AWEIL NORTH AND AWEIL EAST COUNTIES DISPLACED LOCATIONS ROAD ACCESS ASSESSMENT MISSION

Date(s): 22 – 26 June, 2013
Location(s): Aweil-Nymalel-Pamat-Gokmachar - Warapai – Jaac-Maluelkuel – Malual bai-Peth-Wanyjok
Participating Agencies Logistics Cluster, WFP, UNOPS, and MSF Spain
Participant(s): Venkat Dheeravath (LC), Jeffery Lokulu (WFP), Daniel Habakuku Soro (UNOPS), Shaun Lummis (MSF Spain)
Security: Level 1, 2, & 3

1. MISSION OBJECTIVES

1. Using GPS and Spatial Data Infrastructure-Transport (SDI-T) tools to track and assess the road status of Aweil North and Aweil East Counties for humanitarian access.
2. Identify the exact stretch of any damaged roads, bridges, and culverts to recommend repair and determine the current level of access for IDPs, returnees, refugees, and all humanitarian actors, including the Common Transport Service (CTS).
3. Assess the possibility of using the main road corridor from Aweil Town into Aweil North and East Counties, Northern Bahr El Ghazal State, South Sudan.
4. Collect information regarding the new road tracks, IDP camps, airstrips, helicopter landing sites, warehouses, and water crossing locations in Aweil North and East Counties.

2. BRIEF

The Logistics Cluster, WFP Logistics, UNOPS, and MSF-Spain conducted an urgent inter-agency road assessment mission led by the Logistics Cluster upon UNOCHA’s request. The mission team was to explore the possibility of using existing road corridors into the IDP camps in Aweil North/East Counties from Aweil and Gok Machar town in Northern Bahr El Ghazal, South Sudan. This mission also aimed to fill the gap of logistical GIS information and to map out all road access constraints, bridges, culverts, ports, airstrips, helicopter landing sites, and missing villages in the database using GPS and SDI-T tools. The mission team travelled approximately 400 km from Aweil Town, by road, towards Aweil North/East Counties (Nymalell, Ariath, Pamat, Gokmachar, Warapai, Jaac, Maluelkuel, Malual bai, Malual kon, Marial Bai, and Peth) in Northern Bahr El Ghazal from 22-26 June 2013.

The key road corridors (Aweil- Gok Machar; Aweil – Jaac; Warapai-Maleuelkuel-Wanjok) from Aweil into Aweil North County have deteriorated and other road tracks that lead from a primary road into the IDP camps and returnee sites may not be passable during the peak of the rainy season (July to October) for any traffic as the roads consist of muddy tracks only. The primary road corridor from Aweil to Gok Machar is currently inaccessible due to the closure of the bridge which is under construction on Nyamlell River. All traffic is currently passing through Ariath and Pamat road and, due to heavy traffic from the South Darfur through Kirr Kalma and Jaac, this road section has deteriorated. The access roads from Chalek - Majak Kar, Gok Machar- Riang Anei and Garam - Jarkol to the IDP camps are only passable after three dry days with the use of 4WD trucks. IDP and returnee numbers have been reported to be increasing over 25,000 in Aweil North and East Counties, most of whom are coming down from Al Deain, Abu Jabra, Meiram, Rumaker and Kir Kalma area due to conflict in the South Darfur and flooding along the Kirr River. The following is a summary of findings which have been reported to concerned organizations (UNHCR, IOM, OCHA) immediately after return to Aweil base.

3. Summary of Findings/Recommendations/Observations
Day 1: Aweil – Nyamlell – Pamat
- Aweil to Nyamlell Road is gravel and lightly damaged but is passable for all traffic year round (See photo A).
- Nyamlell Bridge (approximately 160m long and 8m wide) consists of bailey steel and is currently under construction by a private company. The bridge is currently not passable for vehicles, however, is being used for pedestrian and motorbike passage. This is a key bridge which connects Aweil town with the Northern Bahr el
Ghazal road corridor (Gok Machar, Kirradem to the South Darfur border). All traffic is currently passing through Araith Payam to reach Gok Machar town and Kirradem. The Bridge is in the completion stage and is expected to open for all traffic by the end of November 2013 (See photo B, C).

• Nyamlell to Marial Bai Road is currently under construction by a private company funded by the Government of South Sudan. The road section is being upgraded to a two layer gravel road instead of the previous existing one layer gravelled road. The anticipated completion date is end of July 2013 (see photo D).

• Nyamlell to Gokmahcar Road is passable only via Araith and Pamat Payams. The road is rough with many potholes up to Araith and from there the road is damaged due to heavy traffic and develops to be impassable for all traffic from July to October (see photo E, F).

• The average speed for 4 X 4 vehicles is 30 km/hour and 20 km/hour for light vehicles from Araith Junction to Pamat.

