

RAPID APPRAISAL

Tonga, Panyikang county



Key Highlights:

- The overall food security, nutrition, WASH, health and education situation was reported to be poor and has deteriorated due to recent conflict and displacements in April 2017. The majority of the local population has returned to their homes and they seem to have developed some resilience. Interventions to support the populations need to build upon this.
- The main livelihoods have been disrupted by the ongoing conflict and multiple displacements: the local population has abandoned farming and largely reduced livestock keeping, shifting to fishing and exploitation of natural resources. Unlike the pre-conflict period, currently the majority of households are relying on fishing and bartering of small livestock, gum arabic, charcoal and firewood to obtaining food.

Recommendation:

- As the community missed the current planting season due to conflict, a half-ration food distribution is recommended to supplement their current food consumption which consists of fish and some food such as green leaves gathered from the wild. This should be complemented by distribution of seeds for kitchen gardening and fishing nets considering that the area is located along the White Nile, an important source of livelihood. This assistance should be preceded by a population verification exercise.
- In order to build community resilience for the longer-term, an inter-agency approach is recommended to support the rebuilding of livelihoods (including support with small ruminants and poultry), mobile health clinics and access to clean drinking water.



Profile of the population



Estimated **12,500 people** living in Tonga



70% women headed households



Livelihood profile

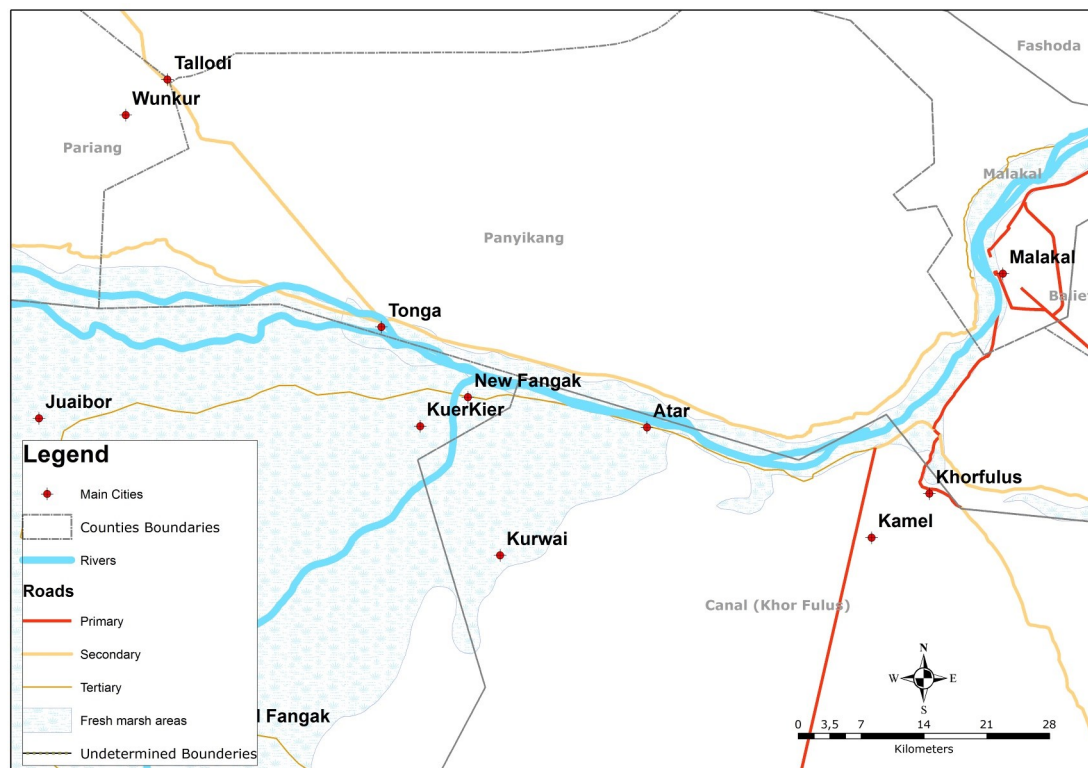


Before conflict: rain-fed **agriculture** as main source of income



After conflict: relying on **fishing** as main source of income

4th October 2017



Map showing Tonga and adjacent town in Panikang county

Overview:

The area is characterized by a unimodal rainfall pattern, and two distinct seasons: a rainy season, from May to October, and a dry season, from November to April .

