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**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

**Livelihoods & Vulnerabilities Study**  
**Gambella Region of Ethiopia**

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**\*\*\* Final \*\*\***

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This report was co-authored by two (2) expert consultants hired by UNICEF with the assistance of various other parties in Ethiopia. For security reasons one author wishes to remain anonymous and none of the supporting contributors have been identified. Co-author **XXXX XXXX** is a lawyer trained in international law, a former legal expert and researcher with Human Rights Watch, and a war crimes and genocide expert affiliated with International War Crimes Tribunals.

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This report was released to the general public on 14 December 2006, the 3rd anniversary of the atrocities committed in Gambella, Ethiopia, 13-15 December 2003. This report was made public by the above NAMED author to raise awareness of:

- the continued denial of basic human rights and liberties, and the repression, insecurity and suffering endured by peoples in Ethiopia due to the Government of Ethiopia, which acts under the banners of democracy;
- the silence, at least, and direct complicity, at worst, of certain United Nations bodies, their partners and their donors, regarding atrocities committed against indigenous people and ordinary citizens in Ethiopia, as everywhere in Africa;
- the complicity of international legal and humanitarian institutions, governments and multinational corporations in ongoing destabilization, militarization and plunder of resources, occurring at an unprecedented rate and scale, in Ethiopia, as everywhere in Africa;
- the role of the Ethiopian government and its backers, the United States, U.K. and Israel, and their covert military and intelligence agents (operations, involvement) in Ethiopia, who are today prosecuting low-intensity wars, and committing terrorist acts, in Ethiopia, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan, as everywhere, under the cover of the "war on terror."

This report was made public in recognition that the U.S. Fund for UNICEF includes amongst its co-chairs and directors current or former U.S. Government and corporate officials, and corporate allies, who have promoted, instituted or directed hostile foreign policies, covert actions, and open military campaigns against and within sovereign nations, and who are thus responsible for unprecedented suffering, despair and death, which is ongoing and global.

Similarly, the role of international AID organizations in Ethiopia, as everywhere, appears to be *managed inequality*, often serving military prerogatives, subordinated to military agendas, and backed by military funding, where the suffering, despair and death of the disenfranchised many is subordinated to the perpetuation of incomes and industries which benefit the privileged few; this, primarily, is *institutionalized white privilege* and the *permanent warfare economy* it thrives on.

*This report is released in Memory & Solidarity with Ken Saro-Wiwa and all people of the Niger River Delta; with Patrice Lumumba and all people of the Congo; with the Hutus and all people of the Great Lakes; with the Tuareg and all people of the deserts; with the innocent men, women and children in Darfur; and all the other brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, fathers and mothers of the people of Ethiopia and Sudan, from which we all came.*

**UNICEF**  
**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

## **Livelihoods & Vulnerabilities Study Gambella Region of Ethiopia**

### **\*\*\* PROPRIETARY NOTICE \*\*\***

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## **SECTION I: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**U**NICEF operations in the Gambella People's National Regional State of Ethiopia (Gambella Region) have been impeded in the effective implementation of programs since the UNICEF base opened there in January of 2005. Repeated attempts to improve the lives of women and children in Gambella were failing, and strategies that worked elsewhere were not working in Gambella.

This UNICEF document, *Livelihoods & Vulnerabilities Study: Gambella Region of Ethiopia*, follows from an innovative UNICEF initiative launched to comprehensively assess the immediate livelihoods and vulnerabilities issues, predominantly of women and children, in the diverse and unique Gambella region of southwest Ethiopia. This assessment is based on a seven-week field study conducted at the close of the rainy season (October and November 2005) in five of Gambella's seven Woredas (administrative zones).

Information on the recent and more historical background of the Gambella Region is given in Section II: *Historical Background and Context*.

### **1. Summary of Introduction and Methods**

The Youth Sports Culture and Labour and Social Affairs Office of Gambella had requested that UNICEF support them in the piloting of an initial one-year program for "Addressing Vulnerabilities in the Gambella Region." As part of that aim, this study set out to: [1] investigate the most effective ways of planning, implementing and supporting sustainable interventions in the region; [2] identify the most vulnerable groups and areas of the region where the above should be targeted; [3] assess the impact of ongoing conflicts in Gambella on livelihoods and how assistance might be affected by these conflicts; [4] verify expressed concerns that above normal breaches of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) were occurring in Gambella, and that there were heightened levels of sexual and gender based violence (SGBV).

Pursuit of this livelihoods and vulnerabilities assessment revolved around the premise that protection issues are a core part of UNICEF's mandate, and that they contribute to other basic vulnerabilities of women and children. In the initial phase of this project a survey questionnaire was developed that could be used as a basic tool for the collection of data regarding livelihoods and vulnerabilities of Gambella's women and children. The rationale and methodology for this study are described in Section III: *Rationale and Methodology for this Study*.

Field research was completed in parts of the Gambella region's Alwero-Peno, Gilo, and Dimma Woredas, and in Gambella Woreda; these woredas are all seeing major human catastrophes in the making. The livelihoods and vulnerabilities section of the questionnaire was complemented by a section dedicated to the collection of data and personal testimonies that would enable a solid

assessment of protection problems. Questions were designed to facilitate a clear picture of who, what, where, when and how protection problems arose, and to record pieces of the personal stories of the people in need.

Section IV: *Unique Challenges of Conducting Research in the Gambella Region*—explores the dynamics involved in understanding and negotiating the many layers of complexity in logistics; communications; information collection, management and protection; security; personal health (physical and psychological); natural environment; and the many spaces of social, political, cultural, and psychological uniqueness that differ between the UNICEF team and the populations UNICEF is serving. All these factors combine with insurgency and low-intensity conflict to make the Gambella zone a volatile and complex research context.

More than 120 interviews were conducted under the most difficult circumstances and in some of the most inaccessible territory in sub-Saharan Africa. Interviews involved interpreters (Nuer, Anuak, Highlander) and interpreter trainings, and they averaged from one to three hours each. Issues of security for staff and protection of the interviewee were constant concerns.

Interviews were completed with women and men of the Nuer, Anuak, Majenger and Highlander ethnic groups. These interviews included impoverished and vulnerable populations in remote villages, gold miners, police, local Kebele leaders, midwives, teachers, nurses, elders, regional Woreda officials, health experts, western NGO expatriates, Ethiopian security officials, Gambella Regional administrators, and members of rebel groups.

Section V: Raw demographic information, including vulnerabilities and protection data, was collected for this study; it is hoped that this data will in future be available for statistical analyses.

## **2. Summary of Findings**

The women and children in Gambella Region are extremely vulnerable. With UNICEF asking questions about access to basic resources necessary for daily survival—potable water, sufficient firewood, movement to and from markets, sustainable incomes, access to education and medical care—the population uniformly responded that all aspects of their lives are directly and profoundly impacted by *problems of security and protection*.

Tangible assets (resources and stores) and intangible assets (claims and access) have been universally denied, repeatedly and devastatingly seized from women and children of all but one region (Godere) assessed. Civilians of all ethnic groups surveyed are living in fear; their ability to withstand shocks has been taxed or completely compromised.

Section VI: *Livelihoods and Vulnerabilities of Gambella's Women and Children*—discusses key finding on vulnerabilities and livelihoods which demonstrates that the deteriorating vulnerability



situation in Gambella in the last two years is primarily due to the protection problems. These protection problems have been caused by the heavy ENDF presence and their actions to target the civilian population often—but not always—in collaboration with Regional authorities, as well as the targeting of civilians by paramilitary rebel groups.

The organizations charged with responsibility for protecting, representing and improving the lives of their citizens are unfortunately doing just the opposite: their actions have devastated the population. The particular circumstances surrounding events and realities in the villages visited in this study are included in sections about the livelihoods and vulnerabilities of women and children in each village.

Section VII: *Overall Impact of the Security Situation on Vulnerability of the Population of Gambella Region*—offers a thorough analysis of findings revealing the nature and scale of protection and security issues in the areas visited. Interviews and testimonies by eyewitnesses, survivors and officials documented incontrovertible evidence that innocent women, children and men have been the victims of attacks by military forces and rebel forces. People have been targeted for extra-judicial killings, beatings and torture, sexual and gender-based violence, looting and burning of civilian property, and threats to commit any of these. The region is plagued by a comprehensive atmosphere of terror; civilians remain either because they have no choice or because the alternative is a life in exile and displacement, separated from their family and their community—reportedly no better in any case.

There are two detailed case studies in the latter part of the report focusing on particular areas of Gambella. They are meant as examples of the kinds of reports UNICEF received in the course of this study.

The Appendices (I-III) offer a more detailed discussion or assessment of the traditional Anuak and Nuer culture, cosmologies, belief systems and history. Included is further in-depth discussion of inter-ethnic and intra-tribal conflict, and a look at the critical environmental issues related to the Gambella region and the ongoing conflict.

### **3. Summary of Conclusions**

It is impossible to separate the problems of livelihood and vulnerability of Gambella's women and children from their problems of security. Protection problems have *caused* them to be exceedingly vulnerable. Any attempt by any organisation to address vulnerabilities that does not address the protection problems in Gambella will fail at best; at worst, such efforts may serve to entrench and enrich the duty bearers while further devastating the civilian women and children.

The agendas of armed factions in Gambella region are irrelevant when civilians are being continually victimised. Regardless of the political aims behind violence that has occurred—and

continues to occur—in the Gambella region, where civilians are the primary targets, these attacks are in violation of Ethiopian and international law.

This assessment has constructed a basic picture of conditions of life and death in the unknown Dimma Region of Gambella: this information—on the scale or nature of the threats to life and livelihood faced by women and children in the region, and about how these issues differ from other areas of Gambella—was not previously available.

Many of the people interviewed for this assessment are living and dying under a permanent and intense state of anxiety and fear—very real—that ENDF soldiers or armed rebels will return at any moment and again terrorize them. Peoples' capacity to feed, cloth, educate and care for themselves, and to move around freely in search of ways to do this, have been grossly interfered with and diminished and, in many cases, eliminated all together.

What is necessary is a comprehensive response by the international community, civil society, and local and Federal government to engage in broad reaching and inclusive strategies towards conflict resolution, peace-building, capacity-building, monitoring and reporting of ongoing violations, and access to effective justice and an end to impunity for the duty bearers.

Failing urgent action in Gambella region, UNICEF fears a further downward spiralling of violence and suffering heaped on the shoulders of the women and children of Gambella. Absent some comprehensive and decisive response, UNICEF programs and the programs of other humanitarian agencies will serve only as band-aids on the otherwise festering wounds of the region.

The deracination of indigenous people that is evident in rural areas of Gambella is extreme. It is very likely that Anuak (and possibly other indigenous minorities) culture will completely disappear in the not-so-distant future. Cultural survival, autonomy, rights of self-determination and self-governance are all legitimate issues for these indigenous groups, and these are all enshrined by international covenants and United Nations bodies—but all are meaningless in Gambella today.

The body of evidence documenting the detrimental effects of unregulated, profit-driven petroleum operations under circumstances in other African nations similar to those that exist in Gambella region is voluminous. It should be noted that the rise of a parallel economy—driven by the petroleum sector—alongside the total deracination of local populations in the Gambella region, as is occurring today, would further institutionalize existing inequalities.

This report about suffering, violence, hunger, hopelessness and other miseries, is not about the past, it is about the present: ENDF military have recently redeployed in large numbers throughout Gambella. UNICEF needs to immediately focus resources and attention to institute

the necessary emergency livelihoods intervention strategies needed to enable immediate survival of populations and to halt the ongoing disaster.

## **SECTION II: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT**

### **1. Introduction**

The Gambella People's National Regional State of Ethiopia (Gambella region) is a lowland (rift-valley) promontory territory in the southwest of the country bordering on south Sudan and Ethiopia's Oromiya and Southern People's, Nations and Nationalities Regional States (SNNPR) zones.

The Gambella region served as an important colonial trading outpost at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Arabs, Indians and Yemenis and other groups dominated trade. Coffee, skins and hides, and ivory were major commodities, and trading occurred between Arab and indigenous groups and encroaching western colonizers, with Gambella town growing to offer a limited foothold for colonial interests.

Historically ignored, the region was annexed to Ethiopia in 1954; it has a long and porous border with Sudan. Characterized climatically by a long dry season (December to June with temperatures reaching in excess of 50 degrees Celsius) and a long wet season (June to November) the region is extremely fertile. Although it can be described as "densely forested," due to the abundance of trees, the landscape is more aptly described as a shrub and thorn bush desert plain.

There are six ethnic groups that consider themselves to be indigenous to the Gambella region: Anuak (also called Anywaa), Nuer, Majenger, Opo, Surma and Komo. (Murle rebels have been reported in the Dimma region.) The Nuer and the Anuak are the largest groups in the region. The third-largest population group consists of people of Tigrayan, Oromo, Kambata, Amhara and other ethnicities, found throughout Ethiopia, who are loosely defined as "Highlanders." The indigenous nomadic Surma people—predominantly resident in the Southern People's (SNNPR) region—migrate in and out of Dimma Woreda, where the presence of armed Surma nomads has a significant impact on interethnic and political affairs.<sup>1</sup>

Gambella region has an estimated population of 393,495. This figure is based on vaccination statistics from completed rounds of polio and measles vaccination completed in Gambella during 2005 (UNICEF / Regional Health Bureau Gambella). The last official census was completed in 1994, but the population predictions based upon the result at this time neither take into account

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<sup>1</sup> A more complete introduction to the two main indigenous groups – the Nuer and the Anuak is available in Appendix.

the influx of refugee (around 50,000 at present), nor the incursion of some 20 – 30,000 Lou Nuer into Gambella from Southern Sudan. The population of the individual tribes in Gambella is frequently a subject of much discussion in the region – as population figures equate to power and thus are subject to manipulation. However, a reasonable assumption based on vaccination experience would suggest that the Nuer and Anuak are more or less equal in number (~ 100,000) followed by the settled Highlander community (~ 60,000), refugee populations (~ 50,000) and the less numerous Majenger, Surma, Komo and Opo.

## **2. Populations and Politics**

Gambella is one of nine administrative zones in Ethiopia, all of which are further divided into administrative units called Woredas. Until recently the Gambella zone was divided into nine Woredas: Akobo, Jikawo, Itang, Gambella, Abobo, Jor, Gog, Dimma and Godere.

However, administrative redistricting occurred in 2004-2005: the new administrative structure is comprised of six woredas and one “special” Woreda managed by the Federal government: Alwero-Peno, Gilo, Jikawo, Akobo, Dimma, Godere and Gambella (special). The Gambella region today has three Anuak Woredas (Alwero-Peno, Dimma and Gilo); two Nuer Woredas (Jikawo and Akobo); and one Majenger Woreda (Godere).

Woredas are further subdivided into towns, while the “Kebele” is the smallest administrative unit, comparable to a village or sub-sections of a larger town; Gambella town, for example, is subdivided into Kebeles 01, 02, 03, 04, 05.

Gambella’s urban centres include Gambella town, Pinyudo (also called Funyido), Dimma, Metti, Abobo, Matare and Kuergeng. Despite their existence as “administrative or commercial centres,” these towns remain underdeveloped. As an example, Gambella is the only Ethiopian regional capital with neither a functional water supply at any level nor an even reasonably steady supply of electricity. At each descending administrative level, the level of underdevelopment increases.

Zone capitals, such as Nyaneng, capital of the Nuer zone, have little or no functional basic services (schools, health centres, etc...), while government offices (zone offices, police stations, etc...) are based in local grass tukuls. Nyaneng is inaccessible by road for six months of the year, and access by boat (only available to aid agencies) involves an eight-hour boat ride followed by a five-hour walk in waist-deep swamps. Most Woreda capitals below the zone capital level exist under similar or worse conditions.

Refugee populations were estimated at between 150,000 and 350,000 in the 1980s, and large numbers of refugees returned to Sudan after the fall of the Derg (1991). The Gambella region has seen significant population flows over the past decade however, as insurgency and conflict flared up both inside and outside Ethiopia. As of November 2004, UNHCR estimated some 68,000 refugees in three camps in Gambella: 31,000 in Pinyudo; 19,000 in Dimma; and 18,000 in

Bonga, although the latest revalidation exercises will probably see total counts drop to less than 50,000 people.

The Nuer were favoured over the Anuak during the Derg era: Nuer dominated the local administration in Gambella until 1991. The armed struggle to overthrow the Derg regime manifested locally in Gambella zone with an alliance between Anuak insurgents, including the Gambella People's Liberation Movement (GPLM), the Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), and the Ethiopian Peoples Democratic Revolutionary Front (EPRDF), which seized power and controls the country today; the EPRDF was predominantly controlled by the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF).

The Anuaks fought alongside the EPRDF to overthrow the Derg, and political statements issued in recent years have delineated the extent of Anuak disaffection for a "liberation" government—the EPRDF—that betrayed them upon its ascension to power.

Some of the best land in the region was taken over for government farming schemes under the Derg. Highlander settlers previously employed as labourers occupied these lands after government farming schemes collapsed with the end of the Derg.

Following the May 2005 elections, the region has a recently appointed Anuak President, supported by a Nuer Vice-President. Other key posts in the regional government are distributed amongst the indigenous groups depending upon their relative population size.

### **3. Conflict and Insurgency in the Gambella Region**

The Gambella region has seen increasing violence and armed conflict since the downfall of the Derg in 1991. Faced with their perceptions of being increasingly pushed off their own land and marginalized by the political system, and having felt increasingly so after decades of open racism by federal authorities and other encroaching ethnic groups, Anuaks began to pursue their grievances by military means as early as 1992. Major military confrontations between the GPLF and EPRDF forces occurred as early as 1993.

The Anuak sovereignty movement sprung out of what the Anuak described as a slow but steady process of attrition against the Anuaks and the GPLF by the EPRDF military: isolated killings and jailing of Anuak farmers, students, educated professionals and other civilians. This process continued through the 1990's and apparently set the stage for tensions and hostilities that have occurred in the post-2000 timeframe.

The Gambella People's Democratic Congress (GPDC) party was organized in 1999 in opposition to the ruling EPRDF, primarily to challenge what the Anuaks claimed were consistent violations of human rights and ongoing dispossessions of Anuak lands. The GPDC immediately won a majority of seats in the government of Gambella.

The relationship between the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) and the Anuak minority is complicated by geographic, ethnic, historical and political factors. The SPLM/A is partially comprised of Anuaks.

On December 17, 2003—just prior to major outbreaks of political violence in Gambella region—the Ethiopian Minister of State for Federal Affairs, Gebrehab Barnabas, blamed recent violence on the OLF. “The conflict in Gambella town last weekend was triggered by members of the Oromo Liberation front (OLF),” he stated, in a statement reported by the international press, “supported by the Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF)...”

The Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) has reportedly infiltrated fighters into Ethiopia through Gambella in recent years, reportedly backed by the Eritrean Government; the OLF leadership is currently based in Asmara, the capital of Eritrea.

The Ethiopian Patriotic United Front (EPUF), a mostly Nuer, Sudan-based, insurgent group led by a former Derg official named Thuwath Pal Chay, has also been active in the region. Thuwath Pal Chay, a Nuer, was the top central government official in Gambella for several years prior to the overthrow of the Derg regime (1991). He claims to be fighting a “war of liberation” that seeks to overthrow the EPRDF government and return Ethiopia to socialism. The EPUF has engaged in sporadic fighting with ENDF (Ethiopian National Defence Forces) and has at times controlled villages along the Sudan border.

