

# Final Report

## Northern Bahr-el Ghazal State, South Sudan

## Conflict Sensitivity Assessment

swisspeace, May 2014

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## 1. Introduction

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) Conflict & Human Rights Network is supporting the pilot phase of a swisspeace project, the « Conflict Sensitivity Portal (CS Portal) », which aims at compiling and making accessible country specific conflict sensitivity resources on a web-based platform. In the framework of this project, swisspeace, the SDC South Sudan desk and COOF agreed to conduct a conflict sensitivity assessment (CSA) in South Sudan's Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State (NBeG) where SDC implements a water program and contributes to partners' activities in the food security and livelihood domain.

The overall objectives of the assessment were simultaneously: to pilot a CSA methodology for replication through the Portal, and to provide an input to the review and planning for the next phase of the water program. The assessment also sought to explore how SDC's engagement in the water sector could contribute to the New Deal agenda in South Sudan.

This report is based on the original assessment report conducted by swisspeace's Michaela Ledesma (end 2012) and was shortened and adapted to the CS Portal needs.

The NBeG conflict sensitivity assessment followed a three-step approach. First, it sought to develop a basic understanding of the conflict context, in particular conflict fault lines, dynamics, actors, as well as the potentials and opportunities for social cohesion, state- and peacebuilding – mainly focusing on internal rather than cross-border issues. This differs from a “traditional” conflict analysis, as the CSA is more descriptive and limited in scope and depth; its main focus is on providing a basis for the subsequent analysis of interactions between programme and context factors. The conflict analysis entailed the following methodological steps: a literature review followed by approximately thirty consultations during a two-week in-country mission that encompassed individual interviews, focus group discussions and project site visits. Consistent with CSA methodology, field consultations focused on understanding interactions between the NBeG context and interventions – international assistance in general with a focus on the water sector – (step two) as well as best practices and potential adaptations enabling interventions to contribute to transitioning out of conflict and fragility (step three).

The conflict sensitivity assessment in Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBeG) identified 4 key issues particularly relevant to international assistance to take into consideration in NBeG from a conflict sensitivity perspective:

1. Contentious relationships among key social groups
2. Competition over land and water resources
3. Limited state capacity
4. External shocks

The profile, dynamics and actors involved in each of these are summarized below (step 1 of the conflict sensitivity cycle), followed by interactions observed between the issues and international assistance (step 2 of the conflict sensitivity cycle), and finally options and potential adaptations (step 3 of the conflict sensitivity cycle).

While the below descriptions represent an effort to bring forward critical observations within each key issues, the four interact also with one another, and thus in most cases should be understood and addressed in combination.

## 2. Contentious relationships among key social groups

### 2.1. Analysis

One of the key aspects to take into consideration by international actors from a conflict sensitivity perspective in South Sudan, and especially in NBeG, are the contentious relationship among some key social groups:

#### *Relationship between returnees, IDPs and resident communities:*

NBeG is home to a population of 2.8 million<sup>1</sup> comprising roughly 99% agro-pastoralist Dinka Malual, and 10%<sup>2</sup> farmer-gatherer Luo.<sup>3</sup>

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), an estimated 466,458 individuals have returned to the state since 2007<sup>4</sup> (during the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) interim period), the highest concentration of any state in South Sudan.<sup>5</sup> The state's population influx includes large number of persons displaced<sup>6</sup> due to conflicts over the international border and within South Sudan, due to flooding and to other sources of insecurity. State and local government, with the support of international agencies, managed to organize movements of large groups of returnees and displaced populations, first to designated transit sites – frequently emergency camps – then to final areas for settlement located primarily in or close to rural areas. Displacement particularly affects Aweil North, Aweil West and Aweil East counties. The intentions of displaced persons regarding their duration of stay as well as status<sup>7</sup> in regards to citizenship and official documentation vary. Returnee profiles are diverse, spanning agriculturalists from South Darfur and Muglad to entrepreneurs and labourers emigrating from Khartoum. Many of them had left what is today Northern Bahr el-Ghazal State during the past civil war (1983- 2005) and therefore possess blood ties to NBeG and considering it their “ancestral home.” In general, displaced groups can be characterized as “in limbo,” i.e. lacking a clear, long-term residency or livelihood outlook, and highly vulnerable according to humanitarian criteria.

