

PROTECTION TRENDS SOUTH SUDAN

January - March 2016



31 May 2016



South Sudan Protection Cluster

May 2016

PROTECTION OVERVIEW

This report is the seventh in a series of Protection Trends papers prepared by the South Sudan Protection Cluster in close collaboration with the three sub-clusters and other protection actors.¹ After providing an overview of the protection situation, the paper discusses trends on issues reported and observed in the first quarter of 2016 (1 January through 31 March), including forced displacement and population movements, threats against children, gender-based violence, and landmines and explosive remnants of war. The paper also examines certain trends since the crisis started in December 2013, depending on the availability of data.

Despite the signing of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan in August 2015, the reporting period was marked by little improvement in the protection environment. Further insecurity was experienced in areas that had not been previously affected by conflict, such as Western Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal, in addition to new outbreaks of violence in Jonglei and Malakal.

The conflict continued to affect civilians, with reports of civilians being targeted, killed, and injured in conflict-related violence, in addition to ongoing issues regarding gender-based violence.² Even though large-scale clashes between Government and opposition forces have declined, low-intensity violence such as extrajudicial killings, and raids have become more prevalent.³ This has led to challenges in understanding the scope of human rights violations and protection threats, particularly given access challenges to the areas most affected. In Wau, for instance, humanitarian and protection actors have received reports of atrocities but thus far have been unable to verify these due to insecurity and access constraints.

At the same time, violence broke out at the Malakal Protection of Civilians (POC) site during 17-18 February. This incident saw the killing of IDPs, the large-scale destruction of homes and assets, as well as general violence against civilians; roughly a third of the site was destroyed.⁴ The Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) reportedly attacked and subsequently breached the perimeter of the POC site, in violation of international humanitarian law and the Status of Forces Agreement. Ongoing investigations are looking into these events.⁵ Freedom of movement for civilians to nearby Wau Shilluk continued to be denied, resulting in families being separated.

As noted, throughout this quarter it became clear that civilians have been targeted resulting in forced displacement. This has been most notable in southern and central Unity, where human rights investigations reported signs of forced displacement of civilian populations⁶ and attempts to prevent the return of

civilians perceived to support the opposition.⁷ These patterns have continued into the first quarter of 2016.

In addition to the violence that continues in the Greater Upper Nile region, humanitarians are witnessing an increasing number of clashes in areas that previously had been calm. At the end of 2015, growing tensions in Western Equatoria led to outbreaks of violence in Mundri and Yambio, causing an estimated 75,000 people to flee their homes in search of safety.⁸

By early 2016, violence also erupted in Western Bahr el Ghazal, with humanitarians receiving reports of clashes between SPLA troops and a local militia in Wau County in January.⁹ Efforts by humanitarian partners to reach these populations throughout the first quarter of 2016 have failed due to access constraints. In Pibor town in February, rising tensions led to approximately 2,000 civilians seeking refuge in the UNMISS base. Humanitarian facilities were also heavily looted and destroyed during this incident, and on 26 February humanitarians were evacuated from the town.

In the two years since the start of the civil war, however, the occurrence and impact of cattle-raiding have not been prioritized by the humanitarian and international community due to the severity and scale of fighting, violations, and abuses related to the conflict. Nevertheless, as the macro-level clashes decline, cattle raids are starting to re-emerge as a threat to the civilian population. In March alone, an estimated 65 people were killed in cattle raids in Lakes State, and 600 head of cattle were stolen in a single incident.¹⁰ Raids also have been reported in northern Jonglei County, with violence and displacement at times spilling over the border into Upper Nile.¹¹

As people begin leaving the POC sites and returning home, the frequency and intensity of cattle raids may increase. Many people in the POC sites have reported that upon returning home, they will attempt to "reclaim" their cattle that has been taken.¹²

Still, the return of opposition leader and First Vice-President designate Dr. Riek Machar and the subsequent formation of the Transitional Government of National Unity in April 2016¹³ provide a potentially positive backdrop for the country's prospects for stability in the months to come. However, it is important that the humanitarian and international community continue to monitor the protection situation in the coming months, in order to ensure that the environment does indeed begin to stabilize for communities across South Sudan.

¹See the papers published in 2014 and 2015 at: www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/south-sudan/protection. The sub-clusters are Child Protection, Gender-based Violence (GBV), and Mine Action.

²OHCHR, "Report of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Assessment Mission to Improve Human Rights, Accountability, Reconciliation and Capacity in South Sudan", 10 March 2016.

³UNMISS/OHCHR, "The State of Human Rights in South Sudan", December 2015.

⁴South Sudan Protection Cluster, "Protection Situation Update: Violence in the Malakal POC Site", 17-18 February, March 2016. See:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/south-sudan/document/protection-situation-update-violence-malakal-poc-site-17-18-february>; Centre for Civilians in Conflict, "A Refuge in Flames. The February 17-18 Violence in Malakal POC", April 2016.

⁵See: <http://www.un.org/press/en/2016/sga1652.doc.htm>.

⁶UNMISS/OHCHR Report, "The State of Human Rights in South Sudan," December 2015, http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/SS/UNMISS_HRD4December2015.pdf.

