

# SKBN Coordination Unit

## Humanitarian Update



COVID-19: A Hand Washing Unit and an Isolation Centre - South Kordofan

April 2020

## FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE

*Poor food security exacerbated by COVID-19 containment measures including closure of cross-line markets*

### Blue Nile

Clearing and preparation of farms for the next planting season is ongoing across all localities of Blue Nile, in response to early food shortages. The food shortages are due to a poor harvest as a result of previous rains, floods, as well as the closure of cross-line markets to minimize the spread of COVID-19. As a result of a poor harvest, farmers were not able to get seeds to plant.

Most households across Blue Nile are now food insecure with no food stocks left. In Komo Ganza, for example, over 90% of households depended on markets as a source of food, though only around 5% of them can afford to buy from the market. As a result, the majority are engaged in alternative activities. For example, communities in Damo and Gondolo are trading charcoal, poles and grass as a source of income. In Deran, Hillat Jadid, Ishkab, Madid and Tukabele, communities collected honey for sale and exchanging some for food. Wild roots locally known as amjoko are also an alternative source of food for this community.

Food insecurity is more severe in Balilla Dawala in Wadaka payam, where only 5 to 8% of households had food stocks in April. The community solely depends on gold mining in exchange for food and income, but gold mining stopped due to low demand following the closure of the border with Ethiopia as well as water shortage used in the mines. It is worth noting that food rations from refugee camps served as a backup, but this will not provide help for very long.

Meanwhile, this year food aid distribution targeted only **8,362** households, which unfortunately does not cover the entire region. Pre-positioning of food is ongoing in Chali, while in Yabus and Komo Ganza it will take place at the beginning of May.

In response to food insecurity, the government formed a special Task Force comprising medical professionals, security apparatus, food security experts that was tasked with mainstreaming food security in COVID-19 response in the region.

### South Kordofan

Clearing in both traditional and mechanized farms is ongoing. Returnees as well as host communities are struggling to settle while at the same time preparing land for the next planting. Lack of garden tools and seeds is reported. Cross-line markets are closed to contain COVID-19, so it is difficult to secure parts for mechanized schemes.

The food security situation remains poor among the entire population due to previous poor crop production, heavy rain and floods that damaged crops. Pests and birds also worsened crop production. In addition, a high influx of returnees (**49,561 in total, of which 22,049 are male and 27,512 are female**) in March from government-controlled areas and camps in South Sudan has exacerbated food insecurity. As a result, the population is in dire need of humanitarian aid.

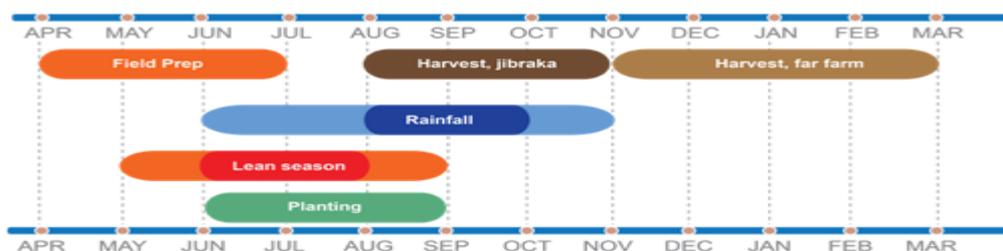
### Highlights:

COVID-19: Authorities increase preparedness and response.

COVID-19 measures driving returnees and movement of people

Market prices for staple items continue to rise

Continued increase in people on the move puts pressure on scarce resources



Seasonal calendar for South Kordofan and Blue Nile

### Western Jebel

As a result of a poor harvest, 80% households are depending on markets as a source of food resulting into increase in the sale of livestock and labor as a source of income to buy food. However, due to the closure of cross-line markets, it is difficult for households to access labor and better prices for their livestock. All markets closed, and this has significantly affected those families that entirely depended on markets as a source of food.

## Market Functionality

- Sorghum prices increased earlier than normal in the monitored areas as the lean season begins.
- Across the monitored areas, prices of imported goods including sugar, salt, cooking oil, and soap are increasing due to disruptions in trade.
- Rising fuel prices are compounded by the fuel shortage and border closings with Ethiopia and South Sudan.

### Blue Nile

Market functionality across the four main cross-line markets was poor due to containment measures of COVID-19. Food prices rose as prices for some local items fell. For instance, in Moguf and Yabus Bala, a price of a malwa of sorghum increased from 200 (Ethiopian Birr) ETB in March to 240 ETB in April. At times, it was not available, which led to competition among the population. In Chali, a malwa of sorghum rose from 800 SSP in March to 1200 SSP in April. In contrast bean prices in Mayak fell from 130 ETB in March to 100 ETB in April.