This influx of nearly a half a million people poses several problems with resident communities with regard to the allocation of resources as well as the social integration of the returnees and IDPs.

*Competition over resources:* Most salient to the conflict sensitivity assessment, returnee and displaced populations compete with one another and resident communities over access to scarce resources and services, in particular water and land (see chapter 2. *Competition over access to land and water*) as well as new infrastructure and services specifically targeted to vulnerable groups. This constitutes a significant source of tension in both rural and urban areas. Recent settlers demand allocation of land suitable for housing as well as cultivation through varying processes. Larger groups, those with specific preferences or needs, and those for whom NBeG is not the ancestral home, face greater delays and difficulties.

*Difficult social integration:* Myriad social integration (reintegration for some) challenges hamper returnee and displaced populations' peaceful co-existence with residents.<sup>8</sup> Returning individuals or households

<sup>1</sup> Northern Bahr el- Ghazal State, “First Draft of the State Strategic Plan, 2007-2011.”

<sup>2</sup> Concordis international Report, 2012 « Crossing the line: Transhumance in transition along the Sudan-South-Sudan Border ».

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. The Luo population resides primarily in Aweil Center County, where they are the predominant ethnic group.

<sup>4</sup> International Organization for Migration, “Returns to South Sudan,” 2007-2013 extracted from the Tracking and Monitoring Database, Juba, May 31, 2013. For further information contact [ers@iom.int](mailto:ers@iom.int).

<sup>5</sup> Protection Cluster, “Access to Land for Reintegration in NBeG: Challenges & Recommendations,” presentation to the Reintegration Theme Group, June 25, 2013.

<sup>6</sup> Characterizing some displaced individuals or groups as “internally displaced persons (IDPs)” or “refugees” is politically sensitive given the on-going border dispute between Sudan and South Sudan. This report uses “displaced” as a general descriptor.

<sup>7</sup> The South Sudanese “Nationality Certificate” holds particular importance as a key enabler of citizen rights and access to services.

<sup>8</sup> The August 2007 report commissioned by the UK Department for International Development, “The long road home: Opportunities and obstacles to the reintegration of IDPs and refugees returning to Southern Sudan and the Three Areas,” and June 2009 report commissioned by the World Food Programme, “Food assistance, reintegration and dependency in South Sudan” provide much more comprehensive analyses on reintegration challenges and strategies of returnees.

may face “outsider” discrimination for having left during the war or for having become “Arabicized” while residing in Sudan, particularly Khartoum. Those having spent significant time in emergency camps as well as urban dwellers newly established in rural settings may lack capacities or motivation to pursue available livelihood strategies. Larger groups may bring new social customs and their own leadership structures, including chiefs, not easily harmonized with the strong, relatively homogenous governance systems in the state. Younger individuals schooled in an Arabic-language system must tackle South Sudan’s English-only system. Finally, social “ills” such as youth gangs, crime and prostitution present in the Apada settlement of Aweil town, are blamed on the returnee population there. The growing youth gang culture, however, with links to similar gangs in other South Sudanese towns, is a complex phenomenon. Gang membership reportedly also includes a number of individuals engaged in responsible jobs.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, many returnees and displaced persons also have long-standing bonds of friendship or familial ties that connect them with the respective resident community – a positive relationships that can be built upon.

*Relationship between migratory and settled groups:*

In addition to the above mentioned population influx, inhabitants of NBeG also have to deal with high numbers of pastoralist migrating from Sudan to NBeG during the dry season. Traditionally, Misseriya (Fayareen and Awlad Kamil sections) and Southern Rizegat pastoralists move around with hundreds of thousands of cattle along multiple corridors to Aweil North, Aweil West, Aweil East and Aweil Center<sup>10</sup>. Although insecurity persisted in the disputed border area due to movements and proximity of state- and non-state armed groups and criminal elements, the Sudan-South Sudan border remained open for transhumance in the 2012-2013 dry season. Some pastoralist groups return to the same areas annually. Therefore they possess strong ties and even benefit from protection from the local community in the case of conflicts. Additionally, « Arab » traders move back and forth bringing goods across the international border and run shops and stores in markets.

