Protection Trends South Sudan

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South Sudan Protection Cluster

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Figures & Tables

ACRONYMS

CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
EDF	Equatoria Defence Force
ERW	Explosive remnants of war
FTR	Family tracing and reunification
GBV	Gender-based violence
GPAA	Greater Pibor Administrative Area (South Sudan)
HCT	Humanitarian Country Team
HRP	Humanitarian Response Plan
IDP	Internally-displaced person
IGAD	Intergovernmental Authority on Development
IRNA	Interagency Rapid Needs Assessment
LRA	Lord's Resistance Army
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MRM	Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism
NEC	National Elections Commission (South Sudan)
NGO	Non-governmental organization
NLA	National Legislative Assembly (South Sudan)
NSS	National Security Services (South Sudan)
POC	Protection of civilians
RRM	Rapid Response Mechanism
SAF	Sudan Air Force
SOFA	Status-of-Forces Agreement
SPLA	Sudan People's Liberation Army
SPLA-IO	Sudan People's Liberation Army-in opposition
SPLM	Sudan People's Liberation Movement
SSDA-Cobra	South Sudan Democratic Army-Cobra Faction
SSLA	South Sudan Liberation Army
SSNPS	South Sudan National Police Service
SSRRA	South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency
UASC	Unaccompanied and separated children
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNMAS	United Nations Mine Action Service
UNMISS	United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan
UN-OCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UN-OHCHR	United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
UNPOL	United Nations Police
WFP	World Food Programme

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On 15 December 2013, fighting erupted in Juba among members of the Presidential Guard, and the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) subsequently split between forces loyal to the Government and those loyal to former Vice-President Riek Machar. In the days that followed, the conflict spread to the three States of Greater Upper Nile (Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile), where the SPLA disintegrated, often along ethnic lines. Since then, the conflict has had a devastating effect on the people of South Sudan, forcing over two million people from their homes and creating a major protection crisis. Despite a number of cessation-of-hostilities agreements as well as high-level international and regional engagement, the conflict continues.

This report is the fourth in a series of Protection Trends papers prepared by the South Sudan Protection Cluster in close collaboration with the three sub-clusters and other protection actors.[1] Recognizing that protection issues in South Sudan are numerous and complex, this paper focuses on a selection of key trends reported between 1 January and early April 2015, summarized below.

Displacement continued during the reporting period, with a two per cent increase in the number of people who have been displaced internally and a seven per cent increase in the number of South Sudanese who have fled to neighbouring countries in search of protection. Populations continued to be on the move rather than find respite in new locations due to ongoing fighting, the need for assistance, and families running out of the resources needed to sustain their situation. This displacement continued to cause major family separation, and the number of newly-identified unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) grew steadily, as did the rates of family reunification. Flash points in the Equatorias and displacement to avoid forced military recruitment were also observed. Host communities struggled to accommodate both conflict- and flood-affected internally displaced persons (IDPs). Overall, this situation of protracted displacement is expected to continue throughout 2015, with limited prospects for durable solutions.

Militarization continued, notably due to ongoing forced and child recruitment by armed forces and armed groups and the proliferation of small arms. Men and boys were particularly at risk of recruitment by the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) and SPLA-in Opposition (SPLA-IO) forces, their respective allied groups, community defence forces and militias groups, especially in Upper Nile and Unity States. These groups also forcibly recruited national staff working for humanitarian organizations.

Gender-based violence (GBV) remained a pervasive threat, and rape was used by the warring parties as a weapon of war. There were increasing reports of sexual harassment, castration, sexual exploitation, abduction and survival sex during the reporting period. Inside UNMISS Protection of Civilians (POC) sites, women and girls also faced increasing rates of domestic violence and unwanted pregnancies. Protection was often compromised by the lack of adequate food, shelter, water and sanitation facilities, and poor lighting. Outside POC sites, women continued to report being harassed,

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[1] See the papers published in January 2014, May 2014 and October 2014. The sub-clusters are Child Protection, Gender-based Violence and Mine Action. Thirty organizations, including UN agencies and international and national NGOs, are identified as Protection Cluster partners in the 2015 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). They provide protection support and services to IDPs and other civilians affected by the conflict.

assaulted, submitted to extortion or attacked, with most alleged perpetrators identified as members of armed forces and groups. In all locations, early and forced marriage and the lack of safe options for GBV survivors remained key concerns.

Grave violations of children's rights continued despite commitments by the Government and the Opposition. Of the 97 incidents reported to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM) between January and March, the most frequent were the recruitment and use of children by armed forces or armed groups (32 reported incidents) and the military use of schools (20 reported incidents). Child recruitment was notably a major concern in Wau Shilluk, Upper Nile State, where armed soldiers affiliated with Major-General Johnson Olony's SPLA forces went on a door to door recruitment drive in mid-February. Child recruitment by SPLA-IO forces was also reported, notably in Leer, Mayendit and Koch Counties, Unity State. In a positive trend, the demobilization of children from the South Sudan Democratic Army (SSDA)-Cobra Faction began in late January in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), with over 1,300 children demobilized as of 31 March 2015.

Protection remained a key issue both inside and outside UNMISS POC sites, where the number of IDPs rose to the highest levels since the beginning of the conflict. Inside the sites, providing safe and secure assistance to IDPs continued to be a challenge. Congestion, restrictions on movement and insecurity caused by the presence of armed elements and active fighting near the gates created protection threats and fed negative coping mechanisms. Youth gangs and leadership struggles led to serious violent incidents in the sites, notably fighting between IDPs. Other incidents included domestic abuse, sexual violence and criminal acts such as assault, theft and burglary. Protection threats also continued around UNMISS compounds, with IDPs reporting harassment, sexual violence, abductions, arbitrary arrests and detentions, physical assaults and forced recruitment by armed actors.

The space for freedom of expression continued to shrink, with more reports of journalists being harassed and detained, and newspapers confiscated and shut down. The National Security Service Act of 2014 continued to raise concerns given uncertainty as to whether or not the bill had been promulgated into law and could be used to curtail the legitimate activities of civil society and human rights groups.

Although the Greater Upper Nile region has been most affected by the conflict, the resulting political and security situation continued to create protection risks for civilians in other areas, namely Greater Bahr el Ghazal, the Equatorias and Lakes State. Such risks included multiple layers of inter- and intra-communal conflict, political instability, conflicts between pastoralists and agriculturalists over land and resources, violence by armed youth, desertions and defections, and lack of accountability and good governance resulting in a climate of impunity.

Despite efforts made by mine action teams to assist communities and support the delivery of humanitarian assistance, landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) killed and injured dozens of civilians during the first quarter of 2015. More reports were received that key transportation routes in Unity State were potentially mined, indicating that the prospects for progress remained hampered by the creation of new hazardous areas. The presence of mines and ERW continued to threaten the lives and livelihoods of civilians, and to compromise the ability of humanitarian workers and peacekeepers to safely carry out their duties.

Humanitarian access also continued to be a serious challenge in both Government- and Opposition-held areas. Reported incidents included cases of humanitarians being killed, assaulted, harassed, abducted, arrested and detained, illegally taxed, and of convoys being stopped, checked, denied passage and/or illegally fined. No reports were received of perpetrators being held accountable by authorities for such offenses. UNMISS's ability to fulfil its mandate continued to be hampered by regular violations of the Status-of-Forces Agreement (SOFA).

The report concludes by proposing a number of specific recommendations for the Government, armed forces and groups, UNMISS and the international community on measures that could improve the protection environment and mitigate the effects of ongoing protection threats. Towards this end, the Humanitarian Country Team's 2015 Protection Strategy will provide a useful framework for ensuring a protection-centred response and facilitating engagement with relevant actors such as UNMISS and development organizations. Looking ahead, the focus should be on measures to deter threats against civilians living outside POC sites and to facilitate their freedom of movement, all the while preserving POC sites as important refuges while the violence continues.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the past months, South Sudan has continued to experience a pattern of failed political negotiations, internal political struggles and economic decline. Coupled with ongoing active hostilities by the parties to the conflict in Greater Upper Nile as well as inter-ethnic violence in other States, this dynamic has perpetuated the existence of a fragile and turbulent protection and security environment for the people of South Sudan.

This report is the fourth in a series of Protection Trends papers prepared by the South Sudan Protection Cluster in close collaboration with the three sub-clusters and other protection actors.[2] After providing a brief contextual overview, it discusses selected key trends reported and observed between 1 January and early April 2015: displacement, militarization, gender-based violence, the recruitment and use of children in conflict, protection threats existing inside and outside the UNMISS Protection of Civilians (POC) sites, freedom of expression, the protection situation outside the Greater Upper Nile region, landmines and explosive remnants of war, and issues around humanitarian space. The paper concludes with a number of recommendations for key actors regarding measures that could improve the protection environment and mitigate the effects of ongoing protection threats.

