

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE - September 2015

South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, Sudan

Produced by the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit¹

Overview

Pockets of population in the Two Areas are facing severe levels of food insecurity, mainly due to late and poor rainfall, which compounds difficulties to produce and access food in the war torn areas. Specifically, in the payams of Chali and Wadaka in Kurmuk county, Blue Nile, the early crops have failed leaving a hunger gap of at least four months for around 30,000 people. Areas in As-Sunut and Dilling in Western Jebel region and in Toobo A, Dallami and Western Kadugli in central parts of South Kordofan are also experiencing critical food security levels. Cases of death due to malnutrition from the Koma Ganza (Blue Nile) and Kao-Nyaro-Warni (South Kordofan) areas have been already reported by this Unit.² **An estimated 90,000 people are now considered at risk of a localised famine, and more deaths are expected if immediate assistance is not provided to these populations.** In Blue Nile, the number of people facing severe levels of food insecurity is more than half of the entire population living under SPLM/A-N control.

According to the Food Security and Monitoring Unit (FSMU) *‘Poor rainfall through September and below normal vegetative conditions throughout much of Kurmuk county will very likely result in extensive crop loss and food shortages for almost half of the people currently living in the county. At the same time, while conditions in central South Kordofan and Western Jebel have improved somewhat through September, there is still cause for concern as famers have been forced to replant crops multiple times as a result of recurrent dry periods. Compounding the situation are market prices that remain high after sharp increases earlier in the season. In addition, less than one-third of markets are functioning normally, with most markets lacking basic food staples.’*³

The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) Food Security Outlook for August further reiterates that food insecurity among conflict-affected people in non-government controlled areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile is of great concern with Crisis (IPC Phase 3) levels of acute food insecurity. In addition, lower than average and sporadic rainfall that started late this season is expected to affect this year’s main harvest (October to December) and could also impact national production in 2016, according to FEWS NET.⁴

Meanwhile, the intensity of aerial bombardment and shelling by government forces continues to be high, despite the proffered cease-fire declared from Khartoum. At least 44 bombs and 66 shells were dropped on civilian locations in the Two Areas during the reporting period. As a result of the attacks, one boy in South Kordofan and one girl in Blue Nile have died. Cultivated farms were particularly targeted in the past month, revealing a dangerous pattern of the government’s attempts to undermine the lives of civilians living in SPLM/A-N held areas. That will have a tremendous impacts on the already fragile food security situation for a considerable number of families in the Two Areas.

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 SKBNCU Flash Update #9; 17 August 2015, SKBNCU August Humanitarian update; SKBNCU Flash update #10, 8 October 2015.

³ Food Security Monitoring in Blue Nile, Central South Kordofan and Western Jebel: A Comparative Report from August 2015 Monitoring. 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 report is available upon request.

⁴ [Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 39 | 21 - 27 September 2015](#)

Civilian locations have been the preferred target of aerial attacks since the beginning of the conflict, as also reported by Amnesty International. The INGO's latest report emphasises the extreme suffering of civilians living in South Kordofan, extreme after four years of conflict: *"If you lived in South Kordofan, you would have spent the last four years ducking into fox holes and running into caves, desperate to survive the aerial attacks that are an everyday part of your life"*.⁵

As humanitarian and security conditions decline in Blue Nile government held areas, more IDPs and refugees have been reported in Wad al-nil, Sinja, Sinner and the Maban camps. In government-held areas of Blue Nile, assistance is being withheld from IDPs.

Access for aid organizations in the non-government controlled areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile continues to be restricted preventing provision of assistance. UNICEF has once more declared its readiness to vaccinate the children in the inaccessible areas in Sudan of the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile.⁶ The agency urged all parties to the conflict to commit to the joint vaccination operational plan that has been in place over the last three years. More efforts should be exerted by partners to negotiate with government and SPLM/A-N authorities to gain access to severely food insecure populations.

