

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE - August 2015

South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, Sudan

Produced by the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit¹

Overview

While ground fighting has declined during the rainy season, indiscriminate aerial bombardment by jet fighters and Antonovs and shelling continues to disrupt the lives of civilians in the two Areas. At least 22 bombs and 74 shells fell on civilian locations, farms and grazing land in August 2015.² Attacks were carried out by Sudan government forces simultaneously with a proffered unilateral cease fire by the same government. Luckily the attacks did not cause any human casualty. One shell fell outside a primary school, and a tragedy was luckily averted. In addition to terrorising local people, insecurity also continues to reduce the peoples' ability to cultivate and rear livestock, as confirmed by the July Food Security and Monitoring Unit (FSMU) report.³ Small Arms Survey confirmed that the Sudan government is targeting civilians with aerial bombing, including attacks on cultivated farms, food stocks and clinics. That indiscriminate use of bombs has contributed to the worsening humanitarian situation for civilians living in rebel-held areas.⁴

The mid-rainy season dry spell affecting the Two Areas since June has ended in South Kordofan, but it continues in Blue Nile. However, the lack of rains in June and July will have a significant negative effect on crop production for 2015-6. Levels of food insecurity for pockets of population in the Two Areas are severe and expected to deteriorate even further in the coming months. According to FSMU, the poor rainfall conditions coupled with insecurity and surging food prices potent a worsening food security situation later on in the year.⁵ The low levels of mortality so far registered could quickly escalate. Seven more people have reportedly died in Kao-Warni-Nyaro after eating poisonous roots. Without access or alternatives, local humanitarian organisations can only continue to monitor the situation and report the number of deaths.

After four years of conflict, the coping mechanisms of the population are extremely stressed, and people have started selling their last productive animals and household goods. According to household interviews, food insecurity is now the first factor influencing peoples' decision to move towards the refugee camps in Unity state (South Sudan). Specific areas of Dallami, Umdorein, Heiban, Dilling, Lagawa counties and Kao-Warni-Nyaro in South Kordofan are reporting drought. Poor agricultural conditions in those locations was corroborated by the FSMU using remote sensing and by local sources. The payam of Wadaka and the southern flank of the Yabus river, where the Koma Ganza people live, are the most affected areas in Blue Nile (see previous Flash alert). According to local humanitarian actors in Blue Nile, there are clear indications of worsening hunger in the coming weeks for the around 30-35,000 people living in those areas, if rains do not come by September.

¹ The SKBN CU works with local civil society organisations and international humanitarian actors to share credible information on humanitarian needs in the two conflict-affected states. In this update, the main sources of information are civilians involved in local humanitarian monitoring and protection activities, local civil administration representatives, and the reporting of other civil society organizations.

² The numbers are based on information gathered through the CU Monitors and the National Human Rights Monitoring Organisation (NHRMO), and triangulated. Their reports are available at [http:// www.sudanconsortium.org](http://www.sudanconsortium.org).

³ FSMU, Food Security Monitoring in Blue Nile, Central South Kordofan and Western Jebel: A Comparative Report from July 2015. The FSMU is an independent INGO monitoring food security levels in South Kordofan and Blue Nile SPLM/ A-N held areas, through trained local monitors. The FSMU reports are available upon request.

⁴ Small Arms Survey, *Two Fronts, One War: Evolution of the Two Areas Conflict, 2014-15*, August 2015

⁵ FSMU, Food Security Monitoring in Blue Nile, Central South Kordofan and Western Jebel: A Comparative Report from July 2015

Meanwhile attacks against civilians in the Ingessana Mountains in Blue Nile continue. New arrivals to the refugee camps in South Sudan and to SPLM/A-N areas report targeted attacks by government forces and allied militias, the burning of villages, rape and extreme dire conditions in which the population is forced to live in government-held areas, with insufficient food, potable water and basic medicine. According to witnesses, the forcibly displaced people around Damazin face even more critical conditions.

