

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE – May 2016

South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, Sudan

Produced by the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit

Further incursion of SAF troops under the cover of significant aerial bombings while productive areas remain inaccessible to civilians for land preparation. Hungry season settles in as household food stocks decline under the pressure of low 2015-6 production, raiding and sharing with IDPs

Highlights:

- Aerial bombings continued in Blue Nile and Nuba Mountains allowing for a build-up of additional ground troops. 185 bombs fell during the period, some targeting civilian infrastructure such as schools and villages;
- As predicted, with poor harvests from the 2015-2016 season, household food stocks are diminishing earlier than normal whilst sorghum prices remain significantly higher than same time last year and February levels;
- There is continued concern regarding civilian access to the large scale agricultural holdings adjacent to Mardess, Al Lazrak and Umserdiba presently occupied by SAF, which will inevitably affect future food security;
- As the rains have begun, already there is concern about erratic rain patterns as a La Nina weather pattern follows El Nino. Villages report losing their first sorghum crop as seedlings dried out;
- Cattle raiding continues affecting an important source of livelihood. However, local conflict resolution initiatives are proving successful on a small scale.

Southern Kordofan

In SK, people living in Heiban and Umdorain were victims of large scale ground fighting, aerial bombardment, and long range shelling using heavy artillery. In total, CU monitors reported that 97 bombs were dropped in Heiban, 18 in Umdorain in May, giving the impression that aerial bombing facilitated the build-up of SAF troops in the Two Areas. SAF positions in Al Lazrak and Umserdiba, were reinforced during this period. Concern were raised by the NHRMO monitors about the targeting of civilian areas.

Two bombings received media coverage including the bombing in Heiban on May 1st which claimed the lives of 6 children¹ and the bombing of a primary school which injured one Kenyan nursery school teacher². Habila County saw shelling from Dilling town to Shingle and Delaiba villages. Fortunately this shelling did not result in any casualties. This has kept the pressure on host communities where IDPs are harbouring including significant populations of IDPs in Umdorain (34,991), Heiban (12,480) and in Dellami (17,520) Counties as reported by FSMU.

After ground offensives between March and June, SAF maintains control of areas adjacent to the most productive agriculture schemes in the Nuba Mountains including in key areas of Delami (Mardess),

¹ Nuba Mountains/Southern Kordofan Region, National Human Rights Monitors Organisation, Monthly Report May 2016

² <http://nubareports.org/primary-school-bombed-in-latest-string-of-civilian-attacks/>

Heiban (Al Lazrack) and in Umdorain County (Umserdiba) captured during the March 2016 offensives. These areas are the main sources of the sorghum and sesame for the region. As the occupation and related insecurity persists, it is clear civilians in these areas will have limited access to their farmland to cultivate this year due to insecurity. These areas are now entrenched as the new frontline, making them targeted areas for aerial bombardment and long range shelling. While the short term negative impacts on food security in those areas has already been reported on, the medium term and longer term impacts are becoming imminent and worrying. Meanwhile, FSMU reports that food prices are far above February levels, as well as this time last year. The price of a malwa of sorghum in in SK have risen to as high as 26 SSP in Heiban County compared to 15 SSP in February.

There are concerns about early season rain patterns in the two areas. The rains started on time in early May, but have not been substantial. CU monitors report that due to the weak start of the rainy season combined with the insecurity, it is unlikely that nearly 65,000 IDPs from SK will return to their land and plant their farms.

FSMU notes that a combination of cattle raiding and livestock disease in the Western Region of SK has eroded the productive asset base of households, confirming earlier reports by CU and NHRMO monitors in April. Income and food from livestock activities is thus declining. There have been reports of populations from Western Jebel moving to SAF controlled areas of Al Sunut County in order to find food. The CU is attempting to ascertain exact numbers. CU monitors report a further raiding of 414 heads of cattle and 9 goats in Western Region, in May. Three consecutive raids of 114, 89 and 68 heads were purportedly carried out by armed militias from Umdehelibin (Talodi County). In the first two raids, in Umdordu Payam (Heiban County) and Doruin Payam (Thobo County), two people were killed trying to protect their cattle.

There were however, some positive results of local peace building activities on cattle raiding. According to the local administration, in three different initiatives by local peace committees, hundreds of cattle were returned by Missirya to Nuba communities and on one occasion Nuba communities returned to communities in non SPLM-N controlled areas after retaliatory raids by local Nuba communities in Lagawa county. The CU recommends continued support to any effort to local conflict resolution between tribes, particularly those that will have food security and other humanitarian consequences.