South Kordofan

A. Protection, Insecurity and Displacement

Incidents of aerial bombardment and shelling against civilians continued to be reported in September 2015, despite the government proffered cease-fire. At least 36 bombs and 66 shells were dropped by government forces during the reporting period.⁷ Attacks happened throughout the state, with the counties of Dalami, Umdorein and Dilling especially targeted. Bombing caused the death of a boy, and a considerable amount of farm land was destroyed (percentages are not available).

As a result of the bombing of Alzraq village (Heiban county) on 15 September, a one-year-old boy died, and a eight-year-old girl was injured. On the same day, heavy bombardment (9 bombs) on Tungule (Dalami county) terrified the civilian population, displaced since two years in the caves or at the foot of the mountains. Two Migs bombed Kurchi (Umdorein payam) with 4 bombs on 6 September, and destroyed six farms. Two (2) bombs now remain dangerously unexploded on the ground. The bombing of Troji (Thobo A county) on 16 September (6 bombs) injured one man and set cultivated farms on fire. Around 30-35 people lost all the sorghum and lubia (cowpea) that they had planted, leaving them without food for consumption, trade or sale for the next year. On 25 September, an Antonov bombed (11 bombs) the villages of Alabu and Tablo (Umdorein county), and as a result farms were destroyed (numbers not reported).

The Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and Popular Defence Forces (PDF) long-range shelling, from Dilling town into nearby civilian locations, intensified in the first half of the month. Shelling into Shungule on 7 September and into Deliaba (Kalandi payam) on 9 September, caused fear among the civilians, and daily activities for around 79HHs were disrupted. On 9 September SAF shelled the village of Kare (Julud payam) in Dilling county, with at least 27 shells, causing the temporary displacement of the 65 HHs who are now living in caves. In the attack, one child was injured and 17 goats were killed. On 12 September another wave of attacks from Dilling town reached Julud areas, setting farms on fire and terrorising the population. On 25 September, shelling of Umserdiba (Umdorein county) in the late evening (20 shells) and of Alnugra (Kadugli county) from Ka-

⁵ Amnesty International, SUDAN: PEOPLE'S LIVES IN SOUTH KORDOFAN DO MATTER, September 2015

⁶ UN News center, UNICEF calls for a joint vaccination plan in Sudan, 6 October 2015

⁷ 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>

dugli town, wounded two civilians and farms were set on fire. On 29 September, Umserdiba was hit again with (15 shells).

No incident of cattle raiding was reported during the reporting period.

According to the Government's Humanitarian Aid Commission (HAC) in South Kordofan, an estimated 5,400 South Sudanese refugees, mostly women and children, arrived in El Leri (Talodi county) in September 2015 and are in need of humanitarian assistance, including food and emergency shelter. The CU has no access to these locations and cannot confirm. According to UNOCHA, heavy rains have so far impeded providing the necessary assistance to the affected communities. It was reported however that the State Ministry of Health 'airlifted to El Leri medical supplies and drugs enough for medical needs of some 2,000 people for one month.'⁸

B. Food security

Rainfall conditions have improved somewhat in South Kordofan during the reporting period, allowing people to plant, but there is still cause for concern according to technical experts. According to the NDVI data, vegetative conditions appear to have improved somewhat and are normal to slightly above normal. However, evapotranspiration moisture levels are below normal conditions across a wide part of the monitoring areas and the state as a whole, suggesting dryness. A lack of rains was reported especially in Toobo A, Dallami and Western Kadugli, while normal to above normal rainfall levels were reported in Heiban and Um Dorein.⁹ In particular, two payams in Dalami, have received little to no rainfall through June, August and September and the high number of IDPs living in those areas are especially vulnerable. Local humanitarian actors are carefully monitoring the situation.

As previously reported by FSMU coping mechanisms for the population in South Kordofan were increasingly depleted and the quality of food consumption significantly compromised, since May-June 2015. Indeed, begging is increasingly reported as a number one source of food and income. In September, 21% of households reported as first source up from 0% in August, and 50% of households report using begging as one of top three sources.¹⁰

In the Western Jebel region rains started again. In most areas of the region, weeding activities are ongoing. However, less than normal rainfall levels were reported in some locations.¹¹ The areas of high crops failure include Farshaya and Karko payams of Dilling and Al-kashaand Al-shifir payams in Al-Sunut. Cultivation of early crops (maize, sorghum, pumpkins, cowpea, okra, tomatoes and other vegetables) in those areas is very limited at the moment due to late rains. The area of As-sunut is particularly affected by drought, raising concerns among the population. Severe food shortages are expected in the county in the coming months.

