

For Immediate Release

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Displaced people in Pibor at high risk of possible disease outbreaks

20 January 2012, JUBA (WHO South Sudan): There are threats of possible vector borne, water borne and respiratory tract disease outbreaks, and malnutrition among the displaced population in Pibor county. The displacement follows intertribal clashes in the last week of December 2011 and first week of January 2012 in which over 60,000 people from Pibor, Lekuangle, Fertait, Bilait, Dorein and others were displaced with many other areas were displaced while many others either reported wounded or dead.

In December, over 5000 Lou Nouer youth from northern Jonglei state were reported to have mobilized themselves and headed towards Pibor County to carry out a revenge attack against the Murle community. This attack follows a series of many other intertribal clashes between the Murle and Luo Nouer that have taken place in Pibor county in 2011. The recent one having taken place in August 2011 in which over 600 persons were killed in Uror county. However this was the worst of all the inter-tribal attacks since the start of the inter-tribal clashes in 2011 causing massive displacement of people and destruction of houses and livelihood. Another revenge attack by the Murle tribe begun last week in response to Luo Nuer youth offensive displacing many more civilians in Akobo, Uror and Duke counties of Jonglei State.



Dr. Abdinisir Abubakar (WHO/South Sudan), the Minister of Health Dr. Michael Milly Hussein, Dr. Lul Riek, Director General for Public and Community Health and staff from Juba teaching hospital speaking to a patient from Pibor in WHO donated tent.

Many of those who fled the conflict in to the bushes following the attack started returning and are currently leaving in open places in in Pibor, Lekuangle and other nearby villages not mentioned here, while many others are still hiding in the bush. In Pibor, Lekuangle and other villages, water points and health facilities were either destroyed or vandalised. In the IDP camps, the sanitation conditions are poor Next to Pibor county, where the IDPs leave is an open water pond which is feared could be used by the community to draw water and increase their risk of contracting communicable diseases. This could pose a risk to the lives of the community in the camp. Those still in the bush and are yet to return continue to be exposed to the risk of getting

malaria, Guinea worm and other epidemic prone diseases given they have no access to safe drinking water and are exposed to the mosquitoes bites.

The attack has and continues to pose a huge threat to the response towards Guinea worm disease eradication which is endemic in the affected area of Pibor. As a result there is of population movement which hinders access to patients with malaria. In addition to the many people being displaced in the bushes with no access to safe drinking water sources and the exposure to mosquitoes, their lives are put at high risk of Guinea worm, acute water diarrhea, malaria and respiratory tract infections.

Following the attacks the World Health Organization, South Sudan office joined the Ministry of Health, Republic of South Sudan and other health cluster partners to support the response towards the affected communities by providing medical supplies and financial support for medical evacuations of patients to Juba teaching hospital and other hospitals by UNMISS and other humanitarian flights. The organization facilitated all medical evacuations of 405 wounded patients from different locations within Jonglei state to Juba or other referral hospitals in collaboration with UNMISS, OCHA, ICRC and MSF. Of the 405 patients medically evacuated to the five hospitals in South Sudan, 222 patients were evacuated to Juba teaching hospital, as part of her contribution and support WHO donated four tents to expand space for the patients, medical drugs and supplies, 80 mattresses, pillows and bed sheets to Juba Teaching hospital to support the hospital cope with the overwhelming numbers of patients who had already filled up the wards. To cater for the unaccompanied patients, the organization provided logistical and financial support to the hospital to cater for the feeding of the wounded patients, caretakers and children. Although there are other hospitals currently managing patients, WHO supported Juba teaching hospital, Malakal, Boma and Bor hospitals with trauma kits and other medical supplies to manage the wounded.

To ensure proper medical care and to support the limited numbers of medical personnel at Bor, Juba teaching hospital and Malakal teaching hospital, WHO deployed more technical officers on ground to assist in coordination of the health emergency response, participating in the management of patients, provide technical support to the health authorities and partners. WHO also provided incentives for health personnel who have been working extra hours and participating in the medical evacuations and in the management of wounded patients. This support has boosted the moral of the health personnel and overall response towards the emergency for which WHO will continue providing support.



The Minister of Health Dr. Michael Milly Hussein visits a female patient at Juba teaching hospital wounded during the Lou Nouer attack of the Murle in Pibor county, Jonglei state. WHO supported these patients.

It's anticipated that more attacks and retaliatory attacks will most likely continue in the nearby counties of Jonglei state. Besides this emergency, WHO continues to participate in and support many other emergencies in South Sudan, in the areas of Malakal, Renk and Maban in Upper Nile state, Yida, Mayom in Unity state and Khorfulus and Atar in Northern Jonglei through provision of drugs, surveillance, deployment of technical staff and resources needed for the response. All these require more resources for effective and efficient response.

The deteriorating humanitarian situation and security in Jonglei state compounded with increased population movement, food shortage, malnutrition and difficulty accessing health services, may contribute to the further spread of the ongoing kala azar outbreak to new communities. WHO is putting together contingency plan to respond to another spike of kala azar outbreak in Jonglei, Unity and Upper Nile states.

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