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East Africa

South Sudan

This country is monitored by local FEWS NET staff

Special Report

South Sudan Crisis Monitoring

February 19, 2014

Regular FEWS NET South Sudan monthly outlook reporting has been suspended due to the current crisis; FEWS NET will continue monitoring the food security situation and post periodic updates while the crisis is ongoing.

Current Situation

- Intermittent fighting has continued even after the government of South Sudan and the opposition signed a ceasefire on January 23, 2014. The government has released seven of the 11 political detainees allied with Riek Machar, the former Vice President of South Sudan and leader of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM)-in-Opposition. A second round of talks started in Addis Ababa on February 10, although this has resulted in little progress to date.

- Fighting in late January in the oil-producing states of Unity and Upper Nile has significantly affected oil output, with an estimated reduction in daily oil production by 20 percent compared to November 2013 (prior to the outbreak of conflict). Further reductions are likely, as security conditions are deteriorating in these areas and many oil workers have left.

Markets and Trade

- Disruptions to the staple food marketing system due to fighting persist, particularly in Bor (Jonglei State), Bentiu (Unity State) and Malakal (Upper Nile State), where fighting intensified in January. As of mid-February, traders have not yet returned to these towns. Elsewhere in the country, conflict significantly disrupted the main season harvest (December-January). Domestic grain trade flows and imports from neighboring countries have been affected by insecurity along key market corridors and departures of foreign traders (Sudanese, Ethiopian, and Ugandan). Highly insecure areas or those dependent on trade flows from those areas are likely to face significant food shortages and well above average prices.

- Staple food prices are normally stable or decrease between December and January. However, between December 2013 and January 2014, sorghum prices increased by 32 percent in Juba, 19 percent in Wau, 10 percent in Aweil. Over that same period, maize prices increased by 33 percent in Aweil and were stable in Juba. South Sudan depends on Uganda to meet its maize requirements. The relative proximity of Juba to Ugandan source markets has contributed more regular maize availability and lower price variability. Prices were not available from Bor or Malakal for the month of December or January, due to market destruction.

IDP and Refugees

- Since conflict broke out in mid-December 2013, fighting and unrest have displaced 873,000 people, as of February 17. About 716,200 have been internally displaced, while 156,800 people have crossed into neighboring countries. Of the internally displaced population, Unity State hosts the largest number of internally displaced people (IDPs) (189,500 people), followed by Jonglei (130,000), and Upper Nile states (122,000). Uganda hosts nearly 70,700 refugees, mainly from Jonglei State. Over 42,300 refugees crossed into Ethiopia, 13,400 into Kenya, and over 23,300 into Sudan. Refugee flows continue, but at reduced rates compared to January.

- IDPs continue to face mostly Crisis (IPC Phase 3) food insecurity. IDPs have significant food consumption gaps and severely restricted access to food due to market destruction and disruptions to the harvest. IDPs were forced to leave behind livestock and other livelihood assets and sources of income. Most IDPs have limited access to humanitarian assistance. Delivery of assistance requires negotiation with the government for approval and security. In addition, very poor health and sanitation conditions are worsening the food security situation. Typical coping strategies, such as increased consumption of wild foods and outmigration for food, are not possible due to insecurity.

- In isolated areas without humanitarian access, particularly in opposition-controlled areas of Unity, Upper Nile, and Jonglei states, pockets of IDPs may face Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity.

- Aid agencies have supported approximately 302,500 IDPs with some form of assistance as of February 14. About 227,115 people have received food assistance. Nutrition partners have reached an estimated 19,735 people.

Food Security Outcomes

- Pre-positioning of food assistance by international organizations normally happens at this time of year, in advance of the rainy season (June-October), when many areas are inaccessible. However, pre-positioning is currently being impacted by conflict, particularly in Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile states. If the current window of opportunity to preposition food assistance and restock markets is missed, less assistance will be available during the rainy season.

- Given ongoing conflict and the likelihood of escalation of fighting in the coming months, IDPs will continue to face significant food consumption gaps, with increasing Crisis (IPC Phase 3) as the lean season (April-August) sets in. Emergency (IPC Phase 4) food insecurity may increase in opposition-controlled areas, given extremely limited or non-existent humanitarian access. While the Greenbelt livelihood zone will face minimal food insecurity (IPC Phase 1) through April, Stressed (IPC Phase 2) food insecurity is expected in the Hills and Mountains livelihood zone and other areas unaffected by conflict in the coming months.

- If security conditions improve, with corresponding improvements in trade and humanitarian assistance flows, food security outcomes would likely be better than the projections above. Nonetheless, food security outcomes during the lean season (April-August) would be worse than normal even if security conditions were to improve, given that conflict significantly disrupted the harvest and resulted in major market destruction and damage to infrastructure. Furthermore, displaced and refugee populations have lost all or most of their livelihood assets, greatly limiting their ability to meet food needs during the lean season.

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