

In collaboration with Save the Children United Kingdom (SC-UK), Action Against Hunger (ACF), Tear Fund, Concern, Veterinaires Sans Frontieres - Suisse (VSF-Suisse) and PACT

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SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

The main crop harvest has just been concluded in the northern parts of the Western Flood Plains, the Eastern Flood Plains and the Nile-Sobat Zones, while it is just starting in the southern parts of the Western Flood Plains, the Greenbelt and the Hills and Mountains Zones. In areas where the harvest ended in November, own crops (sorghum, maize, sesame or groundnuts) are being consumed. However, households are rapidly depleting these food stocks due to insufficient access to supplementary flood-dependent food sources (fish and wild foods) due to below normal flood levels this year. Consumption of fish and wild foods between December and April helps households retain their own food stores for longer. The impact of reductions of these two food sources is now evident in Bahr el Gazal Region.

SEASONAL TIMELINE



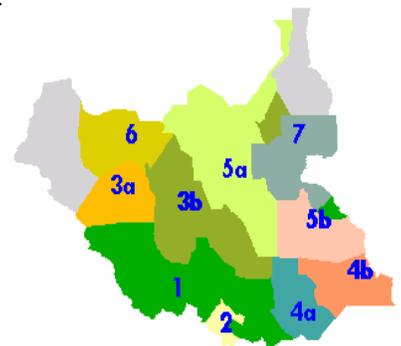
CURRENT HAZARD SUMMARY

- Below normal flooding has forced people and cattle to move to dry season grazing and water areas one month earlier than normal
- The impact of reduced availability of fish and some wild foods in the northern Bahr El Gazal Region of the Western Flood Plains is now evident
- Scattered pockets of insecurity persist in the Eastern Flood Plains and could affect dry season food sourcing activities. Tensions continue in parts of Lakes in the Western Flood Plains. When considered in the context of events during the past five years, the tensions may escalate as the dry season advances.
- The impending dry season, combined with the presence of whooping cough in the main transit area, threatens the Bor returnees.
- As optimism for a final peace agreement by the end of 2004 continues to hold, increased population movements are anticipated.

FOOD SECURITY SUMMARY

Recently matured or harvested crops are currently the main sources of food in the June-September and June -November cropping areas. Depending on the area, these crops include sorghum, groundnuts, maize, sesame, sweet potatoes, and millet. Where other food sources such as fish and wild foods are significant, below normal consumption levels are being reported.

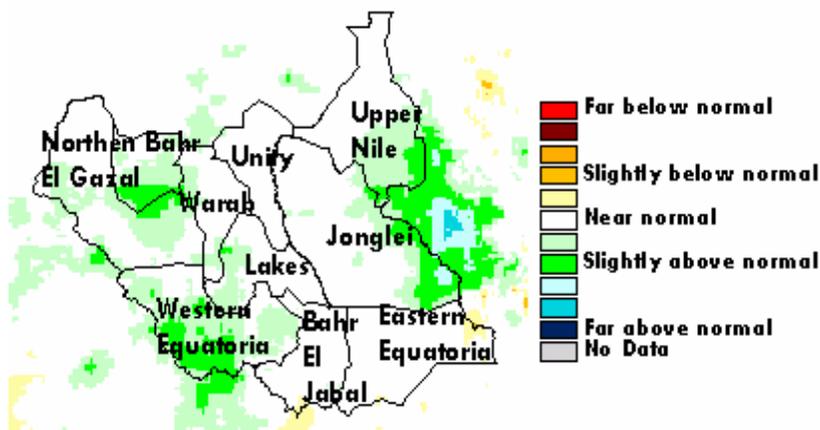
The second season crop harvest is just starting in Western Equatoria (1), and will be sufficient to meet needs during most of 2005. However, recently arrived returnees (2) are surviving on support from kin, and will rely on labor and petty trade to survive because they cultivated small farms. This year's poor harvest in the southern part of northern Bahr el Gazal (3a) is running out and households will soon seek exchange opportunities in the Greenbelt (1). The long term sorghum harvest has just started in Lakes (3b) and is currently being consumed. Pastoral households (4b) have moved to better grazing areas (4a), and are surviving on livestock products and grain exchange. Households along the Nile (5a) are eating their own crops, supplemented by fish and wild foods. The same is happening in Jonglei, and Upper Nile (7) but less is available. In parts of northern Bahr el Gazal, fish and wild food supplies are below normal, and groundnuts and sorghum are the main source of food (6). Households in southern Jonglei (5b) are relying on milk/meat and exchange of locally produced sorghum, and will increase exchange with southern parts of (5a) Bor, where they will move cattle to graze.