People in the Western Jebel are currently mainly relying on remaining food stocks. In some areas however the harvest last year was limited due to high insecurity levels (from shelling and bombardments). In Habila area, in particular, heavy aerial bombardments in 2014 set at least 20% of farms on fire, and food in the market is now scarce. The price of sorghum has increased up to 210 SDG for sack (30 malwa/90 Kg) compared to a normal seasonal price of 150 SDG.

Availability of food and commodities in the local markets in the Western Jebel is also affected by the lack of access for traders across lines due to bad roads and insecurity. At the beginning of the month, the government of South Kordofan re-issued a decree prohibiting trade with the population in the rebel controlled areas, adding it may constitute offences that may result in the

⁸ [Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 39 | 21 - 27 September 2015](#)

⁹ Food Security Monitoring in Blue Nile, Central South Kordofan and Western Jebel: A Comparative Report from August 2015 Monitoring

¹⁰ FSMU (2015) AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2015: FOOD SECURITY MONITORING IN BLUE NILE CENTRAL SOUTH KORDOFAN AND WESTERN JEBEL REGION, Food Security Monitoring Unit.

¹¹ Ibid

death penalty.¹² In frontline areas, government soldiers have been instructed to, when seeing traders, shoot to kill.¹³ ICG had previously noted traders were reportedly killed when trying to trade essential crops, such as sorghum.¹⁴

While it is not the first time these threats have been raised, the renewed decree has further reduced the number of traders who cross the line, resulting in the further reduction of basic commodities in the local market such as sugar, soap, drugs, and clothing. A market in Mulish payam (Lagawa county) has closed down due to lack of items to sell. The traders who make the journey have also reported to local monitors continuous harassment by government security.

C. Health

Health facilities in the Western Jebel region lack drugs affecting the provision of health services for an estimated 250,000 people living in the SPLM/A-N held areas in the region. In Lagawa, monitors reported that the majority of health facilities have closed (numbers were not provided). In Dilling and Lagawa, according to local monitors, some medicines are brought by northern traders but their quality is very poor. People continue to rely heavily on bush doctors. Cases of measles infection in Mandle and Adlan villages (Farshaya payam) were reported and two children have died. Cases of ear infections are also reportedly common. In Habila, a high number of cases of malaria among adult and children was reported.

According to Amnesty International, state health care in South Kordofan has been decimated. Hundreds of people have died because they cannot reach hospitals or health services. Hospitals have been bombed, medical personnel have fled and essential medicines are not sufficiently available.¹⁵

Meanwhile UNICEF has declared its readiness to reach the children that had not been vaccinated in the inaccessible areas in Sudan of the Nuba Mountains and the Blue Nile (and the Jebel Mara of North Darfur).¹⁶ The agency urged all parties to the conflict to commit to the joint vaccination operational plan that has been in place over the last three years.

D. Animal Health

Further research by local actors into the death of 4,000 cattle in Umdorein county in August-September 2015, concluded that cattle died due to eating grass and/or drinking water contaminated by chemicals from bombings. Although possible, local actors have limited technical knowledge and equipment to validate their hypothesis. In mid-September some animals deaths were reported in Dallami and Heiban, but the situation is now stable due to the effective local network of community animal health workers, who were trained during peace years and remain active.

Skin diseases affecting animals were reported from Lagawa, but they remained undiagnosed due to lack of any veterinary doctor in the area.

Technical assistance and provision of medicines for livestock are paramount for those communities that rely heavily on livestock as a livelihood opportunities and for socio-cultural reasons. A cycle of vaccination should be organised as early as possible as well.

