



Internal Displacement in Sudan

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Introduction

More than thirty years of civil war and inter tribal conflicts have caused tremendous suffering for the civilian Sudanese population. Since the conflict escalated in 1983 there have been an estimated two million war-related deaths and reliable sources estimate that 4 million or more remain internally displaced – with little prospect for large-scale returns in the near future. During recent years there has been a major expansion of oil production inside the conflict area. This has become closely linked with increased displacement as civilians have been forced to move as the conflict has escalated in these areas. Access problems in areas such as the Nuba Mountains, Bahr al Ghazal, Western Upper Nile/Unity State, Eastern Equatoria and southern Blue Nile continuously limit the opportunity to reach the displaced with humanitarian assistance, and there are regular reports of IDPs being exposed to gross violations of fundamental human rights and the rules of war – including relief facilities being targeted by aerial bombing (ICG 2002 p3; UN November 2001 p52).

Common problems of quantifying IDP populations is further complicated in Sudan by traditional nomadic migration patterns, as well as movements related to people searching for emergency assistance due to sustained drought problems and even occasional floods. The latest comprehensive estimate of displacement in Southern Sudan dates back to USAID's survey in 1994, which confirmed the presence of 1,5 million IDPs (Ruiz 1998 p153). The UN has estimated the distribution of IDPs within Government-controlled areas as follows: some 1.8 million IDPs in the Khartoum State, 500 000 in the east and the "transition zone", and 300 000 in the southern states; in SPLM/A-controlled territories, it estimates there are 1.4 IDPs (UNCHR 5 February 2002).

Although the civil war in Sudan is commonly depicted as one between the Muslim North versus the Christian and animist South, many casualties over the past years occurred as a result of inter-tribal conflicts (such as between the Dinka and the Nuer ethnic groups and within those groups). The civil war has no single battlefront, but fighting and atrocities against civilians take place in several different conflict areas. This has created a very complex and fluid displacement situation (Christian Aid May 2001). Even if the civil war has a religious dimension, major geo-political and economic issues cannot be overlooked especially in the current phase when displacement has become closely linked to conflict over resources (ICG 2002 p93; IRIN 14 November 2001 pp1, 3; Christian Aid 17 May 2001 p2).

Main causes for conflict-induced displacement

The conflict involves numerous armed factions, including the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A), – which merged with the Sudan People's Defence Forces (SPDF) in 2001 – the Government's Sudanese Army and its Popular Defence Forces (composed of various tribal militias), in addition to several individual groups of armed militias, – partly at war and partly in alliance with the Government or fighting each other. The Government of Sudan has commonly used ethnic divide-and-rule tactics to weaken the southern-based opposition forces, for example by sowing tensions between the Nuer and the Dinka ethnic groups in the oil regions (ICG 2002 pp.129-133). Direct exposure of civilians to military activities by the various armed factions is the main cause behind displacement in Sudan. Military action with a clear intent to displace civilians has been a common pattern and practice by armed forces on both sides of the conflict. Control of

territory has been a main reason for the fighting, but the acquisition of resources and assets from civilians, or the denial of resources to the opposing side have been the dominant aspects of the war. Attacks on civilian settlements to disrupt recruitment to the various militias, and forced relocation have also characterized the conflict (Hendrie 1996; OCHA 28 September 1999).

Abduction of civilians is the most extreme form of displacement in Sudan. It has been reported that as many as 12,000 remained abducted by end-2000 (US DOS February 2001 sect.1b), and that this practice has continued despite several initiatives to stop it. For example, by the beginning of 2001, Government militias escorting a military convoy killed civilians and abducted between 200 and 400 children and women in villages near Wau (UN November 2001). Major displacement of civilians has also paved the way for the recruitment of child soldiers – which has been practiced by both Government affiliated forces and rebel groups (ICG 2002 p4). Although SPLM/A handed over 3,500 child-soldiers to UNICEF in February 2001, there still remains between 4,000 and 6,000 to demobilize and return to their homes (UNICEF 29 August 2001; UN November 2001 p82).

