

HUMANITARIAN UPDATE – May 2015

South Kordofan and Blue Nile states, Sudan

Produced by the South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit¹

Overview

Ground fighting intensified during the reporting period with the Sudan government continuing its “decisive campaign” to eradicate the SPLA-N (rebels) in the aftermath of the elections. The fighting caused the displacement of approximately 50,000 people in the Two Areas in May 2015. Many of the displaced suffered loss of most of their household goods and food stocks, which were looted and burnt by government aligned militias - mainly Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and Popular Defence Forces (PDF). The government forced around 12,000 people in Blue Nile to move to the outskirts of the capital Damazin. An unknown number of civilians were reportedly killed and at least forty-eight (48) were abducted by government forces or affiliated militias. The new IDPs are now living in extremely critical humanitarian conditions, having lost their food stocks and assets including seeds, and will be unable to plant in the rainy season now underway. Many newly displaced in South Kordofan are expected to move to the refugee camps in South Sudan. Neither international organisations nor the CU are unable to assess the situation of the IDPs in government held areas due to government prohibitions on access.

Indiscriminate and targeted aerial bombardment and shelling continue to create fear and cause stress for the civilian populations in the Two Areas. An estimated 180 bombs, including four cluster bombs, and about 300 shells were dropped on civilian locations in May 2015 resulting in the death of five people and injuring nineteen.² Improved household food security data collection and analysis by the Food Security and Monitoring Unit (FSMU) in conjunction with the CU Humanitarian Monitoring teams indicates the majority of households in both Blue Nile and South Kordofan report that the recurring insecurity results in reduced access to fields, pastures, water and markets and losses of crops, livestock, and essential infrastructure.³ While the number of casualties are low, at least partially due to effective community based and self-protection mechanisms after four years of conflict, the aerial attacks have a deep and escalating negative psychological effect on the people. The increase in aerial bombardment and overflights of civilian locations in May and June has been a consistent strategy of the Sudan Armed Forces each year since the start of the civil war, to disrupt cultivation and planting activities, with visible negative impact on the war affected populations in the Two Areas.

The Food Security and Monitoring Unit (FSMU) is now able to better report on the extent and severity of factors affecting food security as well as how households are coping in the Two Areas⁴. Communities in the Two Areas still rely largely on crop and animal sales for income and have started planting in May with the good and early start to the rainy season. In Blue Nile (Yabus and Wadaka payams) households are largely relying on artesian gold mining, a dangerous income source that engages both adults and children. To cope with increasing food insecurity, nearly a third of households are borrowing money and food and reducing health and education expenditures. The situation appears more worrying in South Kordofan, from the visibly increase in the number of households utilizing negative coping strategies. In both areas, there are

¹ 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 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.

² The numbers are based on information gathered through the CU Monitors and the National Human Rights Monitoring Organisation (NHRMO), and triangulated. Their reports are available at <http://www.sudanconsortium.org>

³ The FSMU is an independent INGO monitoring food security levels through a network of local monitors, in South Kordofan and Blue Nile SPLM/A-N held areas. The FSMU reports are available upon request.

⁴ A quantitative report is expected to be available on request in July 2015.

reports of poor households consuming seed stock as food, which bodes poorly for their ability to cultivate and produce sufficient food for the coming year through their farming activities.

Priority areas for humanitarian monitoring include Kao-Nyaro (South-eastern Jebels), Rashad and al Abayissya (eastern Jebels), all of which, to date, are not accessible to the CU/ HMT, and Dalami, in South Kordofan and Wadaka, Chali and the Ingessana Mountains (also not accessible to the CU/ HMT) in Blue Nile. An estimated 100,000 people (14,500 HHs) in the areas in South Kordofan and an estimated 40,000 living in those areas in Blue Nile are presently faced with "crisis" conditions.⁵ These households, in the absence of humanitarian assistance, will be forced to either relocate if physically possible or face "emergency" conditions - implying a potential and significant threat of increased malnutrition and mortality.⁶

Since the conflict in South Sudan began, the personal security of the refugees has considerably increased, particularly in Upper Nile, but there is also an increasingly concerning trend of violence between host and refugee populations from South Kordofan in Unity State. Refugees also report they suffer from shortages in food distribution.