Relationships between the Misseriya, Rizegat and NBeG majority Dinka Malual are multi-dimensional, reflecting historical shared use and competition over water and pasture as well as a tradition of intermarriage and trading but also raiding and armed conflicts. Conflicts between pastoralist groups were subject to political exploitation during the war, with Misseriya and Rizegat militias recruited by the Government of Sudan and many Dinka Malual supporting the Sudan People’s Liberation Army (SPLA).<sup>11</sup> War-time violence and renewed fighting between the Misseriya and the SPLA in 2007-2008 contributed to deepen unresolved enmity, trauma and mistrust.

An important connecting element between Misseriya, Rizegat and Dinka Malual are the special relationships that were established between Dinka Malual and Misseriya and Rizegat leaders including political leaders and chiefs. Annual peace conferences, bringing state level authorities from NBeG and the respective states in Sudan and Chiefs from involved groups and other stakeholders together, address key issues and conflicts related to the upcoming migration, such as timing, routes, and restrictions on weapons. These conferences offer a positive example to other border states though the resulting peace agreements are rarely implemented in full. In-migrations (i.e. from Sudan to NBeG) are typically peaceful while out-migrations are sometimes problematic with destruction of property and armed violence not uncommon. Chiefs, Peace Committees formed for this purpose, County Commissioners, Payam Administrators, Joint Chiefs’ Courts, Chambers of Commerce and the Governor of NBeG himself all play

<sup>9</sup> As reported by SDC and Ministry of Water staff.

<sup>10</sup> One Rizegat group from East Darfur migrates to Aweil North and a second from South Darfur migrates to Aweil East. Misseriya migrate from South Kordofan to Majok (See Concordis International, “Crossing the Line: Transhumance in transition along the Sudan-South Sudan Border,” October 2012 for detailed analysis regarding the peoples, routes and a summary of 2011-2012 dry season migration.

<sup>11</sup> swisspeace, “Report: Dinka Malual-Misseriya Peace Conference 11-14 November 2008, Aweil, Southern Sudan,” April 2009.

important roles in supporting peaceful migration. Peace Committees disseminate information about agreements and the migration process, manage the out-migration with relevant leaders, and assist in resolving conflicts, e.g. cattle theft.

## 2.2. Interactions with international assistance

### *Relationship between returnees, IDPs and resident communities:*

International assistance intervening in NBeG interacts with the existing contentious relationships between returnees, IDPs and resident communities in a number of ways:

*Risk regarding site and beneficiary selection:* If an intervention targets only displaced individuals or households when the resident community in the same area is also in need or vice versa, it may fuel tensions over access to the resources as well as over the difference in treatment between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. The reverse opportunity also exists: sensitive, equitable beneficiary selection across all population segments in the target geographic area could lead to enhanced understanding of common vulnerabilities and increased, positive contact and communication between diverse groups.

At the state level, the overall inequality regarding the level of resources allocated to counties most affected by population influx, compared to those comprising largely resident population where resources and services are still wanting, contributes to citizen perceptions of relative marginalization by the state and service providers, and resentment between residents and leaders of those counties and other populations in the state (see chapter 3. *Limited state capacity*).

*Lack of Communication:* Particularly in emergency settings with mixed populations, lack of broad-based outreach and clear, consistent communication on the part of agencies regarding the source, target beneficiaries and the criteria for selection, as well as on the intended use of resources or services creates confusion and tensions over short-term and long-term access and ownership by and between groups. “Rapid assessment” modalities where minimal time is spent in creating channels of communication and accountability between beneficiaries and service providers may result in resentment and re-traumatization. Conversely, there is an opportunity to support the re/integration of displaced or returnee groups with resident communities through sensitive engagement and outreach even when the intervention is not comprehensive in its targeting.