⁷Human Rights Watch, "They Burned It All", July 2015, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2015/07/22/they-burned-it-all/destruction-villages-killings-and-sexual-violence-unity-state>.

⁸South Sudan Protection Cluster, "Protection Situation Update: Southern and Central Unity State", September 2015. See:

<https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/south-sudan/document/protection-situation-update-southern-and-central-unity-south-sudan>.

⁹South Sudan Humanitarian Project, "Yambio Situation Report", February 2016.

¹⁰UNHCR, "Wau Situation Report: Protection Fact Sheet, Western Bahr el Ghazal", 31 March 2016; South Sudan Humanitarian Project, "Wau Situation Update", March 2016.

¹¹See: <http://radio-miraya.org/national/boy-kidnapped-600-head-of-cattle-raided-in-amongpiny>.

¹²See: <http://www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/18940/Herds-of-Cattle-Raided-In-Twic-East.aspx>.

¹³Protection Cluster interviews in Bentiu POC Site, March 2016.

¹⁴Dr. Riek Machar returned to Juba on 26 April, and the Transitional Government of National Unity was officially formed on 28 April 2016.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND POPULATION MOVEMENTS

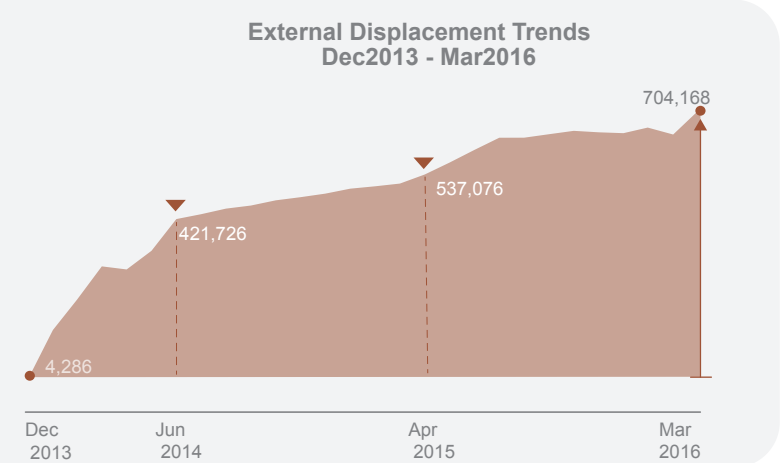
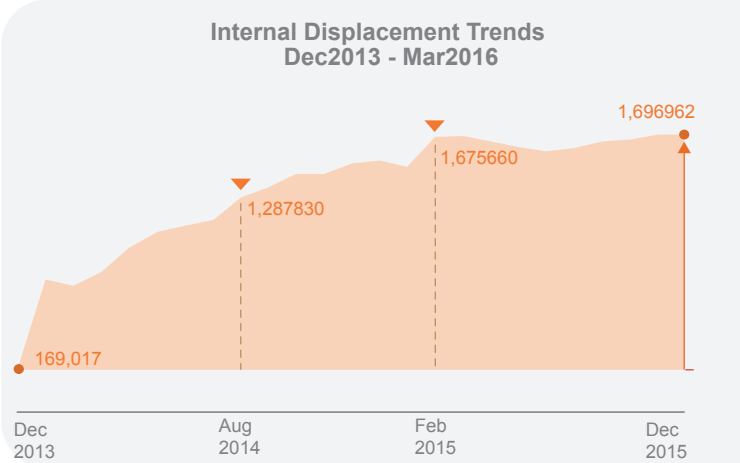
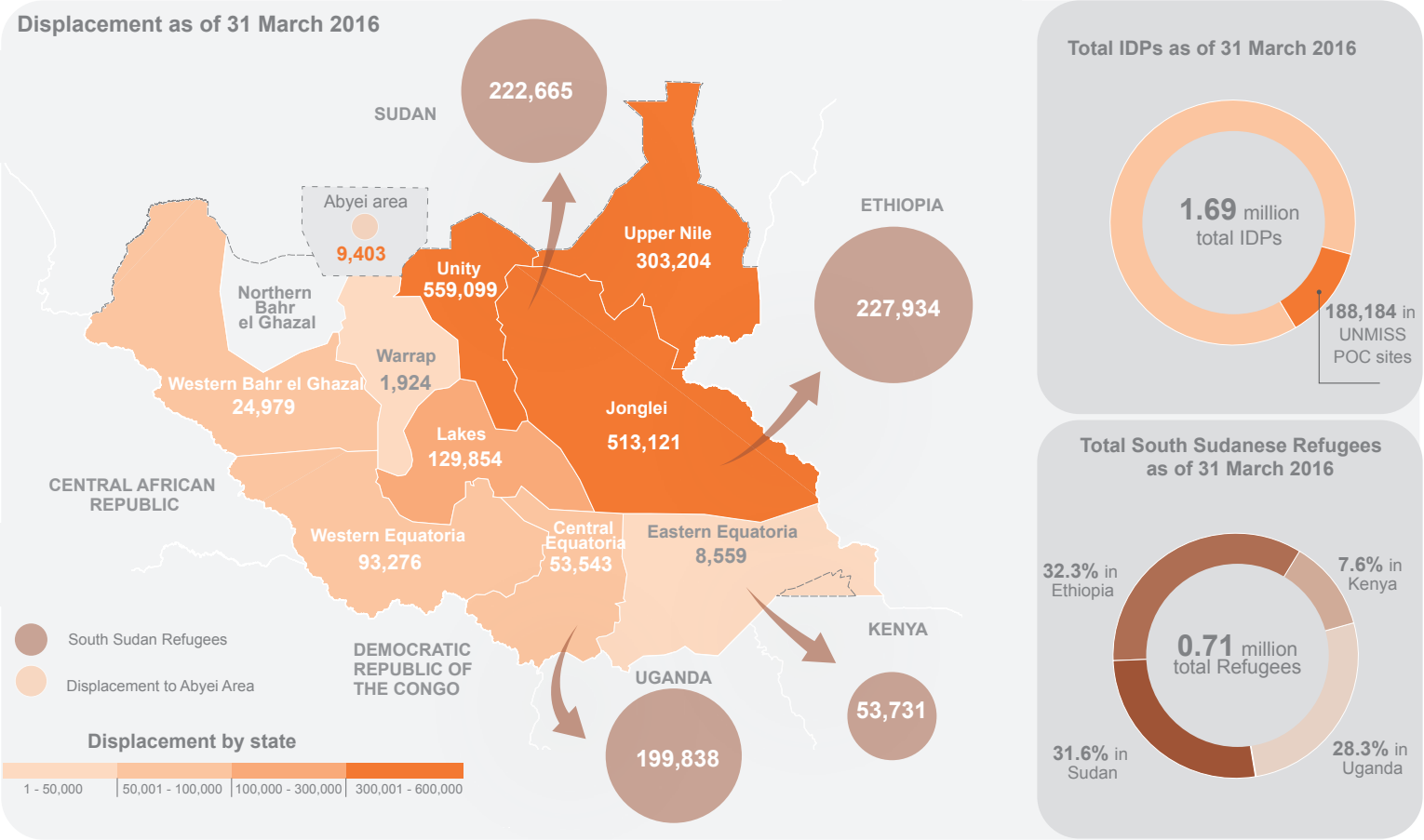
Fighting and food insecurity exacerbated by the deteriorating economic situation continued to cause internal displacement and refugee outflows during the first three months of 2016. As has been the case since the start of the conflict in December 2013, the vast majority of displaced persons live outside the six UN Protection of Civilian (POC) sites. As of 31 March 2016, approximately 1.69 million were living outside of the POCs compared to 188,184 inside these areas – thus around 11 per cent of the total estimated IDP population were living within the POCs. Many of these persons have stayed close to their homes where they can check on crops and assets, fleeing only when there is an imminent threat.

