RAPID ASSESSMENT REPORT

JAZEERA, NGOP AND THANYANG, RUBKONA COUNTY

13 - 15 February 2018
The overall food security situation in this area is distressing as a result of manifold and traversing drivers that includes conflict, inter-communal violence, displacement, economic decline, shortage of rainfall, poverty and disruption of livelihoods. The situation observed on the ground indicates deterioration on indicators that include WASH, health, nutrition and food security. The local community explained that due to the shortage of rainfall, they were unable to cultivate their land. Due to the dry season, even the river water has dried due to which they are not able to do fishing. This is affecting negatively the food consumption of this population.

The most pressing humanitarian needs reported and observed are: WASH (reparation of boreholes), food assistance and livelihood support, followed by health (reinstallation of health services), NFIs (jerry cans and household utensils) and education. The people mostly in need are the most vulnerable among the IDPs.

Following are the **food security related specific recommendations** based on the findings of this rapid appraisal.

- As the households are facing severe food security situation and have not received any assistance for more than a year, food assistance should be provided as soon as possible. This assistance should be preceded by a population verification exercise.

- The food assistance should be complemented by distribution of seeds for kitchen gardening, agricultural tools and fishing kits.

- As rainy season is approaching and on condition that security prevails, an inter-agency approach is recommended to support the rebuilding of livelihoods, mobile health clinics, non-food items, shelter, access to clean drinking water and improved sanitation.

- Considering the risk of inter-ethnical tensions between populations in Ngop and Thanyang, assistance should be provided at two different sides simultaneously in order to minimize any protection risks.
Situation overview

Jazeera, Ngop and Thanyang are located in Rubkona, an administrative division of Northern Liech State and formerly part of Unity State, which has seen a significant level of armed conflict since the outbreak of violence in December 2013. This area, mainly located along the river Nile, is characterized by flood plains and swampy areas, especially during the rainy season, and has a unimodal rainfall pattern, with rainy season starting normally in late March. The local population is predominantly agro pastoralist, engaged in rain-fed cultivation of sorghum, maize, groundnut and cow peas.

Sesame and vegetable crops such as okra, tomatoes and pumpkins are grown on a smaller scale. This zone has limited physical access to markets due to poor road conditions especially during the rainy season. Main livelihoods sources include fishing, some crop farming and livestock.

Especially in Jazeera, the large presence of IDPs and recent returnees, who have outnumbered the resident population, has put additional pressure on the host community in terms of sharing scarce available resources. A number of IDPs (mainly women and young children) who fled the conflict in Mayom, leaving all their belonging behind are either living under trees and sleeping on plastic sheet or living with the host community in a tukul.

According to the January 2018 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), Rubkona county shows a crisis situation (IPC phase 3) that could further deteriorate to an Emergency Situation (IPC phase 4) in the lean season, may humanitarian assistance not be provided. Since the September 2017 IPC release, a combination of harvests and humanitarian assistance in the last quarter of 2017 prevented the further worsening of food security conditions.

From Jazeera to Ngop is around 12 kilometers, or a walk of 2 days as it is across swampy areas. It takes an additional few hours to walk to Thanyang from Ngop, or 4 kilometers.
Objectives of the mission

The main objective of the mission was to assess the current security and humanitarian situation in Jazeera, Ngop and Thanyang to provide recommendations on a possible humanitarian response.

Following are the specific objectives of the joint rapid assessment:

1. To have an estimate of the population numbers of the settlements including actual return of civilian population;
2. To assess the situation in terms of livelihood, food security, markets, current level of assistance, and safety and protection concerns.
3. Confirm WFP’s response options and modalities, including locations of possible operations.

Methodology

The findings are based on focus group discussion (FDG) with men and women from the affected community and key informant interview with local authorities in the area.

The mission members firstly held a general introductory meeting with community members and local authorities, including the Commissioners, local Chiefs, ROSS Director and military authorities1 for sharing information on the mission and its objectives and to gain a general overview of the situation, including security information. After the initial discussion, WFP and Food Security and Livelihood cluster staff went out to conduct focus Group Discussions with members of the community. At last, the mission members went out to triangulate information on ground in the area.

The FGD regarding the prevailing food security situation was conducted with women of different age groups. Information collected ranged from food consumption, livelihoods and main coping strategies adopted to service delivery and security concerns. Moreover, specific protection concerns related to access to various food and livelihood sources, and to food assistance in particular, were discussed briefly. In addition the communities were also asked what would be their preferred month to conduct headcount and registration exercises. Due to the nature of the rapid appraisal, it is not possible to present statistically representative results on the situation in terms of food security, livelihood and nutrition. However, the time spent on ground was sufficient to provide some indicative results for a better understanding of the situation in this community.

