

Rapid Assessment Report

TOCH

Fangak County, Jonglei State

Assessment date : 21st March 2015

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Drivers of crisis and underlying factors

The conflict which started in December 2013 is the main cause of vulnerability for the affected population that has caused displacement of IDPs from Unity, Jonglei and Upper Nile to Toch. This has been made worse by the flooding that occurred in Fangak County, which has also caused displacement amongst the host community. Homes are still submerged by the flood waters, with displaced populations moving to higher ground which is putting stress on the conflict displaced people and the host community. The flooding destroyed most of the food crops and cattle died in the area. Most of the cattle were therefore transferred to the neighbouring Payams, especially Paguir. Food is therefore unavailable, with the population largely dependent on scavenging for wild vegetable leaves, wild fruits and water lilies.

Scope of crisis and humanitarian profile

Initially when the IDPs started arriving in Toch and the surrounding areas they were supported by the host community; most didn't have much with them in terms of food, water containers and shelter and they assimilated themselves into the host community. But the increase in IDP population and the flooding that caused secondary displacement and destroyed food crops and animals created competition for limited resources and depleting food stocks. As mentioned above, there is no food available with most people dependent on wild vegetables, wild fruits and water lilies.

The local authority Payam administrator estimates that there are approximately 5,700 conflict affected and 7,000 flood affected IDPs in and around Toch area, with an estimated 17,000 displaced in the greater Mareang area (Toch, Mareang, Nyadin). Most of the displaced comprise of women, children and the elderly. Some children are separated from their parents and are living with relatives in Toch. Interviews with IDPs show that most came from Bentiu, Malakal, New Fangak, Canal, Bor, Ayod and Nassir.

The coping mechanism for the host and IDPs has been put into disarray due to competition for meagre resources, with lack of food, shelter and other basic services being the primary concerns of IDPs interviewed.

HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

There are currently no restrictions on humanitarian access in the area from Old Fangak to Toch, and the area is far from the conflict zones in the north and south. The security situation in Toch is considered 'normal' and calm and IDPs mentioned that this was the primary reason they chose to stay in Toch.

Toch is accessible from Fangak county through the river Phow by boat (boats can be hired from Old Fangak). There are two airstrips in the area: one in Toch itself and another in Nyadin. Toch airstrip was recently accessed by light aircraft (a MAF caravan landed there a day before the assessment team arrived by boat). However, Toch airstrip may need further assessment by UNDSS, since UNDSS in Juba reported that they were previously unable to land a plane.

KEY FINDINGS

FSL

The food ration that both host community and IDPs are eating has changed and they are now reduced to scavenging for wild fruits, wild vegetable leaves and water lilies. Most do not have any food stocks and have no access to fish from the river due to lack of fishing materials like nets and hooks. Purchasing power is very low - they do not have money to buy from the few that manage to fish from the river. The preservation method is also poor (mainly sun drying) and some of the people complained of stomach problems after eating such fish. The market has only one shop stocking some sugar, soap and rock salt but due to high prices very few (those with relatives in Old Fangak with money to spare) are able to access them.

There is no cereal production, due to crop failure in the last two harvesting seasons that was compounded by the flooding last year. Food stocks have dwindled and the IDPs have become an extra burden on the host community.

The scarcity of grass for animals and diseases affecting them has further reduced food of animal origin. Livestock are dying and the team witnessed carcasses around the village. The community used to live off their animals for milk and meat but most are either dying or emaciated; the community is afraid to kill them for meat as they are not sure of the diseases affecting them. Before death, the animals become progressively emaciated, lose appetite, hyper-salivate, their fur becomes ruffled and they develop bottle jaw. The strong cattle are able to go through the deep waters to obtain good grass while the weak ones suffer and eventually die of starvation. It is reported that various helminthes can be observed in the livestock after death, mainly in the stomach and liver.

Vaccinations had been carried out by FCDI but they faced challenges maintaining the cold chain. A solar fridge provided by CMA is present in Toch centre, but is not functioning due to a faulty battery.

Women and children are put at risk when foraging in the forests and river for the wild fruits, vegetable leaves and water lilies.



Photo 1: Dead animals on the swamp.

Health

There is one PHCU in Toch Payam with 9 staff (6 men and 3 women who are working on a voluntary basis as they are not paid by the government), though not all were found at the clinic at time of assessment. The most common reported ailments in the clinic are diarrheal diseases, pneumonia, eye infections and malaria. The services in the clinic are offered at no cost, but the PHCU lacks drugs to treat basic ailments. THESO and CMA have plans to reinforce the PHCU in Toch, Chotbora, Dhorreak and Kuerdend with medical supplies and experienced staff (clinical officers and midwives were mentioned), though the time frame is not yet known.

