

SKBN Coordination Unit

Humanitarian Update

March 2020



A family returning to South Kordofan from Yida Camp

FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE

Blue Nile

Threshing of the harvest is ongoing and farmers are preparing their fields for the next planting season. However, due to a poor harvest because of previous floods and heavy rain, which destroyed crops, farmers harvested only three to five sacks of sorghum compared to more sacks harvested previously. Reports indicate that the food shortage in the region was exacerbated by food sharing with returnees, immediate families and neighbors. Reports suggest that food stocks will not last until April and, as a result, households with no food stocks have already resorted to sharing with neighbors, depending on markets, and other coping strategies. Many people travel to Maban for their rations.

Despite reports of food insecurity across the region, in Beeh, Benamayu, Challi and Soda, food security was relatively stable (communities depend on their harvests as a source of food). However, this will not sustain people for long and they will rely on markets, which will increase prices and make houses more vulnerable to price changes.

Lemons, mangoes, oranges, water melon and tomatoes were available in the markets. Additionally, in Komo Ganza, communities engaged in selling grass, poles, honey, dry okra, cassava and some wild roots in exchange for food.

UNHCR announced advance food distribution and provided April and May rations at the same time, in order to limit frequency of gatherings and potential spreading of COVID-19 pandemic.

This year, food aid distribution targeted Wadaka payam (8,362 households), which was heavily affected by floods and heavy rain. However, the distribution only covers 25% of Blue Nile. For instance, returnees as well as communities in Amora and Zosko (isolated areas) were not included in the distribution plan.

South Kordofan

Household surveys indicated that there was a poor harvest, which means households are likely to become dependent on the markets before the lean season begins (May – September). In March, the region witnessed movements of people to Ajong Thok for their food rations as a back-up to diminished stocks.

Western Jebel

Because of a poor harvest, 80% of households are dependent on markets as an alternative source of food; however, they may not sustain these purchases for long. As a result, increase in the sale of livestock and exchange for labor as another source of income to buy food has been witnessed. However, with COVID-19 measures closing of borders between SPLMN-controlled and government-controlled areas, has posed a challenge to households to access labor, goods and services.

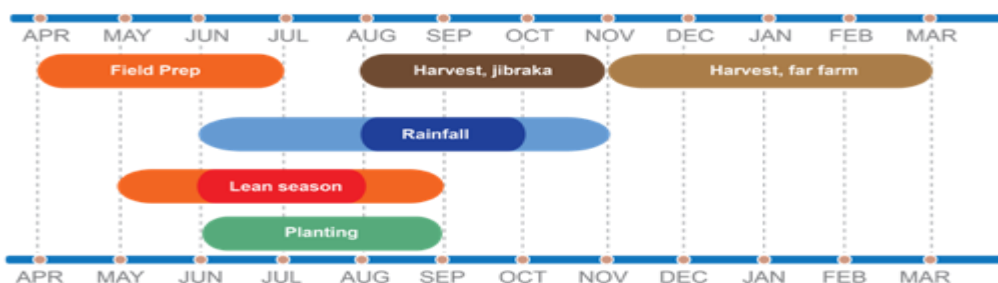
Highlights:
COVID-19 awareness campaign kicks off in the Two Areas.

COVID-19 measures driving returnees and movement of people

Market prices for staple items continue to rise

Poor harvests - households start relying on the markets

Continued increase in people on the move puts pressure on scarce resources



Seasonal calendar for South Kordofan and Blue Nile

Market Functionality

Blue Nile

In Blue Nile, markets were partially functional, because of the closure of borders by the Ethiopian government due to COVID-19. The fact that few Ethiopian traders accessed the region caused scarcity of goods, which affected households who depended on markets as a source of food. Sorghum grains and flour were not available in the market in the last two weeks.

Prices of some goods increased such as petrol from 70 ETB (Ethiopian Birr) per liter to 100 ETB; in Yabus a malwa of white sorghum increased from 50 ETB in February to 60 ETB in March and in Mayaka sesame increased from 1000 SSP to 1800 SSP in March. In contrast gold prices dropped due to the closure of the Ethiopian borders and water scarcity in Wadaka stalled work in the mine industry. In Mayak market, for instance, gold prices fell from 15,000 SSP per gram in February to 7000 SSP in March and in Balila it dropped from 13,000 SSP to 7000 SSP.