The CU continues to be unable to verify numbers, needs and conditions of the war-affected people in the northern areas of Blue Nile. Limited or no access for CU monitors prevents a reliable estimation of numbers in South Kordofan government held areas. More pressure on the government of Sudan by donor governments and humanitarian agencies should be exerted, to ensure that affected communities can receive the assistance they are entitled to under humanitarian law. An independent investigation on the human rights violations should also be conducted.

South Kordofan

A. Protection, Insecurity and Displacement

While ground fighting has reduced during the reporting period largely due to the rainy season, insecurity from aerial bombardment and shelling continues. At least 18 bombs and 74 shells were launched by government forces on civilians locations in August 2015 in South Kordofan. Shelling was mainly directed on Dilling county, but also on Tangle payam in Umdorein county and on Sabat payam in Dalami county. No human casualty was reported but four cows were killed. Government forces also shelled the village of Shingle (Kabala payam in Habila county) from Dilling town on 28 August. Shelling terrorised the civilian populations, especially in Salari payam where one shell fell close to a primary school in Nitle village on 17 August. One borehole was destroyed in the attack. Indiscriminate shelling occurred throughout the day but mostly in the early and late hours, when people are in their homes. The psychological impact on the population, and mostly children, is substantial.

Five incidents of aerial bombardment by jet fighters were reported by local monitors, four on Umdorein county and one in Dalami county. The attacks did not cause any casualty but destroyed at least twelve houses, displacing approximately seventy people. Moreover, attacks were directed at grazing and cultivating lands. The village of Umserdiba (Tangle payam in Umdorein county) was hit by six bombs on 9 August and again on 24 August. As a result of the attacks, four unexploded bombs remain dangerously on the ground.

On 2 August, a man and a woman (names available) who were taking their child to the hospital in Dilling from Ato village (Kalandi payam in Habila county), were arrested and reportedly taken to Kadugli. Their situation is unknown.

A number of incidents committed by SPLA-N soldiers against civilians have also been reported by humanitarian actors, but facts could not be verified by the CU. According to the NGO SUDO (UK), on 12 August a group of SPLA-N soldiers attacked a gold mine in Al-Jabal al-Alakhdar, 30 Km South-East of Talodi, close to the border with Unity state, reportedly inflicting civilian casualties and other reports, including rape cases.⁶ The SPLM/A-N did not confirm the attack, the CU will attempt to investigate further.

Perception of insecurity increased in August for refugees in Adjoug Thok. South Sudan rebels reportedly attacked Pamiir and Alail, near the refugee camp, descending from Tunja and Liri, government-held areas in South Kordofan, and were repulsed by the SPLA after heavy fighting. According to the SPLM-N Refugee Community Chairman, the incident affected the willingness of the refugees to move from Yida to Adjoug Thok. However the population in the camps continues to increase.⁷ New arrivals are coming from the northern counties of the state in search of

⁶ SUDO (UK) Situation Updates - August 2015

⁷ <http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/country.php?id=251>

food, having exhausted all means of coping after four years of conflict and given the prospects of a poor harvest in the coming months. As a result of the prolonged war and its effect on education (reduced facilities and teachers), increasing number of unaccompanied young people are also reaching the camp in search for a secondary education. That is an alarming trend.

B. Food security

Although rains have started in the area since the beginning of August, the dry spell of June and July will have long term effects on crop production. According to FSMU, 100% of payams surveyed cited drought as one of the top three factors affecting agriculture. Insecurity was also reported by 100% of payams, the most consistent trend in reporting seen since June. Seedlings planted, especially in areas of Dallami, Heiban, Umdorein, Dilling, Lagawa counties and Kao-Warni-Nyaro area, have reportedly dried out, twice or three times, delaying the usual harvesting of crops such as maize and other vegetables in August by one month. In the area of Kauda, rain was on time to save the sorghum harvest, according to local people. In Lagawa country, due to late rains people are still weeding - an unusual task this late in the season. According to local monitors, the delay of rainfall has created also conducive environment for insects and parasites to multiply which will inevitably affect levels of production.

