



**USAID/ Famine Early Warning  
System Networks Southern Sudan**

**WFP Technical Support Unit in association with  
Save the Children and FAO**

**With contributions from: Norwegian Peoples Aid, Catholic Relief Services, Tearfund, Action Against Hunger and Interagency Assessments**

## Summary

- Food security monitoring assessments conducted between January and March concur with food security projections made by various food aid agencies in December 2002. Apart from the recent arrival of returnees from Ethiopia, the food security situation is not significantly different from what was foreseen earlier, even in the highly food insecure areas of Aweil West, Pibor, Latjor, Ruweng, Bieh, Torit, Terekeka, Liech, and Gogrial.
- Water shortages have become critical and more widespread as the dry season advances. This has become more evident through increased seasonal migration and could threaten the June-October cropping season as households are likely to extend their stay near the remaining water sources.
- At the beginning of this month, a Climate Outlook Forum (COF) forecasted that the Eastern part of southern Sudan would have normal to above normal rainfall during the March to May season, and the Western part would have normal to below normal rainfall.
- Assessments have confirmed that sufficient seed is locally available for purchase and distribution before the start of the June –October cropping season. However, the prices demanded by farmers in some areas are exorbitant.
- Interventions in the Southern Blue Nile region were delayed last month because the Government of Sudan denied access to the region. This decision was reversed on March 11, and agencies are preparing for interventions.

migrations have been increasing over time due to consecutive years of poor and erratic rainfall, consistent with most countries in the greater Horn of Africa. While agencies have recognized the need to strengthen water-related interventions, chances of success are low in areas with recurrent insecurity. Peace talks between the Sudan Government and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army resumed in March and are currently focusing on the administration of the key disputed areas of Abyei, Nuba and southern Blue Nile. It is believed that the success of these talks is essential to future peace and the food security of people in Sudan.

## 1.0 Overview of Current Food Security Status

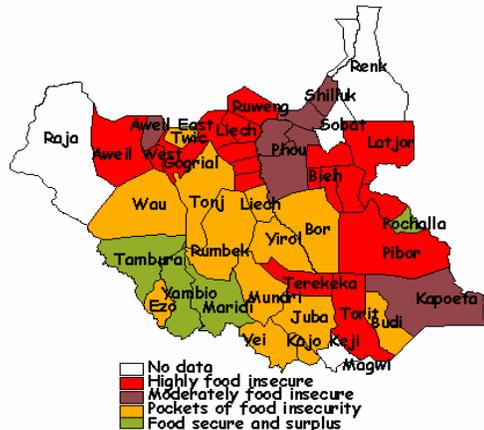
Recent food security monitoring assessments conducted by food aid and health agencies have found varying food security situations even within seemingly homogenous areas. For instance, in highly food insecure areas, such as Ruweng and Aweil East, some stocks of grain still exist. The main factor compounding food insecurity is a widespread shortage of water, leading to unusually large movements of people, including households that would not move under typical conditions. The movements have been more pronounced in Aweil East, Ruweng, Latjor, Pibor, Bieh, Sobat, and Southern Blue Nile. The main concern is that affected populations will prolong their stay near water and grazing sources at the expense of preparing their land.

Good prospects of normal to above normal rainfall between March and May in the eastern part of southern Sudan do, however, present an incentive for households in these areas to return to their homes in time to prepare their land. With normal to below normal rainfall expected in the western parts of southern Sudan, the reverse is more likely, possibly reducing the amount of land which will be cleared this year, particularly in Bahr El Gazal region. Although water shortages are typical during the dry season (January-May), the magnitude of this shortage and subsequent extent of the seasonal

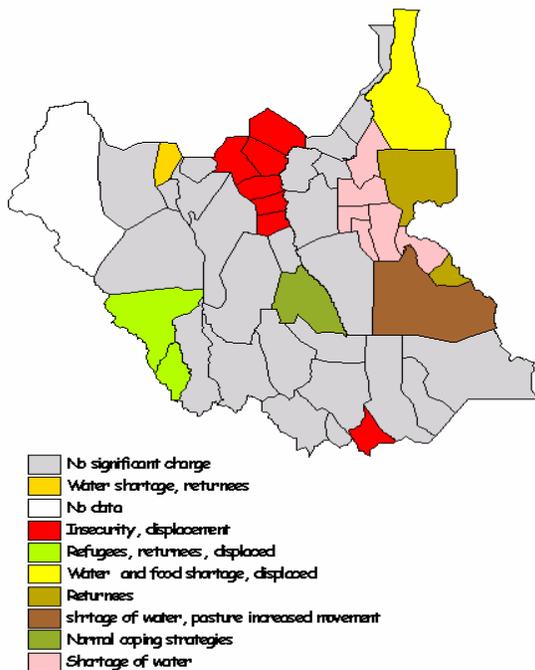
## 1.1 Changes in Food Security Situation since January 2003

