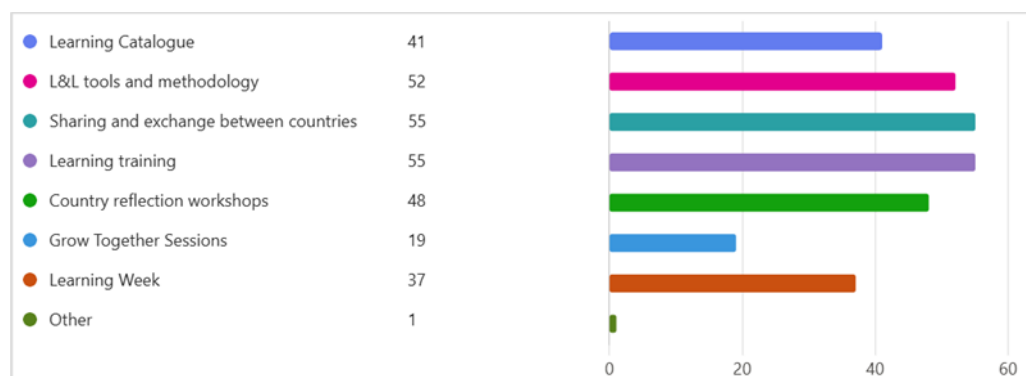


Figure 4: Practices to be prioritized in future programmes, according to all respondents combined from the six countries

The Right2Grow Linking & Learning (L&L) component in South Sudan has shifted learning from a parallel activity to a core driver of programme quality informing implementation, sharpening strategy, and strengthening collaboration. Teams report that the tools and habits introduced have made learning intentional, reflective, and useful in day-to-day work, and there is clear willingness to continue using them beyond the programme, indicating durable changes in ways of working.

To sustain this approach, invest in continuous, practical, in-person training for all levels, especially local CSOs and new staff at start-up and through regular refreshers with hands-on use of L&L tools. Embed learning across partner workplans and M&E, simplify products for community users, and store country briefs in an open, shared repository. Strengthen peer exchange through funded cross-country visits, joint reviews, and reflection

workshops, with routine showcasing of good practices. Ensure strategic follow-up via ongoing technical accompaniment (including on-site visits) and systematic onboarding that shares L&L focal-point contacts and orientation materials with every new staff member. Together, these steps will deepen learning, enhance effectiveness, and keep knowledge a shared, strategic asset across countries, partners, and communities.

One CSO leader from Bor South explained, "...we now have the skills to analyse budgets, track spending, and engage in county dialogues." Another respondent from a women's rights organisation in Juba reflected, "...our confidence has grown. Before, we hesitated to speak in front of government officials; now, we present evidence and they listen." The voices illustrate how programme outputs in capacity development translated into outcome-level improvements in visibility and credibility, as reinforced by the survey analysis.

The Linking & Learning survey provided further evidence of progress in collaboration and networking. Participants noted that the programme created spaces for exchange that helped CSOs move away from working in isolation. A respondent from the Jonglei Civil Society Network observed, "...we discovered we are stronger together. Before, everyone was working alone, but now we meet, share strategies, and sometimes do joint advocacy." These insights are consistent with increased networking and knowledge-sharing among CSOs.

Reflections on practice emphasised that hands-on mentoring, rather than workshops alone, drove application and institutionalisation: "...we were guided to apply the knowledge directly in budget hearings and coordination meetings." Linking & Learning platforms reduced duplication and amplified collective voice: "...when we speak together as CSOs, our messages are stronger." Progress was not uniform; smaller CSOs still need targeted support in financial management, networking, and resource mobilisation. Trust building improved as reporting back to communities became routine: "...they see us as their voice, not outsiders." Many organisations shifted from reactive to proactive engagement: "before, we waited for government to call us. Now, we knock on their doors with evidence."

The following present the Evidence Gap Map and the results of the Outcome Mapping exercise, organised for both the country level and the community level.

In December 2022, the Jonglei Civil Society Network and Voice of Women conducted targeted community engagement sessions in Luadit, Baidit, and Pariak Payams (Bor South) to promote good hygiene practices and kitchen gardening for improved nutrition and sanitation. The sessions, attended by mother-to-mother group members, youth leaders, church leaders, and local chiefs, were mobilised by nutrition assistants through calls, community nutrition volunteers, and church gatherings. Key messages included personal hygiene, food and kitchen hygiene, and kitchen gardening best practices. As a result, communities reported reduced hygiene-related illnesses, improved household and community cleanliness, and enhanced practices such as regular handwashing and safe food handling. Kitchen gardening increased the availability of fresh produce, improved dietary diversity, generated cost savings, and created small-scale income opportunities. Communities responded by forming gardening groups, launching clean-up drives, and integrating hygiene and gardening routines into household practices. Session reports, attendance lists, and photos were produced to verify these outcomes.

On 5 December 2022, a cohort of journalists from prominent South Sudanese media outlets, following targeted capacity-strengthening sessions organised by Save the Children under Right2Grow, began pitching and documenting stories on nutrition and WASH. Motivated by the evidence and contextual understanding gained during the training, journalists developed story pitches focused on malnutrition, child wasting, food insecurity, and gaps in WASH and health service delivery. Selected stories were subsequently published and aired, amplifying the voices of affected communities and drawing public and policy attention to critical nutrition challenges. Notable outputs included published and broadcast features across multiple outlets.

Notable outputs include:

- *"A Battle Against Malnutrition as Children Find Hope Through Right2Grow Project" (Eye Radio)*
- *"Stung by the Bug of Hunger: Mothers in Akobo Find Solution in Malnutrition Centres" (City Review)*
- *"Bor Mother-to-Mother Support Group Asks for Irrigation Sprinkler" (The Radio Community)*
- *"A Mother's Story About Her Daughter After Recovering from Malnutrition" (The Radio Community)*
- *"Addressing Spike of Child Malnutrition Due to Worsening Food Insecurity" (Juba Echo)*

These media engagements contributed to increased public discourse on child malnutrition, community-driven solutions, and the Right2Grow programme's impact. The activity is supported by documented pitches, published articles, and publicly accessible media links.

On 8th July 2022, during a national budget analysis engagement meeting in Juba, 45 Members of Parliament (MPs) participated in a session convened by the Child Rights Coalition (CRC), the Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET) lead under the Right2Grow programme. The meeting, also attended by Right2Grow consortium partners, CSOs, media, and children, focused on reviewing government allocations for food security and WASH sectors. During the session, CRC and Right2Grow partners presented concrete evidence on the share of national budget allocations for food security and WASH, highlighting both investment gaps and opportunities for increased prioritization. The MPs informally acknowledged the presented findings and expressed commitment to using annual budget analysis to inform government decision-making. Specifically, they pledged to review and advocate for improved allocations to WASH and nutrition once the FY2022/2023 national budget was tabled in parliament. This outcome illustrates strengthened civic engagement and increased receptiveness of national legislators to evidence-based advocacy. Documentation of the meeting including an attendance list, session photos, and supporting materials confirms the MPs' recognition of the evidence and their expressed commitment to revisiting budget allocations for food security and WASH.

On 27th May 2023, for the first time in South Sudan, Child-Led Groups developed and expressed their views on malnutrition through a formally drafted position paper during a workshop organized by the Child Rights Coalition (CRC) in Juba. The workshop was aimed at promoting children's participation in the national budget process, in alignment with the Right2Grow programme's objectives to elevate children's voices in public decision-making.

The children, selected by peers through school-based Child Rights Clubs, received support and facilitation from CRC. They were equipped with evidence-based presentations on government budget allocations, national malnutrition data, and the broader socio-economic context. With this knowledge, they articulated key recommendations in their position paper, including:

- Calls for improved access to WASH services and affordable food.
- Advocacy for increased budget allocation to children's food security, nutrition, education, and health.
- Urging full investment in agriculture to improve local food production.
- Demands for child participation in budget formulation.
- Requests for donor and stakeholder support to address malnutrition.
- Appeals for community empowerment to hold government accountable.
- A plea for peace and the end of insecurity affecting children and their communities.

The position paper was officially presented by the children themselves during the Parliamentarians' Budget Engagement Meeting on 8th July 2023 at Palm Africa Hotel, Juba. This platform, facilitated by CRC and the Right2Grow consortium, enabled direct dialogue between child representatives and 45 Members of Parliament, marking a major milestone in child participation in governance.