Reflecting an extremely poor turn for the worse, the FSMU noted a sharp increase in sorghum prices in central South Kordofan and the Western Jebel, where July prices were rose to 3x and 5x June prices, respectively. Prices of sorghum reached a seasonal peak of 10-15 SDG, and availability is scarce. People are hoarding home production, keeping reserves in case of continued lack of rain. Fortunately as rain has come to some areas, the price of sorghum decreased to 7 SDG per malwa (3 Kg) in the major market in Dalami county and to 10 SDG in Kauda.

FSMU noted that in June 2015, food insecurity affected 80% the population with 10% experiencing severe levels. The monitors have detected a rapid deterioration in some communities while others continue to maintain some degree of food security. Their coping mechanisms in fact have been stretched to the limit. People have also started selling their last productive animals, indicative of a last effort to cope with food insecurity. FSMU expects the percentages for the last month to be higher (data collected by the monitors are currently being analysed).

Humanitarian monitors confirmed that pockets of population, such as in areas of Heiban and Umdorein counties (especially Locholo and Koja villages in Lomon payam), are experiencing severe levels of food insecurity. In addition to scarce rains, insecurity has limited crop cultivation to small farms near the homes, significantly reducing the area planted. An assessment by humanitarian staff is ongoing in those areas.

The humanitarian situation in Warni-Kau-Nyaro continues to be critical for its around 37,000 inhabitants. Since May 2015, due to insecurity in South Sudan, communities have been cut off from supplies of food and medicines coming from Upper Nile markets. People are relying on trees leaves, and, as stated in the previous alert, there have been reported deaths due to malnutrition. In August 2015, seven more people have reportedly died after eating poisonous roots. Mortality levels will rapidly escalate if immediate assistance does not reach the population.

It has also been reported that more than around 70,000 people in Rashad and Alabasiya counties (who live isolated due to insecurity), don't have access to basic needs like food, primary health care and shelter. The IDPs also lack of plastic sheets, blankets, mosquito nets and soap for hygiene promotion. According to local witnesses, their food security is considered to be at risk, more so since rains are reportedly scarce, but no assessment can be conducted to validate that information.

C. Health

Children in the area have not been vaccinated since the beginning of the conflict. Access continues to be denied by the government of Sudan and the SPLM/A-N. The UN has recently called for access to reach children in the war-affected areas in Sudan, and that call should not remain un-

heard.⁸ Local capacity of civil society and health actors and structures (such as cold chains) to vaccinate children are in place in South Kordofan SPLM/A-N held areas. Access to vaccines remains the only constraint.

In Habila county, cases of chest and urinary infections are reportedly high. Children are also experiencing skin diseases. Local clinics are limited due to low skills and scarcity of drugs.

Local humanitarian actors in Umdorein reported a high level of cases of Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs).

D. Animal Health

The unexplained death due to sickness of around 2,000 animals in Umdorein county in July 2015 has raised the alarm of local communities and humanitarian actors, as this was a unique event. The majority of the animals in the area have not been vaccinated since 2011. Blood samples have been sent abroad for testing. Many animals were also lost in the last months as a result of malnutrition, as grasses were scarce due to the lack of rains or burned by bombing and shelling, especially in the Western Jebel. In Habila county around 70 cows died in August for diseases locally known as *fahamy*, *abuzagalla* and *tassamum*.

An assessment on the number and state of the livestock, followed by a vaccination campaign, should be carried out as soon as possible in the area. Investing in livestock health is considered cost-effective by experts. The loss of livestock is instead a major loss for the already fragile livelihood opportunities of the local communities and for their cultural values.

E. Water and Sanitation

No update reported.

F. Education

Lack of education remains one of the major effects of the conflict, affecting an entire generation of children in the area. More children are moving to the refugee camps in search of secondary education. However, through community initiative, some successful stories exist. The first term exams were sat by 48 students from a mixed secondary school in the area, with very good performance by 28 girls and 20 boys.

Blue Nile

A. Protection, Insecurity and Displacement

Security situation was relatively calm in the reporting period with limited movement of Antonovs. One incident of aerial bombardment was recorded on 15 August in Samari (Wadaka payam in Kurmuk county). No casualties were reported.