The inhabitants of Tonga and the surrounding villages are agro-pastoralists, who used to rely on rain-fed agriculture before the conflict started in December 2013. The main food crops they used to grow included maize, white and red sorghum, pumpkin, okra and other vegetables .

From March 2017 to May 2017, the area was the scene of intermittent clashes between SPLA and SPLA/ iO forces. On several occasions, the city has been occupied and captured by both factions resulting in repeated displacement. In addition, the most recent conflict occurred during the crucial stages of land

preparation and crop sowing. As the majority of the local population fled to neighboring villages, people were not able to sow crops that they rely on for subsistence and income generation .

The area received two general food distributions by WFP in 2016: a total of 8,592 people were assisted in April (with head-count) and September 2016. In order to understand the latest humanitarian situation, a joint rapid assessment was conducted by WFP's VAM, Security, Access, Emergency Response and Gender and Protection units on 4 October 2017 .

Objective of the Mission:

The overall objective of the mission was to assess the current humanitarian situation in the area:

1. To estimate the population number, including the number of returnees;
2. To assess the situation in terms of livelihood, food security, markets, current level of assistance, as well as safety and protection concerns; and
3. To confirm WFP's response options and modalities, including locations of possible operations ;

¹ South Sudan Livelihood Zones and Descriptions, Few's Net, August 2013.



Lia Pozzi (WFP) and Veerle Triquet (WFP) conducting FGDs with women in the community

Methodology:

The findings are based on focus group discussions and key informant interviews with local authorities. The first focus group discussion was conducted exclusively with women, consisting of 12 women of different age groups and multiple ethnicities. The discussion focused on specific protection issues and other concerns. Later on, 10 men of different age groups and ethnicities joined the group to discuss general issues and concerns ranging from livelihoods and food security to service delivery and security .

Due to the nature of the rapid appraisal, it is not possible to have in-depth and statistically representative results on the situation in terms of food security, livelihood and nutrition. However, the rapid appraisal provided some indicative results for an understanding of situation in community .

Main findings:

Demographics

- The community is composed of people who are originally from the area and returned between May and June 2017 after being displaced to nearby villages due to the recent conflict in April 2017. Reportedly the majority of the population (apart from four households who had remained) had recently returned to Tonga. It is estimated that about 12,500 people currently live in Tonga and its surrounding villages.
- The discussion indicated that about 70% of the town was composed of female headed households. The number of children per household was reported to be 4 to 5, with household sizes ranging from 4 to 9. However, very few children, no pregnant women and only one nursing woman were seen during the mission.
- The participants explained that there has been a very sharp decrease in the number of marriages (they reported no marriages had taken place last year) as they cannot bear the economic obligations of the wedding.
- The appraisal mission observed very few young men in the location. This is mainly related to the prevailing insecurity in the area (mobilization and/or security threats) and partly to the fact that having missed the current cropping seasons, young men were sent off to work at fishing and cattle camps .

Food security

Food Consumption

- According to the women, the general food situation in the community has worsened as a result of the repeated displacement caused by the fighting that intensified in April 2017 and the consequent negative impact on agricultural activities. They explained that the most recent displacement occurred during the crucial stages of land preparation and crop sowing, meaning that this year they were not able to plant the crops they rely on for both subsistence and income generation.
- The men who later joined the discussion confirmed that they had been unable to effectively plant the crops they rely on (red sorghum, white sorghum and maize) as a result of the conflict. This negatively affected the food consumption of this population during this period of the year (September – December), when they rely on their own crop harvests, including green consumption.
- People interviewed reported that they were currently relying on fish and wild plant based diet. Any additional food was acquired through the bartering of charcoal, cows, goats and dried fish for staple foods (cereals and pulses) from traders.
- The entire group reported eating twice a day, in the morning and in the evening .

