South Sudan: Aid agencies appeal for $1.72 billion to assist 6 million people amidst rising needs

The humanitarian community in South Sudan has launched an appeal for US$1.72 billion to provide critical and life-saving assistance to 6 million people affected by conflict, displacement, hunger and a deteriorating economy.

“There is a growing need for humanitarian assistance with displacement, food insecurity, malnutrition, violence and economic decline taking a toll on the health, safety and livelihoods of people in need,” said Alain Noudéhou, the Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan. “We are calling for US$1.72 billion to continue providing life-saving assistance and protection for 6 million people most in need in South Sudan.”

Mr. Noudéhou emphasized the centrality of protection of vulnerable groups, especially women and children, in the response plan. Since the conflict began in December 2013, about 4 million people have been forced to flee their homes, including 1.9 million people who have been internally displaced and about 2.1 million who have fled as refugees to neighbouring countries.

As the conflict continues in some parts of the country, rates of hunger and malnutrition have risen, and food security partners report the risk of famine for the most vulnerable, if early actions are not taken.

According to the South Sudan Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), an earlier than normal start of the lean season will result in an estimated 5.1 million people (48 per cent of the total population) being classified as severely food insecure between January-March 2018.

Read more: Statement by the Humanitarian Coordinator -- http://bit.ly/2z2zkEx

Agencies reach 5.1 million people with assistance, protection in 2017

Humanitarian organisations in South Sudan continue to reach millions of people in need across the country. As of end of November, aid agencies had reached more than 5.1 million people with assistance and protection since the beginning of the year.

This includes: 4.7 million reached with food assistance and emergency livelihoods; more
than 2.5 million reached through the distribution of interagency emergency health kits, more than 2.1 million provided with access to clean water; 818,000 assisted with vital non-food items, including blankets and mosquito nets; 810,000 children and pregnant and lactating women provided with emergency nutritional assistance; 357,000 children supported with access to education in emergencies; and more than 94,000 children vaccinated against measles.

**Humanitarian Coordinator welcomes news of six aid workers safely accounted for**

The Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan, Alain Noudéhou on Thursday welcomed news of the safe return of the six aid workers who went missing four days ago in South Sudan’s Western Bahr el Ghazal region.

The six aid workers, including one international and five national staff, working with Solidarités International, HealthNet TPO, and AFOD, are all accounted for. The Humanitarian Coordinator commends all those who worked to ensure the safe return of the NGO staff and particularly the efforts of the UN World Food Programme (WFP).

The Humanitarian Coordinator reminded all parties of their obligation to respect the neutrality of on-going humanitarian operations and facilitate safe and unhindered access for humanitarian workers providing life-saving aid to vulnerable people throughout the country. These aid agencies were implementing food assistance, livelihoods, health, and nutrition interventions in an area heavily impacted by food insecurity and malnutrition.


**November the most dangerous month for aid workers in South Sudan**

November was the most dangerous month for humanitarian workers in South Sudan since December 2013, with nine killed, including six in Duk, Jonglei, one in Ikotos, Eastern Equatoria and two in Awerial, Lakes. At least 95 aid workers have been killed in South Sudan since the start of the conflict in 2013, including 28 so far in 2017.

Incidents of violence in November also substantially disrupted aid operations forcing the suspension of response activities in multiple locations. Fighting forced the relocation of at least 47 aid workers in six incidents in Eastern Equatoria, Jonglei, and Unity.

Two NGOs temporarily suspended food security, livelihoods and health activities, following the violence in Duk County. Nearly 2.4 metric tons of food items were looted and a warehouse was vandalized by armed groups during the attack. In Iholong, Eastern Equatoria, agencies suspended multi-sectoral assistance following insecurity.

In southern Unity, fighting forced the relocation of aid workers and the suspension of food and nutrition assistance to nearly 34,000 people.

The announcement of new work permit rates could see nearly US$7 million, meant for people in need, diverted to fees.
Partners support closure of Melut PoC site, voluntary return of IDPs from Bor

A flight carrying the last remaining 14 internally displaced persons from the Melut Protection of Civilians (PoC) site left on 20 December, marking the closure of the displacement site.