South Kordofan

Prices of staple items, including sorghum, are steadily increasing across the region. Bean prices are significantly higher than last year. Moreover, the temporary closure of cross-line markets hinders the supply of goods, leading to scarcity and consequently higher prices, which have affected households who depend on markets for food. For instance, in Um Durain groundnuts rose from 250 SSP in February to 300 SSP in March, Heiban sorghum rose from 400 SSP to 500 SSP and in Delami, sorghum rose from 70 SDG to 80 SDG. The price of fuel increased by 62% per cent per liter across the region, indicating that the markets are feeling the impact of the fuel shortage in Sudan.

Western Jebel

Across Western Jebel markets, prices of basic commodities increased. For instance, petrol increased from 200 SDG to 250 SDG in March, sorghum rose from 80 SDG to 130 SDG, sesame from 180 SDG to 190 SDG, sugar from 25 SDG to 50 SDG and beans from 180 SDG to 300 SDG. An increase in bean prices is associated with an increase in the percentage of households that are food-insecure.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Blue Nile

Awareness campaigns and messages on COVID-19 prevention are ongoing across different localities. On March 20, an emergency preparedness meeting conducted by the Governor agreed on: (a) increased awareness and sensitization among communities; (b) formation of an inclusive and multi-sectoral task force; (c) scaling up of WASH activities, including formation of a task force; (d) designation of the Secretary of Health (SoH) as the focal point for outbreak-related response, who will be responsible for selecting security personnel to the committee (which will need to be trained on COVID-19); (e) positioning of hand washing stations at check points and other public places; (f) not closing border completely, but using these points to get out the messages on hand washing, etc.; (g) the need for the SoH to follow up with their counterpart on the national level as to how to acquire detecting and other preventive equipment, such as masks and gloves; and (h) the responsibility of SoH to approach World Health Organization (WHO) on any inquiries.

As a result of the meeting, thirteen check points were identified, and hand washing points were established at Amora, Balila, Chali el fil, Ishkab, Jabel Halla, Marinje, Mayaka, Moguf, Naro/Khor Hassan, Soda, Yabus Bala, Yabus Kubri and Zosok.

A week after the meeting, the Governor sent out decrees, effective 25 March, that: (a) all schools were to close; (b) there would be a ban on large gatherings; (c) people are to continue practices of hand washing and social distancing, and (d) Health Units were to be set up at check points.

Some PHCUs are under-equipped to cope up with and respond to increased demand (e.g., the inflow of patient patients from villages near Tukabele).

Cough, flu, skin infections and malaria as well as epilepsy and river blindness were reported in the region. Skin diseases were common across Komo Ganza payam due to water scarcity.

South Kordofan

The SoH established a task force and developed a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan shared with all partners. Weekly meetings with partners are conducted for updates on implementation of the plan. Local government has closed schools and control measures are put in place at markets, check points and points of entry. Risk communication is being done with the community in collaboration with SoH and partners. Isolation treatment centres are being established at the main hospitals and health worker training on infection prevention and control is on-going. Information, education and communication materials were developed and/or adapted to be duplicated for dissemination across the region. A training of trainers on COVID-19 for county health staff is scheduled for 3 April. The CU is looking at plans on how it can continue to help at this time.

The SoH conducted several meetings in relation to COVID-19 and measures were put in place by SoH with support from the Coordination Unit, partners and local government. Risk communication is being done with the community in collaboration with SoH. The CU is looking at plans on how it can continue to help at this time.

Besides, malaria and coughing mainly among children in Um Durian and Wadaka counties were reported. The healthcare system in the region remains fragile. There are significant shortages of essential drugs across the region.

Western Jebel

Cases of malaria, skin infection and pneumonia were reported. All the fifty-four health facilities including a hospital, have registered lack of drugs to meet the high demand. Also, no immunization programs for children have been conducted since the beginning of the year.

On COVID-19, local leadership ordered for closure of schools. SoH in Kauda in collaboration with SoH in Western Jebel set up eight hand washing points at eight entry points. In addition, an isolation center was established as well as training of forty health staff to carry on the task of awareness creation and prevention measures.

WASH

Blue Nile

Water shortage has become a major challenge as the dry season continues. Most ponds and streams have dried up. Far south of Komo Ganza water shortage has resulted in poor hygiene and sanitation causing skin infections mainly in children.

In spite the fact that a bore hole was drilled, it is not enough for the communities; more boreholes are urgently needed especially in Abu Dira village in Wadaka payam which is one of the areas badly hit by water shortage. On the other hand, communities in Hillat ful, displacement site, walk close to three hours to South Sudan border to get water. There are about 6 boreholes available in Tukabele, but unfortunately, most of them are broken.