RAINFALL, VEGETATION and PASTURE (OCTOBER – DECEMBER 2004)

Rainfall has stabilized since October, with slight improvements in select areas, especially in the eastern parts of Upper Nile, southern tip of northern Bahr El Gazal and Western Equatoria (Figure 1). However, improved rains have not managed to significantly raise persisting low water levels in main water catchments caused by rainfall deficits that occurred between June and August in many parts of southern Sudan. Typically, flooding occurs between July and September, but failed in many parts this year, forcing households to move to dry season grazing and water areas one month early. As anticipated and mentioned in previous reports, below normal water levels are now starting to negatively affect households, particularly in Bahr El Gazal, because they are unable to obtain normal fish and wild food amounts.

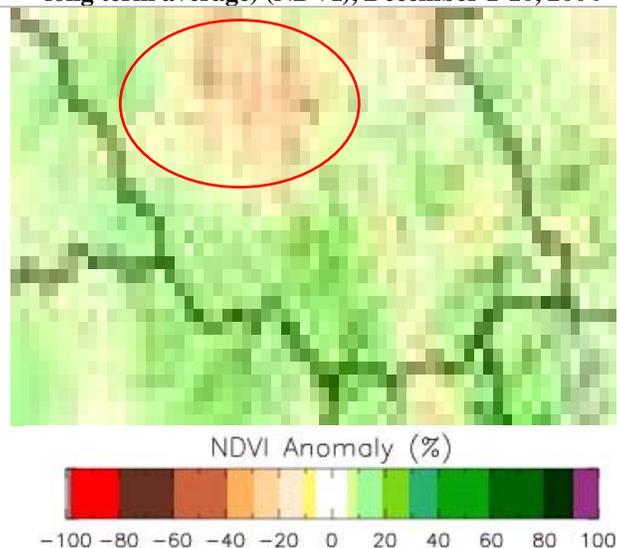
Figure 1: Rainfall Anomalies October 1-December 10, 2004



Source: NOAA; Graphics: FEWS NET southern Sudan

Figure 2 indicates that the Normalized Vegetation Index (NDVI) or 'greenness/health of vegetation' ranges from slightly below to slightly above normal across the region. Many areas appear to have near normal pasture conditions. However, earlier than normal dryness or below normal flood levels are expected to limit the rate of pasture replenishment between January and April 2005. Livestock owners in areas most affected are anticipating a tougher dry season that will involve moving longer distances in order to find sufficient pasture and permanent water sources. This is likely to cause tensions, particularly in the Lakes State. Clan tensions are being reported in Tonj, but the cause is unclear.

Figure 2: Normalized Vegetation Index Anomaly (% of long term average) (NDVI), December 1-10, 2004



Source: NASA; Graphics: FEWS NET Southern Sudan

Livestock started moving to dry season grazing in November, one month early. Meanwhile, veterinary agencies have started facilitating de-worming of animals and vaccination against diseases that are prevalent during the dry season such as haemorrhagic Scepticaemia.

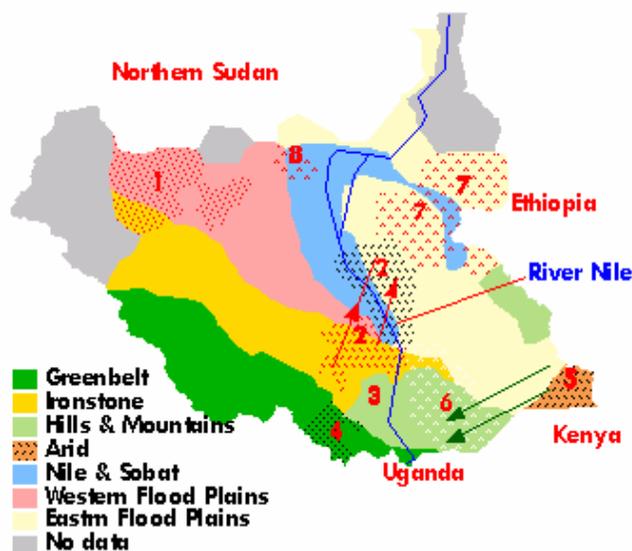
Foot and Mouth Disease, which has been affecting parts of northern Bahr El Gazal (Aweil East, Twic and Gogrial) and Lakes appears to have stabilized.

FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD SITUATION – SUMMARY BY ZONE

The impact of below normal flooding caused by the June to August dry spell is now evident in some areas. The most obvious indications of this problem are earlier than normal dry season movement and reduced access to flood dependent food sources such as fish and wild foods. Meanwhile, the final step towards signing of a comprehensive peace agreement between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) resumed in early December. Both parties committed to signing the final peace agreement by the end of 2004.

Below are brief highlights on current happenings in each livelihood zone.

- The impact of below normal water levels is being felt by households in the northern parts of the *Western Flood Plains*, resulting in a reduction of fish and wild foods. Though not fully established, a similar process is likely to be underway in some parts of the *Eastern Flood Plains*. The situation appears mixed in the *Nile and Sobat Zone*.



- 1 Reduction of farm produce
- 2 Returnees moving to Bor
- 3 LRA attacks
- 4 Returnees to Yei
- 5 Pastoral households access better grazing in Budi (6)
- 6 Pastoral household' peace initiative extends to Torit
- 7 Insecurity persists in some areas
- 8 Raiding and illegal taxation

- In the *Greenbelt*, additional returnees have reportedly arrived from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and northern parts of Uganda.
- Attacks by the Lords Resistance Army (LRA) occurred in some parts of *Hills and Mountains* in early December. If these attacks continue, they may have negative effects on the second season harvest, which is just starting.
- Prospects for households in the *Arid Zone*, a

predominantly pastoral area, have improved as the Toposa and their cattle are now allowed access to better grazing areas in the Kidepo Valley, following a temporary truce between them and the Buya and Didinga tribes. In addition, access to Kidepo Valley increases chances of livestock trade in Agoro market, which is located in northern Uganda. Also, newly harvested maize from Kenya's Rift Valley Province has started reaching markets in the Zone.

FOOD AND LIVELIHOOD SITUATION – ZONE DETAILS

Western Flood Plains Zone: Agro-pastoral, and wild plants

Reports from the northern part of this zone (Northern Bahr El Gazal State) continue to indicate that the October-November sorghum harvest was below normal, but the groundnut and sesame harvest was good. Groundnuts are currently supplementing the shortfall resulting from poor sorghum performance. In a few areas where sorghum is available, stocks are expected to last until February. In the southern parts, harvesting of long term sorghum, the main crop has started and will be completed by January.

Over forty-five percent of households in Aweil West managed to harvest enough sorghum to last until February. Locally produced sorghum is not available in the markets. However, sorghum from food aid agencies is available in markets located in areas where food aid was distributed recently (November-December) and the price is reportedly high. Livestock prices are declining because many households are attempting to sell livestock in order to purchase grain. As anticipated earlier, lack of flooding this year has substantially reduced the availability of fish and water lily this year, two of the main sources of food for households in this area. This is evidenced by the absence of fish in markets. The return of populations from northern Sudan has started, but numbers have not been verified.

Households in Aweil East are currently relying on groundnuts instead of sorghum. Sorghum is not available in markets because households with sorghum are unwilling to sell or barter. Water levels are also reported to be below normal for this time of the year, with a notable absence of larger fish commonly available at this time. Wild foods are available, but in below normal quantities. Some of the households that recently returned from northern Sudan have reportedly started to move back to northern Sudan in search of labor opportunities. This is not surprising given that: 1) labor migration towards the North typically occurs at this time; 2) some returns to northern Sudan were anticipated once the returnees found it difficult to cope or resettle; 3) reductions of sorghum harvest coupled with reduced fish and wild foods access was expected to trigger above normal seasonal movements in search of better food sourcing opportunities elsewhere and; 4) unpredictable movements are expected especially if peace soon becomes a reality. Nevertheless, it is critical that tracking of population movements and intentions is stepped up particularly during January-June when roads are passable.

The scenario in Gogrial is similar to that of Aweil East in that sorghum is not available in the market because households with a better harvest are reluctant to sell. Interestingly, prices in Gogrial are reported similar to same time last year when there was a good harvest. Similarly, there is reduced access to fish due to low water levels.