On 30th November 2023, the Union of Journalists of South Sudan (UJOSS) hosted its first-ever Media Excellence Awards, where journalist Mr. James Atem received the Best Health Reporter Award for his story titled "A Battle Against Malnutrition as Children Find Hope Through Right2Grow Project," published by Eye Radio on 2nd September 2023. This achievement marked national recognition of media contributions toward public awareness on nutrition and WASH, and was directly linked to Right2Grow programme capacity strengthening efforts. Mr. Atem was one of several journalists trained by the Right2Grow programme on how to document impactful nutrition and WASH stories. The training, led by Right2Grow implementing partner UNIDOR, equipped participants with knowledge and skills in capturing community-level "doable actions" for advocacy, and emphasized evidence-based storytelling on malnutrition and service delivery. His award-winning article, published on Eye Radio, highlighted the struggles of malnourished children in South Sudan and the community-level solutions supported by the Right2Grow project. The story's alignment with Right2Grow themes and the technical accuracy resulting from the training were key factors in its selection by UJOSS, based on its award evaluation criteria.

3.2.1.3 National governments and decentralised entities

The Key Informant Interview (KII) with the Chairperson of the Budget Committee indicated that programme outputs such as trainings translated into stronger debates in Parliament. Legislators now question ministries more rigorously and advocate for maternal and child health allocations “...we are able to scrutinise budgets and ask ministries to account for resources; before, we accepted what was presented without question.” At the same time, a persistent gap remains between budget approval and service delivery: resolutions are unevenly implemented, fiscal space is limited, and accountability systems are weak. Collaboration with civil society has strengthened evidence use in budget debates, but cooperation with line ministries continues to lag, constraining follow-through.

Government stakeholders at national and decentralised levels consistently acknowledged that the programme improved their capacity to plan, coordinate, and oversee nutrition and WASH. At state level, coordination meetings that were previously sporadic became structured and evidence-driven. A nutrition focal person in Bor noted, “...we now use data to guide nutrition planning; the training helped us align with standards.” Mentoring and tools supported routine monitoring and alignment with national strategies.

At county level, entities emphasised improved accountability and tighter linkages with citizens and higher authorities. Officials in Bor South described more consistent reporting and supervision, “...before, reports were delayed or incomplete; now we meet deadlines and present better data.” Practical instruments such as checklists helped track water points and escalate issues more systematically, reinforcing a shift from passive receipt of information to proactive problem-solving.

Local administrators at community-facing levels also reported greater responsiveness. An official in Pariang Boma explained, “...when communities report water problems, we forward them quickly to the right offices.” These changes reflect a cultural shift towards evidence use, inclusivity, and accountability across tiers of government. Annex 2 indicators corroborate these outcomes in coordination, planning, reporting, and budget scrutiny.

Notwithstanding these gains, structural constraints limit translation into consistent service delivery. State officials highlighted financing and logistics gaps, “...we plan together, but without resources activities are delayed or not completed.” County teams cited transport and staffing limitations for verification and supervision, and parliamentarians pointed to weak enforcement “...we raise the issues, but ministries sometimes do not act, and we lack power to enforce.” These findings align with the Evidence Gap Map: behavioural change is visible, but execution capacity and enforcement mechanisms remain fragile.

Change stories illustrate how targeted support translated into institutional outcomes. In Bor State, facilitation helped institutionalise monthly coordination with partners bringing data, accelerating response and reducing duplication. In Bor South County, hands-on mentoring led to regular facility visits and faster action on community reports “...we no longer wait; follow-up is now part of our routine.” Nationally, parliamentary training strengthened oversight and visibility of nutrition and WASH in debates, with legislators more confident to defend social sector priorities.

Unintended effects also emerged. As civil society became more assertive, some officials perceived scrutiny as adversarial “...when CSOs question us strongly, colleagues can feel attacked rather than supported.” Improved reporting raised workload and stress for already stretched county teams, and weak executive follow-through risked discouraging legislators who embraced new practices without seeing enforcement.

Taken together, the programme contributed to institutionalising evidence-based planning, more reliable reporting, stronger parliamentary oversight, and more responsive local administration. Sustaining these outcomes will require expanded fiscal space and predictable disbursements, continued mentoring to offset staff turnover, clearer inter-ministerial coherence on implementing parliamentary resolutions, and strengthened logistics for supervision. In short, the behavioural and procedural gains captured by Outcome Mapping are real; closing the execution and enforcement gaps highlighted by the Evidence Gap Map is now critical to ensure lasting improvements in service delivery.

3.2.1.4 Donors and international development organisations

Reflection session with project staff reported that the programme helped move donors, INGOs, government, and CSOs toward more coordinated, evidence-based decision-making. Coordination platforms met more regularly and effectively, drawing wider participation around shared priorities; joint planning became the norm, and policy briefs and monitoring products were routinely tabled with ministries and Parliament. At sub-national level, partners said

data were timelier and more harmonised, which improved targeting and informed funding choices. They also observed that capacity strengthening for CSOs translated into more inclusive decision-making CSO representatives spoke confidently in coordination meetings, and several donors adjusted plans in response to CSO evidence. Evidence products and learning events were credited with strengthening advocacy for nutrition and WASH funding, including attention to maternal nutrition.

At the same time, staff acknowledged gaps and unintended effects. While planning and dialogue improved, joint implementation often lagged as organisations still followed their own funding lines. Competition for visibility/branding occasionally created friction within platforms. The stronger voices of CSOs sometimes raised donor expectations beyond current local capacity. Several partners admitted a dependency on programme-facilitated data systems, raising sustainability concerns if external support winds down. Finally, broader inclusivity occasionally slowed decisions, and smaller grassroots CSOs remained under-represented compared with larger organisations.

According to project staff, the programme institutionalised spaces for coordination, embedded evidence use in funding and planning, and broadened participation contributions that donors and INGOs reflected in their own practice changes. To sustain these gains, the team recommended investing in national ownership and financing, strengthening accountability mechanisms, and ensuring equitable support so that community-level CSOs are not crowded out by larger actors.

3.2.2 Unintended (negative) effects on other stakeholders

Beyond the community, civil society, government, and donor levels already discussed, the evaluation revealed several unintended or unexpected negative effects on other stakeholders who were indirectly engaged in or influenced by the programme. These effects, while not dominant, provide important lessons for understanding the broader implications of programme strategies.

Private-sector feedback in Bor highlighted a general NGO pattern of bringing in inputs from outside local markets, which can depress demand for local suppliers. While this was raised as context, we did not verify this as a Right2Grow procurement practice. The implication is a market-risk to monitor, with a recommendation to prioritize local sourcing where quality and compliance allow

Some implementing partners also reported that the increased demand for coordination and reporting placed unexpected pressure on their own systems. A field coordinator from an international partner explained, "...we are required to attend more meetings and produce more reports, but this takes time away from actual field delivery." This reflection highlights that while coordination is essential, the balance between accountability and operational efficiency needs to be carefully managed to avoid overstretching partner capacities.

Among vulnerable groups, particularly women engaged in informal income-generating activities, some unintended effects were also noted. A respondent from a women's cooperative in Pariak explained, "...when mothers spend a lot of time in meetings or trainings, their small businesses are left unattended. This sometimes creates losses at the market." While women's empowerment was a central positive outcome, this testimony shows that the time demands of participation may have unintentionally disrupted livelihoods for certain groups.

Youth respondents raised another concern: that the skills they acquired, particularly in leadership and advocacy, were not always matched with pathways to employment or financial support. A young participant in Baidit commented, "...we learned how to speak in meetings, but we have no jobs. Sometimes it feels like wasted energy." This unintended effect highlights a mismatch between capacity strengthening outputs and broader structural opportunities, which could risk disillusionment among young people if not addressed.

Finally, traditional leaders and chiefs in some locations observed that their authority was occasionally challenged as new structures gained prominence. A chief in Bor South reflected, "...we welcome the changes, but sometimes people listen more to project committees than to us, and this weakens respect for our role." While the programme successfully promoted inclusive governance, it inadvertently created tensions with existing leadership structures that still play a critical role in community cohesion.

In sum, unintended effects on other stakeholders included reduced market opportunities for local businesses, increased workload for implementing partners, disruption of women's livelihoods due to time commitments,

frustration among youth over unmet expectations, and shifts in traditional authority. These reflections show that while the programme delivered many positive outcomes, its ripple effects extended in complex ways that sometimes burdened or disadvantaged stakeholders not at the centre of the Theory of Change pathways. Recognising and addressing these unintended impacts will be essential for designing more balanced and sustainable interventions in future.