South Kordofan

The available water sources mostly ponds are drying up and the remaining few are being shared with animals. This poses a threat of water-borne diseases to communities. There is need to drill more boreholes and make repairs on the existing ones.

Western Jebel

Lack of drinking water for both livestock and about five hundred households remains a serious problem. The only borehole available unfortunately cannot serve the whole community; this leads to very long queues at the water point. More boreholes are urgently required.

EDUCATION

Blue Nile

On March 25, the governor announced measures on Covid-19 in the region among them was the closure of schools. This will impact the delivery of services in this sector.

The status of education in Blue Nile region remains poor. There are 47 primary schools in region, but they lack trained teachers, teachers' incentives, scholastic materials and secondary schools are non-existent.

It is worth noting that five thousand exercise books donated were successfully distributed to all primary schools in Ishkab and Tukabele in Komo Ganza. Other payams received other scholastic materials. The Secretary of Education (SoE) managed to send seven teachers to Yusef Kuwa Teacher's Education College in Nuba Mountains. Ten candidates were to be selected by SoH for a three-year sponsorship at Hakima Health College in Nuba Mountain. The criteria is from Grade eight and above.

On March 12, a new school was opened in Aleile, Yabus payam with an enrolment of one hundred and twenty students.

South Kordofan

Schools closed due to COVID-19 as a measure to mitigate the spread of the virus. Education in the region is still poor and communities struggle to keep schools functioning. Support is needed in terms of teachers' incentives, construction of classrooms, teachers' training and empowerment parents to keep the schools running.

WFP continues to dispatch food for the school feeding program even though schools are temporarily closed. The food is being kept in their warehouse at the moment.

Western Jebel

There are still huge gaps in this sector and intervention is required. Communities continue to struggle to keep school functional, however, more support is required in terms of scholastics materials, trained teachers, teachers' incentives and school feeding.

ANIMAL HEALTH

Blue Nile

Cases of cough and diarrhoea in livestock were recorded. Animal health continues to deteriorate due to lack of vaccination. Another report from Yabus Bala reported dog bites making livestock prone to rabies.

South Kordofan

In Thobo county, there were reports of death in livestock, but the disease has not yet been identified. The area continues to report lack of veterinary drugs and the available drugs are costly for livestock keepers.

Western Jebel

Drug supply is inadequate in addition, the dry spell has created a crisis on pasture and water for livestock. Animals walk long distances in search for water. Cattle rustling is also on the increase being a source of income to acquire food.

PROTECTION, ACCESS AND SECURITY

Blue Nile

March 8: Tension was reported in Soda between Mabanese and refugees over scarcity of water.

March 13: A man committed suicide, reason is still unclear, but it is linked to drug abuse.

March 14: in Borfa, Chali payam a man shot his wife to death. The case is still under investigation.

In February and March, the region registered 1560 returnees (312 HHs): Chali 260, Komo Ganza 290, Wadaka 360 and Yabus 650. These were mostly students who returned after closure of schools in Ethiopia due to COVID-19. Other returnees were farmers who came to clear their farms and others returned to their homes because of stability and security in the region.

Measures have been put in place to check movements into the region as a way to mitigate the spread of COVID-19.

Western Jebel

Cattle rustling was reported in the region and this has caused tension between the Tabaq and Misseriya of Jangaro.

South Kordofan

March 02: In Lazirak Payam, Heiban County, reports indicated that four cows were looted.

March 09: Another report indicated that forty-seven heads of cattle looted and taken to Ramania payam. Government-controlled area.

SUDAN: South Kordofan and Blue Nile (SPLM/A-N controlled areas) Snapshot (Dec 2019)

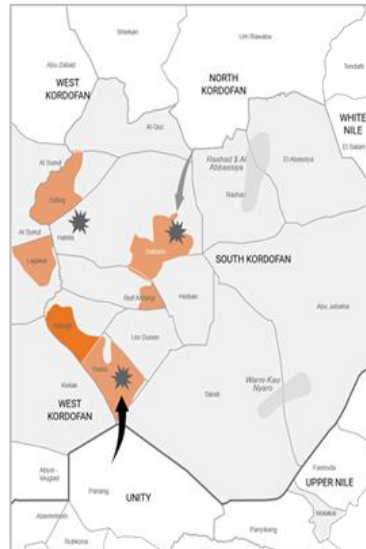
Humanitarian needs remain high within the Two Areas of South Kordofan (SK) and Blue Nile (BN) controlled by the SPLM-N (highlighted in the map). The poor macro-economic conditions in the rest of Sudan have exacerbated the protracted humanitarian crisis that has affected over 1.2 million people living in the Two Areas since 2011. According to the October 2019 FSMU report, the severe lean season, a Sudan-wide economic crisis, and weak markets have led to 15,562 people food insecure (equivalent to IPC 2, 3 and 4, respectively).