*Lack of Coverage and quality:* Several community-level stakeholders conveyed a preference that agencies not intervene at all rather than deliver insufficient coverage or quality. The latter may disrupt existing norms among users without providing sufficient inputs to sustainably alleviate tensions over scarcity. Poor quality work, often resulting in infrastructure breakdown, may produce a similar outcome.

*Timing:* Additional triggers for competition and tensions comprise agencies targeting requirements and “graduation” timeframes that seek to distinguish between displaced, returnee and resident populations while camps and settlements continue to receive people at and for different, sometimes unforeseen, periods of time. Vulnerable individuals and households may not have control over their ability to establish a livelihood or resettle but nonetheless “fall through the cracks” of eligibility for humanitarian support once a certain amount of time has passed. When decision-making is within their control, availability of resources and services becomes one factor influencing household and group choices to remain or relocate. Thus, infrastructure intended for particular beneficiaries may attract – and rapidly become inadequate to serve – an expanded group beyond the intended users, again causing tension over access and ownership. Some agencies reported instrumentalization by resident community members particularly in border areas where they would present themselves as displaced or returnee in order to access resources.

### *Relationship between migratory and settled groups:*

With regard to the relationship between settled and migratory groups, international assistance may contribute to or alleviate competition over scarce resources and services, especially water. Coverage and quality (highlighted in the above section on returnees, IDPs and resident communities) are also relevant

when considering drastic increases in usage, potentially by both humans and animals, during seasonal migration. Resources may also act as a « pull » factor for migrating groups, influencing their decisions to move or remain in specific areas and positively incentivizing peaceful co-existence with resident communities.<sup>12</sup>

### 2.3. Options and potential adaptations

#### *Relationship between returnees, IDPs and resident communities*

The most straightforward adaptation for agencies serving displaced, returnee and/or resident populations in NBeG is to target and deliver services and resources based primarily on need. This would alleviate competition between similarly vulnerable groups (and among counties) and simplify outreach and communication requirements within a target geographic area. A second choice would be to allow flexibility for inclusion of some vulnerable individuals or households from non-primary target groups to avoid creating tensions while supporting integration and social cohesion between groups. A third option – strongly recommended on its own – would be to strengthen outreach and dialogue with all groups in a target geographic area, to ensure common understanding regarding the assistance provided and the criteria for beneficiary selection. It is of particular importance to identify the Paramount Chiefs and Sub-chiefs (or other leaders) representing each group in a target geographic area – recognizing that such leadership structures may exist in parallel with one another.

#### *Relationship between migratory and settled groups*

To the extent that transhumance occurs along more or less established corridors each year, the implications of selecting sites and delivering resources in areas impacted by migration can and should be anticipated. For the water sector, in particular, infrastructure design, siting and management modalities are of heightened importance given that usage levels (human and animal) will increase significantly during migration periods. Temporary infrastructure in key locations could be considered to supplement new or rehabilitated permanent structures where the latter are known to be insufficient.

More proactively, services and infrastructure specifically designed for joint use by transhumant pastoralists and resident communities could be considered to facilitate peaceful co-existence. Schools, markets, health and veterinary services, and water infrastructure could be effectively sited in remote areas and migration corridors with special attention to facilitating agreement on management and dispute resolution modalities. But agencies should carefully strike a balance between providing infrastructure and services necessary to prevent or alleviate tensions but not offering too many incentives for the migratory groups to permanently settle down.

Finally, humanitarian and development actors can also strengthen or weaken government and community conflict management mechanisms supporting peaceful migration through their own engagement with stakeholders in project sites. Strong outreach, communication and coordination involving relevant Peace Committees and customary authorities involved in annual migration conferences alongside resident community leadership and local administrators will help ensure that potential challenges can be taken into account in project design and management; neglecting this creates the risk that any conflicts arising over resources delivered between migratory and resident users will not be managed effectively within the overall framework of the migration process.