South Kordofan

A. Protection, Insecurity and Displacement

Ground fighting intensified in South Kordofan during the reporting period, especially in Dalami and Thobo (formerly Buram) counties, displacing around 30,000 people. Local observers reported five casualties and an increase in the use of violence against civilians. More than half of all households interviewed in Um Dorein, Heiban and Thobo counties under the CU HMT / FSMU data collection activity in March 2015, report harassment, theft and raids, while one in three households in other counties report the same.⁷ On 5 May 2015, government forces and militias attacked the villages of Shatt Damam, Trawi, Mazariq and Hajar Dabib (Thobo county), looting and burning properties, leading to 3,600 HHs (more than 20,000 people) displaced. One woman and two men were killed. Local informants reported 40 civilians were abducted and taken to Kadugli and their condition is unknown. On 10 May, RSF forces attacked al Hadra village in Umhetan payam, a prominent market in Dalami county, killing at least two men, injuring two, and looting and burning the properties of about 750 HHs. As a result, over 6,700 persons were displaced to Abyat, Bill and Gardud Kodila without food, shelter, medicines and water. On 13 May, according to CU monitors, eight IDPs were abducted during ground attacks on Dabakaya (Thobo county). Their whereabouts remain unknown.

Attacks against civilians and looting in Western Jebels (Dilling, As-Sunut, Habila, and Lagawa counties) continue by both SPLA-N and government forces, with a particular concern for theft and raids in As-Sunut county. Shelling, ground fighting, harassment and theft affected more than two out of three families interviewed by local monitors. Lagawa is least affected relative to other areas but nonetheless over half report theft, and a third report ground fighting and harassment as affecting food security related activities.⁸ In Lagawa county on 15 May, Arab nomads and PDF affiliated to the government raided cattle. A boy was badly beaten but rescued by local people who also managed to recover the animals. Local farmers are particularly stressed, as much of their resilience this time of the year is based on access to livestock and animal production. In As-Sunut county, local sources reported the looting of almost 500,000

⁵ These estimates from CU monitors reflect existing official data of the population in the above areas.

⁶ <http://www.fews.net/east-africa/sudan>. Note "Crisis" means at least 1 in 5 households face significant food consumption gaps with high or above usual acute malnutrition, or is marginally able to meet minimum food needs only with unsustainable coping strategies such as liquidating livelihood assets. "Emergency" the next degree of severity means at least 1 in 5 households face extreme food consumption gaps resulting in very high acute malnutrition or excess mortality, or faces extreme loss of livelihood assets that will likely lead to food consumption gaps (<http://www.fews.net/our-work/our-work/integrated-phase-classification>).

⁷ FSMU, June 2015

⁸ Ibid

Sudanese pounds from traders and about 20 motorbikes, while a number of residents were abducted from Fany and Injemena villages, and forcibly taken to el Fula prison. Their situation remains unknown.⁹ On 16 May five civilians from Joak and Sungir Foat villages, on their way from Dabkar, were stopped by gunmen suspected to be PDF and all their belongings were looted (including cell phones and over 25,000 SDG).

Indiscriminate shelling was particularly intense in Thobo, Dalami and Um Dorein counties in May 2015. According to local human rights monitors, 298 shells were launched into civilian areas in South Kordofan in May, although with no reported casualties and relatively little damage to villages. However over half the households report that these actions results in displacement, destruction of crops, loss of access to pasture, water, markets and destruction of crucial infrastructure (schools, clinics, bridges, etc).¹⁰ Nine explosive shells were directed at the villages of Nitile (Sellara payam), Farsile (Al-farshaya payam) and Shungule in Kabella payam (Habla county) in Dilling county on 24 and 27 May, causing burning of an estimated 540 feddans of farming and grazing land and the temporary displacement of approximately 150 HHs. On 7 and 8 May in Dalami county, 75 shells directed at Umbri village (Sabbat payam) forced 11 HHs to move to the caves, without food or shelter.

