

SUDAN Food Security Alert

November 2011

As fighting between SAF and SPLA-N continues, household food security likely to deteriorate to Emergency levels

Fighting between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Army–North (SPLA-N) in South Kordofan and Blue Nile states since June and September 2011, respectively, continues to have major impacts on lives, livelihoods, and food security. Continued conflict is likely to interfere with seasonal labor demand related to the main season harvests, which are already expected to be below average due to poor rainfall and reduced area planted. In the Nuba Mountains, a key destination for the displaced, wild foods and water sources will soon become exhausted, thereby increasing humanitarian assistance needs. At the same time, the Government of Sudan (GoS) has restricted humanitarian access to IDPs. Due to a combination of below-normal harvests, severely restricted access to food and income sources, and high food prices, food security outcomes are expected to deteriorate to Emergency levels (IPC Phase 4) in these areas in early 2012.

In Blue Nile and South Kordofan, fighting has affected at least 400,000 people in each state. Population movements are difficult to verify due to prohibitions on humanitarian access, though there are reports of populations in Khartoum (35,000 people), Ethiopia (33,000 people), Upper Nile State in South Sudan (20,000 people), and Unity State in South Sudan (20,000 people in Pariang and Bentiu payams), with a weekly influx of about 2,000 refugees. Sizeable IDP populations are located throughout both states, with an unknown number of IDPs hiding in the Nuba Mountains. Little is known about SPLA-N controlled areas (i.e., Kouda, Delami, Talodi, and Heiban localities in South Kordofan, and Qessan in Blue Nile), which remain inaccessible for assessment.

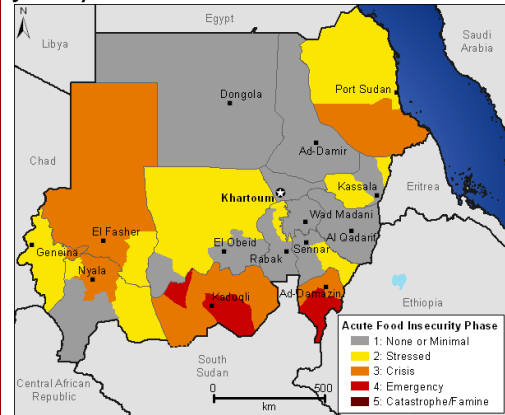
A recent assessment of about 9,000 Blue Nile refugees staying with host communities in Kurmuk, Guba, and Sharkole in Ethiopia found that most refugees are unwilling to relocate to refugee camps in Sherkole and Tango, as they prefer to return to their homes if conditions improve. Refugee inflows have heightened demand for food stocks, raising staple food prices by 30-100 percent, and increased pressure on pastures and water, as refugees are coming with significant numbers of livestock. There is also increased competition over income-generating activities such as gold mining and farm labor.

As the dry season (November-March) sets in, fighting is expected to intensify as mobility increases. Though harvests begin in November, most IDPs did not cultivate, and conflict will prohibit access to seasonal labor opportunities. After November/December, wild foods will no longer be available and harvested crops will quickly be depleted. Drinking water will become a problem after November when seasonal water pools and streams dry up. While some IDP populations in SAF areas may have market access, income sources from labor are limited and food prices are expected to be significantly above average given poor harvest prospects ranging from 20 - 30 percent of normal in parts of South Kordofan and Blue Nile.

Currently, the GoS has restricted humanitarian organizations' access to IDP populations, and negotiations have had little effect to improve access. Though some minimal assistance is reportedly being provided by the GoS in SAF-controlled areas, little to no assistance is being provided in SPLA-N-controlled areas. In addition, both parties have imposed measures to restrict population movements to and from their controlled areas. Both SAF and SPLA-N recently refused to allow SRC and ICRC to access Kouda. Additional displacement is expected as fighting increases.

Given the expectation for continued fighting and restrictions on access to IDP populations, Emergency levels of food insecurity are likely in South Kordofan and Blue Nile in early 2012. Such levels involve either extreme food consumption gaps resulting in very high acute malnutrition or excess mortality, or extreme loss of livelihood assets leading to food consumption gaps. FEWS NET will continue to monitor the impacts of conflict on food security of IDPs and refugees.

Figure 1. Estimated food security outcomes, January-March, 2012



Source: FEWS NET

For more information on the IPC Food Insecurity Reference Table, see www.fews.net/FoodInsecurityScale