



***“We were hopeful after independence ... but now yet again we find ourselves in conflict.
We will not hope again.”***



A boy wears a t-shirt recalling the hope that the referendum brought to South Sudan. He has been displaced by the recent fighting and is currently living in an IDP camp.

HUMANITARIAN AID RELIEF TRUST

VISIT TO SOUTH SUDAN

27 February – 4 March 2014

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Note: all quotes used in this report are from those we met over the course of our visit, except where explicitly stated otherwise. Some quotes have been anonymised.

Executive Summary

- Despite the Cessation of Hostilities agreement, the conflict in South Sudan shows no sign of abating. Civilians are bearing the brunt of conflict with widespread human rights violations, including sexual violence, being committed by both sides with impunity.
- Although the fighting is particularly severe in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity States, the repercussions of the conflict are far-reaching. Looking beyond scenes of utter devastation in cities such as Malakal and Bentiu, many other areas of South Sudan are also seeing a humanitarian crisis unfold, with displaced persons unreached, unregistered and unsupported.
- The humanitarian impact of the current crisis is devastating, with 708,900 people internally displaced as of 13th March. This comes in a context of already-existing food insecurity and deeply entrenched poverty – a legacy of the previous war. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) estimate that 4.9 million people, over 40% of the population, are in need of humanitarian assistance. The Crisis Response Plan, which aims to reach 3.2 million people by June 2014, is only 23% funded.
- The rainy season is beginning early, exacerbating the plight of displaced persons and posing significant challenges to the humanitarian response. In the height of the rainy season, around 60% of the country can be cut off. With the rains come widespread famine, disease, worsened sanitation and food insecurity, amongst other challenges.
- Those that we met were clear that this is a political conflict, and that simplistic binary and ethnic narratives are damaging. In the communities we visited, displaced persons have been welcomed and supported by members of other ethnic groups.
- There are complaints of poor registration procedures in camps leading to inequitable distribution of food and dramatic shortfalls in humanitarian assistance.
- Many civilians are relying on UNMISS for protection, including the 77,000 sheltering in their bases. However, with attacks continuing in and around camps, and much of the population far outside the sphere of protection, there must be a focus on improving UNMISS' capacity to protect civilians.
- Initiatives to promote peace, non-retaliation and reconciliation, and to rebuild trust between communities, are being led by Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and churches.
- In a rapidly changing situation with much rumour and speculation, there is a need to promote accurate reporting, freedom of expression and dissemination of information.

Abyei

- Inter-communal violence and attacks by armed militia are increasing, particularly in northern Abyei. This is creating a climate of terror, preventing civilians from returning to their homes.
- Ngok Dinka community leaders are seeking international recognition for their referendum. They say that the community has spoken, and they will not vote again. They also believe that the Government of South Sudan was about to recognise their referendum before the recent fighting broke out.
- The United Nations Interim Security Force on Abyei (UNISFA) is failing to prevent attacks on civilians. The Ngok Dinka feel that they compromised for the sake of peace, giving up land for buffer zones; but that UNISFA are failing to enforce the buffer zones that they created.

Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan

- Khartoum is using the distraction in the south to triple the aerial bombardment of civilians.
- Insecurity in South Sudan has disrupted transport routes in and out of the region, thus affecting both movements of people and of life-saving humanitarian assistance.
- The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSN) projects that food insecurity in South Kordofan will reach Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels by March/ April 2014.

Recommendations

On South Sudan:

- Immediately make available more funding for emergency relief, particularly for food, safe drinking water, shelter, sanitation and healthcare, to enable the extension of humanitarian assistance across the country before the rainy season fully begins in April. Ensure some of this funding is allocated to South Sudanese Civil Society Based Organisations, who have the ability to access areas where others are not getting through;
- Identify and extend support to Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in more remote areas, outside UNMISS bases and official camps. It is imperative that these groups are identified, registered and that supplies are prepositioned to reach them in advance of the rainy season;
- Improve registration procedures in camps to ensure numbers of people are accurately assessed and food is equitably distributed;
- Encourage the peace process and support the direct involvement of South Sudanese civil society organisations, in order to develop a sustainable peace which will be widely respected and a political solution which reflects the needs of the people of South Sudan;
- Support grassroots peace, justice, reconciliation and non-retaliation efforts, and lay the groundwork for a process of national reconciliation;
- Ensure accountability of warring factions and an end to an impunity in South Sudan, in particular by supporting the Commission of Inquiry, established by the African Union (AU) on the 7th March, 2014, to carry out a thorough and impartial investigation of human rights violations;
- Ensure that conflicts in both Sudan and South Sudan are on the radar of the international media and are a priority for the international community. Promote accurate reporting and inclusive dialogue about the situation and the way forward;
- Utilise the opportunity of the review of the UN Mission In South Sudan's (UNMISS) mandate to strengthen its capacity to protect civilians;
- Lay the foundations for a long-term development plan which will focus on the extension of education and healthcare throughout the country.

On Sudan:

- Increase diplomatic pressure to end the impunity with which President Bashir is currently carrying out human rights violations, in many cases tantamount to genocidal policies, in South Kordofan, Blue Nile, Abyei and Darfur;
- Condemn the increase in aerial bombardment and the resulting worsening humanitarian situation in South Kordofan and Blue Nile;
- Support initiatives to extend life-saving humanitarian assistance to South Kordofan, Blue Nile and Abyei;
- Urge the African Union High-Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) to prioritise inclusive dialogue on Abyei, with the involvement of community representatives from all sides, and to increase their efforts to secure a lasting political solution;
- Assess the ability of UNISFA to protect civilians and review its mandate accordingly.

INTRODUCTION

The conflict in South Sudan is deteriorating, with renewed suffering being inflicted upon a population who have long endured the injustice of war and extreme poverty.

This report highlights the humanitarian impact of the recent conflict on civilians in South Sudan, and the repercussions for communities in Abyei, Blue Nile and South Kordofan. The situation is now falling off the radar of the international media. For many displaced persons still unreached by humanitarian aid, the failure to increase funding and secure greater support from the international community is a death sentence: food insecurity risks reaching famine proportions, and many are without any means of shelter or protection from the oncoming rainy season.

