

SKBN Coordination Unit

Humanitarian Update

May 2021



Woman selling charcoal in the Blue Nile, May 2021

FOOD SECURITY AND AGRICULTURE

Food security continues to deteriorate in the Two Areas

Blue Nile (Southern Kurmuk County)

Food insecurity intensifies across the Blue Nile region after household food stocks had already been depleted due to a previous poor harvest season. In Yabus and Wadaka payams, for example, only 10 per cent of households can afford to buy food from the market, while in Chali and Komo-Ganza, less than 5 per cent can afford to do so. Some communities of Wadaka Payam (Samari and Balila) are sending their children to Doro refugee camp in South Sudan for relief support through general food distribution by the UN agency and other partners since food stocks are depleted. According to CU Payam monitors, people started eating wild roots. Amoro Hills and Zosak (isolated areas) are likely to face a worse situation since fully functional markets are nonexistent in these locations.

On the other hand, 9000 households were supported by one of the implementing partners with general food distribution in Chali, Wadaka, and Yabus payams (So far, two cycles- April and May have been distributed; the third one is planned for in August). Each household received 100 kg of white sorghum, 10kg of beans, 1kg of salt, and 5.4 kg of vegetable oil for two cycles.

Staple grains' prices remain high in the four functioning weekly markets in the Blue Nile. According to local CU enumerators, in Wadaka Payam, the cost of a malwa of sorghum increased from 600 SSP (USD1.5) to 1,000 SSP (USD2.5). Market accessibility remains a challenge for most communities, particularly those in remote areas.

South Kordofan

It is planting season for sorghum, cowpeas, pumpkins, and okra on near farms in South Kordofan. The rains started in early May, but have not been substantial. Reports indicate that many farmers had to replant their crops due to drought, particularly in Heiban and Dallami.

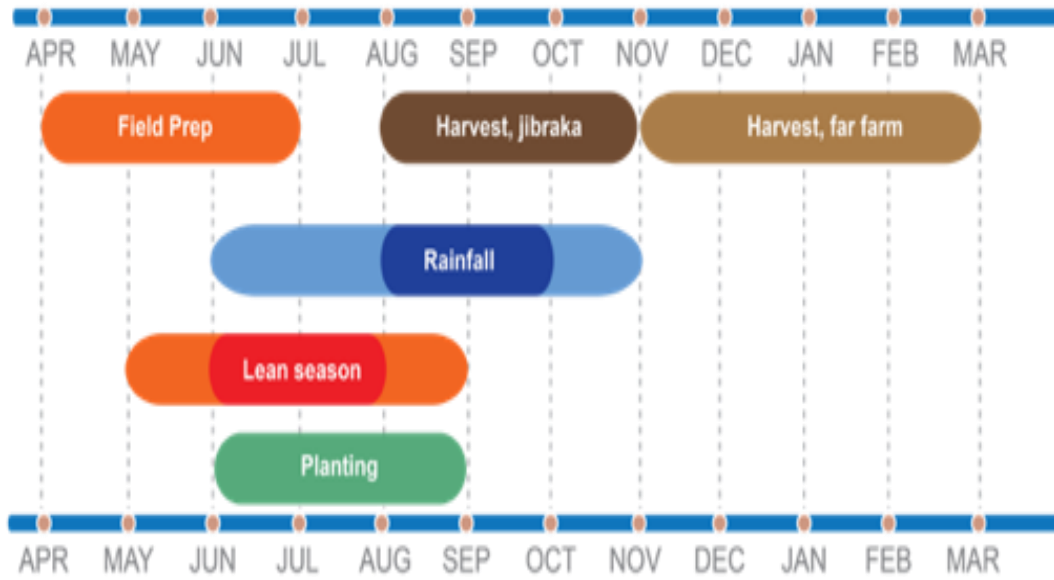
Reports from CU monitors indicate an approximately 10 per cent increase in sorghum prices in the major markets throughout South Kordofan. In many markets, staple food commodity is not available. Without food aid, food insecurity is expected to increase rapidly in the coming months, with moderately food insecure households becoming severely food insecure. The number of households in both host communities and returnees (1630 returnees were registered in May) that relies on markets, and wild fruits for their food in Dallami, Heiban, Thobo A, and Um Durain counties continues to increase.

Highlights

As predicted, food insecurity levels are on the rise across the Two Areas

UNICEF, UNMAS, UNHCR, and WFP visit Western Jebel

Cattle raids continue affecting the livelihoods of pastoralist communities



Seasonal calendar for South Kordofan and the Blue Nile



A trader transporting food commodities to the market in South Kordofan, February 2021

Western Jebel

In the Western Jebels region, (farmers prepare gardens between April and the end of June) farmers reported lack of seeds, tools, and insecurity as the main challenges reported in this sector. Furthermore, fear arising from recent inter-communal clashes caused some of the population to avoid tending to their far farms and attending markets.

Prices of essential commodities have reportedly remained high. There were reports of the increased sale of livestock to purchase food for consumption.

On the other hand, during the visit to Western Jebel, UNICEF, UNMAS, UNHCR and, WFP provided school feeding for 55 schools in the region.

COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE

The Secretariat of Health (SoH) with implementing partners continue to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic: Measures taken include the following:

- Awareness in the clinics is ongoing
- An isolation center in one of the hospitals has been finalized
- WFP provided 28 sacks of sorghum to the checkpoints for feeding
- SoH, in collaboration with WFP, conducted Covid-19 training in 90 schools across South Kordofan
- Training on surveillance, data collection, and management is ongoing
- Training on IPC measures was conducted in Thobo, W. Kadguli, Dalami, and Um Durain
- Soap, thermometers, stationeries, and other items were distributed at checkpoints.