A prevalent historic phenomenon, immigration from Sudanese Nuers continues to be a major factor contributing to tensions and land struggles, and it has sparked armed inter-ethnic conflict in which the Anuaks have universally been the losers. War in Sudan (1980-2005) has also destabilized the Gambella region as members of Nuer, Dinka, Sudanese Anuak and other Sudanese ethnic groups fled war in Sudan by the tens of thousands in the 1980's and 1990's.

Some 20,000 ‘Lou’ Nuer from Sudan—relatively well armed and well-equipped—forcibly displaced Nuers from Nuer zones in Gambella in recent years, causing a domino effect, which in turn further displaced Anuaks from Anuak lands. Nuers in the Gambella Nuer zones have also continued to migrate eastward into Anuak areas by choice, to access fertile farm and grazing lands.

#### **4. Economy**

Ninety percent of the population of Gambella is rural and most of the people are thus subsistence farmers, selling some of their produce on local markets. The only major economies in the region appear to be the cultivation of coffee in Godere Woreda, the exploration for gold in Dimma Woreda and the remaining government farms (predominately cotton) in Alwero-Peno Woreda

In recent years, Petronas, Malaysia's state-owned petroleum company, has acquired exploration rights in Gambella, and China's Zhongyuan Petroleum Exploration Bureau (ZPEB) began seismic exploration activities in Gambella under a subcontract from Petronas. ZPEB is a subsidiary of the China National Petrochemical Corporation (Sinopec). Petronas has exclusive exploration rights within a 15,000 square kilometer concession that stretches across all of central and western Gambella. The extensive seismic exploration undertaken to date can be seen on the transect seismic map titled 2004-05 Gambella Progress Map (dated 20 April 2005); seismic activities criss-cross the Gambella zone beginning from the eastern boundary of the Gambella National Park, west to the Sudan border.

In 2005, Petronas purchased the Ethiopia Hotel in Gambella, the only significant transient lodging option in the town.

### **5. December 2003 Onwards**

An escalation in reprisal attacks between the Highlander settler population and the indigenous Anuak people (primarily caused by land rights issues as discussed above) in the region led to an explosion of violence between these two groups, with government forces siding with Highlanders, between December 2003 and approximately September 2004. Civilian populations of both groups have suffered the most significant casualties in conflict which has caused, amongst other things: (a) the death of thousands of people; (b) displacement of approximately 16,000 Anuaks to Pochalla, Sudan (c) and a major loss of basic social services throughout the region. The intensity of this conflict diminished slightly from around September 2004 onwards, but it continues today, with predominance in four of the seven Woredas of the Gambella state.

In a region where inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflict is common, this particular problem has assumed a proportion that is more significant than other regional conflicts. This is due to the scale of the problem, its inter-ethnic rather intra-ethnic nature (such as the Nuer-Nuer conflicts), and the involvement and responsibility of the Federal military. The shared identity of the Highlander settlers with many of the Federal forces has led to what appears to be an easier and more trusting relationship between the two groups than that which exists, for example, between Anuak people and the Highlander settlers or the Federal forces.

While there appears to be some reduction in intensity of the conflict, its continuation means that the consequences of the period between December 2003 and September 2004 are still being felt today: the region is a long way from recovering both physically and psychologically from that period. Structures damaged or looted in the conflict remain dysfunctional, while supplies and services remain without the necessary reprovisioning or rebuilding. Further, the fear with which each group views the other prevents, for example, the deployment of government staff to areas thought to be under the control of one ethnicity or another.

### **SECTION III: RATIONALE AND METHODOLOGY FOR THIS STUDY**

#### **1. Rationale**

The government's Youth Sports Culture and Labor and Social Affairs Office of Gambella had requested that UNICEF support them in the piloting of an initial one-year programme for 'Addressing Vulnerabilities in Gambella'. Part of the aim of this one-year programme was to effectively identify the most vulnerable people in the region, so that they could be assisted and supported in a full 'Addressing Vulnerabilities' project under the 2007-2001 UNICEF country programme.

At the same time, it became increasingly obvious as the presence of UNICEF in Gambella was being established that significant UNICEF programmes in the region were faltering. UNICEF's partners had expressed concerns that one of the reasons for this was the prevailing security situation in the region and, in terms of protection, its impact upon communities. Given that UNICEF's global child protection goals include ensuring the integrity of humanitarian assistance and that child rights are the basis of all UNICEF activities, it was deemed necessary to further investigate these concerns.

Thus, this study for the Gambella region aimed to:

- Investigate the most effective ways of planning, implementing and supporting sustainable interventions;
- Identify the most vulnerable groups and geographical areas where the above type of sustainable assistance should be targeted;
- Assess the impact of the ongoing conflicts on how people were living their lives and how assistance to them could be affected by this conflict;
- Verify expressed concerns from both governmental and non-governmental agencies that more significant breaches of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) than was normal were occurring, and that there were elevated levels of Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV).

#### **2. Development of Questionnaire**

Pursuit of this livelihoods and vulnerabilities assessment revolved around the premise that protection issues might be fundamental to other basic vulnerabilities central UNICEF's mandate and concerns. The project clearly dictated that individual surveys be undertaken, and testimonies be gathered, which would identify issues revolving around vulnerabilities and livelihoods of women and children. Hence the initial phase of this project revolved around the development of a survey questionnaire that could be used as a basic tool for the collection of meaningful data.

Issues of concern and inquiry included access to basic health, education, income generating opportunities, transport, water, food and firewood, and questions were designed which would



address these issues. The team also designed questions that would qualify and quantify the availability of, or access to, resources and assets that promote or enhance the livelihoods of the populations in need. Most important, all questions were designed to be open-ended, offering the interviewee the opportunity to respond in accordance with the perceptions and concerns that predominated in their daily lives.

The livelihoods and vulnerabilities sections of the questionnaire were complemented by a section dedicated to the collection of data and personal testimonies that would enable a solid assessment of protection problems. If protection was initially flagged as the leading concern in relation to access to water, for example, the specifics of the protection problem were explored in this subsequent protection section. Questions were designed to facilitate a clear picture of who, what, where, when and how protection problems arose—again, using the same example—in relation to the interviewee’s capacity to have unimpeded access to water.

The questionnaire was also designed to shield the source of information (interviewee) from potential threat or retaliation or any other repercussions that might arise due to their disclosure of potentially sensitive information. Ensuring the anonymity of the source, and cloaking the names and positions of any other individuals cited—duty bearers, victims, witnesses, relatives—was, and remains, a priority for which any compromise could be life-threatening. Of further importance was the collection of testimonies giving accurate and comprehensive information about individuals and events, information that could be collaborated or verified, and that would, inevitably, serve to underscore and validate the allegations and claims of the population.

Questions in the protections and security section also served to extract critical information from interviewees regarding duty bearers and the role they allegedly played in reported protection problems.

### **3. Geographical Selection**

This assessment set out to survey as many geographic areas and members of populations as possible. The team developed a plan that prioritised visits to geographical areas according to accessibility concerns (weather, ongoing conflict, restrictions on movement, military presence or absence, rebel or *shifita* activities), UNICEF resources and logistical concerns (e.g. available vehicles, boats, personnel), and other concerns relating to the populations more directly.

Dedicated interpreters were needed for surveying both genders from the Anuak, Nuer and Highlander community, and sometimes problems associated with access to interpretation were encountered. These also played a role in dictating geographical choices and timing of site visits. Interpreter trainings were given, and efforts were made to corroborate and validate reports by interviewees to the extent possible.

Initial forays into the field were designed to exercise caution and test the waters—evaluate and refine the questionnaire; engage in confidence-building activities; adjust to the environment, work methods, and daily needs of personnel—and to ensure the security of everyone involved. Hence the initial forays involved short day trips close to Gambella town. The team’s work in Dimma Woreda, on the other hand, was timed to coincide with the UNICEF polio vaccination campaign, enabling the teams to capitalise on limited resources (personnel, vehicles), and to minimise security by focusing resources in one area at a time.

Efforts from the start were made to ensure that populations of all major ethnic groups (Majengers, Anuaks, Nuers, Highlanders) would be equally well sampled and their interests and concerns equitably represented.

Following the 30 October 2005 attacks by Anuak rebels against government targets in Gambella town, the killings by rebels of several civilian families of Highlanders in Abobo, and the escalation of hostilities and related security concerns throughout the region, the options for performing basic research outside of Gambella town were reduced to almost zero. Within Gambella town itself, the heightened climate of insecurity translated to a heightened sense of fear: interviews, movement, and exchanges of information were greatly hampered. The repercussions of the recent violence have been felt in all ethnic groups in Gambella.

Due to security and logistical constraints faced during the study, as described above, this study concluded with a heavy emphasis on the vulnerabilities of the Anuak population of Gambella, simply because these areas were surveyed prior to the surge in violence which restricted movement thereafter. Much study of the population of other areas of Gambella remains to be done; the Nuer Woredas of Jikawo and Akobo require focused attention, as does the Jor region due to reports of significant military and petroleum activities, and the Jor area’s relative inaccessibility and historical inattention.

In spite of these constraints, great efforts were made to conduct interviews with as wide ranging a population as was possible in each area visited. The findings are thus strictly limited to the places visited during the study, and these are listed throughout the report.

#### **4. Selection of Interviewee Populations**

In each location visited, the team conducted interviews with persons in the community who (a) have positions of respect among the community; (b) are in situations which are likely to expose them to information regarding their communities beyond their own households and neighbours; (c) have been present in those locations for a long enough time period to have a perspective on the changes in vulnerabilities over time; and/or (d) who may be in a position to have represented the community under certain circumstances. In addition, there was a heavy emphasis on interviewing women (using female interpreters as much as possible, to ensure the greatest level of comfort and openness in the interviewing context). Thus, those interviewed include, for

example, teachers, nurses, male and female Kebele leaders, midwives, male and female police officers, Kebele secretaries and chairpersons, and elders. Gathering information from these kinds of persons in the communities visited helped ensure that the nature and magnitude of problems could be adequately assessed.

## **SECTION IV:** **UNIQUE CHALLENGES OF CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GAMBELLA REGION**

The members of this team have worked all over Africa, under the most difficult conditions, yet none would disagree that the task of performing even the most basic but substantive research in the Gambella region presents a daunting challenge. The dynamics involved require the negotiation of layers of complexity in logistics; communications; information collection, management and protection; security; personal health (physical and psychological); natural environment; and the many spaces of social, political, cultural, and psychological customs and traditions that differ between UNICEF staff and the populations UNICEF serves. All these factors combine with insurgency and low-intensity conflict to make the Gambella zone a volatile and complex research context.

### **1. Lack of Infrastructure**

The Gambella region has often been described as “a backwater of Ethiopia” due to its isolation and lack of development. An apt testament to the isolation and inaccessibility of the region is the complete absence of any available maps that reveal anything more than the most rudimentary boundaries and labels.

Like maps of the region, infrastructure in the Gambella zone is either wholly absent or rudimentary. While a recent report noted that road infrastructure “has always been in a state of collapse,” the opposite appears to be true: road infrastructure in Gambella has seen only marginal development at best.

Many areas are completely inaccessible during the rainy season as vast tracts of Gambella’s lowest land become completely submerged (these are the seasonal wetland swamps that draw flocks of migratory waterfowl). Deep ravines and riverbeds are prohibitive or barely navigable by 4x4 vehicles on the roughest of tracks that have never been anything more than rough tracks; winches are standard, imperative accessories.

Equally unmanageable, the rain turns compact clays and rich topsoils into slippery mud where vehicles spin, slip and slide even on flat terrain. Public transport is unreliable or non-existent and, where it does exist, vehicles appear to be in dangerous disrepair, infrequent and unreliable at best.

Well over half of Gambella's population becomes completely inaccessible during the rainy season, except by boat, and even boats do not facilitate access to some areas. The rivers swell and overflow their banks, and the logistics of excursions by river—e.g. maintaining fuel supply alone—are substantial.

But for the UN/ARRA compounds sited in some towns, all major population centres, including Gambella, Pinyudo, Abobo, Metti and Dimma towns, lack even the most basic sanitation, running water and electricity (Gambella has only sporadic electricity). Foodstuffs are equally limited, hygiene a major concern, and in some places there is almost nothing at all to be bought or scrounged for food.

Logistical issues are compounded by personal hygiene and health concerns. Malaria, staff and bacterial infections, upper respiratory infections, dysentery and other unexpected threats all can contribute to reduce capacity and impact work performance.

## **2. Access to Interviewee Populations**

The constraints on research also hinged on availability and access to human populations and ethnic groups within the diverse regions of Gambella, since direct interviews with Gambella's population groups provided the predominant sources of information from which to assess vulnerabilities and livelihoods. However, information collection—access, interviews, visual assessments—are greatly hindered at present due to the highly mobile and transient existence of large numbers of people of all sub-groups.

Towns appear to be drawing people from rural areas due to the constant and lasting insecurity caused by the various armed military and/or para-military forces currently—or potentially—operating in the region. These include federal troops (ENDF); federal and regional police; GPLF rebels; OLF rebels; SPLA in border areas; armed indigenous groups (Nuer, Surma), and other armed *shifita* pursuing common criminal activities.

Remote villages have been depopulated to varying degrees by conflict, or the threat of conflict; some have seen a return of inhabitants, others remain mostly abandoned. Refugees from Sudan (of several ethnicities) float around; some Anuak and Nuer peoples are highly transient across the porous international border. Many civilians remain in a state of constant flux and homelessness, moving back and forth in the no man's land between local villages—where their mere appearance makes them highly suspect, or a direct threat to residents, no matter their affiliations or independence from armed factions—and the refugee camp at Pochalla, Sudan.

Nuers and Anuaks rely on (steadily disintegrating) social networks and familial ties to support them, and many have been forcibly displaced, or have relocated by choice or necessity, and settled temporarily in villages that are unfamiliar or distant from their homes. Husbands and brothers have abandoned families, under threat of political persecution, and their whereabouts is

sometimes unknown to wives, sisters and mothers. Others know the whereabouts of their kin, but remain separated due to the breakdown in communal structures and the effects of the ongoing conflicts. Some children whose parents have been exiled, imprisoned, disappeared, killed or died have been passed from family to family—usually within extended families—as caretakers have been lost due to recent violence or arrests. Other families have been divided by economic necessity as members search for some or any means to provide even the most basic subsistence for themselves or their families.

Highlander populations in the Gambella zones are also highly transient and mobile. The gold-mining camps in Dimma Woreda offer the most striking example, as short-term financial gain provides sufficient incentive to endure some of the most hostile and difficult conditions, in isolation, without families. Highlanders have also migrated to Gambella town seeking greater economic opportunity than they can find outside the dangerous region. Many members of all groups now resident in Gambella region have economic, social or political ties to individuals outside the region, the country, or the continent.

Access to populations revolves around more than locating their whereabouts, and access to populations does not revolve around physical proximity alone. Some individuals and groups will exclude researchers, and may hide or run from them—physically or emotionally—while others will seek to manipulate researchers because of beliefs or perceptions of personal gain, or for some greater political aim.

The difficulty of working in the Gambella region is compounded by the complexity of deciphering individual or group-identity agendas, and the need, for example, for recognising and sifting through intentional deceptions. Cultural and personal biases can easily compound the tripartite relationship of interviewer-interpretor-interviewee. Stereotypes dictating fundamental beliefs can be deeply rooted in the unconscious. Circumnavigating these minefields of subjectivity and bias—which in the Gambella region can prove extreme—offered yet another challenge to the research of this team.

These various factors—immigration, migration, internal displacement, refugee flows, transience, physical and emotional availability, etc.—all contribute to creating a difficult and complex puzzle, or layer of puzzles, that inhibit the extraction and assimilation of demographic data and personal testimonies that will be accurate, concise, comprehensive and meaningful. Indeed, given the volatility of a region where many people are daily wondering where they should go, how soon, and how they will get there, what was true yesterday may already have slipped into oblivion.

### **3. Access to Interviewees: Language Barriers, Cultural Barriers, Confidence Building**

Conducting interviews with any population coming from dramatically different cultural, customary, religious, and sociological experiences from those conducting the interviews always

poses unique challenges. In particular, these interviews are most often conducted through an interpreter, which inevitably places an obstacle between the interviewer and interviewee. It is critical to attempt to bridge these gaps to the extent feasible, in order to build confidence in the interviewee, and in order to allow the interviewee to thus feel sufficiently safe to be certain that you will respect her/his wishes throughout the interview process.

This confidence building and gap-bridging process has been at the core of every interview conducted by the team. Without taking such efforts, the potential risks are great: (a) the trust of the interviewee might be violated; (b) the informed consent of the interviewee might not be obtained; (c) the interviewee—in particular those who have recently experienced traumatic events—could be retraumatized in the process of the interview. Of course, the obvious result of any of these is the denial of information to the researcher.

The team thus spent significant amounts of time prior to each interview with each interviewee, explaining the study and its goals, explaining why we chose to interview her/him, describing what we hope will result from the information obtained, ensuring that they understand that the interview is confidential (and what that means) and that they are fully free to agree to speak or not, and to answer or not answer any questions put to them. This confidence-building exercise is a core component of any such study, and it ensures the integrity of the final results obtained by the team.

Anyone who refused to speak (very few) were of course not interviewed; some who were interviewed refused to answer particular questions. For the most part, most of those approached were appreciative that someone was taking an interest in learning about their lives, and hence they spoke openly, willingly, and in the hope that their experiences might be used to improve the lives of their children.

#### **4. Climate of Insecurity**

Once the confidence of the interviewee was secured and their consent obtained, one of the first things they shared with us was that their daily lives are filled with insecurity. Simply and directly put, the civilian population of Gambella of all ethnicities lives with a constant feeling of insecurity.

The climate of insecurity affects the population, and thus it also affected the team. As explained in the Methodology section above, the study was intended to document the livelihoods and vulnerabilities of the civilian population of the Gambella region, in particular focusing on the women and children. However, in almost all cases, when the issues of daily life (access to water, firewood, education, medical care, etc.) were raised with interviewees, they responded immediately with protection and security concerns as the main factor contributing to their vulnerability. This is a clear indication that the level of security risk in Gambella region continues to be a threat; in fact, it was only due to the (temporary) military withdrawal from the

villages visited by the team that UNICEF was able to gain access to the populations and that members of populations felt comfortable to speak about their protection concerns. It should be noted however that some people also spoke out of total desperation—they suggested they have nothing to fear, nothing more to lose.

Due to the constantly changing security situation in Gambella, the team was somewhat constrained in its access. More regions would have been covered if not for the problems of security.

### **5. Climate of Fear**

Tensions in the Gambella region have escalated significantly due to attacks and retaliatory attacks by military and rebel groups in the past five years. Inter-ethnic (Nuer-Anuak, Anuak-Highlander) and intra-ethnic (Nuer-Nuer) conflicts have contributed to instability and a climate of fear. In the past few years, people's trust in their own ethnic and communal institutions has disintegrated. In post-December 2003 Gambella, financial incentive has become increasingly used as a tool to coerce people into buying and selling information, and this has inculcated deep distrust within communities and ethnic groups.

The climate of fear and terror affects all levels of society in Gambella today, and it is directly impacting the capacity of the government to perform normal tasks, fulfil normal obligations and provide even basic services. The climate of terror translates to behaviour and survival strategy modifications by civilians of every ethnic group, particularly those in rural areas who have been, and remain, subject to attacks, retaliations, massacres, and/or lootings from all sides.

