

SKBN CU Humanitarian Update

July 2017

Overview

- Blue Nile continues to face conflict, further destabilizing a population in critical need of humanitarian assistance.
- A recent SMART Survey in South Kordofan depicts critical malnutrition, with some metrics exceeding the WHO emergency threshold.
- Food security remains a major challenge in both areas with the coming harvest not yet ready. Markets reportedly have limited food at very high costs and the population continues to depend on extreme coping mechanisms.
- Flooding and sporadic rains affect both areas, with temporary flooding related displacements reported and the potential for diminished agricultural yields with long dry spells followed by short heavy rains.

Food security, markets, and nutrition

South Kordofan

Food insecurity remains a major challenge in South Kordofan. Conditions have likely deteriorated since the last round of data reported, consistent with seasonal norms. As of April, moderate and severe hunger increased by approximately one third since the same period last year, affecting 71% of households in the more populous central region.¹ Nearly half of all households reported consuming seeds intended for planting and 13% of households in the Central Region and 31% of households in the Western Jebel were displaced due to hunger.²

Findings from a recent SMART nutrition assessment show a critical nutrition situation, with malnutrition rates measured by height for weight as follows:

Weight for Height Prevalence of Malnutrition in Central Region

Prevalence	Central Region	Western Jebels
Global Malnutrition	23.9 %	29.2 %
Moderate Malnutrition	15.5 %	19.9 %
Severe Malnutrition	8.4 %	9.3 %

These results surpass the WHO emergency threshold, signaling an urgent need for a nutrition intervention to prevent developmental disorders, health complications, and potentially death in young children. The report finds “The emergency nutrition situation is attributed to multi-faceted factors that included household food insecurity, high morbidity prevalence, poor maternal, infant and young child nutrition (MIYCN) practices and lack of adequate humanitarian support and response in the region.”³

¹ FSMU June 2017 Bulletin

² Ibid

³ SMART Report and findings on file with SKBN CU, distributed separately from this report and available upon request.

Agriculture, the primary driver of food security in the area, is heavily affected by the loss of large, productive farms in lower elevation areas. As previously reported, many of these were either lost to the frontlines of the conflict between SPLA-N and Government of Sudan, or too close to frontlines for farmers to feel secure while cultivating. Rains, while sporadic, have been sufficient to date for cereal production. The CU will continue to monitor this carefully through the remaining growing season.

The highly invasive pest Fall Armyworm continues to spread north through South Sudan, reaching as far as Awiel recently. There are no reports of this spreading into South Kordofan, but the CU continues to monitor this threat, as its impact on sorghum and maize crops could be devastating.

Blue Nile

Less quantitative information is available on food security in Blue Nile due to the ongoing conflict. A recent estimate from local, civil authorities indicates there are approximately 9,000 individuals displaced by the current conflict. Access for a humanitarian assessment is vitally important. It is currently unknown what kind of conditions this group faces, but it is likely that a substantial portion of the population now faces a dire food security situation.

The previously reported gap in normal, seasonal rainfall continued into July, creating substantial concern for the upcoming harvest. Key informants have reported to the SKBN CU that much of the Maize harvest has been lost in Blue Nile due to poor rainfall. When combined with the possibility that the recently displaced population has not been able to participate in the planting season, there remains serious concern for the coming harvest.

Staple commodities in markets continued the trend of decreasing availability. Prices vary throughout the region, but have generally reached untenable levels for the population.⁴ Without access to cash to encourage trade with the region, it is unlikely external food will enter local markets in sufficient quantities.

Due to insecurity, no equivalent SMART survey was performed in Blue Nile.

Health

South Kordofan

Reported cases of cholera or acute watery diarrhea have substantially decreased in the Western Jebels and Rashad. The total loss of life from these diseases is not yet known. More medications and medical trainings is needed to address the real possibility of a reemergence as the disease is still prevalent in nearby communities.⁵

The CU continues to work alongside civil authorities to improve the caliber of data collection and analysis. New data is now available on the region and more findings on epidemiological trends in South Kordofan will be available in the August report.

⁴ SKBN CU July 2017 field monitoring activities.

⁵ <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/cholera-spreading-fast-south-darfur-no-treatment-available>

Blue Nile

The fighting within the SPLA-N continues to prevent access to humanitarians and threatens the population's access to medical services external to Blue Nile. While no assessment was possible since the outbreak of conflict, health facilities in Blue Nile already faced substantially more challenges than in South Kordofan, and this is likely exacerbated by the needs of a displaced population. Desperately needed drugs are unlikely to be available in the region while malaria and water-borne disease is expected to increase during the rainy season. Persons remaining inside will have little ability to move to better equipped clinics in the Maban refugee camps due to conflict, and will have highly limited access to medical care inside Blue Nile.