While conflict on a large-scale between the SPLA and SPLA/IO forces has subsided, fighting between these groups continued on a smaller-scale in certain parts of the country, namely Western Bahr el Ghazal and Unity. Inter-communal fighting also continued to cause internal displacement, including an estimated 19,000 persons in Jonglei.

Despite progress on the political front, population outflows to neighbouring countries continued. From January to March 2016, more than 100,000 South Sudanese sought safety in all neighbouring countries, with the majority fleeing to Sudan and Uganda. For the first time since the crisis began, South Sudanese also fled to the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Central African Republic.

Still, Sudan experienced the highest such growth during the reporting period, with approximately 48,000 persons arriving during the reporting period.¹ Since the conflict began, the overall number of South Sudanese refugees has grown from 130,917 to 704,109.² While refugee outflows continue, there are reports of small-scale spontaneous returns taking place, which is likely to gain momentum if the political situation continues to make progress. Spontaneous movements of IDPs and refugee returnees were reported in previous Trends papers, but such movements now appear to be on the increase. This includes IDPs leaving on their own from POC sites such as Bentiu, Bor, and Juba. For instance, some 10,000 IDPs reportedly left the Bentiu POC site for areas where the security situation has improved; humanitarians also have supported the voluntary relocation of about 200 IDPs from the Bor POC site to Jonglei. Also during the reporting period, the Government provided transport for approximately 1,400 IDPs, mostly women and children, from Juba to Upper Nile.

In December 2015, UNFPA and REACH completed intentions surveys of each of the POC sites. These have helped to identify possible areas for return, and humanitarians are now working to scale up services in those locations. While it is likely that an increase in service availability will assist returns in some areas, an overwhelming majority of people in the POC sites cited security as the primary issue preventing their return. This signals that the presence of services alone is unlikely to enable people to leave.



¹UNHCR, "Population Movements from South Sudan Update", May 2016.
²All refugee data from UNHCR South Sudan Situation Information Sharing Portal, available at <http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/regional.php>.
IDP data: OCHA South Sudan website, <http://www.unocha.org/south-sudan>.

FORCED DISPLACEMENT AND POPULATION MOVEMENTS

Ongoing fighting and resulting displacement continued to cause family separation. At the end of March 2016, 12,260 children across South Sudan had been registered as unaccompanied, separated or missing, an increase of 4,369 since the same time last year.

