

Update on Emergency Response Operations in South Sudan Week Ending 03 November 2012

Highlights

- Agencies make headway in easing tensions between refugee and host communities in Maban County
- Nine confirmed cases of Hepatitis E in Yida; joint technical assessment mission planned
- Helicopter mission assesses viability of new sites for refugees

Upper Nile State

Agencies make headway in easing tensions between refugee and host communities in Maban County

Predictably, the large presence of refugees has led to increasing tensions with host communities in Maban County. More than 110,000 refugees now reside there having fled conflict in Blue Nile state, Sudan since September 2011. Underlying issues range from felling of trees to competition for natural resources. Refugees cut bush for fuel wood. They also own large herds of livestock, which leads to fears that refugee cattle will deplete grazing lands and water sources. Other sources of tensions are the potential destruction of crops by refugees' livestock and allegations of livestock theft.

To mitigate such tensions, humanitarian partners have developed projects benefiting the local population since the onset of the emergency. For example, a surgical theatre has been established at the county hospital in Bunj enabling refugees and host communities alike to be operated upon. Health clinics in refugee camps are open to members of the host community, as are water tap stands. Boreholes have been drilled in local villages and seeds and tools distributed to both local and refugee populations.

In an effort to diffuse tensions, UNHCR and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) undertook an extensive assessment through focus group discussions with local leaders, women's groups, local traders and the youth in all camps. With support from the Government of South Sudan's Relief and Rehabilitation Committee (RRC), UNHCR and DRC have created a host community and refugee relations committees in Doro. This is being replicated in other camps.

Three reconciliation meetings have taken place, conducted by a delegation from the County Commissioner and the RRC in Doro and Jamam. Similarly, the Deputy Governor and the County Commissioner held a meeting to reconcile members of the refugee and host communities in Gendrassa following a violent altercation between a refugee and a local resident which resulted in the death of the refugee.

UNHCR has consolidated information on humanitarian partners' current and planned interventions that benefit host communities. This will be used to further inform local authorities and sensitize the Maban community to the opportunity that the refugee influx has created for Maban County in terms of improved access to services. Together with WFP, UNHCR are co-chairing a food security/livelihoods working group to better coordinate interventions in the camps and the host community.

During the reporting period, UNHCR and DRC also facilitated two training sessions on refugee rights and responsibilities, and human rights to clarify issues on their status in South Sudan.

Unity State

Nine confirmed cases of Hepatitis E in Yida; joint technical assessment mission planned

As of 29 October, nine cases of Hepatitis E out of a total of 25 suspected cases in Yida have been confirmed. Nine of the remaining cases came back negative and seven tests are still pending diagnosis. In light of these results, a joint mission of experts from the South Sudanese Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization, and UNHCR has been organized for next week to assess the situation and consider whether an outbreak should be declared.

Based on the current situation, UNHCR and WASH partners are expediting construction of family latrines to increase coverage within the camp. UNHCR is prioritizing latrine slabs, soap, and new buckets and jerry cans for airlift from warehouses in Bentiu and Juba. Partners are simultaneously undertaking an assessment to ensure that latrines are being properly installed, cleaned and used.

UNHCR and partners are maintaining optimum chlorine levels at the water points to help block the transmission of the Hepatitis E virus. Household level water samples were tested during the reporting period and no fecal bacteria were found. This is a positive sign that these efforts are working therefore chlorination levels will be maintained and random sampling will be ongoing.

Conditions continue to improve at all water points and UNHCR and partners are focusing on reducing stagnant water around the tap stands by improving drainage and introducing measures to decrease hand contamination while fetching water.

Approximately 550 Community Health Workers and hygiene promoters and volunteers are working in communities to share vital information on Hepatitis E prevention and reduction of water-carried diseases. These trained volunteers are armed with key messages to disseminate in the settlement to help stop the spread of the `disease.

Supplementary soap distribution is planned, and soap stocks are urgently needed in Yida. UNHCR and health partners will continue to monitor for cases and send samples for testing to the Center for Disease Control in Nairobi.



Refugees collecting water in Yida settlement located in Unity State.
UNHCR/K.Mahoney

Helicopter mission assesses viability of new sites for refugees

During the reporting period, UNHCR undertook a joint air assessment that was facilitated by UNMISS to explore the suitability and accessibility of potential relocation sites offered by the South Sudan government in Unity State.

Technical experts from UNHCR are currently assessing all potential refugee sites in Unity and Upper Nile and drawing detailed site plans. In Unity, new sites will serve both for the refugees now in Yida, and in anticipation of possible new refugee inflows from fighting in South Kordofan state once the rainy season ends.

Statistics			
Upper Nile State: 110,895		Unity State: 64,773	
Yusuf Batil	37,185	Nyeel	963
Doro	43,740	Pariang	1,223
Jamam	15,662	Yida	62,587
Gendrassa	14,308		
Partners:			
ACROSS; ACTED; CARE; Danish Refugee Council (DRC); Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO); GOAL; GIZ; IBIS; International Rescue Committee (IRC); International Organization for Migration (IOM); INTERSOS; MEDAIR; MSF-Belgium; MSF-France; Non-Violence Peace Force (NVPF); Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC); OXFAM; Relief International; Samaritan's Purse; Save the Children Fund; UNICEF; World Food Programme (WFP); World Health Organization (WHO); World Relief; World Vision International.			