

Interagency Assessment in Melut – 30 May to 01 June 2015

A mission was conducted in Melut from 30 May 2015 until 1 June 2015 to assess the conditions of the IDPs and host communities in Melut County after the conflict. The agencies and partners participating in this assessment included UNHCR, UNICEF, GOAL and IMA. The purpose of this assessment mission was:

- Visiting IDPs in all sites of Melut County i.e. Dinthoma I, Dinthoma II, POCs, Hai Soma and Paloich.
- To assess and determine the immediate response required for IDPs in terms of their needs and protection.
- Recommendations of actions needed to be undertaken immediately following the conflict.
- To assess the feasibility of the return of humanitarian organizations back to Melut to resume operations, pending normalization of the security situation.

Background

Heavy fighting erupted in the town of Melut in Upper Nile on 19 May, killing at least six internally displaced persons, leaving several wounded. More than 20,000 civilians sheltering in Dehtoma I and II displacement sites near the UN base in Melut dispersed to Paloich and Renk. Aid agencies relocated out of the town leaving only critical staff to meet life-saving needs of the remaining displaced people. Over 1,600 displaced people were reportedly sheltering in the UN Mission base in Melut¹.

During the conflict, a total of 279 HHS/1,177 individuals (from Shilluk, Dinka, Nuer and other foreign nationalities) were registered and issued with temporary WFP tokens within the UNMISS CSB compound. NFIs, including plastic sheeting, were issued to the IDPs for emergency shelter. 10 HHs whose houses were burnt by shelling which landed in PoC 1 were registered and will be prioritized with NFIs package assistance. A 15-days food ration distribution was also planned but could not take place as humanitarian actors were relocated.

Overall situation

The security situation in Melut remains calm but unpredictable. The town and the market areas have been largely destroyed and most of the host community and IDPs have fled to Paloich and other areas. IDPs have at the time of the assessment started to return. SPLA soldiers were seen within Melut town and along the River Nile. Several boys ages 14-17 were observed carrying arms, some in uniforms and some without.

¹ OCHA South Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin, 29 May 2015

All the offices of humanitarian actors located outside UNMISS have been looted and all items such as food, and NFIs have been stolen. Many soldiers as well as women and children were seen going inside humanitarian compound taking items.

Presently, there are no humanitarian activities ongoing on in Melut following the relocation of humanitarian actors. MSF-Spain conducted an assessment in Melut, Paloich



GOAL store burnt during the fighting.

and surrounding areas from 28 May to 1 June. UNHAS has resumed their flights to Paloich as of 30 May. However, UNMISS helicopters have still not received clearance to fly from Malakal to Melut.

The team was not able to assess the situation in Paloich. However, dozens of IDPs were seen at the Paloich airport waiting to board flights to Juba. The community confirms that up to 200 people a day, coming from Melut and Dinthoma settlements, have been leaving for Juba since the fighting erupted.

Meeting with Melut County Commissioner & Baliet County Commissioner

A courtesy call and meeting was held with the Melut County Commissioner Mr. Bol Aguer Dok. Also present during the meeting was the Baliet County Commissioner, Mr. James Tor and the Indian Battalion. The interagency team explained the purpose of the assessment and the Commissioner was informed that other agencies would gradually return and resume their activities once the security situation was conducive. The Melut County Commissioner informed humanitarian actors that he was only operating from Paloich as the Governor of Upper Nile was visiting the area, and that he would now be based in Melut full time, assuring us of his full support and cooperation.

The Melut County Commissioner welcomed the presence of humanitarian actors and moreover stated that the security situation in Melut is now stable. He provided an update of the government's assistance to IDPs who had fled from Melut to Paloich. He reported that the lack of water was the main concern in Paloich, followed by shelter and sanitation. The IDPs who had moved to Paloich were assisted by Dar Petroleum and that local authorities had assisted IDPs in Paloich with water and transportation back to Melut.

With the situation now normalizing, many of the IDPs are returning back and he estimated that at least 70% of the population in the Dethoma I and II have returned. The Commissioner was of the

view that the host community would return gradually but this may take some time considering that most of their belongings in Melut town had been destroyed. He emphasized that assistance should also be extended to host communities as they have also been affected by the conflict. In addition, he indicated that persons present in Melut with arms (those who are not soldiers) will be disarmed.

Main needs expressed by the Commissioner of Melut:

- Food;
- Access to health and medication;
- NFIs (Plastic sheets, LLINs, mat);
- Clean drinking water;
- Clearing the areas around the Dinthomas and Hai Soma from unexploded ordinances i.e. UXOs before activities could be normalized.

