



THE  
LUTHERAN  
WORLD  
FEDERATION

actalliance

# Ethiopia



Update 24/3/2014

## Situation in South Sudan

South Sudan continues to be unstable; with persistent sporadic fighting, lawlessness and escalating humanitarian crisis, increased displacement is anticipated.

The three-month long conflict in South Sudan has already resulted in internal displacement of over 700 000 people and nearly 250 000 seeking refuge in neighboring countries (UNOCHA 20.3 2014).

The continuing fighting and other violations of the cessation of hostilities agreement have had a heavy toll on Upper Nile and Jonglei states, forcing people to escape mainly to Ethiopia. Particularly the strategically important town of Malakal has witnessed intense armed attacks; in the Ethiopian town of Gambella, evacuated NGO workers are telling numerous accounts of looting, war crimes and human rights violations. The spiralling violence and accusations of massacres of civilians by both sides have prompted warnings that the crisis in the world's youngest state could spill over into a regional conflict.

With no peaceful resolution to the conflict in sight, the humanitarian response continues to people affected within



Refugee children cooking at  
Leitchuor camp © LWF/Heidi

and outside of South Sudan. However, with insecurities, limited resources and the rainy season rendering 2/3 of the country inaccessible, it is feared that South Sudan will be

facing famine. As a lifesaving response, the World Food Programme (WFP) has begun airdrops of food supplies and operations via the Ethiopian corridor. As the complex humanitarian crisis continues, the looming famine will push even more people towards Ethiopia.

## South Sudanese asylum seekers in Ethiopia

Ethiopia has become one of the primary destinations for the latest wave of South Sudanese refugees. Despite Ethiopia's open door policy, the sharp increase in the refugee numbers is placing a great burden on the country, as well as creating an additional source of insecurity.

**A total of 77 135 South Sudanese refugees have arrived to Gambella region, Ethiopia (19<sup>th</sup> March, UNHCR). 95% of the refugees are women and children, with 70 % being minors.**

South Sudanese refugees fleeing to Gambella region are reporting continuing fighting, military recruitments and all-encompassing destruction. 95% of the arrivals are of Nuer ethnicity, who perceive violence as remaining prevalent. Their prospects of return are diminished by fears of being targeted by the government army.

New arrivals continue to cross the Ethiopian border through the entry points of Akobo-Ti ergol and Pagak. Those seeking asylum in Gambella are in increasingly poor condition due to having fled violence in inaccessible areas in South Sudan. The U.N. World Food Program has been reporting that the high rates of malnutrition among children arriving at refugee camps are particularly alarming in Ethiopia.

The declining nutritional status of the women and children waiting to be relocated to camps is a sign of rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation within and beyond borders of South Sudan.

### Refugees relocated to Leitchuor camp

Due to the overwhelming increase in arrival figure, there is a constant search for sites for refugee camps. So far, 2 camps have been established in Gambella; Leitchuor and Kule. Leitchuor has already exceeded its capacity with over 30 000 refugees, and Kule is fast approaching its limit of 20 000. With approximately 1000 new arrivals per day, the relocation and camp absorption capacities are severely overstretched. With the onset of rains, current Leitchuor site will become flooded. Consequently, officials are racing against time to expand existing settlements and to find additional ones.

The relocations are hindered not only by shortage of camp sites, but also by logistical challenges. In the border town Akobo-Tiergol, 10 000 registered refugees are still waiting to be transported by boats, but with the maximum transfer capacity of 500 people/day and low river level, the window of momentum is narrowing rapidly. In addition, with the armed child soldiers extorting money from the boats, the security issues have called for alternative means of transportation, with helicopters being the only viable option.

Approximately 95% of the refugees are women and children, out of which an estimation of 70% are minors. As the refugees are predominantly children, out of which 1/5 severely malnourished, child protection and nutrition issues are paramount. The refugees are suffering from traumas and health issues resulting from poor conditions, with malaria, diarrhoea and respiratory infections being most common causes of death. With UNHCR mission describing the situation in the camps as a “ticking time bomb”, more partners and more funding are required to provide the life saving assistance.

### LWF Ethiopia working in Leitchuor

LWF Ethiopia is the lead agency in permanent water supply and one of the partners accountable for other WASH activities in the Leitchuor camp. In order to coordinate response with partners and other actors, LWF is active in interagency and UN clusters meetings at regional, national and camp levels.

In the past month, LWF completed the drilling of 2 boreholes. In the subsequent pumping test, their yield proved to be twice as good as expected with the capacity to supply 13litres/second. In coordination with Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the boreholes are utilized for emergency water supply with motorized pumps to reduce the distance and costs of water trucking.

Another component of LWF’s response involves hygiene and sanitation promotion, which commenced with the recruitment of 10 incentive based hygiene & sanitation promoters, chosen from the refugee community in consultation with UNHCR, ARRA, DRC and refugee camp leaders.

In response to the growing concerns over disease outbreaks caused by open defecation and accelerated by the rainy season, a mass sanitation campaign was launched around the tukuls. In addition, as per the waste disposal implementation plan, 100 half barrels were procured and distributed at the camp.

Norwegian Church Aid (NCA) is supporting LWF Ethiopia with the deployment of a WASH expert and provision of a rubhall. With NCA’s support and



1st borehole pumping test © LWF/Heidi Lehto

through the WASH cluster, LWF is designing pipelines for the water supply system according to the requirements and UNHCR's plans for the pending Leitchuor extension.

### ACT Appeal and Funding

LWF has launched a Joint ACT Appeal together with EOC-DICAC/ IOCC, appealing for 2,23 million USD. So far, total of 372 000 USD have been contributed by Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Church of Sweden and German National Committee.

UNHCR launched an interagency appeal for \$ 370 million, on behalf of 24 agencies including LWF. UNHCR has already allocated \$ 400 000 for LWF Ethiopia for WASH activities.

There is need for more funding to scale up the response rapidly in this humanitarian crisis that is escalating yet not receiving the attention and support it needs from the

international community.

A link to the Appeal can be found at the end of this refugee story posted on the ACT website:  
<http://www.actalliance.org/stories/a-long-walk-to-safety-story-of-an-asylum-seeker-from-south-sudan>

### Contact:

- Sophie Gebreyes, Resident Representative  
Mail: [Rep.eth@lwfdds.org](mailto:Rep.eth@lwfdds.org)  
Phone: +251 9 33 702851
- Johanna Leppänen, Program Coordinator  
Mail: [pro.eth@lwfdds.org](mailto:pro.eth@lwfdds.org)  
Phone: +251 911 204 308
- Heidi Lehto, ACT Ethiopia Communicator  
Mail: [Heidi.lehto@kua.fi](mailto:Heidi.lehto@kua.fi)  
Phone: +251 911 240 312