3.2.3. Cross-cutting themes (gender, youth, climate)

Gender emerged as one of the strongest cross-cutting themes in programme effectiveness. Across communities, CSOs, and government, respondents highlighted that the programme had shifted norms around women's participation in decision-making, health, and service delivery. A woman from Pariak FGD observed, "...before, men never cared about childcare. Now some fathers even take children to the clinic and fetch water." This behavioural change illustrates how awareness campaigns and Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (M2MSGs) translated into outcomes in more equitable household roles, aligning with programme indicators on male involvement in nutrition and WASH. While sampling sought to be inclusive, disability-disaggregated results were not consistently captured, and persons with disabilities (PWDs) may be under-represented in these findings; this is a noted limitation for interpreting equity in access and outcomes.

At institutional levels, women-led CSOs confirmed that capacity strengthening strategies enhanced their visibility and credibility. The Executive Director of VOW in Bor reflected, "...we used to be overlooked in planning meetings. Now we are invited to present the needs of women and girls." This demonstrates how outputs in advocacy and leadership training contributed to outcomes in women's voice and influence within governance spaces. Several partners also stressed the importance of including PWDs and other marginalised groups (for example, women with high caregiving burdens and hard-to-reach households) in these spaces; however, direct testimonies from PWDs are scarce in the compiled evidence, and results are therefore indicative rather than comprehensive.

However, unintended gender-related effects were also noted. Some men in FGDs explained that household tensions had increased when women participated in multiple community activities. A male respondent in Bor South stated, "...some husbands felt neglected when their wives attended many meetings, and arguments increased." This reflection highlights the need to balance empowerment with continued engagement of men to avoid backlash. Overall, the programme made significant contributions to gender equality, but sustainability depends on reinforcing household and institutional support for women's evolving roles. Attention is also needed to practical inclusion barriers (venue accessibility, transport, and facilitation formats) that may disproportionately affect PWDs and women with mobility constraints.

Youth were also identified as critical actors and beneficiaries of programme strategies. Young people reported gaining leadership roles in hygiene promotion and community mobilisation. A youth leader from Pariak Boma explained, "...we feel respected because we are the ones teaching others to build tippy taps. People listen to us now." This indicates that programme outputs in training and peer-to-peer mobilisation contributed to outcome-level changes in youth recognition and agency. Evidence for youth with disabilities or from displaced/remote households is limited in the dataset and should be strengthened in future cycles to verify equitable reach.

CSOs further confirmed that youth engagement enriched advocacy platforms. A civil society representative in Bor remarked, "...when youth bring evidence from communities, it gives energy to our campaigns. They are no longer passive observers." Outcome Mapping confirmed these shifts, showing that youth are increasingly proactive in demanding accountability and participating in governance processes. Some engagement also occurred in displacement settings (for example, activities in Baidit PHCC/IDPs Camp), suggesting potential reach to marginalised groups; however, disability-specific outcomes were not systematically recorded.

Nonetheless, challenges remained. Youth voiced frustration that new skills were not matched with immediate economic opportunities, an external constraint beyond programme intent. While some participants in Baidit noted, "...we learned how to speak in meetings, but without jobs or capital, it feels like wasted energy," the programme's aim was youth empowerment building public speaking, leadership, and negotiation skills to advocate for services,

claim rights, and influence decision-making. These outcomes are valuable in their own right and can help create the enabling conditions for livelihoods over time, even if they do not translate into immediate income or capital.

Without this, there is a risk of disengagement or disillusionment, particularly among educated but unemployed youth. This risk is likely higher for marginalised youth, including youth with disabilities, though the evidence base is currently too thin to quantify.

Climate was reflected in community and partner narratives as both a threat to programme achievements and an area where further attention is needed. Respondents consistently linked climate shocks, particularly flooding and drought, to vulnerabilities in nutrition and WASH. A chief in Bor South explained, "...when floods come, our new water points are destroyed, and diseases increase." This underscores how climate variability undermines outputs such as infrastructure development and limits outcomes in improved access to safe water.

CSOs also raised concerns about the lack of resources to integrate climate resilience into their programming. A network representative in Jonglei noted, "...we talk about nutrition and WASH, but when climate disasters come, our activities are interrupted, and we lack the tools to respond." This points to an evidence gap: while programme strategies strengthened institutional and community capacity,

In the Right2Grow South Sudan context, CSA was an entry point within Food Security & Livelihoods to stabilize household nutrition during shocks, e.g., flood-tolerant or drought-resilient crops, climate-aware planting calendars, small-scale water harvesting/soil moisture conservation, safe food storage, and diversified home gardens. Coupled with budget advocacy and social accountability, CSA helped direct resources toward risk-informed services and sustained WASH–nutrition gains as climate variability intensified.

Given that climate shocks tend to exacerbate access barriers for PWDs and households in displacement or remote locations, future monitoring should explicitly track who can use WASH services during floods and droughts (for example, accessibility of latrines, handwashing stations, and water points).

At the same time, positive practices emerged. Communities reported that hygiene awareness and diversified diets helped them to cope better with seasonal shocks. A woman in Baidit explained, "...even when rains destroyed crops, we used greens and groundnuts to feed children because of what we learned." This suggests that behavioural changes promoted by the programme also contributed to climate resilience at household level, even if structural adaptation measures remain underdeveloped.

Taken together, the cross-cutting themes reveal that programme strategies significantly advanced gender equality, youth participation, and, to a lesser extent, climate resilience. Women gained greater voice in households and governance spaces, youth acquired leadership and recognition, and communities adopted practices that helped them manage climate shocks. Yet across all three themes, unintended effects also surfaced household tensions linked to women's roles, frustration among youth due to unmet economic expectations, and structural vulnerabilities to climate shocks that outpaced programme interventions. Importantly, the current evidence base on PWDs and other marginalised groups (including IDPs and hard-to-reach households) is limited; disability markers were intended but not consistently captured, constraining assessment of differential access and outcomes.

The above reflections suggest that the programme's effectiveness was not only in delivering outputs but also in embedding principles of inclusivity and resilience across its pathways. Strengthening future strategies will require deeper engagement with men to consolidate gender gains, stronger livelihood linkages for youth, and more deliberate integration of climate adaptation into nutrition and WASH programming. To close equity gaps, programme delivery and monitoring should: disaggregate core indicators by sex–age–disability using a brief, standard screener; ensure accessible venues, transport support, and inclusive WASH designs (for example, ramps/handrails and suitable tap/latrine heights); include Organisations of Persons with Disabilities in county/state platforms; expand outreach and tracking in IDP/remote locations; and document direct testimonies from PWDs and other marginalised groups in future cycles to substantiate results.

3.2.4 Impact

Impact

The programme has generated measurable improvements in child nutrition, health, and growth, consistently reported across Mothers-to-Mothers Support Groups (M2MSGs) and women's groups in the intervention areas.

In Baidit, mothers described noticeable recovery among previously malnourished children, credited to enriched porridge made with greens and groundnuts knowledge shared through peer-to-peer learning. As one caregiver put it, her child "...gained weight after we applied what we learned," illustrating how simple dietary adjustments, reinforced by demonstrations and follow-up, translated into improved growth and health.

In Pariak, women reported adopting exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months and seeking care earlier when children fall ill. Structured demonstrations and continuous peer encouragement-built confidence to act promptly, reducing treatment delays and improving recovery.

In Bor South, community women's groups highlighted greater involvement of men in childcare. Fathers increasingly fetch water and take children to clinics, easing women's workloads and ensuring timelier access to care, changes that support healthier child growth and resilience.

These accounts show that mutual capacity development, peer learning, and hands-on demonstrations have shifted household practices in feeding, caregiving, and health-seeking. The combination of improved diets, increased breastfeeding, earlier care-seeking, and more shared caregiving indicates a growing culture of responsive, inclusive, and informed childcare within targeted communities.

The programme has also strengthened collaboration among decision-makers, leading to more coordinated action against undernutrition. Respondents pointed to clearer roles, better evidence use, and joint planning across government, parliament, and civil society. At the State Ministry of Health in Bor, coordination moved from irregular, ad hoc engagements to routine, data-driven meetings. Monthly sessions bring together government and partners to review reports, identify gaps, and reduce duplication, aligning plans more closely with community needs.

At the national level, oversight of social sector allocations has become more robust. Budget submissions are scrutinised more critically, ministries are pressed to account for spending, and nutrition and health priorities receive greater attention a shift from passive endorsement to active interrogation of how resources are allocated and used.