Livelihoods (Food and income sources)

- The main livelihoods of the area have been disrupted by the ongoing conflict and multiple displacements: the local population has abandoned farming and strongly reduced livestock keeping, shifting to fishing and the exploitation of natural resources. Unlike the pre-conflict period, the majority of households are currently relying on fishing and bartering of small livestock, charcoal and firewood for food.
- Very few cows, goats and sheep were observed during the visit and those present were not in good health. It was reported that some of the cattle were taken away during the crisis.
- Since the latest wave of violence coincided with land preparation and planting, most households were unable to engage in agricultural activities. As a result, a significant proportion of the population is involved in fishing as a source of both food and income.
- Normal income sources including agricultural labour, casual labour, sale of livestock and natural resources have been substantially disrupted by the conflict following repeated displacement, looting and destruction of productive assets.
- Most households have lost their source of income and cash circulation has declined. This has caused an increase in bartering.

Coping mechanism

- Fishing and the collection of firewood to produce charcoal was reported as one of the main livelihood coping strategies.
- The local population explained that the economy is based on a bartering system in which they barter dried fish, key assets, goats and cows for goods (specifically pulses).
- Having missed the current cropping seasons, which represents the main livelihood in a normal year, young boys are sent to work in fishing and cattle camps .

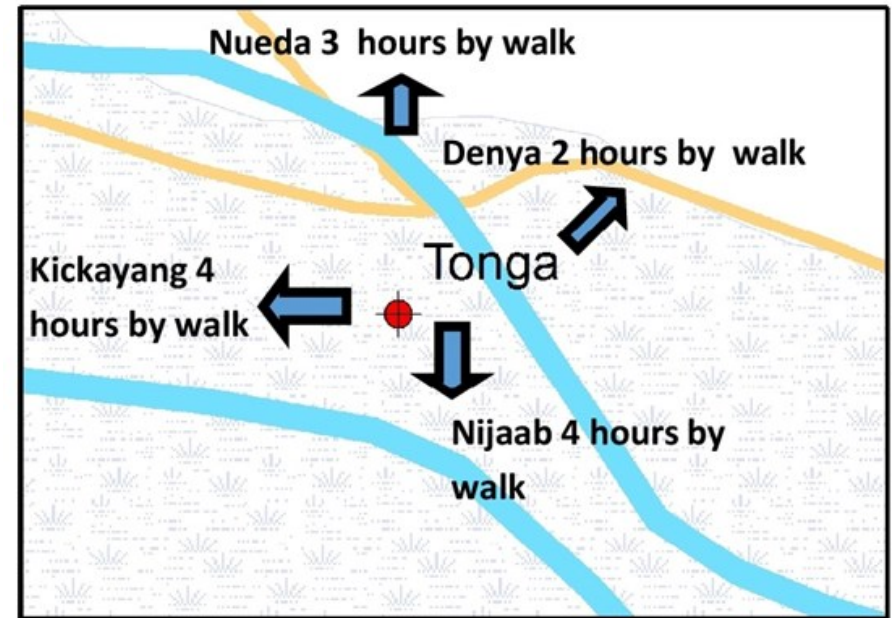


PC: WFP/ Irum Jamshed

A retail shop where women are selling vegetables from their kitchen garden

Markets

- The main market of Tonga consisted of 30 big shops and 40 small shops. The bigger shops were comparable to the traditional “Tukul” selling food and non-food items including cereals. The small shops were mostly in the open offering items such as vegetables, fish and cigarettes.
- There was very little oil and almost no pulses observed in the markets.
- Supply for the market is mainly from across the border with Sudan. The trade situation has been heavily disrupted by the conflict in April 2017.
- Tonga is the main market both for selling and buying of commodities for people from nearby villages. The traders reported that they sell products on credit only for the local community, while the community coming from neighboring villages have to pay in cash or barter. Some communities have to travel as long as 3-4 hours to reach the market for purchasing food commodities.
- The traders are unable to source common food commodities as compared to the situation before the conflict. Currently the traders hardly have any cereals and pulses; the stock levels of other items were also very low.
- Most of the trade in the market is through bartering or selling on high price. The average daily income on a common day for a shop keeper was reported 500-600 SSP, equivalent to the cost of half a kilogram of sugar. The price for sugar (per kg 1,500 SSP), salt (per kg 400 SSP) and oil (per liter 2,000 SSP) was reported almost more than double as compared to prices in Juba.
- As a consequence of the reduced cash circulation due to insecurity and depreciation of the SSP in particular, there has been a shift from cash economy to barter systems. The traders, mostly Sudanese, prefer to be paid in-kind: in exchange for the various goods they procure from Sudan, they receive small livestock, dried fish, charcoal and gum arabic (the last two mainly in the dry season) that they transport back to Sudan.