In Eastern Equatoria, attacks from the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA), traditionally affiliated with forces loyal to the government of Sudan, have displaced many people. The LRA has an appalling human rights record that includes abduction of civilians and forced recruitment of child soldiers (JRS 7 April 2001).

Since 1989 displacement has increasingly been related to the expanding oil exploration and extraction in the Unity State (Western Upper Nile) and Upper Nile areas, as well as in areas crossed by the oil pipelines (ICG 2002 pp132-133; AI 3 May 2000; Christian Aid 15 March 2001; Harker January 2000). The strategy by the Government to protect the oil production has included use of loyal militias to depopulate the oil-rich areas by extremely violent means, including looting and burning villages, killing and abducting (ICG 2002 pp133, 136). In addition, civilians are often caught between the fighting of rivaling militias seeking to establish themselves in these areas (ICG 2002 p135). These attacks have intensified during 2001 and there have been reports that access roads and airstrips built by the oil-companies have been used by the perpetrators (ICG 2002 p136). According to IMF figures, military expenditure doubled to US\$ 327 million between 1998-2000, and while oil production revenues are soaring to \$900 million per year, human rights observers stress that no visible development is benefiting the southern populations (CAID May 2001; IRIN 11 July 2001; IRIN 14 November 2001).

Recent developments

During 2001 violent conflicts continued unabated in the Nuba Mountains, the states of Unity, Upper Nile, Bahr al Ghazal, Eastern Equatoria and southern Blue Nile. These conflicts force civilians to flee both within the same states as well as seeking refuge in neighbouring states (UN November 2001). The IDP situation has worsened since 2001, especially as conflict escalated in West Bahr al Ghazal, causing major displacements particularly from Raga town. Although there has been some unilateral and temporary cease-fires put in place by the GoS and the SPLM/A since 1998, they were not renewed in 2001 or were violated shortly after being declared (UN November 2001). The Nuba Mountains, once Sudan's breadbasket, has since long been the theatre of unresolved armed conflict. The Government has since the early 1990s created so-called 'peace

villages' in areas under their control, where Nuba communities from areas contested with the SPLA have been forcefully moved to. During the first half of 2001 the Government launched an offensive in the Nuba Mountains. In May 2001 militia troops systematically ransacked and burned 2500 homes, forcibly displacing more people into "peace villages"(IRIN 4 June 2001). As areas controlled by the rebels diminish, the civilians are forced to flee higher into the mountains, where cultivation on the steep slopes is fruitless, and where they are cut off from humanitarian assistance.

Available reports show that during 2001 and 2002 new displacement took place especially in the following areas:

- January 2001: Civilians displaced from Nuba Mountains took refuge in south Khordofan state as fighting between the GoS and SPLA escalated (ACT 21 March 2001).
- May 2001: 50,000 displaced in the Nuba Mountains because of attacks by Government troops (IRIN 23 July 2001).
- June 2001: Civilians flee SPLA offensive and the capture of the towns of Daim Zubeir and Raga in Bahr al Ghazal; 30,000 IDPs fled towards Timsaha and 8000 towards Ed Daein (OCHA 10 June 2001).
- Second half of 2001: 5000 IDPs from Raga town in Bahr al Ghazal who initially had taken refuge in Timsaha, were forced to flee a second time after GoS declared it a military area (IRIN 22 January 2002).
- September 2001: 7,600 IDPs in camps in Northern Bahr al Ghazal (USAID, September 2001) Frequent displacements due to PDF/Murahleen raids into northern Bahr al Ghazal mainly along the Babanusa/Wau railway line (UN August 2001).
- July 2001: 4,576 new arrivals in Wau town, (Bahr Al Ghazal) caused by Murahleen militia raids. Total population in IDP camps numbering at 50,560 (OCHA 31 July 2001).
- January 2002: 16,000 new IDPs in Awoda Wau County fled from Bahr al Ghazal (IRIN 22 January 2002).
- March 2001: Arrival of over 12,000 new IDPs into Bentiu (Unity State) as fighting in the oil-rich area escalated (OCHA 31 March 2001). UN estimated in 2000 e number of IDPs around Bentiu at up to 40.000.
- July 2001: 2920 IDPs from Unity State took refuge in Rumbek Lakes District.
- April 2001: People displaced as villages in Juba county were attacked by Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) and Government of Sudan (GoS) troops (JRS 7April 2001).
- January 2002: South Darfur hosted 49,000 IDPs by end January 2002, of which 13,000 are scattered outside camps; those registered in IDP camps numbered 7000 in Umm Therona; 2,952 in Al Ferdow; 2,500 in El Radom and 2,800 in Buram (IRIN 22 January 2002).