The assessment team informed the Commissioner that a DDG team from DRC was coming this week and that they would be liaising closely with government authorities to clear the area of weapons. The Commander of the Indian Battalion Major Chauhan indicated that there were four places where unexploded weapons were located in the PoCs and UNMISS compound.

The Baliet County Commissioner, Mr. James Tor informed that many IDPs from Rom have arrived in Kor Adar, 20km from Paloich. He informed the interagency team that the IDPs are in dire need of assistance and many of them are living under trees and have nothing to eat.

Main needs expressed by the Commissioner of Baliet:

- Food;
- Health;
- Water and sanitation;
- Shelter.

The Baliet County Commissioner reported that there were many children in Kor Adar who have been separated from their families. Assistance is urgently needed as the rainy season has begun. He is assessing whether these IDPs should be relocated to another area. The Baliet County Commissioner will be going back to Kor Adar and provide humanitarian actors with further details on the relocation of Rom IDP's to a new unknown location. A follow-up meeting with humanitarian actors on this matter is planned on 3 June. The Melut County Commissioner identified Panamdit as an area where the Rom IDPs could be relocated as the area is accessible through road and fertile and the IDPs could farm in that area.

Recommendations

- Interagency assessment to be conducted during the firstweek of June in Kor Adar.
- Clearing areas within Melut of unexploded weapons i.e. UXOs.
- Gradual return of humanitarian actors to resume activities in Melut.

PoCs

The interagency team visited the PoCs to assess immediate needs of the IDPs. A joint meeting was held with the leadership of all major ethnicities residing in the PoCs i.e. Dinka, Nuer and Shilluk. All the communities of the PoCs seem to be living peacefully with each other.

Prior to the conflict, there were 958 IDPs living in the PoCs. Following the recent attack on Melut, approximately 600 to 800 persons sought refuge in the PoCs, placing the total figure at 1,600-1,800 IDPs inside the PoCs, making the current site overcrowded.



UNICEF Temporary learning space used as a shelter for new arrivals.

To accommodate this influx, the DRC Women's Center and the two UNICEF Temporary Learning Spaces inside the PoC have been used to shelter the newly arrived IDPs. Some tents have also been erected by the Indian Battalion.

Main needs expressed by the IDPs:

- Food security - The IDPs stated that the last food distribution took place on 16 April. They have had to share the food they had left with the new arrivals.
- Protection:
 - The lack and access to food has created numerous protection implications as many women are venturing outside to collect food, increasing the risk of SGBV. Women expressed concerns that their children are suffering from hunger which is why they had to go outside of the PoCs to search for. Women also go out of the PoCs in search of firewood. This also creates and raises the risk of SGBV. Women travel generally travel in groups in order to protect themselves. Some of the women also reportedly leave the PoC to check their homes and bring back any of their belongings that have not been looted.
 - The leadership relayed the fear of further violence in Melut even if the government has regained control of Melut. The IDPs inside the PoCs are of the view that the situation will not normalize in Melut and are therefore requesting that humanitarian actors relocate them to another area.

- Several children in the PoCs are without parents or any immediate family members. Those residing in the PoC are now taking care of these children. As the learning facilities are now occupied, there are no education activities and children spend their day idle. Children were observed playing with remnants of bullets.
- Some of the IDP leadership requested a weapon search to be conducted inside the PoCs given the movement of women to and from the PoCs.
- Demining interventions are needed given the presence of unexploded devices in and around the premises.
- NFIs - IDPs indicated they are lacking NFIs. Some of the IDPs who have been living inside the PoCs have had to share their belongings with the new arrivals. Some of the items listed are mosquito nets, mats, cooking utensils, and plastic sheeting in view of the rainy season.
- Health – MSF-Spain runs a clinic which remained operational during the conflict. As reported by the community leaders, currently there are limited drugs to treat patients. Serious cases are being referred to the Indian Battalion.
- Nutrition: Community leaders reported that no nutrition interventions are being provided although MUAC screening is being done.
- Shelter – The communal spaces used to accommodate the new arrivals are very congested. Additional shelters are needed to provide better living conditions. In addition, some homes were completely destroyed by shelling, and others have bullet holes on their roofs.
- WASH – Latrines are now full. The Indian Battalion has constructed four latrines inside the PoCs given the fact that the number of occupants within the POC has doubled. They have also provided water. The drainage system is not functioning well, thus water is stagnant around settlement areas in the POC and may become breeding site for mosquitoes. WASH NFIs is in urgent need especially with additional IDPs of 600 – 800 people.
- Education – The leadership requested for alternative solutions to be found to shelter new arrivals so education activities could resume.