Following a significant increase in the rate of reunifications in 2015, these are now observed to be steady to an average of approximately 25 per week. Of registered unaccompanied and separated children, 43 per cent (3,909 children) have been reunified with their parents or usual caregivers, 3.5 times the rate from the same time last year. Nonetheless, as can be seen from the infographic below, new cases of family separation continue to be identified throughout the country, contributing to a growing total caseload of unaccompanied and separated children.

During the first quarter of 2016, the registration rate has slowed to roughly 50 per cent of that recorded during the second half of 2015. This is believed to indicate decreased incidence of population movement, increased stability in the populations living in Protection of Civilians sites (52.7% of active cases), and, potentially, increased awareness among families and communities about prevention of separation.

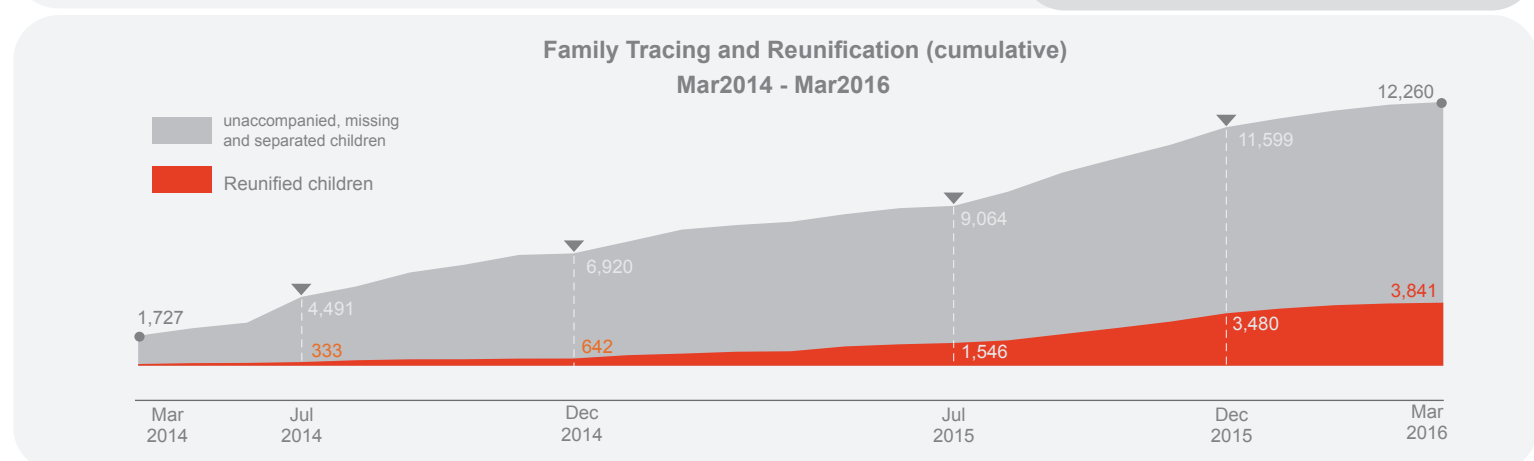
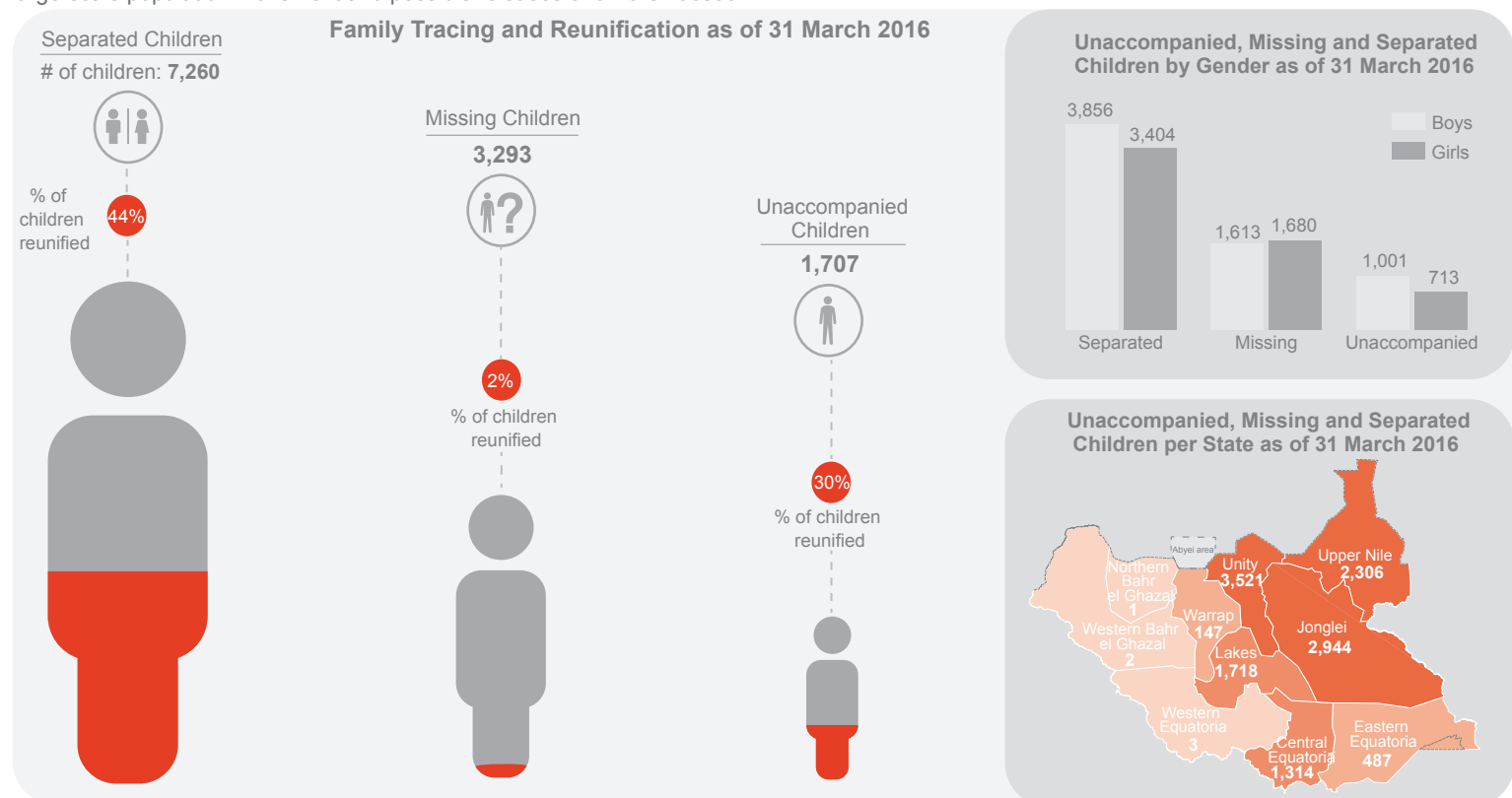
Consistently, the total and active Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) caseload figures demonstrate the high numbers of unaccompanied and separated children in the Greater Upper Nile region, and indicate high concentrations in Juba (Central Equatoria) and Mingkaman IDP settlement (Lakes). While there has been limited indication during the quarter of unaccompanied and separated children returns, either domestic or cross-border, the FTR Working Group remains alert to the possibility of large-scale population movement and possible releases of children associ-