Tensions are being reported in Tonj, and around Gogrial. The GOS/SPLA tensions around Gogrial have lasted for the last two months, and involved holding of civilians by armed groups at ransom. Flaring of such tensions especially in Gogrial implies further but localized movements. However, this is highly unlikely if peace succeeds.

Meanwhile, four health agencies namely; MALTESER, UNICEF, CCM and MEDAIR have stepped up efforts to control a whooping cough outbreak in Awerial County in the Lakes State, which started in June. More drugs and necessary equipment have been deployed in order to intensify coverage. The outbreak may affect or interrupt movement of population scheduled to transit through Awerial to Bor. Several agencies have recommended that the movement is re-routed or temporarily stopped.

Nile and Sobat Rivers Zone: Agro-pastoral and Fishing skewed

Mixed reports continue to come from this zone. A near normal harvest is reported in the northern parts, but conditions are poor in the southern areas. Aside from the harvest, the most important sources of food are fish and water lily, which often contribute almost half of food required annually. Though scant, reports from agencies working in the northern parts, including Action Against Hunger, suggest normal access to these two foods. This is likely to be the case in all areas that are located close to the Nile and Sobat Rivers, and the reverse is likely in areas located further away.

Factional fighting, which started in 1999 in the northwest (northern part of Unity), continues to affect this zone. Apart from cattle raiding, the latest incidents included harassment of relief workers and forced taxation of people at fishing sites by militia pretending to be SPLA soldiers. The extent of this taxation and how it is affecting access to fish has not been established.

Concerns over the likely insecurity associated with the return of 15,000 – 20,000 people and their cattle from Mundri to Bor (situated in the Greenbelt and the Nile Sobat Zones, respectively) as they transit through areas of Yirol, Juba and Terekeka were discussed in a meeting held by the SPLM leadership and other stake holders in mid-November. The meeting targeted communities from all transit areas (Mundri, Terekeka, Rumbek, Yirol, Awerial and Bor), but the most critical group of Mundri residents who inhabit part of the transit route reportedly did not participate. However, the returnees were urged to proceed with the journey, despite an earlier concern that a whooping cough outbreak in Awerial (a main transit area) could affect the returnees. As mentioned above, agencies in the area have stepped up control of the disease and have also recommended re-routing or stoppage. This development has severe implications for cattle moving with the returnees because:

- 1) The dry season has set in and water sources have dried up earlier than normal due to lack of flooding this year. According to the initial schedule, the returnees should have crossed the Nile by this time and reached their homes in Bor from January 2005 onwards. The movement is way behind schedule.
- 2) The returnees cannot return to Mundri because it is the host community that demanded their departure.

The returnees fled Bor County in 1991 during inter-factional fighting which resulted in the displacement of people and cattle to the Greenbelt Zone (Western Equatoria's Mundri area). This year, the host community demanded that the Bor displaced population return to their original homes in Bor.

Hills and Mountain Zone: Agro-Pastoral (two seasons or one extended season and more crop varieties than the flood plains)

As reported last month, the second season (August-December) crops did better this year than last year, with significant improvements particularly in the western parts. Generally, crop production is expected to meet food requirements until August 2005 in many parts of this zone. Sorghum, millet, sweet potatoes, cassava, sesame and cowpeas will continue to be harvested between November and the end of January. Cassava and labour exchange are expected to play a critical role in household food security from January through August 2005. However, small pockets in Juba and Terekeka are likely to be food insecure, and may be further constrained by limited access of civilians to trade in Juba town. Reports from western parts of Juba indicate that households from SPLA-controlled areas going to the town are subjected to looting, harassment and temporary detention by the military.

Meanwhile, insecurity caused by the Ugandan LRA rebels continues to affect select areas of this zone. The latest LRA attacks occurred on December 10, 2004, killing seven people and injuring eight others in Rejaf area of Juba County. These attacks occurred after a ceasefire was declared last month to allow the Government of Uganda to engage in talks with the LRA, and also after several months of successful raids by Ugandan government forces on the LRA inside southern Sudan, which occurred with the permission of the Sudan Government. The LRA often uses southern Sudan (specifically, the Hills and Mountains Zone) as a base from which to attack northern parts of Uganda, with spillover effects on households in this zone. Despite the ceasefire, further attacks of this kind can be expected in northern Uganda and southern Sudan, until LRA operations are ceased.

