

Presentation of Akobo West mission findings March 4th – 10th 2020: “Cows, wild foods, mud fish & food aid”

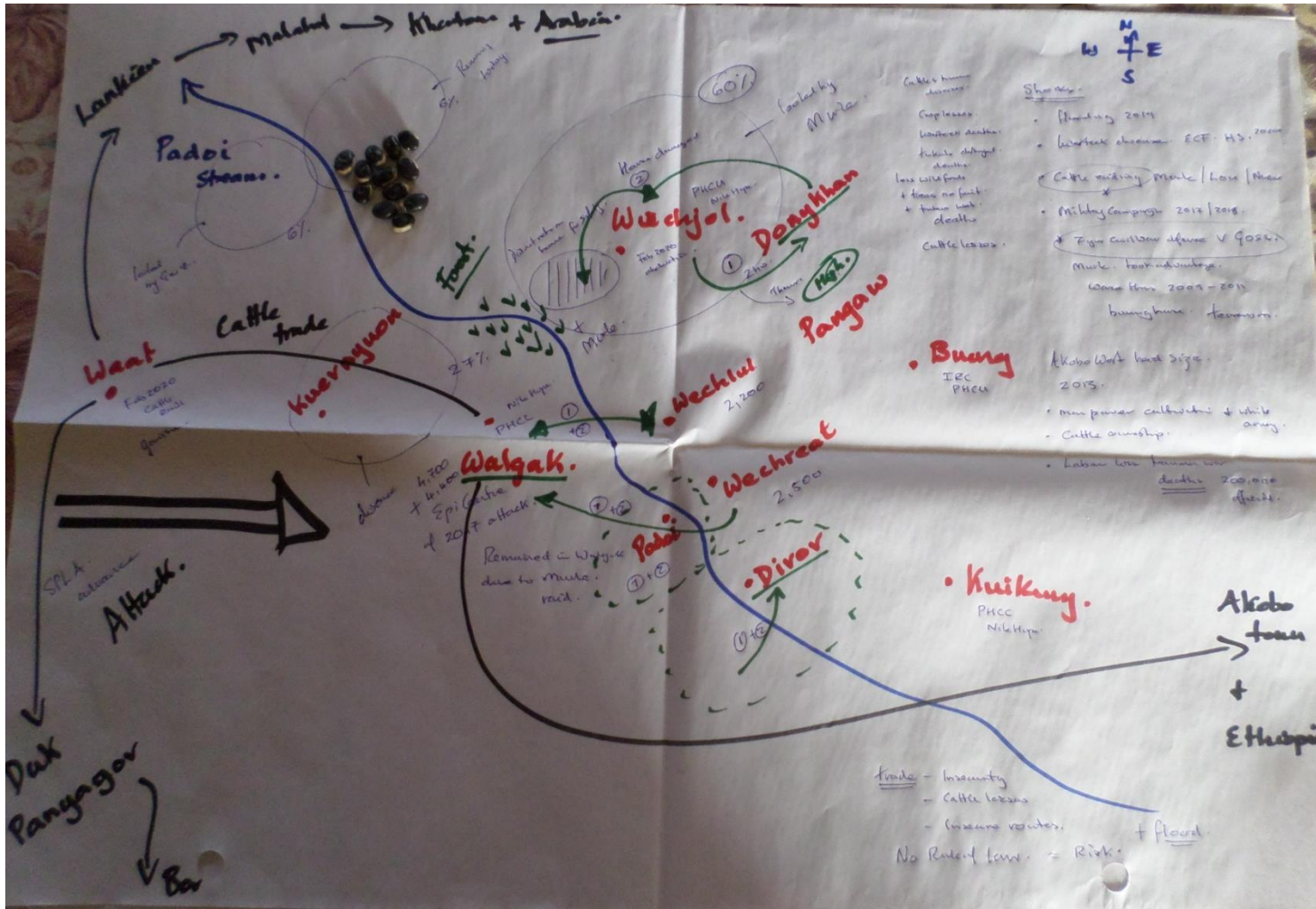


Aims: understand the main drivers; provide the narrative to accompany the FSNMS/ IPC data; and why pockets of phase 5 so close to the FDP