The British Government and other members of the international community must urgently increase diplomatic efforts to secure a political solution to the crisis **before all hope is extinguished**. A young man we met in South Sudan spoke of the challenges facing a generation who have known nothing but conflict. He spoke poignantly of the hope they had had, that South Sudan could finally move away from conflict:

“We were hopeful after independence – that there would be investment, development, jobs, and we could improve health and education. But now yet again we find ourselves in conflict. We will not hope again.”

One of the most powerful sources of hope in the country is coming from local community and church leaders who are travelling across the country and preaching a message of non-retaliation. **We strongly urge support for such grassroots peace and reconciliation efforts, to help reduce the tensions between communities and the escalation of inter-communal violence.**

There is an urgent need for a significant increase in humanitarian funding for the delivery of food, shelter and medicine. According to UN OCHA, as of the 13th March 2014, 708,900 people have been internally displaced by violence since 15th December 2013, and an additional 220,000 have fled to neighbouring countries. 4.9 million people across South Sudan (over 40% of the population) are in need of humanitarian assistance.¹ Given the scale of displacement and the inaccessibility of some regions, it is difficult to locate and identify all those in need of support, and the number of those affected by the fighting and the humanitarian crisis it has triggered may be much higher. In Warrap State, our partners – who have extensive presence on the ground – have identified 24,056 IDPs: significantly higher than the 13,100 estimated by UN OCHA.

The Crisis Response Plan, which aims to reach 3.2 million people by June 2014, is currently only 23% funded. If not addressed rapidly, this shortfall will prevent the pre-positioning of aid in advance of the rainy season, thus posing greater challenges to distribution of aid in the near future.

In a camp for Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Gogrial West, we met a tiny fraction of those in dire need of humanitarian assistance. The camp has received some humanitarian assistance including food and shelter, yet the amount provided fell drastically short of what was needed for the size of the group. Larger families reported that food supplies given for one month lasted just two days. Therefore, subsumed in the statistics of those who have received humanitarian provision are questions about who is receiving enough for survival.

It is groups such as these, living in isolated, rural areas, who have little power to make themselves, their needs or their voices heard, who will suffer most from this conflict. There is an overriding, urgent need **to scale up funding for humanitarian assistance to ensure access to currently unreached and under-supported IDPs, and to listen to their voices, priorities and calls for peace.**

On our last day in South Sudan, the rain began to fall. The rainy season in South Sudan is imminent, and when it arrives, it will bring a litany of new challenges, including serious limitations to humanitarian access, rapid spread of disease, the contamination of water sources, widespread flooding and the destruction of the flimsy shelters which are the ‘homes’ for many thousands of IDPs. The need to secure funding and extend humanitarian assistance to unreached populations across South Sudan before the rains come is therefore critical.

¹ UNOCHA, 10th March 2014, South Sudan Crisis: Situation Report No. 26.

http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/South_Sudan_Crisis_Situation_Report_26_as_of_10_March_2014.pdf

We appreciate that organisations working in South Sudan are overstretched. We call for governments, international organisations and anyone with the capacity to give funds to do so as a matter of priority, to enable the extension of life-saving supplies to vulnerable groups across South Sudan before the full onslaught of the rainy season (expected in April).

This is a complex, fluid and rapidly evolving situation. It is hard to see the way forward. But as the crisis fades from the international media and global interest wanes, the international community must ensure that South Sudanese civilians are not forgotten and do everything in its power to prevent further suffering. It is imperative that new spaces are opened up for inclusive dialogue, that diverse South Sudanese voices are heard – including those of women - and that we are prepared to support and stand with them. Every effort must be made to secure a lasting solution to the current conflict, to end the impunity currently enjoyed by those who commit human rights violations including sexual violence, and to lay the groundwork for the long process of national reconciliation.

Above all, the priority must be to find a political resolution to the current crisis and to take steps towards a lasting peace. The root causes of the fear and violence currently afflicting South Sudan must be tackled for hope to return to the country.

FINDINGS: SOUTH SUDAN

On-going conflict

Despite the Cessation of Hostilities (CoH) agreement of Thursday, 23rd January 2014, fighting continues with breaches of the CoH and human rights violations being committed by both sides. Researchers from Human Rights Watch reported on February 27th 2014 that *“both sides have extensively looted and destroyed civilian property, including desperately needed aid facilities, targeted civilians, and carried out extrajudicial executions, often based on ethnicity”*.² There are widespread reports of sexual violence, including brutal rapes and gang rapes.³

The accounts of those displaced by the fighting reflect the chaos, confusion and terror, and with it, the challenges to accountability. Abraham Dut, a fourteen year old boy who fled from Mayom, said he did not know who was involved in the killing because *“everyone wore the same uniform.”* He ran away and was separated from his family. He does not know what has happened to his mother, father brothers or sisters. Elizabeth Adena, who fled Bentiu, described a similar situation. She said *“Who are the White Army? We don’t know who are the White Army. Everyone was in uniform”* – a statement which brought much agreement from the surrounding group. Statements such as these reflect the high levels of confusion surrounding the perpetrators of violence and demonstrate the immense challenge of ensuring justice and accountability. Such confusion adds to the fear, and to the perception by perpetrators that they can carry out atrocities with impunity. This makes the swift implementation of effective accountability mechanisms, including a robust, public AU Commission of Inquiry, even more crucial, to stem the fear, tackle the impunity and prevent on-going cycles of violence.

Some reports highlighted an escalation of atrocities and killings perpetrated by rebels associated with Riek Machar, carried out randomly and with impunity by the so-called ‘White Army’. We heard of their actions in Malakal: *“They kill everybody they see. Everybody who is not with them is against them. They don’t mind if they’re Nuer, Dinka, it is not ethnic, they target everybody who is not with them”*.

The majority of those fighting in the White Army are just children and adolescents – it has been reported to us that almost all are under 18. They are largely uneducated and extremely vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation. There are widespread concerns that the White Army is out of the control of Riek Machar, with claims from those we met that *“even if Machar agreed to a ceasefire, his troops wouldn’t agree”*.