The analysis is based on information received from multiple credible sources, including direct witness testimonies, observations by protection actors, and reports by the media and other public sources. The reported key trends will both inform and challenge future efforts to address the protection concerns of the civilian population in South Sudan.

2. CONTEXT OVERVIEW

The year began with China attempting to give impetus to the peace process led by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) by holding consultations in Khartoum on the political and security situation in South Sudan on 12 January 2015.[3] The parties agreed to immediately begin work to stop hostilities, to speed up the pace of negotiations to form a transitional government and to take concrete steps to relieve the humanitarian situation. Signed on 21 January, the Agreement on the Reunification of the Sudan People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) – commonly known as the Arusha Agreement – similarly seemed to be cause for optimism, yet discussions on its implementation continued with few concrete results.

The formal IGAD-led peace talks resumed in Addis Ababa on 23 February under intense international scrutiny. Additional pressure for results was created on 3 March after the UN Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution 2206 (2015), which provided for a mechanism by which to impose targeted sanctions such as a travel ban and a freeze on individual assets. The peace talks collapsed on 6 March, prompting negotiations on the modalities of a new round to be facilitated by an expanded

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[2] See the papers published in January 2014, May 2014 and October 2014. The sub-clusters are Child Protection, Gender-based Violence and Mine Action.

[3] Daily Mail, "S. Sudan rivals in Khartoum for China-led peace talks", 12 January 2015, www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/afp/article-2907106/S-Sudan-rivals-Khartoum-China-led-peace-talks.html.

mediation team including the Troika countries (USA, UK and Norway), China, the EU, the UN and five countries selected by the African Union Peace and Security Council (Algeria, Nigeria, Chad, South Africa and Rwanda).

Linked to the peace negotiations, the African Union Peace and Security Council decided in mid-January to indefinitely defer the release of the report by the African Union's Commission of Inquiry on South Sudan, the first-ever commission established by the Council.[4] The deferral triggered widespread reactions by human rights and civil society actors, who criticised the Council for putting the peace negotiations before justice.

With the collapse of the peace process and the mobility allowed by the dry season, fighting resumed in the Greater Upper Nile region. Clashes were noted near and around key urban areas including Bentiu-Rubkona, Nassir, Ayod and Renk, to name a few. As noted in previous Trends papers, insecurity was not confined to the main conflict areas, as both political instability and violence were observed in other regions, as discussed later in this paper. In Opposition-controlled areas, a process of creating new administrative zones and authorities began in earnest, particularly in Jonglei State. This political strategy, which aimed to force the negotiating parties to assimilate new structures into a unity government, may fuel localized tensions in the short term.

The possibility of national elections in June created much speculation and tension. On 31 December 2014, the National Elections Commission (NEC) had announced that general elections would be held on 30 June 2015 as planned. After weeks of tensions and political manoeuvring, the houses of the National Legislature (the National Legislative Assembly and the Council of States) met on 24 March for an emergency joint session to examine the Government's proposed amendment bill to the Transitional Constitution, 2011. They passed the bill and extended the tenures of the Office of the President, the National Legislature and the State Legislative Assemblies until 9 July 2018, thereby negating the need for elections. Despite protests by opposition officials that the action was unconstitutional, the NEC officially announced on 30 March that elections had been suspended. Subsequently, State Legislative Assemblies began voting to extend the mandates of their respective State governors.

Meanwhile, economic decline continued. On 29 March, the Bank of South Sudan declared that local currency reserves had been depleted, an announcement that came shortly after the Government agreed to negotiate a USD 500 million loan from the Qatar National Bank. Military spending, which has doubled since 2010, reached over USD 1 billion, the highest in Eastern Africa.[5] Meanwhile, the currency continued to depreciate, reducing people's purchasing power in an economy that was already strained by its dependence on imported goods.

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[4] The African Union Peace and Security Council authorized the Commission of Inquiry in December 2013, and it was established in March 2014. The Commission is mandated to document human rights violations and abuses committed during the conflict and to offer recommendations on how to pursue justice and reconciliation.
[5] The East African, "South Sudan military spending doubles to $1bn, highest in region", 25 April 2015, www.theeastafrican.co.ke/news/South-Sudan-military-spending-doubles-to--1bn/-/2558/2697206/-/9ibjm6z/-/index.html.

3. PROTECTION TRENDS

Displacement

The first months of 2015 saw a slight increase in internal displacement in South Sudan, which rose from 1,504,000 persons as of 1 January 2015 to 1,527,000 persons as of 31 March 2015 (plus 2 per cent).[6] As seen on the maps below, Greater Upper Nile continued to experience the highest levels of internal displacement and the order remained the same: Jonglei (plus eight per cent), Unity (plus six per cent) and Upper Nile (minus five per cent). The situation in the Equatorias was largely static, with only a small cumulative increase in Central Equatoria. Overall displacement figures decreased in the Bahr el Ghazals and Lakes State.
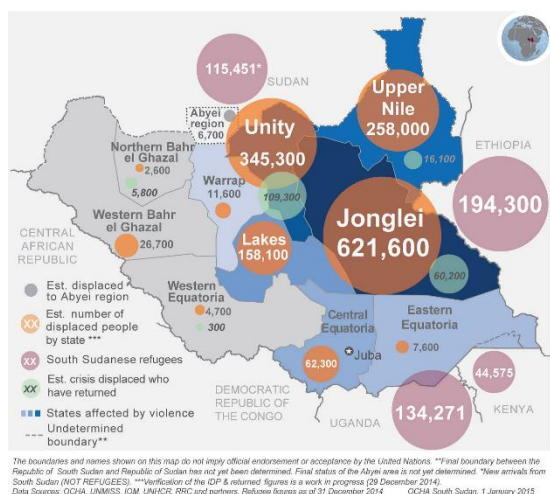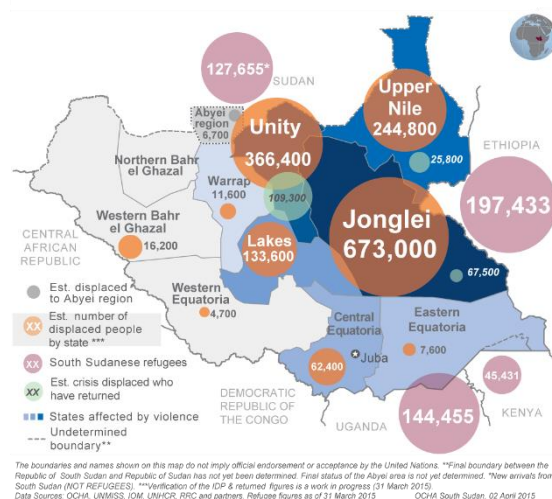
Figure 1. Displacement as of 1 January 2015[7]

Figure 2. Displacement as of 3 April 2015[8]

These maps also show that the number of South Sudanese people fleeing to neighbouring countries rose at a higher rate than internal displacement did, with about a 7 per cent increase recorded between mid-December 2014 (488,618 refugees) and late March 2015 (522,068 refugees).[9] Ethiopia and Uganda continued to host the largest number of South Sudanese refugees in absolute terms, noting however that Sudan saw the largest relative increase at plus 11 per cent, followed by Uganda at plus 8 per cent. Figure 3 below illustrates the relative stabilization of displacement to neighbouring countries. This apparent plateau was however also prone to peaks. In mid-March for instance, nearly 5,000 South Sudanese crossed into Sudan during a single week following a surge in violence in Upper Nile State.[10]

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[6] OCHA, *Displaced Count Monitor*, 31 December 2014 and 31 March 2015.

[7] OCHA, *South Sudan Crisis Situation Report No. 68*, 1 January 2015.

[8] OCHA, *South Sudan Crisis Situation Report No. 81*, 3 April 2015.

[9] UNHCR, *South Sudan Situation: UNHCR Regional Update*, No. 45 (15-19 December 2014) and No. 56 (30 March-10 April 2015). The numbers include only those refugees who fled after the onset of the conflict on 15 December 2013.

[10] UNHCR, *South Sudan Situation: UNHCR Regional Update*, No. 56 (30 March-10 April 2015).