Generally, agencies should always consider whether and how their activities might help to foster communication and build relationships between different groups rather than perpetuate existing divisions.

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<sup>12</sup> In one village in Aweil North during the 2012-2013 dry season, several migrating Rizegat households brought and enrolled for the first time their children in local primary schools; more were reported interested for the coming season. This offers a positive outlook for community relations between Dinka Malual and Rizegat in that area.

## 3. Competition over access to land and water

### 3.1. Analysis

In Northern Bahr el-Ghazal, land and water constitute vital resources for settlement and livelihood. Increasing population concentration, interest or value in the same land by different groups, as well as a lack of transparent regulations, processes and bodies guiding the allocation of land and water, contribute to a high competition over access to land and water and thus to conflicts.

*Increasing population concentration:* NBeG has received an estimated number of 466,458 returnees and displaced persons due to the independence of South-Sudan, but also due to conflicts over the international border and within Sudan as well as to flooding and to other sources of insecurity. This population influx aggravates the competition over access to land and water and therefore constitutes a significant source of tension between the residents of Northern Bar el Ghazal and the returnees whose relationship is already conflictive. (see chapter 1. *Contentious relationships among key social groups*).

*Lack of transparent regulations, processes and bodies:* The current legal framework has still gaps and regulations, institutional structures and processes for land demarcation, surveying or registration are only to a limited degree in place. The existing institutions do frequently not follow unified practices (see chapter 3. *Limited state capacity*) and there is a discrepancy in land management between rural and urban areas. In rural areas, land is distributed according to customary law while state institutions are in charge of land allocation in urban areas. Thus there is a gap regarding both, transparency as well as accountability of land allocation, access, and ownership by various and sometimes competing users in urban areas. This is for example the case when people are asking to leave because landowners suddenly reclaim access to plots for cultivation or infrastructure development. For example, in Aweil town, government bodies have made several attempts to move large settlements (i.e. Rumtit, Apada, Riag Aluel Weeng), in each case with insufficient consultation and unclear decision-making processes. In the most recent example, Riag Aluel Weeng, the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure, requested agencies to provide services for the organized relocation of an “illegal” settlement in central Aweil within a ten-day period. Often these attempts have an unclear legal basis as well as a lack of consultation and unclear decision-making processes.

Furthermore, this lack of established, transparent regulations, processes and bodies guiding allocation of land contributes to low tenure security for returnee and displaced groups in many settlement areas where de facto management rests with customary authorities.

*Interest or value in the same land and access to water:* There is a long and violent history of competition for access to pasture and water between Dinka, who are agro-pastoralists, and Misseriya and Rizegat who are semi-nomadic pastoralists. Misseriya and Rizegat normally engage in annual, dry season migration from Sudan to the Dinka controlled area Northern Bahr el-Ghazal with hundreds of thousands of cattle. This creates many conflicts. For example disputes over pasture and the cattle of Misseriya and Rizegat destroy the Dinka’s fields and hence their harvest which is a major source of food (see chapter 1. *Contentious relationships among key social actors*).

### 3.2. Interaction with international assistance

The manner in which humanitarian and development actors engage with key state and local actors on the land and water issue may directly contribute to the increase or decrease of conflicts over access to land and water:

*Risks with regard to site selection:* Agencies may either contribute to or detract from the ability and rights of displaced and returnee groups to determine their own long-term settlement locations, for example by relying primarily on the state or local government and/or Chiefs in their site selection processes or not advocating for appropriate consultation of and support to these groups regarding their own settlement needs and wishes. It is crucial for agencies, however, to find a good balance between engaging with local government and/or Chiefs and involving displaced and returnee groups in site selection processes, because excluding local authorities could further fuel conflicts.

*Risk of instrumentalization:* Agencies may be vulnerable to instrumentalization by powerful actors who seek to drive support to populations affected by secondary displacement they themselves have induced as the example above of central Aweil has shown.