The SPLM-N controlled enclaves of Kau-Nyaro-Warni, Albasiya (New Tagali) and Rashad Counties are still completely cut off from communication to the outside world. Concerns remain about severe food insecurity, access to water and health services in those areas. The CU is making efforts to gather more information from those key locations through CU monitor missions. New information coming out of New Tagali and Rashad suggests that 62 households were displaced from El Moreib to Nyangovia in March 2016 as a result of the increased fighting in the region. An additional 84 households from Rashad County, hosted in New Tagali County moved from Shamshaka to Alhijair and from Alsaraf to Tola. It appears that the planting season has started and that the general impression is that the rainy season started well there.

Across the boarder

According to UNHCR's Operational update³, UNHCR reported 794 new arrivals to the Yida refugee camp in the last two weeks of May. Refugees cited hunger, aerial bombing and ground attacks as their

³South Sudan UNHCR Operational UPDATE 10/2016, May 2016

reasons for leaving Nuba. UNHCR reported that 90 percent of the arrivals were women and children coming from Thobo, Heiban and Umdorain Counties. By 31 May 2016, UNHCR reported 111,813 refugees from Nuba in Yida (70,876) and Adjoung Thok (40,937).

Blue Nile

In Tadamon and Kurmuk Counties of Blue Nile, SAF and SPLM-N forces pursued fighting as the rainy season begins. Continued SAF aerial bombardment allowed for further build-up of troops. In Blue Nile, SAF Rapid Support Forces, including multiple reports of Janjawid-like troops on horseback, continued fighting near Damazin, the state capital. More SAF and SPLM-N troops amassed in Kurmuk, where fighting will not only increase protection risks but also disrupt land preparation and planting as the rainy season begins. CU monitors reported 70 bombs in 48 separate incidents mostly in Wadaka payam, leading to the displacement of an additional 325 people into Yabus payam, Kurmuk. Troop movements have significantly increased insecurity for IDPs in Blue Nile during the rainy season. SAF positions in Bout, Tadamon County, BN were significantly reinforced during this period. Concern were raised by the NHRMO monitors about the targeting of civilian areas.

A recent UNHCR Report ⁴suggests that new refugees influxes are not expected from Blue Nile in 2016, mostly because remaining potential refugees could be cut off. The report notes that recent refugees from Blue Nile are originating from Kurmuk and Baw in the Ingessana Mountains, the latter a new front of fighting in previous months.⁵

Rainfall levels were reported to be moderate in southern areas of Blue Nile by CU monitors. In their May Bulletin, FSMU reports that early failure of rains in Blue Nile has reduced the chance of success of early planting and that fewer households are engaging in agricultural activities due to increased insecurity.⁶ Other experts report an increased risk of a La Nina weather event following last year's El Nino-induced drought in East Africa.⁷ Meanwhile, FSMU reports that food prices are far above February levels. The price of a malwa of sorghum in Wadaka payam of Blue Nile has soared to 43 SSP compared to 15 SSP in February.

FSMU reported that while livestock disease has slightly decreased, diarrhea leading to weight loss and death is affecting close to one third of livestock. Approximately 600 herders from Wadaka payam left Kurmuk county in search of grazing for their livestock, leading to the spread of disease to Chali where nearly half of the goats are affected according to FSMU. FSMU also reports that diarrhea and respiratory symptoms are affecting half of the poultry in Wadaka and that this is spreading to Yabus as well, where 20% of chickens are affected.

Across the border

According to UNHCR's Operational update⁸a refugee and two local South Sudanese sustained fatal injuries during an incident in the Doro refugee camp on May 30th. The resulting tension caused mass

⁴ Update on New Arrivals, Health and Related Interventions in Maban, Upper Nile, June 2016

⁵ According to CU Monitors, at the end of May, SAF troops attacked SPLA-N in Torda, Ingassana mountains, 30 kilometres south of Damazin. Others troops arrived in Damazin and a second group arrived in Sinnaron their way to Damazin. The aim of this preparation was another attack against SPLA-N in the southern part of Kurmuk County.

⁶ FSMU, May 2016 Monthly Update

⁷ <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-05-24/farewell-el-nino-it-s-la-nina-s-turn-to-cause-trouble-now>

⁸South Sudan UNHCR Operational UPDATE 10/2016, May 2016

displacement in the Camp and UNHCR reports that tensions had been building over accusations of cattle rustling.