

A Report on

RAPID NEEDS ASSESSMENT IN AYOD COUNTY, JONGLEI

February 2017

Highlights

- Populations covered by the assessment are facing high levels of food insecurity, and an estimated 85,000 people are in immediate need of food assistance. Of those, 60,000 are from host families and 25,000 are internally displaced people (IDP);
- Most households consume only one meal per day, composed entirely of wild foods;
- No market exists in any of the locations where the rapid assessment took place; the nearest market where food is available is two to three-day walk;
- Households reported having lost almost 50 percent of their livestock in the past three months;
- MUAC screening of 125 children indicated an average GAM rate of 26 percent in each location, far above the 15 percent WHO emergency threshold;
- A population verification exercise is recommended, as high discrepancies exist between the population numbers provided by the local authorities and those estimated by the rapid assessment mission.

Background

The food security and nutrition situation in South Sudan has progressively deteriorated since the outbreak of conflict in December 2013. Some remote areas in Jonglei State¹, including Karmoun, Wani, Buot and Normanyang, have not been receiving consistent food assistance. Moreover, there has been little or no information collected in terms of levels of vulnerability and needs for the population.

In order to collect updated information on the food security and nutrition situation in the area, the World Food Programme (WFP) in partnership with Catholic Relief Services (CRS) conducted a rapid needs assessment (RNA) from 1-4 February 2017. This report details the RNA findings.

Objectives

- Assess the livelihoods, food security and nutrition situation of the IDPs and host communities in in four locations in Jonglei State;

¹ Use of the state and county names in this report do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of WFP concerning the legal status of any county/state.

- Provide recommendations for the provision of humanitarian assistance where needs are most acute.

Methodology

The RNA employed focus group discussions (FGDs) with women, men, IDPs, and youth, as well as key informant interviews and discussion with community members in the four locations. Mid-upper arm circumference (MUAC) screening of children under five was conducted separately – a total of 125 children were covered in four locations. Observation techniques as well as information triangulation were utilized in order to complement data generated through the use of a questionnaire guide with vulnerable people. The assessment team also visited some of the community critical facilities, such as school or water points, where available.

Limitations

The report is based on a findings of the RNA, whereby the team spent a full day in each location. Thus, time was limited for gathering an in-depth understanding of the food and nutrition security situation of the population, to carry out large MUAC screening, and to carry out a mini-census to verify population figures.

Main findings

Population demographics

About 70 percent of households in each of the locations are headed by women, most of whom are widows, as a large number of men were reportedly killed during the conflicts of December 2013 and July 2016. In each of the locations, IDPs make up about 10-35 percent of the total population. Over 50 percent of the IDPs are women and children. An average of 70 percent of the IDPs are integrated into host communities. In all the locations, both IDP and host populations suffer extreme problems with drinking water accessibility, hygiene and sanitation facilities.

IDP populations across the locations are originally from:

- Bentiu (Unity State);
- Juba (Central Equatoria State);
- Malakal (Unity State); Ethiopia (former South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia recently returned to the area).

Food consumption and sources

Most of the households reported consuming only one meal per day, mainly composed of water lily seeds/grains (yiel) and roots (kei), lalop seeds (thow) and palm tree seeds (thok). In Wani, the population also relies on fish from surrounding swamps which is, however, constrained by lack of fishing nets/hooks. Local population and IDPs are experiencing the same challenges in terms of food consumption.

Markets

There are no markets in the assessed locations. The nearest market to Normanyang and Karmoun is in Old Fangak or Coflus which can only be reached over a two to three day walk.



Lalop seeds and leaves that constitute the only food that people consume on a daily basis

Most households reported that before the crisis of December 2013 and July 2016, they relied on markets from outside their localities since movement was not restricted; for example in Wani, the local population previously received supplies by river from Juba and localities such as Normanyan, Karmoun, while people in Buot got supplies from Old Fangak, Coflus, Gorowai.

Livelihoods and income sources

In all the areas visited there were no significant means to support livelihoods nor substantial sources of income. Even if they had money, most households reported that money was of no use due to non-existence of markets.

