



## PC Update: Protection Cluster/Interagency mission to Lainya

23 to 25 February 2017

### Introduction and team composition:

The mission was organized and led by UNOCHA following the reports of dire humanitarian needs in Lainya, Wonduruba and surrounding areas. The clusters which participated were: Protection, Food security, WASH, NFIS, Health and Nutrition. Education was not represented, however, it was covered by protection. The team went on 23<sup>rd</sup> and returned on 25<sup>th</sup> Feb, 2017. The initial plan was for the team to visit all the locations in Lainya and Wonduruba but access was denied for Wonduruba and the surrounding areas. The areas visited/assessed include: Lainya town, Limbe, Kenyi, Loka and Longwili. General meetings were conducted and cluster specific separate focus group discussions with women, men and children were conducted.

### Situation Overview:

After the July, 2016 conflicts in Juba, around September to December 2016 Lainya experienced grave human rights violations, sexual violence, killing, forced displacement, and disappearances of young men. Many people fled to Uganda, Kajokeji and surrounding bush. However, at the time of the assessment according to the locals, Lainya has been relatively calm since January. No report of major security incident/clash except some isolated cases of looting of property and harassment of civilians while trying to harvest their crops. The population left are mainly the most vulnerable persons (elderly, persons with physical disabilities, those with chronic sickness and mental cases). The normal social setting of the community has been severely disrupted with no basic services. The remaining population is traumatized after having witnessed human rights violations and abuses and expressions of living in fear.



*One of the focus group discussion with women at Kenyi Payam. One of the elderly woman (in blue head scup estimated to be 60+) explained how she was let with two children of her late son who was killed during the conflicts and how difficult it is for her.*



### Assessment Methodology:

- The information was gathered through meetings with the key informants, the office of the County Commissioner, Church leaders, chiefs and Headmen.
- Focus group discussion with different categories of people in five locations.
- **General Observation:** the team observed that some areas were vandalized and abundant for example Ganji Payam, soldiers were seen taking some items from the school. Presences of cattle camps along the road, cattle were seen in one of the schools and in water points. Many SPLA soldier's check points along the road right from Juba/Jebel, Bungu, Ganji Kagwada, Longwil, Lainya town, up to Limbe (the last point where the team reached). Most of the schools and health centers on the way are not operational, solar lights at health centers are removed. Tukuls along the road are burnt and wreckage of freshly burnt vehicles near Ganji was seen on the way. Only one grinding mill in Longwili was operating. Soldiers were seen selling some fruits and farm produce in Kenyi Payam. Some group of vulnerable persons (elderly women) are staying together with the ECS bishop at the Church vocational training compound.

**Population:** The pre-conflict population is estimated at approximately 140,000 civilians in greater Lainya. The County Commissioner and RRC office estimate that about 75% of the population has fled. From viewing the town and surrounding areas during this assessment from the main road there are very few people to be seen. It is estimated there are only a few thousand in the areas viewed along the road. The authorities have said there are many people who have fled to the surrounding rural areas as they fear to be in town with the military present.

### Protection Key findings and recommendations:

1. **Security and safety:** At present, there is relative calm in Lainya and surrounding areas as there being no report of major conflict in the past month. However, there was report of a vehicle being ambushed and burnt on the way between Ganji and Longwili recently (wreckage was seen on the road). People expressed they feel unsafe with the presence of the SPLA soldiers and the cattle keepers that have weapons. As in all monitoring in the Equatoria region, the civilian population expressed fear of the government forces. It was reported that three young men were killed by cattle keepers on 22<sup>nd</sup>/02/2017 and a number of cattle from the host community of Longwili were abducted. This caused panic and tension for the local population. The church leaders and the local authorities have been trying to calm the situation and warned against revenge actions to the population.
2. **Freedom of movement:** People are not able to move freely especially women and young men due to fear of being harassed and sexually assaulted by soldiers. A number of people reported being beaten and women have allegedly faced sexual violence when trying to go to harvest their crops. Some soldiers were seen thrashing sorghum and carrying cassava/sweet photos in Limbe. The population views them as taking the harvest of sorghums/grains of the civilians who fled.
3. **Disappearance and killing of people:** Some women reported that their husbands had gone missing since October and no information regarding their whereabouts.
4. **Persons with Special Needs (PSNs):** Many vulnerable persons (elderly and disabled persons) are left without caretakers as the abled persons have fled to Uganda. It was also reported that many people including PSN are living outside of the town areas by the road which the mission team was not able to verify since it was not allowed to access to the areas



outside the main road because the security authorities have assessed that these are IO controlled areas.

5. **GBV:** In all areas visited (Lainya town, Limbe, Kenyi, Loka and Longwile) gender based violence, including rape, reportedly occurred at the onset of the conflict in July. All age groups were susceptible to the violence: elderly women and young girls were allegedly among people who were raped. Gender-based violence has continued to occur after July, with incidents of sexual violence reportedly occurring weeks before the assessment mission. Women face high risk of sexual violence when they go to collect food for their children. The biggest challenge to responding to the needs of survivors is that health facilities have not been functional because of the insecurity, and GBV actors have not had access to the area to provide services. Humanitarians have recently supported the reopening of one the health facilities in Lainya, which could allow for GBV service providers to put referral systems in place to assist survivors.
6. **Child Protection:** There were reports of children who are separated from their parents and orphans. Most of these are vulnerable children, some are elliptic cases, and others with chronic or mental problem are being left with grandparents who are also vulnerable. No reports of abduction or child recruitment.
7. **Women Hygiene:** Lack of soap and other hygiene items was a serious concern expressed by the women of reproductive age.
8. **Education:** Most of the schools are not open as a result of the area being abandoned by the population. Only two schools in Lainya town were reported to have started registration of pupils and one in Longwili. They have not begun classes because they lack materials and teachers. Some schools were occupied by displaced such as in Longwili Boma. Primary 8 children who were supposed to sit their final exams were disrupted.
9. **Health, food and NFIs needs** were raised. (details will be covered by the respective clusters).

#### **Recommendations:**

- Support people's advocacy request for improved safety and security by the government. There was a request for Police to replace the SPLA soldiers;
- Freedom of movement is restricted because people fear where soldiers are deployed on roads;
- Discussion/dialogue to be initiated with the cattle keepers to move away from the farm lands;
- The role of the church leaders in peace dialogue with the both armed actors should be supported;
- There is need for follow up protection monitoring and assistance to the PSNs;
- Humanitarians must be granted continuous and safe access to the area to provide health and GBV services, among others. Awareness campaigns should be conducted to inform the community about GBV risks, impacts and services, once they are established.
- Advocacy and planning with authorities and community structures should be conducted to increase security for women and girls in locations of displacement and during movement. Advocacy should be conducted in collaboration with women of all ages and women with disabilities.
- Child protection is recommended to do proper registration of the separated/orphans and vulnerable children for immediate intervention
- GBV and WASH actors should prioritise dignity kits and hygiene kits for the most vulnerable as part of their programming for Lainya.