Reports from UNHCR in Uganda indicate that over 3,000 people from southern Sudan LRA-affected areas arrived in northern Ugandan Districts of Moyo, Adjumani and Arua in November.

Greenbelt Zone: Exclusively Agriculture

An interagency assessment conducted around mid November in various areas of Yei (Morobo, Yei and Lainya) found that the area has received an estimated 8,400 Sudanese people who fled insecurity in the neighboring Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and

northern Uganda where they were living as refugees. Lainya has received 40 percent of the returnees, while Morobo and Yei have received 27 and 33 percent respectively. The returnees lost most of their assets due to looting which occurred during their return journey. They are now settling with the host population and surviving on support from kin, sale of few remaining assets, sale of labor, petty trade, hunting of game (bush rats), and gathering wild yams. The assessment indicates that the returnees have cultivated an average of one feddan (acre) with sorghum, maize, simsim and millet during the second season, which will be harvested between January and December. It also indicates that Lainya is the least capable of hosting the returnees as it is the least productive, has little livestock, and suffered a dry spell in May and June. This is contrary to recent pre harvest assessment findings by Norwegian Peoples Aid (NPA) which indicated that a much better harvest is likely from December onwards compared to the same time last year, and that households are likely to be food secure during most of 2005, with cassava contributing significantly between January and July. It is important to note that Lainya is not far from surplus producing areas such as Otego and Yei as well as Bangolo in Mundri County. The November assessment found that food, water, hygiene, health and non-food items are main priorities. A rapid assessment conducted at the end of October 2004 indicated that the main priority for returnees is to gain immediate access to farming tools and agricultural inputs in order to prepare land for the next planting season which starts in March/April 2005.

The last significant influx of returnees occurred after the SPLA captured Yei town from the GoS in March 1997. This triggered the return of an estimated 25,000 people who were residing in Uganda as refugees. Households resettled within 6 months (March – August) of their return and were able to cultivate during the following season (August – December 1997). It is critical that agencies planning to offer temporary resettlement/reintegration support refer to this particular experience in order to avoid underestimating the existing livelihood coping capacity, especially regarding food access. Where possible, efforts should be devoted to enabling the returnees to access readily and locally available crop surpluses and seeds rather than delivering externally sourced supplies. It is also important to prioritize de-mining of mine infested areas as this could severely constrain crop cultivation necessary for recovery of the returnees in both the long and short term, and also because of increased potential of population returns if peace is signed.

Arid Zone (Livestock, trade and exchange, hunting and gathering)

In this drought-prone area, households survive by migrating in search of pasture and water, and through trade and exchange of livestock for grain, cattle raiding, hunting and gathering. Unfavorable rains this year forced households in this area (Toposa tribe) to negotiate a truce with their neighbors and traditional enemies (Buya and Didinga tribes in the Hills and Mountains Zone) in order to secure access to pastures for livestock in the Kidepo Valley between October and March of next year. The negotiations were facilitated by PACT, an international agency that builds the capacity of local leaders, grassroots organizations, coalitions and networks to achieve social, economic and environmental justice. The negotiations are now expanding to include other communities such as the Lopit and Lotuka of Torit County in the Hills and Mountains Zone.

Free access to Kidepo Valley is also expected to yield an additional benefit for the Toposa as they are likely to access or join the Sudan-Uganda cross border livestock trade via Agoro market located in Uganda, where an estimated 2,000 cattle are driven and sold every month. This market offers better terms of trade compared to Lokichoggio in Kenya. The latest updates from PACT indicate that sales of small livestock (goats) in Kenya is increasing, which may be closely linked to the availability of maize harvested from Kenya's Rift Valley Region. Maize is now available at the main market of Narus situated in this zone.

Eastern Flood Plain Zone: Agro pastoral, hunting and gathering

In addition to many scattered persisting pockets of insecurity in this zone, added insecurity due to fighting over control of taxation by different militia groups in the eastern parts of Upper Nile State (Latjor) is reported to have displaced unknown numbers of people. In addition, there are rumors that the Ethiopian government has asked Sudanese refugees residing in Ethiopia to return to Sudan. UNHCR and OCHA are investigating the rumors.