Meanwhile fighting continues in the Ingeessana Mountains and the rest of Baw county, severely disrupting the lives of the civilian population.⁹ Attacks on villages by government forces and militias continue to be reported, with cases of rape, burning and forced displacement of the population. Cases of rape perpetrated by government Fallata militias after the attack of Misfa village in August were reported by local witnesses. As previously reported, local and international humanitarian actors interviewed a group of 58 HHs that reached Maban refugee camps in late July 2015, after their village was burned down by Rapid Support Forces (RSF) in May. The refugees reported raping occurred and some men were taken away by military intelligence. Part of the community fled towards the capital Damazin, and families were divided. The new arrivals also

⁸ UNOCHA, Humanitarian Media Monitoring, Monday 3 August 2015

⁹ Sudan Tribune, [SPLM-N claims repulsing fresh government attack in the Blue Nile](#), 20 August 2015 and [SPLM-N rebels rescue five-year old girl, hand her to ICRC](#), 17 August 2015

reported the dire humanitarian conditions in which they were forced to live since the beginning of the war.

Harsh living conditions were also reported by IDPs arrived in SPLM/A-N held areas in August 2015, escaping violence from SAF forces in the north of Kurmuk payam. Seven HHs from the Burun Jurot tribe coming from Jurot arrived in Penamo. While thirteen HHs from Al Keli of Ragarig and Fanziger tribes arrived in Mayak and seven Fanziger HHs reached Doro refugee camp (South Sudan). Interviewed by local humanitarian actors, the displaced persons denounced high levels of harassment by government forces, and lack of food and medicines.

According to the Head of the National Committee for Development in the Ingessana Mountains, over 35,000 people are displaced and living in dire humanitarian conditions on the outskirts of Damazin since last April with little or no assistance was provided to them.¹⁰ Sources on the ground reported deteriorating humanitarian conditions, while assistance has been extremely limited.¹¹ According to UN OCHA, emergency shelter (that includes stick post, straws and plastic sheets) provided by UNHCR was given to around 1,300 families displaced from Baw county to the villages of Alazaz and Algari by the INGOs Adra and the NGO Mubadroon. The project targeted large families and families without shelter considered more vulnerable.¹²

Meanwhile, tension is rising between Ingessana communities displaced from Baw to Rosaires and the local Arab communities of Rufa'a in Azaza village, east of Rosaires, confirmed by local witnesses.¹³ According to local witnesses, members of the tribe were armed by the government to act against the new arrivals, following a historical divide and rule tactic. Community based protection, and conflict resolution interventions are urgently needed to reduce tensions between IDPs and host communities.

According to local humanitarian actors, around 600 Ingessana were arrested since 2011. A number of them were tortured and suffer deep psychological effects, according to their families. Some were forced to work for the government. Around 100 are still in custody without trial in government arrests facilities in Damazin, according to SUDO (UK).¹⁴ Detainees are allegedly being subjected to unlawful forms of detention. They are only allowed out of the containers two times a day to go to the toilet. Members of the National Congress Party, military personnel and local authorities have been seen by local witnesses taking active participation in the looting and burning of properties of the people arrested. Some of them own shares in mining companies in the Ingessana mountains. The Commissioner of Geissan county, Faiz Ballah, is considered to have played an active role in the burning of villages in the Ingessana Mountains. He owns a chromite company in the area.

The CU continues to be unable to verify numbers, needs and conditions of the war-affected people in the northern areas of Blue Nile (and South Kordofan). More pressure on the government of Sudan by humanitarian agencies should be exerted, to ensure that affected communities can receive the necessary assistance. An independent investigation on the human rights violations should also be conducted.

Psyco-sociological assistance should meanwhile be provided to the new arrivals.

