

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE - March 2015

South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, Sudan 1
Produced by the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit

Overview

While the first three weeks of March were relatively calm, the last week witnessed an notable increase in aerial bombardment and shelling in South Kordofan causing significant displacement and damage to livestock, food and tree crops. A new wave of ground fighting has reportedly caused the displacement of over 20,000 civilians from the front-line areas. Consistent with previous trends, bombing in March appeared to be directed towards civilian targets, such as farms, food stocks and schools, including the New Sudan Primary School in Heiban Payam, but did not cause any human casualties. At the end of the month/beginning of April, the IDPs living in caves in the Tunguli area were targeted, causing the death of seven people. SPLA North military attacks employing a mobile force and aimed at undermining the April elections and depleting government resources, have reportedly provoked civilian casualties and displacement from Government held locations in South Kordofan.

In the Western Jebels, attacks on civilians and traders by government forces continues to disrupt markets and access to livelihoods, as a ban by the Government security forces on the use of motorcycles by civilians and traders near the front line areas continues. The whereabouts of four women and two children who moved across the front lines to attend a vaccination clinic in the Dilling area are still unknown after their arrest by government forces. In the Eastern Jebels, an attack by SAF and associated militia forces on Al Hadra market is seriously affecting commerce and trade vital to the local population. Prices of food and commodities are expected to increase, as fewer people are now selling and buying in the market.

In Blue Nile, the humanitarian situation for about 10,000 people reportedly living in the Ingessana Mountains is unknown, as a result of heavy ground-fighting concentrated in the northern part of Bau County in the last two months. The number of the displaced who still remain in this location is not known as ongoing conflict prevents access by CU monitors.

Access to health care and clean water continue to be the top priorities for residents and IDPs in both SK and BN, and the need to repair water pumps is a critical concern. Food security remains at crisis levels.¹ While a change in the CU Humanitarian Monitoring Team food security monitoring methodology will mean that detailed analysis and reporting on food security will only resume after April, there are already many indications that food insecurity, which was affecting 65% of the population in December/January after the harvest, has worsened since then.

Refugees in Maban and Pariang counties in South Sudan feel threatened by the continued presence of armed groups and prevalence of small arms resulting from the conflict in South Sudan which is concentrated in Unity and Upper Nile states. The Commission for Refugees, in the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of South Sudan has announced, in association with UNHCR, that the Yida refugee settlement is to be closed and all the refugees are to immediately relocate to Adjoug Thok. All new arrivals from SK are now being accommodated in Adjoug Thok. UNHCR has indicated that this relocation process from Yida and associated provision of services will take much longer than what is indicated by the COR. However, the local refugee association has advised UNHCR that the refugees are opposed to their proposed relocation from Yida to Pamir due to concerns of ongoing insecurity and lack of protection. The refugees clearing are voicing a preference for Gumryak instead. This position is also widely held and presented by the civil administration and Nuba leadership inside South Kordofan.

A number of security incidents affecting INGOs working in the Maban refugee camps were reported, including looting of property. Reports over the past months from Blue Nile refugees of collusion between Sudanese and Ethiopian security forces in camps in Bambasit camp require independent investigation. Similar reports of forced recruitment of child soldiers in Yida by Darfur factions also need further investigation.

¹ IPC classification, see <http://www.fews.net/east-africa/sudan>.

South Kordofan

A. Protection, Insecurity and Displacement

The intensity of aerial bombardment reduced in the month of March in South Kordofan, only to start again in the last week of the month. Overall 102 bombs were reported, with seventeen people were injured among which were a significant number of children.² According to Sudan Consortium, the number of bombing incidents is equal to last March 2014, but four times higher than March 2013.³ Bombing continued to target civilian locations mainly in Dalami, Heiban and Um Dorein counties, hitting houses, farms and food stores. On 15 March, the Peace and Community Development Center in Kanist Alamsih Church and the New Sudan Primary School (Heiban County) were bombed injuring ten people. These locations are far from any military position. In the same county, on March 21 and 27 respectively, six bombs were dropped on Njakima village and around Alazrag destroying tree crops. As a result of the bombing on 21 March of Karkaria village (Um Dorein County) an unknown but considerable number of people were displaced to the streams. Anti-personnel mines in Angarto (Talodi County) reportedly injured two people, while at the same time killed four animals and injured ten.

