

23 February 2012

Highlights:

- Austerity measures, meant to cut non-salary spending by 50 per cent, have put the humanitarian community on alert for greater hardship.
- The government will start its campaign for disarmament among rival communities in Jonglei State on 01 March, with an emphasis on voluntary handovers first.
- South Sudan will “field test” the new Transformative Agenda for humanitarian coordination.

I. Situation overview

The Council of Ministers on February 17 approved the initial set of austerity measures to reduce government expenditures to make up for the shut-down of oil production. Humanitarian agencies are concerned that the loss of export revenues from oil could add to an already complicated humanitarian situation. In Jonglei State, inter-communal clashes continued as the government prepared to begin a campaign for voluntary disarmament. An estimated 140,000 people have been affected by the crisis in the state.

The humanitarian community also continued to respond to emergencies in other parts of the country, including displacement of around 110,000 people from Abyei and the need to accommodate over 100,000 refugees from fighting in Southern Kordofan and Blue Nile, in Sudan. The Southern Kordofan/Unity refugee corridor has been disrupted by insecurity, including reported bombardments by Sudanese forces around the border. The South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA), a rebel group vowing to “end corruption”, has issued new warnings to civilians, NGOs and UN personnel to leave Unity and Upper Nile States.

II. Humanitarian challenges: needs and response

Austerity adds to food-security fears

South Sudan's self-imposed austerity measures amid its oil dispute with Sudan have raised concerns in the humanitarian community about consequences for people already suffering from poverty, lack of infrastructure and weak institutional capacity. The World Food Programme (WFP) has declared a Level 3 emergency for South Sudan, directing a large share of resources towards scaling-up operations in the country amid rising concerns about food insecurity.

Given erratic rainfall and tensions with Sudan, the projected cereal deficit for South Sudan this year is 470,000 metric tons – 60 per cent more than last year. As many as 4.7 million people could experience food insecurity, 1 million of them severely. The WFP is preparing to assist some 2.5 million people and plans further scale-ups if necessary. The potential for macro-economic shocks from the loss of oil revenues makes worst-case scenarios appear more likely.

Austerity measures – set to take effect immediately upon signing by the President – include a 50 per cent reduction of non-salary spending and the elimination of unconditional grants to state governments. Until now, oil revenues have accounted for 98 per cent of the government budget. The Council of Ministers has promised not to eliminate any jobs or reduce the salaries of public employees, nor to touch defence and security spending, which accounts for over 40 per cent of the budget. The Minister of Finance and Economic Planning, Kosti Manibe, vowed to shore up the budget by enforcing the 2009 tax code, with a target of tripling non-oil revenue collection within six months.

Jonglei disarmament set to begin softly

The Government of South Sudan says it will begin its disarmament campaign in Jonglei State starting 01 March, with a strong emphasis on “sensitization” and voluntary disarmament first, led by chiefs from the communities. Peacekeeping Joint Monitoring Teams are to include South Sudan's army and police along with representatives from the Dinka, Lou Nuer and Murle communities. The state governor has asked the UN country mission, UNMISS, to monitor the process for human-rights violations. Concerns remain, however, that disarmament efforts could contribute to increasing tensions in an already tense environment. Jonglei's rival communities are wary of relinquishing their weapons, regardless of government promises to carry out disarmament simultaneously in each

area. South Sudanese troops, sent to Jonglei in larger numbers ahead of the campaign, reportedly withdrew under fire early in the week after a group of Lou Nuer youth misinterpreted sensitization statements.

Inter-communal clashes have continued, with around 200 Lou Nuer confronting around 300 Murle near Yuai on 18-19 February, leaving at least three dead, according to unconfirmed reports. The Murle community denied allegations that its fighters were concentrating for a renewed offensive in the state, the scene of bitter inter-communal violence and widespread displacement since last year. UNMISS air reconnaissance noted no large concentration.