From the civil society side, leaders of Voice of Women and the Jonglei Civil Society Network emphasised that credible data and joint statements have amplified their influence and secured invitations to formal planning sessions, moving CSOs from observers to contributors in policy dialogue.

The Right2Grow programme has made important contributions to strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations in South Sudan, particularly in community mobilization, advocacy skills, and participatory approaches. Trainings in Budget Monitoring and Expenditure Tracking (BMET), Bridge4Voices and Outcome Harvesting helped partners acquire practical tools to analyze budgets, facilitate dialogue between communities and duty bearers, and craft evidence-based advocacy messages. As a result, local CSOs reported greater confidence in engaging with government actors, organizing community dialogues, and representing communities in decision-making spaces. The programme's impact in South Sudan lies in equipping CSOs with foundational advocacy skills, boosting their representational and communicative roles, and enabling more structured participation in local accountability processes.

Reflection session feedback provided quantitative confirmation of these trends. Participants rated collaboration with CSOs/INGOs as very useful and with government ministries, local authorities, and media as useful, citing more frequent exchanges, fewer duplications, and more effective use of resources.

These developments show the programme's contribution to closer, more systematic, and more transparent working relationships. By embedding evidence in dialogue, fostering coalition-building, and encouraging accountability, the initiative has catalysed joint planning, evidence-based advocacy, and strengthened oversight meaningful progress in the collective fight against undernutrition.

3.3 Sustainability

3.3.1 Perceived sustainability of achieved changes

Perceptions of sustainability varied across stakeholders, but there was broad agreement that many achievements especially in nutrition practices, WASH behaviours, community structures, and institutional capacities are likely to endure. At the same time, stakeholders flagged risks linked to financial constraints, climate shocks, and governance weaknesses that could undermine long-term continuity.

Community-level perspectives. Community members were confident that behaviour changes rooted in local structures and peer learning will continue. Women in Mother-to-Mother Support Groups described exclusive breastfeeding and improved child feeding as habits they will keep: "...we now know the right foods for our children. Even if the project ends, we will keep teaching each other." Another participant noted: "...our groups are still meeting. We do not need outsiders to remind us; we have taken it as our responsibility." Men and youth echoed sustained hygiene practices: "...Tippy taps are in most homes now... even without support we will maintain them," and "...clean water is part of our lives now." At the same time, communities were candid about fragility driven by livelihoods and food security: "...we know what foods are good, but in the dry season we cannot always provide them," and among youth, "...awareness will remain, but without jobs, our lives do not change much."

Civil society perspectives. CSOs were optimistic about sustaining gains in financial management, accountability, and advocacy. As one leader put it: "...we now know how to prepare financial and activity reports. Even if funding stops, we will not forget this knowledge." Networked working is expected to persist: "...we are stronger together as networks. We will keep speaking with one voice." Smaller CSOs, however, warned that activity levels will depend on resources: "...we can collect issues and write reports, but without money we cannot travel or print documents."

South Sudanese CSOs expressed confidence that knowledge and skills gained through Right2Grow such as BMET, Bridge4Voices, and community mobilization will continue to be applied, but high staff turnover and weak learning systems to transfer knowledge threaten their sustainability. Partnerships built with government and communities were valued, yet remain fragile without structured platforms and resources to maintain them. The greatest concern lies in funding: most CSOs remain donor-dependent and lack strong resource mobilization strategies, raising doubts about sustaining advocacy and service delivery efforts once programme support ends. Findings from the MCD and Linking & Learning surveys suggest that many partners perceive acquired capacities as sustainable beyond the programme period. Skills related to advocacy, evidence generation and internal organisational practices are reported to be embedded in routine CSO operations. However, sustainability remains uneven and dependent on continued access to resources and staff retention, particularly for smaller local organisations.

Government perspectives. Officials at state and county levels pointed to durable changes in coordination, reporting, and oversight. A state focal person affirmed: "...we now have monthly coordination meetings. This practice will not stop because it has become part of our routine." A county officer added: "...we are accountable now; we know how to track services and submit reports. This habit will continue." Still, logistical and fiscal barriers threaten impact: "...we can collect reports, but without transport we cannot always verify them," and at national level, "...we can question budgets, but if ministries do not implement, our efforts are wasted."

Donor and partner perspectives. Partners recognised stronger, more inclusive platforms and shifts toward co-creation: "...the platforms we now have are stronger and more inclusive," and "...we used to design alone, but now we co-create with local organisations." The main concern was reliance on external facilitation: "The systems work well now, but if funding ends, I am not sure government can keep the same momentum."

Across stakeholders, knowledge-based and behavioural changes exclusive breastfeeding, hygiene routines, peer-to-peer learning, CSO accountability, and evidence-informed planning are seen as likely to remain because they are now embedded in daily practice and institutional routines. Sustainability is weaker where ongoing resources, infrastructure, or enforcement are required: households face food insecurity; CSOs face funding and operational costs; local government faces transport, staffing, and budget constraints; and national oversight lacks consistent executive follow-through.

In sum, behavioural and institutional shifts are widely perceived as sustainable, but structural and financial barriers threaten their depth and scale. Going forward, strategies should reinforce local ownership while addressing resource gaps, logistics for supervision, and mechanisms that link parliamentary scrutiny to executive implementation alongside livelihood support that enables households to apply nutrition and WASH knowledge consistently over time.

3.3.2 Factors contributing to sustainability (incl adaptation to changing contexts)

The sustainability of programme achievements rests on a mix of social, institutional, and systemic factors. Stakeholders across communities, civil society, government, and donors highlighted enablers that support continuation, alongside contextual challenges that required adaptation.

Community-level factors. Ownership through local structures, Mother-to-Mother Support Groups, youth groups, and water committees was repeatedly cited as the main driver of continuity. "...we are not waiting for outsiders... the groups belong to us, and we will keep them," a woman in Baidit noted. Youth echoed this commitment: "...even without projects, we are role models... we must continue to show good practice." Practices viewed as "life-saving" (exclusive breastfeeding, handwashing, safe water) were seen as unlikely to be abandoned: "...once people see that children survive and do not fall sick, they will never go back to the old ways."

Civil society factors. CSOs pointed to durable internal assets financial management, reporting, and advocacy skills as foundations for sustainability: "We now have systems that make us accountable... this knowledge will not disappear." Coalition working further strengthens voice and continuity: "When we speak together as a coalition, our voice is stronger." At the same time, resource mobilisation remains decisive; some groups are diversifying with community and private contributions: "...we are trying to raise small funds ourselves, because donor support may not always be there." In addition, tools such as BMET and Bridge 4Voices have been embedded into daily practice and organizational advocacy processes, increasing the likelihood that these gains will be sustained beyond the programme.

Government factors. Sustainability for public actors hinges on institutionalising routines monthly coordination meetings, improved reporting formats, and budget scrutiny. "...coordination is now part of our calendar," a state official remarked; a county officer added, "...we are more accountable now, and this culture will continue." Effectiveness, however, depends on transport, fuel, staffing, and executive follow-through: "...we want to keep supervision visits, but without transport and fuel it will be difficult," and "We can debate budgets, but unless ministries implement, we are limited."

Donor and development partner factors. Inclusivity and alignment were seen as sustaining forces: "...the platforms are stronger and more inclusive. Once people see the benefits of joint planning, they will not want to go back." The principal risk flagged was reliance on external facilitation and funding: "...the structures are there, but they are still heavily reliant on our presence. Sustainability will depend on whether government budgets can absorb these functions."

Adaptation to changing contexts. The programme's flexibility supported continuity amid insecurity, political turnover, and economic shocks. When insecurity disrupted travel in Jonglei, coordination shifted to smaller clusters and radio messaging: "Even when roads were unsafe, we continued coordination in smaller groups." Political changes were managed through quick inductions for new officials: "...when new MPs joined, they were trained quickly. This avoided losing momentum." Economic pressure prompted context-fit adjustments, promoting affordable local foods: "...they taught us to use groundnuts and greens instead of expensive foods... this made it possible to continue when prices rose."

In summary, sustainability is strongest where ownership, habits, and inclusive practices are embedded in community groups, CSOs, and government routines, and where approaches can flex with context. Knowledge, skills, and cultural shifts are widely viewed as irreversible gains. Sustainability remains fragile where ongoing financing, infrastructure, logistics, or enforcement are required; limited domestic funding is the largest threat to maintaining and scaling achievements.