Shelling from government forces increased towards the end of the month (and in the first days of April) in areas closer to the front-lines, following a renewed wave of ground fighting initiated by the government and by SPLA-N's mobile military campaign to impede elections in the state.⁴ The UK Ambassador to Sudan denounced SPLA-N's killing of civilians in the attacks on Kalogi but media later reported that the residents specified the deaths were largely military.⁵ CU monitors could not verify. Heavy shelling by government forces was reported on Suguli village (Western Kadugli) from Kadugli town on 17 March, resulting in 57 households displaced. On 27 March direct shelling from Dilling into the villages of Kajalla (Kabiella Payam, Habila County) set fields on fire, raising the community perception of insecurity in the area after a few months of relative calm. Shelling from Dilling town between 27 and 29 March to nine civilian villages injured one 16 year old boy herding cows and killed 10 cows and injured 5, as reported by CU monitors on the ground. Shelling in Nitile village displaced people to the caves and the school was closed.

On 28 March, the SPLA-N attacked the Habila SAF garrison and stayed in the area for few hours, causing the displacement of over 2,000 people according to the state Governor.⁶ On 6-7 April, local Habila authorities reported to a multi-agency assessment team comprised of HAC Sudan, UN agencies and INGOs, that 21 civilians had died (including 4 children), 37 were injured, 2,240 were in need of humanitarian assistance (362 HHs in 13 locations) and the number of people affected was likely to increase. It was reported that the hospital facilities were also damaged, a school was razed and supplies were looted. It is hoped that multi-agency assessments will be allowed to continue in areas held by both SPLM/A - North and SAF forces.

Harassment and attacks on civilians in the Western Jebels continue to be reported, while the area remains free from ground fighting. On 15 March four women and two children from Nitile village (Silara Payam) were arrested by government authorities on their way to Dilling town, returning from a cross-line clinic where the kids had been vaccinated. Their whereabouts remain unknown. Two INGO vehicles were reported stolen in mid March by SPLA-A forces and, allegedly, ballot boxes on the road between Dilling and Kadugli were intercepted a week later. A government ban on motorcycles being used for trade continues to be active, as reported by local communities in Habila, affecting vital marketing activity of the population. On 7 March government forces attacked Hadra market in the Eastern Jebels and three people were shot and killed. Local monitors reported that the incidents has not yet caused an increase in food and commodity prices, but that is expected because the number of people visiting the market has also declined.

² Information collected from CU monitors and National Human Rights Monitoring Organization (NHRMO) monitors, see also Sudan Consortium, [Human Rights Update: February - March 2015](#), 7 April 2015

³ Sudan Consortium, [Human Rights Update: February - March 2015](#), 7 April 2015

⁴ Radio Tamazuj, [SPLA-N threatens to stop elections in South Kordofan](#), 29 March, and SPLM/A-N press release circulated online, 5 April 2015

⁵ Sudan Tribune, [British envoy concerned by rebel attacks on civilians in S. Kordofan](#), 17 March, and Radio Dabanga, ['SPLM-N did not attack civilians in South Kordofan's Kalogi'](#) 17 March 2015

⁶ SPLM/A-N spokesman statement circulated online, and Radio Tamazuj, [South Kordofan governor says 21 citizens killed in Habila attack](#), 31 March 2015

Ground fighting or threats of conflict was reported in the areas of Dalami, Abu Jubaiha, Habila and Dilling towards the end of the month, which resulted in more than 21,000 people reportedly being displaced from Kalogi, Al-Rahamania, Habila and Karshola into North Kordofan. Prior to these latest waves of displacement, there were more than 88,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) in the eastern corridor of South Kordofan - El Abassiya, Rashad, Abu Jubaiha, Gadeir, El Leri and Talodi localities, according to HAC.⁷ Assessments on the displaced are made more difficult due to the lack of IDP camps, as people fleeing the conflict are reportedly asked to disperse and move to Khartoum or other areas to reach their relatives. According to HAC Sudan, in the second week of March about 14,500 people fled their homes and sought shelter in Al Abassiya, Abu Jubaiha and Tajmala towns as a result of SPLA-N attacks. The number increased to 23,600 in the third week. According to aid agencies, 60% were assisted and some are starting to return to their villages.⁸ According to CU monitors, some of the displaced left their homes based on threats of ground fighting which did not actually materialize.