Aerial bombardment into civilian locations continued in May 2015 with 161 bombs reported by local monitors on Heiban, Um Dorein, Thobo and Dalami counties, killing five people. Nearly all households interviewed by HMT monitors report being terrorised by flyovers and actual bombing by Antonovs. Between 4 and 11 May, Um Dorein county was bombed almost every day in the morning hours, but no casualty occurred. On 16 May, however a man was killed after 15 bombs were dropped in the village of Umserdiba. Mardes village (Tungule payam) in Dalami county, where people are living at the foot of the mountain, was attacked twice on 10 and 17 May with a total of 14 bombs. One man was killed. On 20 May, 10 bombs were dropped on Asolo (Boram county), killing one woman and injuring two men, while destroying 10 homes. While aerial attacks are much less prevalent in the Western Jebels, the majority of households indicate 'fly over' terrorism has a serious negative effect in limiting their movements and activities in both near and far fields and reducing their access to pasture and water. Areas particularly affected include Dilling and Habla counties.¹¹

As already reported by the CU, Kauda was the target of a deadly government aerial attack on 25-27 May which targeted civilian locations (church, schools, and residential areas). A drone overflight on the previous day is believed to inform the government air force with GPS coordinates and high resolution pictures. On 25 May, two MIGs dropped two missiles in a church compound, which includes the school. As students were not at school that day there were no casualties. Another bomb fell on a residential area, killing two children (one on the spot and the other died two days later in the hospital). Their mothers were also injured and are still in the hospital. In the early morning 27 May, two jet fighters dropped four cluster bombs - banned by the Convention on Cluster Munitions - on residential areas in Kauda. Although people were still in their homes, the bombs did not explode as intended.¹² If the cluster bombs had deployed as designed, the fatalities and injuries would likely have been significant, and the use of these cluster bombs has been more regular in 2015¹³. Later, at midday, an Antonov dropped 12 bombs around the busy weekly upper Kauda market. Three people were injured and six houses destroyed leaving those (former) residents without food and shelter.

⁹ <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/two-south-kordofan-villages/>

¹⁰ FSMU, June 2015

¹¹ Ibid

¹² <http://www.clusterconvention.org>

¹³ Human Rights Watch, *Sudan: Cluster Bombs Used in Nuba Mountains. End Indiscriminate Bombing*, 16 April 2015 and "Human Rights Update: February – March 2015," April 2015, <http://www.sudanconsortium.org/>

The aerial bombardment continues to have a horrible negative and significant psychological impact on the population, becoming exhausted by four years of violent conflict. The effect was deeper for those who lost their houses and food stocks. Human Right Watch has reported on the immense suffering that aerial bombardment has caused children and their families, as many are killed and more are left without food and access to basic services like health and education.¹⁴

Meanwhile insecurity in the refugee camps in Unity State (South Sudan) between the host Dinka community and the refugees is on an upward escalation. On 10 May, a Dinka man with a gun harassed four women who were collecting firewood. One woman resisted and was killed.¹⁵ The perpetrator has not yet been found by the police. The event comes after a series of deadly incidents between the local and the refugees communities around Yida camp, already reported by the CU. While so far effectively contained / mitigated by the local authorities and local community committees, including joint refugee and host participants, the rising incidence of violence remains a concern.