The level of desolation and destruction across South Sudan is indisputable. Our partners report that Malakal is almost deserted and that *“the bodies are high”*. Recent satellite images portray the scale of desolation and

² Human Rights Watch, 27th February 2014, South Sudan: War Crimes by Both Sides. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/02/26/south-sudan-war-crimes-both-sides>

³ UNMISS, 21st February 2014, Interim Report on Human Rights - Crisis in South Sudan, Report Coverage 15 December 2013 - 31 January 2014. <http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/interim-report-human-rights-crisis-south-sudan-report-coverage-15-december-2013>

destruction in the city.⁴ Comboni Missionary Sister Elena Balatti, who had stayed in Malakal throughout much of the recent fighting, reported on the 3rd March 2014:

“Malakal, a city of 250,000 inhabitants, is completely deserted... The rebels are the only ones present. Malakal has been attacked three times by the rebel forces of Riek Machar: on Christmas Eve, on January 14 and February 18. After each attack the inhabitants gradually abandoned the city. Many are refugees in neighboring villages, others headed to the north of the State, some even to Sudan.

Violence against women has become a very common crime, especially in the last attack. Before taking the plane to Juba I brought a 12-year-old girl who was part of a group of 9 young girls who had been raped in the church of Christ the King to the Red Cross hospital. According to the testimonies of people who had taken refuge in the church, on the evening of 25 February, the rebels came to kidnap the 9 girls three times.”⁵

A similar story is repeated in major towns and cities across South Sudan. UN Humanitarian Coordinator Toby Lanzer has reported that towns across Upper Nile State, Unity State and Jonglei have been destroyed and deserted.

The majority of IDPs we met in Warrap State had fled Bentiu, where they described scenes of constant fighting and indiscriminate killings, in those cases all committed by rebel forces. Laurel, a Dinka woman from Bentiu whom we met in the camp, said:

“You see me as if nothing happened. I appear normal so that I do not have to remember what happened, and for the sake of the children.

My husband, who was a soldier, was killed. His Commander was a Nuer and they chained the hands of the Dinkas and killed them. When we were there, we saw many killings and 43 were killed with my husband. This was during this conflict on December 18th 2013. This done by Commander Kong, an SPLA Commander who defected to Riek Machar.”

The IDPs from Bentiu spoke of levels of violence and fear which led them to leave their homes with nothing, sometimes separating from their families as they fled from the area. The terror of the current conflict prevents them from returning and thus they are trapped in dire circumstances with little access to humanitarian assistance and no means of supporting themselves. Most report that their houses were burned down by the rebels in Bentiu, and so they have nothing to go back to.

Impact on refugees from Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan: Our partners reported that forces aligned with Riek Machar have targeted refugees from the Nuba Mountains who have been living in Unity State, so they have returned to the Nuba Mountains where such humanitarian services as were available have deteriorated even further.

It has since been reported by the Sudan Democracy First Group that on the afternoon of March 3rd, refugees from Blue Nile living in Maban were attacked by an unidentified armed group of people wearing military fatigues. They were attacked near the Yosif Batil refugee camp. SDFG report that *“Hundreds of refugees have fled to a nearby NGO compound, and many refugees in the camps, including high numbers of women and children, are terrified of further violence.”⁶*

The South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit have reported a number of deaths among the refugee populations from SPLM-N held areas of South Kordofan, who had been living in Upper Nile State. They also report that *“significant numbers of the refugee population in Lilo and Gollo sites remain unaccounted for at the end of the reporting period [28 February 2014]”.*⁷

⁴ <http://world.time.com/2014/02/26/exclusive-satellite-images-malakal-destroyed-south-sudan/>

⁵ Fides, 3rd March 2014, Malakal, a city of 250,000 inhabitants, completely deserted after the rebel attacks: the testimony of a missionary to Fides. http://www.fides.org/en/news/35330-AFRICA_SOUTH_SUDAN_Malakal_a_city_of_250_000_inhabitants_completely_deserted_after_the_rebel_attacks_the_testimony_of_a_missionary_to_Fides#.UxVgstSSzqx

⁶ Sudanese Refugees in Upper Nile: Facing Perils – With Nowhere to Run. 4th March 2014, <http://us7.campaign-archive1.com/?u=7acabab6ae470b89628f88514&id=c7361f51c4&e=0c30b9156c>

⁷ South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit, February 2014, ‘Update on humanitarian needs in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Sudan’.

Such reports of the violence suffered by Sudanese refugees illustrate the intimately interlinked nature of conflicts in Sudan and South Sudan. Continued instability in South Sudan increases the pressure on populations of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, reducing their options for finding safety. This underscores the need for a comprehensive, holistic approach to conflicts in the Sudans.

Humanitarian situation

The humanitarian situation in South Sudan is extremely serious, not only in the areas most heavily afflicted by fighting such as Bor, Malakal, Bentiu and Juba, but all across the country as a result of widespread displacement. Since 15th December 2013, over 908,000 people have been displaced by violence, including 705,800 within South Sudan and 202,500 into neighbouring countries. There are major gaps in provision of health services and food to affected populations, particularly for those outside UN compounds and camps.

Those whom we met pleaded for urgent supplies of food, healthcare and shelter. Cases of malnutrition, pneumonia, malaria and diarrhoea are common. Pregnant women face the prospect of birth with no support. Similar stories have been reported across the country. Maternal, infant and under five mortality and morbidity rates are extremely high.

The insufficient food distribution in camps is exacerbated by poor registration procedures and inaccurate data on conditions and numbers of affected persons.

The rainy season in South Sudan is likely to start in mid-April, though in parts of Warrap State the rain has already begun to fall. This will bring a host of further challenges, including reduced access for humanitarian actors, a rapid spread of diseases and flooding. IDPs across South Sudan are particularly vulnerable to the problems that the rainy season will bring, given that many are either completely without shelter or have makeshift structures built from cardboard or material which will not survive the rain. **Funding is urgently needed to prepare and preposition supplies, including food and emergency medical kits, in advance of the rainy season; distribution will become much more difficult and expensive once the rains begin, and some areas will be unreachable.**

Displacement in Warrap state

Gogrial Area Diocese, located in **Warrap state**, has received **24,056 IDPs, including 9,934 in Gogrial West and 14,122 in Twic** (2nd March 2014); with more arriving every day. The figures correlate with recent International Organisation for Migration (IOM) statistics, recording **12,898 IDPs in Twic County (20th February 2014)**.

