

SKBN CU Humanitarian Update

May 2017

Overview

- Conflict in Blue Nile and nearby refugee camps puts thousands in danger and threatens the stability of the region during the main planting season.
- Medical supplies, medicines, and trained health care professionals are not available in the majority of the region as Sudan faces a cholera outbreak and cases of malaria are expected to increase with the start of the rains.
- Early rains allowed those displaced due to water shortage to return to their homes, but improved water infrastructure remains an urgent need.
- Extreme coping mechanisms were observed by humanitarian monitors in all areas as food stocks are either diminished or completely depleted
- Prices of staple food crops continue to rise as food stores run out and cross line trade remains dangerous

Food security and markets

South Kordofan

Populations throughout SPLM-N controlled areas are now relying on extreme coping mechanisms. While new quantitative data is not yet available, SKBN CU Humanitarian Monitors and independent actors report observing substantial numbers of households relying entirely on wild foods, large groups begging outside local government offices, or relocating entirely to South Sudan or government controlled areas of Sudan. The situation is dire, and a recent FEWSNET release suggests these conditions will worsen without a major intervention.¹

Markets in all counties reported either insufficient supply of staple crops (selling out before all persons were able to trade) or none at all. Monitors reported an approximately 20% increase in sorghum prices in the major markets throughout the central region.² Increasingly, trade of livestock or handicrafts is not a viable means to food security.

Away from the volatile frontlines relative calm continued in South Kordofan during May, allowing sections of the population to prepare and plant their fields. As the population is primarily supported by subsistence farming, those lacking farmland or implements are in a particularly dangerous situation. Returnees from South Sudan and persons internally displaced from conflict are among the most vulnerable, with both their near term and long-term food security threatened if farming is not possible.

Without intervention, it is expected that food insecurity will increase rapidly in the coming months, with those previously reported as moderately food insecure moving to severely food insecure.³ There is also

¹ "More Nuba flee from SPLM-N areas in South Kordofan" reported by Dabanga Sudan, accessed on June 15, 2017 at: <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/more-nuba-flee-from-splm-n-areas-in-south-kordofan>

² As reported by SKBN CU Humanitarian Monitors in May

³ Food Security Monitoring Unit, April 2017 Report

the potential the current situation will lead to a cycle of year over year decreases in overall food production if not addressed.

Blue Nile

Fighting in Blue Nile and refugee camps in bordering South Sudan has the potential to severely impact food security. In May, tribal fighting erupting in Doro refugee camp in South Sudan and in border towns of Blue Nile. This insecurity further threatens the viability of the South Sudanese refugee camps for persons in Blue Nile who may face critical food insecurity in the coming months. The situation in the camps is being addressed directly by UNMISS. As food security is likely to further deteriorate, the free and safe passage of refugees will be very important.

As May is an important month for planting, the fighting and displacement is highly likely to affect preparations for the next harvest. All parties need to immediately cease fighting and allow residents of Blue Nile to freely engage in cultivation.

Three of the main markets in Blue Nile had no staple food crops at all at the time of assessment in May. This is especially concerning as April saw the population shift to net food buyers⁴, meaning more relied on trade and markets than on their own production.

There are no current, quantitative estimates of food security or nutrition in this area, but the situation is feared to be dire. Qualitative information from key informants suggest that less than 50% of households had food stocks remaining at the end of April,⁵ and extreme coping mechanisms were broadly observed. Monitors' observed households completely depending on wild, foraged food and others completely relocating due to lack of food. An initial attempt by SKBN CU to more closely track relocations was cut short due to conflict.

Health

South Kordofan

A local Secretariat of Health supported clinic in the Western Jebels reported receiving five cholera cases from two counties. This has not been independently confirmed as of the writing of the report, but raises serious concerns as Sudan and South Sudan are both facing cholera outbreaks.⁶ Cholera is especially dangerous to malnourished children and an outbreak in South Kordofan could be particularly deadly.

A recent interview between Human Rights Watch and the Secretary of Health revealed that there are only 5 doctors for a population of over 900,000 people, and no obstetrician or gynecologist.⁷ This is a ratio of 1 doctor for every 180,000 people.

⁴ Food Security Monitoring Unit, April 2017 Report

⁵ Ibid

⁶ UN OCHA Humanitarian Bulletin, Issue 9, published June 9, 2017

⁷ "No Control, No Choice: Lack of Access to Reproductive Healthcare in Rebel-Held Southern Kordofan," by Human Rights Watch, accessed at www.hrw.org/node/303836/ on June 15, 2017

Blue Nile

The population remains afflicted by common illness like diarrhea and infections, and malaria is expected to become a bigger problem in the rainy season. The current conflict will affect access to healthcare, as there are only a few functioning clinics and population movements are restricted by the fighting. Bringing medicine and supplies to replenish the badly depleted clinics will become even more difficult if the conflict is not resolved quickly.