Food security

Food insecurity continues to affect the population of the Nuba Mountains as food stocks from the 2014 / 15 harvest are widely exhausted and people began to plant with the early start of the rainy season.¹⁶ Cultivation has begun in the majority of counties where security allows and agricultural inputs and tools are largely available. The majority of households are relying on sales of grain production for income, while in Heiban and Dalami counties, households rely more on sales of livestock. Nearly one in four rely on sales of grass, charcoal and firewood in Thobo, Heiban and Um Dorein in the central region and Al Sunut in the Western Jebels.¹⁷

In the Central Region (Thoba, Dalami, Heiban and Um Dorein), households are coping by selling household items, asking for and borrowing money from friends and relatives and reducing expenditures by withdrawing children from school. At present these phenomenon are still limited (one in 10 households) but directly related to food insecurity.¹⁸ In the Western Jebels, a third of households surveyed report that aerial bombardment results in forced displacement, loss of important infrastructure and market access. Households in the Western Jebels are coping by reducing health and education expenditures. One in five are planting less - preferred crops. Of serious concern is that nearly one in five households are consuming seeds, which will negatively impact the 2015/ 16 harvest.¹⁹

Local informants report an estimated 100,000 people (14,500 HHs) are particularly affected in isolated pockets of displacement in the south-eastern Jebel (Kao-Nyaro) and in the eastern Jebels, which are isolated from the rest of the SPLA-N's held areas, and in Dalami county, close to the northern frontline.²⁰ Reports from monitors in May indicate that people are moving away from Abri and Dalami payams in Dalami county due to lack of food availability.

The government of Sudan continues to block humanitarian assistance to SPLM-N held territories in the Two Areas, leaving more than half a million IDPs without assistance. Food prices remain more or less equivalent to the same time last year, though with quickly reducing availability. This may be a relevant indicator to encourage interventions of cash inputs as an appropriate

¹⁴ Sudan: Bombing Campaign's Heavy Toll on Children, HRW, 6 May 2015

¹⁵ South Kordofan and Blue Nile Coordination Unit Protection Update #7 - 2015

¹⁶ <http://www.fews.net/east-africa/sudan>

¹⁷ FSMU, June 2015

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ The displaced in the Eastern Jebel are around 6,372 (1,062 HHs) in Al-Abassiya county and 27,817 (4,636 HHs) from Rashad county that moved to Al-Abassiya, around 6,000 HHs in Warni and Kao Nyaro, the South-Eastern Jebel and around 20,000-30,000 IDPs in Dalami, See SKBN CU Humanitarian Update, April 2015.

intervention to enhance household food security and strengthening local and regional markets.

B. Health

Lack of drugs, equipped facilities and qualified personnel remain critical concerns for war affected populations in the SPLM-N held areas. It was reported by HRW that 22 health facilities have been damaged since 2011, mostly by government aerial bombardment.²¹ Lack of hospitals in Western Kadugli, Thobo Um Dorein, Dalami, Alabasya and Rashad seriously limit the ability of those populations to receive treatment and the mobility of the patients to the two functioning hospitals in the central areas will reduce further as the rainy season has started as the journey can take up to five walking days.

Suspected cases of meningitis were reported in Kubang and some cases of measles in Eray (Heiban County) in May 2015. Efforts from the international community for a humanitarian corridor to allow for a UN led vaccination campaign to take place have to date failed. According to HRW, "The two sides have an obligation under international law to minimize harm to civilians and not to block access to independent health care services [...] They should urgently facilitate vaccinations before the coming rains reduce access or risk further outbreaks."²²

C. Animal Health

Unknown diseases continue to kill livestock particularly in Western Kadugli and Dalami counties. A vaccination campaign for the animals is urgently needed.

D. Water and Sanitation

The rainy season has increased the availability of water but clean water remains scarce in all the SPLM-N held areas. Handpumps are in need of immediate repair, as repeatedly stressed by the CU, alongside effective training to local people for maintenance. CU monitors from Western Kadugli reported that 24 out of 53 hand pumps are broken, as are 4 out of 7 in Kadugli payam, 3 out of 10 in Miri payam and 8 out of 15 in Kurungu payam.

E. Education

No update reported.