Protection issues

The Government has been criticized for not accommodating the protection needs of IDPs from the south (Ruiz 1998). Some observers have questioned the extent to which the "peace villages" for people displaced from the Nuba Mountains in Southern Kordofan provide protection for IDPs (e.g. Al 20 June 1997). Over the past years, concern has been expressed by the international community on the conditions of IDPs living in the so-called "peace villages" with reports of forced islamisation of non-muslims by the authorities. Since 1998, there have been regular reports of Government bombing civilian targets, including hospitals caring for IDPs, IDP camps, and food aid drop-zones.

Human Rights observers have reported an increase during 2001 of such gross violations of international humanitarian law (USCR 24 September 2001; IRIN 14 November 2001). There were nearly 100 air strikes in the first six months of 2001 only, including bombings on IDP camps in Equatoria (Ngaluma and Pariang camps) and in Bahr al Ghazal (Malual Kon IDP relief centre) (IRIN-CEA 3 August 2001). In addition, food aid drop zones were on several occasions targeted for aerial bombing during 2001-2002; including the bombings that occurred in Akuem on 10 February 2002 during a WFP food distribution to 18,000 civilians (IRIN 22 January 2002; WFP 13 February 2002).

It has also been reported that military actions by the SPLA towards Raga, Deim Zubir and surrounding areas of western Bahr El Ghazal in 2001, were the cause for massive displacements of civilians to Ed Daein and other more secure areas under GoS control.

There has been a noticeable rise of attacks on civilians in oil-producing areas and areas crossed by the oil pipelines (IRIN 28 February 2002, 12 March 2002). During February 2002, in the oil-rich Western Upper Nile, aerial bombings on Nimme killed five civilians including an MSF worker, and militias ransacked the village as well as medical supplies. 11 days later a helicopter gunship attack on a relief centre in Bieh, killed scores of civilians and led to the US suspending peace talks with Khartoum (IRIN 12 March 2002).

Arbitrary arrests and abductions of displaced children by Government forces have been reported (AI 20 June 1997 and Ruiz 1998). Concerns have also been raised about the protection of civilians within SPLA-held areas given the absence of a civilian judicial system and the reported disappearance of detained people (HRW 1998).

The UN has pointed at a general lack of awareness about human rights and international humanitarian law to protect the rights of civilians in armed conflict (UN November 1999, p.50). It has also raised concern about a disparity of protection methods applied by the various humanitarian agencies (OCHA 28 September 1999, paras. 20-22). In December 1999, an agreement signed by the UN, Government and SPLM/A at a Technical Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (TCHA) meeting in Geneva, includes guarantees for protection of civilians. It also binds SPLM/A to "customary human rights law", and contains the commitment by both parts not to enforce illegal relocations of civilians (OLS 15 December 1999).

In early January 2002, the US Peace Envoy proposed four confidence-building measures: calling for a cease-fire, while granting humanitarian access to the Nuba Mountains; creating zones of tranquillity, allowing aid workers to carry out a nationwide immunization program; appointing an international commission to investigate charges of slavery; and cessation of Government's aerial bombardments of civilian targets (IRIN, 14 January 2002). In March 2002, the most contentious of all these proposals: the protection of civilian populations, has been formally agreed by both the GoS and the SPLM/A, and is to be monitored in northern and southern Sudan (IRIN 12 March 2002).