Performing this livelihoods and vulnerabilities assessment amidst the climate of terror that exists in the region means that the team has had to surmount major hurdles revolving around distrust, apathy, and the intentional provision of disinformation. People have likely sought to forget what they can, remain silent, or explain events in ways that assign some meaning to an otherwise meaningless existence, and what people might wish to believe, or want others to believe, might not always correspond to what actually happened. Extensive time has been devoted to overcome these obstacles.

Security for the team, for interpreters, and for interviewees is another major consideration. Operating in a climate of violence and fear means that anyone at any time might decide that their interests are threatened by the research activities under way. All these factors represent barriers to operating successfully amidst a complex emergency engulfed in ongoing violence.

## **SECTION V: STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF EVIDENCE OBTAINED**

The raw demographic data—including extensive vulnerability and protection data—collected in the context of this study has not yet been comprehensively analyzed or represented in statistical analytical form. For further information about statistical data please contact UNICEF.

## **SECTION VI: LIVELIHOODS & VULNERABILITIES: WOMEN & CHILDREN**

The civilian population of Gambella region in the areas visited in this study are profoundly vulnerable, due to countless factors which have combined to create a devastating—and still deteriorating—situation.

### **1. Food Security & Income Generation**

With a population that is 90% rural, the main source of income in the region is farming. Even though no formal evidence exists, officials at the Bureau of Agriculture in Gambella believe that the situation of farmers and food availability in the region is deteriorating. Population has increased, but farming techniques have not changed and the land that is used is believed to be overused. The problem is exacerbated by insecurity, as government schemes to address farming issues—such as the National Agricultural Extension Package—do not reach most places in Gambella.

It is clear that the loss of Anuak men, the displacement of Anuak males from their traditional lands, and the conflict that has centred around Anuak regions has increased the vulnerability of these people and worsened the problems outlined above. Farming cycles have been disrupted, plantings missed, and, in some cases, crops have been destroyed or stolen.

In July 2005 results of an exhaustive nutritional survey in the Anuak part of the Funyido refugee camp revealed a rate of global acute malnutrition in excess of 26%, with 7% severe acute malnutrition—by far the highest of any refugee camp in the region. Given that many of the people in the camp are in fact internally displaced Anuaks who have chosen to use the camp as a coping mechanism (in reality perhaps two-thirds of the 12,000 people registered in the Anuak camp are IDPs today), these figures give a clear indication of the acute vulnerability caused by food insecurity of the Anuak people.

The protection problems and restrictions on freedom of movement, for example, also contribute to a loss of capacity in accessing fish as a source of protein and basic sustenance. Villagers complain about not being able to move along rivers or between river and village, and, like farming, fishing is a livelihood opportunity that is greatly compromised.



Outside the agricultural sector there are no functioning cottage industries in Gambella region, with the exception of Dimma Woreda, where gold prospecting attracts people from all over Ethiopia. The main employer in the Gambella region is the government.

The biggest potential employer in the region could be the petroleum industry in the future. However, to date, its impact has been extremely limited and overall it has contributed neither to harmony amongst the different ethnic groups by its employment policies nor to significant job creation. The employment policies of the oil companies are unknown, though most of the land under oil prospectation is controlled by Nuers (although most of it originally was Anuak); thus the more menial petrol jobs are taken by the Nuer. Educated Highlanders take the most lucrative jobs in qualified positions. International expatriates also work in the petroleum sector in Gambella.

## **2. Education**

Assessing the state of education in Gambella and its impact upon the vulnerabilities and livelihoods of the people is extremely difficult, mainly because there is no firm base of solid statistical data for the region.

The latest information from the central government implies that that the Gross Enrollment Rate in the region is 106.6% (137.9% of expected boys going to school and 73.2% of expected girls going to school). At the regional level, the latest statistics from the Regional Education Office suggest a Gross Enrollment Rate of 124.6% (144% of expected boys going to school and 99% of expected girls going to school).

Similarly, in theory there are 161 Primary schools, 6 secondary schools, 2 preparatory schools and 1 Technical Vocational college in the Gambella region.

The reality, however, is somewhat different. The number of functional schools is far less than the number given above and all schools suffer from a dearth of equipment, teachers and learning materials. The latest Net Enrollment Figures (1997 EFY) in the region are 34% of boys and 25.2% of girls at school. Even this could be an exaggeration and does not show the discrepancies between the main towns and safer Woredas of the region and those suffering high insecurity. Dimma Woreda, for example, by UNICEF calculations, probably has just 8% of boys and 4% of girls of school age going to school. The dropout rate at Grade 1 (EC 1997) is said to be 36.7% whilst the average primary dropout for girls is 48.3%.

Equally significant is the quality of education that is being offered in the schools. Inherent problems of working in the climatic conditions of a region like Gambella mean that even at the end of November 2005 over 50% of the schools of the region remain closed due to flooding. Most will re-open in December and the remainder in January 2006. The school year will then finish in June 2006 when the rains start again. Even when the schools are open they are uniquely open in the mornings from 08:15 – 12:15 due to the intense heat of the region (temperatures

reaching greater than 50 degrees Celsius in the months of March, April and May). Effectively, this means that children are spending well under half the time that they should in school.

### **3. Effects of Famine**

At a more individual level, the example below, from the recent Education Joint Review Mission in Gambella (November 2005), highlights the results of poor supervision and motivation of the staff in the region.

**An example of the sluggish start to the school year:**

In one primary school visited there were theoretically 400 students enrolled but this proved impossible to verify. It was not yet 12:00 noon but only a handful of students were sitting aimlessly around. No classes were in session. Out of 19 teachers only two were present; the Director was absent. Teachers were keen to receive support for the teaching learning process (supervision) but did not receive this on a regular basis.

More positively, the input from NGOs (HOPE, The Catholic Mission, etc...) are providing for a limited number of quality educational establishments in Gambella town.

Even when it is available and can be physically accessed, education is also hampered by the relatively high costs. In a region where the people are as poor as they are in Gambella, actually paying the costs of providing school materials and uniforms to children to go to school is a serious financial concern for families, and an impossible prospect for the majority. This depth of poverty also means that families are unwilling to send their children to school if children can support the "home". The additional nomadic nature of some of the indigenous groups in the region, and the internal displacement of perhaps one third of the population due to conflict, has additionally hampered children getting into school.

Many of the areas visited in the context of this study have no schools, while others have school buildings but no tools for teaching. Many of the teachers who once staffed the schools have left their home villages due to insecurity. In some places the ENDF have occupied the school facility, and at times they have destroyed desks and chairs, and burned books. In villages where there is no school, parents are reluctant or unwilling to send their children to the nearest school in other villages, due to insecurity. Even where security permits, lack of income prohibits families from sending their children off to distant schools.

In places where schools exist, in most cases they only reach up to grade 6 or grade 8; for secondary schooling, the children have to go to Gambella town. Many rural families cannot afford to send their children to school in Gambella town, and this contributes to dramatic under-education in the region.

Security is a primary factor aggravating an already poor situation regarding access to education.

## **4. Health Care**

In theory, Gambella should have greater than 100% potential health coverage over the complete region. In reality, health care coverage is extremely poor everywhere. This can be demonstrated through a variety of ways:

### *4.1 Latest Routine Vaccination/Ante-natal & Post-natal care statistics (Nov. 2005)*

- Pregnant women who have attended at least one ante-natal care session: 9.4%
- People using family planning facilities: 0.06%
- Women who have accessed post natal care: 0.91%
- Children vaccinated BCG: 9.7%
- Children vaccinated DPT3: 7.27%
- Children vaccinated Measles: 5.94%
- Women vaccinated TT: 0.81%

### *4.2 Available Staff*

Excluding Gambella regional Hospital, the total number of staff deployed in health centres in the region is 101 people. Considering that 16 of these work in Itang Health Centre (MSF supported) and 34 in the Godere woreda (greater security and, relatively speaking, well developed in comparison to the other woredas), this leaves just 51 staff working over the five other woredas. Akobo woreda, for example, has just four health staff for the entire woreda (including the woreda health officer).

In theory for the complete region there are four doctors. In practice never more than two are actually present in the region. They are junior doctors working in the hospital. Prior to December 2003 there were 12 medical doctors in the region.

### *4.3 Functioning Facilities*

There are 21 functioning clinics, one hospital and seven functioning health centres. They, like the staff, tend to be centred in the more peaceful areas, or in one or two of the larger towns. At one extreme eight of the 29 facilities are in Godere woreda; at the other extreme there is only one functional clinic in Akobo woreda, and one functional clinic and one functional health centre in Jekew woreda. As a comparison, prior to 2003 there were a total of 11 functional health facilities in Jekew woreda.

One of the results of the above is that access to health care—in an area where other infrastructure problems (education, water, transport, etc...) exacerbate health problems—is even poorer than the already poor national coverage around the country. For many, in a region where perhaps one-

third of the population are internally displaced, access is further reduced by the prohibitive cost of health care and the use of, or faith in, traditional medicine in the region.

The final cost of this greatly diminished access to health care is in the reporting of the health situation of the population of the region. Morbidity / mortality statistics may be able to report—in the main—trends of disease patterns in the region, but they are unable to give a true idea of the overall burden of disease upon the people of Gambella.

This study confirmed that access to medical care continues to be a serious problem in Gambella region. The vast majority of the populations interviewed had either no access to medical care or very limited access under very rare circumstances. Villages that had health clinics in them three years ago now often have only shell buildings, with no staff and no equipment or medication. This is in great part due to the security situation, as will be discussed in Section VII, where in many locations the ENDF has taken over, looted, and/or destroyed the clinic. In other locations due to insecurity, medical staff has fled the village. In villages where there is a clinic, and it is staffed, populations interviewed reported a lack of financial ability to pay for medical services, and some reported preferential treatment of some patients over others, based on ethnicity.

In still other villages, there is no medical care available. In these locations, insecurity prohibits people from travelling along the roads to reach the nearest clinic, where even if they could obtain access, the clinic will likely be unstaffed or unable to treat the patient.<sup>2</sup>

## **5. HIV - AIDS**

There is no effective testing of HIV-AIDS in the region. The only place that can test people is the central hospital in Gambella where people are tested on a voluntary basis. Of 250 people so tested last year, 51 of them were HIV +. This gives a prevalence rate of just over 20% amongst

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<sup>2</sup> In one village (unnamed to protect the interviewee) the one medical practitioner (there is only one) complained of being caught between political and military objectives of the soldiers and the “rebels”—though the individual would not indicate who he believed the rebels to be. Soldiers have threatened him, and police have come to arrest him, but because he maintains a “neutral” position and serves the soldiers and the people he is generally protected. The rebels accuse him of working with the government, but he claims he is trying to serve the people. However, ENDF set up a semi-permanent camp near the village and placed 500 soldiers in it in October 2004. The ENDF monopolized the clinic, he alleged, and he eventually but reluctantly admitted that his campaign on guinea worm eradication was a failure because local people were afraid to come due to the military. He counted 360 cases of malaria in which soldiers who came to him for treatment represented half. The soldiers left in August 2005, though patrols in the area continued out of bases, in a larger local town, that remained functional throughout the rainy season.

At the time of the visit the health clinic was little more than a shell, on the verge of being abandoned, overrun with rats and filth. What medicine there is has been provided by the ICRC, Ida and government. The clinic was closed for two months from around late August to mid-October, and it was pillaged by soldiers in the absence of the health practitioner, who left when the ENDF camp closed in August, he said, because he was not protected from the “rebels.”

those tested. Just how far this proxy indicator can be interpreted to give an idea of the overall prevalence in the region is not clear. However, all the factors that a region needs to suggest a higher than normal prevalence rate are in place:

- Wife inheritance;
- Child marriage;
- Polygamy (up to five wives occurs amongst Anuaks and Nuers);
- High military presence (estimated between 50,000 – 80,000 men);
- Oil workers in the region;
- High rates of prostitution involving both women and young girls;
- A significantly higher than normal level of sexual and gender based violence;
- Conflict;
- Poor access to health and other basic education.

High HIV-AIDS prevalence rates concomitant with female genital cutting are also likely in the region; FGC occurs solely among the Highlanders however.<sup>3</sup>

Both the treatment and the care of HIV–AIDS victims in the region have serious shortcomings. Again, in theory, some 50 people are meant to be under the treatment of ARVs supervised by the central hospital in Gambella. In reality only 23 people are being treated and there are fairly frequent breaks in the supply pipeline of the drugs, and the temperature sensitive drugs are stored in buildings with no fans or air conditioning; again, this is a region that rarely sees a day in the wet season below 35 degrees Celsius and in the dry season below 45 degrees Celsius.

## **6. Rural Water Supply and Sanitation**

Access to water during 2005 remained a core daily challenge for the communities visited; many places have not had any pumps installed. In places where pumps were installed by the government the water must be paid for, and most of the residents cannot afford to pay; in places where pumps have been installed by NGOs, there is free access.

However, the military presence which has been pervasive in so many of the areas assessed during the study has impacted access to water for the populations regardless of the presence or lack of pumps, and in many areas of Gambella this forms the greatest obstacle to access to clean water. In the areas where the military presence has decreased in the past few months, access to water has improved greatly since the departure of the soldiers.

In theory, one in three people in Gambella should have access to a safe water supply, in reality, over half of the water schemes are not functional and effective access to a safe water supply

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<sup>3</sup> The prevalence of Female Genital Cutting (FGC) in Sub-Saharan Africa is believed to continue to hover above 80, often closer to 98%; FGC occurs under unsanitary conditions, often with septic instruments or primitive (septic) tools used repeatedly without sterilization. See < [www.stopexcision.net](http://www.stopexcision.net) >.

drops to between one person in seven and one person in eight. Even in Gambella town—the regional capital—there is no effective water supply and indeed the situation in the town has worsened since 2003. The result of poor access to safe water is that the overwhelming majority of the population of all ethnicities use unprotected water supplies: predominately streams and stagnant pools in the wet season (frequently shared with animals) and the main rivers of the region during the dry season.

The water situation is worse within the Anuak zones: the inability of government contractors to work in this area and the collapse of the old woreda structures means that there has been globally no effective inputs in the water and sanitation domain into the area since at least 2002. One result of this is that indigenous cases of Guinea worm, virtually eradicated from the region and the country prior to the conflict, have now risen dramatically in the Anuak zone.

Contributing perhaps most significantly to the water problems is the inability to effectively complete the software components of the water and sanitation programmes. Software components such as sensitisation, and the setting up of water point, sanitation and hygiene committees, require strong field input and support to ensure both their initial success and their viability. This has been impossible in Gambella in recent years, and was never well done to begin with. As an example, in Matare, the woreda capital of Akobo, *there is not a single public or private toilet in the town.*

The civilian population of Gambella region is vulnerable due to many development and poverty factors; nonetheless, this study has determined unquestionably that the deteriorating situation in Gambella regarding the vulnerability of the population in the past two years is primarily due to the protection problems caused by the heavy ENDF presence and their targeting the civilian population, often (but not always) in collaboration with Regional authorities (including Regional Council and Police).

Thus, the organizations charged with the responsibility for protecting, representing, and improving the lives of their citizens are unfortunately doing just the opposite: their actions have devastated the population.

## **7. Livelihoods & Vulnerabilities of Women & Children**

### **7.1 Ilea Village**

All aspects of the livelihoods and vulnerabilities of the population in Ilea in the past year have been affected by the ENDF presence.<sup>4</sup> The military presence in Ilea was constant and significant inside the village until the middle of the rainy season 2005 (~ August), when most of the soldiers pulled out from the majority of their posts and camps throughout Gambella region.

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<sup>4</sup> See Section VIII: Case Study [1]: Opinya/Penyao.

The population of Ilea fled during the violence of December 2003/January 2004; most have not returned, and those who have are predominantly women, children and elderly. Women in Ilea have no source of income other than brewing and selling local alcohol (local brew made from grain) to the local men in the village and, when the military is present, to the soldiers.

The movement of the population of Ilea has been severely restricted by the military presence, in all respects. During the military presence, people did not travel out of the village to go to market.<sup>5</sup> They did not dare to travel alone outside the village into the bush to collect firewood; when women go for firewood they go in groups, and even then they remained terrified of encountering soldiers.

There is a water pump in the centre of Ilea village that was often entirely inaccessible by the civilian population during the military presence in the village because the ENDF occupied the pump and routinely confiscated the water containers of women who dared to try to collect pump water. Even collecting water at the river held a risk during the presence of the military, and the women and girls went to collect this water, and to do laundry and wash, only in groups; yet still, many have been subjected to threats, harassment, and in some cases by direct sexual attacks by ENDF at the river.

People from the village of Ilea complained of the absence of a school, and some parents said their children could not go to school because of money. People complained of malaria, headaches, persistent coughing, infections, coughing up blood, and a lack of medicine. Infant mortality is a serious problem.

The already vulnerable population of Ilea has been rendered drastically more vulnerable due to the military presence, and this situation has reportedly been true throughout the entirety of the military occupation. Only recently, due to the military pull out of Ilea, has the population become more mobile, regained access to resources such as firewood and water, and reclaimed their freedom of movement. Yet the residents of Ilea, when visited by UNICEF for this study, were living in extreme fear of the ENDF's pending return to their village.

## **7.2 Itang Town**<sup>6</sup>

The population in Itang reported that water pumps in town had been installed by the government, and thus one must pay for water from the pumps. However, it was reported that the pumps rely

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<sup>5</sup> The military pulled out of Ilea and most other areas visited in approximately July 2005; however, they redeployed at the end of November 2005.

<sup>6</sup> The assessment team made one visit to Itang by boat prior to the escalation of tensions after October 30, 2005. The area reportedly remains an outpost of chronic instability, with some history of inter-ethnic conflict between Nuers and Anuaks. The situation demands further attention, as the military set up camp in Itang proper and has remained there since late 2003 or early 2004.

on petrol to operate and, given the isolation and inaccessibility to Itang, they often run short of fuel and cease to operate altogether for extended periods of time, forcing people to rely on the Baro River.

Most of the Anuak population gets water from the river, which they believe to be the source of many illnesses in Itang. Those interviewed reported that they purchase firewood from the Nuers rather than collecting it themselves, if they can afford it. The reason for this appears to be an ongoing sense of insecurity (many Nuers are allowed to carry weapons). According to several interviewees, the military presence has been less significant in Itang in 2005.

Since the crisis of December 2003, the population reported, taxes have not been paid to (collected by) the government.

Interviewees reported that they have access to proper and non-discriminatory medical care in Itang due to the presence of the MSF clinic. It was also reported, however, that midwives in Itang had previously received formal training from the Health Bureau, but that they received no follow up after that training and no ongoing support. Thus, they apparently work without any equipment or gloves, and their work is not as effective as it could otherwise be.<sup>7</sup>

### **7.3 Opinya/Penyao Village**

Penyao is a small village on the Baro River approximately halfway between Gambella town and Itang town: it is a small village and 100% Anuak.<sup>8</sup> The village is bounded by the river on one end, the Itang road on the other. There is no medical clinic in Penyao and no market, and access from Penyao to other places was dramatically limited by the heavy military presence. The population is afraid to collect firewood for fear of attack by the soldiers, and they do not move about within the village after dark for the same reason.

People reported that there was no medicine in the clinic and the health worker is always absent. Soldiers had turned the clinic into a camp at one point. Both school and clinic were reportedly looted, property destroyed, on multiple occasions, by ENDF. Some sickness—malaria, coughing, fever, diarrhoea, headaches and infections (eyes, leg, testicles)—was reported by most every interviewee for themselves or their children. Access to the “toilet”—the bush—has been restricted due to fear of soldiers.