Recommendations:

- Immediate general food distribution to IDPs in the PoCs.
- Distribution of NFIs and WASH supplies (in particular soap). Partners operating in the PoCs to assess if a blanket distribution is the best approach.
- Follow up with MSF-Spain on the supply of drugs and resumption of nutrition services.
- Clearing the PoC area of artillery remnants.
- Construction of additional latrines to accommodate the new influx.

- Explore alternative solutions so women do not have to leave the PoCs to collect firewood.
- Registration of new arrivals, and fresh vulnerability screening of IDPs who have any specific needs.
- Family tracing and reunification of children.
- Psychosocial support for IDPs.
- Presence of UNMISS and UNPOL to monitor security within the PoC.

Dinthoma I

A visit was made to Dingthoma I where nearly 50% of the IDPs in Melut County reside. The majority of the population in Dingthoma I originates from Baliet County in Upper Nile State. During the visit the team noticed that many IDPs were returning from Paloich, many coming back in trucks and hired vehicles. It is estimated that over 2,000 IDPs have returned to the settlement. Many of the shelters in Dingthoma I seem to be intact with no major damages being observed. During our visit the team met with Mr. James Dau who is a member of the IDP Camp Management and Simon Leuth Chief of the IDPs from Baliet County. Women and children also participated in the discussions.

Main needs expressed by the IDPs are:

- Health - IDPs complained that many people returning are suffering from health issues. Health interventions (MSF facility) were interrupted by the conflict and medical supplies have been looted. In case of serious health concerns, IDPs have to travel to Paloich to access medical services. The team also observed civilians looting humanitarian compounds, including bags of vegetable seeds. The community reported that some of the women and children have fallen sick after consuming these.
- Food security, Nutrition and livelihood – IDPs reported the last food distribution took place in March. A distribution was scheduled in May but could not take place as fighting broke out. The food which was to be distributed was looted. Many women and children complained that they had to eat leaves in order to survive and many indicated they had had to travel as far as Paloich to find food. This also creates protection issues and concerns, in particular for SGBV. In terms of livelihood, most people have lost their means of living; many women are collecting firewood and selling it. . Some markets were seen to be operating in Dinthoma 1 indicating that some of the IDPs have resumed their means of livelihood.
- WASH – Provision of clean drinking water has been interrupted by the conflict. IDPs indicated they are collecting water from the Nile River and the water is used without any kind of treatment which has resulted in serious health issues such as diarrhea. They do not have water containers. Prior to the conflict, IOM was due to repair the existing latrines and build new ones. The latrines in Dinthoma I are now full and people are defecating in the open field. With the rainy seasons approaching this could create critical health issues, including cholera.

- NFIs - Many of the NFIs were looted during the conflict. When the fighting was taking place many of the IDPs fled to the bush, while some managed to escape to Paloich and others sought protection in areas which they considered safe. Most NFIs (plastic sheets, mosquito nets, cooking sets, blankets) have been looted.
- Protection - Many of the IDPs living there also expressed they are still fearing for their security. IDPs stated that they are many unexploded shells within and surrounding Dinthoma I and asked for these to be removed before someone gets injured. There are also many IDPs who have been separated from their families. Some of their whereabouts are unknown as they fled in different directions during the conflict, while some moved to Paloich.

Recommendations:

- Immediate general food distribution to IDPs.
- Re-opening of nutrition services in Dinthoma 1
- Distribution of NFIs.
- Provision of safe drinking water and repair/construction of WASH facilities, including latrines, as well as provision of WASH NFIs.
- Resumption of interventions in the health facility.
- Verification of the returning IDPs population and fresh vulnerability screening of IDPs who have any specific needs.
- Family tracing of those children without parents or relatives or finding caregivers.
- Psycho-social support for IDPs affected by the conflict i.e. those having witnessed it and those whose relatives were killed.
- Regular protection monitoring of IDPs.
- Coordination with the government authorities i.e. Commissioners Office and RRC in resuming activities.

Dinthoma II

A visit was made to Dinthoma II where the team met Mr. Daniel Deng, the camp manager, along with other women and men. The majority of the population in Dinthoma II originates from Pigi County in Jonglei State. Most of the shelters there were observed to be in good condition. It is estimated that over 3,000 individuals have returned to the settlement.