*Increase of land value:* By delivering resources or services that have a positive impact on the value of the plots, agencies significantly increase the risk that landowners or other influential stakeholders will re/claim both plots and resources for their own benefit in the short or longer term.

### 3.3. Options and potential adaptations

There are several options or adaptations regarding the possible interaction of international assistance with the competition over water and land:

Generally, it is important to engage in coordinated policy, advocacy and response which enhance transparency and accountability around land and water use as well as tenure issues such as arbitrary survey fees and vulnerability criteria, timely allocation of land to displaced and returnee populations, and appropriate consultation and decision-making processes for population resettlement.

More locally, and given the extent to which land access shapes competition over resources, livelihood strategies as well as long-term settlement and re/integration of displaced and returnee populations, agencies should consider advocating for, and even facilitating, more effective and transparent processes for land allocation to returnee and displaced groups. This should involve the relevant state and local authorities.

Additionally, and to ensure transparency regarding beneficiary access to and utilization of services or infrastructure provided, agencies could make their support contingent upon completion of appropriate procedures or documentation. SDC grantee Action Against Hunger (ACF) offers a good practice example of convening a public ceremony for the signature and witnessing by key stakeholders of a document setting forward terms of access and use for the water infrastructure they provide and the land on which it is situated. Though of limited legal power, such a process and document nonetheless increase transparency and accountability for all involved.

Finally, agencies should engage local level authorities, i.e. Payam Administrators and Chiefs, to advocate for and address individual land use and tenure problems at the local level; this will require careful preparation including context and stakeholder analyses as success will likely hinge upon personalities and relationships with the individual stakeholders involved.



## 4. Limited state capacity

### 4.1. Analysis

South Sudan is a very young state which still seeks his proper democratic shape. It lacks democratically operating institutions operating on the basis of accountable and participatory procedures. The judiciary is malfunctioning and basic services such as access to health, education and infrastructure are only partially provided. These limitations can be explained, to some extent, by national fiscal austerity measures<sup>13</sup> which stretched state budgets and staffing even further and resulted in the maintenance of salaries for a reduced number of staff but virtually no operational budget to carry out its state functions. This weak state capacity obviously affects NBeG too. According to the 2008-2009 IOM Village Assessment, in 2008 thus before the austerity measures started only 30% of NBeG villages have access to improved drinking water, 7% access to healthcare facilities and 27% direct access to education. Additionally, 43% of the villages assessed reported receiving food assistance<sup>14</sup>.

Administrative chieftaincies that had been introduced by the colonial administration remain important local government institutions in NBeG. Reinforced by the limited capacity of higher government institutions, they continue to fulfil administrative, judicial and conflict resolution functions at the payam, boma and the community levels.

### 4.2. Interaction with international assistance

All aspects of humanitarian and development engagement contribute to the strengthening or weakening of modern and traditional governance structures.

*Risk of substitution and loose of legitimacy:* In constructing and providing infrastructure and basic services, the international agencies may undermine the role and weaken the legitimacy of the government by creating a substitute for government responsibilities. Or reverse, strong coordination, clear lines of accountability, joint assessment, targeting and delivery carried out by implementing agencies together with relevant government stakeholders will reinforce the latter's legitimacy and capacity, as well as extend the reach of limited state resources.

*Raising expectations for services and resources:* Agencies also create expectations and demands from the public with regard to services and resources. These could lead to conflicts between communities and within communities. Further, after the agencies have left, these services and infrastructures can't be upheld by the government potentially causing frustration with government institutions

*Risk of contributing to the loss of high quality staff within state structure:* Recruitment of government staff by international agencies is especially problematic as government cannot compete with the higher salaries and, in some cases due to austerity measure, reportedly cannot replace staff it has lost.

*Risk of raising competition over resources:* The concentration of international assistance in specific geographic areas while needs are widespread in the whole state territory may contribute to tensions between citizens and the state as well as between political leaders and traditional authorities regarding equitable access and distribution of resources.

