

## HUMANITARIAN UPDATE – November 2014

### South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Sudan

Produced by the South Kordofan & Blue Nile Coordination Unit<sup>1</sup>

#### Overview

The resumption of AUHIP facilitated peace negotiations in Addis Ababa this month provided some early and small indicators of positive movement towards a cessation of hostilities and possible progress for improved humanitarian access; however as the talks 'progressed', it became evident that the Government of Sudan / NCP and the SRF / SPLM North remained as far apart as ever on a political agreement to end the conflict in South Kordofan (SK) and Blue Nile (BN) States. The month was marked by an increase in aerial bombardment by SAF in both SK and BN, compared with the previous three months. The Government of Sudan was consistent in its stated focus on the 'Decisive Summer Campaign' to end the rebellion in the two areas. The bombings contributed to reduction in household food security in at least two ways; firstly, discouraging household members from venturing into their farms to harvest their crops; and secondly, directly damaging and destroying un-harvested cereal crops and already harvested grain stores. Most local markets in South Kordofan were active as households with sufficient early harvests participated in sales of grains, and purchase of essential goods, while others with livestock resources were active in selling those, to purchase grains. Many areas of SK are cultivated with longer maturing sorghum and harvesting is not expected to start until later in December and into January, leaving large numbers of people food insecure at this time, and vulnerable to ongoing military activities that damage and or destroy their crops. Blue Nile markets were characterized by extremely limited items being available, as the blockade on trader movement of basic food items across the Ethiopian border continued. The drying of the road from Upper Nile State to BN later in November was expected to improve the market conditions, both in terms of availability and lower costs.

#### 1. South Kordofan

**Protection, Insecurity and Displacement:** This month, humanitarian monitors reported eleven Antonov bombing raids dropping more than 100 bombs in 12 different villages, resulting in the damage/ destruction of more than 40 households, and the deaths of 3 civilians. The fear of aerial bombardment has a distinct negative impact on the essential agricultural activities in the harvesting season. In the affected villages, many household members, especially women and children, have fled their homes for what they perceive are safer locations, usually the nearest rocky hillsides and caves. Up to 500 fedans of ripe or ripening fields of sorghum around Merdia and Tunguli in Dalami County have been destroyed in November, much of that as a result of being deliberate set on fire by SAF personnel on 28<sup>th</sup> November. Local monitors reported that the fire, pushed by high winds, continued burning the fields for three days. Most communities that are in closer proximity to front line conflict locations, including towards Kadugli, Dilling, Debiebat, Dalami and Heiban, report significant visible build up of military forces.

---

<sup>1</sup>The SKBN CU works with local civil society organisations and international humanitarian actors to share credible information on humanitarian needs in the two conflict-affected states, in the SPLM-N controlled areas. In this update, the main sources of information are civilians involved in local humanitarian monitoring and protection activities, local civil administration representatives, and the reporting of other civil society organizations.

**Food Security:** In most payams of SPLM-N controlled Dalami County, up to 80% of households were unable to cultivate their farms in the planting season, due to their displacement from SAF offensives in March to June 2014. Low lying areas of Dalami County experienced what village elders claimed were levels of flooding never before seen, not only seriously damaging large areas of cultivated farms but also spoiling fruit trees along the river banks. Many households resorted to early selling of livestock to purchase grains, which was just starting to be available in local markets. In Heiban county, many households reported lower yields of grain from their farms, due to extended dry spells in the growing season, and aggravated by late season flooding. However, overall production, mostly of short maturing sorghum, was good and the market prices were stable through most of the rainy season in Heiban. Heiban was hosting about 400 households of IDPs from Dalami, all of whom were very food insecure.

