

Update on Emergency Response Operations in South Sudan

Week Ending 9 December 2012

Highlights

- **First group of possible refugee influx evacuated from Elfoj**
- **UNHCR and humanitarian actors activate contingency plan for possible influx; K43 hosting 73 new arrivals**
- **Maintaining the civilian character of refugee camps**
- **Pumping tests conducted to evaluate water availability indicate positive results in Yida**
- **UNHCR conducts border monitoring and provides water on border corridor from Jau to Yida**
- **Polio Vaccination campaign carried out in Yida**
- **Refugees in Yida mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence**

Upper Nile State

First group of possible refugee influx evacuated from Elfoj

On Saturday 08 December 73 new arrivals (21 households) – the first group and indication of a possible influx – were evacuated from the border town of Elfoj. The group was recently displaced by aerial bombardment and ground fighting in their village in Sudan's Blue Nile state.

Humanitarian workers have reported that approximately 250 more people have arrived in Elfoj and will be transported further inland.

The refugees are believed to be part of a group of families UNHCR heard fled their village over a week ago. One of the new arrivals interviewed by UNHCR claimed to have witnessed fighting, heavy weapons and the destruction of villages with houses burnt to the ground.

Bombing in border areas of Blue Nile State near Elfoj was reported on 7 December and 11 December. This may hamper people's movement to safety.

The refugees fled with hardly any personal belongings and survived on wild fruit, tubers and whatever water sources were available to them.

Apart from the refugees still in Elfoj UNHCR and partners are watching for potential new arrivals.

The group, predominantly made up of women, children and the elderly has received medical assistance for exhaustion and dehydration. Medical observation indicates the group appears to be moderately malnourished with some of them severely so. All children were provided plumpy nut during the medical visit.

According to MSF, between 15 and 20 percent of the group appears to have malaria.

UNHCR and humanitarian actors activate contingency plan for possible influx; K43 hosting 73 new arrivals

The group of 73 evacuated new arrivals received high-energy biscuits, plumpy nut for the children and NFI kits. They were relocated to Jamam Transit site on 11 December where they will be given kitchen sets and food rations.

The absorption capacity of the existing transit facility has been increased to about 1,300 persons. Construction work at the new transit site is ongoing but is still severely hampered by the lack of wooden poles. All avenues are being explored to expedite access to this resource through discussions with local authorities. The pre-positioning of NFIs and food in Jamam is ongoing.

Meanwhile construction of the way station on the border road to Elfoj (K43) continues in preparation for greater numbers of new arrivals. Almost 100 latrines have been completed; an additional 100 more almost complete.

MSF water treatment plant has been installed and the first 35 cubic meters of water have been produced. A second bladder tank is being set up in K43. In addition a water point will be installed halfway between K43 and El Fuj as well as another new water point closer to Elfoj.

UNHCR and humanitarian actors remain on high alert for any eventuality.

Maintaining the civilian character of refugee camps

Following the recent visit of UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Antonio Guterres, to South Sudan and high-level discussions with the Government of South Sudan on maintaining the civilian character of refugee camps, UNHCR-Maban has subsequently engaged in fruitful discussion with local authorities including the SSPS, SPLA and the County Commissioner at Maban level.

Local discussions led to specific measures to ensure that armed elements would not be permitted in camps. Furthermore, the disarmament of armed elements at border entry points will be strengthened.

UNMISS, the Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan also agreed to deploy blue helmet and civil police contingencies to deter armed elements in and around refugee camps in Maban.

Subsequent to these interventions UNHCR has noted a marked decrease in presence of armed elements in camps over the last few days.

Unity State

Pumping tests conducted to evaluate water availability indicate positive results in Yida

UNHCR, Africa Water and Solidarites International have conducted two water pumping tests during the last week. While detailed analysis is still being finalized, the preliminary indications point to positive results. Initial reports show that it should be possible to increase pumping hours significantly without affecting the aquifer, thus reaching the 15 liter/person/day mark as per the emergency SPHERE standards.

In other WASH-related news, UNHCR and Africa Water are now drilling one borehole for the local South Sudanese community as part of efforts to support host communities. The borehole should be operational by the end of this week. Additionally, UNHCR has requested Africa Water to drill another borehole in the Angolo refugee community, which is the largest group in Yida. Due to the continuous influx of new arrivals and resulting congestion of the Angolo boma, an additional water point is needed to avert potential health and hygiene related problems.

UNHCR conducts border monitoring and provides water on Jau-Yida corridor

UNHCR continues daily monitoring on the corridor from Jau to Yida to transport some of the most vulnerable refugees including women, children and the elderly. The team is also refilling the two water tanks along the road twice per day to ensure refugees have potable drinking water. Access to the border is difficult in what remains a militarized zone and most humanitarian partners have little to no access due to security considerations. UNHCR is engaging the South Sudanese Army (SPLA) in an effort to enhance the protection of refugees during the journey, with a particular focus on protecting women travelling alone. SPLA has since opened a checkpoint at a distance from Yida to screen arrivals and ensure that no weapons enter Yida. This is a major step forward in efforts to preserve the civilian character of the camp.

Polio Vaccination campaign carried out in Yida

During a four-day campaign this week, more than 13,000 children age 0-5 years inclusive, representing 64 percent of the target age group were vaccinated against polio. Ten teams consisting of two trained refugee community health workers each conducted house-to house visits to reach children. One team was also stationed at the Registration Center where biometric verification was being carried out, with thousands of refugees passing through. While the percentage of children inoculated is a substantial improvement from 47 percent in November, it is still lower than the 90 percent minimum target. Lessons learned from the campaign will be compiled, as various changes must be implemented before the next



round of the polio campaign due to start in late February. Notably one in every six, i.e. 2249 of the 13,012 children immunized, reported never having received polio vaccine previously. Of these, 80 percent were children older than six months of age and 60 percent were older than one year. All of the recent arrivals from the Nuba indicated that no immunizations are being provided there. This includes children as old as five years of age who have not been vaccinated against any of the childhood diseases preventable through immunization programs, such as that of polio.

Refugees in Yida mark 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence

Over the past 16 days, refugees, with the support of UNHCR, IRC, NP and Samaritan’s Purse held two events to raise awareness of violence against women and girls. Taking inspiration from this year’s theme “from peace in the world to peace in the home” a newly formed drama group made up of 10 young women wrote and performed a play for more than 700 refugees during two performances. Humanitarian agencies and refugees also took the opportunity of 16 Days to inaugurate a new child friendly space with games, traditional dancing and songs as well as a new mural painted by a well-known Nuban artist.

Statistics

Upper Nile State: 112,091		Unity State: 69,533	
Yusuf Batil	37,199	Nyeel	827
Doro	44,742	Pariang	763
Jamam	15,439	Yida	67,943
Gendrassa	14,711		

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.