Upper Nile camps under strain from new arrivals

Refugee numbers are increasing steadily in Upper Nile State, with 43,483 registered in Doro and 32,427 in Jammam as of 23 February. Doro received 5,053 new arrivals in the week, until registration was temporarily interrupted for WFP food distribution. Registration is to resume shortly. According to refugees, a further 20,000 people are in the border area, but whether they have crossed the border yet is unclear. The presence and number of these additional people have not been confirmed by UNHCR and refugee-assistance partners. Non-food items have been distributed to 12,900 people in Jammam and 5,167 in Doro over the past week. Both settlements need replenishment given the constantly growing numbers of new arrivals.

Water, sanitation and hygiene are a major concern, and water supply at refugee sites is still below the UNHCR standard of 15-20 litres per person per day. In Jammam, hand pumps have been motorized and are producing water, but truck capacity for bringing more water remains insufficient. The results of a hydrologist's assessment are expected in the coming days. A large rig contracted to dig deeper boreholes in Maban will arrive within a week, according to IOM.

Malaria, watery diarrhoea and respiratory tract infections are the most common reported diseases. MSF has reported an increase in bloody diarrhoea due to lack of hygiene and is sending cholera kits for preparedness. Health partners are establishing standard referral procedures for HIV and tuberculosis patients. In Doro, measles vaccinations have begun for at least 12,000 children ranging from 6 months up to 15 years old.

Level 2 registration – identifying refugees with special needs – will start in Doro and Jammam as soon as sites in Unity State are done. Some refugees could be moved from the Doro 1 site to Doro 2, depending on water availability and access to services. A third site must also be identified for Doro, while Jammam needs a second site. The Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED), while awaiting reports on unexploded ordnance that could affect water facilities, has started Jammam 2 site demarcation, with finalisation expected in two weeks. Additionally, the Jammam-Doro road needs upgrading before the rainy season. Local authorities are engaged, and UNOPS has received positive indications that the necessary equipment can be located within a week.

In order to improve safety and security, 40 community watch volunteers have been trained, protection kiosks are being set up, and joint activities are being organized between refugees and host communities. In Doro, humanitarian partners have identified three child-friendly spaces, and 20 recreation kits supplied by UNICEF have arrived, so that activities for children can now begin.

Hygiene and schools upgraded for refugees in Unity State

Updated refugee statistics are not available for Unity State for the past week because UNHCR is undertaking Level 2 registration, meant to identify people with special needs. As of 16 February, 26,400 refugees were receiving humanitarian assistance in the state. Level 2 registration continues in Yida, with the registration team set to proceed from there to Pariang



Women queuing for clean water at the Doro refugee site in Upper Nile State. Photo: UNHCR/ S. Billvik

and Nyeel. A nutrition assessment in Yida, which screened 4,090 children aged between 6 months and nearly 5 years, shows positive trends based on preliminary results, with further analysis to follow. The ICRC has established a family telephone linkage for refugees staying in Yida with their relatives in Khartoum. Out of 92 calls placed, 40 went through successfully, including 31 calls by unaccompanied minors, according to ICRC. The service is to continue on a regular basis.

In Nyeel, CARE has nearly completed a piping system and begun hygiene promotion. To prevent flooding of latrines during the rainy season, a shelter planner sent to Nyeel and Pariang is proposing a revised design using septic tanks. Soap has arrived for distribution to minor and separated girls living in Yida. Water, sanitation and hygiene partners continue to coordinate their activities to prevent gaps.

Two long houses are under construction to provide more space for primary education in Nyeel. Education partners are working together in both Nyeel and Pariang to finalize the procurement of furniture for schools. Pariang's secondary school has received over 1,000 registered refugee students, while additional school premises are being prepared to take in another 2,000. These new premises need to be ready by the time South Sudanese students return to school in the second week of April. Vacant primary schools are being used for now. Protection partners in Pariang are working with the community to identify more caretakers for students.

In the state capital, Bentiu, meanwhile, training is underway on health information systems. Health partners are developing referral mechanisms between refugee sites to deal with the realities of relocation, including by HIV and tuberculosis patients.

Re-registration to begin for displaced from Abyei

Humanitarian agencies have been preparing for contentious re-registration and verification exercises to start on 27 February with displaced people in and around Abyei. In the Agok area, local authorities are insisting on wider criteria for displacement. In Twic, in Warrap State, the authorities have accepted a verification exercise with some amendments to eligibility requirements. Previous registration exercises were conducted by WFP and IOM in May-June 2011. Since then, the situation has been fluid, with many people moving from one location to another. However, if political considerations take precedence, the total numbers of displaced could be inflated, humanitarian officials warned.