According to a local teacher, the school was occupied by soldiers and turned into a military camp in early 2004. People complained that their children are not in school, that they cannot afford school, that there is no school. One girl said she had been travelling ten minutes upriver to a school but could no longer afford to do so. A teacher reported that the ENDF broke into the

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<sup>7</sup> Itang, Record # M-5: 13 October 2005.

<sup>8</sup> See Section VIII: Case Study [1]: Opinya/Pinyao.



school again (villagers had made an effort to revitalize it) in July 2005. The teacher ended his comments asking: “Why are they trying to make the lives of children hard?”<sup>9</sup>

#### **7.4 Abobo Town**

The Anuak population of Abobo reported that access to water during the military presence is seriously hampered, and that means that the already insufficient number of pumps that exist in Abobo were often inaccessible to the population because of ENDF.

The population reported being terrified of their security to such an extent that they are afraid to move about even during the day, and that this has been the case throughout 2005. In Abobo, the military presence decreased around August 2005; however, the ENDF reportedly remain in town in smaller numbers.

The study revealed that the security threats experienced by the population in the context of their access to resources have been caused by a combination of military, regional police, and regional governmental officials: the population, in particular the Anuak civilian population, live in fear of mistreatment at the hands of the military, often supported by the local police and government.

Their access to firewood is greatly hindered for this reason, as they dare not venture into the bush, and they never move about at night due to constant fear of attack.

The study revealed some allegations of blocked access to medical care in 2005 for Anuaks in Abobo. There is reportedly one non-Ethiopian doctor who works in the medical clinic in Abobo; the rest of the staff of the clinic are Highlanders. Anuaks reported that when the foreign doctor is not present they are often denied medical care by the Highlander staff of the clinic. Several interviewees stated that they had been turned away from the clinic—in the absence of the foreign doctor—in one case, the patient was bleeding profusely from the side of her head and was told there was nothing they can do for her; she was sent home bleeding.<sup>10</sup> Interviewees reported chest pains, coughing, coughing blood, and no money to do anything about these.

The Anuak population reported that when the military presence in Abobo is heavy they do not have access to the flour-grinding mill due to insecurity along the road. They also reported that even with the reduced military threat (August to November 2005), they are required to bring a letter from the authorities for permission to access the mill.

#### **7.5 Pochalla Village (Ethiopia)**

Prior to October 2005, there was a military camp inside Pochalla village. The military presence affected all aspects of the lives of the Anuak civilian residents of Pochalla. The soldiers block the

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<sup>9</sup> Record # K-35: 25 October 2005.

<sup>10</sup> Record # M-9: 14 October 2005.

water pump preventing people from collecting water. They threaten, harass, intimidate and frequently mistreat the population. The population is terrified, afraid to move about, to collect firewood or travel to other villages for market—a village of people hiding in their homes after dark. Said one resident: “Here there is a problem with the latrine: if you go to the bush to latrine at night they catch you and beat you.”<sup>11</sup>

There is no school in Pochalla village, and there was only a shell of a medical clinic, unstaffed and unequipped, that was completely looted by the military. The primary source of income for women in Pochalla village is brewing and selling local alcohol to the village men. Smoking of “Highlander tobacco” was exceedingly widespread among both men and women in Pochalla.

As in other villages, the vulnerability of the population of Pochalla village decreased somewhat following the withdrawal of the ENDF around July 2005. However, residents of Pochalla reported that if the military return, they will be unable to remain in their homes and will flee once again.

## **7.6 Pynyido (Funyido) Town**

Residents of Pynyido town have lived in an exceedingly tense environment from late 2004 through 2005, due primarily to the security situation existing there. The military presence in Pynyido town has not decreased as it has in the surrounding villages visited in the study. The presence of thousands of refugees has formed the ostensible basis for the heavy military and ARRA presence in Pynyido town; however, the impact on the vulnerability of the non-refugee residents of Pynyido has been substantial.

Anuak residents of Pynyido town reported that they cannot move freely to the market, that they take huge risks going into the bush to collect firewood, and that those with money are the only ones who can afford to purchase firewood from the Nuer refugees who sell it at market. Others reported as well that there are two water pumps in Pynyido town that were installed by NGOs; thus the water from these pumps is free of charge. However, many Anuak residents of Pynyido nonetheless stated that at times the security situation causes them to be too afraid to access water from those pumps. At the time of this assessment visit, there had been no water available in Pynyido town, outside of the ARRA/UN compound, for three days.

There are two medical clinics in Pynyido town, outside the refugee camp facilities: the government clinic and an NGO clinic. Anuak residents do not go to the government clinic to seek treatment because they report being denied medical care there, in spite of the fact that many of the nursing staff of the hospital are of Anuak ethnicity. Thus, Anuak residents of Pynyido seek medical care in an NGO clinic in the Anuak area of town, where there is only one nurse and

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<sup>11</sup> Record # K- 23: 18 October 2005.

where the supplies and medicines are meagre at best. Highlanders and Nuers in Pinyudo reportedly seek treatment at the government clinic.

At night in Pinyudo town, almost exclusively, only Highlander residents are seen in the centre of town. Anuaks reported that they do not dare to venture to the centre of town at night for any reason.

### **7.7 Gog Jinjor Village**

There was a heavy military presence in Gog Jinjor until the ENDF pulled out around July 2005. Though the military base was in nearby Gog Dipatch, the troops would move throughout Gog Jinjor on a daily basis. Due to the violence of late 2003 and early 2004, most of the villagers of Gog Jinjor fled to Pochalla, Sudan, and the very few who have returned are almost exclusively women and children. This heavily female and child population has been rendered drastically more vulnerable due to the heavy military presence in Gog Jinjor throughout 2005.

The road to Gog Jinjor and the entire village itself was overgrown with tall bush grasses at the time of this assessment. Grasses surrounded the shell that was once a school, which was completely dilapidated, filthy, leaky and wet, covered with mosses and dust inside. Many windows were broken or gone, many desks had been destroyed.

There is one school in Gog Jinjor; however, children often did not attend school during the time of the military presence due to the threats, intimidation, arbitrary interrogations, and harassment along the road to the school by soldiers.<sup>12</sup>

Reports from villagers described several incidents of burnings of Anuaks' schoolbooks by ENDF in Gog Jinjor right in the centre of the village in both 2004 and 2005. Thus, the students who attend school do not have any schoolbooks. This schooling situation affects the population of Gog Dipatch as well, since the children from Gog Dipatch would be attending school in Jinjor if the road could be travelled safely.

There is no medical clinic in Gog Jinjor and the closest clinic is in Pinyudo town, thirty-seven kilometres away. Residents of Gog Jinjor reported that during the rainy season of 2005 alone, four children died while being taken on foot by road from Gog Jinjor, their mothers failing to reach the Pinyudo clinic in time for treatment.<sup>13</sup>

Until their departure, the ENDF presence in Gog Jinjor affected the daily lives of the population throughout 2005. Residents are afraid to collect water or firewood, and to move around alone. The one water pump was occupied by the military and thus inaccessible to the population.

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<sup>12</sup> Gog Jinjor, Records # M-17 and # M-18: 19 October 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Gog Jinjor, Record # M-17: 19 October 2005.

Farming was out of the question as no one dared to travel out to the fields from town. No one felt safe to move at all at night.

Things have dramatically improved from a protection point of view since the departure of the military in July 2005; nonetheless, the men and boys from the village are for the most part still too fearful to return to their homes for fear that the local authorities will arrest them on accusation of rebel activity. The population is thus widely scattered.

### **7.8 Gog Dipatch Village**

As stated above, the ENDF camp that was based in one of the four villages that comprise Gog Dipatch covered the Dipatch and Jinjor areas, and the militarization lasted through 2004 and into July 2005. During the crisis of late 2003 and early 2004, most of the population of Gog Dipatch fled to Pochalla, Sudan and other places in the Gambella region. Meanwhile, as the ENDF moved into Gog Dipatch, they essentially took over part of Gog Dipatch for their own purposes.

Returning in 2004 from having fled, the population who had previously resided in the area of Gog Dipatch nearest the road to Pinyudo (where the ENDF had installed themselves) were unable to resettle in their homes due to the ENDF occupation. Those residents were thus internally displaced to the other villages in Gog Dipatch. Even following the military pull out in July 2005, most of the residents of the area of Dipatch in the military camp could not move back to their homes due to the devastation caused by the soldiers. Those civilians do not own land in the other parts of Dipatch and are thus more vulnerable and dependent on their neighbours, who themselves are living under total impoverishment and misery.

In Gog Dipatch during the ENDF presence there, access to firewood and water was entirely impossible in areas occupied by the military. The study revealed allegations that the military were soiling a well by throwing dirty water into it that had been used to wash clothes. Residents resoundingly reported that the situation had greatly improved in Dipatch after the ENDF pullout; at the time of this assessment people had greater access to whatever meagre resources were present, and they were not living in such extreme daily fear.

Due to the security situation, there is no medical care in Gog Dipatch, as there is no medical staff present. The nurse who was reportedly present during the military occupation was allegedly required to remain there under the military occupation of the clinic compound; following the military pull out, the nurse left the village. During military occupation, according to the population, the nurse tried to treat civilians but was under the authority of the military, and thus many villagers were too afraid to seek treatment there.

Tools and chairs from the school were taken from the village by ENDF, and several houses, including one of an old woman who was still living in it, were stripped of their corrugated roofs.

The residents of Dipatch are deeply afraid of the ENDF, and reported uniformly that if the ENDF presence should recur they would flee Dipatch.

## **7.9 Dimma Woreda**

This was UNICEF's first assessment of conditions around Dimma Woreda. UNICEF has not previously assessed the livelihoods and vulnerabilities of women and children, or the factors leading to the complexity of the emergency there. Thus, this Dimma section—and the Case Study for Dimma Woreda—will be more extensive than other sections of the report.

Dimma Woreda is an exceedingly complex Woreda, with a confluence of factors all of which combine to create a terribly volatile mixture. If left to continue down its current path, there appears to be a great risk of a significant escalation in violence.

Women and children in Dimma Woreda are greatly at risk. Threats to their physical security affect their day-to-day lives, decisions they make, and their access to resources for survival. Because of the transitory nature of the population in Dimma town and in surrounding gold mining areas, and due to neglect by regional authorities, the population lives with virtually no access to medical care, insufficient or no schools, no freedom of movement, and restricted or no access to information.

Dimma has been visited by ICRC in the past, and has a WFP and UNHCR presence due to the refugee camp in Dimma town. According to the ARRA Coordinator for Dimma, as of September 2005, there were 8619 Sudanese refugees at the Dimma camp, with the following demographic breakdown: Nuers (7045); Dinka (484); Murle (154); Nuba (68); other (196).

Dimma differs from other areas visited by the consultants, and the complexities and vulnerabilities of life in Dimma are different. Highlanders and Anuaks and other ethnicities have lived here since long before the violence of 2003. Bordered by the lush, highland mountains of Godere Woreda, with mountains rising up and out along the long border of the Southern People's, Nations and Nationalities Regional States (SNNPR), the Dimma Woreda is distinct in its relations with the rest of the Gambella region.

Dimma is split by the Akobo River, which runs near and parallel to the centre of town: the territory to the south is considered "Surma Land", as it is heavily impacted by bands of indigenous nomadic Surma people whose range extends south across the Woreda boundary, where the majority of Surma reside. To the north of the Akobo River is a predominantly Anuak area.

Dimma Woreda is home to approximately 15,000 residents, with indigenous Anuaks believed to be in the majority, but much of that population is in constant flux. A sizeable Highlander population, also somewhat transitory, has resided in Dimma for years. Dimma's abundant gold

deposits have brought people from all over the country seeking wealth through gold mining, washing and selling, or through businesses that capitalize on the influx of transitory gold miners.

The gold deposits in Dimma region are mostly in areas of Gessena, Korkora, Majoch, Tubwa, Addis Kamp, along an often impassable road from Dimma Town.<sup>14</sup> Though the distances are not great, the geography is rough, and road access to camps and villages is limited, even by 4X4: the residents of these areas live in extreme isolation.

In Dimma town, freedom of movement for Anuaks and Highlanders is severely restricted; each group is afraid to enter into the other groups' areas. Highlanders run all shops in Dimma town and Anuaks reported being fearful even of approaching Highlander owned stores to purchase needed goods. (During this assessment, racial slurs and insults were directed at team members as they walked down the main street in town: these slurs were not limited to Ethiopian Nationals, but also directed at consultants who were in the presence of Anuak translators.)

Dimma town has a majority Highlander population: while it is unclear whether the Highlanders formed a majority prior to the violence of 2004, a significant Highlander population was present in the region long before 2004. Highlanders arrive from all over the country, not in groups but usually as individuals, sometimes with their families. Their motivation for coming to Dimma town appears to be gold digging and related commerce.

The main street of Dimma town has door-to-door stores all run by Highlanders. Upon conversing with several of these business owners, it was discovered that most of them had come to Dimma relatively recently, and that the Highlander merchant population is always in flux: when violence flares up many of them leave, some of those return, along with newcomers.

Dimma town has a visible Nuer presence, and there are Surma (traders, children, women) who come through the town. The study found a general fear of the Surma expressed by both the Anuak and Highlander residents. The team did not gain an opportunity to meet with Surma, but they are mentioned here because their armed presence was repeatedly cited in relation to the vulnerabilities, including people's freedom of movement and access to water, firewood and market. These protection and vulnerability concerns affect both the Anuak and the Highlander population, and the problems are found in the southern gold mining areas (Gessena, Korkora, Majoch, Tubwa) and in the solidly Anuak areas (Merkez, Gedu, Bandera, Awaya)

Both Highlanders and Anuaks reported being afraid of attacks by Surma nomads. Highlanders reported living in fear of Anuak rebels, and Anuaks reported living in fear of arbitrary arrest by ENDF and physical violence by Highlander civilians. All of this has deeply affected the daily lives of women and children in Dimma town itself.

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<sup>14</sup> Like most of Gambella State, maps of Dimma Woreda are unavailable or mostly blank.

With the exception of people living within the ARRA compound, all those interviewed in Dimma town reported problems with access to water. These problems primarily revolve around security limitations on freedom of movement. Anuaks and Highlanders both reported purchasing firewood from Nuer refugees in town, who are the only ethnic group who risk going into the bush to collect it. All groups are fearful of attacks by “*shifita*”.

The primary medical clinic that exists in Dimma town is on the ARRA compound, and is accessible only to compound residents and refugees. Thus, unless locals manipulate the system to gain a refugee registration card, which interviewees indicated they had done, populations do not have access to medical care in Dimma town.

There is a health clinic at Merkez, an entirely Anuak village five kilometres from Dimma town, and the Anuak population goes there if they need medical treatment, but a single nurse works in that clinic, in a very limited capacity. The Highlanders in Dimma have a choice of going to Merkez, or further to Koy town. At least 25 kms from Dimma town, Koy is the site of the second government clinic (staffed by 2 nurses). In essence, Dimma town is a place entirely lacking in access to health care.

Dimma town has one primary school through grade eight. The villages of Koy and Merkez have primary schools through grade four only. The only secondary school in Dimma Woreda is in the Nuer refugee camp and is only attended by refugee children. Other children from Dimma who wish to go to secondary school must go to Gambella town, but few Dimma families can afford to send their children to Gambella. Outlying regions have no schools at all.

Dimma Woreda is a highly neglected Woreda in all respects. The Woreda Council has five offices and no transportation. There is one phone line in Dimma town, which is reportedly locked on orders from the Regional Telecommunications office whenever there is a problem. (On the day following the Anuak rebel attacks of 30 October 2005, the public phone lines in Dimma town ceased to function: they were reportedly blocked to prevent news of the Gambella rebel attacks from reaching the local populations.) People indicated to the team that they do not have access to information about security—or anything else—in the region, and thus that they often react based on rumour.

Dimma is an exploited Woreda used by many for its resources. The indigenous population has suffered due to the influx of wealth-seekers; the newcomers do not come here to invest, settle, register, build houses and roads, or advocate for infrastructure. The outsiders have come to make money, and return to their places of origin to build houses and “invest” in their lives away from Dimma.

Nonetheless, the indigenous population also has an interest in the resources of the region; many persons reported that the Anuaks are the best at finding gold. Thus, the outsider presence could be viewed by the Anuak population as a threat to their security and their financial prosperity.

Indeed, there were several Anuak businesses in Dimma town prior to the 2004 violence, and now there are none, and the residential population has dramatically decreased.

To complicate the stresses and vulnerabilities in Dimma town, the entire town burned to the ground around May 2005 (due to an accident involving some candles). Residents lost everything: entire businesses and homes were obliterated, money and documents lost. UNICEF supported the reconstruction of the town with donations of essential emergency non-food items such as plastic sheeting. This fire affected primarily the business area of town where there are a majority of Highlanders, but many Anuak and other residents were affected as well. The town has the appearance of a place which is temporary: the first row of businesses on the filthy, muddy, main street are made of sticks with plastic; any tin structures remaining from before are completely rusted over due to the fire.

Populations living along the Gog-Akula road (an impassable track from Dimma town to Gilo Woreda) are among the most vulnerable seen anywhere during this assessment. The mostly Anuak residents have problems with all the vulnerability indicators, including grave problems with security. Woreda officials in Dimma town suggested that humanitarian intervention is drastically needed in the distant villages of Okwach and Achanga: water, health, food, education, protection were all cited in creating an extremely devastated population.

### **7.10 Gambella Town**

The situation in Gambella town is complex, multi-layered and extremely sensitive. In the context of this study, UNICEF interviewed men and women, civilians and officials, of all ethnic groups in Gambella town. Across the board, all those interviewed cited security as the main factor contributing to the vulnerability of the population in Gambella town. The insecurity that attends the lives of the civilians in Gambella has increased in the past few weeks following the 30 October 2005 attack by the GPLM. Because these interviews were conducted after that attack, many persons were hesitant to share their daily experiences and struggles with UNICEF. However, those that did come forward to report on their vulnerabilities explained that the recent security incidents have aggravated an already challenging situation with regard to access to resources for survival.

Apparently there is a severe water shortage throughout Gambella town, and the river serves as the primary source of water in most of the town. Interviewees of all ethnicities reported problems with access to medical care, in particular due to the lack of trained professionals. The water problem also affects the provision of adequate medical care. There is only one government clinic and one government hospital in Gambella town. There are several private clinics, but according to the civilians interviewed, the costs of care at these facilities are prohibitive. Nuer interviewees reported that they couldn't obtain medical care at the private clinics even if they can afford it, due to the reported hesitation on the part of the Highlander staff to treat Nuer patients.



Nuer, Highlander and Anuak women in Gambella town reported that they no longer go outside town to collect firewood, due to the security risk. Some Nuer and Kambata Highlanders, as well as some Anuaks, reported that members of their communities who live at the edge of the town, near the bush, take great risks in collecting firewood. Other Gambella town residents reported purchasing firewood and charcoal from these Nuer and Kambata Highlanders, but also reported that the risks taken in collecting firewood have driven up the price dramatically.

In the Nuer village of Ochom (approximately one hour walk from Gambella town), women reportedly have great difficulty obtaining water and firewood, as well as moving along the road to and from Gambella town to go to the market, due primarily to security concerns.

In one Anuak Kabele of Gambella, abutted by Highlander homes and land, residents reported serious and constant daily security concerns in venturing into the bush to collect firewood, or to go to the river for water, or even to merely move about the “neighbourhood”.

### **7.11 Godere Woreda: Metti Town**

Godere Woreda is dramatically different in all respects from the other Woredas visited by UNICEF for this study. In almost all aspects of daily life and access to resources, Godere is resoundingly more developed than the other areas visited.