Most households in Buram and Um Dorein county cultivate long maturing sorghum and their harvest time was expected to be later in December and in January, thus leaving most households experiencing serious food deficits in November, relying on household gardens (Jabraca) for very limited food production. Households with livestock are selling at this time of year, to purchase grains from outside markets, where increasing prices were reported in November from earlier in the year. Regular Antonov overflights result in many household members remaining close to homes and their foxholes, negatively affecting essential investment in weeding and harvesting activities. 2014 production was reported by local monitors as being much poorer than in 2013, due to significant displacement in the planting season and heavy rains and late season flooding that destroyed farms estimated at more than 1,000 fedans. The CU county coordinator for Buram indicated that more than 3,000 households, mostly women headed and with large numbers of children, had returned from Yida at the end of 2013 and early 2014, seriously impacting the pressure on the community to share limited food stocks. In the western side of SK, better grain production than in 2013 was reported by local monitors, and the markets were active, with stable prices.

**Health:** A serious escalation of measles in Heiban and Um Dorein counties had been reported in October, and a widespread measles vaccination campaign for under 5 children was in preparation by the SOH for December. The severe shortage of essential drugs, medicines and vaccines for children and pregnant women is a serious concern raised by households across South Kordofan.

**Water and Sanitation:** In Um Dorein county, 76 out of 128 boreholes were reported by CU monitors as being inoperable in November, due to lack of spare parts. In Tabanya payam, in Buram County, the county coordinator reported some villages had only one potable water source for more than 1,800 people, while in Jau payam, almost all handpumps are broken, leaving households to rely on local water sources. Across the western counties, Habila, Dilling, Lagawa and Al Sonut, more than 50% of handpumps were indicated to be non functional with each working borehole serving more than 100 households (approx. 600 people).

## **2. Blue Nile**

**Protection, Insecurity and Displacement:** Between November 10 and 21<sup>st</sup>, humanitarian monitors reported sixteen Antonov bombing raids dropping more than 40 bombs in 14 different villages in Kurmuk County, resulting in the damage/ destruction of 5 households, and the death of 1 civilian. The regularity of the Antonov overflights resulted in local displacement of more than 100 households to locations deemed to be safer, along the riverbanks and deeper into the forests. Another 72 households, with over 200 people,

returned from Doro to Chali payam this month, reporting that insufficient food distributions led to their decision to return to Blue Nile. Both residents and IDPS in BN as well as refugees in the Maban camps indicated that they perceived increased threats from armed groups, including SPLA-IO, to the refugee camps in Maban County. On 24 November fighting between armed groups in Maban County, in Upper Nile State, resulted in a one day suspension of road movement between Bunj and Melut.<sup>2</sup>

Five traditional leaders in Blue Nile who were arrested by the security agents in the state, and were being detained in Damazine, have recently been released, according to a local source.<sup>3</sup> 600 Fellata tribesmen were reported to have been mobilized in Blue Nile in association with wider mobilization of the Popular Defence Forces.<sup>4</sup> Concerns were raised by local government and traditional authorities of detention and disappearance of prominent persons<sup>5</sup> who had relocated to Bambasi refugee camp in Ethiopia.

**Food Security:** As reported in October, a majority of the households in Wadaka, Chali Alfil and Yabus payams are already experiencing serious food insecurity, due to destruction of their main crops from heavy rains and late season flooding, and infestation of locusts, ants and birds. Very limited availability of any food items in the markets with prices increased of up to 70% contributed to increasing food insecurity. Aerial bombardment during the cultivation season reduced the size of many household farms, especially in Wadaka payam, closer to the conflict front lines, or prevented households from cultivation on their farms at all. Already, roots and leaves, from wild plants and from cassava, lalob and nabag wild fruits are staple nutrition items for many households. The high river levels and very poor roads through November have significantly reduced access to the markets but that is expected to improve in December, for goods coming from Upper Nile. Serious levels of hunger at household levels are reported by local monitors in many bomas of Yabus Payam, especially Koma Ganza, Gondolo, Damo, Dering, Shafaka and Dogabeli, where cultivation is reported to have completely failed, and communities were cut off from other parts of Yabus by high water. The large IDP population in SPLM-N controlled BN is also reported to be much more food security stressed than in 2013.