After a peak in February, the flow of refugees into Unity State from South Kordofan has decreased according to the Refugee Council (the local SPLM-N authority representing the refugees in the camps) in Yida camp. They report 20-30 refugees arriving per day at the end of March. In 2015, around 9,000 people have arrived in the two camps, mainly into Adjoung Thok, reportedly escaping the ground fighting around Kadugli and Talodi. Refugees also report coming from the northern parts of the SPLM-N controlled areas, as food stocks are quickly depleting after a poor harvest, especially for those who were displaced in 2014 and had little or no opportunity to plant.

The Government of South Sudan has announced that Yida refugee settlement will be closed, and apparently taken over by the SPLA as a military base, and that the around 80,000 refugees will be moved by 1 June 2015 to Adjoung Thok (currently hosting around 25,000 refugees) and Pamir in Pariang county (Unity State), in coordination with UNHCR. The location of the new camps remain a significant challenge to be addressed as refugees are refusing to move to Pamir, due to the continuous insecurity in South Sudan and are instead, indicating that Gumryak is the preferred location. Reports continue to arrive to the Yida Refugee Council of the disappearance of children, allegedly forcibly recruited by Darfur resistance movements roaming around the area and suspected to have been moved towards Western Bahr al Ghazal. There are reports that the recruitment of youth soldiers is also being done by the SPLA-N, which has been denied by SPLM/A leadership. As this is an issue beyond the capacity and reach of the CU to follow up on, an independent inquiry / investigation would be warranted.

The condition of the refugees of Blue Nile in Ethiopian camps continues to be a matter of concern, and recent reports from local informants indicate that refugees are being illegally detained by Sudanese security in coordination with Ethiopian security in and around Bambasit camp. As above, an independent investigation in the camps would be important in contributing to stronger protection for the rights of the refugees, where little international protection is currently present.

B. Food security:

A household food security survey (the last one using the same survey format since 2012) was conducted in December 2014 by a third-party organization. Thereafter, a new survey form and technical approach has been in preparation, with training for the 94 CU - HMT payam monitors on the new forms and approach being completed in March, and over 1600 households in ten counties in the SPLM-N controlled areas in the Two Areas being surveyed during the end of March and in early April. Improved monthly and more qualitative quarterly reports from each area will be available as of May 2015. The information from the December survey is provided here (see Figure 1 and 2, below) as it corroborates information provided by the CU in the February 2015 report reporting *relatively* improved food security conditions given the local harvest. Note the overall pervasiveness of food insecurity despite the harvest (65-67% with pockets of up to 90-98%) - a particular concern given the prevalence normally declines between December and August:

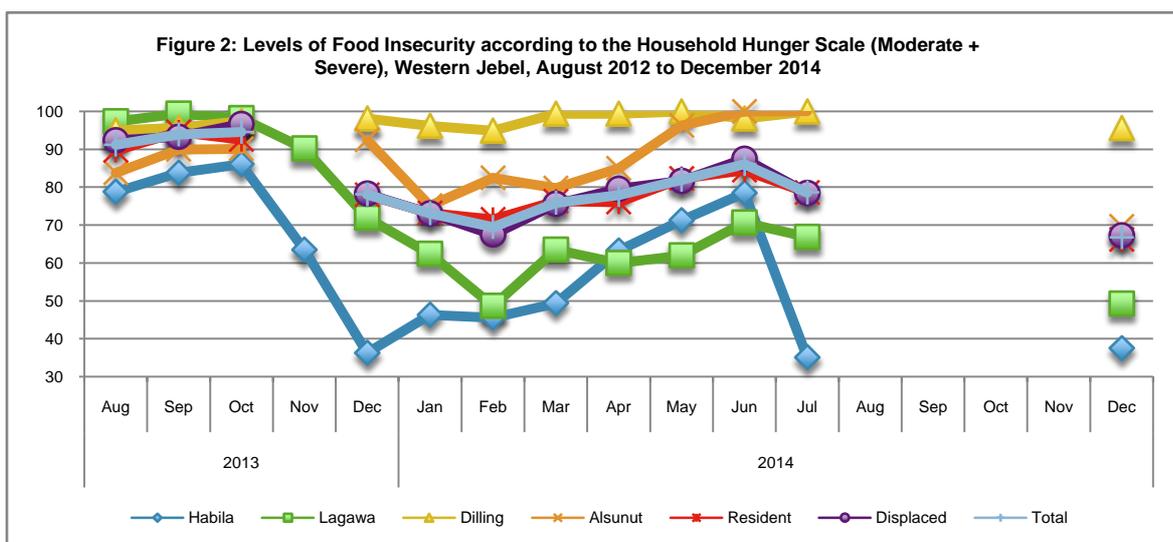
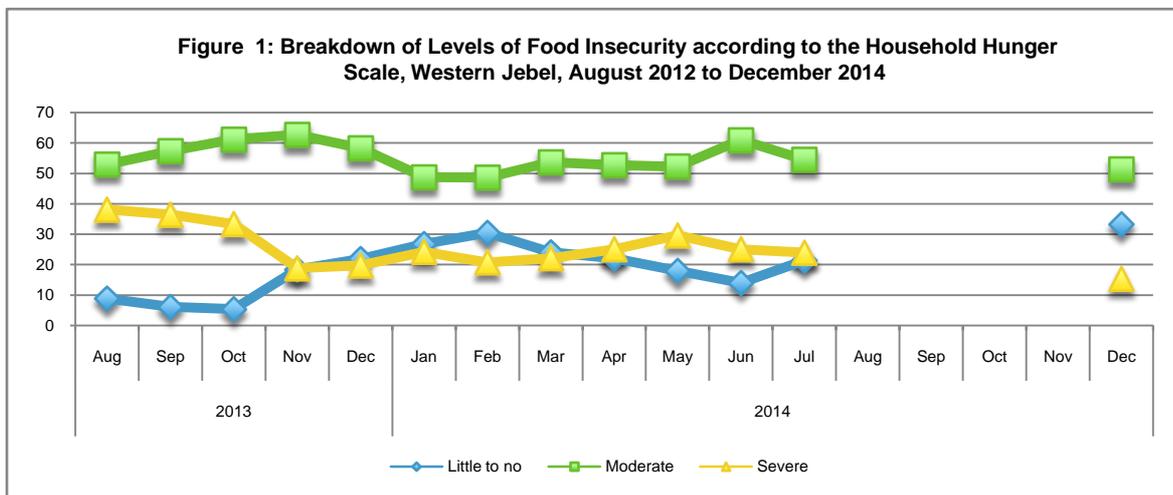
Sixty-five percent of households in the central localities of South Kordofan were considered moderately to severely food insecure in December 2014, a rate that is five percent higher than in December 2013. Food insecurity levels in Buram A (90 percent of households) and Buram B (98 percent) remained particularly

⁷ OCHA, [Humanitarian Sudan Issue 13 23-29](#), March 2015

⁸ OCHA, [Humanitarian Sudan Issue 11 | 9 – 15](#), March 2015 and [Humanitarian Sudan, Issue 12 | 16 – 22](#), March 2015

high. In the week prior to the December 2014 survey, households reported consuming staple grains and pulses infrequently, at only 4.3 and 2.3 days per week, respectively. While remote sensing imagery indicated relatively normal patterns of vegetative growth over the season, farmers were fairly pessimistic with crop outcomes. Seventy-two percent of farmers characterized the season as being “poor” in December 2014, compared to only 57 percent in December 2013. Between 54 percent (Um Durein) and 94 percent (Boram B) of households reported reliance on own production as their primary source of food grains in December as well, in keeping with seasonal expectations.

