

## SKBN CU Humanitarian Update

October 2017

### Overview

- Food security remains a major challenge due to the shortage of farmland caused by the military frontlines, and the terraced agriculture is now showing signs of soil deficiency and stunted crop growth.
- A significant number of farms (21) and pastoral land were reported destroyed by fire along frontlines in South Kordofan. Houses were also destroyed as a collateral damage. This also has a major impact on communities' hope for peaceful coexistence.
- New details from Kaw and Warni suggest the shrinking population faces a dire humanitarian situation. Few have planted and mostly live on wild roots.
- Schools have reopened in South Kordofan, not in Blue Nile, but lack of school fees, school material and teachers' incentives remain a major obstacle for a quality education.

### Food Security and Agriculture

#### South Kordofan

Food security improved in the Central Region (CR) and in the Western Jebels (WJ) in the last month as the harvest of near farms (*jibraka*) finished in most counties. While the 2017/2018 harvest has improved compared to the past years, it remains short of the ten-year average. Moreover, as agriculture land along frontlines remain inaccessible to the population, the overall potential output for the region has significantly reduced since pre-conflict levels. According to FSMU, rainfall measured by the Standardized Precipitation Index (SPI), was consistently below average throughout October. Nonetheless relative to last year's poor harvest, farmers anticipate a fair harvest that will likely improve food security in 2018.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to less than ideal climatic conditions, the rocky soil of the mountains is showing signs of depletion and stunting yields from the major cereal crops. As the population is already producing less than needed to sustain itself, it is unlikely that a rest season will be possible to help improve conditions.

Per FSMU, most markets in the CR functioned well. The number of cereals traders doubled from last month as the *jibraka* sorghum harvest hit the market.<sup>2</sup> CU monitors reported that new crops like chickpeas, sesame, dry okra and small quantity of sorghum were available in markets and often exchanged with other household needs (salt, soap, sugar and other). Sesame and okra from the far farms in WJ have also been harvested. Vegetables (tomatoes, refresh okra, eggplant and cucumber) were also largely available. Access to cross-line markets also improved as roads are more accessible with the beginning of the dry season and looting and ambushes against traders have reduced in the CR. However, prices of both crops and livestock remained high in some counties, especially in Heiban and Umdorein.

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<sup>1</sup> FSMU 'October 2017 growing season prospects brief' available at [https://fsmu.org/files/documents/2017/11/22/Growing\\_season\\_prospects\\_brief\\_October\\_2017.pdf](https://fsmu.org/files/documents/2017/11/22/Growing_season_prospects_brief_October_2017.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> FMSU 'October 2017 market monitoring brief', available at [https://fsmu.org/files/documents/2017/11/22/Market\\_monitoring\\_brief\\_October\\_2017.pdf](https://fsmu.org/files/documents/2017/11/22/Market_monitoring_brief_October_2017.pdf)

In the WJ, crops prices remained high as the harvest predictions are not as positive as in other areas. According to CU monitors, basic commodities remained expensive and poorly available in the local markets. Poor rainfall, especially in August, affected crops development. Lagawa county, which used to be a surplus area, is especially affected by poor rains, as well as parts of Dilling county. Crops like *lubia* (beans), okra, maize and pumpkin have generally failed as result of lack of rain. Moreover birds and weeds, such as the locally named *bouda*, that lives under the sorghum and causes it to dry up prematurely, affecting the plant's development. According to FSMU, even if rainfall was below average also throughout October, those who planted generally predicted a more bountiful harvest than last November's.<sup>3</sup> However, even with some relative improvement, local monitors continue to expect a significant hunger gap next year in the WJ.

In the whole region, the harvest of far farm is expected to start next month and to last until late January 2018, with the exception of Thobo (Boram) where it is expected to last until late February. However, some communities have started harvesting ahead of time as wildfire has already destroyed 21 farms (9 in CR and 12 in WJ) in the reporting period. According to local monitors, fire mostly occurred close to the frontlines and was man made. The burning of pastoral land will also impact on livestock survival hence ultimately affecting livelihood for communities living on both sides of the frontline.

Information from the isolated regions of Kaw-Nyaro (estimated 25,000 people) and Rashaad-Alabassya (estimated 25,000 people) remains largely unavailable. As already reported, according to qualitative interviews with resident in Kaw-Nyaro, the small agriculture which is possible due to security reasons does not provide enough food for the population. People live on wild fruits, and severe food insecurity has already forced a significant number of population to leave. There were reports of hunger related deaths and malnutrition is reportedly endemic.