Figure 3. Total number of South Sudanese refugees in neighbouring countries,
15 December 2013-7 April 2015[11]
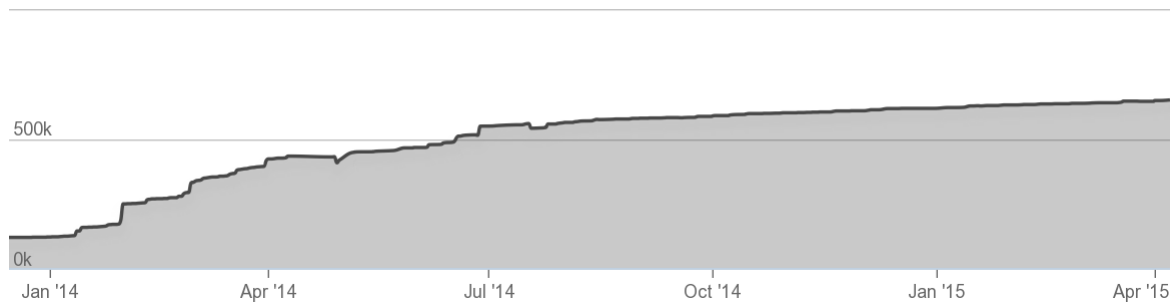
Overall, even though new displacement no longer occurred on a massive scale in early 2015, populations in South Sudan continued to be on the move both inside the country and toward neighbouring ones. Indeed, despite lower-intensity violence than during the same period in 2014, populations were unable to return to their areas of origin or find respite in a new location. This was due to complex factors including the conflict itself, the need for assistance, and families running out of the resources needed to sustain their situations.[12] The displacement of populations from Duk and Twic East (Jonglei State) in January 2015 also demonstrated the vulnerability of previously non-displaced populations due to ongoing fighting in specific locations.

Displacement continued to cause major family separations. A review of the national Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) Database showed that the number of newly-identified UASC continued to grow steadily during the quarter.[13] Indeed, the national caseload grew from 6,920 to 8,061 (+1,141 new cases) compared to 1,157 new cases in the final quarter of 2014. In 2015 to date, almost all new cases were identified during missions to the most isolated and under-serviced communities through the Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM). As of 31 March, over 70 per cent of the total national caseload had been identified through RRMs, compared to 30 per cent in August 2014. The data also showed that despite the increase in newly-identified cases, the reunification rate rose from 10 per cent to 13 per cent, with 442 children returning to their families compared to 250 children last quarter. This was due in part to improved data and information management, as well as to more systematic tracing efforts by FTR network partners.

During the reporting period, two other notable displacement trends were observed: displacement in the Equatorias and displacement to avoid military recruitment. In Eastern Equatoria, over 6,100 people fled cross-border from the Nimule and Pagari areas into northern Uganda over a two month period (Dec 2014-Jan 2015), primarily fearing armed conflict after reports that a local military commander had defected.[14] In Central Equatoria, 3,200 persons were displaced in mid-January from the Kworijik-Luri area to Juba following violence between the Mundari and Bari communities. Such short bursts of movement demonstrated both how displacement was used as a coping mechanism

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[11] UNHCR, "South Sudan Situation Information Sharing Portal", http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/regional.php.

[12] South Sudan Protection Cluster, *Auto-Protection: Lived Experiences of Conflict-Affected Persons in Southern Unity State*, March 2015.

[13] Inter-Agency Child Protection Information Management System (IA CP IMS) Database, data for 1 January-31 March 2015.

[14] UNHCR South Sudan, *Protection Monitoring: Cross-Border Movement South Sudan to Uganda,* Report #5, 6 February 2015.

and the extent to which populations remained vulnerable to displacement due to localized conflict or fear of conflict, as seen throughout 2014 in Lakes State.

Protection partners also noted that young men were fleeing into the bush to avoid recruitment. In one assessment in Mankien, Unity State, populations reported that thousands of men were hiding in the surrounding areas to avoid being recruited into the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA), an armed group affiliated with the SPLA.[15] This form of displacement, while perhaps proximate, separated individuals from services and assistance, and placed them at risk if discovered by armed actors. Similar reports from Opposition-controlled areas in Unity State were also received.

Humanitarian organizations working in Akobo, Jonglei State, reported 15,000 new arrivals in the area between November 2014 and March 2015.[16] These new arrivals were populations from Upper Nile State who have been on the move since December 2013: initially displaced from Malakal town into the UNMISS POC site, they then moved to locations in Upper Nile and Jonglei States including Kaldak, Atar, Phom, Khorfulus and Canal. In November 2014 they were attacked by Major-General Olony's SPLA forces, leading them to flee to Jonglei – first to Kurwai and then Akobo – reportedly because they considered the area safe for their ethnic group.

During this period, flood-affected communities also faced particular challenges. While flooding is a seasonal and predictable phenomenon in South Sudan, assessments in flood-affected areas found host communities struggling to absorb both flood- and conflict-affected communities simultaneously. For example, in Toch (Fangak County, Jonglei State), 5,200 conflict-displaced IDPs and 7,000 flood-displaced converged in one area.

As a result of on-going and protracted displacement, host populations in other regions also reported that they had reached maximum capacity and would be unable to take in any new arrivals without international assistance.[17]

Militarization

The issue of recruitment, including forced recruitment, again gained prominent attention in the first months of 2015. Incidents included the recruitment of children by Major-General Olony's SPLA forces, with children and youth reportedly taken from the gates of UNMISS compounds along with other young men.[18] While the real number of recruitment into armed forces – either voluntary or forced – is unknown, reports of forced recruitment were frequently received during the reporting period, particularly in Upper Nile and Unity States.

In Unity State, the South Sudan Liberation Army (SSLA) was actively recruiting in Mayom County.[19] In one assessment, communities reported that up to 12 per cent of the male population had been

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[15] Interagency Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA) to Mankien, Mayom County, Unity State, 20-23 February 2015.
[16] This compares to 17,000 between December 2013 and October 2014, with almost as many new arrivals in the last four months as during the first year of the conflict.
[17] Interviews conducted in November 2014 and February 2015 by protection actors in Akobo, Pagak, Leer and Waat.
[18] Human Rights Watch, *South Sudan: Government Forces Recruiting Child Soldiers*, 16 February 2015, www.hrw.org/news/2015/02/16/south-sudan-Government-forces-recruiting-child-soldiers.
[19] Small Arms Survey, *The Conflict in Unity State Describing Events through 29 January 2015*, February 2015, www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/fileadmin/docs/facts-figures/south-sudan/HSBA-Conflict-Unity-Jan-2015.pdf.

forcibly recruited.[20] Similarly, the SPLA in Malakal (Major-General Olony's forces) were accused of forcibly recruiting both men and boys without discrimination. In Unity and Jonglei States in particular, humanitarian organizations reported that national staff members had been forcibly recruited by both SPLA-IO and SPLA. Both groups were also accused of going door to door at night in Unity and Upper Nile States, taking men away to fight at the front lines.

The issue of men and children being mobilized into local armed community defence forces and militia groups added complexity to the militarization of communities. While many of these groups are not primarily designed to be aggressive forces, they do play a complementary role to armed groups. For example, the presence of the White Army enabled the SPLA-IO to retain territorial control over areas such as Pagak and Leer, respectively in Upper Nile and Unity States. Such mobilization processes have been described by protection actors as the almost total armament of communities. There is also a question about the degree to which these groups will be willing to assimilate into or support the wider armed conflict. So far, the results have been mixed.

The militarization of communities, which has been made possible in particular by the widespread availability of guns, continued to facilitate the rapid escalation of community disputes. The opportunity for top-down recruitment into armed groups and more grassroots-level revenge attacks and inter-communal violence left many young men in the perilous position of being dragged into the conflict, one way or another.

Gender-Based Violence

Gender-based violence (GBV) remained a serious problem in South Sudan. During the reporting period, cases of sexual violence such as rape, sexual harassment, castration, sexual exploitation, abduction and survival sex were increasingly reported both inside and outside POC sites.

As shown below in the figure with data from the GBV Information Management System (GBV IMS)[21], the highest number of incidents reported in the first quarter of 2015 was from GBV survivors who suffered physical assault (44 per cent); this percentage was relatively stable throughout the reporting period. The same stability applied to incidents of rape, which accounted for 16 per cent of overall reported incidents. Sexual assault incidents represented approximately 4 per cent on the total, with most incidents taking place in January. Emotional abuse cases were on average 20 per cent on the total, while 12 per cent related to the denial of resources, opportunities and services. Cases involving survivors who were forced to marry against their will were 4 per cent on average.

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[20] Interagency Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA) to Mankien, Mayom County, Unity State, 20-23 February 2015.

[21] South Sudan GBV Information Management System, *Quarterly Report: January-March 2015*, May 2015. The GBV IMS tool was launched in South Sudan in August 2014. Since then, data-gathering organizations that provide psycho-social services have been submitting data on reported incidents of GBV. A total of 834 reported incidents were received between August 2014 and March 2015. This is a small sub-set of the actual prevalence of GBV in South Sudan, since the GBV IMS only captures the cases that are reported in areas where GBV IMS partners are providing services.