The food security situation varied across southern Sudan at the start of January 2003. (Figure1). There

**Figure 1: Food Security Status of southern Sudan in December 2002**



**Figure 2: Additional Food Security Concerns by End of February 2003**



Sources: WFP led Annual Needs/Monitoring assessments, Assessment Reports by other OLS/Non OLS agencies

were significant pockets of high food insecurity following a poor harvest attributed to erratic rains and insecurity. As a result, a total of 1,850,000 people were projected to be food insecure until the next harvest in September 2003. Out of these, 700,000 would be highly food insecure, facing food deficits of 20-30 percent of annual food needs, even after expanding all available food sources. Total food requirements for all food insecure populations, including Nuba and Southern Blue Nile, were estimated at 101,000 MT. About 50 percent of this food would be targeted to highly food insecure areas. Recent monitoring assessments indicate these estimates were appropriate. However, additional concerns have emerged lately, including severe water shortages; the return of Sudanese refugees previously hosted in Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic (CAR); and continued insecurity, particularly in the northern part of Liech, Ruweng, and Magwi (Figure 2).

Below are assessment findings for various areas.

### *Aweil East*

Though Aweil East is categorized as moderately food insecure, a rapid monitoring assessment by WFP indicates that pockets within this area are likely to run out of grain in March; households are increasing petty trade and bartering activities in order to cope with the situation. Though the assessment team found that the price of sorghum has doubled, figures provided by the same assessment on terms of trade in lowlands of the same area contradict this as they reflect some normality (15kg of sorghum for one goat), given this time of the year. Further, seed availability assessments conducted by various agencies in the same area indicated a total of 323 MT of sorghum, 625 MT of groundnuts and 114 MT of sesame seeds from last year's harvest as locally available for purchase, indicating that there are some pockets that may be relatively stable. However, the price demanded for sorghum seed is exorbitant (three times higher the market rate), at \$722 per MT. These findings reflect a contradictory market

situation that requires more analysis and close monitoring.

Displaced people from Aweil East are returning to the area in increasing numbers. Ongoing conflict between pastoralists and agro pastoralists over pastureland and water in neighboring Dafur region, an area that hosts many displaced people from Aweil East, may increase this return rate. In addition, the peace process between the GoS and the SPLA is likely to spur a massive return. Because Aweil East is already food insecure, returnees may find it difficult to settle within a reasonable period of time. An increase in returnees before the end of the dry season would only exacerbate the current water shortage problems. Currently, the population in all highland areas has moved to lowlands in search of water.

### ***Latjor, Pochalla, Pibor and Bieh***

About 13,500 people have returned to Latjor and Pochalla from Pinyudo refugee camp in Ethiopia, where they had lived as refugees for almost 10 years. The returnees are concentrated in the southeastern part of Latjor and the southwestern part of Pochalla. They fled Ethiopia after UNHCR attempted to relocate them to another camp following attacks by the host community of the Anyuak tribe. Latjor and Pibor are already highly food insecure, and given the lack of local resources, it will be difficult for the returnees, many of who have been gone for a decade, to settle in the next year.

The situation in Pibor remains critical, characterized by an increased movement of pastoralist in search of pasture to the neighboring Bor area. The population most at risk remains the agricultural and returning households as they have lost the most important option of migrating to Ethiopia (including the refugee camps) to sell labor for food. This segment of the population has the lowest chance of recovering from the impact of last year's drought in the next one or two years.

The food security situation in Pochalla is more stable and returnees to this area will be in a position to settle in the next one year with inputs search as seeds and tools, which are available locally. Water and pasture shortages continue in Bieh state, resulting in unusually large population movements towards Bor, increasing the competition for wild fruits, wild game and fish. The water shortage will certainly undermine preparation efforts for the next cropping season, as the population will prioritize searching for favorable conditions for livestock over cultivation. This will perpetuate the food insecurity that has been chronic in Bieh since 1999.

### ***Yirol***

A recent assessment conducted by WFP suggests that the food security situation is relatively stable compared to all other recently assessed areas and expansion of various coping strategies remained normal. However, the threat of HIV is raising concerns due to the increased cattle trade with Uganda. Positive trends are a recent shift to growing more cassava, a continuous and drought resistant crop, and a cultivation of a wider variety of cereals with different maturation times by a few farmers in lowland areas. Also, some better off households (those with significant livestock numbers) have started using ox-plough for land preparation. These initiatives should be encouraged.