B. Food security

¹⁰ UNOCHA Sudan, Humanitarian media monitoring, 25 August 2015, and Radio Tamazuj, Sudan: 35,000 displaced from Bau locality, Blue Nile, 13 August

¹¹ Radio Tamazuj, IDPs in Sudan's Blue Nile state report deteriorating conditions, 20 August 2015 and Over 8,000 displaced people face food shortage in Blue Nile, 28 August 2015

¹² UNOCHA, Humanitarian Sudan Issue 33 | 10 - 16 August 2015

¹³ Radio Tamazuj, Sudan: 1000s of people face eviction in Roseires, 11 August 2015

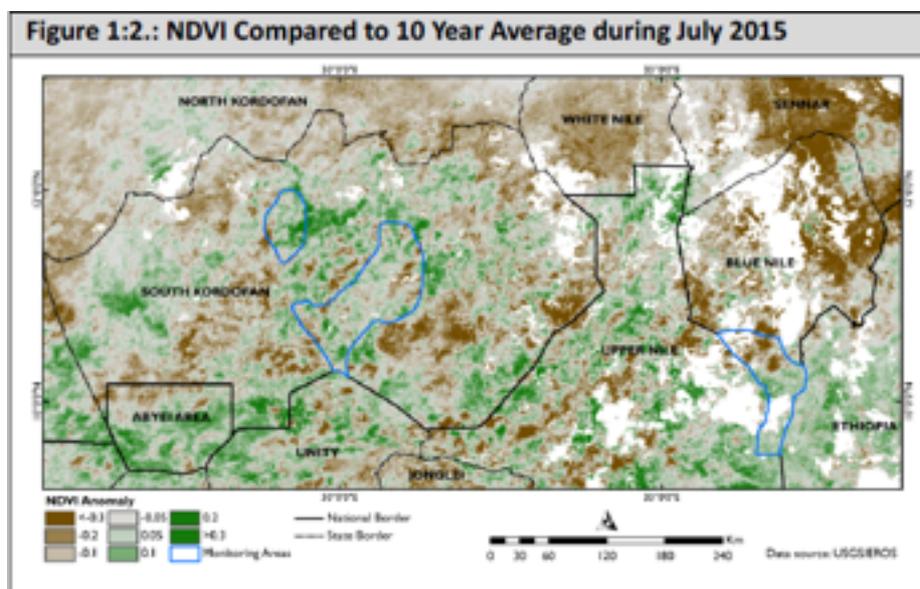
¹⁴ SUDO (UK) Situation Updates - August 2015

Lack of rains continues to affect the planting season in Blue Nile with 100% of payams surveyed citing drought as one of the top three factors affecting agriculture. Insecurity was also reported by 100% of payams, the most consistent trend in reporting seen since June (similar to South Kordofan). Unlike in South Kordofan, where rainfalls started again in August, the dry spell continues to affect the communities in Kurmuk county in Blue Nile. Note in Figure below, large swaths of brown in Blue Nile indicative of below normal vegetative growth. According to local people, the current season is the driest in five years. In some areas, such as Wadaka, Tanfona and Chali, most of the seedlings like maize, sorghum, simsim, groundnut and beans have dried up. Planting is also affected by a large quantity of insects, a chronic problem in the region.

The little harvest from short-term maize and sorghum planted around homes, so called *Juboraka* plantation, has been already consumed. No additional maize is available in the area, which is an unusual situation. In some areas, communities are already forced to eat root of trees, mushrooms, and pumpkins. People were also seen eating *oum jako*, a poisoned root that creates severe stomach ache. Following small showers the last week of August around Yabus, HHs are planting short and long-term sorghum, hoping for the rains to come in the coming days. Long-term sorghum is expected only in January-February 2016.

Livestock sales have also significantly increased as households attempt to cope. 100% of households indicated an increase in this income source, up from an average of 10-20% between March and June.

If rains do not come, there will be a additional hunger gap of at least 3 months. According to local humanitarian actors, there are clear indications of impending and significant hunger for around 30-35,000 people if rains do not come by September. The situation is being closely monitored by the CU and local partners. If the poor season continues, emergency assistance must be immediately provided to those communities.