Figure 4. Types of GBV reported in the South Sudan GBV IMS, January-March 2015 (n = 317)
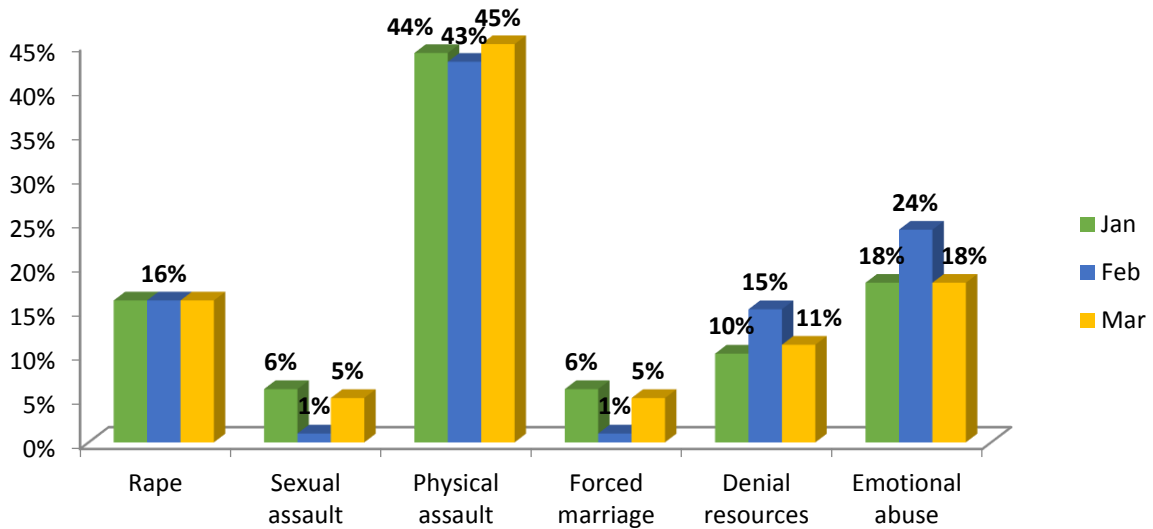
On 11 October 2014, the Government of South Sudan signed a communiqué[22] with the United Nations on addressing conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV), and subsequently established a Joint Technical Working Group to oversee its implementation. The same communiqué was signed with the Chairman and commander in chief of the SPLA-IO on 18 December 2014. Unfortunately, little progress was made during the reporting period by either side on critical issues, including ensuring accountability and the rigorous monitoring of CRSV by the African Union or other regional bodies.

Data on incidents occurring in UNMISS POC sites indicated that domestic violence, including intimate partner violence, increased significantly. The causes of these trends are numerous. Over a year into the conflict, there has been a general rise in IDPs' levels of frustration, trauma and idleness, which often led to violence and criminality. The widespread brewing and sale of alcohol within and on the periphery of POC sites also contributed to increasing violence, including GBV. Furthermore, displacement resulted in the breakdown of community structures that are vital to safeguard women, children and other vulnerable groups.

There was also increased reporting of unwanted pregnancies across the POC sites, in some cases leading to self-induced abortions or the abandonment of new-borns in latrines or in the forest. Single women who became pregnant were particularly vulnerable, since they did not benefit from the protection of family members. Women sometimes found it necessary to engage in "survival sex" to obtain food, services or safety. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the cultural stigma against the use of condoms also exacerbated the situation. Rape, lack of knowledge of or access to clinical management of rape (CMR) services and cultural issues related to abortion were a few of the many reasons for unwanted pregnancies in POC sites.

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[22] Communiqué signed during the October 2014 visit to South Sudan of Zainab Hawa Bangura, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. See www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/joint-communique/joint-communique-of-the-republic-of-south-sudan-and-the-united-nations-on-the-prevention-of-conflict-related-sexual-violence/.

In some POC sites, women and girls were placed at risk of sexual violence because they had to share shelter with dozens of strangers, including men. Safety concerns were also raised by water and sanitation facilities lacking clear markings and being built with improper materials. Poor lighting in many POC sites likewise increased women's exposure to violence. In the Malakal and Juba POC sites, for example, women reported a rising number of GBV incidents during the night, particularly around the latrines. In all sites, the lack of safe spaces for GBV survivors and other IDPs with protection concerns remained an ongoing issue, with some individuals forced to seek protective custody in the UNMISS holding facility or to stay at the hospital.

Outside the POC sites, GBV incidents were reported to be on the rise. Most alleged perpetrators were identified as members of armed forces and groups. Women and girls reported being harassed, assaulted, submitted to extortion or attacked when leaving the sites to collect firewood or go to the market. Women often walked for weeks to obtain food for their families, exposing themselves to the risk of sexual violence. The limited availability of health services outside POC sites made women even more prone to abuse and violence, noting that in all locations survivors faced stigma and discrimination when attempting to access services without accompaniment.

Reports from protection actors in Lakes State indicated that sexual violence, notably gang rape, was on the rise. The frequency and severity of domestic violence also increased, with some women being stabbed by their partners. Generally, much of the violence was related to inter- and intra-communal fighting, with sexual violence encouraged by some groups. The high number of cattle raids, partly caused by the higher rates of cattle disease, also escalated rates of sexual violence, with reports suggesting that some perpetrators were armed actors crossing into Lakes from Unity State.[23]

Early and forced marriages continued throughout the country. Girls were married to relieve the burden on their families. Dowry is a significant income for families, especially during times of both economic difficulty created by the conflict and food insecurity caused by displacement and flooding. The 2010 Sudan Household Health Survey indicated that about 40 per cent of girls were being married while they were still children, a rate that is likely higher today.

Although the levels of sexual violence were still alarming, more women were reported rape and sought help during the first months of 2015. While reports by GBV partners indicated that some women sought help only months after they had been raped, almost half sought help within the three life-saving days during which HIV and unwanted pregnancies can be avoided.

Recruitment and Use of Children

Between January and March 2015, 97 incidents of grave violations of children's rights were reported to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM).[24] These incidents affected 7,257 children (4,303 boys and 2,954 girls). The most reported violations were the recruitment and use of children by armed

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[23] South Sudan GBV Sub-Cluster, *GBV services in Mingkaman, Awerial County, Lakes States: A Call for Action*, March 2015.
[24] In 2005, UN Security Council Resolution 1539 established a Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism to systematically monitor, document and report on six grave violations committed against children in situations of concern, namely: recruitment and use of children; killing or maiming of children; sexual violence against children; attacks against schools and hospitals; abductions of children; and denial of humanitarian access.

forces or armed groups (32 reported incidents)[25] and the military use of schools (20 reported incidents). When considering these numbers, it should be recalled that reported incidents are always a fraction of total actual incidents, as is the case with GBV incidents.

Table 1. Incidents of grave violations reported to the MRM, verified and unverified, January-March 2015

Type	Verified information				Unverified information			
	# incidents	# boys	# girls	# sex unknown	# incidents	# boys	# girls	# sex unknown
Killing	4	13	0	0	2	0	4	0
Injuring	3	8	0	0	0	0	0	0
Recruitment and use of children	19	284	0	0	13	723	0	0
Attacks on schools	16	2,490	2,325	0	4	664	620	0
Attacks on hospitals	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Rape and sexual violence	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0
Abduction	3	8	1	0	6	112	2	0
Denial of humanitarian access	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	*72*	*2,804*	*2,328*	*0*	*25*	*1,499*	*626*	*0*

Following extensive advocacy efforts, 24 schools were vacated between January and March 2015. Despite this progress, however, 20 new incidents of the military use of schools were recorded to date in 2015. As of the end of March, 29 schools were reportedly being used for military purposes. At the end of March, 18 of these had been verified by the MRM.

Figure 5. Number of children affected by grave violations per State
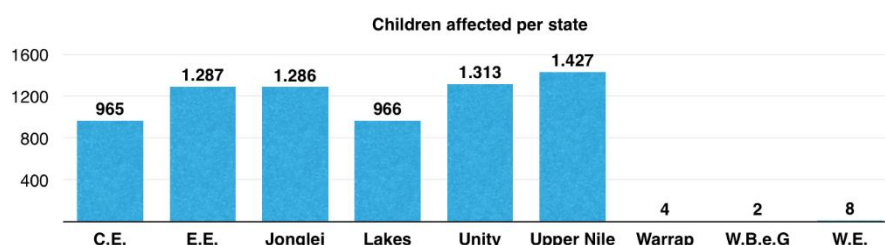
25 Most of the reports of recruitment and/or use of child soldiers were based on observations of children dressed in military uniforms and carrying arms. In some reports, the children may not have been in military uniforms but were seen carrying arms as part of armed groups or units.