The first and most obvious difference between Godere Woreda and other areas visited was the apparent feeling of security of those interviewed. While Majengers did talk about a prevailing and serious Highlander bias against Majengers, which at times over the past four years has escalated into serious violence and retaliations, security concerns were rarely cited as having a great impact on the population. The ENDF have reportedly been present in Godere only briefly in 2003, and there have not been reports of attacks by armed groups.

There were reports of some inter-ethnic tension, some discriminatory behaviour and some low level conflict from time to time between Highlanders and Majengers in Godere Woreda. However, on the whole the standard of living is much higher and the vulnerability much lower than all the places visited.

From the information that the team was able to gather, access to education, medical care, water and firewood, are all challenges. However, these are far lesser challenges than faced by others interviewed in other regions. Water—which reportedly comes from containers from which generators pump it house to house—is expensive and dirty, but this is reportedly a problem in many highland areas.

Transportation was cited in Godere as being a major problem; roads are apparently in very poor condition. Apparently the government prohibits construction of roads through certain parts of

Godere Woreda due to the risk of deforestation. Thus, teachers in outlying areas have to walk up to 75 kilometres at the end of each month to Metti Town to collect their salaries.

A Majenger female community official reported that there are problems within the Majenger community due to discrimination against girls and women. She described community struggles with the tradition of sending girls out of the house to live on their own at age twelve. This situation has forced many Majenger girls to reportedly drop out of school, get married very young (child marriage), or resort to prostitution for survival.

Most remarkable regarding Metti town was the existence of a Girls' Club in the secondary school. A multi-ethnic club comprised of Majenger and Highlander girls and teachers, the girls get together to discuss issues of concern to themselves and their peers, which are then addressed in collaboration with their teachers.

## **8. Conclusions About Livelihoods & Vulnerabilities of Women & Children**

The study revealed an alarmingly strong link between the vulnerability of the women and children in Gambella and the security situation. In fact, it was almost impossible to separate the struggles of the population—regarding access to water, firewood, markets, education, and health care—from the security problems in the region. It is thus impossible to deal exclusively with these access issues in Gambella without first addressing protection and security issues. The following section will describe in depth the protection problems faced by Gambella's women and children.

## **SECTION VII: OVERALL IMPACT OF SECURITY SITUATION ON VULNERABILITY OF THE POPULATION OF GAMBELLA REGION**

### **1. Protection of Women and Children**

#### **a. Intimidation, Harassment, Terrorisation of Civilians by Authorities**

Gambella Region is the scene of ongoing conflict between Federal armed forces and Anuak rebel groups: both have engaged in targeting of civilians, and both have contributed to the current climate of terror in which the civilian population lives.

During the crisis of December 2003 to January 2004, almost all of those killed were civilians, not combatants. Anuak rebels are alleged to have killed civilian government workers, following which Highlander civilians combined with ENDF allegedly killed hundreds of Anuak civilians—including women and children—in retaliation. Approximately one month later, Anuak rebels reportedly—and with astonishing brutality—massacred Highlander civilians, including women

and children, in gold mining areas in the Dimma region, following which Anuak civilians in Dimma town were reportedly killed by a combined effort of Highlander civilians, military forces, and ARRA staff. In all these cases civilians were exclusively targeted, women and children in particular, and this has remained the pattern of all protection violations in Gambella region since the crisis began.

Throughout 2004 following these and other violent attacks in which civilians were killed, ENDF engaged in a widespread campaign of terrorisation and collective punishment of the Anuak civilians. The high military presence in the Gambella region from early 2004 until approximately July/August 2005 has been explained as being necessary for two primary reasons: [1] to provide security for Petronas, the oil exploration company which has a contract with the Ethiopian government for oil exploration in Gambella region; and [2] to provide security in the region to counter inter-ethnic conflict.

Inter-ethnic conflict in Gambella region does occur with frequency, and this is clearly a factor that also contributes to vulnerability of the population. However, the numbers, the physical presence and the impact of the ENDF in Gambella has gone far beyond these alleged purposes.

Federal forces did not restrict their presence either to roads leading to the oil exploration areas nor did they restrict their presence to areas of inter-ethnic conflict. Rather, they settled inside villages and towns that were 100% Anuak, and began what has become a pattern of widespread intimidation, harassment, and physical attacks against the Anuak civilian population. These actions have been part of an apparent effort to locate and arrest Anuak rebels; however, the entire Anuak civilian population has been and continues to be targeted on accusations of their affiliation with the rebel movement. Under the rubric of anti-insurgent operations, civilians throughout Gambella region have been routinely harassed, beaten, sexually assaulted, arbitrarily arrested and detained, their homes burned and looted. This has been the case throughout 2004 and 2005, up until the military pulled out of most villages, approximately July 2005, and it has continued in some areas where the military remained.<sup>15</sup>

In most if not all Anuak villages visited in the study, with the possible exception of larger towns, the population fled during the violence of late 2003/early 2004, and more than half the populations of those villages have not returned. They are presently reportedly either in Sudan or in Woredas near the Sudan border, such as Akobo. Of the populations of these villages who have returned, the majority are women and children, as the men and boys are too afraid to return for fear of being arbitrarily arrested and detained by either the military, the regional police, regional council, or even at times their own village Kebele authorities acting under pressure from the former. This predominantly female and child population amongst the Anuak villages in Gambella is profoundly vulnerable to violence by military forces, and lives in perpetual fear of violent attacks.

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<sup>15</sup> As of the writing of this report, the military had redeployed to all these areas of Gambella.

Even a legitimate search for paramilitary forces does not justify the kind of aggressive military behaviour that is clearly taking place in these areas. The populations are profoundly impacted by this military occupation: all aspects of their daily lives are threatened as a direct result.

Anuak rebel groups have also engaged in scores of attacks targeting civilians, and many of the populations interviewed reported being as terrified of rebels as of the military. The study revealed incidents in Dimma Woreda in 2005 where Anuak villages had been targeted by Anuak rebels and burned to the ground. On 4 November 2005, Anuak rebels burned to death Highlander civilians in Abobo—two parents and their two children—in their home. Nuer residents of Ochom village reported routine attacks and lootings by Anuak rebels along the road. The most recent attack in Gambella town by Anuak rebels indicated a very coordinated effort. Though police officers were the targets and victims, this attack has terrified civilians of all ethnicities living in Gambella town.

The study revealed that civilians are being targeted by Federal forces and armed Anuaks based on their political affiliations. Although there are cases ethnically motivated violence, the study did not reveal an ethnic motivation, per se, behind the targeting of civilians. The ENDF is targeting Anuak civilians on accusation of affiliation with and support of Anuak armed groups, based on their presumed anti-government affiliations. The Anuak rebels are targeting Highlander civilians due to their presumed support of the government and military, and have targeted Anuaks who are, in their view, pro-government and government workers. The attacks against civilians have thus not been clearly across ethnic lines; rather they have been based on pro-government versus anti-government affiliations.

In this respect, the ENDF and Anuak armed groups are not the only duty bearers causing protection violations in Gambella region: regional police and regional council members throughout the region have also victimized civilians. Many reported that local authorities acted in support of ENDF operations and actions targeting the population. Even where civilians did not report active participation by local authorities, in almost all cases the population obtains no recourse from local authorities and no protection against physical attack by ENDF. Some civilians reported that this was primarily due to regional authorities' physical inability to protect the population from ENDF attacks, but others gave examples of local authorities being directly complicit in the actions of Federal forces to target civilians. This coordination between ENDF forces and local authorities has been particularly evident with regard to the targeting of suspected rebels, collaborators and supporters. As a result of all these factors, the women and children of Gambella live in extreme fear.

#### **b. Atmosphere of Violence and Threat of Violence Leading to Insecurity**

In the village of Ilea, throughout the military presence there, soldiers fired weapons into the air regularly to frighten the population, and a shooting range was constructed which directed bullets

from target practice towards the village; women and girls are threatened and attacked at the river; men and boys are arbitrarily beaten and arrested; and the population has lived under a general situation of intimidation and harassment by the military forces occupying their village.

In Penyao/Opinya village, the military presence was so pervasive that the military forces moved through compound after compound by day and night, and at least twice in 2005 they detained large numbers of villagers in the village square—surrounding them, threatening or perpetrating violence, and subjecting them to hours in the scorching sun.<sup>16</sup>

In Abobo there has been a pattern of arbitrary arrest and detention by military forces in collaboration with local authorities and police; there have been beatings, and harassment of women; and reported cases of sexual violence against women.

In Pochalla village, the comprehensive military presence has impacted all aspects of the lives of the population, as has the apparent backing of ENDF actions by regional authorities from Pinyudo town. Civilians have been chased by armed soldiers, there are reports of beatings, sexual violence, extra-judicial killings, and arbitrary arrest and detention, all occurring in 2005.

In Pinyudo town, a collaborative effort between the military and the local authorities, including alleged involvement by ARRA officials, has thoroughly terrorized the civilian population, in particular the Anuak civilians. Scores of Anuaks, including educated Anuaks, such as nurses and teachers, have been targeted on accusation of rebel affiliation. They have been routinely beaten, arrested arbitrarily, detained and mistreated, and denied their rights to due process. Anuak businessmen in Pinyudo town are subject to random orders from local police to close business while Highlander businesses are permitted to operate. Freedom of movement to the centre of town is greatly restricted for the Anuak population after dark.

Gog Jinjor village is almost entirely populated by women; the men and boys who fled during the crisis of December 2003 and January 2004 have feared to return due to ongoing ENDF searches for men and boys accused of being rebels or collaborators. Those who do risk return are routinely subject to arbitrary arrest, detention, mistreatment or extra-judicial execution.

The civilian population of Gog Dipatch returned from having fled the crisis to find that ENDF had thoroughly taken over one entire kabele in Dipatch: villager's homes were occupied, belongings and livestock looted, roofs of homes removed for military use. Due to comprehensive military presence in Dipatch, the Anuak population lived in profound fear prior to the ENDF withdrawal of July/August 2005, and the continued to live in fear of ENDF cordon and search operations. Kebele authorities were reported to work closely in collaboration with military authorities; whether pressured to do so or out of voluntary collaboration, the population of Dipatch is fearful of their own Kebele authorities: their protection situation is grave.

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<sup>16</sup> See Section VIII: Case Study [1]: Opinya/Penyao, for details.

The Anuak villages of Merkez, Gedu, and Bandera, in Dimma Woreda, are home to some of the most vulnerable populations encountered during this study. These villages have been attacked, burned and looted, by Anuak rebels; they have been subject to harassment, intimidation, arbitrary arrest and mistreatment by Federal forces; they have been forced by Dimma Woreda authorities to hand over accused rebels and accused collaborators under threat that the Kebele authorities themselves will be detained for failure to comply with this order; and they fear moving along the road due to the threat of armed groups, including *shifita*, ENDF, Anuak rebels, and Surma nomads. These protection problems from all directions, combined with the resulting daily vulnerability as described in the Livelihoods and Vulnerabilities section, have brought the population beyond total misery and despair.

Even in the gold mining settlements of Dimma Woreda, as in Dimma town, all civilians live in conditions of extreme fear and intimidation. They fear the authorities, they fear their neighbours, they stay only for the lucrative gold economy and, even so, and many are leaving due to the increasing insecurity.

The civilian population of Gambella town is living in increasing insecurity, and the fear and terror felt by Gambella town residents has increased during the course of this study. Anuaks, Nuers, and Highlanders all reported living with minimal movement around town, and almost none out of town, due to fear of rebel attacks. Some reported fear of retaliatory attacks based on presumptions of affiliations with the military, the government, or the rebels.

### **c. Killings and Extra-Judicial Executions**

The study established that extra-judicial killings of civilians continue to occur throughout Gambella region. Unidentified rebels, *shifita*, Anuak rebels, Federal and regional police and ENDF have all committed killings in the Gambella region in 2005. Many of those extra-judicially killed by ENDF forces are Anuak civilians, particularly men and boys, who have been targeted on the basis of their assumed relations to Anuak rebel groups.

This study documented allegations of civilian men and boys who were shot in the bush or on the outskirts of a village by soldiers stationed in permanent or semi-permanent camps near to or inside villages and towns. Allegations of killings have been received for 2004 and 2005: students, intellectuals and educated professionals (teachers, nurses) have been heavily targeted by the military.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In one egregious case typifying the kinds of psychological and physical terror that is allegedly taking place, ENDF picked up five Anuak refugees returning home from Pochalla, Sudan where the Anuak refugee camp is located. Witnesses saw the five men in Pochalla, before they were put under detention by ENDF, and then taken to the ENDF camp near the village. The five men were allegedly tortured, their screams heard throughout the day, and witnesses alleged they heard screaming throughout the night, repeating things like: "Oh mom, oh mom. I am Anuak! These people are killing me." The Kebele Chairman allegedly reported this to the Woreda Administration but no

Anuak rebel attacks have also occurred, and have also targeted civilians. In fact, a statement by the GPLM issued just after the attack of 30 October 2005 articulated the Anuak rebel agenda of continuing to target government officials, police, employees of the petroleum companies—in short deeming anyone who supports the Federal government and its institutions in Gambella as a legitimate target. While Anuak rebels claimed in this statement that they would not target civilians, the study revealed that in fact civilians are often the victims of Anuak rebel attacks.<sup>18</sup> The most recent occurrence of killings by Anuak rebels took place on October 31, 2005 in Abobo town, where rebels allegedly burned to death a Highlander civilian family—mother, father, and two children—in their home in Abobo.

#### **d. Disappearances and Desecration of the Dead**

Amongst the most difficult protection issues to address within a complex context of this nature is the prevalence of people being “disappeared”: the assignment of blame or responsibility, and the possibilities for recourse for family or community members, are almost meaningless when someone is “disappeared”.

For example, in separate incidents—one on 22 or 23 of September 2005 and another on 26 or 27 of September 2005—farmers are reported to have disappeared from the Pinyudo area: their arrival was expected by their families but they failed to show. Villagers reportedly searched for the men in both cases. Interviewees noted that the ENDF “is undertaking operations in the area and we cannot know what happened to these men.”<sup>19</sup>

The study revealed several cases where dead bodies have been taken and disposed of without offering any information to the family, friends, or communities, and with no opportunity for relations or others to collect the body, hold a burial according to the local customs and rites of the ethnic group in question, and provide closure for the family.

#### **e. Physical Violence**

Beatings, torture, and other forms of physical abuse continued in Gambella region throughout 2005. The victims are almost always civilians, and the perpetrators of this violence include Federal forces and local police, often with backing by local authorities. There are also patterns of acute inter-communal and intra-communal violence, which often accompanies a breakdown in the social fabric such as has occurred in Gambella region. Nonetheless, the bulk of the physical

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action was taken and the five men were killed, their bodies never recovered. The families came for them but were not provided any information. Witnesses believe the five men were buried in a mass grave within the abutting ENDF camp. Record # K-23: 18 October 2005: Pochalla, Ethiopia.

<sup>18</sup> For details of egregious examples, see Section VIII, Case Study [2]: Dimma Woreda.

<sup>19</sup> Record # K-31: 21 October 2005.

violence perpetrated by the authorities in Gambella occurs in the context of the ENDF's anti-insurgency operations, targeting the Anuak civilian population.

Throughout all the areas visited by the team, cases of military forces beating civilians were reported to have occurred throughout 2005 and up until the departure of military forces from most villages in approximately July. Interviewees described having no recourse for reporting such incidents to local authorities, and where they did describe making such reports of incidents of physical violence to Kebele or local authorities, victims almost uniformly said that they obtained no redress.

#### **f. Arbitrary Arrest and Detention**

The most prevalent protection violation documented during this study is the pattern of arbitrary arrest and detention. ENDF forces, usually in collaboration and coordination with Regional administrative and police officials, have engaged in widespread sweeps of the civilian areas in search of alleged insurgents, rebel collaborators or rebel affiliates. Civilian men and boys have been arrested in droves throughout the region. They are arrested most often by the ENDF, who either detain them directly in military facilities or transfer them over to civilian police authorities. Reasons for these arrests are almost never given; mistreatment often occurs in this context.

Due to these widespread arbitrary arrests and detentions of men and boys, many civilian men and boys have not been able to return to their home villages since they fled the violence of December 2003 and January 2004.

Those arrested are detained without being granted their rights to due process. They are not informed of the charges against them; they are not promptly, if ever, brought before a judge; they are not granted the right to defend themselves through witnesses and lawyers. They are reportedly held in poor conditions and not given access to medical care.

Juveniles are arrested and detained under the same conditions as adults.

The pattern of massive arbitrary arrest and detention occurring in the Gambella region is in direct contravention of legal obligations under both Ethiopian law and International law.

#### **g. Sexual and Gender-Based Violence**

The study revealed patterns of extensive sexual violence perpetrated by military forces against civilian women and girls; many of the survivors are under eighteen, some as young as fourteen. In addition, threats of sexual violence, harassment and intimidation of a sexual nature are almost universally reported by women and girls in areas having a heavy military presence.



The magnitude of this problem is difficult to assess due to the cultural and traditional context of Gambella; however, the team is seriously concerned about the extent of sexual and gender based violence—perpetrated by ENDF—that is allegedly occurring in Gambella. Unlike other protection violations documented, the study did not reveal any incidents of sexual violence perpetrated either by police or by regional administrative authorities; the allegations were exclusively of military perpetrators.

Of all those interviewed there were only two cases where reports of sexual violence were made to the local authorities, and in these specific cases the Kebele authorities in that village blamed the young women (both adolescents) for their ‘promiscuous’ behaviour, and therefore held the survivors responsible for their own rapes.

Allegations also emerged regarding sexual violence of Highlander women and girls by Highlander military. Conditions in isolated locations clearly indicate a greater problem of severe sexual and gender-based violence, having a dramatic impact on women and girls of all ethnicities.

Typifying the kinds of reports that have emerged from this vulnerabilities assessment are stories of soldiers lying in wait in the bush for young girls and women to pass by on route to fetching water or collecting firewood; others are harassed and assaulted while attempting to bathe in rivers. Soldiers appear to patrol villages, hover around water pumps and pathways, and specifically target girls and women that have caught their eyes, even knocking on tukul doors and entering tukuls in the night. There is virtually no recourse for protection to prevent sexual violence, no hope of medical or psychological support if assaults occur, and traditional taboos and customs often only further institutionalise both the injustice and the suffering of the victims. The unusual case of an alleged rape in Abobo underscores the impunity enjoyed by soldiers, and the complete absence of recourse, even when there are witnesses and the perpetrator is identified and caught. The unusual aspects revolve around the boldness of the rape survivor to: [1] endure the social stigma and shame by revealing the act; [2] confront her assailant directly; and [3] attempt to gain justice through official channels.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> This alleged rape, corroborated by others, occurred in April or May 2005 when a thirty-year old Anuak woman was snatched off the main road at 2:00 PM while carrying firewood to sell in town. A uniformed ENDF (Highlander) soldier stopped her and interrogated her, and then forced her into the bushes and raped her. When the survivor heard the voices of people passing by she allegedly yelled out: “Are you Anuak people? The soldier he is raping me!” The soldier allegedly fled when the other Anuaks approached. One Anuak witness accompanied the survivor to report the rape to the federal police in Abobo, while one witness followed the soldier. Police accompanied the survivor and the witness to find the soldier with the help of the second witness. The soldier was arrested and taken to Abobo, and the survivor was told to come back tomorrow. Upon arriving at the police station the next day the rape survivor found that her assailant was gone: ENDF soldiers came and took the soldier to their nearby camp at Village #7 in Abobo. The police refused to assist the survivor. The Woreda administrator was informed. The woman wanted to go to the hospital, and demanded that the soldier pay for it. After waiting all day at the police station she left. Officials took no action. “I don’t know whether I got any disease when I was raped,” she said. She had no money and did not go to a clinic or a hospital. Record # K-17.