The UN reports that its Food Security and Livelihoods Cluster had reached 9,600 people in Warrap State by the 24th February. This suggests a **significant number of people are without any food assistance, as there are 24,056 IDPs in Gogrial West and Twic - and these are just two of the six counties in Warrap state.**

There are also discrepancies between numbers of IDPs reported by local organisations and those reported by UNOCHA, which on the 3rd March stated that there are 13,100 IDPs in Warrap State and just 700 in Western Bahr-el-Ghazal. This highlights the need to improve registration procedures and data collection.

Upon arrival in December 2013 and January 2014, IDPs were supported by local Dinka communities. However, after being there for around two months the capacity of the local community, many of whom are already suffering from food insecurity, to provide support is deteriorating rapidly. This is an area in which floods destroyed many of the previous year's crops. Therefore food is limited and seeds are urgently needed. It also lacks schools, clinics and boreholes, and was waiting for these to be provided by the government when the fighting began.

The **Gogrial West County Commissioner Hon. Makuc Aru Luac** reported that around 6000 IDPs have arrived in his County in the past three weeks, and that numbers are increasing daily because of the continuing fighting and growing hunger in Unity State. Whilst some assessments of displaced persons have been undertaken by UN organisations, and some plastic sheets, blankets, mosquito nets and food have been provided, these are far from sufficient for the numbers of affected persons. He has stated that the most important priorities for IDPs in his area are food, medical care, shelter and clean water. Boreholes should be dug as a priority to prevent diarrhoea and other diseases.

Our partners have a number of priorities for funding, to support those who have been displaced into the area, and the most vulnerable members of host communities. Emergency relief is the top priority: both food and non-food

items which will relieve the most immediate suffering of IDPs and will keep them alive while a longer term solution is sought. Further priorities include temporary schools and medical kits for the IDPs.

They also seek to enable food cultivation, with bulls and a plough, so that both IDPs and vulnerable members of the host community can cultivate food during the coming rainy season. Reducing the pressure on the host community is crucial, to avoid the build up of tension between groups.

Man-Angui IDP Camp

The HART team visited Man-Angui, a spontaneous settlement of IDPs in Gogrial West on the 2nd March 2014. There are 4832 IDPs in this camp, and more are arriving every day. We spent several hours interviewing them individually and collectively. We came with open questions, offering those we met the opportunity to voice their greatest concerns and priorities. We were surrounded by people wanting to tell their stories, and to describe their current situation, with countless tales of suffering and starvation, as illustrated in the selection of interviews below. For further examples, contact HART.

They were determined to tell their stories and to demonstrate the difficulties of life in the camp. Again and again, we were told: we have nothing to eat, we are starving. They listed the people that they have already buried.

We asked about their messages, their priorities. A number of women held out their hands to us, clasping handfuls of green leaves. They raised these leaves to their mouths, explaining that this is all they have to eat. This pattern was repeated all across the camp – as we came to a new group of people, we were shown handfuls of leaves, and small pots with the same leaves being boiled. They are determined for the world to hear their cry for food aid.



Above: IDPs demonstrate the 'food' that they are eating.

The majority of those we met had fled from the fighting in Bentiu, and described a situation in which it was simply too dangerous to remain. The killing was indiscriminate. Many have been separated from their families. They have

lost contact with relatives remaining in Bentiu and so, with no news coming through, they do not know what the situation is like there or when they will be able to return.

Despite this dearth of information and the horrors they have fled, many of those we spoke with in the camp expressed a preference for returning home rather than remaining in the camps. Anjelo Kuol Agany is a soldier who was based in Unity State. One of his wives was killed in the fighting, and so he, his other wife and three children fled to the camp. He said:

“We have been here for 20 days. We have received no shelter, no food, we have not been registered. Other people have taken the children in to give them shelter. I sleep under the tree. My only wish is to go back to my home. I want to find my family. I do not know what is happening there, but I would rather suffer there than suffer here.”

This view was echoed by many others in the group.

Many of those currently living in the camp do not have any form of shelter. Some have makeshift structures with wooden frames, covered with tarpaulin, whilst others have walls built from cardboard, which will disintegrate when the rains come. A number of people were sitting underneath blankets slung over tree branches, to provide a modicum of protection from the blistering sun. Most people emphasised to us that shelter is a priority for them, to provide some protection from the on-coming rainy season. In particular, they ask for including plastic and nylon sheets and mosquito nets.



Above left and right: makeshift shelters.

There are no health services in the camp and no primary health care centres nearby. The major health issues being faced are pneumonia, as a result of crowded conditions and a lack of shelter, diarrhoea, malaria and malnutrition, which are claiming the lives of many, in particular children and the elderly.

Abuk Deng, a young Dinka woman, told us:

“There are many problems here: lack of provision of maternal and child health care; a need for tents for pregnant women as it is so hot; also there are no clothes and blankets for children. We also need medicines for pregnant women. We do not know when to expect our babies. There is no transport to the hospital a long way away. There is no qualified midwife, just a Traditional Birth Attendant (TBA). There is no NGO to provide care. We can show you women recently delivered, who have nothing. The only clothes we have are what we ran with. We left everything behind. We came with nothing.”

Many of those we spoke with in the camp complained of problems with the registration procedures for IDPs. Only those who are registered are able to receive rare packages of food aid and sheets for shelter.

In one group, only 5 out of approximately 80 people had documentation which entitled them to shelter and food (3 had been issued by the Red Cross, 2 by the World Food Programme). No-one else had been registered. There were complaints that early arrivals were registered effectively but since then there has not been either registration or distribution of aid. The vast majority have not been issued with any food assistance. The few provisions available

were shared around the camp. The majority of people have not received any materials for shelter and are sleeping in the open.

There were concerns that the registration is done at night, by local people, and IDPs complain of partiality:

“Not everyone gets food, only those that have been registered. The registration is done at night, so that they put people who they know in the registration book. If you have a husband that husband will stay for the whole night without sleeping so that the registration process is done in his presence, and if you don’t have a husband you may only sleep and no-one will inform you. When distribution comes, your name will not be found in the registration book.”