<sup>13</sup> In late January 2012, the government of South Sudan made the unprecedented decision to shut down oil production throughout the young country. The decision resulted from an impasse in negotiations between Juba and Khartoum over the financial terms and conditions by which the South would export its oil through Sudan.

<sup>14</sup> International Organization for Migration, "State report Northern Bahr el-Ghazal: Village Assessments and Returnee Monitoring: Analytical Report, Maps and Statistical Tables," 2009.

*Risk of instrumentalization:* Agencies risk being instrumentalized by actors hoping to draw support from their constituency by promising resource or service delivery.

*Lack of clear outreach and communication:* In target sites, lack of clear outreach and communication could mean that interventions are de facto attributed to false actors.

### 4.3. Options and potential adaptations

*Balance between equity and needs:* Agencies should carefully balance equity and needs while designing and implementing project.

*Relationship with key government and customary authorities:* Agencies should have strong relationships with key government and customary authorities and should involve these stakeholders to discuss and resolve concerns. Furthermore, there is a need of close coordination between implementer and government counterpart at each step in the project cycle. And hereby the agencies can directly contribute to enhance the government capacity as well as to ensure effective joint service delivery.

*Relationship with communities:* Agencies should have strong relationships with communities and should involve them in the discussion and in the resolution of concerns. For example, demonstrating and engaging communities directly in successful conflict management processes, increases the likelihood that they will be able to drive the same in the future.

*Reducing instrumentalization risk:* Implementers can reduce risks of instrumentalization or of political tensions by triangulating information feeding into their decisions regarding distribution, allocation and level of resources through various sources.

## 5. External shocks

### 5.1. Analysis

The majority NBeG residents are subsistence agro-pastoralists, whose reliance on rain-fed farming, pasture for animal grazing, as well as rivers and flood plains for fishing, is adversely impacted by flooding and drought. NBeG is located almost wholly on the « Western flood plain », with both lowland and highland areas experiencing erratic rainfall. Lowland areas flood annually during the rainy season (May to November) during which they but also many highland areas become physically inaccessible. This is especially problematic for vulnerable groups including displaced and returnee populations requiring delivery of food aid or other assistance. Mid-lands have water throughout the year and are not subject to flooding. Fertile highland areas lack access to water in the dry season<sup>15</sup> Major shocks occurred in 2007 and 2008 (floods) and 2009 (drought). The 2009-2010 Needs and Livelihoods Assessment estimated that 19% of NBeG households were severely food insecure and 43% moderately food insecure; these figures dropped in 2013 to 11% and 39%, respectively. Due to erratic rainfalls, recurrent floods and droughts, lack of tools, limited access to new technologies and other limitations NBeG regularly features an overall cereal deficit.<sup>16</sup>To cover this deficit cereals are imported either from Sudan, other areas of South Sudan

<sup>15</sup> International Organization for Migration, "State report Northern Bahr el-Ghazal: Village Assessments and Returnee Monitoring: Analytical Report, Maps and Statistical Tables," 2009.

<sup>16</sup> See FAO/WFP, "FAO/WFP crop and food security assessment mission to South Sudan," 2011, 2013 etc.

or from Eastern Africa. Surface floods cause disease outbreaks (for example acute watery diarrhea<sup>17</sup>), as well as destruction of property and infrastructure on an annual basis, resulting into an increased population displacement.

### **Current crisis in South Sudan**

In 2013 political tensions within the dominant political party the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) had been high. Senior politicians and SPLM party members had contested for the SPLM chairmanship and related to that for being nominated as SPLM presidential candidate for the elections planned in 2015. In this politically tense situation a fighting broke out among members of the presidential guards in Juba in mid-December. These clashes have escalated into armed fighting between members of warring factions of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) - the armed forces of South Sudan - in several states in South Sudan. Until the end of January 2014 Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity States have been mostly affected by the armed violence. The violent clashes that from the outset had an ethnic dimension have led to severe human rights violations, the killing of supposedly several thousand people, the displacement of hundreds of thousands of South Sudanese and to a deep division between many Nuer and Dinka community members. By the end of January 2014 an estimate of 740'000 South Sudanese are displaced within South Sudan and 123'000 took refuge abroad.<sup>18</sup> Fighting continues despite the signing of a cease fire agreement on January 23.