As noted earlier, child recruitment by both the SPLA and SPLA-IO – as well as by their respective allied groups – continued to be a major concern. One notable incident occurred in Upper Nile on 15 and 16 February, when armed militia groups forcibly recruited boys and men from Wau Shilluk.[26] Witnesses reported that the SPLA went from house to house, taking boys over 12 years old, while also rounding up male adults, including humanitarian workers. At a rallying point outside the village, most humanitarian workers were released once proof of their employment had been verified.[27] Based on interviews with credible witnesses, the UN initially believed that 89 children had been taken during just one of these raids. Another credible witness estimated that around 300 children were present at the training camp, where the new recruits' activities included shooting weapons. A UN team subsequently travelled to Melut, in Upper Nile, to verify the forced recruitment. The UN also received credible reports that Major-General Olony's SPLA forces had forcibly recruited children in January 2015. Child recruitment by the SPLA was also reported in Fashoda and Akoka Counties, also in Upper Nile.

In one positive development, the demobilization of children from the South Sudan Democratic Army (SSDA)-Cobra Faction began on 26 January in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA). As of 31 March, UNICEF had registered 1,314 demobilized children in Pibor (319), Gumuruk (228) and Vertet (103). Interim care centres were built to support demobilized children, and family tracing and reunification (FTR) services were ongoing, with approximately 200 boys reunified. In Pibor, tensions emerged after children registered at the local primary school could not attend class because there were no teachers. Trauma and psychosocial distress were visibly high among some boys, although rates of aggression and other signs of distress decreased progressively. Despite the demobilization, many boys continued to be observed carrying weapons and dressed in military attire in Gumuruk, while partners in Pibor continued to observe children working as armed bodyguards for military officials.

Recruitment by the SPLA-IO also continued to be reported. In March 2015, partners received reports of mass recruitments in Leer, Mayendit and Koch Counties (Unity State), where up to 500 children were abducted or recruited through clan contributions by local chiefs. Reports suggested that the children were taken to the frontlines in Guit, Nhialdiu and Panakuach, also in Unity State. A similar pattern of abductions and local recruitment had been observed in mid-2014 in Unity State.

Child protection partners in southern Unity State reported that 74 children were screened out during forced conscription activities and returned to the care of their families by the SPLA-IO between January and March 2015. A hundred more children were reportedly screened out specifically in Leer, Unity State. In March, the SPLA-IO nominated child protection officers who were tasked to work with international partners to demobilize all the children within its ranks. This may offer an opportunity to more effectively screen out children during recruitment efforts.

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[26] UNICEF, "UNICEF condemns new child abductions by armed group in South Sudan", 21 February 2015, www.unicef.org/media/media_80205.html.
[27] South Sudan Protection Cluster, *Forced and Child Recruitment*, briefing note, March 2015.

Protection in and around UNMISS POC Sites

When the conflict began in Juba in mid-December 2013, hundreds of people fled to the UNMISS compound in Tongping. As of 9 April 2015, 117,858 IDPs were living in POC sites, the highest number registered since the beginning of the conflict, notably due to ongoing clashes in Unity and Upper Nile States.[28] This section examines the trends regarding protection threats both inside and outside UNMISS POC sites, remembering that about 90 per cent of IDPs live outside UNMISS bases.

Table 2. Official number of IDPs living in UNMISS POC sites[29]

State	UNMISS POC site	Number of IDPs	
		31 December 2014	9 April 2015
Central Equatoria (Juba)	POC-1 and POC-2	15,484	15,380
	POC-3	17,595	19,294
Unity	Bentiu	43,718	52,908
Upper Nile	Malakal	21,420	26,596
	Melut	926	944
	Nassir	9	0 [30]
Jonglei	Bor	2,694	2,374
Western Bahr el Ghazal	Wau	450	362
	Total	**102,296**	**117,858**

Protection threats in UNMISS POC sites

Although many efforts have been made to improve living conditions and the availability of services in POC sites, providing safe and secure assistance to IDPs remained a challenge. Crowding continued to be a concern, notably in the Bentiu POC site, where thousands of new arrivals were cramped into the site pending the completion of a new extension. Similar efforts to complete site extensions before the rainy season were underway in Malakal, while the POC sites at UN House in Juba attempted to accommodate about 2,000 new arrivals within existing space.[31]

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[28] These are official numbers provided by UNMISS after registration exercises. See also New York Times, "More South Sudanese Seek Shelter at U.N. Bases", 7 April 2015, www.nytimes.com/2015/04/08/world/africa/more-south-sudanese-seek-shelter-at-un-bases.html?_r=0.

[29] UNMISS, data reported on 31 December 2014 and 10 April 2015.

[30] The POC site in Nassir closed on 5 January 2015 after the remaining IDPs permanently left or were employed by the IGAD Monitoring and Verification Team. Other POC sites established during the conflict have similarly been closed after the departure of IDPs, namely in Rumbek, Pibor, Pariang and Renk.

[31] South Sudan Protection Cluster, *New arrivals in the UNMISS Protection of Civilians Sites in Juba*, briefing note, 2 April 2015.

Beyond the physical space concern, IDPs continued to deal with the mental and psychological strain caused by a growing sense of imprisonment, isolation, restlessness and idleness after months of living in POC sites. These feelings were fed by insecurity, lack of income-generating opportunities and restrictions on movement. Unsurprisingly, serious violent incidents continued to be reported, often facilitated by negative coping mechanisms such as excessive alcohol consumption. Violent incidents included fighting between IDPs, domestic abuse, sexual violence and other GBV, and other criminal acts such as assault, theft and burglary. Protection actors observed that the general level of tension and violence in POC sites ebbed and flowed depending on dynamics in the wider conflict.

Two key issues fuelled violence in POC sites during the reporting period: youth gangs and leadership struggles. Although described as social groups for young men who have lost their families, gangs increasingly became sources of insecurity and violence in POC sites. The situation was especially concerning in Bentiu, where the number of inter-gang fights had declined after peaking in September 2014, only to surge again in mid-February 2015. These fights often involved hundreds of youths armed with machetes and spears, and led to serious injuries of gang members, other IDPs, humanitarians and UNMISS personnel. A multi-cluster Youth Programming Taskforce was set up in Bentiu in early April to prevent this trend from worsening.

Second, the rising frequency of leadership struggles inside POC sites, notably in Bor and Juba, was symptomatic of the challenges associated with long-term encampment. In Bor for example, the power struggle divided the community, leading to a violent altercation on 21 January involving about 100 IDPs armed with sticks and metal rods, and resulting in a number of serious injuries. A new chairman was eventually elected in March, but the violence and power vacuum increased tensions in the POC site and disrupted the provision of services for weeks. In Juba's POC-1 site, global food distribution was suspended for weeks in early January after leadership issues led to violence, including against humanitarian workers.

IDPs in POC sites such as Bentiu, Malakal and Melut were also confronted with the dangers created by their proximity to the frontlines. In Bentiu for example, shelling, gun firing and mortar explosions were heard on a regular basis near the POC site, leading to the closure of the gates (i.e., only entries allowed) and the cancellation of supply flights. Following clashes between the SPLA and SPLA-IO in Rubkona on 17 March, rockets landed in the POC extension and SPLA elements entered the POC site and targeted civilians. SPLA-IO elements were also seen moving near the compound. These rising incursions underscored the need to maintain the civilian character of POC sites and rightly prompted calls by UNMISS and the UN Secretary-General for all parties to respect the sanctity of UNMISS premises.[32]

Finally, protection actors also raised concerns regarding the plight of new arrivals in the Juba POC sites.[33] As mentioned, about 2,000 new IDPs arrived in the past months, yet they remained

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[32] UN Radio, "Fighting in Unity States breaches protection of civilian site in Bentiu", 17 March 2015, www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2015/03/fighting-in-unity-states-breaches-protection-of-civilian-site-in-bentiu/#.VRufYU0cSM8.

[33] South Sudan Protection Cluster, *New arrivals in the UNMISS Protection of Civilians Sites in Juba,* briefing note, 2 April 2015.

unregistered due to a January 2015 UNMISS directive on 'no new arrivals' and 'no new registration'.[34] Unregistered, these new arrivals faced special protection concerns, as they were not entitled to a plot, shelter kits or food rations.

Protection threats around UNMISS POC sites

Since the beginning of the conflict and as in previous Trends papers, concerns persisted regarding the protection threats existing around POC sites, notably with regard to IDPs' freedom of movement to search for vital necessities, to meet with family members, or to engage in livelihood activities. In Melut for example, male Nuer IDPs have not left the POC site since December 2013, fearing possible attacks by armed Dinka civilians or members of the Melut Defence Forces militia. In Juba, IDPs continued to leave the POC site only during the day, adopting special self-protection measures such as moving in groups, avoiding the use of the Nuer language and returning before dark.[35] In Bor, few of the Nuer IDPs have left the POC site since it was attacked on 17 April 2014 due to fears of harassment, physical assault, arbitrary detention and sexual violence. At the Bor airport, male IDPs seeking to travel to Juba continued to be harassed, arbitrarily arrested and subjected to invasive searches. Although these incidents declined during the reporting period, they regularly peaked when fighting intensified or security incidents occurred in Bor Town.