Food insecurity is comparably worse in Blue Nile due to the underdevelopment and widespread flooding in October which impacted communities. Heavy rains continued to have a big effect on crops, especially earlier maturing sorghum, sesame and groundnuts. According to an IOM Report dated 2 November, heavy rains "caused temporary displacement and disruption in service provision to more than 900,000 individuals [in South Sudan]", of which an estimated 200,000 are in the Upper Nile region.

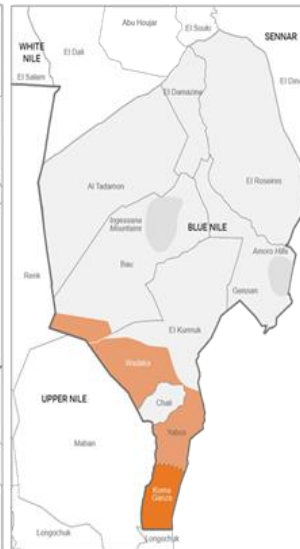
In both the Two Areas, 202,000 school-age children are in need of education, and over 550,000 people are in need of shelter support. In Blue Nile, with no health facilities able to handle emergencies, people have to travel to South Sudan for medical care. About 4,167 individuals from the rest of Sudan and refugee camps in South Sudan have returned to the SPLM-N controlled areas of Heiban and Um Durain Counties in South Kordofan, mainly due to difficult living conditions and lack of food.

While the operational challenges continue, the funding gaps have increased considerably since 2016. Despite the challenges and very limited access into the Two Areas, a limited group of humanitarian partners continues to reach over 1.2 million people in an area of over 21,000 square km, mainly with emergency food, health and WASH assistance.

South Kordofan State



Blue Nile State



Percentage of moderately food insecure population

- Severe (66 - 100%)
- Moderate (31 - 65%)

Security hotspot areas

Refugees returnees

IDPs returnees

Key Figures

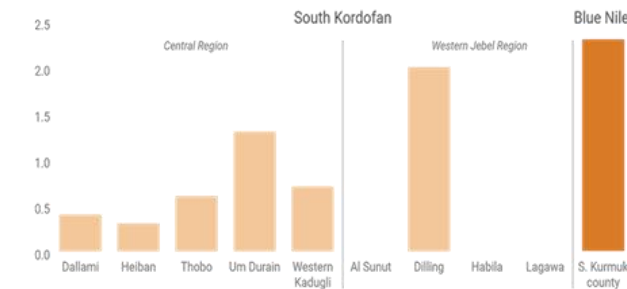
1.2M
Total population*

People in Need

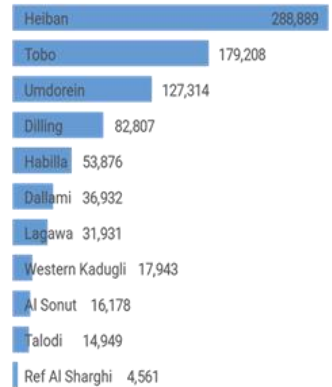
1.3%
16k
Severe and moderate food insecure population (Equivalent to IPC 3 and 4)

*New census results awaited from local authorities

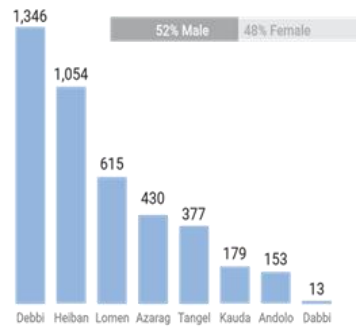
Percentage of severely food insecure households by payam (Oct 2019)



Population with access to health care services



Returnees by Payam June - September 2019



Created on 3 Dec 2019

Data Source: SKBN, FSMU

SKBN Coordination Unit

The SKBN CU reports security incidents according to the information received from a variety of sources. This information does not include a comprehensive verification of perpetrators or damages.

This monthly update on humanitarian issues in the Blue Nile and South Kordofan states is compiled by the SKBN Coordination Unit. With three main functions of information, coordination and advocacy, the SKBNCU strives to put out regular and accurate information on the humanitarian situation of people affected by the conflict since 2011.

Please send your comments to advocacy@skbncu.org