Health and nutrition

Civil insecurity and displacements undermine food security in Sudan. IDPs are among the worst affected, and become dependent on host communities – who already have over-stretched their meagre resources –, or on sporadic humanitarian aid (FEWS 15 March 2001). Despite the fact that both floods and droughts hit Sudan during 2001,

national cereal production improved by 38 percent in 2001, compared to the year before. Nevertheless, there are significant food deficient areas in Sudan, and the nutrition situation deteriorated during 2001, with malnutrition rates commonly at 15-30 percent in IDP hosting states of Bahr el Ghazal, Upper Nile, Eastern Equatorial and Unity. As a result of poor harvests in 2001, nutrition is expected to further deteriorate during 2002 in Red Sea State, Kordofan, and Darfur States. FAO warned that in 2002, population displacement and insecurity, risk to further deteriorate the nutritional status in several zones in southern Sudan, especially in Kapoeta and Torit in East Equatoria, Aweil, Gogrial, Twic/Abyei and Tonj in North Bahr el Ghazal, Raja in West Bahr el Ghazal, Jonglei and Unity. In these areas, food stocks are insufficient to bridge the hunger gap until the next harvest and the FAO Supply Assessment concluded that overall 155,000 tones of food aid would be needed in 2002 for IDPs and other vulnerable groups, at least until the harvest in August/September 2002 (FAO 17 January 2002; FEWS 22 February 2002). A survey conducted in September 2001 in Aweil IDP camps of Northern Bahr el Ghazal, reported a dramatic prevalence of under-five mortality rate at 6.5/10,000 per day. Also, it pointed to the very poor quality of water sources and critical lack of access to health facilities (ACC/SCN October 2001 pp17-18). Other health indicators on a larger scale are not readily available as surveys on IDP health are rarely conducted. However, the situation for people during the flight phase is reportedly particularly bad due to minimal access to health facilities and clean water (Christian Aid 15 March 2001).

One factor that exacerbates the situation facing IDPs is that large groups of the general population are in need of humanitarian assistance. IDPs were only one of several target groups for the major Bahr Al Ghazal relief operation 1998. Assessments there revealed that IDPs were actually marginalized compared to other war-affected people during food distribution— especially those not accompanied by their traditional leaders during their flight. Surveys also showed that IDPs had higher malnutrition and mortality rates than the resident population (SPLM/OLS 27 August 1998, Jaspars 12 April 1999).

IDPs in Khartoum

UN estimates that about 1.8 million IDPs have sought refuge in the Greater Khartoum area (UN CHR 5 February 2002). In 2000 it was reported that only 260,000 were settled in the four official IDP camps while the remaining were living in various planned and unplanned areas (UN November 2000 p143). Several reports describe a bleak humanitarian situation facing the latter category of IDPs, including regular outbreaks of disease, chronic food insecurity and limited access to safe drinking water (e.g. Harker January 2000 pp44-45; UNCHR 17 May 1999 paras. 76-80). However, it was reported by end-2000 that IDPs in camps had relatively good access to health facilities, water supplies and sanitation facilities (UN November 2000, p. 144).

Return and resettlement

During recent years, there have been periods with improved security in selected areas that have accommodated some IDP return. Some programmes of resettlement (e.g. around Jonglei and Twic County) have been implemented. Some IDPs returning to Bahr Al Ghazal in 2000 experienced problems in reintegrating as they had been absent from the area since a long time, without paying tax and has weakened their ties with traditional leaders (Jaspars 12 April 1999). However, the worsened security situation in this area has had negative impacts on the return process after mid-2001. Reports in 1999 suggest that a reconciliation process among Nuers and Dinkas opened the way for

IDPs, notably in Equatoria, to return to Jonglei (UN November 1999, p.117). Similarly, in May 2000, over 250 traditional and civil leaders from the Bor area of Upper Nile, representing members of the Anyuak, Dinka, Jie, Kachipo, Murle and Nuer ethnic groups, met to discuss the conflict that had arisen between them, and issued a statement indicating a willingness among the groups to create peace (NSCC May 2000).