When IDPs did leave the POC sites, one of the biggest threats they faced was forced recruitment. From mid-January until early March, the situation around the Malakal POC site was especially concerning, with IDPs taken by force from the E-gate by armed men allegedly associated with Major-General Olony's SPLA forces. In Bentiu, forced and child recruitment by armed forces was reported outside the gate and while IDPs travelled to town. IDPs also continued to face other physical security threats around POC sites and at nearby checkpoints including attempted killings, abductions, arbitrary arrests and detention, physical assaults, sexual violence, harassment, confiscation of property and extortion. UNMISS's ability to effectively deter such incidents remained limited.

In Juba, protection concerns were raised in relation to the management of movement in and out of the POC-3 site. In mid-January, UNMISS decided to enforce the 6 p.m. curfew at the gate, prompting a number of violent incidents. In early February for example, hundreds of IDPs threw stones at security guards and forced their way into the site after breaking the perimeter fence. UNMISS subsequently decided to maintain the curfew but accept arrivals until 8 p.m. This measure dramatically reduced the frequency of incidents at the gate and allowed IDPs to move more freely to attend to their affairs before dark.

IDPs returning to town also faced protection concerns. In Malakal town for example, returnees reported a lack of food and services, as well as forced recruitment and regular harassment by SPLA soldiers. IDPs attempting to travel farther to neighbouring countries also faced multiple risks. For example, IDPs from the Bentiu POC site trying to reach Sudan continued to report being arbitrarily arrested or shot at by SPLA soldiers who assumed they were Opposition soldiers or supporters.

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[34] The denial of access of new arrivals to the Juba POC sites was not strictly adhered to, and new arrivals continued to enter/leave the sites freely. On the other hand, 'non-registration' was implemented.
[35] South Sudan Protection Cluster, *Protection Risk Assessment: IDPs in Juba*, February 2015.

During the reporting period, UNMISS took new measures to promote a more secure and safe environment for IDPs wishing to voluntarily return to their homes or previous residences. This included a joint UNMISS and South Sudan National Police Service (SSNPS) community policing project in Juba involving the construction of new police stations and regular patrols by both UNMISS and the SSNPS, as well as the establishment of a forward operating base in Malakal town.[36] Protection actors continued to advocate for UN peacekeepers to monitor hospitals and markets and to conduct patrols at times of high risk, as recommended in previous Trends papers.

Freedom of Expression: The Shrinking Space for Civil Society

In its last report on the human rights situation in South Sudan, the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR) described multiple actions by Government security forces against civil society actors, including the harassment and detention of journalists, the confiscation of newspapers and the closure of radio stations.[37] The unfavourable nature of the environment for freedom of expression was illustrated by South Sudan's decline in the Press Freedom Index released by Reporters without Borders in February.[38] Its report emphasises that the conflict had hit media freedom hard, noting for example that news outlets were often warned not to cover security issues and that journalists were unable to work freely.

A number of incidents were observed during the reporting period. On 16 February for example, the Minister of Information and Broadcasting threatened to shut down the United Nations-run *Radio Miraya* in Juba for disseminating the views of the Opposition.[39] On 9 February, the National Security Service (NSS) interrupted and prevented the election of the South Sudan Bar Association in Juba and arrested a reporter covering the event.[40] NSS officials also interfered with the publication of newspapers in Juba. For example, in a move that prompted widespread condemnation, NSS officers confiscated copies of the *Nation Mirror* on 3 February. The Minister of Information and Broadcasting subsequently shut down the paper, citing its 'negative agitation' and status as an 'anti-Government publication'.[41] Although most incidents occurred in Juba given the concentration of media outlets there, journalists in other parts of the country were also affected by the crackdown.

As noted in the last Trends paper, the bill for the National Security Service Act of 2014 had raised widespread concerns since it granted security forces unrestricted powers of arrest and detention with

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[36] UNMISS, "SRSG Loej and US Chargé d'Affaires Twining visit Malakal", press release, 10 March 2015, http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/unmiss-chief-visits-malakal.

[37] OHCHR, *Report on the human rights situation in South Sudan*, A/HRC/28/49, 27 March 2015, http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/A_HRC_28_49_en.pdf. The report covers the period between 15 August and 15 December 2014.

[38] South Sudan was ranked 125 out of 180 countries, down from 119. See Eye Radio, "Press Freedom Worsens in South Sudan", 12 February 2015, http://eyeradio.org/press-freedom-worsens-south-sudan/.

[39] SRSG Loej met with the Minister on 19 February 2015 and received assurances that *Radio Miraya* broadcasts would continue according to UNMISS's mandate and as stipulated in the Status-of-Forces Agreement. See United Nations Radio, "News in Brief", 18 February 2015 (PM), www.unmultimedia.org/radio/english/2015/02/news-in-brief-18-february-2015-pm/#.VR_KMxb3dUY.

[40] See Radio Tamazuj, "South Sudan security raid lawyers' association meeting, arrest journalist", 9 February 2015, https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/south-sudan-security-raid-lawyers-association-meeting-arrest-journalist, and Voice of America, "South Sudan lawyers on strike", 10 February 2015, http://m.voanews.com/a/south-sudan-lawyers-strike-bar-association-vote-security-services/2637261.html.

[41] Sudan Tribune, "US envoy demands immediate re-opening of Juba newspaper", 5 February 2015, www.sudantribune.com/spip.php?article53896.

the aim of protecting State interests against a range of threats, potentially also curtailing the activities of civilians engaged in legitimate protection, human rights and advocacy activities. Although reportedly adopted on 8 October 2014, it remained unclear whether the bill had been promulgated into law in the absence of a quorum during the vote. In mid-March 2015, media outlets reported that a letter from the Justice Minister dated 25 February claimed that the bill had 'become an operational law'.[42] However, no confirmation or denial was released by the President's Office, leaving doubts as to the bill's status.

Beyond Greater Upper Nile

Greater Bahr el Ghazal

Western Bahr el Ghazal (WBeG), Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBeG), and Warrap States have not been unaffected by the conflict. Although the focus of the humanitarian community has been largely on Greater Upper Nile, civilians in these States continued to face their own protection threats given multiple layers of unaddressed grievances and conflicts, border disputes with Sudan, lack of accountability for human rights violations and abuses perpetrated by the SPLA, the Sudanese Air Force (SAF) and other groups, large-scale conflicts between seasonal pastoralists and host communities, and the heavy militarization of the area since the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement. Political manoeuvrings to remove state governors in both Bahr El Ghazals also caused tensions and hampered efforts to address these issues.

Physical protection concerns were exacerbated by regular aerial bombardments in multiple locations in Raja County (WBeG), including Dem Jallab, Timsaha, Siri Malaga and Khor Shaman. According to various accounts, the bombardments were conducted by the SAF to target members of Sudanese rebel groups reported to be in the area. An unknown number of civilians in Raja were killed and injured in these cross-border attacks. The bombardments also raised concerns regarding the increasingly regional dimension of the conflict.[43]

Although their scale is unknown, SPLA desertions in the area continued to create protection threats. According to some reports, Nuer deserters attacked and robbed civilians on the move. In early January, for example, a group of approximately 30 SPLA soldiers, alleged to be Nuer, left the SPLA base in Boro Medina, Raja County. The group was subsequently blamed for four ambushes between 15 and 25 January that led to the injury of the Raja County Commissioner and the deaths of up to 11 persons.[44]

Lakes State

The previous Trends paper described in detail the worrying situation in Lakes State, which continued to deteriorate during the reporting period. Instability and violence continued to be caused by both inter- and intra-communal violence and their associated patterns of revenge killings, border disputes

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[42] Radio Tamazuj, "Kiir loyalists declare security bill to be law", 16 March 2015, https://radiotamazuj.org/en/article/kiir-loyalists-declare-security-bill-be-law.

[43] International Crisis Group, *Sudan and South Sudan's Merging Conflicts*, Africa Report N°223, 29 January 2015, www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/africa/horn-of-africa/south%20sudan/223-sudan-and-south-sudan-s-merging-conflicts.pdf.

[44] United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering 18 November 2014-10 February 2015),* S/2015/118, 17 February 2015, www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss/reports.shtml.

over water and pastureland, ambushes by armed youth, and tensions between the State Governor and the youth.[45] The resulting breakdown in social order and rule of law threatened the physical safety of civilians, created a climate of impunity for human rights violations and disrupted humanitarian assistance. According to OCHA and Protection Cluster partners, the most conservative estimates suggest that more than 200 civilians were killed in Lakes State between January and March.