Fuel prices were high in Mayak and Balila, a litre rose from 1,000 SSP in March to 7,000 SSP in April.

### South Kordofan

The presence of many markets before COVID-19 containment measures contributed to depletion of the little food available (being sold in cross-line markets). Returnees and the vulnerable host communities are in dire need of immediate food support. Sorghum prices rose – the produce has been absent from markets. In Heiban, groundnuts rose from 300 SSP in March to 350 SSP in April. The price of fuel increased by 62% per cent per a liter across the region, indicating that the markets are feeling the impact of the fuel shortage in Sudan.

### Western Jebel

Prices of basic commodities in the region have increased. For instance, petrol rose to 300 SDG in April from 250 SDG in March petrol has generally not been available in the market. Sorghum rose from 130 SDG in March to 150 SDG in April, sesame from 190 SDG in March to 250 SDG in April, sugar rose from 50 SDG to 60 SDG in April, ground nuts from 80SDG to 120SDG and beans from 180 SDG in March to 300 SDG in April. An increase in bean prices is associated with an increase in the percentage of households that are food-insecure.

## COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

### *Authorities increase COVID-19 preparedness and response*

So far, the region has not confirmed any COVID-19 cases, but the authorities are stepping up prevention and preparedness measures. Schools have been closed and over 70,000 learners have been affected as a result. Markets, including cross-line markets, were also closed in efforts to mitigate the spread of the pandemic, which has affected the already severely food insecure households that depended on markets as a source of food. Cross-border and cross-line points of entry are still open, but with strict supervision in place. Mosques and churches have also closed. Check points have been established in: Dilling, Dellami, Heiban, Jau, Thobo and Western Kadguli.

A three-week campaign and community engagement on risk communication is on-going in South Kordofan with the exception of the most isolated areas of Kau Nyaro/Warni. However, it is worth to note that, the SoH has included them in the response plan, and a team comprising people from different counties has been mobilised and will be dispatched there soon.

On the other hand, more than 120 Hakima medical students have undergone a Rapid Response Training on COVID-19 to scale up preparedness across localities of South Kordofan and Western Jebels. In addition, 40 medical staff were trained in Western Jebels and Hand Washing Stations have been established at each points of entry: Abujunuk, Fragile, Hajarjawad, Nitile, Tarein and Umjimina.

The SoH also managed to create Isolation Centers in: a) Alginizia in Umdorein b) Dere, and Kubla in Delami c) Jau, Missiriya and Tiess in Thobo and d) Nyakima and Tembera in Heiban Counties. Plans for expansion across the whole region are under way. SoH in collaboration with local authorities is also mobilizing food distribution for the Isolation Centres that have been established.

Meanwhile in Blue Nile, local authorities are mainstreaming food security in COVID-19 preparedness. A COVID/Food Security committee has been formed comprising of SoH, SoAgric, SoFinance and Security. The first campaign was conducted in Abengro, Belatum and Moguf the next will take place in Ishkab and Takabele in Komo Ganza. To minimise on big gatherings, the committee will only engage with community-based networks, administrators, Omdas, Sheiks, Youth and Women as risk communication channels. The CU has provided the committee with a vehicle which is being used to scale up awareness in Chali and Wadaka payams.

Also, a COVID/WASH committee has been set up in coordination with SoH in Blue Nile. The COVID/WASH committee comprises 4 members from each village who are tasked with disseminating information in local languages on COVID-19, Water and Sanitation across communities.

## HEALTH AND NUTRITION

### *Inadequate drug supply to meet increased demand*

#### **Blue Nile**

Based on reports from SoH and the Humanitarian Monitoring Team (HMT), cough, skin rash, fever and acute watery diarrhea as well as Leprosy and river blindness were recorded. As previously reported health centers have registered lack of drugs due to increased demand. Acute watery diarrhea is an indicator of the poor water and sanitation situation in Blue Nile. Health care in Blue Nile is highly limited and few clinics have required drugs to deal with medical cases.

#### **South Kordofan**

The Secretariat reports have suggested that health facilities lack drugs as a result of a high influx of returnees and people from government-controlled areas reportedly seeking medical services in the region. As a result, the facilities are overwhelmed with numbers and run out of drugs and unable to meet the increasing demand, hence there is an urgent need for drugs and medical supplies.

#### **Western Jebel**

Malaria, skin infection and pneumonia were reported, which poses a major concern in the region, as access to medical care is limited. Health authorities have registered no drug supply for the last 3 months.