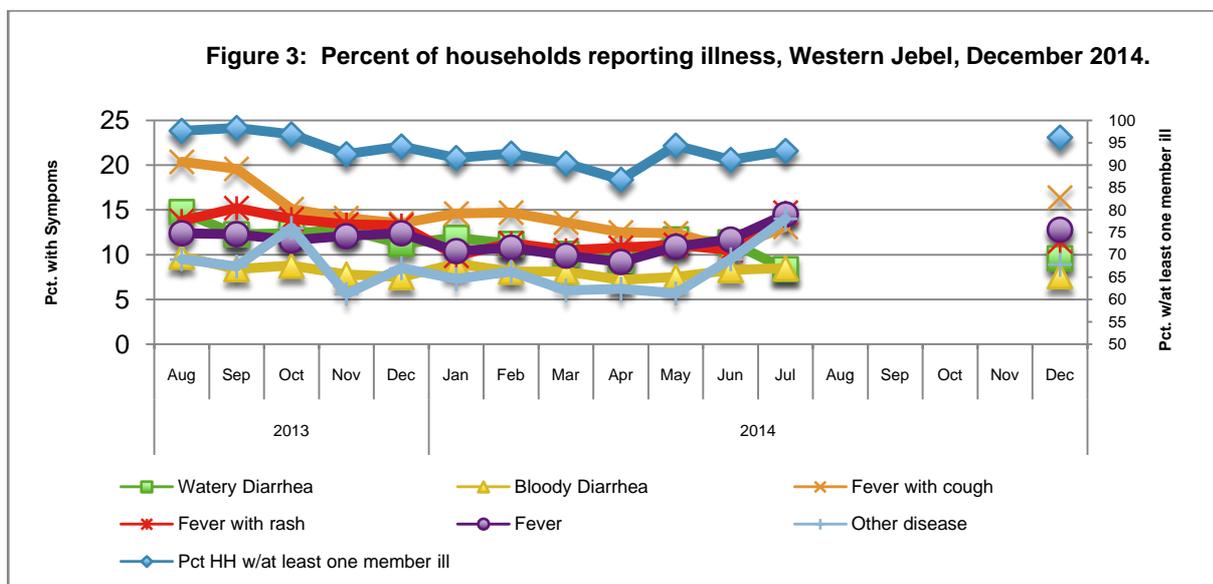
Food insecurity levels in the Western Jebel region of South Kordofan state remained high in December 2014, with 66.8 percent reporting moderate to severe food insecurity. These levels are somewhat improved compared to the 78.1 percent food insecurity levels observed in December 2013. Food insecurity levels are substantially higher in Dilling, compared to the other localities in the region. It is not clear from the available information that excessive rainfall in 2014 led to any significant harm to crops. While 72 percent of farmers characterized the season as “poor”, measures of vegetative greenness based on remote sensing suggest fairly typical seasonal patterns. Food prices show a mixed trend, with unseasonal increases in some localities and expected declines in others. A large share of sample households were engaged in harvesting activities for their main staple food crops in December, consistent in timing and extent with the previous year. Compared to last year, significantly more households reported own production as their primary source of grain, with fewer relying on market purchases.



Source: Food Security Monitoring Unit for Blue Nile, South Cordovan and Western Jebel (FSMU)

C. Health

According to the December survey referred to above, a fairly high share of households experienced illness in December, 89.5 percent. The rate is consistent with previous months.



Source: Food Security Monitoring Unit for Blue Nile, South Kordofan and Western Jebel (FSMU)

Lack of drugs, frequent movements and unreliable presence of qualified personnel, poor communication and very limited access to health facilities because of insecurity remain the greatest challenges facing the civilians. Areas particularly affected include the counties of Western Kadugli, Al Buram, Um Dorein, Dalami, Alabasiya and Rashad. Lack of access to health services remains critical in the western Jebels, especially in the Lagawa area, where most people are using local remedies that are not always safe. In Dilling, cases of urinary infection and skin diseases were reported. While in Habila, people suffered from chest and urinary infections. After the suspension of activities of MSF from Farandalla (Al Buram County) and Dalami, malaria cases were reported to have increased during March.