As in Greater Bahr el Ghazal, the veracity of reports that SPLA-IO forces were present in Lakes State remained contested. During the reporting period, there were three alleged attacks by SPLA-IO from Unity State to Lakes State. Although these attacks have been attributed to SPLA-IO forces, analysts suggest that the SPLA-IO would not want to disrupt its supply routes into Unity State or open another front in northern Lakes State.

The widespread availability of small arms in Lakes State continued to fuel the conflict, but disarmament campaigns also created protection risks, notably human rights violations by security forces. In January 2015, the governor indicated that the State government would not proceed with civilian disarmament due to reports that armed youth from the border counties had helped to repulse an alleged SPLA-IO attack.[46]

In response to the violence, peace initiatives multiplied in early 2015, including by the Archbishop of the Episcopal Church of Sudan.[47] President Kiir also launched a peace conference in mid-February that resulted in the adoption of 14 resolutions.[48] Despite these efforts, however, the cycle of violence continued to escalate and will likely worsen in the absence of rule of law, accountability and political legitimacy.

The Equatorias

In contrast to the tensions created by calls for federalism by the governors of the three Equatorian States in June 2014, the recent period was characterized by tensions caused by reported defections and mobilizations through new armed groups. In mid-December 2014, former SPLA Major-General Martin Kenyi reportedly confirmed his allegiance to the SPLA-IO, leading many to believe that he would resurrect the Equatoria Defence Force (EDF), a separatist group formed during the 1990s under his leadership. In response, the SPLA allegedly went door to door in Magwi County, harassing civilians while looking for Kenyi. At least three schools in the county were subsequently occupied by SPLA soldiers. This was followed in early February 2015 by reports that a new rebel group had been formed with more than 200 defectors under the command of Major Lasuba Lodoru, said to be active in Maridi County, Western Equatoria.[49] Members of the political elite denied these claims, but the whereabouts

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[45] Nhial Tiitmamer, *Assessment of Policy and Institutional Responses to Climate Change and Environmental Disaster Risks in South Sudan*, SUDD Institute, March 2015, p. 36. See http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Assessment%20of%20Policy%20and%20Institutional%20Responses %20to%20Climate%20Change%20and%20Environmental%20Disaster%20Risks.pdf.

[46] Interagency Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA) to Maper-Rumbek North County, Lakes States, 23 January 2015.

[47] South Sudan Protection Cluster, *Lakes States Update #3: Overview of the Conflict Situation*, February 2015.

[48] See Resolutions of Lakes State Peace and Reconciliation Conference held in Rumbek on the Resolution of inter-clan conflict in the State, 14-17 February 2015, via Gurtong, "Peace conference ends with 14-point resolution in Rumbek", 18 February 2015, www.gurtong.net/ECM/Editorial/tabid/124/ctl/ArticleView/mid/519/articleId/16212/Peace-Conference-Ends-With-14-Point-Resolution-in-Rumbek.aspx.

[49] Voice of America, "Claims of New Rebel Group in South Sudan", 28 January 2015, www.voanews.com/content/south-sudan-rebel-group-new-unrest/2617157.html.

of both men remained unknown. Either way, the alleged mobilization of Equatorians in such groups raised the spectre of a third front and increased tensions in the region.

Chronic fighting over resources between border communities continued. The land conflict between communities living in Kajo Keji (in Central Equatoria) and Moyo County (in northern Uganda) persisted, despite efforts by both governments to find a solution.[50] Attacks by the Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) were also reported in early March in Nabiapai (Yambio County, Western Equatoria) after a lull of three years.[51] In mid-March, incursions by Kenyan forces into Nadapal town, an area in Eastern Equatoria contested by both South Sudan and Kenya, similarly created tensions and reportedly displaced civilians.

Local pastoralist and agriculturalist groups continued to fight over grazing land and to engage in cattle-raiding and rustling, expressing both economic need and inter-tribal rivalries. According to protection actors, the rising death toll attributed to cattle-raiding and rustling in the Equatorias was linked to the widespread possession of small arms by civilians, as well as the commercialization of cattle-raiding across the country. These clashes were more frequent because displaced pastoralists were moving with their cattle, which then encroached on pastoralist land. This prevented pastoralists from planting their fields, or led to the destruction of the crops by grazing animals.

As mentioned, the longstanding conflict between the Bari and Mundari tribes in Central Equatoria State was also a protection flashpoint. On 18 January 2015, fighting broke out between the Mundari and Bari at Kworijik, north of Juba, reportedly due to the incursion of Mundari cattle on Bari land.[52] The villages of Degeri and Kworijik (in Juba County) were later burnt down, allegedly by Mundari men, and four persons were killed. Following the incidents, about 300 civilians, mostly women and children, sought refuge at a primary school in Juba.

Mines and Explosive Remnants of War

Landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) continued to kill and injure dozens of individuals in South Sudan during the first quarter of 2015. The weapons negatively impacted hundreds of communities and endangered the safety of thousands of humanitarian aid workers, peacekeeping forces and development actors. Mine action teams continued to respond to landmine and ERW threats from the civil war period, as well as to new contamination from the current conflict. Mine action teams were deployed in all ten States and conducted survey, clearance and/or risk education to support protection of civilian activities, create conditions for the delivery of humanitarian assistance, support human rights monitoring and reporting, and assist in the resumption of livelihoods activities.

During the reporting period, there was a noticeable trend regarding reports that key transportation routes in Unity State – such as the routes from Bentiu to Guit County and Nhialdu, as well as various routes in Mayom County – were potentially mined. From January to March 2015, mine action teams

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[50] Eye Radio, "Authorities urged to intervene in Moyo-Kajo-keji land dispute", 5 February 2015, http://eyeradio.org/authorities-urged-intervene-moyo-kajo-keji-land-dispute/.

[51] Small Arms Survey, *Lord's Resistance Army Update*, 16 March 2015, www.smallarmssurveysudan.org/facts-figures/south-sudan/lra.html.

[52] The Citizen, "Juba tense following northern Bari hostilities", 22 January 2015 [print only].

opened 1,698 km of routes in seven States, namely Unity, Upper Nile, Jonglei, Warrap, Central and Eastern Equatoria, and Western Bahr el Ghazal. During operations, hundreds of ERW and more than 12,000 rounds of small arms ammunition were cleared and destroyed.

Figure 6. *Hazardous areas cleared and devices destroyed, January 2014-March 2015*
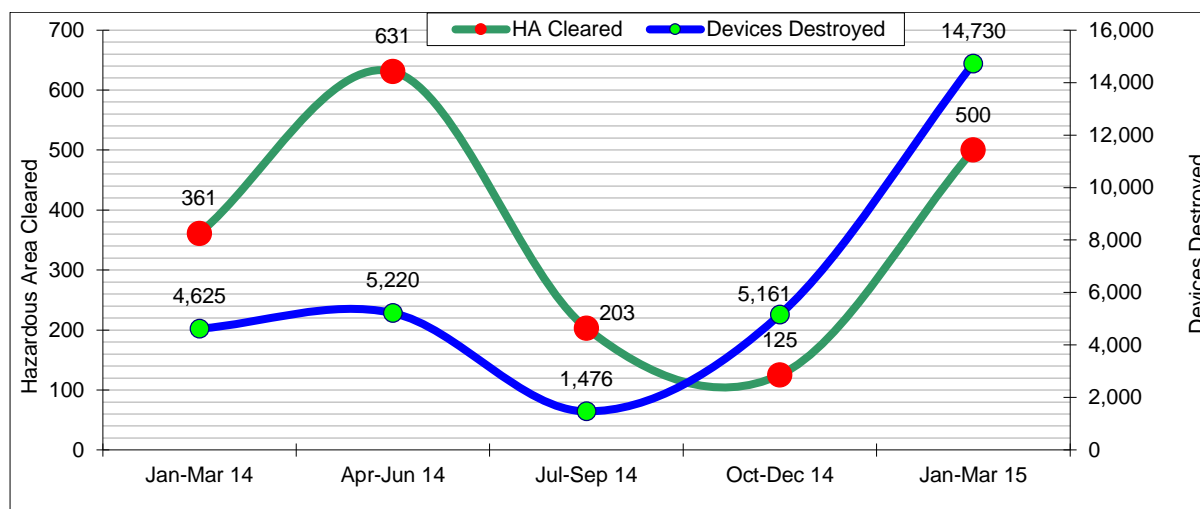
The conflict also reduced the potential for progress by creating new hazardous areas[53] that threatened lives and livelihoods. As of 31 March 2015, there were 754 hazardous areas recorded in the Information Management System for Mine Action database, an increase of 4.5 per cent from the previous quarter. With the arrival of the dry season and favourable conditions for mobility, additional mine action teams were deployed to the field, resulting in a 300 per cent increase in the number of hazardous areas that could be addressed and closed during the first quarter of 2015. The teams destroyed 14,730 mines and ERW during the first quarter, a 185 per cent increase over the previous period.