## WASH

### *Unsafe drinking water for thousands*

#### **Blue Nile**

The prevalence of poor sanitation and hygiene practices is worrisome. Over 80% of households in Blue Nile region have no latrines and practice open defecation, which poses a threat to the community. Also, with many households continuing to depend only on unsafe surfaces of water for drinking, cases of diarrhea continue to be reported. Access to safe drinking water remains limited across the region. Humans and animals continue to share water sources, putting people at risk of contracting waterborne diseases.

#### **South Kordofan**

Based on field reports from HMT staff, water scarcity was reported in all counties across South Kordofan. Hand-dug wells that support livestock have dried up forcing animals to share water sources with humans, which poses a threat of waterborne diseases to the population. There is urgent need for repairs of hand pumps and drilling of more boreholes.

#### **Western Jebel**

Lack of drinking water for both livestock and humans. About 500 households are sharing a single borehole. There is need to drill more boreholes in the area to minimize on long queues and also repairs of broken boreholes are also needed.

## EDUCATION

### *COVID-19 containment measures affect learners*

Due to COVID-19 preparedness and response measures, all schools have been closed which has affected over 70,000 learners across the Two Areas. However, the huge gaps in this sector are still existent: scholastic materials, trained teachers, school feeding and teacher incentives. Communities struggle to keep schools running. Intervention is highly required.

## ANIMAL HEALTH

### *Limited access to drugs affects livestock keeping*

#### **Blue Nile**

Veterinary programming remains a challenge to livestock. Cough and diarrhea were recorded, this has affected their health hence poor meat and milk production. Tse tse fly has also been reportedly a widespread problem beyond Komo Ganza.

#### **South Kordofan**

Livestock sector that contributed to food security basket has not been supported since the start of the year. The secretariat has registered lack of drugs and vaccine. Livestock owners relied on cross-line markets as a source of drugs, however, with COVID-19 outbreak, all cross-line markets have been closed down and this has affected livestock keeping. Cattle are an important source of income for the families. Loss of this asset, coupled with poor harvests, has impacted negatively on the food security.

#### **Western Jebel**

Lack of pasture and drinking water for livestock remains a challenge. Animals walk long distances in search of drinking water which affects their health. Lack of veterinary intervention and pasture has also been reported across the region.

## PROTECTION, ACCESS AND SECURITY

### *Continued increase of movement into the Two Areas*

#### **Blue Nile**

April 09: Three miners were reportedly captured by Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and their whereabouts are still unknown. This is likely to affect the ongoing peace negotiations in Juba.

April 16: It was reported that SAF killed a 22-year-old boy in Qolnugura, Chali Payam.

A high migration to SPLMN-controlled areas was registered in April. **2,500** individuals were recorded by the administration in Chali payam and **500** in Wadaka payam. However, reports indicate that these returnees commute regularly between Blue Nile and refugee camps in Maban during the rainy season for cultivation purposes. But with COVID-19 containment measures in place, this movement is likely to be affected.

#### **South Kordofan**

**49,561** people who returned in January to March are in need of non-food items, especially emergency shelters, because grass for construction has been destroyed by bush fires and what is available costs 700 SSP per bundle, a fee high for a returnee. As such, it has been reported that most of the returnees are living with their relatives leading to overcrowding and are prone to diseases.

15 April: Reports from Sabat village, Sabat Payam in Delami County indicate that, 28 heads of cattle were looted by unknown people and taken to Government-controlled areas. However, peace building committees from both sides are working to ensure that the looted livestock will be traced and returned to the owner.

#### **Western Jebel**

16 April: A group of armed men reportedly from Sembu a base of former Popular Defense Forces (PDF) mostly from Arab Misseriya raided Kujurja village, Karko payam in Dilling county and looted 50 heads of cattle but were later recovered and returned to the owner.

## SUDAN: South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot (Dec 2019)

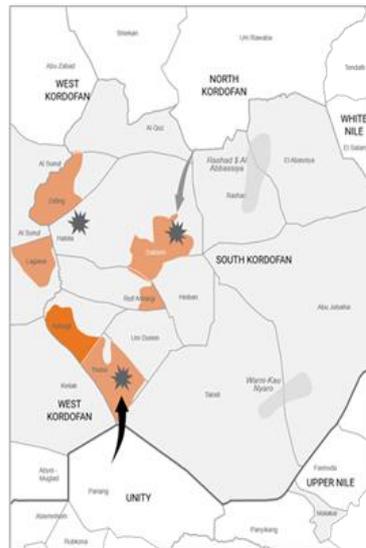
Humanitarian needs remain high within the Two Areas of South Kordofan (SK) and Blue Nile (BN) controlled by the SPLM-N (highlighted in the map). The poor macro-economic conditions in the rest of Sudan have exacerbated the protracted humanitarian crisis that has affected over 1.2 million people living in the Two Areas since 2011. According to the October 2019 FSMU report, the severe lean season, a Sudan-wide economic crisis, and weak markets have led to 15,562 people food insecure (equivalent to IPC 2, 3 and 4, respectively).