Source: FSMU July report

Markets in the area lack essential commodities as the movement of traders is being limited by Ethiopian security forces. The FSMU confirmed a decline in numbers of markets fully functioning in Blue Nile, particularly in Yabus and Wadaka where 50% and 100% of markets are only partially functioning in August, respectively - down from 100% fully functioning in July. Sorghum, sugar, coffee, salt and oil are at very low availability at the moment. Also Ethiopian traders do not accept South Sudanese Pounds (SSP), affecting local communities' ability to buy. The value of the SSP reduced from 3 to 2 Ethiopian Biir in the last month, compounding effective prices of good have increased, as shown in the tables below.

Average price of essential food stuffs in August 2015 (Bella, Moguf, and Balila markets)				
Food Item	Unit	Price August (in SSP)	Price July (in SSP)	Percent change
		(1SSP=2ETB)	(1SSP=3ETB)	Adjusted (ETB/SSP)
Sorghum	Malwa	23	9	163%
Maize	Malwa	23	9	147%
Sugar	KG	23	9	163%
Tea leaf	KG	112	63	78%
Coffee	KG	38	16	146%
Soap	PCs	8	3	200%
Goat meat	KG	38	18	116%
Cow meat	KG	34	15	128%
Vegetable oil	Ratol	18	9	114%
Rice	KG	17	8	114%
Pasta	PCS	15	6	170%
Salt	Malwa	50	20	150%

Meanwhile movement of IDPs and refugees in the SPLM/A-N controlled areas continues to be intense, mainly due to lack of food and livelihood opportunities. People move in search of work in gold mines, casual work in the few existing markets, and to help families in the harvesting and weeding activities. Around 800 people from Maban community were seen moving to Ethiopia through Yabus due to lack of food and insecurity, in addition to lack of education opportunities in Maban.

C. Health

At least 12 clinics are functioning in the area at the moment but lack of trained personnel continues to be an issue. The most common diseases reported are malaria, skin infection, wounds, anaemia, and diarrhoea.

D. Animal Health

The health of livestock in Blue Nile is very poor according to local communities, as animals are dying for unknown diseases. The current dry spell is exacerbating the problem. Livestock are reported to access water every two-three days (one day of travel to the water points, one day of grazing, one day back to water points etc). The massive livestock movement and concentration at water points has increased the risk of livestock disease transmission, especially in the central and north-eastern Blue Nile. The severity and the extent of the problem is difficult to estimate until an assessment is conducted in the area. No vaccination took place in the area since the beginning of the conflict and it is urgently needed, especially in areas where there is a significant movement for trading or other seasonal movement for water and pasture.

The loss of livestock is one of the most dramatic consequences of the conflict in Blue Nile, especially among the predominantly pastoralist communities such as the Ingessana, Jumjum, Mayak, Burun. Animals are now increasingly being sold to buy food by the communities. This phenomenon is affecting cultural traditions in the area and at the same time is indicative of the degree of negative coping mechanisms being employed.

E. Water and Sanitation

Availability of clean water has improved thanks to more effective maintenance done by local communities. Local NGOs want to assess the possibility of rehabilitating existing pumping machines to make use of Yabus river as a source of water to continue agriculture through the year, and technical assistance should urgently be provided.

F. Education

Schools in the area continue to be closed as children are helping their families in farming.

Humanitarian Negotiations on the Two Areas

Negotiations on the Two Areas have not resumed since the last round of December 2014 and prospects of peace remain grim despite the Parties' call for a final solution.¹⁵ While the government has declared a unilateral cease-fire to allow the SPLM/A-N to join the National Dialogue in Khartoum which should take place in October, attacks on the ground by government forces have continued. Opposition forces led by the SPLM-N continue to ask for a political solution and an inclusive dialogue as the only way forward, and that should be prepared outside the country.¹⁶ This proposal was endorsed by the 539th African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) on 25 August 2015 in Addis Ababa, calling for a preparatory conference to create the necessary conditions for a national dialogue process.¹⁷

¹⁵ Sudan Tribune, [Sudan reiterates readiness for lasting ceasefire in the Two Areas](#), 11 August 2015

¹⁶ Sudan Tribune, [Sudanese opposition forces stick to their demand for holistic solution: SPLM-N](#), 16 August 2015

¹⁷ [PEACE AND SECURITY COUNCIL 539TH MEETING, Communique'](#), 25 August 2015