3.3.3 Reflections on four identified aspects of sustainability

3.3.3.1 Communities

Communities to have continued access to nutrition and WASH services

Community members widely expressed confidence that many nutrition and WASH gains will endure because they are now part of daily routines and reinforced through community-owned structures. Women, men, and youth described improved feeding practices, hygiene behaviours, and water use as embedded in how households live, rather than as externally driven requirements.

Sustained Nutrition Practices: Mothers reported that exclusive breastfeeding, timely complementary feeding, and preparing diverse meals have become habitual. A woman in Baidit explained, "...we no longer wait for projects to tell us; breastfeeding and feeding greens is now part of how we live." Another mother in Pariak added, "...even without facilitators, our mother groups are still meeting and sharing knowledge." These accounts indicate that nutrition behaviours are perceived as sustainable because they are supported by social networks and evolving norms.

Hygiene and Sanitation: Youth and men particularly emphasised continuity in WASH practices. A youth leader in Bor South observed, "...tippy taps are everywhere now. Children remind each other to wash their hands, so the habit will not disappear." A male community member in Pariang Boma noted, "...clean water has become part of our lives. Nobody wants to go back to the river." These reflections suggest hygiene practices have shifted from externally promoted to socially enforced.

Challenges in Sustaining Access to Services: Despite optimism about behaviours, the durability of physical services remains fragile. A community leader in Baidit cautioned, "...we can use the water well, but when the pump breaks, repairs are difficult without money and spare parts." Women also pointed to food insecurity constraining diet quality: "...we know what foods are good, but in the dry season we cannot always provide them." These challenges highlight limits to sustaining services without reliable technical and financial support.

Local Ownership as a Sustainability Factor: Community leaders underscored the central role of local committees and peer groups. A chief in Bor South affirmed, "...because the groups are ours, we will continue them even if projects end. People now see the benefits." Youth echoed this sense of responsibility through their leadership roles.

Overall, sustainability is strongest where behaviours have become daily habits and are reinforced by M2MSGs, youth groups, and water committees. Continued access to services such as safe water and diverse foods is threatened by food insecurity, limited finances, and weak supply chains for repairs. Communities are committed to sustaining practices, but the long-term functionality of services will require ongoing linkages to technical assistance, spare parts, and modest financing mechanisms.

3.3.3.2 Governments

Governments to adopt, maintain and implement WASH/nutrition policies Government stakeholders at national, state, and county levels described steady progress in adoption, maintenance, and implementation of WASH and nutrition policies, while acknowledging persistent constraints.

Adoption and prioritisation. National and state actors reported tighter integration of nutrition and WASH in planning and debate. "...we now debate allocations for nutrition and water directly in parliament. This was rarely happening before," a budget committee member noted. A senior planner added, "...nutrition is now recognised as a cross-cutting issue... written into our strategic plans." At state level, routine review of data has normalised nutrition in governance: "...every month we bring stakeholders to review data. This makes nutrition part of our routine system."

Maintenance through systems and structures. County and state officials highlighted institutionalised practices: "...supervision of facilities is now part of our workplan," and "...we now use monitoring tools that guide our reports." Financial oversight has strengthened accountability: "...we track how much is spent on nutrition and WASH." These shifts reduce dependence on individual champions and embed expectations in calendars, checklists, and reporting formats.

Implementation gaps. Resource and logistics constraints limit follow-through. “...we can make plans, but when vehicles break down, supervision stops,” one county leader observed. State officers echoed infrastructure risks: “...without spare parts and funding, water systems collapse.” At national level, weak executive response undermines oversight: “...we raise questions, but ministries sometimes fail to act.”

Political commitment and adaptation. Leadership continuity and community pressure help sustain policy gains: “...when new leaders come in, they are quickly briefed and trained,” and “...chiefs and local councils now remind us of nutrition priorities.” These dynamics keep commitments visible even amid turnover.

Overall. Policies are more firmly adopted and anchored in systems and routines, with tangible improvements in planning, supervision, and oversight. Sustainability of implementation remains fragile where transport, staffing, spare parts, and budget execution lag. Long-term durability depends on translating political commitment into predictable domestic financing, reliable logistics for supervision and maintenance, and consistent executive follow-through on parliamentary scrutiny.

Civil society organizations have the capacity to sustain or scale up programme outcomes

CSOs reported that strengthened organisational systems, advocacy capability, and coalition working are durable gains, while scaling remains constrained by funding and logistics.

Strengthened organisational capacity. Women-led and youth-focused groups described lasting improvements: “...we now know how to keep proper records and write financial reports,” and “...our team can design advocacy campaigns and engage with leaders.” These internal assets are seen as knowledge that endures beyond project cycles.

Networking and collective action. Coalitions reported greater influence and staying power: “...when we speak as one network, government listens more,” and faith-based partners noted that community structures will keep mobilising even after projects end.

Local-level constraints. Grassroots CBOs flagged operational barriers: “...we can identify issues and write reports, but without funds we cannot travel to present them,” and “...printing materials and organising meetings costs money.” Technical capacity may persist, but activity levels hinge on modest, flexible resources.

Innovation and adaptation. Organisations are testing lower-cost outreach and local resourcing: “...we now use radio talk shows because they are cheaper than large meetings,” and “...we have started asking local businesses to contribute to our activities.” These adaptations help maintain advocacy and service roles despite budget pressures.

Overall. CSOs are well placed to sustain quality through systems, skills, and alliances, but scaling will depend on diversified local funding, practical operating support (transport, small grants, communications), and continued partnership with government and development actors.

Civil society organisations have the capacity to sustain or scale up programme outcomes

3.3.3.3 Local authorities

Local authorities have pledged continued support Local authorities at county, payam, and boma levels expressed strong commitment to sustaining programme achievements especially supporting community structures, monitoring services, and maintaining accountability channels. They also acknowledged limits from scarce resources and infrastructure gaps.

Commitment to community structures. County leaders said they will continue backing local committees and support groups established through the programme. A government official in Bor South remarked, “...the mother groups and water committees have reduced problems in our communities. As government, we must keep supporting them because they make our work easier.” A payam administrator in Pariak added, “...we encourage youth and women groups to keep active. We will provide meeting spaces and link them with chiefs.” These reflections recognise community-driven structures as key to sustaining service delivery and behaviour change.

Accountability to communities. Local leaders pledged to remain responsive to citizens’ concerns. A boma chief in Baidit noted, “...when people report broken water points, we take the complaints to the county office without

delay. We cannot let communities lose hope.” A local council representative in Bor echoed, “...we will continue to listen to communities and forward issues to higher authorities. That is our role.” Accountability practices strengthened during the programme are now seen as core responsibilities.

Support for service monitoring. Sector officers committed to ongoing oversight. A county health officer in Bor South said, “...supervision visits are now part of our routine, and we will continue to track services even after projects end.” A WASH officer in Baidit affirmed, “...we will not abandon the checklists and monitoring tools. They help us know where problems are.” These pledges indicate that technical practices have been internalised.

Constraints. Despite commitment, authorities were candid about operational limits. A payam administrator in Pariang admitted, “...we are committed, but without vehicles and fuel, it is difficult to reach all areas.” A county official in Bor South added, “...we will keep supporting the groups, but our budget is very small. Without external help, our response will be slow.” Delivery will depend on resource availability from higher levels of government and partners.

Overall, commissioners and administrators down to chiefs, council members, and sector officers have pledged continued support to sustain outcomes by maintaining community structures, strengthening accountability, and using monitoring tools. Their ability to honour these pledges, however, is constrained by financial and logistical limitations. Continued linkages with state and national governments, and strategic partnerships with CSOs and donors, will be critical to translating commitment into sustained action.

3.4 Coherence and partnership

3.4.1 Internal coherence & partnership functioning

Added value of working together

Coherence within the South Sudan partnership has strengthened markedly since the early stages of the programme. Partners have moved from fragmented, parallel implementation to more integrated ways of working. Joint planning, co-facilitated activities, and routine information exchange are now standard, creating alignment across the consortium. As one INGO manager put it, “...at first, we pulled in different directions; now we plan together and hold each other to account.” National CSOs confirmed the shift from observer to contributor: “...we no longer attend as observers our data is on the agenda, and we help lead sessions.”