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1 Division Commanders, Operation Commanders
Background Information

Demographics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jazeera:</th>
<th>Ngop:</th>
<th>Thanyang:</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• 39,000 resident population</td>
<td>• 36,000 resident population</td>
<td>• 36,000 resident population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 9,000 IDP population</td>
<td>• 5,000 IDP population</td>
<td>• 6,000 IDP population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 6,000 returnee population</td>
<td>• 7,000 returnee population</td>
<td>• 9,000 returnee population</td>
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<tr>
<td>• The household size was relatively bigger with 10-15 members in a household. One household comprises of multiple small families sharing the Tukul. Most of the family members were reported living outside under trees.</td>
<td>• The household size was relatively bigger with 15-20 members in a household. One household comprises of multiple small families sharing the Tukul. Most of the family members were reported living outside under trees.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• 3 – 5 children were reported under age of 5 years.</td>
<td>• 4 – 5 children were reported under age of 5 years.</td>
<td>60% of households were reported headed by women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 40% of households were reported headed by women</td>
<td>• 60% of households were reported headed by women.</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Food Security

Food Consumption

The general food situation in the community is distressing as a result of manifold and traversing drivers that includes conflict, inter-communal violence, displacement, economic decline, shortage of rainfall, poverty and disruption of livelihoods. The local community explained that due to the shortage of rainfall and scarcity of tools, they were not able to cultivate their land last year. Currently, as a result of the scarcity of rain last year, as the river water has dried due to which they are unable to do fishing.

The scarce availability of fish during this time of the year, combined with the lack of cereal stocks from own production is affecting negatively the food consumption of this population in these months, when they normally rely on their own crop harvests, including green consumption and fish from the river.

The specific food consumption findings include:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Jazeera:</th>
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<th>Thanyang:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Their diet is based on only wild foods including Luloos, gum from the tree, water lilies and green leaves from the wild.</td>
<td>• Their diet is based on only wild foods including Luloos, leaves from the trees, and wild tubers.</td>
<td>• Their diet is based on only wild foods including Luloos, gum from the tree, and green leaves from the wild.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Most participants reported eating twice a day, while they used to consume three meals per day in the pre-crisis period.</td>
<td>• Most participants reported eating once a day, while they used to consume three meals per day in the pre-crisis period.</td>
<td>• Most participants reported eating once a day, while they used to consume three meals per day in the pre-crisis period.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The main consumption-based coping strategies that the local population is employing include reduced number of meals per day, increased consumption of wild foods, decreased diversity of diet (reduced consumption of cereals, no consumption of meat and milk) and limiting portion size, sharing food with IDPs.

The participants reported cultivating okra, sorghum, maize and potatoes before the crisis situation.

The respondents mentioned that they have not received any food assistance from the last 3 years.

Livelihoods (Food and Income Sources)
The main livelihoods of the area have been disrupted by the ongoing conflict and multiple displacements. The local populations have abandoned land farming and lost most of their livestock mainly as a result of looting. Normal income sources including agricultural labour, casual labour, sale of livestock and natural resources have been substantially disrupted by the conflict following repeated displacement, looting and destruction of productive assets. The local market is currently not functioning; therefore, the local community is entirely relying on collection of wild foods.

Specific livelihoods information to the different areas are mentioned below:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Thanyang:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• The only source of cash income is from the sale of charcoal. The residents of the community were reported cultivating sorghum and maize in a reduced part.</td>
<td>• The only source of cash income is from the sale of charcoal.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Own production is sufficient for 3 months only.</td>
<td>• No production reported due to shortage of rainfall</td>
<td>• No production reported due to shortage of rainfall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Less than 25% of the resident population in the community reported owning livestock (2-3 cattle).</td>
<td>• Less than 25% of the respondents reported owning livestock (2 – 3 cattle).</td>
<td>• No livestock was reported by the respondents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 According to the FGD, the local community used to consume three meals before July 2016, while it is just consuming one meal currently with some households also consuming a small breakfast.
Markets
No functional market was observed in the area. Specific information to markets are illustrated in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Thanyang:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• It takes four days to reach to Rubkona market.</td>
<td>• The nearest market is the one in Bentiu which takes 5 days to reach there.</td>
<td>• The nearest market is the one in Bentiu which takes 6 days to reach there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Some protection concerns were reported by female coming back from the Rubkona market</td>
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Service mapping

- No basic infrastructure is currently available as repeated attacks resulted in massive destruction. Services such as health, education and water are currently unavailable even though a number of displaced people have already returned. Teachers and medical practitioners have left as a result of insecurity and lack of material.
- Most households have no shelter and are living under trees.
- Communities feel safe walking in a radius of four hours from the landing strip and explained that most of the community lives in this vicinity. They do not feel safe going further as a result of insecurity.