Few cases of measles were reported in March: two in Farandalla and two in Gidel health facility (two children under 5 and 14 years).

D. Animal Health:

The livestock health in the western Jebel remains poor and cases of animal dying ‘for unknown reasons’ continue to be reported by CU monitors. Livestock is a major income generating resource and represents cultural wealth for the local population but is also a critical component of household food security during the hunger gap periods, and has the critical advantage of being able to move with households during times of stress and displacement.

E. Water and Sanitation

According to data provided by the SPLM-N South Kordofan Secretary for Engineering Affairs, Water Resources and Minerals, more than 40% (573 out of 1395) water pumps are not functional in their areas, 73 out the 104 water yards are not operational, 3 out of 35 dams are damaged and only 9 out of the original 46 *hafirs*⁹ are functional.¹⁰ The situation is particularly critical in some counties, with around 69% broken pumps in Buram and Abu Jibeiha, 63% in Rashad, 50% in Talodi, Dilling and Kadugli.

⁹ Large man-made excavations (up to 15,000 M²) to capture runoff from rain water, especially important for livestock water sources.

Lack of access to drinking water remains the biggest challenge in the western Jebels, especially in Dilling. Throughout South Kordofan, the need to repair broken hand pumps and water yards, alongside the training of local people for sustainable locally managed maintenance of water points, remains a priority.

The multi-agency assessment in Habila reported the urgent need to repair water pumps to ensure continued supply of potable water. Most residents rely on water from three small dams, one of which has dried up and the second one has low levels of water. The third one was polluted when livestock gained access as a result of the fighting. Note: the percentage of households with toilets in South Kordofan is very low (less 1%). Water Environmental Sanitation (WES) team with the support of UNICEF and IOM will carry out another assessment to intervene in the area.

According to the Yida Refugee Council, there is a short of potable water in Adjoung Thok camp as the population increased up to 23,000 with the recent arrivals. The situation is expected to deteriorate further with the additional new arrivals and the relocation of the refugees from Yida.

F. Education

Continuous insecurity is affecting the possibility of children to get a quality education in the SPLM controlled areas. Nonetheless resilience of the population remains high and, after the bombing of the New Sudan Primary School in Heiban Payam, local monitors reported that both students and teachers are keen to resume their studies.¹¹

In Yida, education remains a matter of very high concern at every level of the Nuba society, but more people are keen to move Adjoung Thok where education is provided by UNHCR. The community-run secondary school in Yida has started its activities with 352 students and nine teachers. In Adjoung Thok, there are 3 primary schools for 4,950 students and one secondary school with 1,419. 125 candidates have already paid fees to take the Kenya Certificate for Primary Education (KCPE) certificate this year.

Blue Nile

A. Protection, Insecurity and Displacement

During the month of March, there was limited systematic reporting of security incidents in Blue Nile state as the monitors were away from their locations for training. However CU monitors could document incidents of aerial bombardment in Kurmuk County on two different days, without casualties but showing unusual patterns. On 16 March, 17 bombs were dropped on Soda at 11.30 am. Two of the bombs detonated at altitude, which was considered unusual by the local people. According to a military expert consulted by the CU, it could be a means of deploying anti-personnel ordinance, as has also been reported in South Kordofan around military locations. But more information is needed. On 25 March 2015, four bombs were dropped in Mofu, two in Mayak (Wadaka) and two in Chali area. Monitors on the ground reported that the bombing of Chali released 'a white powder that changed to bright-yellow', without effects on civilians. However, this incident raised concerns of civilians of the potential of chemical weapons being utilized in their areas.

Heavy fighting in Bau area, especially in the Ingessana Mountains, where ground fighting has concentrated since February 2015, has displaced 900 people into government-held areas according to OCHA.¹² CU monitors have not yet been able to verify the numbers of the affected population yet, but they are expecting new refugees to arrive in Maban soon, despite the high risk this journey entails.