ated with armed forces and groups as factors likely to impact FTR operations and numbers. The impending onset of the rainy season, with its implications for travel and access, is prompting action from protection partners to finalize as many outstanding reunifications as possible in the coming weeks.

Protection partners also continue to be worried about the projected 16,000 children who are believed to be associated with armed forces or armed groups, though the partners are encouraged by the planned release of children from the SPLA-IO.

As a result of the severity of the violence and displacement in South Sudan, the trauma and psychosocial support needs are acute across all segments of the population. While the total psychological impact is currently unknown, it is estimated that more than 907,000 children are experiencing some form of psychosocial distress, up from 876,000 at the end of the third quarter in 2015. In addition to the trauma experienced by both IDPs and host communities, displacement makes it difficult to process the events naturally.

Since 2015, protection partners have transitioned to a community-based strategy for psychosocial support, which focuses on building the psychosocial response capacity of traditional caregivers, complemented by direct psychosocial support for the most complex cases. In the first quarter of 2016, 51,707 children received psychosocial support, the largest group being adolescent boys 11-17 years old. In addition, 256 mothers and 102 fathers received training on parental support and protection skills. While 6,258 caregivers received dedicated supportive services as well, there is a huge gap in psychosocial support for the adult population of South Sudan.



Source: Family Tracing and Reunification database.

GRAVE VIOLATIONS OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

During the first quarter of 2016, 240 incidents of grave violations of children's rights were reported through the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM), affecting approximately 5,004 children. The UN verified 185 incidents of these incidents. Fewer incidents were documented during this reporting period than in the previous quarter, when 258 incidents were reported. The majority of verified incidents (70%) have continued to take place in the Greater Upper Nile — Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile. Military activity also increased in Western Bahr el Ghazal, where almost as many verified incidents (18) were documented during this reporting period as in all of 2015 (17 cases total).

Denial of humanitarian access accounted for 33 per cent of all incidents documented during the reporting period through the MRM. Incidents included attacks on and looting of humanitarian facilities that were providing child protection services to communities in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, as well as attacks on the UN Protection of Civilians site in Malakal, during which schools and hospitals were also attacked.

Incidents of recruitment and use of children by armed forces and armed groups were the second most reported accounting for 29 per cent of all incidents reported. Sixty-one incidents were documented during the reporting period, slightly higher than the average quarterly incidents documented in 2015, which was 50. Of the 61 incidents, 46 were documented in the Greater Upper Nile region.

At the end of 2015, the UN signed an action plan with the SPLA-IO

to stop and prevent the recruitment and use of children and killing and maiming of children. The SPLA signed an action plan with the UN to stop and prevent the recruitment and use of children in 2009. It signed a revised action plan in 2012 and made a commitment to its revised action plan in 2014. Both the SPLA and the SPLA-IO are listed for recruitment and use of children and killing and maiming of children in the Secretary-General's 2015 report on children and armed conflict.