Team of four:

1. Qualitative: PRA tools
2. Context analysis/ social group analysis
3. Food security & livelihoods
4. Population movement
5. Humanitarian Food Assistance tool
6. Characteristics of extreme food insecurity: HHS

Akobo West: livestock trade routes; 2017 SPLA offensive; micro displacements (flood & Murle attacks); safe havens and restricted areas



Amazing array of atypical population movements!

- Eastward **2017 SPLA advance**: today significant IDPs from Waat & Uror
- Reduction in **livestock trade** as compared to 2013
- **Multiple micro displacements**:
 - Floods from low ground to marginally higher ground
 - Murle raids from isolated settlements to centralized safe havens
- **Restricted movements**:
 - To grazing along Sobat (fish & pasture)
 - Alternate to Pading (safe haven: grazing & search for food)
 - To local deep forest: fear of Murle raids (big factor in past hunger lack of access to wild foods & gathering;
 - Over use of local Padoi river fishing grounds (run out by end March)
- So called **'returnees'**:
 - Children from Ulang & Gambella (need school fees) no cows = no fees so they remain
- Out **migration of richer 'better off'** with cattle: to Ulang cattle camps → Gambella → Ethiopia, Kenya & Uganda (you need resources to be a refugee);
Poor stay at home cost of living is low (gather & collect food)

Context: protracted shocks & heightened vulnerability & extreme food insecurity

Over the past 6 years:

1. Decimation of livestock based livelihoods: raiding & disease
2. Losing side of the civil war: political & economic marginalization – stagnation of the rural economy
3. Near continuous disruption to basic services
4. Erosion of traditional kinship support & social safety nets
5. Asset depletion and reliance on food aid, gathering wild foods and fish

Ranked shocks: depleting household and community assets

1. **Intensification of Murle raids from cattle raiding to Communal warfare:** guns/ break down of traditional authority/ rape/ killing of civilians/ damage to property and cattle as ‘spoils of war’ – past 10 years
2. **Poor harvests:**
 - 2018 bird pests significant losses
 - 2019 ‘unprecedented floods’ zero harvest
3. National crisis & **SPLA offensive** 2017/ 2018

Loss of livestock and the collapse of indigenous social safety nets

1. Losses % piling: Murle raids 60%; livestock diseases 27%; SPLA looting 6%; remaining <10% as compared to 2013;
2. Migration away of riang 'better off' and kuak 'middle' social groups
 - Loss of livestock *'only those with wealth can move away'*
 - Reverse multiplier effect
 - Decline in local labor market: farms & construction
 - Traditional support: grains/ milk & blood/ lactating cow/ money/ 'glue of society' Decline in inter marriage
3. Remaining kuak left to support a swollen group of poor 'chan' and extreme poor 'chanichar'
4. Young men part of 'vigilante' protection force: grazing, forest, fishing – unproductive activity