### ***Magwi***

Attacks by the Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) kept many farmers from their fields last year, reducing cultivated land by 65 percent. In addition, the LRA and deserters from the SPLA looted food reserves. In neighboring Torit, the SPLA's capture of Torit town had raised the hopes of Bahr El Gazal and Upper Nile people residing in displaced camps in Magwi, that they might soon return home. The hope of returning to their homes in Bahr El Gazal and Upper Nile resulted to sale of large quantities of their harvests in northern Ugandan districts of Gulu, Pader and Kitgum. This also led to a reduction in size of farms that they cultivated during the second cropping season (August-December). The hope of returning was lost when GoS captured Torit town again. Although the displaced population could sell their produce in northern Uganda, they could not rely on the same markets to purchase food since

production in most parts of northern Uganda has been severely undermined by LRA attacks, which have displaced close to 700,000 people. It is therefore unlikely that grain will be available or affordable for purchase by the displaced population in Magwi. Currently, peace talks are occurring between the LRA and the Ugandan Government. Success in ending the conflict in northern Uganda would have a positive impact on food security in both Magwi and Torit areas of southern Sudan as this would facilitate both increased food production and trade.

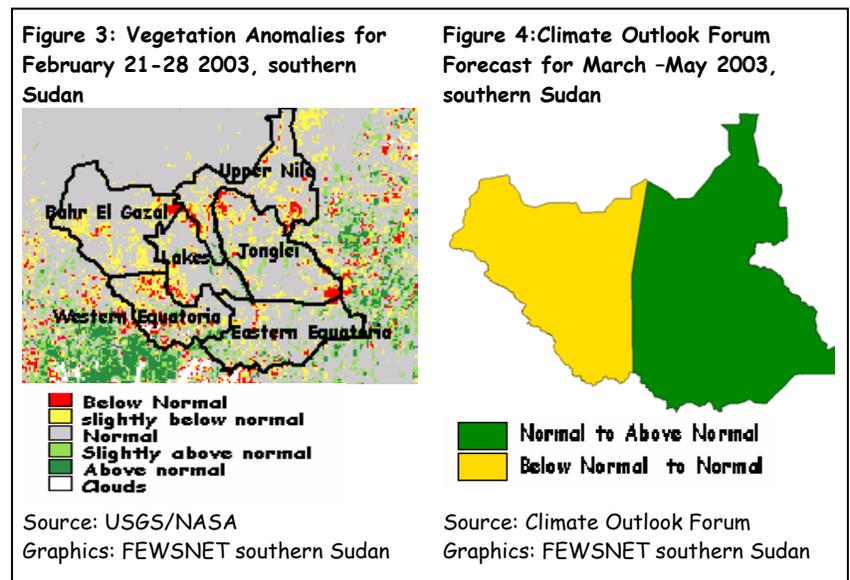
***Ruweng, Liech and Southern Blue Nile***

Despite the on-going peace process, insecurity has continued to displace people in Liech, to both within the area and outside to Ruweng. A recent food security assessment conducted by WFP in Ruweng found significant differences between different population groups. The most food insecure households are those without livestock and those that have fled into Ruweng from Liech and other areas. Even those that have stayed remain highly food insecure due to continuous movement and relocation by a majority of households in search for safety in the last four years. Compounding this problem is a shortage of water in the dry season, the lack of health facilities, and the presence of Kalazaar disease and poor hygiene and sanitation practices. Food aid, water and health interventions are very much required, however, continued insecurity creates a challenging environment for implementers.

As reported last month, pressing humanitarian needs were identified by an inter agency assessment mission in Southern Blue Nile. The situation is critical due to a combination of insecurity, compounded by food and water shortages. Implementing agencies under Operation Lifeline Sudan were delayed by clearance constraints, which were finally lifted on March 11. Insecurity in the three areas has kept households from cultivating, and they have, in turn, shifted to hunting and gathering, which are ultimately unsustainable strategies given the finite resources and recurrent droughts in the region.

**2.0 Agro – Climatic Conditions**

Below-normal vegetation conditions persisted in pockets of Bahr El Gazal, Lakes, Upper Nile and Western Equatoria regions (Figure 3), but they were slightly improved compared to the previous month.