Overview of what changed in working together since MTR

Survey and reflection feedback indicate that collaboration, rated only moderate at mid-term, is now widely seen as strong. The country coalition offers a predictable platform to convene diverse actors, align messaging, and amplify community evidence. Partners described more coherent horizontal collaboration INGOs, CSOs, and grassroots groups triangulating their data alongside government reports reducing duplication and unblocking bottlenecks faster. Remaining frictions were attributed to structural issues (conflicting donor calendars, focal staff turnover, and occasional top-down decisions). Even so, the trend remains towards stronger internal alignment, supported by global working groups and communities of practice that provide technical backstopping and peer learning.

Partners consistently affirmed the consortium’s added value in combining complementary strengths: international actors contribute technical depth, mentoring, and external linkages; national CSOs bring contextual knowledge and community legitimacy. As a women-led CSO leader remarked, “...the big organisations gave us skills, but we gave them entry to communities and legitimacy working together meant both sides became stronger.” Research and learning specialist noted streamlined processes: “...global advice comes in once we agree locally what we need. What used to take months to design now takes weeks.”

Since the Mid-Term Review, the partnership has shifted from largely top-down to more inclusive and balanced. Smaller CSOs that previously felt overshadowed now present their own evidence and take facilitation roles through deliberate mentoring arrangements. A grassroots partner summarised the change: “...before, we were only invited to listen. Now, we present our data and lead sessions ourselves.” More predictable coordination mechanisms regular reviews, common action trackers, and co-chaired meetings ensure broader participation in setting agendas and reviewing progress. As an INGO programme manager reflected, “...there is more discipline

now in how we meet, follow up, and hold each other to account. It feels like a real partnership, not parallel projects.”

Application of adaptive management principles

Adaptive management has become a shared practice rather than a reaction. During insecurity, activities decentralised to payam and boma levels, with local CSOs maintaining engagement: “...when roads were blocked, we continued sessions with mother groups and sent our updates later.” Economic shocks prompted redesign of nutrition guidance around affordable local foods: “...they taught us to use what we have instead of waiting for expensive foods.” Political turnover was addressed through rapid inductions for new officials: “...when we joined the committee, the programme immediately oriented us. We did not lose momentum.” Quarterly reflection spaces function as problem-solving forums: “...we adjust together instead of blaming each other.” Effective approaches such as engaging chiefs to mobilise men for WASH were replicated across locations.

Success of localisation and shifting the power efforts

A notable achievement has been progress on localisation and power-shifting. Local CSOs now occupy central roles in advocacy and accountability, often presenting data directly to authorities. As a state official in Bor observed, “...in our coordination meetings, it is now local organisations presenting community evidence, not just INGOs.” Local organisations describe moving into leadership: “...before, we waited for INGOs to speak for us. Now we speak for ourselves, and government listens.” International partners acknowledged the rebalanced roles: “...we used to drive the agenda, but now we provide technical support while local partners lead the conversations.” Consortium practices rotating facilitation, INGOs mentoring smaller CBOs, and financial management training have embedded this shift.

Stakeholders were candid about remaining gaps. Many local organisations noted that financial power still sits largely with international partners: “...we can speak and present evidence, but the money still comes through INGOs.” Donors similarly recognised that more direct funding to local actors is needed to consolidate gains.

In sum, the partnership has matured into a more coherent, equitable coalition. Technical expertise, contextual legitimacy, and increasingly balanced decision-making have raised delivery quality, accelerated problem-solving, and strengthened credibility by elevating local voices. While funding flows and a few structural constraints still require attention, the partnership is stronger, more coherent, and better positioned to sustain collective achievements than at mid-term.

3.4.2 External coherence

Dutch embassies

Partners consistently described the Dutch Embassy in Juba as an ally and convener that added political visibility, legitimacy, and a bridge to wider donor–government platforms. Its engagement went beyond funding oversight, actively facilitating dialogue between the consortium and national institutions. As one CSO leader put it, “...when we went with evidence to the ministry, the presence of the Embassy gave weight to our voice. Officials listened more seriously.” Field visits and direct conversations with women’s groups reinforced trust “...the Embassy joined our field visits and asked questions directly... this made communities feel heard” and supported the localisation agenda. At the same time, partners noted a gap between national diplomacy and sub-national realities: “...we hear of donor support in Juba, but at county level the link is weak.” More consistent presence outside the capital was a recurring ask.

Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Engagement with the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) provided strategic direction and political backing closely aligned to nutrition, WASH, and localisation priorities. Partners valued seeing local work tied to global commitments “...we can show that our work here is not isolated but contributes to global commitments” and appreciated advocacy that carried South Sudan voices into international for a “...when MFA raised the importance of women’s voices in New York, we felt our stories had travelled far beyond Bor and Juba.” Technical and policy backstopping helped sharpen evidence and connect to networks. The main weakness was distance from national

CSOs: “...we know MFA stands with us, but we rarely speak to them directly.” More direct in-country engagement with local organisations would deepen this coherence.

Other partnerships

UN-led coordination especially UNICEF’s role in government–donor WASH platforms underpinned external coherence by offering legitimacy and structure. State actors noted that “...under UNICEF coordination, we see how our local reports fit into the national picture,” and CSOs valued being at the same table as INGOs and ministries “...government officials take us more seriously because we are part of the same table.” Sharing monitoring data in joint donor forums helped align funding and reduce duplication. The most common constraint was centralisation in Juba and limited agenda-setting influence for CSOs and county teams: “...coordination happens in Juba, but our voices are rarely heard there.”

Other actors

Beyond bilateral partners and UN agencies, a wider ecosystem strengthened coherence and reach. Traditional leaders legitimised new practices “...when we tell people that handwashing or breastfeeding is good, they accept it faster because it comes from us.” Faith-based organisations spread messages through congregations “...we preach not only about faith but also about health and hygiene.” Private actors supported upkeep and supply chains “...without the mechanics, our pumps cannot last.” Youth associations and civil society networks bridged village perspectives with official forums “...we link what young people are saying in villages with what officials hear in meetings.” These relationships were sometimes episodic “...we are called for trainings, but not always for planning” pointing to the need for more systematic inclusion.

Overall, external coherence was strong where diplomatic support, sector coordination, and grassroots engagement met: the Embassy amplified local credibility; MFA aligned country work with international priorities; UNICEF-led platforms connected evidence to national frameworks; and community, faith, private, and youth actors anchored change in everyday systems. To sustain and deepen this coherence, partners emphasised extending donor presence to state and county levels, creating more direct channels between MFA and national CSOs, devolving coordination beyond Juba, and institutionalising the roles of traditional, faith-based, private, and youth actors in planning not only implementation.

4. Lessons learnt and best practices

4.1 Programmatic

A key programmatic lesson from the South Sudan experience is the importance of embedding behavioural change within community-owned structures rather than relying exclusively on project-driven interventions. Platforms such as Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (M2MSGs), youth associations, and community water committees proved highly effective not only in initiating change but also in sustaining it. Women in Bor and Baidit repeatedly affirmed that exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding are now part of their daily routines, with one mother explaining: "...even if there is no project, we will keep sharing with each other because we see the results in our children." This illustrates how the social legitimacy of peer groups helped transform health practices into community norms, making them less dependent on external facilitation.

Another lesson relates to the integration of gender and youth perspectives across programme activities. By deliberately engaging men in WASH and nutrition roles, the programme contributed to shifting household dynamics towards more equitable responsibilities. A male respondent in Pariak reflected: "...we now fetch water together with our wives. Before this was not possible, but the benefits are clear." Youth, meanwhile, gained visibility as leaders in hygiene promotion, often serving as role models within their communities. Yet the evaluation also documented unintended effects: some households experienced tension when women's frequent participation in meetings was perceived as neglecting domestic roles, and youth expressed frustration at the lack of livelihood pathways following training. These experiences demonstrate that empowerment must be balanced with household dialogue and linked to economic opportunities to avoid backlash or disillusionment.

The programme also highlighted the necessity of adaptive responses in fragile contexts. Inflation and sharp rises in food prices undermined households' ability to provide diverse diets, but nutrition messages were successfully adapted to emphasise low-cost, locally available foods such as sorghum, greens, and groundnuts. As one woman in Pariak put it: "...we learned that even with little money, we can still make food nutritious with what we grow." Similarly, when insecurity made travel to certain areas impossible, local partners continued activities at payam and boma levels, ensuring that community engagement was not disrupted. This ability to decentralise and adapt showed that flexibility is not only desirable but essential for programme continuity in South Sudan's volatile setting.