In 2015, 1,054 incidents of grave violations were documented through the MRM, an increase of 28.2 per cent from 2014, when 756 incidents were documented. Incidents of all six types of grave violations, with the exception of maiming, increased in 2015; indeed, incidents of killing more than doubled, and incidents of rape and other forms of sexual violence increased by 41 per cent. In both years, the majority of such violations have been documented in the Greater Upper Nile. The increase in documented violations in 2015 are mostly attributable to the prolonged fighting in Unity, which targeted and displaced civilians from villages throughout the state into the UNMISS Protection of Civilians site in Bentiu. Witnesses and survivors of attacks on villages recounted incidents of killing, maiming, raping, and abduction of children. According to multiple testimonies, children were not only victims of the attacks but also perpetrators as child soldiers.

Finally, incidents of attacks on and military use of schools have been recorded throughout South Sudan, particularly in Unity and Central Equatoria. Since the start of the conflict, schools have been used as barracks, living quarters for soldiers and their families, and even as recruitment centres for children.

Registered Incidents of Grave Child Rights Violations: January - March 2016

Attacks on & military use of schools & hospitals

of incidents: 25

Recruitment and use of children

61

Abduction

13

Killing

18

Sexual violence

8

Injuring

16

of children affected by violence

4,369

347

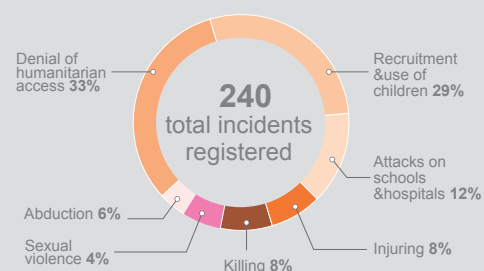
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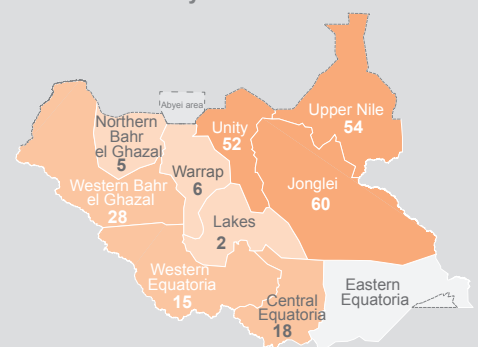
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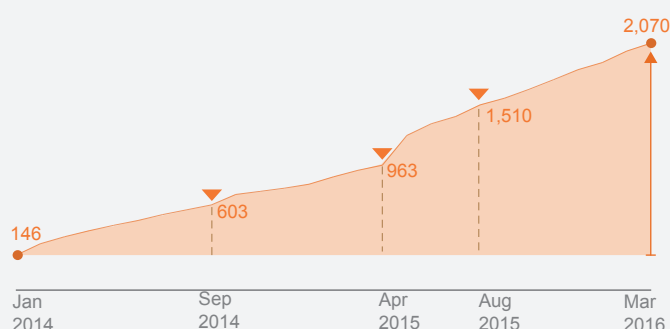
Registered Incidents: January - March 2016



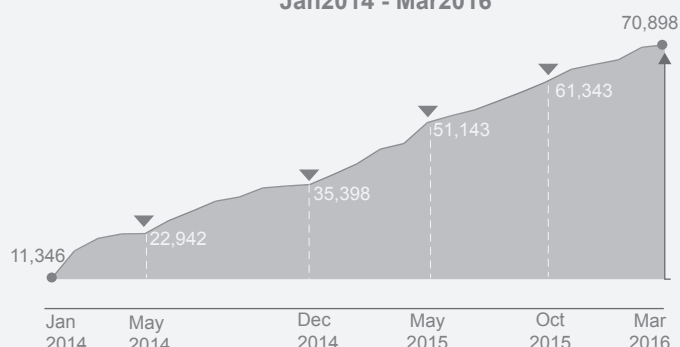
Registered Incidents per State January - March 2016



Number of Incidents of Grave Child Rights Violations (cumulative) Jan2014 - Mar2016



Children Affected by Violence (cumulative) Jan2014 - Mar2016



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Since the beginning of the crisis, gender-based violence (GBV) has been a major protection concern in South Sudan. In 2015, 1,647 survivors received support from GBV actors using the Gender Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS).¹ In the first quarter of 2016 girls and women were disproportionately affected by GBV incidents (96% of survivors of such incidents are female), a trend that has been stable since the beginning of 2015.

Incidents of GBV significantly affected children, with 21 per cent of survivors reporting such an incident in January-February 2016 being underage. Children are often survivors of child sexual abuse (10% of incidents reported) and early marriage (4%).

From January to March 2016, the most common reported incident is physical abuse, mostly perpetrated by the intimate partner (48% of cases). Again, this percentage has remained stable since the beginning of 2015. Domestic violence is both a characteristic of the humanitarian crisis and a persistent feature of daily life across South Sudan. It is a deeply rooted problem that has a severe impact on the survivor's health and well-being, as well as on opportunities for income generation.