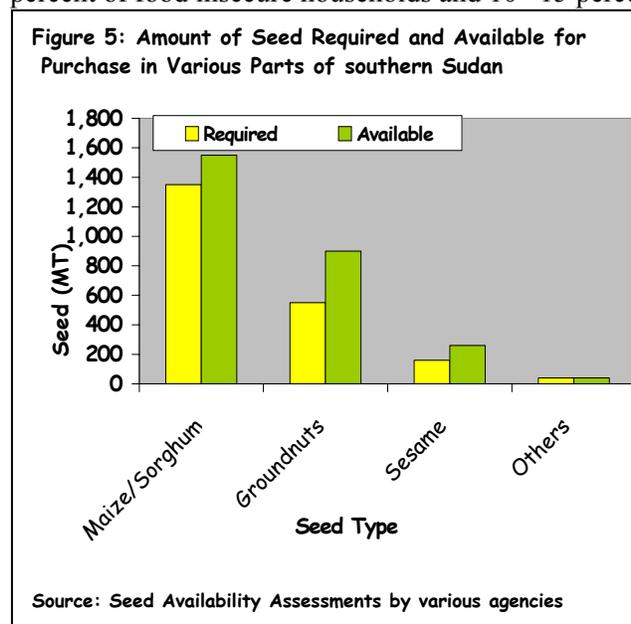
Last month's poor conditions have started to make themselves obvious in people's activities, with more and more people migrating in search of pasture and water, both for households with and without livestock. Though some rains were received in parts of Eastern and Western Equatoria and Jonglei region in February, these population movements are not likely to end until May, when the dry season is over in most of these areas. At the beginning of March, the Drought Monitoring Center Nairobi (DMCN) convened the eleventh

Climate Outlook Forum (COF) in Uganda, to formulate a consensus for the March -May rainfall season for the Greater Horn of Africa region. For southern Sudan, the probability is higher for normal to below normal rainfall in the western half of the country and normal to above normal in the eastern half (Figure 4). Although this forecast is relevant only for relatively large areas, it provides some form of early

warning and emphasizes the need to strengthen monitoring of the cropping and pre-cropping activities closely, regularly and systematically by all food security agencies.

## 2.1 Seed Availability and Access for June-October Season

In January aggregate seed needs were estimated at close to 2,100 MT for 130,000 households (40-45 percent of food insecure households and 10 –15 percent of the total population of southern Sudan).



The main types of seed required are sorghum, groundnuts and sesame. Seed availability assessments conducted by various agencies in parts of Western Equatoria region and Bahr El Gazal confirmed that enough seeds are available for purchase and distribution in deficit areas (figure 5). Though the seeds are available, prices, particularly for sorghum, are very high, ranging from \$160 per MT in Western Equatoria to \$722 MT per MT in Aweil East area of Bahr El Gazal. This price is three times higher that of the local markets and reflects an assumption on the part of local farmers that humanitarian agencies will pay regardless of the market situation. It is, therefore, important for agencies planning to purchase these seeds to investigate fully real local market prices and widely share information to avoid purchasing seeds at inflated prices since this could have a detrimental impact on poorer households who rely

on markets to purchase food. Coordinated seed purchase activities would help to discourage distortion of prices in future. FAO is currently updating seed intervention plans made in December 2002 and has also requested seed-related agencies to inform FAO of their funding status so that alternatives plans can be made for areas that are not covered.

## 2.2 Status of Nutrition and Health

As reported last month, a nutritional survey conducted by Action Against Hunger (ACF-USA) in January found rates of 23.4 percent Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) and 4.8 percent Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) in part of Sobat area. Although the high rates were attributed to a lack of sufficient food intake, poor or non-existent health facilities and water, as well as poor hygiene and sanitation practices particularly during the dry season it is important to note that Kalazaar is endemic to the area and this could be a major factor contributing to malnutrition. Although the survey recommends therapeutic and supplementary feeding, general food aid distributions, increased immunization coverage, improved access to water, treatment and management of Kalazaar initiatives also need to be prioritized for this population.

Nutrition surveys conducted by Tear fund and MSF in different parts of Aweil East suggest that households in areas that had the worst harvest last year have higher rates of malnutrition. As argued above, this year's water shortages, which have increased the magnitude of seasonal migrations, will also likely reduce labor committed to preparation of land for the next cropping season, thereby producing a knock-on effect into next year. There is an urgent need to fund and support water management initiatives and projects particularly in northern Bahr El Gazal, Upper Nile and Eastern Equatoria regions.

### **2.3 Food Aid Interventions**

There was significant improvement in the amount of food delivered by WFP (the main food aid agency) in February. A total of 4,300 MT was delivered against the planned 4,960 MT; this compares favorably to January, when 2,300 MT were delivered against the planned 3,757 MT. These deliveries were made despite a 15-day ban on some flights and insecurity in Eastern Equatoria that led to a 2 week suspension of food interventions by WFP. Continued insecurity in this region remains a threat, particularly to Torit and Magwi as a cut in food aid reduces households' chances of recovering from last year's insecurity and drought. WFP and CRS are the main agencies providing food assistance in these two areas.