Another best practice was the integration of evidence into planning and accountability systems at multiple levels. The use of monitoring checklists and reporting formats helped counties track service delivery more systematically, while CSOs were able to present credible data in policy forums. Government officials noted that decisions are now increasingly informed by evidence rather than ad hoc judgments. A county health officer observed: "...we used to send incomplete reports. Now we track services properly, and this makes us more accountable." The lesson here is that even in low-resource contexts, structured tools and mentoring can institutionalise accountability practices that endure beyond programme cycles.

Finally, the evaluation underscored that while behavioural and institutional changes are relatively sustainable, outcomes that depend on continued financing and infrastructure remain fragile. Boreholes, tippy taps, and sanitation facilities risk falling into disrepair without technical support and spare parts. Similarly, while communities understand what constitutes a nutritious diet, food insecurity and seasonal shortages limit the consistent application of this knowledge. As one youth leader in Baidit candidly remarked: "...we have the skills, but without jobs or income our lives do not change much." The clear programmatic lesson is that social and behavioural interventions must be paired with strategies to strengthen livelihoods, local markets, and resource mobilisation if they are to be fully sustained.

In summary, the programme demonstrated that behaviour change is most effective when rooted in local ownership, reinforced through gender- and youth-sensitive approaches, and supported by adaptive management in the face of insecurity and economic shocks. Embedding accountability tools within government and community systems further enhanced sustainability. Yet the experience also showed that sustainability of outcomes is uneven, with knowledge and practices more durable than infrastructure and resource-dependent services. These insights provide practical guidance for designing future interventions in fragile and conflict-affected contexts.

4.2 Partnership collaboration

One of the clearest lessons from the South Sudan consortium has been that the quality of collaboration directly shapes programme effectiveness. At the start of the programme, partnerships were often fragmented, with international NGOs dominating technical spaces and national CSOs limited to observer roles. By the endline, however, deliberate investments in mentoring, shared decision-making, and inclusive coordination transformed the partnership into a more balanced coalition. A CSO representative from Bor observed: "...before, we listened while others decided. Now, we sit at the same table and present our own findings." This evolution highlights that collaboration must be nurtured through structures that promote equity, not assumed as a natural outcome of consortium arrangements.

The partnership also demonstrated that complementarity of roles is a best practice when clearly defined. INGOs contributed technical expertise, compliance systems, and global linkages, while CSOs provided contextual legitimacy, community trust, and direct access to local structures. Government actors noted that evidence shared by CSOs often carried more credibility because it came from trusted local organisations. A state official in Bor reflected: "...when local groups speak, we know it is real community evidence. This has more impact than reports alone." This complementarity enhanced both the quality and legitimacy of advocacy, showing that collaboration works best when different actors bring unique strengths that are recognised and respected.

Another important lesson was the institutionalisation of adaptive management within partnership structures. Quarterly reflection sessions shifted from being reporting exercises to becoming collective problem-solving forums where partners reviewed progress, identified gaps, and adjusted strategies together. An INGO programme manager explained: "...we no longer blame each other when things go wrong. Instead, we ask what we can change together." Local partners confirmed the value of this culture of learning, with a grassroots CSO in Jonglei noting: "...when insecurity stopped field visits, we continued activities locally and reported back. The consortium trusted us to lead." These experiences underline that adaptive management is most effective when rooted in trust and shared accountability across partners.

The consortium also advanced the localisation and shifting-the-power agenda, which became a hallmark of its collaboration model. Local partners not only implemented activities but increasingly shaped agendas, led advocacy efforts, and engaged directly with government. A women-led organisation in Juba remarked: "...we used to depend on INGOs to speak for us. Now, we speak directly to ministries and are taken seriously." International partners adapted their roles accordingly, moving from gatekeepers to enablers. This change not only empowered local actors but also strengthened the credibility of the consortium with external stakeholders, who valued the authenticity of community-driven evidence.

Despite these gains, challenges remained. Smaller CSOs highlighted resource disparities that limited their ability to participate fully, particularly in travel, communications, and digital reporting. Occasional competition among partners also surfaced when responsibilities expanded, demonstrating that equitable collaboration requires continuous attention to power dynamics and resource flows. Donors and international partners acknowledged these tensions, with one donor representative noting: "...progress on localisation is clear, but until local organisations access more direct funding, power will not fully shift."

In summary, partnership collaboration in South Sudan has evolved from fragmented coordination to a more inclusive, adaptive, and locally led model. The lessons learnt demonstrate that equitable structures, clarity of roles, and trust-based adaptive management are essential for effective collaboration. Best practices included the mentoring arrangements between INGOs and CSOs, the institutionalisation of reflection sessions as learning spaces, and the deliberate empowerment of local partners as agenda-setters. While disparities in resources and influence remain, the consortium's experience provides a strong example of how partnerships in fragile contexts can mature into platforms that combine technical excellence with local legitimacy.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

5.1 Key conclusions

The country Theory of Change (ToC) remains valid and context-appropriate, but requires adaptive emphasis. Stakeholders judged the ToC a useful guide and broadly aligned with the global ToC; progress has followed the ToC's roadmap though more slowly than intended because advocacy approaches were relatively new in many locations. Where assumptions held (government openness, CSO credibility, citizen willingness), pathways delivered visible results; where assumptions were weaker (private-sector capacity, stable financing), progress was uneven.

Capacity strengthening under Right2Grow equipped CSOs with the tools and confidence to advocate effectively at local, national, and international levels. Partners particularly valued trainings and tools such as Bridge4Voices, BMET, Outcome Harvesting, etc. which they credited as essential for enabling policy engagement, budget advocacy, and community mobilization. Many emphasized that their advocacy achievements would not have been possible without the technical trainings, tools, and mentorship provided through the programme.

Evidence-based advocacy strengthened policy debate and budget transparency. CSOs trained in budget analysis and brief writing submitted products to Parliament and line ministries; this helped spur national public budget hearings (2023/24), the creation of a WASH caucus in Parliament, and contributed to a 10% rise in the 2024 agriculture/food-security allocation. Parliamentary informants confirmed a shift from passive approval to active scrutiny, while also noting a persistent gap between budget approval and service delivery.

Community-level strategies were highly responsive and inclusive. Water points, hygiene promotion, and Mother-to-Mother Support Groups (among others) improved everyday access to safe water and nutrition information and fostered bottom-up accountability. Behaviour change was reported after caregiver trainings (e.g., handwashing, safe water handling, improved feeding practices), and youth reported increased agency though livelihoods constraints remained.

Partnership functioning matured but still faces equity gaps. Collaboration shifted from fragmented to more inclusive and locally led, with clearer roles and routine reflection/learning. Complementarities between INGOs and CSOs increased quality and legitimacy of advocacy. However, smaller CSOs still face resource disparities that limit full participation.

Systemic constraints limit translation of wins into services. Shrinking fiscal space, weak execution of parliamentary resolutions, and limited private-sector engagement continue to slow implementation of policy and budget gains at sub-national level.

5.2 Key recommendations for the future (including the opinion of the consultant)

Short-term priorities (0–9 months)

- Invest in equitable partnership and localisation. Continue mentoring and joint planning that move INGOs from gatekeepers to enablers; earmark small, flexible grants and digital/reporting support for under-resourced CSOs so they can participate fully in coordination, advocacy, and monitoring. Maintain quarterly learning reviews to drive adaptive management.
- Deepen community empowerment while addressing structural barriers (pilot phase). Protect and expand platforms that work MtMSGs, Water User Committees, child and youth clubs while attaching pilot livelihood linkages (e.g., VSLA/enterprise coaching with kitchen gardens) in priority sites.
- Re-calibrate the private-sector pathway (set-up). Do basic market mapping; engage local suppliers for WASH maintenance; initiate light-touch business development services; support community-based enterprises and savings/producer groups to test viability.
- Safeguard gains through risk-informed measures (foundations). Develop contingency plans for funding volatility; establish community-level maintenance funds for water points with simple rules and oversight.

- Consolidate the evidence-to-influence pipeline (stand-up). Resource a standing CSO “policy help-desk” (or rotating unit) to support continuous budget tracking, expenditure analysis, and brief production; maintain the WASH caucus while scoping extensions.
- Ensure Flexible, inclusive participation (adjusted times/locations, childcare or rotation, hybrid/clustered meetings) reduces clashes with caregiving and eases domestic strain.
- Co-create training materials with local actors; translate/simplify tools for third-tier CSOs and grassroots leaders to match literacy levels.
- Run advocacy simulations, budget-hearing drills, storytelling campaigns, mock policy dialogues; set up mentorship/coaching and peer exchanges
- Introduce simple scorecards, self-assessments, and feedback loops to capture how skills are applied in practice.

