

SKBN CU Humanitarian Update

September 2017

Overview

- Blue Nile continues to face a dire humanitarian situation with thousands displaced by violence and flooding. Initial estimates put the number of internally displaced around 27,000, over a third of the population.
- Heavy rains and displacement threatens the 2018 harvest in Blue Nile, creating a very poor food security outlook.
- Active fighting and human rights concerns continue in and around Blue Nile, more assistance is badly needed to address the ongoing conflict.
- New details from Kaw and Warni suggest the shrinking population faces a dire humanitarian situation.

Food Security and Agriculture

South Kordofan

Overall food security improved throughout the SPLA-N controlled Central Region and Western Jebels as the early harvest continued. As previously reported, the 2017/2018 harvest will likely improve over the last year's for these areas, though is expected to fall short of the ten-year average. Rainfall was sufficient but sporadic during the growing season, with periods of abnormally low rainfall and episodes of flooding which damaged some crops.

As there is no cease-fire or peace agreement substantial portions of agriculture along frontlines remain inaccessible to the population. This has depressed agricultural output for many communities throughout the central and western regions, reducing overall potential output for the region. The impact of this will be felt throughout 2018. This conflict related food insecurity was most pronounced in Heiban county, which faced the heaviest fighting and hosts the greatest number of displaced persons. Severe food insecurity was 27% in this county, per the latest FSMU report.¹

The SKBN CU was able to conduct a series of key informant interviews with residents of Warni, Kaw, Fungor, and Nyaro payams to provide an overview of the humanitarian situation in this difficult to reach area. This region, often referred to as Kaw-Warni has been completely isolated by conflict. Cut off from refugee camps in South Sudan, lacking the ability to cross into Government of Sudan areas, and unable to travel to any other SPLA-N region, little is known of this region but the situation is fear to be among the worst in Sudan and South Sudan.

The population inside is now estimated to be less than 25,000 people. This is a reduction of more than half since the outbreak of the conflict. This group of people have largely lost access to farmland after the outbreak of the conflict in 2011 and live on swampy land, generally unusable for agriculture. The small

¹ FSMU July/August 2017 Food Security Brief

agriculture which is possible typically only provides enough food to last until late March of each year. This results in a six-month gap between food stores depleting and the following harvest.

With few coping strategies available people are forced to either subsist on wild foods like leaves and roots of trees, or risk crossing multiple frontlines to reach assistance. There were reports of hunger related deaths and malnutrition is reportedly endemic.

Blue Nile

Blue Nile remains in a crisis with a substantial portion of the population displaced by conflict. A recent assessment by the CU indicated there were at least 27,000 individuals displaced as during September. This correlates closely with the previous assessment by FSMU showing 39% of the population severely food insecure. This group of people are facing a dire situation. Many have completely lost access to agriculture. With 11% of the population at the highest level of food insecurity (6 out of 6 on the Household Hunger Scale), urgent help is needed.

As crossing to refugee camps remains very dangerous, displaced people in need of assistance face a challenging choice to risk their lives to cross to the refugee camps of South Sudan. Agreements between warring parties to end the conflict are desperately needed to bring aid to a population in dire need.

It remains unclear exactly how much agriculture was lost to conflict or flooding, and staple prices remain high as commodities in markets are still in short supply. Prices vary throughout the region, but have generally reached untenable levels for the population.² Without access to cash to encourage trade within the region it is unlikely external food will enter local markets in sufficient quantities.

Health and Nutrition

South Kordofan

Consistent with seasonal norms, cases of malaria appear to have substantially increased in September. Local clinics reported being overwhelmed by cases of malaria in all locations the CU was able to assess. Access to trained medical staff and appropriate drugs is highly limited for most of the population, and currently there are not adequate statistics on specific needs of the population. More medical capacity is sorely needed to address the needs of nearly a million people in SPLM/A-N areas of South Kordofan.