Similar to what was observed in 2015, one in four GBV incidents during the first quarter of this year was related to sexual violence. Conflict-related sexual violence remains a concern, with 10 per cent of such incidents allegedly perpetrated by individuals associated with armed forces or armed groups. Survivors of rape also reported being attacked by gang members or unknown persons while collecting

firewood or accessing water and sanitation facilities.

Approximately four per cent of the reported incidents are cases of forced marriage, nonetheless key GBV and child-protection actors confirmed that child marriage continued to affect girls' health and well-being. Under-reporting is related to cultural acceptance of child marriage and to limited options for girls who refuse to get married.

Fifteen survivors were involved in incidents of possible sexual exploitation, underscoring how displacement and extremely poor economic conditions may push vulnerable individuals into harmful coping mechanisms, including survival sex.

Indeed, under-reporting more broadly remains a major trend. Cultural acceptance of violence, fear of stigma, and the persistent difficulties in accessing justice prevent survivors from speaking out and gaining support.

Efforts need to be strengthened to ensure access to specialized, holistic services for GBV survivors including health, psychosocial and legal support services. Efforts also must be strengthened to mitigate the risk of violence in and beyond displacement settings. Access to livelihoods and self-reliance opportunities must be ensured for individuals at risk of GBV and for survivors of GBV, particularly as a strategy for reducing and preventing future such incidents.



¹The GBVIMS was rolled out in South Sudan in 2014. It currently includes 15 member organizations. GBVIMS data that is shared is only from reported cases in areas where the data-gathering organizations are providing services, and is in no way representative of the total incidence or prevalence of GBV in South Sudan. These statistical trends are generated exclusively by GBV service providers who use the GBVIMS for data collection in the implementation of GBV response activities in a limited number of locations across South Sudan and with the consent of survivors.

LANDMINES AND EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

The explosive legacy of conflict in South Sudan means that nearly eight million people live in counties which are impacted by landmines and explosive remnants of war, with 94 million square metres of land contaminated by explosive hazards recorded in the mine action database. During the reporting period, mine action teams were deployed across the country and conducted surveys, clearance, and/or risk education to support protection of civilian activities, create conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, and support human rights monitoring and reporting.

The map below illustrates the spread of known explosive hazards across all of South Sudan. The full extent of contamination remains unknown, as the Greater Upper Nile region (including Unity, Upper Nile, and Jonglei) has not yet been comprehensively surveyed and the impact of armed violence in the region remains to be quantified.

During the last three quarters of 2015, a significant number of new hazardous areas were found than cleared and closed. Comparing 2016 with 2015, UNMAS recorded 699 new explosive hazards, compared to 533 new hazards in the first quarter of 2015, highlighting that the incremental increase is caused by more than seasonal factors.