The insecurity of refugees in Maban continues to be prevalent, given movement of South Sudanese SPLA-IO troops around the camps and the presence of armed local militias. A medical INGO has reduced staff and services following (at least) four armed robberies in the first week of March. Such incidents put staff at serious risk and many supplies have been looted. Perpetrators have not yet been identified. Check points targeting refugees continue to be active, reportedly led by a militia called Maban Defense Forces (MDF).

¹⁰ The data considered a population of 1,396,761 of which 466,630 are IDPs. They can be provided upon request.

¹¹ Sudan Consortium, [Human Rights Update: February - March 2015](#), 7 April 2015

¹² OCHA, [Humanitarian Sudan Issue 11 | 9 – 15](#), March 2015

WFP has reduced food airdrops and thus, the level of food rations to Maban refugees, apparently due to financial constraints. According to a local NGO, the refugees will receive only a half ration for the next three months. Insecurity continues to hamper the use of roads to deliver humanitarian assistance.

B. Food security

Quantitative reports could not be collected in Blue Nile in March 2015 as the monitoring report system is being improved. As a result of qualitative information collected by local monitors in Kurmuk county, it appears that food remains the first priority for the population and the hungry season will begin in 2015 as of late April, compared to August/September in a normal year. The limited food stocks available, due to a poor harvesting season as a result of insecurity, heavy rains, floods and insects, are quickly being depleted. The population of the Koma Ganza, living in the southern area of Yabus, live on roots and leaves of trees. In the northern part Wadaka payam (Wadaka Aljebel, Mayak, Mofu, Goz Abu rassin, Goz Aljamamat, Marmaton, Tunfona, Tunja, and Goz Bagar), people were not able to cultivate due to insecurity, and depend on sorghum bought in nearby markets that is considered not sufficient to cover their needs.

C. Health

The health system in Blue Nile has been severely affected by the war, with few clinics available, a limited supply of drugs, shortage of medical equipments, and insufficiently trained or unqualified health personnel. Children in the area have not been vaccinated since the war started in late 2011. Most of the people interviewed are still relying on traditional medicine, including special roots and leafs of trees especially in south Yabus and Wadaka payams. The major diseases reported by the communities and nurses interviewed are: malaria, diarrhea (watery and bloody), skin infection, violence and non-violence wounds, eye infection, malnutrition (SAM & MAM), typhoid, TB, leprosy, fever, headache, and cough.

D. Water and Sanitation

Access to clean water continues to be a priority during the current dry season, especially in southern Bau County and in Wadaka, where women walk up to six hours daily to collect water. Communities from western Wadaka migrated to areas closer to the river in the past month. Two of the water pumps that were repaired locally in Bau area in February 2015 have already broken. Professional assistance is urgently needed, including training of local people for maintenance. Lack of fuel is affecting the functioning of the water yard that was repaired in February 2015.

E. Education

The additional four primary schools opened in December 2014 are now functioning, for a total of seventeen primary schools in the SPLM-N held areas in Blue Nile serving 4,299 kids. An additional four schools are expected to open in April 2015. Nonetheless, the schools available do not meet the needs of the population and more assistance is needed. Schools lack prepared teachers due to lack of incentives, with only 52 volunteers in place (an average of 82 students/teacher). Classrooms are congested or the classes meet under the trees and material is scarce affecting the quality of the education received for the students. As a teacher reported 'we are not giving a proper education, we mostly help the kids spend some time'.

Humanitarian negotiations on the Two Areas

Negotiations on the Two Areas are suspended with no indication they will resume anytime soon. Sudan opposition parties and civil society representatives met in Berlin and signed the 'Berlin Declaration' calling for a cessation of hostilities in the Two Areas and Darfur and the boycott of the Elections which were scheduled ahead of the National Dialogue. A preparatory meeting for the Dialogue was called in Addis Ababa by the AUHIP on 29-30 March 2015 but the NCP did not attend and the meeting was suspended. The Government announced that elections will be held on time in mid April 2015, except in 7 constituencies in South Kordofan for security reasons.¹³

¹³ Sudan Tribune, [Sudan postpones elections in seven S. Kordofan constituencies](#), 7 April 2015