Language barriers are a further problem. People in the camp do not understand how the registration process is being carried out; nor do they understand announcements for when registration will happen. They request that the registration be monitored by people from their own community, who they trust, and in a language that they understand.

CASE STUDIES

Awan Akuien Malual is 55 years old. He fled from Bentiu with his three wives and fifteen children. He has no way to feed his large family. “Since I have been here, I have buried two children, one woman and one old man. They died because they have no shelter and sleep under the trees.

The rains will come soon, and we need to have proper shelters that will prevent the rain from coming inside, and prevent disease.”



Kuat Khoth Chuol Deng is a local Chief from Bentiu. He fled on the 1st January. 10 members of his group have died from hunger so far.



“We have been feeling drops, we think the rain will start in mid-March. We worry where the children will sleep. The children start coughing in the night – they are suffering from pneumonia. The land is waterlogged in the rain, so it will flood, and then we will have no possibility to search for food.

Our priority is to see that sleeping materials are provided, mosquito nets, food.

We have also noticed that there are rivers here with fish. Some of us are fishermen. If we had fishing materials, we could get food.”

Nyagun Koor fled Bentiu, where she was living with her husband, a soldier based in the Bentiu military barracks.

“We came here because we feared for our lives, and we did not know what was happening. Many people were killed in the town. We don’t know who the killers were; we just ran. It took 2 days ‘footing’ to reach here. We have now been here one month and a few days.

We still suffer, because there is not enough food. We suffer from malaria and other illnesses. The Red Cross have been here but not enough. We civilians have nothing. The fighting is by the big people like Riek Machar, not us. We don’t know where to go as the people in our home are still fighting. We have nowhere to go.”

Mary Nayarit is 30 years old, from Bentiu in Unity State.

"I do not know what brought me here, I ran with others. But this is not our place. My husband was killed in this recent conflict, by Machar's soldiers in the battle for Pariang. I came here with 3 children and my in-laws. My life is terrible because my husband died. I do not know where my family is or my husband's family – we are all scattered.

Many people are dying. But if I get support for my children, that will enable me to survive, because I know people are dying elsewhere.

As a Nuer, I was worried coming to Dinka land. But the Dinka have been very kind".

Another Nuer woman in the IDP camp said to us: *"Both Dinka and Nuer suffer. The Dinkas are really caring for us. There is no separation between us. We live together peacefully here."*

Such testimonies to the generous welcome given by the Dinka communities to people from Nuer and other tribal groups fleeing into their land bely the widely held perception that the essential basis of the conflict lies in ethnic hostilities. Whilst there have been widely reported atrocities perpetrated on an ethnic basis, many South Sudanese civilians live peaceably with members of other ethnic and tribal groups, which could form a hopeful basis for much needed reconciliation on local and national levels.

FINDINGS: ABYEI

"Within the AUHIP Proposal is the solution, a way our communities can live together".

"As children, we used to hear that the British Government is one that supports people's rights. So now we feel surprised – what happened to the role played by Britain. It is high time for Britain and the British people to help prevent our people from being cleansed".

The HART team met with community leaders from Abyei in Agok town on Friday, 28th February 2014, including:

Minister of Finance Achuil Okol;
Minister for Infrastructure and Public Utilities Kon Manyiet Matiok;
Paramount Chief of nine Chiefdoms Bulabek Deng Kuol;
Member of Legislative Assembly Mr Chol Aguck;
Legislative Council Senior Chief Bagat Manytoc Manchol;
Chief Arop Kuol;
Senior Chief Deng Agok;
Pion Tok (One Heart) Women's Society Leader Achai Koyo;
Reporters Joseph Koch and Mayol Bilabek;
Head of Protocol Luka Malok.

All of the below quotes come from these conversations.

Escalating violence

Abyei, a small area straddling Sudan and South Sudan, has long been the focus of contentious border disputes. It is home to the Ngok Dinka people, as well as the location for bi-annual, seasonal migrations by the Misseriya, nomadic Arab herders. Over the decades these communities have largely lived in peace, with significant movement and mixing between groups, intermarriage and a history of friendship. However, recent years have seen an increase in inter-communal violence, intimately bound up with broader geopolitical tensions and Sudan's long-running civil war. They say they *"have never felt the peace"* of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA).

Repeated international negotiations and agreements have failed to resolve the issue of Abyei's status and to secure a lasting political solution. Many of the hardships endured by the people of Abyei stem from this failure: the humanitarian situation is severe, with few aid organisations able to work inside Abyei as it is a 'contested zone', little

infrastructure, education or healthcare, widespread displacement and a constant threat of violence. The people of Abyei feel that they have consistently been denied the chance to vote on their own future, or to voice their own opinions on the issues which shape their lives and communities.

“The International Community is forgetting our suffering. The world is not listening for the voiceless; it is listening for the voice of the powerful.”

Those we met in Agok described a significant increase in violence in recent weeks, including attacks on civilians by armed militias. Ngok Dinka community leaders have documented 49 extra-judicial killings by SAF and armed militias between 25th December 2013 and 26th February 2014.

They state that there have been increasing attacks by the Government of Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and militias, particularly at night: they *“appear in the forest and kill, and then they disappear”*. Elderly people are often burned to death in their huts because they cannot run away. We were reminded that *“in conflict, it is the women who suffer the most. Every day we receive bad news that a brother or son is killed – and then responsibility for the family has to pass to the growing number of widows”*.

On the 1st and 3rd March, immediately after we left, there were deadly attacks on Ngok Dinka communities by Misseriya Militias in Makir and Dungop, resulting in at least 51 deaths.⁸

The crisis in 2011, in which Abyei town was razed to the ground by the SAF and 120,000 civilians were displaced, led to a UN Security Council Resolution (2046) requiring the withdrawal of all armed forces from Abyei. Since then Abyei has been declared a demilitarised zone. The SPLA withdrew but the SAF remained in the area, with sources reporting they are stationed in Diffra. Locations inside Abyei currently occupied by the SAF and Popular Defence Forces include: Guil-bek (Umkhriate), Mabek Ngol (AbuGhazala), North-East Kec (Aldhia), Pakar (Alshamam), Langar (Goli), Riang Adhig (Umkhia), Thiegei (Sheigei), Waj-Angoum (Dahlop), Alal, Kol-Adet, Kol-Thio and Dakjur (Dambloya).