Re-orientation of the social structure: change in shape of population pyramid

Walgak KIs including Paramount chief of Akobo, Nyirol & Uror	
2020	2013
<p>Today no Riang 10 – 15 cows considered as Kuak Moved away: (1) Ulang camps; (2) later onto Gambella; did not return; sold animals to pay for migration; Gradual movement over past 3 years especially since July 2016; Or moved to Kuak & Chan social status;</p>	<p>Riang: 25% 100+ cows 30 – 40 goats Farms with 5 – 6 sacks (approx.. 70kg each)</p>
<p>Kuak ‘some one with assets’ (middle): 10% 2 cows 8 – 10 goats Son with NGO; Shop owners; 2018 harvest attacked by birds 2019 all harvest lost after floods</p>	<p>Kuak: 52% 30 – 35 cows; 15 – 20 goats Farms 2 – 3 sacks; Hires labor for farming & construction</p>
<p>Chan ‘poor’: 20% Female goat 1 cow</p>	<p>Chan ‘poor’: 23% 3 - 5 cows; 5 goats & no cows Hard working/ labor & bigger farms up to 5 sacks</p>
<p>Chanichar ‘extreme poor’ 70% No animals Farms 1 – 2 sacks – 2019 harvest zero Those not wanting to farm left for Sudan for construction work; Reliant on fish & wild foods;</p>	<p>Chanichar ‘extreme poor’ Rarely existed <i>Researcher comment: likely always a residual % (my own research during OLS) and especially after crisis events: after 1991, 1997/ 98 etc.</i></p>

Coping with extreme hunger I

General: greater importance of local fish & wild food gathering

- Murle raids restricting access to Sobat grazing & fishing grounds; livestock & population migration to Pading (safe haven)
- Micro displacement from lowland to higher land (floods) and from isolated to larger settlements (safe havens)
- Importance of food aid: cyclical hunger (HFA) and seasonal hunger (worsening into the lean season)
- Marry daughters: no cows Prospects only marry poor!
- Debt: eat now repay HFA in future!

Coping with extreme hunger II

Extreme poor: higher HHS scores; includes phase 5 HHs (17 case studies)

- IPC phase 5 pockets had re-located (now in central safe havens)
- Greater zero sum coping: firewood/ wild food/ fish; time poverty to do anything else!
- Greater reliance on begging – less successful when everyone is hungry
- Personal vulnerability: elderly/ disabled/ mentally traumatized: unable to access FDP and BMR during the floods
- Less able to navigate a CRM
- Lacking agency/ lacking hope
- Small family without labor
- Lacking kinship support & connection

Just not enough to eat

How deep is the current hunger & how will we recover?

1997/98: worse with more deaths

- Early rains & dry spell/ drought – lost less harvest; compared to 2019 floods;
- Air drop ‘chaos’ as compared to today;
- No Murle raiding; more animals survived; fewer died from disease;
- Recovery & herds restored after 4 – 5 years;

1991: repeat of floods + Murle raids combination!

Current: no mass starvation (HHS 5 & 6) with 16 hunger deaths in past 5 months; in March hunger worse than in Nov/ Dec despite more hunger deaths (12);

- Asset stripped population & fractured society (loss of riang & kuak)
- White army ‘spoils of war’: split across counties and for sons who took part
- Causes of intensified communal warfare not addressed:
 - Lack of rule of law (Murle, Dinka/ Nuer)
 - Post PCA ‘flooded with guns’ intensified with current crisis
 - Break down traditional authority structures: youths + politicians

Major challenge : **economic** (roads, markets, productive projects) and **social** (schooling, nutrition & healthcare, WASH etc.) infrastructure; future of pastoralism; **political** representation in Juba etc.bringing peace & healing to South Sudan!

Recommendations

- **Re-instate former FDP** at Wiechjol (especially important during the rain season)
- Increasing **ration size and reducing the delivery cycle** as we move into the deeper/ worsening hunger season
- Ensure **most vulnerable are registered** and receive their HFA
 - More pro-active CFM/ CRM ‘go to them’ as they ‘can’t always get to us’
- **Targeted support to most vulnerable:** protection measures/ social work & out reach (complementary to HFA using local NGO or CP)
- RRM team down time (OLS) better **understanding of the local context** – simple tools & training → report on context;
- **Livelihood support:**
 - Targeted small ruminant restocking ‘big challenge when we are all poor’; small cash stipend instead: salt, condiments, candles – basics!
 - Restore community based animal health (CAHWs)
 - Fish & veg kits as wild foods decline later in the year
- Advocate for **Walgak landing strip** to be re-opened: better access to humanitarian support

Build hope: peace/ investment/ functioning school/ rule of law etc.