Main needs expressed by the IDPs

- Health - IDPs stressed the lack of medicines with most of them, namely children, suffering from infections. For serious health issues, IDPs have to travel as far as Paloich to access health services. On 1 June, Health and Nutrition (OTP) interventions resumed in the Health facility ran by GOAL.
- Food, nutrition and livelihood- IDPs expressed that they did not have any food which was seen as their first priority. They also indicated not receiving food for three months. Currently

IDPs are eating tree leaves as food. It is observed that the adults are more malnourished at this time as they are giving priority to young children's with the scarce food they get.

- WASH – IDPs expressed the need for safe drinking water. They are fetching drinking water from the river and which has led to various health concerns including diarrhea. Latrines are not in working condition leading to open defecation.
- NFIs - During the conflict the IDPs reported that most of their NFIs were stolen and they lacked essential NFIs such as blankets, mosquito nets, plastic sheets etc.
- Protection - The presence of unexploded ordinances was flagged by the IDPs. Women also expressed fearing for their security as they have to travel far in order to get food and firewood. However, no incident has been reported to date.



Shelters in Dinthoma II.

Recommendations:

- Immediate general food distribution to IDPs.
- Distribution of NFIs.
- Provision of safe drinking water and repair/construction of WASH facilities, including latrines, provision of WASH NFIs.
- As the clinic is operational, mass MUAC screening in the community with specific focus on IYCF.
- Verification of the returning IDP population and fresh vulnerability screening of IDPs who have any specific needs.
- Family tracing of those children without parents or relatives or finding caregivers.
- Psycho-social support for IDPs affected by the conflict i.e. those having witnessed it and those whose relatives were killed.
- Regular protection monitoring of IDPs.
- Coordination with the government authorities i.e. Commissioners Office and RRC in resuming activities.

Hai Soma

The IDP settlement in Hai Soma is largely abandoned. Prior to the conflict there were approximately 200 individuals living there whom are now believed to have either fled across the river to Nun or have settled inside the PoCs. The team could not assess the site on foot as there may be potential unexploded ordinances. Clearance of UXOs must be undertaken as a first step. As Hai Soma is located close to Melut town, some of the shelters may need repair. However, most seem to be in relatively good condition. An assessment of the WASH facilities and shelters is required.

Melut town

Melut town was the most affected by the conflict. Most of the houses were burnt, properties were looted. According to the commissioner some of Melut residents fled to the nearby villages and Paloich. The area is not yet cleared of UXOs. Melut town is heavily militarized. Hence, accessibility to Melut hospital and PHCC was not possible. There is no activity in Melut town. There is no visible sign of returnees at the moment. However, the Commissioner confirmed that they will work on clearing the area from UXOs and encourage the communities to return back to Melut town. Prior to the conflict Melut town and surrounding IDPs were receiving safe water service from surface water treatment system constructed by OXFAM. However, it wasn't possible to visit the source to observe the scale of



Stalls of the market in Melut town destroyed during the fighting

the damage as the area is not yet cleared from UXOs. There is a large amount of solid waste from left over of looting and damage.

Recommendations

- Clearance of the area from UXOs
- In terms of WASH, in the short run, provision of water treatment options like PUR and/or aqua tabs, WASH NFIs. Further assessment of the water supply system and maintenance.
- Strengthening the existing health facilities and mobile clinics for health and nutrition in the villages where the Melut residents fled.

Additional recommendations (applicable to all locations)

- Specific attention should be given to protection. This would include protection monitoring, vulnerability assessments/screening, SGBV assessment family tracing and reunification, psychosocial support, individual case management, establishment of protection desks, etc. Protection monitoring would entail identifying persons with specific needs (PSNs) and follow-up on their needs, including referrals for services.
- The host community has also been affected by the conflict and it is not clear when they will return. It is important to note that assistance should include all affected populations in order to avoid marginalizing the host community.

Assessment team details:

Name	Organization	Position	Tel	email
1. Amin Afridi	UNHCR	Protection Officer	+211-922473125	afridi@unhcr.org
2. Tsedee Girma	UNICEF	Emergency specialist	+211955026512	tgirma@unicef.org
3. Ester Vincent	UNICEF	Nutrition Officer	+211915478110	evmogga@unicef.org
4. Denis Okoya a	GOAL	Area Health Manager - Sobat	0912150803	dokoya@ss.goal.ie
5. Hussien Hassen	GOAL	WASH Coordinator	+211914653271	hbamie@ss.goal.ie
6. Alan Karanja	GOAL	Clinical Officer	0921286173	akaranja@ss.goal.ie
7. Dani Denish	IMA	Health Coordinator	+211929104480	danidenish@imaworldhealth.org

GOAL and IMA provided logistic support to the assessment team by providing one vehicle each.