Local leaders state:

“Khartoum's plan is to terrorise the Dinka people, through raiding, killing, burning villages so that they leave the land for Misseriya. Our own people cannot move freely because of fear, so they cannot grow crops or obtain food by any other means.”

Between December 2013 and February 2014, offensive raids carried out by the South Sudanese army were reported in the northern part of Abyei.⁹

The community leaders are deeply dismayed by loss of oil revenue: until recently they had been receiving 2% of sales of oil from Abyei, as dictated by the 2004 Abyei Protocol, but that now this has been stopped.

The Referendum

In Abyei, communities feel powerless in the face of discussions between governments and high-level panels. They are frustrated by seemingly endless agreements which to them are worth no more than the paper on which they are written, as they are bringing no tangible benefits. In an attempt to wrest some control of the situation, they organised their own referendum in October 2013.

The referendum was based on the AUHIP [African Union High-Level Implementation Panel] proposal, set out by Thabo Mbeki, which had proposed a referendum to be held in October 2013. However, the failure of the Governments of Sudan and South Sudan to reach an agreement on administrative arrangements and voter eligibility prevented its implementation.

The community leaders explained their reasons for proceeding with the referendum on their own initiative. They repeatedly emphasised that there have been so many promises relating to the status of Abyei over the years,

⁸ The Enough Project, 'Looming Crisis: Open Wounds in Abyei Increase Risk of New War', March 13 2014, available at <http://www.enoughproject.org/reports/looming-crisis-open-wounds-abyei-increase-risk-new-war>

⁹ The Enough Project, 'Looming Crisis: Open Wounds in Abyei Increase Risk of New War', March 13 2014, available at <http://www.enoughproject.org/reports/looming-crisis-open-wounds-abyei-increase-risk-new-war>

including the Addis Ababa Accord of 1972, the provisions of the CPA in 2005 (which provided for a referendum on Abyei to be conducted concurrently with the referendum on South Sudan), and the Recommendation of the AUHIP in September 2012. However, these agreements have not been respected and nothing has been done. The people of Abyei feel they have consistently been denied the chance to vote on their future.

“We are human, we have a point where we have to say enough is enough. There were so many agreements, resolutions, they were not implemented.”

“We came up with our own resolution to hold the referendum, with comprehensive arrangements for maximum participation. People eligible to vote travelled from faraway places, including Juba and even from abroad.”

64,775 Ngok Dinka participated in the referendum, and 99.98% voted in favour of transfer to South Sudan.¹⁰ The international community has largely rejected the referendum, which did not include the Misseriya.

Local community leaders in Abyei state the referendum has been recognised by all South Sudan political parties, most of the 10 States of South Sudan and a number of civil society organisations – and that the Government of South Sudan (GoSS) was in the process of officially recognising the referendum when fighting erupted in December. The community leaders believe that other African countries were waiting to recognise the referendum once GoSS had done so.

The Ngok Dinka community are determined to achieve greater recognition for this referendum. The message of the community leaders, including chiefs, politicians and leaders of youth and women’s groups, was unanimous:

“We are the community leaders and we want you to take our message: we have had our Referendum and it is final and lasting. This was the community decision.”

“The lack of support and international recognition for our referendum has portrayed that there is no solution, and so has encouraged more attacks by the Misseriya and other militias.”

“We are not voting again. All we did was implement those agreements.”

Humanitarian situation:

a. In Abyei

Abyei Town is still in much the same shape as it was following the attacks in 2011. Destruction remains widespread. Local community leaders report that around 70,000 of the 150,000 population of Abyei are currently displaced, many in Agok in South Sudan. Those remaining in Abyei have almost no support.

The Abyei Administration has now returned to Abyei town, attempting to encourage people to return to the area. However, as a result of the crisis of 2011, and the continuing presence of SAF forces in the region, there is widespread fear amongst displaced persons, preventing them from returning to their homes.

Development assistance is urgently required to bring stability and peace to the region, and to allow displaced persons to return home.

“When we were displaced from Abyei, we lost so much. Many buildings are still destroyed, and we lost so much else, including clean water, school textbooks, provision of education.”

“All of our institutions are destroyed, all schools are damaged, children are learning under trees. Above all we need support for schools and water”.

“You can’t make a house as it will be burnt, you can’t make a livelihood. These are the pressures.”

¹⁰ The Enough Project, ‘Looming Crisis: Open Wounds in Abyei Increase Risk of New War’, March 13 2014, available at <http://www.enoughproject.org/reports/looming-crisis-open-wounds-abyei-increase-risk-new-war>

There are concerns that as Abyei is described as a 'contested area', donors are reluctant to provide support. *"We urge the international community to understand that Abyei is not to be denied help because of their perception of Abyei as a 'contested area'."*

They ask for help for development and for the community to have support, *"even if it is going to be destroyed"*.

b. In Agok and surrounding area

Much needed humanitarian assistance is currently being provided by international organisations and distributed by local organisations. A number of International NGOs are present, as well as The World Food Programme. Their role in supporting displaced persons in and around Agok is invaluable, but their ability to extend support into Abyei is severely limited.

Abyei Community Action for Development (ACAD) is currently targeting 81,000 beneficiaries in the area, but the number in need of assistance is significantly greater. In the words of one of the community leaders: *"because people here share, there is no disaster"*.

The role of the United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA)

One of the highest troop densities of any UN peace keeping force is based in the Abyei region with 5,326 military troops, including 4,113 uniformed personnel.

However, community leaders from Abyei expressed concerns about the effectiveness of UNISFA and their ability to disarm militias and protect civilians. On May 4th, 2013, the Paramount Chief, Kuol Deng Kuol, was assassinated in an area hosting many UNISFA troops, leading to a widespread lack of confidence in their abilities to protect people.

