MELUT-RENK, LOGISTICS ASSESSMENTS REPORT – 20 JULY, 2011

Date(s): 13 - 15 July, 2011
Location(s): Melut Town, Melut County – Renk Town, Renk County
Lead Agency, (Inter-agency mission): UNOCHA
Other Participating Agencies: SSRRC, WFP, Logistics Cluster, UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO, WV, IOM.
Security: Level 3

1 Objectives of Assessments

1. Using the GPS unit and Spatial Data Infrastructure (SDI) tools, assess the Melut-Renk Road for humanitarian access; assess capacity at Paloich truck transport market.
2. Identify possible locations for installation of Mobile Storage Units (MSUs) as required to respond to ongoing gathering of displaced beneficiaries in Renk Town, Renk County.
3. Conduct SDI airstrip assessment for new airstrip in Renk.
5. Assess Renk-Melut river corridor.

2 Background

The influx of South Sudanese, returning or displaced, entering thru the northern Nile corridor has exposed a need for immediate humanitarian support, while observing strategic humanitarian priorities.

The majority of IDPs/returnees are, so far, congregated in Renk, Upper Nile State. The Logistics Cluster, at the request of UNOCHA was tasked with assessing logistics capabilities to support the appropriate response from the humanitarian community.

A previous inter-agency mission was conducted to Melut, on the 10 July 2011, assessing river access and warehousing opportunities in Melut (http://www.logcluster.org/ops/sudan/malakal_melut_river_assessment_report). UNHCR is planning to develop a way station at Melut, this will provide much needed humanitarian support and a feasible alternative to the concentration of services in Renk (which is approx 20 km from the South Sudan/Sudan border). The Logistics Cluster will also provide a common warehousing facility in Melut.

An inter-agency mission to Renk was organised at Malakal level. WFP and World Vision provided boat support for the mission from Malakal to Melut, with UNHCR and UNMISS providing vehicles for the road transit from Melut to Renk. A full day was spent in Renk, with the mission returning from Renk to Malakal on WFP boats. The Logistics Cluster’s contribution to the mission included rapid assessments for air access, road access, river access, temporary warehousing and capacity at Renk Port.

3 Summary of Findings/Recommendations/Observations

Objective #1:

- A secondary road of 31 kms from Melut to Paloich (see pic 1) links Melut Town to the primary road from Malakal-Paloich-Renk. The Malakal-Renk primary road is 345 km; the Paloich-Renk (Renk truck stop/CP, WayPoint 33) road is 131 km.
- In wet weather the Malakal to Paloich road becomes temporarily impassible. Following a few days dry weather, this leg of the road will allow traffic beyond 20 mt capacity (see pic 2) to pass. In the rainy season and sporadically, buses and trucks are seen entering Malakal from Kosti/Renk/Paloich.
- It was hoped that the Paloich truck market would provide capacity for the road transport of beneficiaries from Renk to Melut in order to alleviate pressure in Renk. On inspection few trucks were seen at the Paloich truck market (see pic 3). Notwithstanding the planned river movement, it is suggested that appropriate trucks, if available, be contracted in Malakal to augment the Paloich truck capacity and transport beneficiaries from Renk to Melut.

Objective #2:

- Reports were received that the original returnee camp in Renk (approx 1.5 km east of the Renk truck market, WayPoint 25) suffered from a lack of potable water and poor sanitation. An additional returnee camp has been established at Renk Port. Neither camp appears to be an appropriate location for the establishment of Logistics Cluster common warehousing.
- Conversations with WFP’s partner in Renk, Episcopal Church of Sudan Development and Relief Agency, and separately with Mercy Corps/Poland, revealed that both NGOs contract for warehousing locally. Two warehousing areas exist in town; Warehouse area 1 (see pic 4) presents the better option with larger warehousing facilities, albeit only up to 8-10 m by 4 m, with a maximum beam height of 2.5 m. The road access to WH area 1 was also considered practicable for all-season accessibility. WH area 2 appeared to cater to small businesses with warehousing of maximum 4 m x 3 m.
- Both NGOs were supportive at local level to assist the Logistics Cluster in identifying and overseeing appropriate warehousing for common humanitarian use.
Objective #3:

- Air access to Renk is currently only available once a week (Sunday) with an UNMIS helicopter flight from Malakal.
- Two airstrips are located in Renk. The first is an abandoned airstrip that UNHAS has subsequently placed on the ‘no-go’ list and is clearly not practical for fixed-wing use (see pic 5). Reportedly this airstrip is 400 m long and will require substantial rehabilitation.
- A second airstrip is being established in the same area by a commercial oil company, this airstrip was assessed at 1,400 m long by 65 m wide at a minimum (see pic 6). Heavy plant machinery was observed on the site although work had reportedly temporarily ceased during the independence celebrations. The airstrip is situated 1.5 km from the primary Renk-Paloich road, approximately 10 km south of Renk town.
- Before UNHAS/DSS can conduct a full technical assessment of the second airstrip, it may be useful if UNOCHA/South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Comission/County Commissioner’s office obtain assurances that the airstrip is operational and that the commercial oil company will allow humanitarian use. This same procedure is also to be conducted for the airstrip in Paloich, also belonging to a commercial oil company, which is reportedly in a satisfactory condition. Information on when these airstrips are expected to be operational would be immediately very useful.

Objective #4:

- Renk Port is fully operational with substantial capacity, further report to be provided separately.

Objective #5:

- The river corridor Renk-Melut is 187 km and was transited in 4.5 hours at an average speed of 42 kph.
- The volume of traffic observed on this transit was relatively insignificant; however, access is unimpeded for large volumes of barge and boat traffic. A barge dedicated for passenger transport was also observed for the first time (see pic 8).
- A second, previously unobserved, loading bank of around 150 m long was seen on the northern outskirts of Melut town and provides additional access/spill-over capacity for Melut Port operations.

➢ Note: All GIS files, SDI-T and pictures have been filed with the Juba Logistics Cluster.
For more information about the Logistics Cluster (LC) – South Sudan, please visit our website at http://www.logcluster.org/ops/sudan or send an email to southsudan.logs@logcluster.org

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Pic 3, WayPoint 07, Paloich truck market
Pic 4, WayPoint 30, Renk WH area 1

Pic 5, WayPoint 34, Renk disused airstrip
Pic 6, WayPoint 38, Renk new airstrip (north, looking south)

Pic 7, River hazard, photographed 10 km North of Melut town
Pic 8, Nile river passenger barge
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