Recent return movements:

- By mid-2001 there were expectations about further return to Bor County in Jonglei state, by displaced people who had been living more than nine years in camps (NESI 31 July 2001).
- In October 2001, there was some internally displaced people returning from Ed Daein camps to Raga town in Bahr al Ghazal, but lack of social infrastructure, high insecurity and severe food deficits in Bahr al Ghazal have apparently limited further return movements (IRIN 22 January 2002)
- 25,495 IDPs/returnees registered in Twic County as of end January 2002, and the number is anticipated to double by end of 2002. None of the relief agencies currently working in Twic are providing shelter inputs and fishing equipment for the IDP/returnees. These IDPs are leaving the Khartoum state and the North because of lack of work as well as food shortages in IDP camps. They arrive very destitute, some having been looted on their way or having sold their assets to secure a safe passage. The majority of IDPs are living with relatives, who suffered from drought in 2000, thus putting an extra strain on the local communities (ACT 8 January 2002).

Humanitarian Access

Humanitarian access continues to be a major problem despite efforts during recent years to negotiate an improvement of the situation. Since mid-2001, denied flight access, worsening security conditions – including intensified Government aerial bombing on civilian and humanitarian targets – as well as changing political alliances have caused a very difficult security situation for humanitarian workers. As of March 2002, up to 45 locations were at times off-limits to aid agencies because of denied access by the Government (IRIN 4 March 2002).

Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) is the main mechanism for humanitarian aid in Sudan, and incorporates the UN system and several international NGOs. OLS negotiates with the warring parties to allow humanitarian access to the war-affected population. In December 1999, the UN, the Government and the SPLM signed an agreement that should provide agencies accredited by the UN "free and unimpeded access" to vulnerable populations. The UN should also be able to decide on routes and other logistical arrangements for assessments and delivery of humanitarian assistance (IRIN-CEA 20 December 1999; OLS 15 December 1999). The access and security agreement reached in 1998 by TCHA was still not fully implemented by 2001, and areas most affected by conflict (Nuba Mountains, Southern Blue Nile, Western Upper Nile, Bahr El Ghazal and Eastern Equatoria) still suffer chronic access denials. In addition, needs assessments and operational activities in Government areas continue to be limited to sites that have been agreed by the Government. In 2001, the UN reached an agreement with the GoS and SPLM/A to be granted four "Days of Tranquillity" per month and designated "Zones of Peace" to facilitate access to war-affected people (UN IAC December 2001).

Air access is restricted to areas cleared by the Government, and denial of flight locations is frequently used by the Government to regulate access in selected areas (OCHA 31 January 2001). This affects especially the opportunity to assist civilians in Western Upper Nile, Bahr el Ghazal and Eastern Equatoria (UN IAC December 2001). The number of locations in rebel-controlled areas where the UN/OLS has been denied flight access by the GoS remained at 20 from 1999 to 2001, but increased to 35 per month since June 2001. During June 2001, WFP was only able to deliver two-thirds of the planned volume of food aid to southern Sudan, partly due to flight denials. This made, among others, over 150,000 IDPs out of reach of WFP in Bahr al Ghazal (IRIN 12 July 2001). The UN is also concerned that systematic access denial jeopardizes health programmes – especially vaccination campaigns (UN IAC December 2001).

In 1999, the UN was for the first time allowed to conduct humanitarian assessments in the Nuba Mountain areas, held both by the Government and by SPLM/A. Based on the assessment, the UN in 2000 launched a multi-sectoral program targeting 454,000 war-affected persons (UNCERO 8 November 1999; UN November 1999, pp.91-92). In July 2000, CARE and the United Nations were able to deliver the first shipment of goods and equipment to non-Government-controlled areas (CARE 20 July 2000). It was reported by the beginning of 2001, that refusal by the Government to let humanitarian agencies access SPLM/A controlled areas remained a problem (IRIN 16 February 2001). In November 2001, Government forces shelled the only airstrip in the area, while WFP planes were on the ground (AFP 23 November 2001), and similar incidents together with flight denials made the Nuba Mountains inaccessible in mid-2001 (IRIN 22 June 2001). Implementation of the multi-sectoral program had still not fully commenced by end-2001 (UN November 2000, p.3). However, the Government of Sudan and the SPLA/M signed a six-months renewable cease-fire agreement in the Nuba Mountains on 19 January 2002, but it remains to see to what extent this will improve freedom of movement for civilians as well as humanitarian assistance (USAID 6 March 2002).