Education
There is no operating school and no presence of teachers.

Health
- There is no operating health facility reported in these locations and no presence of medical practitioners
- Common diseases reported include typhoid, malaria, anemia, diarrhea, cholera, Urinary tract infection, TB etc. The communities reported epidemics of water-borne diseases such as cholera.
WASH

- The overall WASH situation is alarming with no access to safe drinking water in any of the assessed locations. The communities are practicing open defecation. The adolescent girls and women have to walk up to 2-4 hours to collect muddy water for drinking.
- Three boreholes were reported in Jazeera but none of them is functioning.

Shelter:

- Lack of appropriate shelters: a very vulnerable group in Jazeera was living under trees with a number of small children while in Ngop and Thonyong many of the homes had also been burnt.

Gender and Protection

No incidents were reported from previous distribution activities in the location but a number of other protection risks were identified.

- The lack of shelter is a particular protection risk in these location. Any activities would also need to consider the needs for water, NFIs and access to medical care. The women-headed households displaced from Mayom are particularly at risk.
- High number of separated and unaccompanied minors.
- In addition, mobility due to insecurity remains limited/restricted and any activities should be conducted as closely as possible to the area where the communities are residing.

Security/safety concerns:

- This area experienced increased levels of insecurity in the second half on 2016, which caused WFP to suspend its operations;
- Currently, in Jazeera, no major security threat is foreseen. In Ngop and Thanyang, the security situation remains more volatile considering their proximity to Buaw (Koch), which has been very unstable in the last few months;
- Risks of inter-ethnic tension between populations in Ngop and Thanyang were reported. This would require that any assistance is provided in two different sites, despite the proximity of these two locations.
- The observed presence of cattle in Jazeera could constitute a potential security risk (e.g. possible cattle raids).
RECOMMENDATIONS

The most pressing humanitarian needs reported and observed are: WASH (reparation of boreholes), food assistance and livelihood support, followed by health (reinstallation of health services), NFIs (jerry cans and household utensils) and education. The people mostly in need are the most vulnerable among the IDPs.

Following are the food security related specific recommendations based on the findings of this rapid appraisal.

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- The food assistance should be complemented by distribution of seeds for kitchen gardening, agricultural tools and fishing kits.
- As the planting season is approaching and on condition that security prevails, an inter-agency approach is recommended to support the rebuilding of livelihoods, mobile health clinics and access to clean drinking water.
- Considering the risk of inter-ethnic tensions between populations in Ngop and Thanyang, assistance should be provided at two different sides simultaneously in order to minimize any protection risks.

Other recommendations:

- Any exercise should be accompanied by an action to resolve the access to water.
- Women should be given priority as heads of Households and principle entitlement holder.
- Child protection actors should be involved in any further assessment as well as humanitarian response.
- Communities preferred to communicate through the RRC and chiefs of the location but efforts should be made to also communicate with the community more broadly.
- Site section should be as close to possible (3 hours max) from the location where the communities are residing. This is particularly important for Ngop and Thanyang where the landing strip was between 3 to 4 hours from where communities were living and there is no access to water.
Annex

Seasonal calendar

The zone is characterized by swampy vegetation of papyrus, reeds, Napier grass and bush scrub. Other water resources within the zone include lakes Namm and Nang. The zone has a unimodal rainfall pattern with average precipitation ranging from 800 - 1,100 mm per annum, and it is predominantly occupied by agro-pastoralists. Crop production is rain fed. The main crops grown in the area include sorghum, maize, groundnut and cow peas. Sesame and vegetable crops such as okra, tomatoes and pumpkins are grown on a smaller scale.

The rainy season starts in May and ends in October. The lean season is generally from June to July, before green crops are ready for consumption. Sorghum is the staple cereal. Agricultural work starts with land preparation from February to April. This is followed by sowing or planting in the month of May to mid-June and weeding from the end of June until August. Harvesting of all crops including green consumption starts in September and continues until the end of October. Lambing, kidding and calving takes place in the dry season months of November to February.

The peak milk production period is the rainy season from June to October and falls from the start of the dry season in November to December. There is no major external seasonal livestock movement outside this zone.

CONSUMPTION CALENDAR FOR POOR HOUSEHOLDS

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4 South Sudan Livelihood Zones and Descriptions, FEWS NET, August 2013.