When one Kebele leader confronted the ENDF commander near his village regarding reports that soldiers were targeting the women in his village with sexual violence, the commander reportedly replied, “So? Tell your women not to go out after five o’clock.”<sup>21</sup>

The study also revealed heinous sexual atrocities committed by Anuak rebels combined with Anuak Kebele militiamen, in January 2004, in the gold mining areas of Dimma Woreda. The victims were all Highlander civilian women and girls.<sup>22</sup>

#### **h. Looting and Destruction of Property**

Looting and destruction of personal property by ENDF troops has been the most substantial, and the civilian population has been heavily and repeatedly targeted. Soldiers have stolen goods and supplies: they have destroyed food stores, stolen mattresses from tukuls, stolen clothing, money, radios, and shoes off the feet of residents. In some places, ENDF soldiers have come again and again to pillage.

Grain stores and crops have been destroyed, and fields have been burned.<sup>23</sup> Interviewees in Gog claim that ENDF burned tukuls of people who had fled the area and not returned. Corrugated metal has allegedly been stripped off roofs and walls of government structures in some places, and off the homes of some civilians and used for military barracks. Schools, churches and medical clinics have been occupied and converted into ENDF barracks in many of the locations visited during this study. Schools and educational materials have been looted or destroyed, desks and chairs burned for firewood, blackboards ruined, doors and windows broken.

Reports taken from some officials have collaborated allegations that ENDF have disabled or broken water pumps: in Ilea village soldiers reportedly wrecked all three pumps.

There are also reports of Anuak rebels conducting looting and burning campaigns in Gambella region, targeting civilian locations. Anuak people in several villages in Dimma Woreda have suffered atrocities from all sides. Perhaps the most egregious case in all of Gambella, Anuak rebels have allegedly burned to the ground the isolated Anuak village of Bandera at least three times in as many years. Interviewees, including Anuaks, in Dimma town indicate that Anuak rebels have repeatedly looted Anuak and other communities in the region: shoes, gold and money were offered as examples of the many things they are taking from the civilian population.

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<sup>21</sup> Record # M-34: 29 October 2005.

<sup>22</sup> For a detailed report of violence in Dimma Woreda, see Section VIII: Case Study [2]: Dimma Woreda.

<sup>23</sup> The extent of burning of fields and crops, and even some Anuak villages, by ENDF forces or government officials is unclear. Some fires have allegedly spread by accident, and the resultant victims were Anuak. However, testimony gathered herein clearly supports malicious and intentional destruction of property, including huts, fields, and harvested crops, by fire.

Nuer women living in Ochom village reported that they routinely face attacks by Anuak rebels along the road from Gambella to their village, when they return from going to the market in Gambella. Reportedly, rebels have stolen livestock of many of the residents of Ochom, and women are increasingly afraid to move outside the village.<sup>24</sup>

Anuak rebels have attacked government sites seeking to increase their numbers of small arms and ammunition: most recent were the 30 October 2005 attacks in Gambella town.

### **i. Restrictions on Freedom of Movement**

Freedom of movement is greatly restricted or entirely blocked in many of the places surveyed by this mission. Travel after dark in the rural areas, and even around big towns like Gambella, Dimma and Pinyudo, is either self-imposed or officially restricted; in some cases the authorities have warned civilians not to go out at night, that authorities will not view themselves responsible for anything should a security incident result.

Even by day, however, the security situation for people of all ethnicities dictates major behaviour modifications—at the very least—regarding daily activities, travel or other movements. Some of the reasons for this have been given already: civilian men and boys are subject to extra-judicial killings, arbitrary arrests, beatings or disappearances should they be found in the bush, moving between towns, travelling along roads, even working in their fields.

People have been confined to their homes, corralled together, forced to sit under the hot sun, or throughout the day, without food or water. People in Opinya and Pinyudo complained about being corralled for long periods.<sup>25</sup>

Many civilian women interviewed are subject to abuse, intimidation and rape if they venture beyond the “safety” of tukul compounds. Strategies to defeat the inevitable violence include moving in groups to gather firewood or water, and completely altering patterns of daily activities. However, these do not insure protection from ENDF predation.

Fear is an inhibitor of movement throughout the region.

The presence of Anuak and likely other (OLF) rebels, armed *shifta* of unknown origin, armed Surma nomads, and *Shifta* bandits, and the widespread presence of ENDF forces, all complicate serious protection and security concerns on movement in Dimma Woreda.

In Pinyudo town on 22-23 September 2005, government Woreda officials—backed by armed Federal police—held public meetings where they informed everyone present that an informal curfew would go immediately into effect; several meetings like this were held, primarily for the

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<sup>24</sup> Record # M-50: 15 November 2005.

<sup>25</sup> For details see: Section VIII: Case Study [1]: Alwero-Peno.

Anuak population in Pinyudo. People in Gog Dipatch were also explicitly warned, by Federal troops, not to move at night or risk being shot.

Majenger people in Godere are often subject to abuse or intimidation, including searches and interrogations by ENDF soldiers and regional police, while they are moving inside or outside the Gambella region (and sometimes in Godere region).

The civilian population has been all but entirely blocked in terms of freedom of movement in Gambella region. Fear of attacks by soldiers and rebels, fear of arrest by local authorities including police, fear of inter-ethnic violence, all combine to lead to communities-in-hiding. The lack of freedom of movement also directly impacts on access to resources, with all the consequent vulnerabilities resulting.

### **j. Impact of Inter-Ethnic Conflict on Vulnerability of Women & Children**

The inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic conflicts in Gambella (not investigated for this study) add extra vulnerability and protection concerns for the people of the region. Conflict within the Nuer clans is not new, and some coping mechanisms—including the clan system itself—do help mitigate against the overall impact of violence. However, the scale of the conflict in 2004 when an estimated 20,000 to 30,000 'Lou' Nuer occupied approximately 25% of the 'Nuer' zone, and raided other areas beyond that, was clearly unusual. An estimated one third of the Nuer population was displaced. Frequently this resulted in lost land and cattle, and forced migration to areas previously considered unsuitable for habitation (prone to flooding, malaria, etc.). Alternatively this placed additional pressures on host communities in areas where migrants arrived. The nature of the Nuer clan system facilitated violence itself, as clans were obliged to mix into the new areas of settlement.

The impact of the inter-ethnic Anuak / Nuer conflict was briefly touched upon earlier. Despite the Anuak's overall loss of land (to the Nuers), the conflict does not always go one way. Inevitably, displacement, death and suffering of all types significantly affect people on the front lines between the two regions, with the obvious results of increased protection concerns.

Finally, despite the significance of the above inter- and intra-ethnic conflicts, it is notable that many of the smaller tribes of the region are involved in smaller-scale conflicts with one another and with the Anuaks. For example, the Majenger people contest land with the Anuaks between the highlands of Godere woreda and the lowlands of Gambella and Alwero-Peno woredas.

## **2. Impact of Protection Issues on Livelihoods & Vulnerabilities**

Section VI of this report describes in depth the conditions under which the population is living in Gambella region. It is abundantly clear from this study that the vulnerability of the women and children in Gambella region is very high and increasing, in most part due to the protection

situation. In fact, the study demonstrated that one cannot separate the two from each other; all aspects of daily access problems that the women and children face are directly and negatively impacted by the protection and security conditions. It is difficult if not impossible to work to address the population's vulnerability without addressing the protection problems. Absent a serious effort to improve protection of the population; through a decrease in human rights violations, accountability of those responsible for the human rights violations, increased monitoring and documentation, and an installation of systems of actual protection for the population, their vulnerability will continue to increase. Given Gambella's highly volatile climate environment, the more vulnerable the population the greater the likelihood of increased conflict.

### **3. Breakdown of Social Fabric Due to Vulnerability**

#### **a. Substance Abuse**

In places where human beings have lost all hope; where they have been victimized over extended periods of time such that it becomes habitual; where they have no access to any means of self-improvement or self-help; where there is no recourse and only a consistent deterioration in living conditions, it is common for those persons to turn to escapism. This is the case in Gambella region. Almost every village visited was filled with men and women drinking locally brewed alcohol and smoking 'Highlander tobacco' out of gourds. This substance abuse problem is so pervasive that the team was hard pressed to find a place where the population was not smoking and drinking. The pervasive substance abuse problem contributes to all kinds of complementary problems, such as domestic violence, child abuse, and common criminal activity.

#### **b. Violence in Families and Communities**

The internal fabric of families and communities at all levels and in all ethnic groups is affected by the protection situation, and as a result their own communities render women and children more vulnerable. Frustration and anger, hopelessness, disenfranchisement, disillusionment and increased militarization all combine to contribute to an infiltration of violence into the home and the community.

#### **c. Displacement and Family Separation**

The security situation in Gambella has separated many families, with few solutions in sight. Many of the families who fled Gambella during the violence of December 2003 and January 2004 remain separated, with the women and children returning and the men remaining in Pochalla, Sudan, or in areas of Gambella closer to the Sudan border. As described above, the men return only to find the arbitrary arrest and detention and other protection violations so great that they flee again. Other families have been internally displaced repeatedly, creating what is almost a migratory population, who returns home, only to flee again, perhaps to flee that second

location, if security deteriorates there. Throughout this process families are dispersed repeatedly, contributing to a further unravelling of the social fabric. The impact on the children is obviously the most critical. Gambella's children are living in perpetual fear, instability, violence and hopelessness.

#### **d. Increasing Militarization**

Hopelessness, apathy, lack of opportunity, lack of resources and lack of recourse: these are the only 'assets' available to many civilian residents and refugees. Some interviewees have clearly expressed their hopes and dreams for the future: they have none. They have nothing to look forward to but misery; there is no hope of any kind of relief from the intense suffering, the persistent fear and insecurity, and the apathy and disillusionment that is driving many people to substance abuse.

With no schools, no hope even of gaining lower education, no money to rise above the situation, and while witnessing the fact that in the future they may be jailed, exiled, disappeared or killed, younger people who would otherwise be unlikely candidates for these activities may be increasingly likely to join the ranks of armed insurgent groups or to resort to common criminal activity.

#### **e. Prostitution and Sexual Exploitation**

The team is gravely concerned that the devastating protection situation and the resultant vulnerability of adolescent girls in Gambella has forced many of them to turn to prostitution as their only means of survival. Female community leaders universally reported that adolescent girls are the most at-risk group in Gambella region.

While the magnitude of prostitution in Gambella region is difficult to assess, it is obvious that there are dire consequences for the adolescent girls in Gambella region. They are much more vulnerable to sexual violence, prostitution, disease and mistreatment, and to sexual exploitation. They have no recourse, and the hopelessness and desperation that result from their protection situation leave them extremely vulnerable.

#### **f. Criminal Activity**

While the growing sex trade is driving girls and women to capitalize on the only asset they have any (limited) control over—their physical body—men and boys in Gambella region, who are reluctant to face the misery which life holds for them, could be drawn into common criminal activity, including theft and banditry. Disaffected males in Gambella are increasingly likely to choose to vent their frustrations by such harmful activities, whether motivated by financial or political agendas.

Armed attacks and robberies could escalate. Said one educated person interviewed for this assessment: “It is a problem of education. There is no equipment, no water, no materials, too many students—or none at all. Teachers are unqualified...unpaid. Many teachers don’t want to come because of the problems. There are many problems in rural areas: not enough buildings, towns too remote, many children don’t get proper schooling so they have gone to criminal activity—for example: killing and stealing.”

#### **4. Duty Bearers**

Based on this study, ENDF forces bear the greatest responsibility for the ongoing protection violations against women and children in Gambella region. The majority of crimes committed against the civilian population by persons in positions of authority in the past year have been attributed to actions by the military. Crimes reported include killings, physical violence, sexual and gender based violence, looting and burning of property, arbitrary arrest and detention, and threats to commit any of these. Allegations of these international law violations committed by ENDF forces were widespread in most of the areas visited, while redress for the victims—and concurrent accountability of the alleged perpetrators—does not exist.

Regional authorities, including such administrative authorities as regional, zone and woreda council members and regional police, were reportedly in some cases working in collaboration and support of the ENDF forces committing protection violations on civilians. Regional authorities’ involvement in ongoing human rights violations in Gambella region is not as egregious as that of the ENDF; nonetheless, it has been reported by scores of those interviewed. Where Regional authorities did not directly facilitate military actions against civilians, in most cases they most definitely did not protect the civilians against human rights violations by the military; in fact, they failed to provide any redress against such crimes.

This apparent support by regional authorities for ENDF actions may be due to a combination of factors; (a) Regional authorities may be under duress from federal authorities not to stand in the way of military operations, and in fact they may be under direct orders to support and/or facilitate ENDF operations; (b) Regional authorities have gained their positions of power indirectly (if not directly) due to approval at the Federal levels. The team interviewed former regional authorities—administrative, police, judicial, etc.—that had been removed from their positions due to allegations of being politically opposed to the Federal government’s policies. Thus, the study revealed that regional authorities have little choice but to act in full support of the actions of the Federal government, even where such actions are in violation of Ethiopian and international law.

It must be said, however, that regional authorities bear a duty and responsibility towards their constituents, as well as an obligation to uphold the law. Where they are directly involved in violations of the law, they must also be held accountable for these violations. The fact that they act under duress by Federal authorities could serve later to mitigate the severity of the

punishment they would receive by law, and could simultaneously aggravate the severity of the punishment of federal officials who engaged in ordering or inciting such acts by regional authorities.

As discussed in Section VII-a above, civilians are being targeted not only by Federal authorities with the support of regional authorities, but also by armed groups such as the Gambella People's Liberation Movement/Front (GPLM/F). Attacks by the GPLM have resulted in deaths of civilians, including women and children, in several locations in Gambella region. Anuak rebel atrocities are far more widespread than previously thought, and are often extremely brutal in nature.<sup>26</sup> Civilians of all ethnicities reported living in terror of attacks by Anuak rebels, which have targeted both Highlanders and Anuaks. Thus, though the magnitude of the violations by Anuak rebels may not be as great as those committed by the Federal authorities, the feeling of terror and fear of the population is dramatically increased by rebel activities in the region.

It bears mention here that the Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) has been and continues to play a role in aggravating—rather than redressing—security and protection concerns of the civilian population of Gambella region. UNICEF has documented several instances of direct collaboration and support by ARRA for ENDF operations in Gambella region. Most egregious in this respect is Dimma Town, where the ARRA compound has been the site of a military weapons storage facility and a military prison where civilians were reportedly detained and mistreated. ARRA personnel also reportedly participated (in a supportive role) in military operations in other regions of Gambella visited during the study. ARRA's appearance of affiliation—if not actual collaboration and support—with the ENDF protection violations in Gambella region contribute to a sense of fear of ARRA among the civilian population. This apparent close relationship between ARRA and the military has also affected UNHCR, who is—along with ARRA—presumed by the civilian population to be closely connected with ENDF. UNHCR vehicles travelling through the region with military escorts—the only UN agency that uses such escorts—contributes to this appearance. Not only does this create an increased security concern for UNHCR beneficiaries and for the host community; in fact it puts UNHCR staff directly at risk of attacks by Anuak rebel groups due exclusively to their apparent affiliation with Federal forces.

International law violations committed by any of the above duty bearers are punishable by law, regardless of the political ideology or agenda of the alleged perpetrator. Atrocities committed by 'freedom fighters' are considered by law to be the same as atrocities committed by governments. Alleged perpetrators of violations of international law can be held accountable for these crimes where they are committed against persons protected under international law; protected persons include civilians regardless of ethnicity or political affiliation, as well as unarmed and/or captured police, military, and suspected rebels.

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<sup>26</sup> See: Section VIII, Case Study [2]: Dimma Woreda (Majoch gold mining settlement).



## **5. Governance and Justice**

### **a. Governance**

The extremely political nature of the Gambella region means that the temptation to use political influence to the advantage of one's own people is irresistible to some persons in positions of authority. This means that rather than addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, it is often the same people who benefit from assistance time after time. This even affects financing and support provided to the regional government partners from agencies such as UNICEF. For example: During the May 2005 elections the Head of the Water Office in Gambella took the office's one vehicle (a donated UNICEF vehicle) and disappeared to his home village to supervise the drilling of two bore holes (using UNICEF funding) for his people. Similar examples of this type of practice exist within the other key offices, including the Regional Health Bureau.

On a larger scale, humanitarian assistance and support provided for vulnerable communities by the UN and other NGOs has been manipulated to advance more regional political aims in the region. Examples of this include the May 2005 elections where food was strategically placed in certain areas in order to encourage the movement of IDPs either back to their home areas or into further displacement.

The conflict in Gambella led to the departure—due either to fear and flight, or direct threats, or targeting—of a number of key officials at the woreda level, who took with them all capacity to manage and support programmes at that level. This problem has been worsened by boundary changes to the redistricting of woredas and changes in woreda capitals. Capacity at the woreda level is thus extremely low.

Evidence clearly indicates that the capacity of the state or regional government to mitigate, improve or enhance the quality of life is greatly diminished at present. The military and political objectives, and the actions that manifest due to these, are having a devastating effect on the capacity of the regional government and local authorities and institutions to maintain any semblance of order.

The sustained climate of violence and concomitant terror felt and experienced by members of all ethnicities interviewed, whether state agents or average civilians, means that educated and trained professionals are unavailable and/or unwilling to fill positions essential to state, regional or local governance, education, health and development.

The complete educational breakdown has led to an absence of available (trained, educated, willing) members of local ethnic groups to fill essential positions in society. The killing, arrest and detention, or exiling of intellectuals and educated professionals from the Anuak group is, in particular, a key factor that has compromised the capacity of the state to fulfil its function and serve the populations it is responsible to.

Educated outsiders who have filled positions in the Gambella region are, due to security concerns and the ubiquitous climate of terror, seeking transfers that the government refuses to honour, and this leads to disaffection of the professional class, and that in turn means lower productivity, lack of political will, and a greater propensity of these individuals to serve private or personal interests. Given the obvious tensions and threats, outsiders are also increasingly unwilling—no matter the financial or educational incentives being offered—to relocate to the Gambella region. In the absence of willing agents, the government has increasingly deployed coercion to compel individuals to serve its interests.

### **b. Taxation**

The case of taxation is a stellar example of administrative breakdown that emerged through this study of livelihoods and vulnerabilities. Most residents interviewed in rural areas, and many in urban centres as well, claimed that they had not paid taxes for at least three years. Businessman and salaried professionals, including teachers, administrators, nurses and police all cited compulsory monthly taxes attached to their monthly salaries. However, landholders in rural areas cited December 2003 as the defining event after which taxes have not been paid. Most declared that they have not paid taxes “since the problem started” because no state agents have come to collect taxes.

Most people indicated that the government officials are unwilling and afraid to travel into areas to collect taxes. One government tax official in Gambella town indicated that much of the civilian population is completely uprooted, in transit, displaced by low intensity conflict and fear of the ENDF.

While the people are suffering extraordinary levels of vulnerability, with loss of incomes and rents and no viable option for commercial or financial gain, the increasing problems with protection have meant that the state and regional institutions are unable to collect taxes essential to the provision of government, regional and local services. As the people have become increasingly disenfranchised, incapable of paying taxes to begin with, the self-perpetuating—or state-perpetuated—cycle of degradation is complete.