Cases of acute watery diarrhea, caused by the Vibrio Cholera bacteria, continue to kill people throughout the southern portion of Sudan.³ This presents a particularly concerning threat to the Western Region, where a recent survey showed access to medical care as practically nonexistent.

Immediate and chronic malnutrition is 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.⁴

² SKBN CU August 2017 field monitoring activities

³ <http://sudantribune.com/spip.php?article63762>

⁴ SKBN CU SMART Survey Report

Blue Nile

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.

Health facilities in Blue Nile already faced many challenges to serving the population, and this is likely exacerbated by the needs of a newly displaced population as a result of the conflict. The fighting within the SPLA-N continues to inhibit access to humanitarians and threatens the population's access to medical services external to Blue Nile. People 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. Desperately needed drugs are unlikely to be available in the region while malaria and water-borne disease are expected to increase during the rainy season.

Children are also at risk of treatable diseases, with very low immunization rates and poor access to primary health care in both the Central Region and Western Jebels. Acute watery diarrhoea, malaria, skin and eye infections were the main identified health risks to children in a recent SKBN CU rapid assessment.

Animal Health

South Kordofan

The local Secretariat of Animal Health continues to report hundreds of cases of the dangerous disease sheeppox. This disease is often fatal and can spread quickly. Without access to vaccines or veterinarian care this could spread and affect thousands of animals.

Blue Nile

Little is known about this sector. The local Secretariat of Animal Health has not been functioning since the conflict broke out. The CU has received reports of thousands of livestock killed or stolen in the conflict, but without full access to the region it has been impossible to fully assess the impact of the conflict on this important livelihood.

Water

South Kordofan

Rains continued into September roughly consistently with seasonal norms, though access to clean water remains a significant issue. Water-borne illness still threatens a community without sufficient access to healthcare. More boreholes or treated water distribution centers are badly needed.

Blue Nile

Heavy rains and severe flooding exacerbated the already challenging displacement situation in Blue Nile. With thousands displaced and no access for humanitarian relief, people have suffered from contaminated water, lack of shelter from rains, and an increased risk of illness. The main market in the region was flooded, causing an unknown amount of property damage.

Improved water sources are desperately needed for the same reasons as stated for South Kordofan. Investment in this area is now more challenging as a new conflict has restricted access for potential humanitarian actors.

Education

South Kordofan

Schools have been out of session and little has changed in the last month. 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 children⁵ in the region and very little access to trained teachers or well-equipped schools.

Blue Nile

Resources for education in Blue Nile are 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 created. There are currently no education opportunities offered to provide these children an important alternative, support to this sector is desperately needed.

Protection and security situation update

South Kordofan

September saw relative calm and minimal insecurity along front lines. This is progress which needs to be built upon to address cycles of violence and revenge between communities. Isolated incidents of killing still occurred, and cross line activities remain flashpoints for violence. Dedicated effort is needed to bring communities together.

There is still no peace deal or cease-fire which spans the growing season, meaning farming presents a serious risk of loss for potential farmers. A large amount of agricultural land is still not accessible, and reports of households attempting to prepare their traditional farmland dangerously close to frontlines are common.

Blue Nile

Conflict in Blue Nile continued into September, further exacerbating an already crisis level humanitarian situation. Urgent action is needed to bring an end to this conflict and allow the population to resume agriculture or access humanitarian assistance. With an estimated 27,000 currently displaced and an unknown amount of damage to homes and property, the situation for Blue Nile is likely to get worse.

The CU has received numerous reports of destroyed homes, burnt or looted shops, theft of livestock, and destruction of farmland. Alleged human rights violations have also occurred during the fighting. It is not possible with current resources to fully assess the impact of this violence. The CU has received further

⁵ Based on an approximately 27% of population, ages 6 to 17.

reports of tribal violence against person moving from Blue Nile to refugee camps in South Sudan. Further assistance is desperately needed to bring an end to this cycle of violence.