A. Aweil – Nyamlell Road (in good condition)  
B. Nyamlell Bridge under construction  
C. Nyamlell Bridge is under construction  
D. Nyamlell – Marial Bai road is under construction  
E. Ariath-Pamat road in bad condition  
F. Ariath-Pamat road truck stuck
2: Pamat - Gok Machar – Warapai - Jaac

- Pamat to Gok Machar Road is gravel and rough (many potholes) and is only passable for all traffic during the dry season (see photo G).
- Two culverts have eroded which makes the Pamat – Gok Machar Road impassable for all traffic during the rainy season. The culverts are located approximately 8km before Pamat and approximately 8km after Pamat. The gravel covering the embankment has deteriorated (approximately 25% near Adhol Village) on one of the culverts. Continuous rains may cause further damage which will result in the restriction of all traffic along the Pamat - Gok Machar Road from July to October (approximately). The area between Pamat and Gok Machar towns is flood prone. The culverts need to be repaired as soon as possible because this is the only road that reaches the Gok Machar IDP and returnee sites (see photo H). Gok Machar airstrip is approximately 1,000m long and 60m wide. The surface is hard gravel soil and with some patches of grass which may make the landing for a fixed wing aircraft difficult during rainy season. The Gok Machar airstrip is landable for rotary air assets during all seasons. Vehicles regularly pass through the airstrip and can lead to additional damage. Prevention measures and security to the airstrip need to be taken to avoid further damage. WFP MSUs are located next to the airstrip.
- Gok Machar has approximately 10,000 IDPs and returnees at the site (Source: MSF/IOM) and the access roads are muddy and sandy making travel along them difficult. Pamat-Jaac Road (track) is sandy and muddy and passable only for light vehicles limited to 10mt. This road is in a flood prone area. According to mission findings and local authorities, this section of the road section may not passable for any traffic from July to October (see photo I, J).
- Jaac Airstrip is 800m long and 60m wide, consisting of natural compacted sandy soil which is only landable for fixed wing aircraft during the dry season. There is open ground next to airstrip which is landable for rotary air assets as it is slightly more elevated than the airstrip (landing site GPS: E 27.134392 dd; N 9.478138dd) (see photo V).

G. Road is in bad condition at Gok Machar  
H. Culvert damage after Pamat
Day 3: Warapai - Chalek - Malualkuel-Mual Kon

- Warapai to Chalek Road (track - approximately 6km) is sandy and muddy and there are many potholes along the road. This road section is not passable for any traffic during rainy season (see photo M, N).
- Chalek to Jarkol Road (track) is only passable for light vehicles, with difficulty, during all seasons.
- Jarkol to Malualkuel Road (track - approximately 5km) is muddy and the last three kilometres are impassable for all traffic during rainy season (see photo N). Malualkuel to Waradong Road and Omdurman to War-Awar Road (track) sections are impassable for all traffic during the rainy season (see photo O, P).
- Waradong to Omdurman Road (track) is passable for light vehicles, limited to 10mt, with difficulty after 3 dry days during the rainy season.
- The new WFP MSU in Malualkuel is currently empty and will likely become isolated during the rainy season as this route is impassable from both sides (Jarkol and Waradong) for all traffic from July to October (approximately).
The Logistics Cluster in South Sudan maintains a number of e-mail lists for the dissemination of information and discussion on logistics topics. For more information about Logistics Cluster in South Sudan, please visit our website at http://www.logcluster.org/ops/ssd11a or send an email to SouthSudan.Logs@logcluster.org

Day 4: Malual Kon – Malual Bai-Peth-Ariath Jn-Aweil

- Malual Kon to Malual Bai Junction Road is gravel and rough (with many potholes), however the road is passable after two dry days in the rainy season for all traffic. Malual Bai town is located three kilometres from the main gravel road and is impassable for all traffic during the rainy season.
- Malual Bai has three WFP Mobile Storage Units (MSUs) containing food currently prepositioned.
- The Malual Bai airstrip is not landable during either the dry or the rainy season for fixed wing aircraft, but is accessible for rotary air assets during both seasons.
- Malual Bai Junction to Peth Road is impassable for all traffic during rainy season and remains difficult during the dry season due to the road damaged from 2012 heavy rainfall (see photo Q).
- Peth Bridge is a Bailey bridge which is in good condition and passable for all traffic during all seasons. Wanyjok to Ariath Junction is in good condition for the first twelve kilometres, thereafter the road is in poor condition and may be impassable for all traffic during the rainy season (see photo R).

4. RECOMMENDATIONS/CONCLUSIONS:

1. The Wanyjok Junction to Ariath Junction and Ariath to Gok Macahar Road sections and culverts need to be rehabilitated immediately to enable humanitarian access to serve all IDP camps and returnee areas during the rainy season and maintain access during dry conditions.
2. A common storage unit could be installed in Chalek to serve Garam, Jarkol IDP camps and Malualkuel village, however a suitable managing partner needs to be identified to provide security and compound space for the inter-agency storage.
3. Access roads from Chalek - Majak Kar, Gok Machar- Riang Anei and Garam - Jarkol are required for a few settlements to connect IDP camps to reach the following villages: Malualkuel, Warapai, and Chalek.

4. The private construction company currently working with the Ministry of Physical Infrastructure to complete the Nymalel Bridge will enable access to Gok Machar IDP and returnees sites, once completed.

5. Gok Machar and Jaac Airstrips need to be rehabilitated immediately due to the deterioration of the road tracks and inability to access the populations.

6. Recent heavy commercial road traffic passing through Jaac and Pamat from South Darfur into South Sudan has made all road tracks impassable.

7. UNHCR and IOM need to immediately verify new IDPs (from Kirr Kalma and along Kirr River), returnees, and refugees from South Darfur, Sudan.

8. Ten trucks carrying returnees were stuck along with 150 other commercial trucks next to the Kir Kalma-Jaac Road due to heavy rains and poor road tracks which need to be verified immediately.

9. There is approximately a two week period left in 2013 to preposition food and NFI's to these areas as we are near the peak of the rainy season and access will quickly deteriorate.

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