Community in the adjacent towns accessing Tonga market

Services mapping

- According to the participants in the focus group discussion, no agency has held a permanent presence on the ground since 2013. There have been some reports of MSF mobile clinics in nearby areas but the authorities claim that such mobile clinics have been infrequent.
- There are no medical facilities in Tonga or nearby villages. It appeared that there might be one or two individuals with medical skills but no medical supplies are available. Some fifty deaths were reported due to diarrhea and malaria.
- The WASH condition observed was very poor. There is no functioning borehole left after they were destroyed during the conflict. The community relied on drinking water from the river.
- All households practice open defecation .

Security/ Safety Concerns

- Both focus group discussions revealed that the main security/protection threat that the local population faces is related to violent conflict.
- Both men and women confirmed they feel relatively safe and comfortable traveling within a radius of 2 to 4 hours from the center of Tonga town.
- When asked about possible protection incidents or challenges during the previous distribution, the women explained that they could not recollect any such incidents. However, it is important to note that the focus discussion was very short and did not allow for building trust with the participants in order to get adequate responses on safety and security concerns without them feeling like the assistance might be threatened.
- When asked about their preferred means of communication both, men and women, explained that they preferred to receive communication from village chiefs and the local authorities.
- The community also reported a high number of deaths related to malaria and acute diarrhea due to an absence of WASH resources and facilities .

Recommendations:

The overall food security, nutrition, WASH, health and education situation was reported to be very poor and has deteriorated due to conflict in April 2017. Although the community was displaced in April, the majority of the local population has returned to their homes since and seem to have become resilient. Future interventions to support the populations need to build upon this resilience. The findings of this rapid appraisal translate into the following recommendations:

- As the community missed the current planting season due to conflict, **a half-ration food distribution is recommended to supplement their current food consumption which consist of fish and some food such as green leaves gathered from the wild. This should be complemented by distribution of seeds for kitchen gardening and fishing nets** considering that the area is located along the White Nile, which is an important source of livelihood for this population. This assistance should be preceded by a population verification exercise.
- In order to build community resilience for the longer-term, **an inter-agency approach is recommended** to support the rebuilding of livelihoods (including support with small ruminants and poultry), mobile health clinics and access to clean drinking water.
- An **inter-agency assessment is proposed** to evaluate multi-sectorial needs and response options.
- An **interagency in-depth food security and livelihoods assessment is proposed to be conducted in February 2018** in order to assess the situation and to propose the most appropriate support options in preparation of the next cropping season if security situation allows.

Annex

1. Seasonal calendar²:

The rainy season in this zone starts in May and ends in October. Lean season is normally from mid-May to mid-August, when green crops are still not ready for consumption. All main food crops are cultivated during the same months. Unlike other zones, maize is the staple cereal. Agricultural work starts in February to April with land preparation, followed by sowing or planting in the month of May to mid-June. The agricultural workload intensifies with weeding towards the end of June to August. Harvesting of all crops including green consumption starts in the month of September until end of December. However vegetable production is mainly done in the dry season.

Seasonal calendar:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seasons												
Rainy season												
Dry season												
Lean season												
Cropping												
sorghum												
vegetables												
Livestock												
lambling/kidding/calving												
milking												
Other												
employment by oil companies												
Hazards												
livestock diseases												
conflict/cattle raiding												
Legend												

Consumption calendar for poor households

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Staple foods												
sorghum												
market purchase												
wild food collection												
Income												
sale of firewood												
sale of elephant grass												
domestic work												
Expenditures												
health care												
education												
Legend												

² South Sudan Livelihood Zones and Descriptions, Fewes Net, August 2013.



WFP mission members and local community from Tonga