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Climate change intensifies human-crocodile conflicts in war-torn South Sudan

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South Sudan's biodiversity is threatened because of a plethora of reasons ranging from weak environmental regulation, poor development planning, overexploitation of wildlife, livestock and agricultural land expansion, climate change, political and armed conflict [1]. Climate change has already caused substantial ecological issues in the country, including drier weather, increased incidence of droughts and flooding, and even a reduction of annual maximum flooded areas since the 1960s, with some permanent rivers that have become seasonal in the last two decades. These changes have affected people severely, e.g., by crop and livestock losses and displacement of people, with a predicted increase in the desertification process, delayed and shorter rainy seasons, and increasingly intensified frequencies of floods and droughts [1], especially because about 80 per cent of the human population lives of smallholder agriculture, farming and fishing [1]. A recent "Perspective" in Science magazine has emphasized that human-wildlife conflicts will increase under climatic change scenarios, reporting a few noteworthy cases [2]. Here we report an additional case that, because of the very fragile human condition in war-torn South Sudan, is particularly noteworthy. In a previous study, we demonstrated that Nile crocodile (*Crocodylus niloticus*) represent a significant threat for both humans and livestock along the White Nile river course in South Sudan, and that most of the attacks (almost 100% lethal when made against humans) occurred by dry season, when shepherds are forced to push their livestock nearby the riverine waters because of the hotter and drier dry seasons [3]. This trend is increasing year-by-year, and the number of attacks is also likely increasing (we estimated it at an annual rate of >5% in the last five years), whereas also the negative perception of people towards crocodiles is also growing (despite

the legal protection that these reptiles enjoy from the government). Therefore, it is essential to invest funds and efforts on enhancing the awareness of people concerning crocodiles, climate change and the resulting growing threats due to human-wildlife conflicts.

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