### Blue Nile

Conflict and flooding in Blue Nile continue to affect food security. Internal conflict since May has significantly affected people's ability to plant and overall access to near and far farms, though it remains unclear how much agriculture was lost due to the limited access to the areas in the past months. According to FSMU, most households did not plant crops this growing season. Restricted cultivation and below average rainfall hindered crop development, so a poor far farm harvest is predicted offering little respite from the lean season.<sup>4</sup> In addition, severe flooding since August has damaged planted fields in Yabus and Chali, further reducing the prospect of the 2017/2018 harvest. By September 2017, all crops (sorghum, cassava and sweet potatoes) along the Yabus rivers were destroyed.

Better access during the month of October allowed CU monitors to reach Wadaka, an area significantly affected by the internal conflict. There the population is mostly locally displaced, and severe levels of food insecurity were observed. The lack of food in the area in the past months has forced the population to survive on roots and to move in search of food. 200 individuals have reportedly left to the Maban refugee camp in Doro between 23-25 October 2017 due to hunger. Food and NFIs assistance to these communities is urgently needed in order to prevent hunger and further displacements.

All markets were partially functioning in October in Blue Nile but availability of food was very low due to insecurity and inaccessibility of the roads. Markets with access to Ethiopia were better supplied and new products such as sesame, groundnuts, okra, and beans (*Lobia*) were seen. While prices have generally

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<sup>3</sup> FSMU 'October 2017 growing season prospects brief' available at [https://fsmu.org/files/documents/2017/11/22/Growing\\_season\\_prospects\\_brief\\_October\\_2017.pdf](https://fsmu.org/files/documents/2017/11/22/Growing_season_prospects_brief_October_2017.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

decreased throughout the region since last month, they remain at untenable levels for the population.<sup>5</sup> Wadaka payam has especially suffered and witnessed a high increase of the commodities price, due to the isolation during the conflict until September. According to FMSU market monitoring, in Wadaka the average price for sorghum was declining but was still three times higher than in Yabus.<sup>6</sup> CU monitors confirmed that a malwa (3Kg) of sorghum was sold at 500 South Sudanese Pounds (SSP) in Wadaka in October (almost 3 USD), while it was 1,250 in September, 300 SSP in Chali (2.5 USD), and 30 Birr in Yabus and Moguf (a little over 1 USD). Without access to more cash to encourage trade within the region it is unlikely external food will enter local markets in sufficient quantities.

The poor prospect of the harvest and threat posed by the possible resumption of the conflict are exacerbating an already poor food security situation in the area. According to FSMU July reports, 39% of the population was severely food insecure and 11% at the highest level of food insecurity (6 out of 6 on the Household Hunger Scale). Those percentages are expected to rise and for a larger part of the population in the coming months.

## **Health and Nutrition**

### South Kordofan

No update reported on major disease outbreak from the Secretariat of Health but cases of malaria continue to affect adults and children, consistent with seasonal norms. Similar to September, CU Monitors reported that local clinics were overwhelmed by cases of malaria in all the accessible locations and drugs were largely depleted.

The CU wishes to raise attention to the overall weakness of the health system in the area, beyond the supply of drugs. Access to trained medical staff is highly limited for most of the population and more medical capacity is sorely needed to address the needs of nearly a million people in the areas.

Immediate and chronic malnutrition remains a major challenge in South Kordofan remains a serious problem. As previously reported, global malnutrition and severe malnutrition based on height for weight were 23.9% and 8.4% in the Central Region and slightly worse in the Western Jebels at 29.2% and 9.3% respectively.<sup>7</sup>

### Blue Nile

While the overall access to health care remains extremely limited in Blue Nile, the provision of health services has slightly improved in Yabus area in the last month thanks to better security and accessibility of roads. The Koma Ganza areas on the southern bank of Yabus river however remained inaccessible due to the high level of the waters, and threats of insecurity continue to limit provision of services in Wadaka and Chali payams. Moreover, due to flooding, the population's access to the better equipped clinics and the hospital in the Maban refugee camps remains largely inhibited.

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<sup>5</sup> SKBN CU September 2017 field monitoring activities

<sup>6</sup> FMSU 'October 2017 market monitoring brief', available at

[https://fsmu.org/files/documents/2017/11/22/Market\\_monitoring\\_brief\\_October\\_2017.pdf](https://fsmu.org/files/documents/2017/11/22/Market_monitoring_brief_October_2017.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> SKBN CU SMART Survey Report

Reports of Acute Watery Diarrhoea just north of the SPLA-N and Government of Sudan frontline increase concerns of the illness spreading into the region. This is an immediate concern as access to health care in Blue Nile is highly limited and few clinics have the needed drugs to deal with such an outbreak.

## **Animal Health**

### South Kordofan

No new report from the Secretariat of Animal Health on major disease outbreak this month. Last month's livestock disease outbreak reported in Tutubo village in Umdorein County, that killed more than 600 heads of the animal, appears to have been contained and no further death of animals was reported.

In the WJ, hooves infection among goats was reported, as well an 'undiagnosed disease among cows that causes high fever, bending while walking and white rash on the skin'.