The leader of the local youth organisation for Abyei stated that whilst they appreciate UNISFA's presence, they are not meeting their mandate to protect civilians, who are still regularly being killed in raids by armed militias. Local people complain that the disarmament which UNISFA is supposed to be carrying out is not happening.

People also complain that, instead of protecting civilians in their villages, UNISFA are trying to relocate them to Abyei Town, leading to overcrowding and increased pressure on services. This is also allowing the Misseriya to move into their villages.

The extra-judicial killings have all been carried out since the establishment of a 'Buffer Zone' by UNISFA, which was created to allow the seasonal nomadic migrations of Misseriya to take place without clashing with the Ngok Dinka. The Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) for Sudan and South Sudan describe the buffer zone: *"As during the last dry season, the UNISFA strategy is to funnel Misseriya migrants into the east and west migratory corridors, while forming a buffer-zone above the areas near Abyei town that contain the greatest concentration of Ngok Dinka returnees."*¹¹

However, armed militias continue to cross the buffer zone. Community leaders express profound frustration that they although they have given away so much of their own land to create the buffer zone, the killings continue.

"We have sacrificed so much. We accepted the buffer zone to maintain peace and allow nomads to use water supplies and land for grazing, although it intruded into large areas of our own land. 50 per cent of our land has now been given away. We accepted the loss of land for the sake of bringing peace to people who had suffered so much."

"We ask UNISFA why they allow nomads to break the buffer zone, when we have given the land?"

"The AU has to have a discussion with UNISFA to at least protect civilians".

"UNISFA were mandated by the UNSC to provide peace and protect civilians here. Now we have strong doubts that they are neutral. They don't protect the Ngok Dinka people".

¹¹ Human Security Baseline Assessment for Sudan and South Sudan, 'The Crisis in Abyei', <http://www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/facts-figures/borderdisputed-areas/abyei.html>

Other issues:

The recent conflict in South Sudan has also impacted upon those displaced from Abyei. A significant number displaced from the recent conflict in South Sudan - particularly from Unity State - have arrived in the Agok area, adding to the pressure on humanitarian resources.

The absence of media and accurate reporting on the situation is a serious problem: There are no reporters in the region to tell the world what is happening and it takes 3 or 4 days for local leaders to send news to Juba.

FINDINGS: BLUE NILE AND SOUTH KORDOFAN

Note: we were not on this occasion able to visit Blue Nile or South Kordofan. We met with our partners from the region and discussed the situation with them. We also felt that credible reports from organisations such as The Sudan Consortium detailing the recent increase in military offensives in the Two Areas should be highlighted here.

Since 2011, civilians in South Kordofan and Blue Nile State have been caught in the middle of conflict between the Government of Sudan and the SPLM-N, and subjected to ground offensives and aerial bombardments by the Government of Sudan. These attacks have deliberately targeted civilians, striking at markets, schools, churches and other gathering places. Their 'scorched earth' policy is intended to destroy entire villages and prevent food cultivation. Half a million civilians are displaced, with many hiding in caves with deadly snakes, in river-banks or under trees. One of our partners from the Nuba Mountains said: *"We should have been extinguished from the face of the earth, but because of the mountains, we were not"*.

The situation in Blue Nile and South Kordofan has deteriorated further since December 2013, for two main reasons: firstly, an increase in aerial bombardment by the Government in Khartoum and secondly, the crisis in South Sudan which has disrupted transport routes into the Two Areas and thus has affected both the movement of displaced people and the provision of aid.

The people of Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan feel that they are victims of a process through which agreements are regularly signed and never implemented: *"We are all victims of this all our lives. We are victims of this silence. We need the international community to follow up on what both sides have committed to – they are very good at signing"*.

Ground Attacks and Aerial Bombardment

We met our partners from Blue Nile on the 27th February 2014. They reported that aerial bombardment in South Kordofan and Blue Nile is now almost daily, with the biggest increase happening in South Kordofan. The bombardments have generated a climate of continuous fear in the Two Areas: *"It is terrible, they can come at any time. The worst is at night, because the children wake up terrified"*.

They highlighted a recent development in the use of long-range missiles, which are launched from Kadugli and can reach Kauda – a distance of 93km. Sometimes they fall short, destroying houses and killing civilians along the way.

Updates from our partners correlate with reports from other bodies with presence on the ground in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. According to The Sudan Consortium, February saw the highest number of civilians killed or injured in Southern Kordofan since the current conflict began in 2011.

They describe one attack:

"As [AUHIP-sponsored peace talks] were about to begin, aircraft from the Sudanese Air Force systematically bombarded six villages in Andulu District and in neighbouring Umserndiba on 12 and 13 February 2014. In one particularly egregious incident on 13 February, 13 civilians were killed and 16 injured when Sudanese air force jets fired 28 rockets into the crowded market area of Thorlatiso village in Andulu District, Um Dorein County, Southern Kordofan. The dead included five women, two of whom were pregnant. The attacks on the

other five settlements killed 14 and injured 22. The villages that were attacked were entirely civilian in character and can in no way be defined as legitimate military targets.”¹²

In January 2014, monitors on the ground in Southern Kordofan documented the third highest number of air strikes since the beginning of the conflict¹³. This follows a record high of aerial bombardment of civilian settlements in December 2013, with an average of two bombing attacks per day. December also saw the highest number of civilian casualties since the beginning of the conflict.¹⁴ A list of recent reports of aerial bombardments in Southern Kordofan can be found in Appendix 3. An update from the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit reported Ground Offensives in February 2014 in Abbasiya, Bau, Heiban, Dilling and Kadugli, resulting in the destruction of four civilians settlements and the new displacement of more than 5000 civilians in SPLM-N areas.¹⁵

In Blue Nile, a total of 15 air strikes were launched by the Sudanese Air Force on civilian areas during January, the highest number since monitors began recording in April 2013¹⁶. The Sudanese government has targeted Blue Nile State with deadly new tactics and weapons that have increased casualties and caused thousands to flee into South Sudan and Ethiopia, where many struggle to receive adequate humanitarian assistance.¹⁷

Humanitarian Situation

Food insecurity in SPLM-N held areas of Blue Nile and South Kordofan is acute, as a result of intense instability and a limited rainy season. The estimated 680,000 IDPs in the Two Areas are almost entirely reliant on food coming from outside. However, the conflict in South Sudan has disrupted land and river transport to the regions, hindering the transfer of life-saving assistance.