E. Water and Sanitation

¹² Sudan Tribune, [South Kordofan bans trade with rebel-held areas](#), 7 September 2015

¹³ ICG (2013) Africa Report N198, Sudan's Spreading Conflict (I): War in South Kordofan, see footnote 191.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Amnesty International, September 2015

¹⁶ UN News center, [UNICEF calls for a joint vaccination plan in Sudan](#), 6 October 2015

No update reported.

F. Education

Schools continue to be closed in SPLM/A-N controlled areas, due to the rainy season, with the school year starting in October.

Local leaders from Abu-Khersola locality, under government control, reported to the media that 'primary and secondary schools in the area are deteriorating due to a lack of teachers, chairs and an overall poor educational environment'.¹⁷ According to UNICEF, in Sudan, nearly four decades of war have deprived more than three million children of their schooling. Conflict has been a major factor pushing boys and girls out of the classroom in the states of Blue Nile and South Kordofan.¹⁸ The longer term effects not only on recovery and psycho-social stability, but also on eventual and sustained peace, as civic education is provided in schools, is undeniable.¹⁹

Blue Nile

A. Protection, Insecurity and Displacement

Aerial bombardment continued during the reporting period in Blue Nile. On 19 September, an Antonov dropped two bombs on civilian locations in Tanfona, four in Malkan and two in Wadaka (Kurmuk county), luckily without any casualty. On 24 September, the first day of the Eld Al Adha, the villages of Malkan, Ulu and Wadaka (Kurmuk county) and the village of Kobra in Baw county, were bombed in the afternoon, while people were celebrating. As a result, one girl was killed. On the same day heavy shelling hit the Kilgu hills, but luckily without casualties.

Ground fighting concentrated in the areas south of the capital Damazin during the reporting period. No new attacks against civilians in the Ingessana Mountains (Baw county) were reported. However the effects of the attacks carried out in the Mountains between April and August 2015 continue to be visible.

Nineteen (19) HHs (123 people) arrived on 14 September in the refugee camps in Maban from Tanfona (a village bordering Wadaka and Baw county, close to South Sudan). These people left government-held areas in the Ingessana Mountains, after their village was burned down by SAF in July. They had reached Tanfona on 8 September. Interviewed by local monitors, they explained that their village was attacked in the evening, during the month of Ramadan. Two women interviewed reported that their houses were set on fire, and cases of raping were witnessed. After the attack, the group escaped to the area of Kapadek, under the SPLA-N control. The place was shelled by SAF, and two men died. The rebels escorted them to Tanfona. The group walked for four days, without food and water. Upon arrival in Tanfona, they ate goat meat that caused to many of them stomach problems, after a long period without food. No other food was available. The majority of the children fell sick, but none died.

A new influx of IDPs from Blue Nile from the Ingessana Mountains in the towns of Wad al Nil, Sinja and Sinner, was also reported. Arrivals reported critical humanitarian conditions in their areas of origin. The new comers were left on the peripheries of the towns without assistance. Allegedly, the state government refused to establish camps for the displaced.²⁰

¹⁷ Radio Tamazuj, Education worsening in Abu Karshola locality, 7 September 2015. The term 'locality' used in government areas is the equivalent of a 'county'.

¹⁸ UNICEF, Education under fire. See also Radio Dabanga, War keeps 3 million Sudanese children from school: Unicef, 7 September 2015

¹⁹ See <http://www.poverty-action.org/study/peace-education-rural-liberia> and <http://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR254%20-%20Civic%20Education%20and%20Peacebuilding.pdf>

²⁰ Radio Tamazuj, Sudan: More displaced from Ingessina arrive in Sennar, 2 September 2015

Reports of the conditions in which civilians, including the IDPs, are living in government held areas continue to be a matter of concern. The CU has no access to those areas, and urges humanitarian actors in Sudan to put pressure on the government to conduct an immediate assessment and provide the necessary assistance to the people in need.

Finally, the arrival of new refugees in Maban (South Sudan), stresses the already volatile security situation in the refugee camps. The regular tension between the refugee and the host community became more serious in the last week of September, especially around Gindrassa and Yousif Batil camps. According to local humanitarian actors, this could be related to the arrival of a new commissioner in the county. Given the tense political and security environment, humanitarian agencies should do anything possible to assist people inside Blue Nile.