Supplies of veterinary vaccines, drugs and personnel is desperately needed in these areas, also to avoid the spread of diseases in Sudan and neighbouring countries.

### Blue Nile

Information on this sector is scarce, despite its great cultural and economic importance for the communities. Recent reports from local monitors indicate that a large number of livestock was lost between June and October due to the lack of any veterinary assistance. Locally reported, unverified statistics suggest that losses amounted to the 15% of animals in Wadaka, 10% in Yabus and 5% in Chali Alfil. The most common diseases reported are diarrhea, skin diseases, swelling feet, nose and eye bleeding, cough, and tsetse fly.

## **Water**

### South Kordofan

As the dry season has just begun, water was still largely available in the area for both human and animal consumption. Even if water in streams has started to dry up, it was still available in the shallow hand dug wells.

Despite the availability of water, the overall access to clean water remains a significant issue. In WJ drinking water for both animals and human was especially scarce, as most of the bore holes are broken and lacking of spare parts. Water-borne illness still threatens a community without sufficient access to healthcare. More boreholes or treated water distribution centers are badly needed.

### Blue Nile

Similar to SK, availability of water has improved in the last month, especially in the usual dry areas of Wadaka, though overall access to clean water remains poor.

As reported, heavy rains started in August and that continued until the end of the month causing severe flooding that led to further displacement in the Yabus area and loss of crops. With thousands displaced and no access for goods and humanitarian relief, people have suffered from contaminated water, lack of shelter from rains, and an increased risk of illness.

## **Education**

### South Kordofan

All schools have reopened after the break. However the Secretariat of Education has set school fees of 2500 SSP per child per year. This amount is unattainable for most of the families and has forced many children stay at home or look after the animals instead.

Education remains the top priority for the region, and a significant reason for families and unaccompanied children to displace out of the area or children to join military forces. Quality education however is severely affected by the lack of school material. Teacher training opportunities are rare and generally under-resourced, meaning the months away from classes could not be used to build capacity in most of the region. Investment in education is badly needed. There are approximately 255,000 school age children in the region and very little access to trained teachers or well-equipped schools.<sup>8</sup>

### Blue Nile

Education in the areas is severely compromised due to insecurity, lack of resources and the endurance of the humanitarian crisis. The school year has not started at the scheduled beginning of October 2017 due to the conflict. Overall, the 37 bush primary schools in the area lack of education material and qualified teachers. Education opportunities for the children in the area are desperately needed, more so in the current situation where the conflict has the potential to affect boys of potential military stature.

## **Protection and security situation update**

### South Kordofan

The security situation in the state has been relatively stable on the ground throughout this reporting period, However, a series of isolated incidents, especially across the frontlines, have caused fear among the population and undermined daily activities, as well as damaging relations between crossline communities. Cross-line activities remain flash points for violence, dedicated effort is needed to bring communities together. The list of incidents occurred in October is below:

- 10 October, long range missile fired from Dilling into Hejerat village (Sillara payam), no casualties.
- 13 October, wildfires, allegedly set in Dalami county by Government forces or affiliated militias, destroyed partially 9 farms, 4 granaries in Tunguli, 13 houses in Sabat and 8 houses in Umheitan payams. As reported, the bushfire is not only destroying crops but pasture for the livestock.
- 17 October, allegedly SAF soldiers from Dilling town set fire on 12 farms in Nitil village South-East of Sillara Payam (names of farms owners were reported).
- 22 October, fire was set by allegedly Government troops from Dilling towards Deleba village of Kabella payam in Habila county, that burnt an estimated 5km square of grazing land and forest of gum Arabic and one plot of crops. The fire also burned down a house with all HH properties as well as 2 farms.

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<sup>8</sup> Based on an approximately 27% of population, ages 6 to 17.

- 22 October, 2 motorbikes were taken from cross-line traders at Warl stream and goods were looted, implying a loss of around 100,000 SDG. That is a major setback for trading options in the area.

Note, the SKBN CU is reporting according the accounts received. No comprehensive verification of perpetrators or damages has been possible

### Blue Nile

The internal SPLA-N conflict in Blue Nile ceased in October and relatively free movement of civilians and goods was observed within the area, also thanks to the accessibility of the roads at the end of the rainy season. However tension remains high as the two SPLA-N factions maintain different camps and have shown no sign of reconciliation.

Urgent neutral efforts are needed to bring an end to this conflict and to allow for the safe access of humanitarian assistance to all areas and for the reconciliation of the communities. The conflict has already left a long-term effect in the area, as it has undermined planting. That will result in even more severe food insecurity in the coming months.

The risk of the resumption of insecurity poses also uncertainty on the civilians while it affects long-term planning for humanitarian partners. Given the fragility of the situation, a resumption of conflict will have a devastating effect on the communities and will cause massive displacement to the refugee camps if not dealt with urgency.