**Health:** Ten primary health clinics in Kurmuk County (3 in Wadaka, 1 in Chali Alfil and 6 in Yabus payams) that are operated at the local level were reported to have minimal or no essential medicines, an especially frustrating situation for people who walk up to 8 hours to obtain diagnosis and treatment. There is a strong reliance on traditional healers and traditional herbs and medicines. Higher incidents of malaria, watery diarrhoea, pains and coughing and coughing than in previous months, were prevalent health complaints reported from the local health authorities.

**Markets:** Ethiopian traders continue to be blocked from bringing food items into SPLM controlled locations in Blue Nile, resulting in very limited items being available in local markets. The price of sorghum, which is available at very limited quantities, has risen to about 30 SSP per malwa, more than 70% increase from this period in 2013, and from earlier in 2014. Sugar, tea and coffee prices are also more than 50% higher than when trade was functioning from Ethiopia.

---

<sup>2</sup> [http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South\\_Sudan\\_Crisis\\_Situation\\_Report\\_No\\_64\\_28Nov2014.pdf](http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South_Sudan_Crisis_Situation_Report_No_64_28Nov2014.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/five-detained-blue-nile-traditional-leaders-released>

<sup>4</sup> <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/spla-north-commander-claims-govt-mobilized-600-fellata-fighters-blue-nile>

<sup>5</sup> <https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/14-blue-nile-refugees-disappear-some-feared-dead-bambasi-camp>

**Education:** The children of school age in SPLM-N controlled areas rely on community run primary schools, of which there are 5 in Yabus Bala which have been in session since 15 October 2014. Five new community run primary schools are starting now for 2015, in Gondolo, Eshkab, Belatoma, Yabus Gabah and Chali. The students are in need of school materials, uniforms, school feeding while the volunteer teachers indicate a high requirement / request for school teaching materials / curriculum which is based on the Sudan Basic Education system, teacher training and improved classrooms, especially plastic sheeting, and incentives for the teachers.

### **3. Negotiations for humanitarian access in the two areas**

November 2014 witnessed a series of negotiations between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-N), after a break in talks that lasted for about seven months (since 30 April 2014). The first round started on the 12<sup>th</sup> and adjourned on 17<sup>th</sup> November 2014. The second round started on 26<sup>th</sup> November and adjourned again on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2014, on the understanding that each party shall consult with their leadership about a number of outstanding issues, particularly cessation of hostilities in the Two Areas and Darfur and the holding of a preparatory meeting for the national dialogue in the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa. The parties expected to resume talks on 5<sup>th</sup> December 2014 to continue discussion on the same outstanding issues.

Both rounds of talks that have taken place between the belligerent parties in November 2014 have failed to reach any significant progress on negotiations of humanitarian access in the Two Areas. The communique on 12 September 2014 of the 456<sup>th</sup> meeting of the AUPSC in article 14 (i) reads that the PSC endorses *“the negotiations on cessation of hostilities, immediately leading to a comprehensive security arrangements agreement, should resume at the earliest opportunity, under the auspices of the AUHIP...”*. Therefore, expectations were high that the November talks could produce an agreement on cessation of hostilities or ceasefire that would have allowed for humanitarian access as well as moving toward a more inclusive national dialogue process. The positions of the two parties were divergent and were unable to bridge these differences. The GoS, on one hand, insisted on a comprehensive ceasefire as a package of complete security arrangements. SPLM-N, on the other hand, proposed a cessation of hostilities as a first, freestanding step in order to address the humanitarian situation in the Two Areas and Darfur as well as creating a more favourable environment for concluding negotiated agreements on the political and security issues.

The talks between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM-N resumed again, as expected, on 5<sup>th</sup> December and continued for three days. The negotiations adjourned without any progress towards an agreement. The AUHIP ended the 9<sup>th</sup> round of talks between the GoS and SPLM-N indicating that the panel will consult bilaterally and invite the parties for another round of negotiations, expected to be early in January 2015.

The Darfur peace track also started in Addis Ababa on 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2014 providing for an opportunity for one peace process with two tracks facilitated by the AUHIP aimed at ending war in the whole of Sudan. The Darfur talks adjourned on 27 November without agreement on the agenda. It was hoped that the Darfur talks track was to be resumed on 4<sup>th</sup> December but this has not been realised as yet.