During the month of September SUDO (UK) monitors reported that eight individuals were arrested by Military Intelligence, two of whom were subsequently tortured, in Blue Nile. The individuals in question were arrested for reasons ranging from suspected communication with the SPLM-N to no stated reason at all. Three of these eight individuals have been detained in the containers within SAF Fourth Division headquarters in Damazin. SUDO (UK) monitors estimate there are at least a further 75 held in containers. According to the NGO, 'this inhumane form of detention is compounded by the detainees' inability to leave the containers except to go to the toilet in the morning and the evening. Furthermore the detainees are unable to access a lawyer or their family members and are often denied medical treatment.'²¹

B. Food security

Food security is critical in Blue Nile. The payams of Wadaka and Chali have received extremely limited rainfalls during the reporting period, affecting the crop performance. A humanitarian assessment conducted in Chali payam on 15-17 September, reported that all maize has desiccated while at flowering stage. The low prospects for harvest is now a big concern according to humanitarian actors. Even the drought resistant short and long term sorghum has failed and almost no harvest is expected from these major staple crops. As a result, around 30,000 people living in those areas are at risk of a localised famine.²²

Remote sensing data analysed by FSMU revealed that vegetative conditions and moisture levels were considerably below normal throughout much of Kurmuk county in September, at a time of year when conditions are normally at their peak. Planting of the main staple crop, sorghum, typically runs through July and early August. For many farmers, persistently poor conditions in Kurmuk suggest little chance to establish a crop from this point forward.²³

Deaths due to malnutrition and sickness from eating inappropriate wild foods have already been reported from the Koma Ganza area, where around 15,000 people live in critical humanitarian conditions. With a population of approximately 67,000, the affected communities in Kurmuk county represent more than half of the population. Monitoring of population movements has observed an extreme increase in movements up 800% since July, mainly due to lack of food.²⁴

Because of the protracted conflict in Blue Nile (and South Kordofan), the coping strategies of the population in these areas are already exhausted. Any remaining productive assets, animals and items, are being sold. Very few people can still afford to buy food. The people of Kurmuk county have ceased to report selling crops or livestock as a main source of income and almost uniformly

²¹ SUDO (UK) Situation Updates - September 2015

²² SKBNCU Flash update #10 - 8 October 2015. The population living in Blue Nile areas controlled by the SPLM/A-N is estimated to be around 67,000. Around 37,000 live in Yabus payam, 9,000 in Chali payam and 26,000 in Wadaka payam.

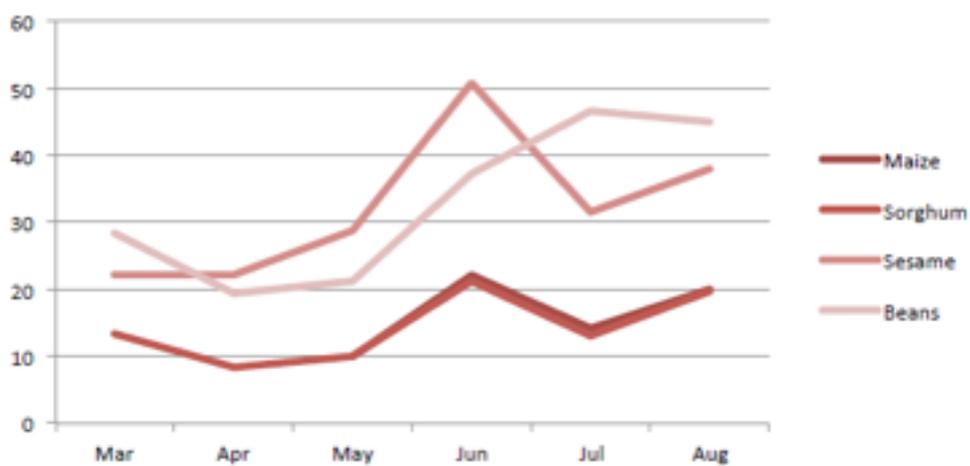
²³ FSMU, August 2015

²⁴ FSMU, August/September 2015. One village has seen up from 10 households moving in July to the refugee camps to 35 in August and 89 in September.