Humanitarian Response

Overall coordination of OLS is the responsibility of the UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Khartoum. For humanitarian interventions in rebel-held areas, the UN Humanitarian Coordinator is assisted by the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for southern Sudan, who is based in Nairobi (also UNICEF Chief of Operations for southern Sudan); while the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for northern Sudan is based in Khartoum (also WFP Representative and Country Director). The OCHA Coordination Unit for Sudan provides support to the Humanitarian Coordinator and his Deputies (North and South) as well as serves as a Secretariat to the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs for Sudan. OCHA has its main office in Khartoum, with a sub-office in Nairobi covering the southern sector. UNICEF has in the past been criticized by NGOs for weaknesses in their co-ordination of the OLS emergency response, and NGOs have advocated for the need to separate the coordination on strategic affairs from coordination on operational matters (DEC 30 May 2000, para. 8.3; ICVA 24 April 2000). In 2000, an OLS Consortium-Humanitarian Services Coordination Unit was established by UNICEF in Nairobi and Lokichokio to support sectoral coordination of OLS agency programs in the south (UN November 2000, pp.14, 90).

The response by the Government to the IDP situation, in terms of relief aid, appears to be limited to its partnership in OLS. A review of the OLS described a very complex structure of official administrative layers, including the Governmental Humanitarian Aid

Commission (HAC) at the federal level, as well as numerous committees at state, provincial and local levels (Hendrie July 1996). The SPLM/A has also established its own organization to co-ordinate and facilitate relief assistance in areas held by the opposition forces.

UN estimates that most of the three million or so beneficiaries of the UN humanitarian program are IDPs (UN IAC December 2001). UN has expressed serious concern about the under-funding of its appeals during the past two years. As of February 2002, it was reported that 61.81 percent of the overall needs identified in the Sudan 2001 UN Appeal were funded. While three-quarters of requested food-aid had been provided, only one-third of the non-food sector was funded (OCHA February 2002). As a consequence, long-term projects for IDPs in sectors such as resettlement or women's health were not implemented or were phased out (UN November 2001). The CAP 2002 states that it will promote humanitarian assistance on a rights-based approach, emphasizing life saving as much as life-sustaining projects, and reiterating the importance of tackling the root-causes of conflict and under-development for a sustainable peace and reconstruction of livelihoods. This should translate into multi-sectoral projects targeting both the needs of IDPs and host communities.

The multi-sectoral Nuba Mountains program of assistance and rehabilitation planned after the 1999 UN assessment mission, was not yet operational by November 2001 due to access and security concerns (UN November 2001 pp. 133-134). However, there have been seven UN/NGO interventions in the Nuba Mountains between 2000 and 2001 including for some Polio immunization campaigns.

There is a high level of NGO activity in Sudan. A network of 44 national and international NGOs work under the OLS umbrella and implement relief and rehabilitation activities in partnership with UN agencies. Khartoum-based NGOs have signed country agreements with the Government, while NGOs operating in the Southern Sector collaborate with OLS and the humanitarian wings of the rebel movements. Some NGOs are operating independently of the OLS structure, e.g. the Norwegian People's Aid.

NGOs have been operating in a very difficult conflict environment, and had to overcome many impediments. For example, in March 2000 came a disagreement about the content of a new MOU between the SPLM and NGOs, which made some NGOs pull out of southern Sudan (some of which have returned since). Also, the European Commission suspended funding for humanitarian operations in areas controlled by the SPLM (ECHO 23 March 2000). The NGOs were particularly concerned about not being able to maintain full control over the use of their means of transport and equipment. This withdrawal had a negative impact on the delivery of humanitarian assistance. The European Commission announced in January 2002 a €17 million humanitarian aid package for Sudan, with particular focus on IDPs (ECHO January 2002).

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