Women and girls reported spending most of their time harvesting wild foods for consumption at household level, while men were either fishing, hunting or tending cattle.

Agriculture

In all the locations, households interviewed reported that weather conditions and conflict have exposed them to increased food insecurity. Own production has been undermined by both conflict and excessive rains which resulted in flooding in 2016 during which crops were lost in the agricultural season. In previous years, households were able to count on their own agricultural production for consumption.

Though households generally own land for agricultural purposes, they reported not being prepared for the 2017 agricultural season as they lack seeds and draught power.

IDPs experience lack of or limited availability of land for agricultural purposes and do not have seeds to plant.

Communities also raised fear about conflict that could disrupt the upcoming agricultural season.

Livestock

In all locations, local communities reported a very high mortality rate of livestock - around 50 percent loss of livestock herds in the past three months due to lack of water, diseases and diminishing pasture. The assessment team observed some livestock carcasses littered in the localities, which confirmed the information reported by the communities.

Discussion in Normanyang revealed that currently 30 percent of the host family households have five or more livestock; five percent have less than five livestock and 65 percent do not own any livestock. In Karmoun, 30 percent own less than five livestock while 70 percent do not own any livestock. The situations in Buot and Wani was also similar to that in Karmoun.

Humanitarian assistance

None of the communities in the visited locations have benefitted from food or livelihood assistance. The only form of humanitarian assistance they received was emergency education activity carried out by Catholic Mission Development (CMD) a local organization, with support from UNICEF.

Nutrition

An ad-hoc MUAC screening of 125 children across the four locations revealed an average GAM rate of 26 percent, far above the 15 percent emergency threshold. Children were said to be prioritized for the limited food available at the household level who also had access to limited milk. However, women and mothers appeared malnourished. Skin and eye infection (observation), diarrhoea, malaria and pneumonia are very common diseases in all four locations, and there are no health facilities, professionals or medicine to treat the problems.

Mortality

No death directly caused by starvation was reported; however, deaths related to epidemics (such as diarrhea, malaria, cholera) were reported in Wani (10 in the last three months). Key informants underlined that the conditions of these people were compromised by poor food consumption.

Population in need

The assessment concludes that populations in all the four visited locations experience very high food insecurity levels and should be targeted with immediate food

assistance; however actual population sizes in each location need to be verified as the figures provided by local authorities appear exaggerated.

Table 1 below provides the population estimates by local authorities, which stands at **168,310**, of which 65,300 are IDPs. However the mission estimated the total number of people at 85,000, of which 25,000 are IDPs (table 2 below). This estimation was done using some field techniques such as, and not limited to;

- aerial settlements view
- triangulation of information
- observation of population of women and children at the airstrip
- transect walks in the locality

Table 1: Estimates of Vulnerable population

Location	By Local Authorities			By Assessment Team		
	Local population	IDPs	Total	Local population	IDPs	Total
Normanyang	29,000	15,000	44,000	17,000	3,000	20,000
Karmoun	38,480	35,000	73,480	24,000	15,000	39,000
Buot	28,530	3,300	31,830	15,500	1,500	17,000
Wani	7,000	12,000	19,000	3,500	5,500	9,000
TOTAL	103,010	65,300	168,310	60,000	25,000	85,000

Recommendations

- Given the precarious food security and nutrition situation, populations – both IDPs and host families - in all the four locations should be provided with immediate food assistance;
- A population verification exercise to estimate the correct number of people present in the area should be conducted prior to any intervention;
- An integrated food security intervention is recommended: immediate food and nutrition assistance for six months should be combined with some livelihood support to prepare households for the upcoming agricultural season. Considering the availability of fishing opportunities, distribution of fishing equipment is recommended;
- Considering the high livestock losses incurred by these communities, an in-depth study on livestock disease and appropriate response is recommended;
- As the mission observed gaps in other sectors than food security, a multi-sectorial assessment in these areas to evaluate needs in terms of nutrition, health, WASH, education, protection, etc. is recommended;
- As women were already involved in various livelihood activities such as collecting wild foods and firewood for family consumption, some income generating activities to drive women’s empowerment should be considered.