report mining as a the main source.²⁵ That is not only extremely dangerous, as often relying women children to enter small and unprotected holes, but it is also insufficient income to meet consumption needs in the best of times.²⁶

Regular market monitoring indicates that staple food prices have been increasing at an above average rate since last April. Sorghum prices have more than doubled from SSP (South Sudan pound) 8.31/malwa (3 Kg) in April to SSP 19.72/malwa in August. Prices of maize and beans have more than doubled over the period as well.²⁷ Prices in the affected areas have further increased in the past week, up to SSP 50/malwa in Wadaka, SSP 35/40 in Chali and SSP 40 in Tanfona (Figure). This latest spike in prices is due to the overwhelming demand in the face of limited supply according to local monitors. People are now mainly eating roots and wild fruits.²⁸

Figure 3a. Average Staple Food Prices in Kurmuk, Blue Nile March - August 2015 (SSP/malwa)



Source FSMU August 2015

Sporadic rains started in Wadaka and Chali payam towards the end of the reporting period. If consistent, they should allow for the long-term sorghum to be harvested in January-February 2016. Nonetheless, **immediate assistance should be provided to these populations to contain the hunger gap** of the next four months.

Reports from the ground indicate that people might move to the refugee camps in South Sudan, if they do not receive any food supply in the next weeks. Moving to the refugee camps is the last option for these communities, who are mainly farmers, and have resisted four years of insecurity and restrictions. Refugee camps in Maban are also reporting heightened insecurity levels in the past weeks. A further exodus will also have huge political, security and financial implications on current humanitarian operations in South Sudan.

C. Health

No update reported.

D. Animal Health

²⁵ FSMU, August/September 2015

²⁶ Women and Artisanal Mining: Gender roles and the road ahead <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INT-TOGMC/Resources/336099-1163605893612/hintonrolereview.pdf>

²⁷ FSMU, August 2015

²⁸ SKBNCU Flash update #10 - 8 October 2015

No update reported.

E. Water and Sanitation

No update reported.

F. Education

Schools will be closed in the SPLM/A-N areas until November.

Humanitarian Negotiations on the Two Areas

In mid September, the Sudan Revolutionary Front (SRF) - the major opposition group to the government - declared readiness to sign a six-month agreement for a cessation of hostilities (COH). In particular, the SRF declared that *'the COH for humanitarian purposes should: 1. Create conditions favorable to supplying emergency relief and provide security guarantees for safe, unhindered access by humanitarian agencies to vulnerable groups; and 2. Secure and provide free passage and unimpeded access for humanitarian personnel in accordance with international best practices.'*²⁹

The SRF also issued a road map for the resolution of all conflicts in Sudan, in line with the African Union Peace and Security Council (AUPSC) resolutions 539 of 25 August.³⁰ The 7+7 Committee in charge of the National Dialogue welcomed the SRF statement, and invited the rebels to put down arms.³¹ The President of Sudan invited the rebels to come to Khartoum, while offering full amnesty.³² The SPLM-N slammed Khartoum's offer as mere propaganda.³³ So far none of the Parties has put down arms. Ground fighting is ongoing and aerial bombardment and shelling against civilians by government forces continued throughout the reporting period.

²⁹ Statement of the Sudan Revolutionary Front, 15 September 2015

³⁰ Sudan Revolutionary Front roadmap on the way forward, 14 September 2015

³¹ Sudan Tribune, [Sudan's 7+7 body welcomes SRF readiness for cessation of hostilities](#), 20 September 2015

³² Sudan Tribune, [Sudan's dialogue body rejects AUPSC's call for pre-dialogue meeting](#), 4 September 2015 and Radio Dabanga, [Khartoum fights AU over venue national dialogue in media campaign](#), 8 September 2015 and Sudan Tribune, [Sudanese president decrees amnesty for rebels and ceasefire](#), 22 September

³³ Sudan Tribune, [Bashir's 2-month ceasefire is public-relation manoeuvre : Arman](#), 26 September 2015