Animal Health

South Kordofan

Heavy early rains affected already weakened animals, with local government and civil society organizations reporting hundreds of livestock deaths in May. Livestock trade as a viable livelihood has further diminished as markets have lacked other foods to trade. Without access to cross line trade, pastoralist communities will face a dire food security situation. Food assistance or improved market conditions are necessary for the survival of a substantial portion of the population.

Blue Nile

Direct monitoring was not possible in Blue Nile as the local Secretariat of Animal Health has suspended all activities in the wake of the recent fighting. The same trends as noted in South Kordofan are believed to be present. Livestock continue to be afflicted by disease and were likely affected by the early rains.

Water

South Kordofan

May brought heavy rains, with the monitoring team reporting cumulatively 250 millimeters of rainfall to date this rainy season. This above average rainfall has replenished shallow, hand-dug wells and allowed populations displaced due to water shortage to return home. Access to improved water infrastructure (filter systems, boreholes, etc.) remains a serious challenge to the population, as most water sources are still potentially contaminated.

Blue Nile

Early rains could not be measured directly, but rivers and shallow wells were reported as similarly replenished, alleviating the worst of the water insecurity. More improved water sources are badly needed in Blue Nile.

Education

South Kordofan

Schools are now out of session and most students will participate in cultivation. Without general access to an internationally recognized curriculum most students will have no access to higher education or other opportunities past the basic, under-supported schools in the region. Furthermore, a recent report highlights

that with limited resources, males are generally given preference to attend school over females.⁸ More support and advocacy is needed to provide a viable education with equal access for both boys and girls.

Blue Nile

Resources for education in Blue Nile are even more scarce, likely creating a situation worse than South Kordofan for boys and girls. Added to this, the current conflict has the potential to affect boys of potential military stature. Progress made to keep children under 18 out of the military needs to be maintained, and educational opportunities respected.

Protection and security situation update

South Kordofan

Inter-community conflict continues to pose a threat to market activity, costing lives and limiting trade with Government of Sudan territory. This not only threatens an important livelihood and means of food security, but is also threatens the lives of civilians working as traders and pastoralists. More investment is needed to bring these groups together, or this ever-increasing distrust could threaten the viability of a post-conflict society. This raiding has primarily taken place around markets, creating fear and disrupting the lives of a significant portion of the population. This raiding needs to be addressed by authorities and perpetrators not allowed to profit from this activity. Local civil societies working cross line report that perpetrators of raiding and looting rarely face consequences.

Gender based violence in South Kordofan remains a major issue. In recent interviews with Human Rights Watch, 6 of 25 women reported having been beaten in their homes.⁹ There is no recourse for this behavior, and the local justice department reported never having processed domestic violence cases. As food security worsens, more women are having to bring their families across active military lines in search of food and support. There are not proper monitoring mechanisms in place to ensure the safety of these refugee movement, but during May cases of women being brought back to a local hospital having been raped along the way were reported. More effort is needed from local authorities and the international community to ensure safe passage for these refugees.

Explosive remnants of war still pose a serious threat to the population in all areas. Unexploded aerial armaments and land mines continue to injure and kill herders, farmers, and children. As soon as possible, dedicated education and clearance programming will be needed.

Blue Nile

Tensions escalated into violence in the border areas of Blue Nile and in the refugee camps in South Sudan. Clashes along tribal lines have put thousands of lives in danger and badly affected the prospects of providing aid to people in great need. There are reports of extrajudicial killing along tribal lines both within Blue Nile and the refugee camps serving this population. Leadership needs to take all possible effort to stop this violence and bring peace to the area. Women and children have been caught in the

⁸ "No Control, No Choice: Lack of Access to Reproductive Healthcare in Rebel-Held Southern Kordofan," by Human Rights Watch

⁹ Ibid

conflict, but there are no reliable estimates on numbers affected at this point. Thousands of refugees are reported to have fled Blue Nile to South Sudan or Ethiopia in fear for their lives.

The impact of this fighting will likely last well into 2018, as agriculture and livelihoods were disrupted in many population centers. The SKBN CU will monitor the humanitarian impact of this conflict as security allows.

Annex I: Security Incidents March 2017

Date	County	Payam	Village	Incident	Impact
9 May 17	Heiban	Um Durudu	Orah	Looting	52 camels looted in clash with military
14 May 17	Delling	Delling	Hajar Juad	Looting	1 person killed, market looted, and homes destroyed.
22 May 17	Kurmuk		Soda	Armed Conflict	Armed groups primarily divided on tribal lines fought for control of Soda village. No death toll is known