Food insecurity is comparably worse in Blue Nile due to the underdevelopment and widespread flooding in October which impacted communities. Heavy rains continued to have a big effect on crops, especially earlier maturing sorghum, sesame and groundnuts. According to an IOM Report dated 2 November, heavy rains "caused temporary displacement and disruption in service provision to more than 900,000 individuals [in South Sudan]", of which an estimated 200,000 are in the Upper Nile region.

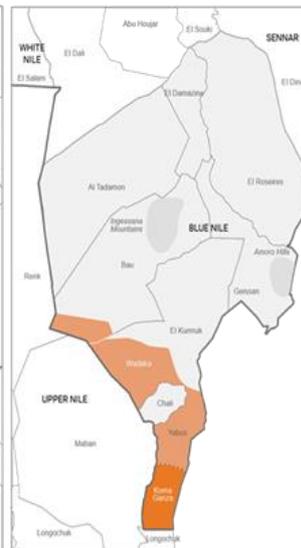
In both the Two Areas, 202,000 school-age children are in need of education, and over 550,000 people are in need of shelter support. In Blue Nile, with no health facilities able to handle emergencies, people have to travel to South Sudan for medical care. About 4,167 individuals from the rest of Sudan and refugee camps in South Sudan have returned to the SPLM-N controlled areas of Heiban and Um Durain Counties in South Kordofan, mainly due to difficult living conditions and lack of food.

While the operational challenges continue, the funding gaps have increased considerably since 2016. Despite the challenges and very limited access into the Two Areas, a limited group of humanitarian partners continues to reach over 1.2 million people in an area of over 21,000 square km, mainly with emergency food, health and WASH assistance.

### South Kordofan State



### Blue Nile State



Percentage of moderately food insecure population

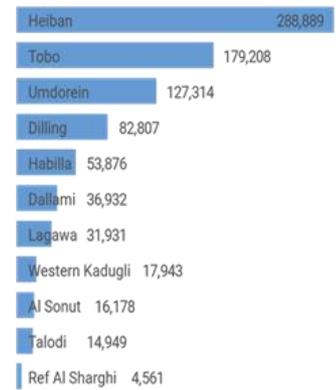
- Severe (66 - 100%)
- Moderate (31 - 65%)

Security hotspot areas

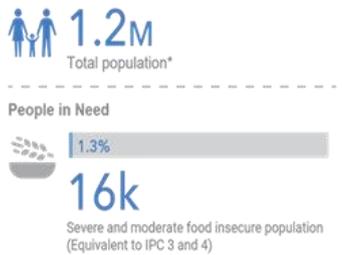
Refugees returnees

IDPs returnees

### Population with access to health care services

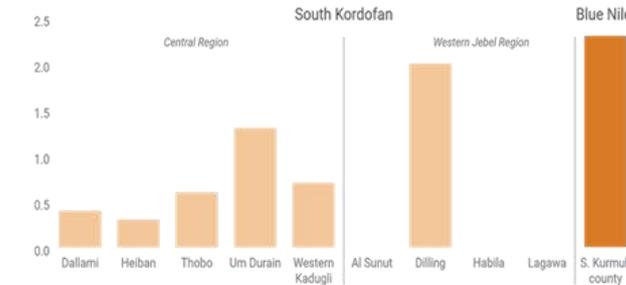


### Key Figures

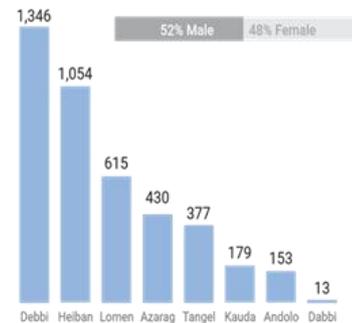


\*New census results awaited from local authorities

### Percentage of severely food insecure households by payam (Oct 2019)



### Returnees by Payam June - September 2019



Created on 3 Dec 2019

Data Source: SKBN, FSMU

SKBN Coordination Unit

The SKBN CU reports security incidents according to the information received from a variety of sources. This information does not include a comprehensive verification of perpetrators or damages.

This monthly update on humanitarian issues in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states is compiled by the SKBN Coordination Unit. With three main functions of information, coordination and advocacy, the SKBNCU strives to put out regular and accurate information on the humanitarian situation of people affected by the conflict since 2011. Please send your comments to [advocacy@skbncu.org](mailto:advocacy@skbncu.org)