Medium-term priorities (9–24 months)

- Strengthen sub-national governance linkages. Support county/state planning units to use CSO data for routine reviews; co-create simple accountability compacts linking citizen priorities to county workplans and budget lines, with clear, time-bound follow-up.
- Deepen community empowerment (scale). Expand livelihood linkages (VSLA/enterprise coaching with kitchen gardens) across additional payams/counties based on pilot learning.
- Re-calibrate the private-sector pathway (scale). Formalise supplier arrangements for WASH spares/services closer to communities; strengthen community enterprises and producer/savings groups with targeted BDS.
- Keep the ToC adaptive and owned locally. Schedule biannual Theory of Change reviews with Parliament, line ministries, CSOs, and communities; document what is working (e.g., evidence-based caucus engagement, public hearings) and what needs redesign (e.g., private-sector role), and update the country ToC.
- Consolidate the evidence-to-influence pipeline (expand). Produce regular cross-sector budget/expenditure briefs; extend caucus models from WASH to nutrition and food security to ensure sustained uptake of CSO evidence.
- Invest in male champions and couples’ sessions to provide positive reference points and practical scripts for negotiating time and task sharing at home.
- Provide post-training support, refresher sessions, and regular practice opportunities; establish communities of practice/peer learning groups.
- Pair technical training with small seed funds/materials to overcome application barriers; add targeted modules on donor mapping, proposal writing, fundraising, resource mobilization, negotiation, and SDG monitoring.
- Begin structured donor outreach and learning visits; support partners to build donor pipelines and engagement calendars.

Long-term priorities (24+ months)

- Institutionalise budget transparency and close the approval–delivery gap. Embed annual public budget hearings in law and practice; require timely in-year execution reports; strengthen follow-up mechanisms between Parliament and line ministries so resolutions translate into county-level services; expand CSO accompaniment to committees.
 - Safeguard gains (institutionalisation). Incorporate successful practices into government guidelines and training curricula; implement phased cost-sharing models and mature local maintenance funds nationally.
 - Private-sector pathway (mature ecosystem). Consolidate resilient local supply chains for WASH maintenance and viable community enterprises that can operate without external facilitation.
 - Diversify funding sources, embed resource-mobilization practices and donor-engagement routines within CSO systems.
 - Set up succession planning, document processes, and formalize knowledge-transfer mechanisms. Deepen higher-level advocacy skills and link South Sudanese CSOs to regional/global platforms for sustained influence.
- Increase gender-transformative work with men and boys through dialogues and role-modeling to shift norms and build active support for women’s public roles, lowering backlash.

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Annexes

Annex 1 - Setailed Data Collection Overview

KEY INFORMAT INTERVIEWS

N/O	KEY INFORMANT	INSTITUTION	POSITION	TYPE OF INTERVIEW
	Angau Jool Anyieth	Lualdit Boma	Chief	Key Informant Interview
	Daniel Mabil Mach	Pariang Boma	Community Chief	Key Informant Interview
	Elijah Lual Makuei	Ministry of Health	Community Health Worker	Key Informant Interview
	Mkhor Dot Mayen	Baidit – Bor South County	Youth Leader	Key Informant Interview
	Ajith Gop Nyok	Pariang Boma	Youth Leader	Key Informant Interview
	Mabany George C.	Action for Conflict Resolution (ACR)	CRC Member Organisation	Key Informant Interview
	Achiek Alier	Bor South	Youth Leader	Key Informant Interview
	Hon. Michael Ayuen	National Legislative Assembly	MP- Chair Person Budget Committee	Key Informant Interview
	Adut Christina	Empowering Women and Girls Organization (EWGO) Juba	Chairperson CRC	Key Informant Interview
	Elizabeth Ayen Keer	Bor South County	Religious Leader	Key Informant Interview
	Yom Geu Ayom	Voice of Women (VOW)	Executive Director	Key Informant Interview
	Riek Dong	State Ministry of Health-Bor	Nutrition Focal Person-	Key Informant Interview
	Rev. John Akong Maluk	Bor South County	Religious Leader	Key Informant Interview
	Manyang James	Jonglei Civi Society Network	Secretary General	Key Informant Interview
	Amuor Ayuen Deng	Bor South	Woman Leader	Key Informant Interview

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION

FGD Group	Number of Participants	Location
Male Community Members	9	Bor South
Female Community Members	6	Bor South
Female Community members	6	Pariak Boma
Learners	2	Juba – Elite Schools
Learners	2	Juba - St Lawrence School
Mother to Mother Support Groups	6	Baidit Boma
Mother to Mother Support Groups	7	Pariang Boma

REFLECTION SESSION

Name	Sex	Organisation	Function
Joyce Akandu	Female	SCI	Consortium Manager

Natalia Mbisimo	Female	SPEDIP	Program Coordinator
Kenji Jenispheer	Female	(CRC)	Project Officer
Tabitha Aya	Female	(UNIDO)	Program Coordinator
Morjan Robert	Male	(SCI)	Research and Learning Specialist-Save the Children International
Akol	Male	WVSS-Melut	Program Coordinator
Caroline Mbaya	Female	(UNIDO)	Program Coordinator
Robert Sochi	Male		Program Coordinator
Jacob Makur	Male		Program Coordinator

Annex 2 - Indicators

Will be provided as a separate Excel file.

Annex 3 – Limitations encountered and mitigation strategies used

Key limitations that affected the evaluation related mainly to access, timing, stakeholder availability, and the inherent challenges of assessing contribution in a complex operating environment.

In several instances, mobility and safety constraints, particularly along the Bor–Juba Road and the broader effects of insecurity and seasonal flooding limited the team’s ability to reach certain locations and respondents as originally planned. These constraints had the potential to reduce geographic coverage and to over-represent perspectives from more accessible areas. To mitigate this, the evaluation team applied flexible field scheduling, relied on locally based data collectors where appropriate and made careful substitutions of sites or respondents while maintaining the intended balance of stakeholder groups. Any remaining gaps in coverage were treated transparently during analysis and reporting.

Stakeholder availability also posed a challenge, especially when engaging government representatives and institutions with competing priorities and tight schedules. Delays and cancellations risked uneven representation across stakeholder categories and could have affected the completeness of institutional perspectives. The team mitigated these risks through early outreach, repeated follow-ups and flexible interview timing options. Where necessary, alternative respondents with comparable responsibilities and knowledge were identified to ensure that critical institutional viewpoints were still captured.

A further limitation concerned response bias, including the tendency for some participants both community members and implementing partners to provide overly positive accounts of results, whether due to expectations of assistance, fear of repercussions, or social desirability. This could have led to overstatement of achievements and under-reporting of challenges. The team addressed this by emphasizing confidentiality and informed consent, using neutral and carefully phrased prompts, creating safe spaces for discussion, and systematically triangulating information across different respondent groups and data sources. Particular attention was paid to verifying claims through multiple perspectives and cross-checking with available records to strengthen confidence in key findings.

The evaluation also faced the common challenge of attribution in a multi-actor context, where changes observed on the ground may result from overlapping initiatives, contextual shifts, or other external influences. This limitation can affect the strength of causal claims if not handled carefully. To mitigate this, the team applied a contribution-focused approach, testing the plausibility of causal pathways, examining alternative explanations, and assessing the strength of evidence before drawing conclusions. Where evidence was insufficient to support strong claims, findings were presented cautiously and framed in terms of contribution rather than direct attribution.

Inclusion and representation were also considered potential constraints, particularly for groups whose participation can be limited by social norms, caregiving responsibilities, mobility barriers, or disability-related access challenges. Under-representation of these groups could weaken the evaluation’s ability to fully reflect differential experiences and outcomes. The team mitigated this through intentional sampling by stakeholder type

and, where feasible, by gender and age, the use of local languages, and facilitation approaches designed to encourage participation from groups that may be less comfortable speaking in mixed settings. The analysis also considered how these constraints may influence interpretation and the generalisability of findings.

Finally, the evaluation's timing introduced limitations in capturing very late activities and outcomes occurring after the end of primary field data collection. This could affect the completeness of evidence for results emerging towards the close of the reporting period. To mitigate this, the team strengthened document review, drew on available programme monitoring information to contextualize late developments, and clearly distinguished between findings verified through primary data and updates drawn from secondary sources.