Animal Health

South Kordofan

Conditions for this important livelihood are expected to improve as the rainy season replenished animal food sources. No major changes to this sector since the last report.

Blue Nile

As conflict has limited the movements of herders, large amounts of cattle are reported to have been moved from Blue Nile to nearby refugee camps in South Sudan. The market value of cattle has also been reported to have decreased in trade for staple commodities. This important aspect of food security has been diminished as there is now less supply of goods in the markets to trade animals for.

Water

South Kordofan

Sporadic rains have become a challenge, with long dry spells followed by intense rainfall. This has led to flooding and property damage in many communities, and threatens the viability of agriculture if more, long dry spells are experienced. Reports of houses being destroyed by heavy rains and floods came from three counties in July.

Access to boreholes or filters remains a significant issue. Even while water is now more plentiful in rivers and hand-dug wells, humans and animals commonly share the same stagnant water sources. Should cholera or other water-borne disease enter more communities, there will likely not be sufficient improved water sources to prevent spreading throughout communities. More clean water sources and animal specific reservoirs are needed to improve health conditions throughout the region.

Blue Nile

A period of over three weeks without rain was reported by SKBN CU monitors. This abnormal break in rainfall threatens water security and agriculture in much of Blue Nile. Improved water sources are desperately needed, as the previous war between SPLA-N and SAF destroyed much of the infrastructure in communities. Investment in this area is now more challenging as a new conflict has restricted access for potential humanitarian actors.

Education

South Kordofan

Schools are now out of session and most students will not be participating. Many students will use this time to prepare to take South Sudan examinations in hopes of attending education outside of South Kordofan. This will require children to leave their homes and find opportunities in South Sudan to take tests. With limited food and no viable transport options, this journey can be difficult and dangerous. Without access to an internationally recognized curriculum in their home area, educational opportunities remain very limited.

Blue Nile

Resources for education in Blue Nile are scarce, likely facing 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

As the civil and military leadership faces changes at both regional and local levels it is important to ensure the voices and needs of marginalized populations are not forgotten. Women continue to be under-represented in education and leadership, creating an environment with limited opportunities for development. Additionally, gender based violence is seldom reported and even more rarely punished.⁶ More focus is needed to address these issues at the local and regional level.

Inter-community conflict and cattle raiding continues to threaten the security of civilians living or cultivating near conflict lines. These events not only have the direct consequences of death, rape, and injury to members of the community, but also create a pervasive sense of fear for those trying to work and trade in these areas. As many communities are dangerously food insecure, women and children will have no option but to work in these dangerous locations, putting vulnerable populations at an elevated risk of violence. More investment is needed to bring these cross-line groups together to break the cycle of violence and revenge.

Blue Nile

After nearly three months of conflict an estimated 9,000 persons are newly displaced inside Blue Nile. These communities were already facing critical humanitarian needs, having already been displaced at least once since 2011, and are likely in need of shelter and food assistance. The CU has not been able to conduct an assessment due to insecurity and road conditions, but is planning to as soon as feasible.

The ongoing conflict within the SPLA-N has a direct impact on the civilian population, not only through displacement but also by exposing vulnerable populations to increased protection risks including rape,

⁶ "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/

abduction and early marriage, forced recruitment, and general fear. Families have been divided and members of communities are still unaccounted for. Free movement of people and their access to assistance is now severely compromised due to ongoing insecurity.

Recent reports from the fighting in June and July reveal looting and destruction of homes and humanitarian facilities during fighting between military factions. Safe and unhindered humanitarian access is essential for assessing and responding to the needs of the community in a timely and effective manner. For that, we urge both parties to exercise restraint and cease violence.

Annex I: Security Incidents June 2017

Date	County	Payam	Village	Incident	Impact
7 July 17	Lagawa	Tulishi	Rass Alfiel	Cattle Raiding	45 head of cattle reported stolen
14 July 17	Lagawa	Time	Kudada	Cattle Raiding	60 head of cattle reported stolen
16 July 17	Thobo	Thobo	Thobo	Cattle Raiding	60 head of cattle reported stolen

Note on conflict in Blue Nile: The SKBN CU is not in a position to report on the specific events and incidents on the ongoing conflict at this time. The fighting, which began on May 22nd, has disrupted normal monitoring activities. As soon as possible, more information will be provided.