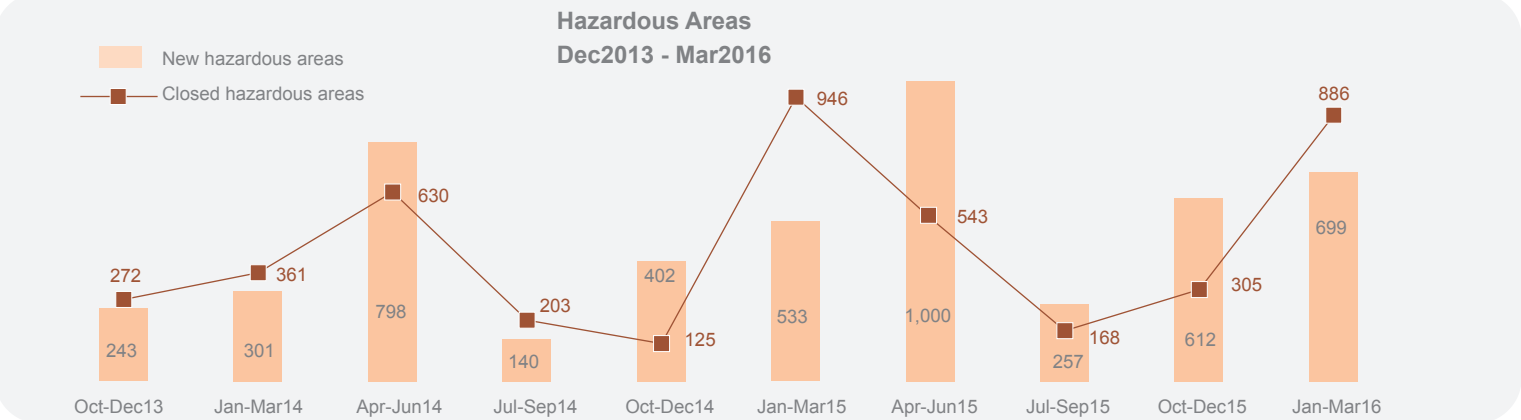
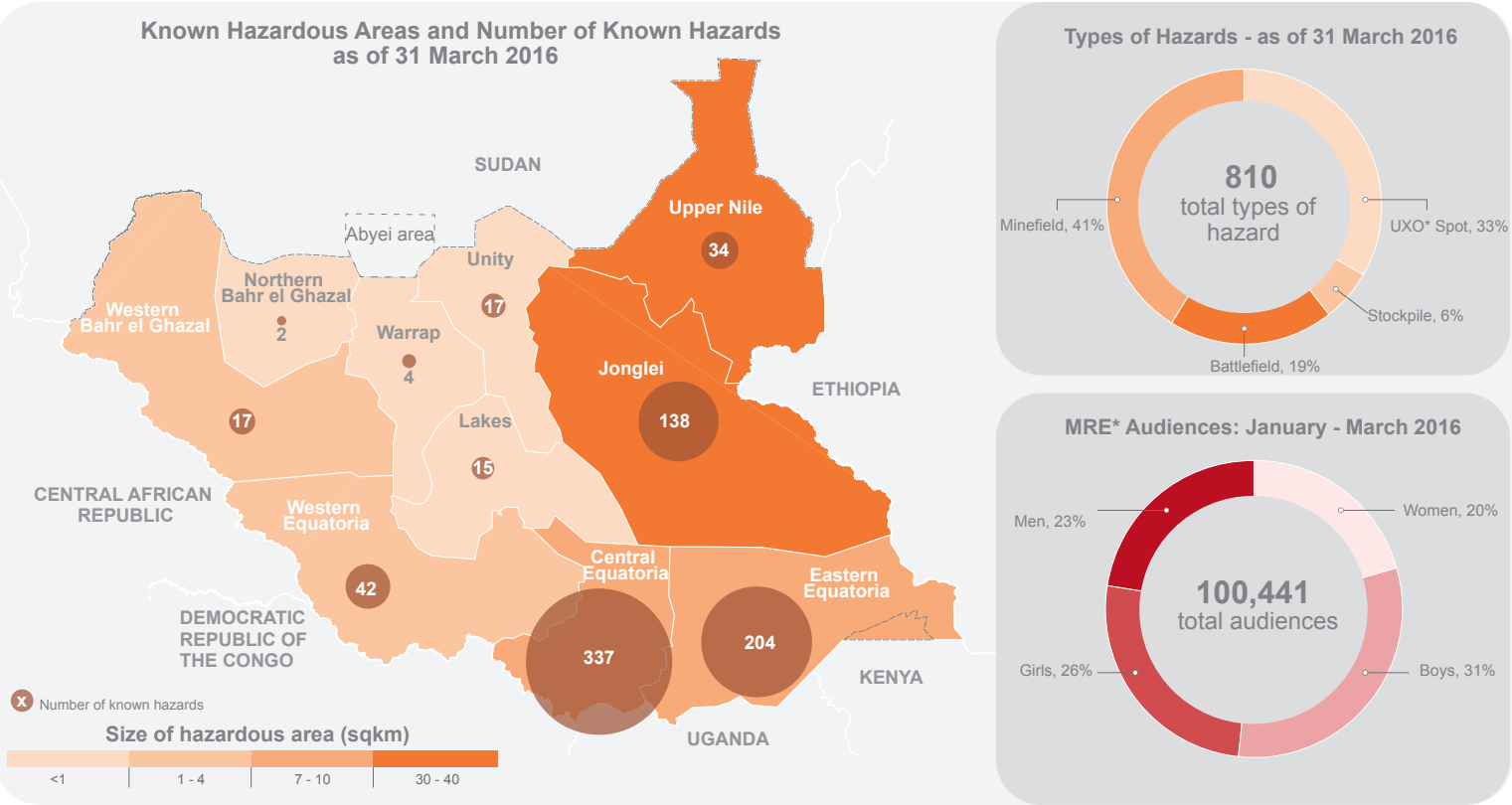
The increase in the number of hazards known to UNMAS has multiple determinants:

1: Ongoing conflict has increased the proliferation of explosive

hazards. There is currently no evidence relating to the laying of new minefields; rather, the majority of contamination resulting from the current conflict is unexploded ordnance (UXO) such as grenades and mortars. Still, the threat posed by UXO is significant: While an anti-personnel mine is designed to kill or maim one person, a single UXO has a greater blast radius. During this quarter, 30 people were killed and maimed, including 10 children, yet only two of those people were injured by landmines and the remainder by UXO. An analysis of accident information shows a link to young boys engaged in the scrap-metal trade, prompting specific messaging to be incorporated into risk education sessions.

2: In 2015, risk education teams were embedded in all UNMAS clearance teams and were able to use their information sessions to engage communities and encourage the reporting of explosive hazards. With clearance teams in close proximity, communities can see that information they provide leads to the immediate reduction of hazards – recognition that has improved community reporting.

3: Increased population movement results in new hazards being found and reported. It is anticipated that this upward trend will continue into the next quarter, during which UNMAS is planning to keep as many of its teams operational as is feasible during the wet season.



Source: Information Management System of Mine Action (IMSMA).
* MRE: Mine Risk Education, UXO: Unexploded Ordnance.

Photo caption

Makieu Geng cradles his 4-year-old sick son outside the shelter of his host Adhieu Chol in Rumbek, South Sudan

Photo credit

UNHCR\IR. Nuri

For more information, please contact:
protectionclustersouthsudan@gmail.com