Blue Nile

A. Protection, Insecurity and Displacement

Fighting was concentrated in the Ingessana Mountains in Bau county in May 2015, leading to a devastating humanitarian crisis for about 30,000 people living close to the war zones, according to OCHA.²³ In the first half of May 2015, approximately 12,000 civilians were forcibly evicted by the government from their villages, namely Khor Maganza, Samansur and Maidum villages, which were subsequently burnt down. The people were moved to locations on the outskirts of Damazin and Rosaries, as previously reported by the CU. According to Sudan Democracy First Group (SDFG), these populations were targeted as designated "rebel supporters".²⁴ Concern was

²¹ Sudan: Bombing Campaign's Heavy Toll on Children, HRW, 6 May 2015

²² Ibid

²³ According to the 2015 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), Baw locality is home to 32,160 people in need in addition to 25,636 IDPs, see <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/2015-humanitarian-needs-overview-sudan-october-2014>

²⁴ SDFG, Update Vol. 3 No. 13, 28 May 2015

expressed by local humanitarian workers over their current conditions and safety. The rainy season has also started, making the possibility of assisting them more challenging.²⁵ The relocation sites suffer from a lack of basic services and livelihood activities. Young men among these IDPs have reportedly been forcibly recruited into government forces and militias (number unknown).

Local humanitarian actors note up to another 20,000 residents of the Ingessana mountains are at risk of forced relocation and complete destruction of their homes and livelihoods, as more violence is expected towards the end of the current dry season of fighting (June). International humanitarian response was reportedly prohibited by the government and the UN Resident Coordinator expressed his deep concern about the ongoing situation, in particular, “Humanitarian needs are rapidly rising in Blue Nile, but aid agencies are often not permitted to independently assess humanitarian needs and respond accordingly in the state”.²⁶ Local NGOs Pan-Care and the Sudan Red Crescent Society were designated to provide aid to the IDPs, but no information is available on their intervention.

Households in Wadaka were particularly threatened by shelling and ground fighting. While one in three households in all counties report theft, based on the FSMU study, there is relatively lower conflict related harassment and raiding in Blue Nile when compared to South Kordofan. However, similar to South Kordofan, nearly all households interviewed report being terrorised by flyovers by Antonov planes, whether bombs are released or not. Bombing affected more than 50% of HHs in Chali and Wadaka and two out of four households interviewed in Yabus. 14 bombs were dropped on civilian locations in the first week of May, mostly in Wadaka payam (Mayak, Mofu, Samari, Balila and Yalta) and in Chali. Shelling was particularly intense in Wadaka. While bombing did not cause any casualty, over a third of households report that it resulted in displacement, destruction of crops and livestock, loss of access to fields both near and far, markets and destruction of crucial infrastructure (schools, clinics, bridges, etc).²⁷ Populations in Chali and Wadaka have been forced to live in extremely poor humanitarian conditions since the beginning of the conflict. Local monitors report over 500 households displaced in Chali due to compounded effects of the conflict, flooding and lack of food availability.²⁸ The situation in Wadaka is further compounded by persons displaced to Wadaka from elsewhere in search of water.²⁹

Tension in Maban between the refugees and the local community continues. On 5 May 2015, an Ingessana refugee was killed by a member of the Maban Defence Force (MDF) on the road to Yusif Batil camp, raising fear among the refugees. In the last week of May, a Felata nomad shot and injured a refugee man from Kaya camp and stole his cows. The perpetrator was later arrested by the local police but the cows were not retrieved. Divisions between ‘indigenous’ tribes and the Felata are long-standing, as the Arab nomads are the main component of the Popular Defence Forces (PDF) used by the government of Sudan during the earlier civil war and again in the current conflict. According to local sources, the incident reveals a collusion between Felata armed nomads and MDF around the camps. If confirmed, this collusion is a worrying development for the security of the refugees.

Meanwhile insecurity has led to the resettlement of around 15-30 people/ day (approximately 40 HHs per week) during the reporting period from the Maban camps to the Shorkile refugee camp in Ethiopia. Some refugees also reportedly moved back to Wadaka, Chali and Yabus areas to cultivate, as food distribution in Maban remains insufficient.