A total of 562 women, men and children have been assisted to return or relocate to places of their choice following joint efforts UNHCR and other partners have been undertaking since early December 2017.

“It is an important protection achievement as working closely with our partners we could finally find a solution to a protracted displacement that was also in the best interest of the internally displaced women, men and children,” UNHCR Representative in South Sudan Johann Siffointe said. “Closure of the Melut camp provides a good example of how concerted efforts as well as inclusion of displaced persons in every step of the process can lead to a highly rewarding outcome.”

Over the past three weeks, a UNHCR team has been working with the internally displaced persons at the Melut PoC site to fulfill their intentions of leaving the site and returning to their homes or places of their choice within South Sudan.

To facilitate the returns and relocation, UNHCR set up a processing center at the Melut PoC site where internally displaced persons were issued necessary documentation and counselled so to be able to decide on the best solutions for their situation.

More than 80 per cent of 562 internally displaced persons opted to relocate or return to areas such as Renk, Ulang, Mading, Udier, Fangak, Wau, Aweil as well as Melut County. The remaining 75 chose to stay under the protection of UNMISS and relocate to the Malakal PoC site.

UNHCR provided a relocation grant to all families to ensure they can meet their basic needs upon arrival at a new destination.

All 75 internally displaced persons who were relocated to the Malakal PoC site were immediately provided with shelters and included in all services and assistance delivered to other residents.

The closure of Melut PoC site will provide an opportunity for UNMISS to shift its focus from maintaining security in the camp to increasing patrols in the surrounding areas.

250 IDPs voluntarily leave Bor PoC site for Fangak

Out of more than 400 IDPs who registered their intention to leave Bor PoC, over 250 voluntarily departed for their places of origin in Fangak, and arrived on 17 December.

Out of more than 400 IDPs who registered their intention to leave Bor PoC site, over 250 voluntarily departed for their places of origin in Fangak, and arrived on 17 December. They had been displaced in Bor since in December 2013, when fighting erupted.

The return followed a series of engagements and meetings between the Bor Solutions Working Group (SWG) and IDPs who showed interest to return to their area of origin.
SWG partners and representatives of the IDP community conducted an assessment mission to Fangak County from 25 October to 1 November 2017 to meet with authorities, community and religious leaders, and humanitarian partners operating in the area.

The authorities and partners pledged to support the resettlement of the returnees. The mission also secured guarantees for safe river passage. A subsequent security risk assessment mission was conducted on 9 December to further ensure a safe return environment.

As part of the return package, humanitarian partners have provided one-month food rations to departing IDPs. Non-food items including cooking utensils, mosquito nets and shelter items among others will be provided upon arrival.

As of 9 November, the number of civilians seeking safety in six PoC sites located on UNMISS bases was 209,885 including 112,140 in Bentiu, 24,424 in Malakal, 38,113 in Juba UN House, 2,532 in Bor, 651 in Melut and 169 in UNMISS base and 31,856 in the area adjacent to UNMISS in Wau. The PoC sites have been offering protection to people in South Sudan since December 2013, when the civil war broke out in the world’s youngest country.

**Inter-communal violence leaves scores dead in Lakes, Warrap**

Dozens of people have reportedly been killed and several others injured following inter-communal clashes between rival clans in Rumbek Centre County (Lakes) and Tonj East County (Warrap) over the last two weeks.

Humanitarian partners carried out an assessment mission in the aftermath of the Rumbek fighting, the worst in months, and found that dozens of people were killed, many more injured and over 2,200 homes razed, displacing thousands of people. Partners estimate that the violence affected some 9,000 people in Abiru and Malek counties, forcing them to flee their homes. Reports also indicated that during the fighting, food crops and other valuables were looted and destroyed. Many health facilities were overwhelmed by the influx of patients wounded and injured in the violence.

Partners were forced to temporarily suspend several humanitarian operations due to the fighting. The assessment reports showed that thousands of displaced people were in urgent need of food, shelter, and protection due to the destruction of houses and other properties.

In Warrap's Tonj East County, over 30 people were reportedly killed in deadly inter-communal fighting between the Thiik and Kongor clans. The incident temporarily disrupted humanitarian activities in the area.

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OCHA humanitarian bulletins are available at: www.reliefweb.int