III. Returns to South Sudan

Returnee Overview by State*											
State:	Upper Nile	Unity	Warrap	Northern Bahr el Ghazal	Western Bahr el Ghazal	Lakes	Jonglei	Western Equatoria	Central Equatoria	Eastern Equatoria	Total
New Arrivals 15-21 Feb	189	0	29	200	135	4	0	25	544	77	1203
Previous Total											0
Updated Total	59697	87634	33095	69373	21133	17398	21034	2245	42050	11623	365282
Type of Returnee											
Government Assisted	25317	32080	16894	23499	7937	15631	16090	1548	26522	9886	175404
Spontaneous	19419	55554	6973	44683	13331	1501	4914	673	16072	1814	164934
Unspecified	15150	0	9257	1391	0	270	30	49	0	0	26147

*since 30 October 2010. Contains only verified IOM data unless otherwise noted. Figures are as of 21 February 2012.

RRC plans alternative corridors

The Chairperson of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) visited Bentiu, in Unity State, and Malakal, in Upper Nile State, on 20-22 February. The purpose of the visit was to prepare the RRC and the humanitarian community for a possible mass South Sudanese return movement from Sudan, along with an expected influx of refugees. The RRC expects returnees to come primarily via Upper Nile and western parts of Unity State, rather than by other agreed corridors into Unity and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, which are currently disrupted by insecurity.

The increased focus on the Upper Nile corridor would greatly stretch response capacity in that area, with the expectation that returnees would have to spend some time in temporary sites waiting for onward transport, or until roads become usable after the rainy season.

NFI kits pre-positioned in case of influx

In preparation for anticipated mass returns in March and April, 1,000 non-food item (NFI) kits have been prepositioned in Gok Machar, in Northern Bahr el Gazal. Small-scale humanitarian response efforts, meanwhile, continue for returnees throughout the country. In Aweil, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, 264 spontaneous returnees have received a one-month food ration. In Gogrial West, in Warrap State, 188 returnees have been identified for livelihood assistance to help them reintegrate, along with an equal number of people from the host community. Equipment for small farming or businesses, including ox ploughs, grinding machines and hairdressing materials, will be provided.

No-shows frequent for trains in Renk

In Upper Nile State, 56 people received onward transport from Renk to Malakal during the past week, although 100 had registered for the trip. This failure to show up for actual travel has been a persistent problem in Renk, with returnees apparently being undecided about whether or not to leave. In Sudan, meanwhile, IOM is preparing manifests for trains to bring South Sudanese returnees from Khartoum and Kosti. In Khartoum, over 600 people have been put on the manifest, while in Kosti, listing has started for approximately 1,000 returnees awaiting onward transport. Returnees with little or no luggage are the priority, as space is still available in passenger carriages, but not in luggage carriages. The departure date for both trains depends on when IOM receives carriages for the second train.

IV. Humanitarian planning and coordination

South Sudan to “field test” Transformative Agenda

The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) has selected South Sudan to test the implementation of the planned new Transformative Agenda for humanitarian coordination. After identifying weaknesses worldwide during the past two years, the IASC Principals agreed in December 2011 on a set of actions to improve the current humanitarian response model. These include: a mechanism to deploy strong, experienced senior humanitarian leadership from the outset of a major crisis; strengthening leadership capacities and rapid deployment at various levels; improved strategic planning at the country level; enhanced accountability of the Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) and members of the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT); and streamlined coordination mechanisms adapted to operational requirements.

Prior to an emergency, IASC organizations will aim to increase mutual understanding among civil society, national and international response systems. Efforts will continue to develop local response capacities with the support of international humanitarian organizations, to ensure that life-saving assistance can be delivered when needed. At the outset, IASC organizations will focus their efforts on implementing the transformative agenda in three key areas: leadership, coordination, and accountability, with the ultimate objective of accountability to beneficiaries.

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