Overall, through survey and clearance, mine action teams released more than 3.6 million square metres of land to communities during the first quarter of 2015. That translated to a 134 per cent increase in land released from the previous quarter, changes that improved opportunities for safe freedom of movement, humanitarian operations and livelihood activities. In addition, 67,998 people were reached with mine risk education, which continued to play a key preventative role. This was especially important given ongoing displacement and potential future voluntary movements, as people move into unfamiliar areas or locations that have been newly affected by mines and unexploded ordnances.

Closing Humanitarian Space

Humanitarian workers operating in areas controlled by either the SPLA or the SPLA-IO continued to report serious access and operational challenges during the reporting period. The Humanitarian Access Snapshot for March 2015 alone presented a severe situation, with over 20 cases of assault and harassment, 12 cases of detention and arrest, and 26 cases of convoys stopped and checked, denied

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[53] "Hazardous area" is a generic term used for an area perceived to have mines and/or ERW.

passage or asked to pay an illegal toll.[54] Active hostilities (mainly in the Greater Upper Nile region) and insecurity in large parts of Lakes State also continued to force the suspension of humanitarian activities.

Humanitarian workers, especially those operating in hard-to-reach areas, faced demands by armed actors for humanitarian assets to be used for personal or professional purposes. Of particular concern was an 11 March 2015 circular sent to aid agencies by the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Agency (SSRRA), the arm of the SPLA-IO that monitors and regulates humanitarian activities. The circular stipulated that the SSRRA would levy a five per cent tax on the salaries of all South Sudanese staff of aid organizations working in Opposition areas. The tax had not been levied at the time of writing, but many national staff were nonetheless concerned since they already pay a 10 per cent salary tax to the Government. Given the economic situation in the country, similar demands on humanitarian actors are expected to increase.

Humanitarian activities were also hampered by rising harassment and violence against aid workers. On 5 February for example, SPLA-IO elements detained two South Sudanese nationals employed by an international NGO and a senior Government official after the UN helicopter on which they were travelling landed in an Opposition-controlled area in Jonglei State. The three officials were released after two days.[55] Aid workers also faced constraints in Government-controlled areas. In Upper Nile State, for instance, two South Sudanese staff members and one driver working for a UN agency went missing on 1 April 2015. At the time of writing, they and another UN agency staff member abducted at Malakal Airport in October 2014[56] remained missing. Airports also remained dangerous, as Nuer staff members were routinely pulled off flights, detained, harassed and questioned at Bor and Rumbek airports. Overall, many humanitarian agencies continued to avoid sending national staff of particular ethnicities to areas held by either the Government or the Opposition, or alternatively provide them with international staff escorts to protect them from harm. No reports were received of perpetrators being held accountable by authorities for such offenses.

In the first months of 2015, violence against humanitarian staff working in the UNMISS POC sites also seemed to be on the rise. Attacks against humanitarian workers perceived to be Ugandan nationals took place in early January in the Malakal POC site, and an assault in the Wau site on 12 March led to the suspension of food distribution. UNMISS staff and police officers were also injured in their attempts to control fights, enforce curfews and provide security during registrations and food distributions.

UNMISS continued to face violations of the Status-of-Forces Agreement (SOFA). From November 2014 to February 2015, UNMISS registered 39 violations, including restrictions on freedom of movement; threats to personnel and/or premises; harassment, assault, arrest and detention of UNMISS personnel; shooting at UNMISS vehicles and convoys; and attempts to prevent the departure of

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[54] OCHA, "South Sudan: Humanitarian Access Situation Snapshot, March 2015", http://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-access-situation-snapshot-march-2015.

[55] LWF, "LWF South Sudan Staff Arrives Safely in Juba", 6 February 2015, www.lutheranworld.org/news/lwf-south-sudan-staff-arrives-safely-juba.

[56] WFP, "WFP renews calls for release of staff member missing for one month in South Sudan", 20 November 2014, www.wfp.org/news/news-release/wfp-renews-call-release-staff-member-missing-one-month-south-sudan.

flights.[57] According to reports, government security personnel, including elements from the SPLA, the SSNPS and the NSS, continued to be the main perpetrators of these violations. Such restrictions on freedom of movement, as well as ongoing refusals to allow night-time patrols in certain towns, challenged UNMISS's ability to fulfil its mandate to protect civilians.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS

Given the protection situation described above, protection actors in South Sudan propose the following recommendations for measures that should be taken to mitigate protection threats and improve the protection environment for displaced civilians and other conflict-affected persons.

Government of the Republic of South Sudan
- Arrest and hold accountable those responsible for violations of international humanitarian law and abuses of human rights, in particular for acts that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- Increase allocations to social services including education, health services (including maternal and child health), and water and sanitation.

All armed forces and armed groups
- Stop all conflict-related sexual violence.
- Stop forced recruitment and/or use of children in the conflict, and release children who have already been recruited.
- Allow full access for the United Nations and NGOs to effectively deliver humanitarian assistance and to monitor and report on human rights violations.
- Refrain from the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of landmines and cluster munitions.
- Respect and ensure the civilian and humanitarian character of POC sites and refugee camps.

UNMISS
- Ensure that all existing UNMISS compounds remain able and willing to receive civilians seeking protection in POC sites.
- In consultation with the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) and protection actors, deploy peacekeepers in areas where there is a high concentration of IDPs in order to mitigate the heightened protection risks they face.
- Strengthen mechanisms to identify, record and prevent threats and attacks against civilians, including through regular interaction with them and by working closely with humanitarian and human rights organizations, including non-UN organizations.
- Place greater emphasis on preventative and community policing approaches inside the POC sites based on UNPOL's experience in other displacement contexts where overcrowding and youth criminality are concerns.

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[57] United Nations Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on South Sudan (covering 18 November 2014-10 February 2015),* S/2015/118, 17 February 2015, www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/unmiss/reports.shtml.

- Ensure that protection remains central to the humanitarian response by providing robust support to the implementation of the HCT Protection Strategy.
- Support protection activities in the 2015 Humanitarian Response Plan with continued and sustained resources.
- Encourage the prioritization of humanitarian mine action to facilitate safe humanitarian access and the protection of civilians, notably by including mines and explosive remnants of war mitigation activities in planning for IDPs, refugees and returnees, and by surveying and releasing/clearing areas of mines/ERW prior to establishing sites for IDPs.

5. CONCLUSION

This report presented the main protection concerns that have been reported in the first months of 2015, notably an increase in internal displacement and onward cross-border displacement to neighbouring countries; the ongoing militarization of communities due in part to forced recruitment and the proliferation of small arms; continued gross violations of human rights, including gender-based violence and forced and child recruitment; ongoing protection threats inside and outside UNMISS POC sites; lack of freedom of expression and attacks on civil society; the rising diversity and complexity of protection threats for civilians living outside the Greater Upper Nile region; threats related to mines and explosive remnants of war; and the ongoing shrinking of humanitarian space.

These trends are expected to persist throughout 2015 and the civilian population in South Sudan will continue to pay the price for the conflict. The protection risks will likely multiply due to the deteriorating economic situation and the anticipated surge in both hostilities and intra and inter-communal violence. Economic factors are likely to exacerbate protection issues, particularly in urban settings, where violent crime is escalating. The ongoing devaluation of the currency will continue to place further strain on struggling communities by raising prices and increasing food insecurity. The anticipated intensification of active hostilities in the closing weeks of the dry season is likely to further displace populations, noting that the experience in 2014 suggests that people will move to areas they consider safer during the rainy season. Facilitated by the proliferation of small arms, intra- and inter-communal violence will likely continue as communities seek to address internal grievances and avenge past attacks.

Only about 10 per cent of IDPs live in UNMISS POC sites, yet the bulk of attention has been directed towards these populations. Looking ahead, the focus should be on measures to deter threats against civilians living outside POC sites and to facilitate their freedom of movement. In the absence of a viable peace agreement, options to improve IDPs' freedom of movement, such as voluntary assisted relocations for IDPs in selected POC sites, are being explored pending conditions conducive for pursuing durable solutions. That being said, POC sites will remain an important refuge for civilians seeking protection as long as the violence continues.

As part of the overall humanitarian response, the HCT's 2015 Protection Strategy will provide an important framework for ensuring a protection-centred response to the conflict and facilitating

engagement with relevant actors such as UNMISS and development organizations. However, given the scope and severity of the protection threats facing civilians in South Sudan, a more robust and sustained commitment from the wider international community will also be necessary to exert pressure on the warring parties to cease hostilities and commit to peace and reconciliation.