NFI & ES

The majority of the affected population is living under trees, the primary school and PHCU, as most houses were destroyed by flooding. They lack cooking utensils, blankets, sleeping mats, plastic sheeting, mosquito nets, jerry cans, buckets and soap. They share most of the cooking utensils and jerry cans between themselves and the host community.

Some IDPs mentioned that they were able to access some soap from relatives who received WASH NFIs in Menime.

Nutrition

THESO is offering nutrition services at the PHCU. They offer OTP and TSFP at the PHCU. Cases of SAM and MAM are high (figures not specified at time of reporting) according to the consultation records as the community solely depends on wild fruits, leaves and water lilies as food.

WASH

There are only two boreholes in the area - one in Toch village and another in Pathiai village - which are not adequate for the needs of the population, and as a result many are using unsafe water sources. There is a general lack of water carriers (both jerry cans and buckets) within the community and during the assessment no community members were seen collecting water from the borehole using a water carrier, most were using their palms to drink directly from the borehole.

There are no latrines and open defecation is prevalent in the area. Women and girls have to wait until night time to access defecation areas, due to lack of privacy during the day. Women mentioned that they have to go to defecate at night but in groups, for safety reasons. There is a lack of general hygiene among the population, especially among younger children.

Young girls lack basic hygiene materials and use torn cloths during menstruation.

Protection

Protection issues noted included lack of shelters as the IDPs were living under trees and some in the school. There is a high risk of sexual exploitation for women and girls living under trees. Women and girls reported that they do not feel safe sleeping in the open and resort to sleeping in groups at night for safety.

Boys and girls of school going age were idle as schools are closed. Issues of early and forced marriages were reported to be common.

There are cases of unaccompanied children staying with the displaced, though the figure is unknown. The authorities also reported an unconfirmed number of separated children.

Standard Action Liaison Focus (SALF) is in Toch conducting psychosocial support and case management of GBV survivors. There is also a planned registration and distribution of dignity kits.

Education

There are many school aged children within the displaced community but currently the school is not operational and is occupied by IDPs. Toch primary school comprises of 8 learning classrooms, but lacks teaching and learning materials. One of the walls of one classroom has collapsed due to the flooding from the river. Teachers are present in the community but lack incentives – since the crisis started they are no longer supported by the government. They used to teach last year before the closure of the school year, but on a voluntary basis.

School is planned to resume in April but due to the occupation of the school by the IDPs there is no dedicated learning space (as well as no teaching and learning materials).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS AND FOLLOW UP		
	Recommendations	Follow up – who and when
FSL	Provision of veterinary drugs and services to the area. Distribution of fishing kits. Food distribution to the affected populations.	FCDI (waiting for drugs from Juba). By 15 th April. TBC
Health	Scale up support to the PHCU with drugs and health kits.	THESO
Nutrition	Scale up support to PHCU with TSFP and OTP	THESO
NFI & ES	Distribution of NFI (including sleeping mats, plastic sheeting, mosquito nets, blankets, cooking utensils) for the displaced.	TBC
WASH	Distribution of WASH NFI for the displaced and hygiene promotion activities.	TBC (ALSI and SALF report they are applying for IOM RRF funding. ALSI are not yet present in area. At the time of reporting SALF had submitted a proposal to the RRF)
Protection	Scale up case management activities in Nyadin Bomas.	SALF By 3 rd April

ASSESSMENT INFORMATION
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Geographical area visited

- Toch N 08 58' 3.65" E 030 42'30.65" Alt 411.5m

Assessment itinerary

- 09:15 hrs , 21th March, 2015: Left Old Fangak by boat
- Arrival in Payat for one team to visit surrounding villages and PHCU
- Arrival in Toch and interviews with LAs, KI and IDPs
- 15:15 hrs: Returned by boat to Old Fangak.

Key informants interviewed

- John Jal Kuol, CHW at Toch PHCU and Acting SRRA Toch Payam.
- Duop Wichar, Toch Payam Administrator.
- James Gathoi, Food for the Hungry Focal Person, Toch.
- Peter Nut Khan, Sub Chief Old Fangak.
- IDPs and community members in Toch.
- Cattle keepers.

Contact list

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