### **c. Corruption and Clientelism**

Problems with local individuals abusing their positions of power and authority, including cases of individuals lining their own pockets with money or goods from state or international organisations, at the expense of vulnerable populations they are charged with serving, are already occurring. This “white collar” crime and corruption will likely become increasingly entrenched and unmanageable as resources flow into the region, with the risk of institutionalising economic power blocks who will use financial incentives to gain or maintain control of individuals, groups or assets that serve their interests.

The financial and economic incentives will likely further serve to prime the cycles of violence as desperate agents for hire undertake to achieve their goals—collecting some payment or benefit—by any means possible. Criminal networks and armed factions involving local or regional clans, warlords or power brokers—whose activities and connections may thrive with an increasing lack of transparency—may arise.

The long, porous border between Gambella and Sudan risks seeing greater international commerce in contraband and small arms; border disputes and cross border threats to security may also likely increase.

#### **d. Increasing Incarceration Rates**

Increasing incarceration also taxes the infrastructure and capacity at the state, regional and local levels. To begin with, there is the obvious social and political instability and disaffection inculcated by such ongoing state behaviours as arbitrary arrest, detention without charge, detention without trial, and the suffering and alleged physical abuses endured by prisoners held under harsh conditions and/or for long periods of time. Second is the burden on state resources to manage increasing numbers of detainees. Third, especially in light of recent attacks (30 October 2005) against police and prison facilities in Gambella town, is the resistance and resentment of officials assigned to the management and protection of these facilities.

In some cases, guards and police see that the populations being targeted are heavily drawn from their own ethnic groups, a factor which inevitably leads to very real government concern for allegiance from its agents. On the other side are armed insurgents seeing their compatriots, including ordinary civilians, being unjustly imprisoned. Meanwhile, alleged perpetrators of crimes—including soldiers, civilians and police—remain unpunished. The climate of incarceration thus represents another element in the pool of risk and conflict evident in Gambella today.

#### **e. Compromised Labour Pool**

The absence of all basic health care, high rates of disease (HIV, TB, malaria), nutritional compromise, famine and absence of basic food, and other difficult conditions of life are all evident in the areas surveyed for this study. Economic marginalisation or collapse, and the absence of incomes and purchasing power, combined with the incredible physical and emotional burdens of eking out some kind of meaningful existence amidst poverty and fear, and the ultimate recognition that “making a living” and having a “livelihood” are impossible under such conditions, all translate to a compromised labour pool. Individual and institutional capacity, productivity, political and personal will, and purpose and meaning for life are all lost under these conditions.

All of the above factors combine to provoke a spiral of decay, and the final outcome is a loss of revenues and loss of commercial opportunities for both private and government ventures. The government, in effect, is shooting itself in the foot by failing to adopt a strategy of inclusion and social harmony. The expansion and institution of trade and commerce along rivers and roads and in urban markets, and the likelihood of private investment, the luxury of sustainable development (or any development at all), the improvements in quality of life and protection of the natural resource base, can all be counted as major losses denied stakeholders at all levels of society and governance. These otherwise available assets are all denied to the state, its institutions, and its people. Ecotourism provides another, viable opportunity that could generate and facilitate a healthy, functioning alternative to the current devastation and despair.

Outsiders—persons not from Gambella region—occupy many of the skilled posts in the region. This is because the capacity to educate and train indigenous staff in the region is extremely poor, resulting in the importation of Highlanders from outside the region.

Both perceived and real insecurity hamper the deployment of skilled staff into remote locations of the region. The result is that many structures are closed due to a lack of staff.

Due to the recent attack by rebels in Gambella town and Abobo, the government employees in town have become increasingly fearful. In interviews, they reported to UNICEF that most of the Highlander government employees in Gambella have applied numerous times to be transferred out of Gambella—in spite of the hardship allowance to which they are entitled for agreeing to work in Gambella region—due to security concerns. These requests have reportedly been universally rejected, and thus the Highlander workers feel that they have been forced by the government to either remain in Gambella region at the risk of their security and the security of their families, or move to a new place where they will be unemployed.

#### **f. Insufficient or Non-Existent Supervision by Regional Government Staff of Field-Based Structures**

Many of the key staff and specialists in the Regional Offices are of Highlander origin. An important percentage of them are from outside of the region of Gambella—attracted to the region by the +40% on basic salary hardship allowance and other advantages (such as the ability to be supported for a masters degree after 3 years of service, instead of 5, as in other regions). Given the ongoing conflict, they are not particularly motivated to leave the capital, Gambella, and supervise activities that are going on in rural areas. Indeed, many of them are even nervous to leave the town even when being transported by UNICEF or other agencies. The consequences of this lack of supervision are felt at many levels:

- Woreda offices are desperately in need of financial, structural—many have no equipment and are based in local tukuls—and technical support and training as most of their officers are politically appointed and rarely visited. The problems of the Woreda offices are thus

not understood at the regional level. An example of occurred during the recent Polio vaccination campaign (October 2005), when the Regional Health Bureau provided funds to the Woreda offices to either hire vehicles or run their existing vehicles: in the Woreda of Dimma the vehicle was broken down beyond repair; in Jikawo woreda there are no vehicles available to rent;

- The politicized nature of the Woreda offices and the competition between the two major indigenous groups of the region – the Anuak and the Nuer – is allowed to flourish due to the lack of supervision. This manifests itself in, for example, the exaggeration of population figures to the benefit of one or another group leading to poor allocation of limited resources;
- Delays to completion of projects. A list of 16 schools, drawn up by UNICEF for a joint Regional Education Bureau / UNICEF project for the rehabilitation of the schools and support to the pupils / teachers, was rejected in its entirety by the Regional Education Bureau as all the schools were considered unsafe to visit. The list included the only schools in zone capitals and woreda capitals. UNICEF staff had selected the schools based on the criteria that they were safe, accessible, secure and staffed;
- At the field level itself, the lack of training and support at woreda level is similarly amplified down to the level of the staff in the individual structures; quality (above all) suffers.

The result of all this is a reduction in the overall quality and quantity of services being offered by government structures to the end users at the field level in Gambella. It manifests itself in breaks in the supply line of drugs to health centres, poor standards of teaching and nursing, unreported breaks in water points, falsification of information coming from the field, and a general lack of information about the reality of what is happening outside of the main towns.

#### **g. Lack of Rehabilitation**

It has been very difficult to address the structural needs of the government services affected by the conflict:

- High unit costs: the difficulties in access and the distance from Addis Ababa mean, for example, that the cost of building a latrine or drilling a well in Gambella is significantly higher than anywhere else in the country;
- Security: specialist contractors employed by the government who come into the region from outside of Gambella are particularly prudent and will not work anywhere where they feel that there is a potential risk;

- Access: the long rainy season and the hot dry season mean that work, at a reduced rate of efficiency, can only be completed between the end of December and early June in most of the region.

The overall effect of the above is that the physical state of structures providing basic services in the region is worsening. What little work is being done is insufficient to stop the gradual degradation of the existing services due to neglect of regular maintenance work and the effects of conflict.

The overall state of government provided basic social services at this time is extremely poor and, if anything, getting worse. The result of this is an increasingly vulnerable population.

The lack of any central government support in the agricultural sector (except in the profit making government run state cotton farms) is causing reduced yields for the majority of farmers (of one sort or another) in the region. Yet the agricultural potential of the region—according to the Agriculture office of Gambella—is at least 10 times its present level of exploitation.

The lack of potential job opportunities, alienation, the ongoing circle of violence and the increasing poverty of the region has made the possibility of joining the ‘rebels’ an increasingly attractive option for many young men—particularly the Anuaks.

#### **h. Justice Sector**

The deterioration in governance and all aspects of societal and administrative structures in Gambella, combined with the security and protection situation, and a profound lack of capacity, has also affected the justice sector. There are reportedly more than 700 prisoners detained in the Gambella prison. Estimates are that most of the prisoners have been arbitrarily arrested, held without charge, or held post-charge but pre-trial, for periods of up to two years. Ethiopian law and international law standards of due process are thus being systematically violated in the criminal justice process in Gambella region.

The study revealed that some of those working in the justice system are under political pressure by Regional and Federal authorities to ensure that the detainees not be released. They reported that if they take part in judicial measures to respect due process standards—which most often would lead to the release of these prisoners, because they are held without charge or without any evidence to back a charge—these judicial officials and staff risk losing their positions on accusation of helping the rebels.

There is no juvenile justice system in Gambella: minors are treated as adults in the criminal justice system. Minors are detained as adults and tried—if the case actually reaches trial, which few in Gambella have—as adults. This is in violation of Ethiopian law, and a blatant breach of international obligations arising under the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

In addition and of great concern are reports received by UNICEF during this study that there may be civilians detained by military authorities in military camps in Gambella region. Persons detained under such conditions are being held in direct violation of international human rights law as well as international humanitarian law.

## **SECTION VIII: CASE STUDIES**

### **Case Study [1] Alwero-Peno Woreda: Villages of Opinya and Ilea**

#### **❖ Opinya (Penyao) Village**

The Anuak village of Opinya (also called Penyao) is located on the north shore of the Baro River about 15 miles west (45 minutes by light boat) and downstream from Gambella town; it is also connected to Gambella town along the Itang road. The nearest administrative or police offices of any kind are in Abol, a village slightly to the east which was cited as the source of frequent visits by police.

The village sits some 500 meters from the Baro River and some 10 minutes walk from the road. It is comprised solely of tukuls and tukul compounds surrounded by perimeter fences and there are no functional, basic services in the village.

This study of people's vulnerabilities in Opinya established consistent evidence and patterns of protection violations that have had heavily impacted residents. These include access to the most basic resources or assets, including water, health care, firewood, education and the capacity to pursue even the most rudimentary livelihood, including fishing and farming, or travelling to market.

Emerging from these vulnerability complaints were allegations, eyewitness accounts and personal testimonies of torture, beatings, rapes, looting and destruction of property, arbitrary arrest and detention, and severe restrictions on movements and ordinary life for residents of Opinya. In what has become a common theme elsewhere, many of these—especially rape and torture—were described as routine events. Again, villagers were reluctant to address the impact of the military presence, fearing retaliation, due in part to the possibility of paid informants living amongst them, in part to the fear of being punished for speaking under a climate of impunity for perpetrators, and they appear to continue to suffer mostly in silence.

Vulnerabilities and livelihoods of women and children in Opinya have been greatly impacted by the presence of an ENDF military camp just five to ten minutes walk from Opinya village proper. ENDF soldiers set up a semi-permanent camp abutting Opinya sometime early in the dry

season of 2004 and did not vacate until after July 2005. Because of its proximity, in relative terms, to the Itang road, Opinya has apparently been targeted on the assumption by Federal forces that it is a likely site from which armed assailants—rebels or bandits—come and go and ambush vehicles along the road.

Said one eyewitness to multiple infractions of physical violence: “Since the problem in Gambella the soldiers come often because the ambush [of ARRA] happened in December 2003. They say the people in this village know who killed those people. They come because we are Anuak people.”<sup>27</sup>

Upon their first visits to Opinya—reported by one interviewee to be December 2003—the military reportedly took over the church, the health clinic and the local school and its corral, all of which were looted, and “made them into their living room.”<sup>28</sup>

### **Water and firewood:**

Hand pumps at boreholes in Opinya were reported to have been inoperable for at least the past two years (2003-2005). One interviewee claimed the hand pumps had been intentionally broken by the ENDF military. Because the distance to the river is great (in terms of portaging water), the close proximity of water in the bog between the river and the village was inducing people to bathe in what at the time of the research was a stagnating pool of fetid water full of mud and cow dung; it is possible that people were also taking drinking water from this nearby pool. As the frequency of rains decreased, the pool of water began to dry up and disappear, yet some people continued to use it, partially out of fear for their security, instead of marching through the mud to the distant river. Similarly, women have greatly modified their survival strategy to allow them to venture out of the village to gather firewood.

Said one interviewee: “Nobody moves when EPRDF (ENDF) is here. We can’t even go to the river to wash when soldiers are here. The soldiers come and go—stay two or three days—then go—then come back after two or three days.”<sup>29</sup>

### **Arbitrary arrest, assault and detention without trial:**

Six or seven Anuak police inspectors came to Opinya from Gambella one night in September 2004 and arrested three Anuak women. The women were first accused of “having money” and then for allegedly “providing some food to some Anuak newcomers who passed through the village.” One woman was taken to nearby Abol, where two Highlander police held her. Within a day or two she was transferred to Gambella prison.<sup>30</sup> Another of the three women also arrested at

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<sup>27</sup> Record # K-9: 13 October 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Record # K-9: 13 October 2005.

<sup>29</sup> Record # K-35: 25 October 2005.

<sup>30</sup> Record # K-36: 25 October 2005.



night, was taken to Gambella and kept awake on the street all night; she spent two days in the police station and, subsequently, was transferred to the prison.<sup>31</sup> Both interviewees spent six months in Gambella prison without charge or trial; neither woman saw a lawyer until a few days before their release; both reported being beaten “with hands and sticks” at the time of arrest. They were reluctant to speak of their ordeal.

### **Forced Labour, Detention and Torture:**

Soldiers frequently surrounded Opinya, rounded up villagers, segregated them by gender, and forced them to sit in the courtyard for extended periods of time, without food or water, sometimes under the hot sun, and sometimes for the duration of the day. In one instance they stole the shoes off the feet of detainees. Sometimes ENDF arrived with regional police—Anuaks, Nuers and Highlander police were all cited—and sometimes the police came alone. Such detentions were reportedly frequent after January 2004. There appear to have been constant military incursions into Opinya in July of 2005.

Soldiers reportedly sometimes surprised residents by surrounding the village in pre-dawn raids; other times they searched and looted tukuls at night. Males were often interrogated and sometimes beaten in full view of everyone; sometimes people were taken “out to the road” and when they returned they had been beaten bloody; some have never returned; both males and/or females were arrested for allegedly supporting or aiding armed Anuak factions.

One teenager with a chronic disability incurred as a three-year old child—who suffered a concussion after the handle of the water pump hit him/her on the head—was arrested by Highlander police (named in the interview) who came to Opinya in January of 2004, and he was jailed for six months without charge or trial.<sup>32</sup> The subject was again beaten, along with numerous other young men (some of whom were also arrested and remain in prison) in July 2005; the interviewee claimed that there were between 150 and 200 ENDF soldiers on this date. “If we come from the river or the toilet [bushes] they [soldiers] ask, ‘Where are you coming from? You are talking lie!’ They beat me in July 2005.”

One interviewee described the typical behaviour of the military in one of the most recent military incursions: “Soldiers came in July 2005 by road—maybe 120 soldiers, EPRDF [ENDF]. They surrounded the village. People were just sitting around under trees. They searched every tukul, stole goods, clothes, shoes, radios, mattresses, money—many things. I was here. The soldiers separate out boys over 14, 15, and men, and make them sit off apart from old women and children. They never beat old women. For young women they want to rape them. [Soldiers] always forced young men to work, fetch water and firewood. They usually surround the village at night and wait for morning and wake people up searching their houses in the dark. In July

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<sup>31</sup> Record # K-37: 25 October 2005.

<sup>32</sup> Record # K-39: 25 October 2005.

[2005] when soldiers come they broke into the school and they damaged everything. Why are they trying to make life of children's hard?"<sup>33</sup>

### **Sexual- and Gender-Based Violence:**

Illustrating the extreme vulnerabilities and absence of livelihood, opportunities, assets, justice or recourse is the case of Record # K-38. At first reluctant to speak with our team, but encouraged by older women who knew her story, the interviewee reported problems in all categories of the livelihoods survey.<sup>34</sup>

She is illiterate, a student, and she reported having completed school to grade eight, but she cannot attend school easily, because it is upriver and she has no money. At the time of the interview she was 15. She was married and impregnated at fourteen years old. She reported constant chest pains and coughing and her ten-month old baby was sick with diarrhoea and fever. She cannot afford to go to the hospital in Gambella, and the soldiers occupied and looted the clinic in Opinya, leaving her the only option of suffering in silence.

Her only source of income is making and selling alcohol to the men of the village, an arduous task that reportedly provides—under cooperative weather conditions—no more than 60 to 80 birr (6-9 dollars) per month. She is not allowed to collect firewood by the older women of the village who have tried to protect her from being raped by ENDF soldiers. She is afraid to move—even in the village—after dark and, anyway, the soldiers have forbidden people of Opinya from leaving their tukuls at night.

On the day the soldiers came to Opinya she had just come back from Gambella. It was January or February 2004. She recounts her experience: "I didn't take off my clothes. I was just standing there in my home [tukul] when two [EPRDF] soldiers come. One stand outside with a gun and the other two in the tukul try to take my clothes off. Then one catch me and I was crying loudly and the other catch me and one rape me in my tukul. One soldier held my legs and the other soldier rape me. I was crying loudly. They said they will kill me if I don't stop crying loudly. Then after they leave me. They are EPRDF soldiers. They take some things from me and they leave me."

The interviewee claims she went with family to Gambella police station two days after the rape and reported the rape but nothing happened. Her only possessions—a mattress, some clothes, some little money—were stolen from her in subsequent visits by soldiers in 2005.

Another interviewee noted the irony of soldiers confining the people of Opinya to their tukuls at night, where the soldiers have come again and again knocking on doors to try to rape women and girls: "They have been trying to rape women. When the women are sleeping they come and

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<sup>33</sup> Record # K-35: 25 October 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Record # K-38: 25 October 2005.

knock on the door. Since January 2005 they have been trying to get girls but they sometimes couldn't.”<sup>35</sup>

### **Complaints and official investigation:**

Complaints were filed in several cases noted above. According to several sources, many residents who were beaten in July 2005 went together to the Gambella police station and waited, in Gambella, for one week, for the police to take some action; apparently, no action was taken, after a week they left as they needed to continue to work in their village in order to provide them with something to live on.

According to one witness, complaints have been filed with the Kebele chairman who, in turn, has sent letters to the Woreda administration. The witness claimed that nothing was ever done, and that there was no response at all. He also said that police have sometimes come in response to complaints but that soldiers are always gone by the time the police arrive: they see that people have been beaten but they never catch anyone. “We can complain to the Woreda administration but it costs us money to go and we get no response.”<sup>36</sup>

The above case study, with the collaboration of witnesses and the many names given, offers a more than representative sampling and apt description of violation of rights in this village. The time available did not permit a more comprehensive study of the population of this village, though two lengthy visits were made, but it is extremely likely that the accounts and the numbers of violations recorded do not show the full scale of the suffering there was, and is, in Opinya.

When asked what people will do when soldiers return, people have said: “We are thinking we will have to leave this place, but this is our home, and we do not know where to go.”

### **❖ Ilea Village**

The village of Ilea offers another exemplary case study revealing the relationships between the livelihoods and vulnerabilities of women and children and the protection realities they are facing due to the security situation in their area.

Ilea is a typical Anuak village of tukuls located on the southern bank of the Baro River and approximately 40 minutes by road west of Gambella town. Ilea is also approximately 20 minutes east of two Chinese petroleum camps established in 2004 near Pouldeng, now a Nuer zone. There are two functional hand pumps and the damaged structures of a health centre and a school, neither of which have any staff to work in them.

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<sup>35</sup> Record # K-9: 13 October 2005.

<sup>36</sup> Record # K-35: 25 October 2005.

Numbers of people in Ilea have reportedly increased over the last two years due to an influx of Anuaks who were displaced from their traditional lands by Nuers of the Thiang sub-clan—the Thiang Nuers were themselves displaced from villages of Makuach, Teluit, Puoldeng and Kuergang following conflicts with the Chengajaanwi sub-clan and with Lou Nuers who penetrated the Akobo and Jikawo zones of Gambella from eastern Sudan in January and February 2004.