²⁵ <https://www.dabangasudan.org/en/all-news/article/sudanese-forces-torch-villages-in-blue-nile-state-arab-coalition-fayda>

²⁶ <http://reliefweb.int/report/sudan/statement-attributable-united-nations-resident-and-humanitarian-coordinator-sudan-ad-0>

²⁷ FSMU, June 2015

²⁸ FSMU May Report.

²⁹ FSMU May Report.

Fears of attacks by SPLA-IO forces and general insecurity in Upper Nile state has also led to the precautionary (temporary) relocation of 66% of international humanitarian staff in May 2015. This action increases the tension and fear of future insecurity amongst refugees

B. Food security

Similar to South Kordofan, the rainy season has started earlier than normal this year in Blue Nile. Cultivation has started in the majority of villages where security and agricultural inputs and tools are available. According to FSMU, the majority of households in Chali and Wadaka are relying on sales of crops for income. While in Yabus and to a lesser extent in Wadaka, artesian gold mining is the main source of income. Gold mining is a particularly dangerous income source as both adults and children spend hours in deep and dangerous holes. Households are largely coping by eating seed stock (more than one third) - due to very serious food insecurity - and a worrying practice for the current agricultural season. Households are also planting less preferred crops, as well as borrowing food and money to buy food. One in ten HHs are selling productive assets such as their last female animal or draft/transport animals.³⁰

Food availability remains scarce in the war affected area, especially among the Koma Ganza people in southern Yabus, and in most of Chali and Wadaka payams. All markets in SPLM-N areas lack essential food commodities like sorghum, sugar, salt, onion, oil and coffee. Moreover, market conditions have deteriorated as prices of essential commodities increased due to the higher exchange rate of the US Dollar. In Yabus and Moguf markets, traders coming from Ethiopia are refusing to accept the South Sudanese Pound and US Dollars are impossible to find, affecting the ability of people to buy items even when widely available. Finally, as elections were held in Ethiopia, the border with Sudan was closed in the last two weeks of May and the market did not function.

Food security for the refugees in Maban (South Sudan) is also at risk. While WFP had already reduced the food ration in the past months, it is now expected to reduce further food distribution of sorghum, oil, CSB, CSB ++. However, recent communications indicated that reduced access to conflict affected locations in South Sudan resulted in more food being delivered to the refugee camps this month.

C. Health

The health status in the SPLM-N held territories in Blue Nile remains the second priority after food security for residents and IDPs. All the health clinics lack sufficient drugs and no antibiotics can be found. Most people in the area use roots and leaves of trees for treatment. The major diseases expected in the upcoming rainy season are malaria, diarrhoea, fever, skin infection, and typhoid. Provision of health services to the people in need remains paramount.

D. Animal Health

No update reported.

E. Water and Sanitation

Water availability has improved given the early onset of the rainy season. The quality of drinking water remains extremely poor, given contamination with mud and insects. The maintenance of boreholes remains a priority. A filtering system would help people living close to Yabus, Mayak, Alsamah Alaradeba and Wadaka rivers.

³⁰ FSMU May Report.

F. Education

Seventeen (17) primary schools were functioning during the reporting period but they are still lacking school material, qualified teachers and facilities. Based on an established calendar in the SPLM-N areas, schools closed in the last week of May for children to help their families cultivate and are not expected to restart until November 2015.

Humanitarian Negotiations on the Two Areas

There is no update on the resumption of humanitarian negotiations on the Two Areas. Meanwhile, the SPLM-N, as part of the Sudan Revolutionary Front, boycotted the April elections and refused to accept the result, calling for a popular uprising.

The international community should pressure all concerned parties to negotiate to allow for a humanitarian corridor to deliver emergency food and medicines to the population in need. According to HRW, the Security Council should follow through on threats to impose sanctions on those responsible for blocking aid, and establish an arms embargo.”³¹

³¹ Sudan: Bombing Campaign's Heavy Toll on Children, 6 May 2015