NEEDS:

Identified needs and gaps in response to the COVID-19 pandemic in the Two Areas include:

- Increase soap, hand washing facilities, and water supply in public settings;
- Medical devices such as diagnostic tests, specimen containers to transport samples to neighbouring countries, ventilators, and personal protective equipment including surgical masks, face shields, gowns, and gloves at facilities as well as stationery;
- Improve communication and timely reporting (e.g., provision of VHF radios and internet support);
- Scaling up of risk communication and messaging to reach a broader coverage;
- Increasing vehicle and fuel supply to conduct awareness in the Two Areas;
- Improve levels of medicines and medical supplies stocks in the SPLM-N controlled areas; and
- More funding in the health and WASH sectors across the region to meet the substantial existing gaps.

EDUCATION

Education in Blue Nile still a challenge

Blue Nile (Southern Kurmuk)

Schools in Blue Nile remain community-led. Support for education remains a top priority and one of the main reasons children move to refugee camps in South Sudan and Ethiopia. The top needs in the area include lack of teachers' incentives, insufficient school feeding to keep children in school for a whole day, lack of learning materials, lack of teacher training, and the need to construct classrooms. While WFP supports over 90 schools in the SPLM-N controlled areas with school feeding, more assistance is needed to support teachers and keep children in school.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Shortage of essential drugs at community-based health centres

Blue Nile (Southern Kurmuk County)

The population remains affected by common illnesses like diarrhea and infections, malaria, and skin diseases resulting from poor hygiene exacerbated by the rainy season. With no health actors in the area, qualified medical personnel, medical equipment, and supplies are desperately needed. People have been seen walking to Maban seeking health services.

South Kordofan

In most clinics visited, lack of essential drugs (e.g., antibiotics, antimalarial drugs) remains a challenge. With the onset of the rainy season, the population will become vulnerable to malaria and diarrhea, among other diseases. According to CU monitors, in Thobo county, there were 33 cases of death in both adults and children related to malaria and diarrhea.

Western Jebel

With only two health actors in an area of 4,219 km², qualified medical personnel, medical equipment, and supplies are desperately needed. Despite the area having over 50 health centres, there is still a shortfall reported of drugs and trained staff.

WASH

Unsafe drinking water for thousands in the Two Areas

Blue Nile (Southern Kurmuk County)

Lack of water is a significant challenge in all counties across the Blue Nile, with most water sources, have dried up. The number of boreholes is insufficient for the population. Where boreholes do not exist, natural water sources are shared with livestock, creating a health risk. About 60 per cent of the people do not have access to clean drinking water. In Wadaka Payam, the primary sources of drinking and cooking water are unprotected wells, which are also shared with livestock. With only one humanitarian partner active in the WASH sector in the Blue Nile, there is a need to prevent diseases in the coming rainy season.

South Kordofan

The available boreholes need immediate maintenance to reduce pressure on the few existing ones. Population and animals continue to share stagnant water sources leading to water-borne disease. More clean drinking water sources and animal water points are needed to improve health conditions throughout the region.

Western Jebels

Over a third of boreholes in Western Jebels are reported to be broken. Spare parts are desperately needed to maintain the existing boreholes and water yards, particularly in Sillara, Alfrshaya, and Karko payams in Dilling county.

ANIMAL HEALTH

Lack of essential drugs in the Two Areas affects livestock keeping

Blue Nile (Southern Kurmuk County)

In Wadaka Payam, a highly needed vaccination campaign for livestock has not occurred due to a lack of funding. The primary livestock diseases identified in May were hoof and mouth disease, cough, skin rashes, swollen hooves, and diarrhea. Overall, diseases, limited water, and cattle raids affect the main livelihood for pastoralist communities living in the area, further reducing their coping mechanisms.

South Kordofan

According to the Secretariat of Animal Health, diseases are still affecting livestock, and they are dying in all counties of South Kordofan, but there are no accurate death figures.

Western Jebel

Increasingly, cattle raiding is threatening the leading livelihood/security of many communities in the Western Jebels. In early May, there were reports of insecurity with cattle allegedly stolen by gunmen in Dilling and Lagawa counties. These incidents also impact grazing patterns of cattle keepers affecting access to pastures and water. More peacebuilding and peace education activities are needed to reduce the risk of conflicts and increase the potential for co-existence.

PROTECTION, ACCESS, AND SECURITY

Although the overall security situation remained normal, cattle theft remained high in May Blue Nile (Southern Kurmuk County)

19/5/2021: A woman and a girl drowned after heavy rain in Kumbur payam, Heiban county.

15/5/2021: 36 head of cattle were looted from Tabilli payam, Thabo A county.

1630 returnees were registered in May in Thobo (560 in Angalo, 300 in Tabanya, 400 in Tabilli, 90 Kulu and 280 in Troji payams). Among the needs for returnees and host communities include food, water, emergency shelters, and NFIs.

10/05/2021: A landmine explosion in South Kordofan in which a vehicle transporting relief supplies was damaged, and three people sustained injuries, is a clear sign that there is a need for demining services as people plan to return home as a result of the ongoing peace process.

Inter-communal conflicts and cattle raids continue to threaten the security of communities living or cultivating near government-controlled areas. In Julud payam, Dilling county, Western Jebel, two farmers returning from outlying farms were killed by gunmen. This episode caused tension in the area, and livelihood activities were suspended. Recent security improvements in the area came to an end, causing some communities to fear working on their outlying farms.

UNMAS, UNHCR, UNICEF, and WFP missions to Western Jebel were conducted.

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