On January 17th 2014, the Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SRRA), based in South Kordofan and Blue Nile, warned that the situation in **Blue Nile State** is grave, and that if food and medicines are not delivered immediately, hundreds more will die of hunger and disease in the coming months. On February 11th 2014 the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSN) projected that in SPLM-N controlled areas of **South Kordofan**, the situation will reach Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity by March/ April 2014.¹⁸

There is hardly any provision of fundamental services including healthcare and education.

Some aid is still able to get across the border into the Two Areas. Supporting cross-border efforts is essential to ensure the survival of communities in South Kordofan and Blue Nile. There are still markets on the borders between Sudan and South Sudan, where food can be purchased and taken into the Two Areas.

Rebuilding Trust

There is an urgent need to rebuild trust and dialogue between communities. Our partners expressed deep concern for the younger generation of the African population of the Nuba Mountains, who have never known peace. Living in deep isolation and under constant attack, they have not had the chance to live amongst the Arab population of Sudan as many of the older generation have. As a result, *“they understand the Arabs only from the Antonovs... they know the Arabs in the face of the missiles, the antonovs, their loved ones who have been killed. All they know is that*

¹² The Sudan Consortium, March 2014, ‘The Impact of Aerial Bombing of Civilian Settlements in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Republic of Sudan’.

http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_consortium_actions/reports/2014/Sudan%20Consortium%20Update%20Feb%202014%20FINAL.pdf

¹³ The Sudan Consortium, February 2014, ‘The Impact of Aerial Bombing of Civilian Settlements in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Republic of Sudan’.

¹⁴ The Sudan Consortium, January 2014, ‘The Impact of Aerial Bombing of Civilian Settlements in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Republic of Sudan’.

http://www.sudanconsortium.org/darfur_consortium_actions/pressreleases/2014/Sudan%20Consortium%20Update%20Jan%202014-FINAL.pdf

¹⁵ South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit, February 2014, ‘Update on humanitarian needs in South Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Sudan’.

¹⁶ The Sudan Consortium, February 2014, ‘The Impact of Aerial Bombing of Civilian Settlements in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile States, Republic of Sudan’.

¹⁷ <http://enoughproject.org/blogs/report-forgotten-wars-sudans-periphery-smolders-focus-turns-south-sudan>

¹⁸ Famine Early Warning Systems Network, February 11 2014, ‘Conflict and poor harvest likely to drive Crisis and Emergency outcomes in Sudan’. <http://www.fews.net/east-africa/sudan/alert/tue-2014-02-11>

this comes from the Arabs". In the face of these growing divisions between communities there are serious concerns about the ability to rebuild trust and peace between groups: yet this will be essential to the development of a lasting peace.

CONCLUSION

The widespread, massive suffering of civilians in South Sudan caused by the eruption of conflict last December and its subsequent escalation has resulted in a humanitarian crisis reaching catastrophic proportions in some areas.

The news coverage of atrocities, such as those perpetrated in Malakal, and of the plight of civilians in some parts of South Sudan, has deflected attention from other areas where civilians are also suffering from this conflict, such as in the Abyei region, and victims of Khartoum's continuing, ruthless assaults on civilians in Blue Nile and Southern Kordofan, with increasing aerial bombardment.

This visit and report attempt to keep the needs of these suffering people on the agenda of the international community and humanitarian organisations, lest they become 'forgotten people', left to suffer and die, without aid or advocacy; and lest the perpetrators of violence are allowed to continue their atrocities with impunity.

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9th March 2014

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX ONE: Report IDP in Gogrial Area Diocese (Warrap State), 2nd March 2014

Locations/Camps	No of IDPs	County	From where
Kuajok	3823	Gogrial west	Abyei
Manangui	4832	Twic	Unity State
Manawan	2232	Twic	Unity State
Aweng	3049	Twic	Unity State
Akon North (Jong)	5023	Gogrial	Abyei
Turalei	2000	Twic	Unity State
Ajak kuethdhiec	2009	Twic	Unity State
Gogrial	256	Gogrial West	Abyei
Alek South	405	Gogrial West	Abyei
Riau	427	Gogrial West	Abyei
Total	24056		

- The total no. Of IDPs in Gogrial West **9,934** (Main camps are Kuajok in Kuac North and Jong in Akon North)
- The total No. of IDPs in Twic **14,122** (The main camps are Aweng, Manawan and Manangui)

NB: These IDPs need humanitarian assistance (Food and Non-food Items). All these people are under Gogrial Area Diocese.

APPENDIX TWO: Figures for IDPs in Twic, Warrap State, from IOM South Sudan Crisis Response, Displacement Tracking Matrix, 1 – 28 February 2014 (page 12, available at <http://southsudan.humanitarianresponse.info/system/files/documents/files/DTM%20Report%20Round%201%20-%20February%202014.pdf>).

WARRAP State TWIC County					
Aweng		540	1,031	1,308	2,339
Man-Anguei		1,991	3,638	4,692	8,330
Man-Awan		139	297	337	634
Pan-tiit		47	72	103	175

APPENDIX THREE: News reports of recent bombardments in Southern Kordofan

Source	Date	No. Killed	Where	How
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Sudan Consortium	25 Jan '14	n/a	Kauda	32 Bombs
	15 Dec-15 Jan '14	22	South Korodfan	56 Bombs
	20th Dec '13		Kauda, Toroje	Ground offensives
	1-15 Jan '14		South Korodfan	35 seperate attacks
Radio Tamazuj	30 jan '14	10	Korongo Abdalla, kadugli	aerial bombs
	13 Feb '14	5	Gadir Locality	landmine explosion
	9th Feb '14	19	Karida	Gunmen
	24th Feb '14	6	Trawa Village	aerial bombs
Fox News	10 Feb '14	3	Tamadirgo & Dar	aerial bombs
All African	10 Feb '14	1	Damordago	aerial bombs
Business standard	20 Feb '14		Kadugli	aerial bombs
Sudan Tribune	w/c 17 Feb '14	11	Om Dula, Nuba Mountains	aerial bombs