NBeG is up to the present-day (end of January) not directly affected by insecurity and armed violence caused by the ongoing politico-military crisis. Yet, individuals originating from NBeG who had lived in Bor, Malakal and Bentiu were affected by violence. In the longer run NBeG state will potentially be affected by political instability and limited financial resources of GoSS. The ongoing crisis might affect the government's access to oil revenues which constitute a large portion of the government budget. Moreover, revenues will increasingly be allocated to the armed forces and will be used less to cover salaries and to provide services. It is also feared that the internal conflict might be used by the Government of Sudan to attack the border states including NBeG

### **Tensions between Sudan and South Sudan over the border in NBeG**

The course of the border between South Sudan and Sudan including the border between NBeG and South Darfur and South Kordofan is up to the present day contested. In view of the political tensions and armed clashes between Sudan and South Sudan caused by the dispute over the oil sources in Heglig/Panthou - a disputed area at the border between Sudan and South Sudan - the borders between Sudan and South Sudan were closed for several months in 2012 and 2013. As a result trade between NBeG and Sudan was almost completely ground to a halt and staple food and other goods became scarce and prizes skyrocketed. Goods imported from East Africa are considerably more expensive than imports from Sudan. Given the fact that NBeG often has an overall food deficit the state depends on food import from Sudan. The dependency on cereal imports is problematic given the fragile relations between the Government of Sudan and the Government of South Sudan and the disputes over the border. Clashes at the border, political tensions and mistrust between Dinka Malual and their neighbours furthermore impacted on access to pasture and water for Dinka and Misseriya/Rizegat agro-pastoralists. Misseriya did for instance not enter NBeG in 2011/2012.<sup>19</sup> Past clashes at the border led to displacement of people inhabitant areas close to the border

<sup>17</sup> as Aweil town and other counties during the 2008 floods.

<sup>18</sup> <http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-crisis-situation-report-30-january-2014-report-number-15>

<sup>19</sup> <http://concordis-international.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Crossing-the-Line-FINAL-26Oct12.pdf>

## 5.2. Interaction with international assistance

International assistance modalities can serve to strengthen or weaken local capacities to manage and cope with flooding and drought, and their effects.

Provision of assistance to flood- or drought-affected groups, e.g. in temporary or long-term settlements, may influence their movements, contributing to the overburdening of available resources and services as well as to conflicts with resident communities. Alternatively, support to designated settlement areas where the selection of locations is poorly done may place vulnerable groups at greater risk of being affected by flooding or drought. Finally, actors supporting state infrastructure development should carefully evaluate the designs of such interventions according to their impact on flooding and drought; for example, building roads without culverts preventing drainage.

Specifically, disproportionate emphasis on delivery of humanitarian aid while neglecting support to state and local government and community capacities in disaster risk preparedness and response, as well as to adapt livelihood strategies, inhibits improved resilience in the face of climate-related shocks. This ultimately contributes to cycles of continued displacement and consequent pressure and conflict over scarce resources in temporary or long-term settlement areas.

## 5.3. Options and potential adaptations

In preparation for the 2013 rainy season, some agencies pre-positioned supplies for distribution by light vehicle in lowland areas expected to become inaccessible, potentially contributing to prevention and mitigation of flood-related displacement. This is a good practice that could be expanded.

Likewise, continuous, joint government-agency monitoring of flexible humanitarian response capacity to shocks can contribute simultaneously to real-life preparedness as well as capacity building. In general, where possible, government and community capacities for disaster risk reduction should be improved to strengthen future resilience. In the absence of available resources for full-blown training or disaster risk reduction programming, capacity building could take the form of enhanced communication and coordination with relevant state and local authorities, for example by inviting them to participate in intervention planning or activity monitoring.

Furthermore, livelihood and infrastructure interventions needs to be carefully designed, adapted to mitigate the impact of natural disasters.

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