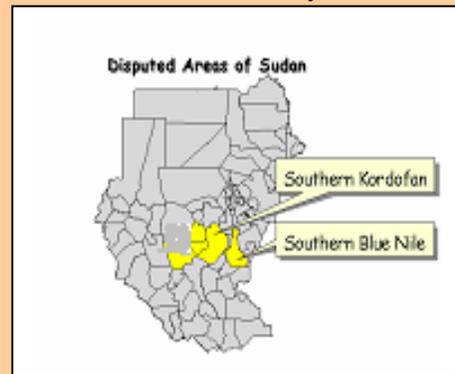
Currently, WFP has enough cereal stocks to last until May - June. Stocks of pulses are expected to slightly improve soon but will be expected to run out in May, while oil is expected to run out by end of March. Food stocks for other food aid agencies, namely NPA and CRS will be sufficient to last until the next harvest in September, taking into account the expected arrival of more food by these two agencies in March and June respectively. Given the possibility of a break in WFP's cereal pipeline in June, there is a need for donors to replenish the pipeline and also for WFP to conduct a review of the current food security situation using the Annual Needs Assessment projections as a baseline, in order to improve prioritization of food insecure populations particularly if the pipeline not be sufficient to cater for all vulnerable groups after June.

## Special Feature: Sudan Peace Process

Peace talks between the Government of Sudan (GoS) and Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (SPLA) began in June 2002, under the auspices of IGAD (Inter-Governmental Authority on Drought) and continued until September. During this period, both parties committed to a negotiated, peaceful, comprehensive resolution to the Sudan conflict and agreed to address the root causes of the conflict and establish a framework for governance, through which power and wealth would be equitably shared. Both sides agreed to the following: the people of southern Sudan have the right to self determination through a referendum to determine their future status; a democratic system of governance that takes into account cultural, ethnic, racial, religion, linguistic and gender diversity would be established; and both parties would find a comprehensive solution that addresses the economic and social deterioration and replaces war with social, political and economic justice that respects human and political rights. They also agreed to develop a plan to address the needs of the war-affected population and redress the historical imbalances of development and resources allocation.

In addition, the two parties would negotiate and implement a comprehensive ceasefire and peace agreement. They would implement a peace agreement including pre-interim and interim periods. During the pre-interim period (6 months), there would be a cessation of hostilities and mechanisms to monitor the peace agreement would be created. This would be followed by an interim period that would last for six years during which the peace agreement would be continuously monitored by an independent commission. At the end of six years, the people of southern Sudan would vote in an internationally monitored referendum for the system of government established under the peace agreement or for secession.

The next round of peace talks resumed in mid-October and ended in mid-November, culminating in the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to cease hostilities during the negotiations in all areas of the Sudan and allow unimpeded humanitarian access to all areas where people are in need, in accordance with Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) agreement. Despite the MOU, fighting continued in Western Upper Nile region (Liech) in January, displacing 50,000 people and worries grew that the fighting would poison the negotiation process. The fighting led the parties to acknowledge the need to strengthen the MOU and in January 2003 they signed an addendum that provided for the establishment of Verification and Monitoring Team (VMT) and the extension of the MOU until the end of March 2003. In addition, the GoS and the SPLA agreed to take measures to effect the voluntary return of the civilian population displaced by fighting in the Western Upper Nile region, and requested the UN to expand the areas covered by interventions to Southern Blue Nile and Kassala areas. The next round of negotiations started on March 4 and focused on the administration of the disputed areas of southern Blue Nile, Abiyei (southern Kordofan) and Nuba (southern Kordofan). The talks are still on going and will cover issues such as economic development, peace and security, the ceasefire and a permanent peace in Nuba, and the possibility of adopting a similar agreement for the other disputed areas. The disputed areas are regarded as a key to overall peace in Sudan. The expectation is that if there is agreement on administration of the disputed areas (highlighted) by GoS and SPLA the rest of the process has a high chance of succeeding. However, complications can be expected given the following:



- The GoS insists that the disputed areas will not have the option of self determination because they are geographically located in the north (according to 1956 colonial boundaries).
- The Nuba people held a convention in November 2002 and confirmed their wish to remain under SPLA administration. The people of Southern Blue Nile expressed the same interest in December. Though people in Abiyei have not concluded their convention, they are likely to favor remaining within SPLA administration.

Southern Sudanese church leaders have hailed the resumption of the peace talks but have called for urgent international support to guarantee a just and sustainable peace agreement.