Federal Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) troops reportedly first arrived in Ilea immediately following the ambush of the Administration for Refugee and Returnee (ARRA) vehicle and the subsequent outbreak of violence in Gambella town from December 13-15, 2003. Residents in Ilea cited a permanent military presence in the village from January 2004 to at least July, and possibly August 2005. ENDF troops established a permanent military camp within 300 meters of Ilea village, to provide and ensure security of petroleum operations along the corridor from Gambella town to the Chinese camps near Pouldeng. With the arrival of the rainy season, and the suspension of petroleum operations and closure of the Chinese military camp, the ENDF soldiers subsequently pulled out circa August 2005.

A survey of people's vulnerabilities in Ilea resulted in reports of major problems from January 2004 to August 2005. These included access to the most basic resources or assets, including water, health care, firewood, education and the capacity to pursue even the most rudimentary livelihood.

Emerging from these vulnerability complaints were allegations and eyewitness accounts of extrajudicial killings, shootings, beatings, torture, rape and sexual assaults, and severe restrictions on movements of Ilea villagers. Many of these—especially rape and beatings—were described as routine events.

Villagers were reluctant to address the impact of the military presence, fearing retaliation, and they appear to continue to suffer mostly in silence.

**Water:**

While there are two hand pumps for water in Ilea, it is unclear how many, or for how long, certain pumps in Ilea have been inoperable. Residents complained of inaccessibility or inoperability of these hand pumps due to an overwhelming presence by ENDF forces pumping water for their own needs.

Soldiers were described as monopolizing the main pump, located in the heart of the village, throughout the daylight hours, and abusing, threatening, intimidating, beating or driving away women and girls who arrived or waited at the pumps for access to water.

Residents explained how they were forced to wait with plastic jerry cans in long queues while soldiers in a separate queue controlled the pumps. Any complaint or interruption by residents was met with intimidation, abuse, threats or direct violence. Soldiers apparently came in groups of 20 to 30, one after the other, rotating into the village and occupying the pumps for half or full days at a time.

Residents complained of being targeted for sexual violence after they were forced to go to the river to fetch water; similar accounts emerged regarding ENDF attention to women who went to the river to bathe. Reports of rape in Ilea are frequent, but the scale remains unverified. Given the reticence and taboos in Anuak culture about speaking about rape, it is clear nonetheless that sexual violence by ENDF soldiers has been significant.

According to one woman: “In the dry season when we go to fetch water the soldiers are bothering us. They are just coming to women who are bathing and causing problems.”<sup>37</sup>

It should be noted that the additional stress and strain on the already destitute and energetically weakened population of Ilea is exacerbated by the difficult chore, assigned to women and girls, of hauling water from the banks Baro River to the huts of those in need; distances range from 50 meters to perhaps 350 or 400 meters. The same can be said of the arduous burden of collecting firewood under threat of violence.

### **Firewood:**

Residents complained that women were consistently targeted when they ventured out of the immediate confines of the tukul village in search of firewood. Over time, as everywhere, areas closest to the village have been depleted of adequate fuel sources, requiring that women venture farther into the bush—further increasing their isolation and vulnerability to attacks.

The interviewee above claimed to have eye-witnessed one shooting (June/July 2004) and one beating (March 2005). The interviewee stated: “When the sun is up we [women] can go in a group to collect firewood. When the sun is down we can’t go where the soldiers are. If you do they ask you questions and if you don’t answer they may shoot you. The soldiers are always in the bush but we never know where they will find us, when they catch us.”<sup>38</sup>

According to another interviewee: “Now men go for firewood; we keep the women in the village. Soldiers come to the village to look for food but also for girls by using the food issue—like they need a chicken—as an excuse to look for girls to rape. And they steal the chicken too.”<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Record # K-6: 12 October 2005.

<sup>38</sup> Record # K-6: 12 October 2005.

<sup>39</sup> Record # K-3: 12 October 2005.

### **Freedom of Movement:**

Restrictions on freedom of movement by villagers in Ilea extended well beyond collecting firewood and fetching water from the Baro River. Residents expressed a general fear of moving anywhere outside the immediate areas of village huts during the day, and a heightened and constant fear of sudden violence by ENDF soldiers at night. Men and boys venturing to the river to wash or to fish, or to farm in their fields, were routinely accosted, interrogated and sometimes beaten. Several men were shot outright when soldiers saw them returning to the village through the fields. Many men reportedly fled Ilea for Gambella, Pinyudo or Pochalla (Sudan) to avoid being accused of being “rebels” or “shifta,” and subsequently targeted.

One interviewee was shot twice, once in December 2003 and again in May 2004, both times in Ilea.<sup>40</sup> He was also an eyewitness to the shooting dead of a student returning to Ilea from the fields. Men who fled Ilea were cited by interviewees in other villages, where they passed through, for the trauma they endured and the stories they carried with them. In testimony taken in Opinya, for example, one interviewee reported: “In February 2004 many boys passed through Opinya escaping from Ilea [where they were beaten]. This is how we learned what was happening [to Anuaks].” The same interviewee in Opinya reported that the transient men from Ilea were also talking about rapes in Ilea [in February 2004].<sup>41</sup>

Soldiers also inculcated terror in the local villagers by shooting for their target practice near the village, in the direction of the village. Said one interviewee “When soldiers were here they were shooting the target and they are shooting near here and they tell us not to go out there. So we could not collect firewood.”<sup>42</sup>

International staff for one humanitarian organization working in the Gambella region confirmed that the placement of the shooting range for the ENDF military camp at Ilea was such that bullets were flying in the general direction of the village.

### **Complaints and official investigation:**

One government official interviewed in Gambella—who was born and raised in Ilea—reported that he travelled to Ilea to investigate the growing complaints against the military, and that he met with the military commander on site in an effort to address the problems. The interviewee stated: “The soldiers broke the [water] pumps—all three—because they are pumping twenty-four hours. I went there to see. We know that in Ilea the soldiers go to the river and rape women—[a lot of] sexual abuse and rape. This was happening too much, so we went there in February 2005.”

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<sup>40</sup> Record # K-7: 12 October 2005.

<sup>41</sup> Record # K-39: 25 October 2005.

<sup>42</sup> Record # K-4: 12 October 2005.

“I talked with the commander [named]. He was here [Gambella town] as the commander in December 2003. He was in Ilea with his troops. He was commander in Gambella [Dec. 2003] then Abobo and then Ilea. He say this: ‘Give us the name of the soldiers’ but he didn’t do anything and people don’t know the names of the soldiers.”<sup>43</sup>

“If they [ENDF] are there they will do that because they [ENDF] have guns. My brother went to Ilea and he was shot by [ENDF] soldiers in Ilea when filling water by the hand pump.”<sup>44</sup>

One elderly interviewee who claimed to have been sick for three years also had a child with an infected leg. The interviewee noted the impossibility of identifying soldiers who have violated basic protections because ENDF soldiers are always being rotated and transferred in and out of other areas: “They have been changing: some come, some go... The soldiers just want people to leave this land, this area. We do not feel safe. We are just fearing that they will kill us and we are suffering from that.”<sup>45</sup>

Residents of Ilea also indicated that complaints were frequently made to the Kabele chairman. One interviewee claims to have confronted the Kabele chairman with numerous rapes each time a rape occurred and became known to him during his stay with his family in Ilea in July 2005.<sup>46</sup>

Villagers in Ilea lived in an intense state of anxiety and fear, unsure what abuses the soldiers might commit or who might be targeted next. Even after the effort by the regional government official to mitigate the violence by soldiers, no action was taken by police or military to stem the abuse and terrorization of the people of Ilea. As of October 2005, the villagers were living in constant anxiety about the impending return of the military to the nearby encampment in support of the reopening of the Chinese petroleum camp at the end of the rainy season. (Soldiers returned in November 2005.)

The investigation was limited in time and scope, and efforts to return to Ilea to further investigate vulnerabilities and protection were thwarted by ongoing logistical issues surrounding security in the Gambella region. However, we believe that this case study offers a representative sampling and apt description of protection issues that were much greater in scale and nature.

### **Case Study [2]: Dimma Woreda**

As an introduction to the Dimma region, one western humanitarian expert—who had worked throughout Gambella State for over a year—said: “Dimma is a big mix. It’s the wild, wild, west: there are allegations of big killings. There’s the presence of Surma nomads, a tribe of warriors from the Southern Nations who never went to school: they are out of control; they all have

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<sup>43</sup> Record # KG-8: 14 November 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Record # KG-8: 14 November 2005.

<sup>45</sup> Record # K-2: 12 October 2005.

<sup>46</sup> Record # KG-11: 12 October 2005.

Kalashnikovs in their hands. And then there are the gold-washers who feel they have been completely forgotten.”<sup>47</sup>

A survey of vulnerabilities of women and children in Dimma Woreda established consistent evidence and patterns of protection violations that have had a devastating impact on the residents. These included access to the most basic resources or assets, including water, health care, firewood, education and the capacity to pursue even the most rudimentary livelihood, including fishing and farming, or travelling to market.

Vulnerabilities and livelihoods of women and children in Dimma Woreda have been greatly impacted—sometimes favourably but usually devastatingly—by the presence of ENDF military who flooded the region in January and February of 2004. This military influx followed on the heels of massive international law violations committed by armed Anuak groups.

Protection violations committed by ENDF and Anuak rebel groups in Dimma Woreda include allegations of beatings, rape, looting, destruction of property, arbitrary arrest and detention, and severe restrictions on movements and ordinary life for residents. Also emerging from these vulnerability complaints were allegations, eyewitness accounts, personal testimonies and reports from officials of killings by both ENDF soldiers and armed Anuak groups, the latter of which—Anuak rebels—have also repeatedly looted and burned to the ground Anuak villages.

According to one official who was present when Anuak rebels burned the Anuak village of Bandera to the ground three times, once in February 2004, once in April 2005 (third date not given): “Rebels blame farmers for showing ENDF where rebels are. That is the imagination of the rebels—but we are farmers here. The rebels may beat us and if they do we may inform the military. We do not know anything about them [rebels]. People in this village have relations with ENDF. When the rebels beat us the military come and provide security for us.”<sup>48</sup>

The same interviewee said: “I think the [EPRDF] government would like to get rid of the Anuak people and they try to do this but some outside visitors or governments put pressure on the government to stop [violence] and so they stop.”<sup>49</sup>

Notably, there are at least fifteen Anuak villages west of Dimma town and north of the Akobo river: only three of these were reached: Gedu, Merkez and Bandera. (Based on the very limited mapping exercise this team completed—see the attached map of the Dimma Woreda—there are likely many small villages, throughout the region, that remain unmarked). Given the heavy presence of Anuak rebels in this area, it is likely that the extent and nature of the protection issues outlined below only scratch the surface of what has actually occurred.

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<sup>47</sup> ICRC interview, Gambella, October, 2005.

<sup>48</sup> Record # K-50: 29 October 2005.

<sup>49</sup> Record # K-50: 29 October 2005.



Indeed, reports are that major insurgency by Anuak rebels and ENDF in the far western region of Dimma Woreda have driven the local population to extraordinary misery and vulnerability, with ongoing events occurring in late 2005.

Said one official in Dimma in October 2005: “There is no food, no water, no clinic, in Achanya, and no village nearby, so the people are really in need. Also in Okwatch and Okwenyweny and Okwaa—people are scattering. Okwatch village fell apart because people left that area [due to] fighting between ENDF and rebels. When ENDF reached that village they burned it, and people want to come back but they are afraid. I’m going to write a letter to Regional Government because people are just scattering and dying.”<sup>50</sup>

Many people of Dimma Woreda are terrified into silence: as usual, people were reluctant to address the impact of the military presence, fearing retaliation, due in part to the fear of informants, in part to the fear of being punished for speaking under a climate of impunity for perpetrators, and they appear to continue to suffer mostly in silence.

Since the violence of December 2003 and January 2004 that spread throughout Gambella, the populations of the region have shifted their places of residence, altering the demographic composition from village to village, and the vulnerabilities of the population have changed in nature.

Underscoring this problem are survivor stories like this one told by a 28 year-old Anuak man in Gedu [paraphrased]: “I’ve been in Gedu one year now. Before the problem time [13-15 December 2003] I was in Gambella. When things calmed down I went to Gog. In Gog I found things were not peaceful and I decided to go to Pochalla, Sudan. I left Gog in January 2004 for four months. Then I went back to Pinyudo until September 2004, but it was not good in Pinyudo—everyone was killing and beating Anuaks—so I came back to Gedu. Since the problem, I’ve been running everywhere and I couldn’t get any rest or any work.”<sup>51</sup>

The Anuak population in Dimma town has decreased since early 2004, when many fled; most have never returned. There are no Anuak business owners in Dimma town. Some Anuaks in the region are farmers, others are gold diggers/washers, and a few of these have families who follow them as they shift from place to place. Many support wives and children in other Woredas. Anuaks also fill many government and official positions in Dimma Woreda.<sup>52</sup>

Understanding current vulnerabilities and protection issues requires establishing some background into how things got the way they are. Hence this case study on Dimma Woreda will begin by addressing in detail the violence that rippled out of Gambella in December 2003, and rocked the Dimma region.

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<sup>50</sup> Record # K-62: 31 October 2005.

<sup>51</sup> Record # K-54: 29 October 2005.

<sup>52</sup> Record # K-61: 31 October 2005.

### **22-27 January 2004: Dimma Gold Mining Areas**

Prior to December 2003, Highlanders and Anuaks in the gold mining areas reportedly lived together with relative calm. The indigenous populations of Gessena, Korkora, Majoch and Tubwa—along with the Kebele militia and Kebele leaders—were entirely or almost entirely Anuak. Nonetheless, the Highlander population had been working the gold business in that region for years, and the Highlanders reported that prior to the time of violence they felt genuinely protected by the Kebele militia in spite of the fact that they were of a different ethnicity.

Rebels became very active in Dimma Woreda after problems occurred in Gambella town in December 2003. Our team uncovered consistent allegations that armed Anuaks returning from Pochalla, Sudan, killed people all along their route (Gedu, Addis Kamp, Tubwa, Majoch and Aroge-Megera).

According to highly confidential Anuak sources whose independent testimonies closely corroborate each other: Anuaks from Gambella and Pinyudo who fled to Pochalla, Sudan after the December 2003 problems organized themselves and came to Dimma to take revenge for the killings of Anuaks in Gambella.

One Highlander interviewed in Majoch, who claimed he was at the time of the initial attacks panning for gold in the bush between the two villages of Akobo Dar and Shamu, not far from Gedu, alleged that Anuak rebels began killing people in the area in early January, some “fifteen days before the conflict in Dimma town” [of 26-29 January 2005]. The rebels allegedly tied some people’s hands, killed them with sharp weapons, and threw them in a hole near Shamu.<sup>53</sup>

In mid-January 2004, two Anuak officials from the Dimma Woreda allegedly met with the rebels after they began killing people along their path. The Anuak officials attempted to dissuade the Anuak rebels from taking revenge on Highlanders by convincing them that the people of Dimma Woreda were not involved in what happened in Gambella. The Anuak rebels accused the Anuak officials of collaborating with the government and reportedly shot them dead.<sup>54</sup>

The Anuak rebels reportedly moved to Gedu village on 26 January 2004, where they allegedly killed three Highlanders: two men, one woman.<sup>55</sup> The rebels crossed the Akobo River to Addis Kamp and reportedly killed Highlanders there, also on approximately 26 January 2004.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Record # K-58: 30 October 2005.

<sup>54</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005; Record # K-62: October 31, 2005; Record # K-64: October 27, 2005.

<sup>55</sup> Given the distances and walking times cited by locals, it would have been difficult for anyone—on foot in rough country—to move from Gedu to Addis Kamp to Tubwa to Majoch—killing people in each town along the way—all in a single day. Hence all dates given herein could be thought of with some level of uncertainty, perhaps of a couple

Testimonies from Highlander survivors, confirmed by Anuak officials in Dimma town, indicate that on 26 January 2004 Anuak rebels from the bush joined with Anuak Kebele militia—in a pre-planned and coordinated response to the December incidents in Gambella—to brutally slaughter between 200 and 350 civilian women, children and men in the Tubwa-Majoch gold mining area.<sup>57</sup>

Based on different accounts, it is possible that there were at least two Anuak rebel contingents who descended on the gold mining areas from different directions: one group attacking camps from Gedu to Majoch; the second group attacking from Addisu Neche Dingay. According to one Anuak official from Dimma town: “They [Anuak rebels] killed all ethnic groups in these villages.”<sup>58</sup>

Reports from Majoch state that the attacks against the camps of Addisu Neche Dingay and Addisu Megeera occurred first, and that the survivors of those killings fled along the road to the Majoch camp. The Anuak Kebele militia instructed the people of Majoch—frightened residents and fleeing IDPs from other villages—to remain in Majoch, that they would be protected.<sup>59</sup>

One witness reported that civilians only remained because they were reassured by the Anuak Militia—many of whom had previously gained the trust of the people of Majoch—who told them to look out into the bush (it is possible in some places to see far off into the low hills and valleys of the surrounding shrub desert) and notice that the military were approaching; the assurance of protection offered the population a sense of imminent security with the arrival of ENDF troops.<sup>60</sup>

Interviewees alleged that when rebels approached Majoch from the bush, the Highlander civilians saw that they were in fact well-armed and uniformed in military garb, but that they were not ENDF but Anuak rebels. As the rebels approached the Majoch camp, the Anuak Kebele militia turned on the Highlanders they had promised to defend and began shooting at them. Some who fled were caught at the outer rim of the camp—which was by this time surrounded by Anuak rebels—and killed there. Reportedly, following the killings, Anuak civilians and rebels looted money and other valuables from the homes of the Highlander population.<sup>61</sup>

Some Anuaks allegedly died in the crossfire. One Highlander witness who understands Anuak reported that she heard the Anuak Rebel leader say to the Anuak militia: “Kill only the

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of days; on the other hand, locals seem capable of completing otherwise unimaginable marches through hostile bush without food, water or rest.

<sup>56</sup> Record # K-60: 30 October 2005; Record # K-62: 30 October 2005; Record # K-64: 27 October 2005.

<sup>57</sup> Record # M-38: 30 October 2005; Record # M-39: 30 October 2005; Record # M-43: 31 October 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Record # K-59: 30 October 2005.

<sup>59</sup> Record # M-38: 30 October 2005; Record # M-39: 30 October 2005; Record # M-42: 30 October 2005.

<sup>60</sup> Record # M-42: 30 October 2005.

<sup>61</sup> Record # M-38: 30 October 2005; Record # M-39: 30 October 2005; Record # M-40: 30 October 2005; Record # M-42: 30 October 2005; Record # M-43: 31 October 2005.

Highlanders.”<sup>62</sup> The entire Anuak population reportedly fled in the direction of the villages of Merkez, Gedu, Bandera and Awaya, and have not returned since.

It is unclear the extent to which the Anuak civilian residents of Majoch were aware of this plan prior to its occurrence. One witness reported that in the weeks prior to the massacre, one Anuak militiaman and one Anuak rebel were going door to door in the Anuak community in an attempt to recruit the population. Apparently one of those involved in this was arrested and imprisoned by the military prior to the massacre.<sup>63</sup>

Some Highlander residents who fled returned with ENDF the next couple of days to assess the damage, find survivors and bury the dead. Three of these Highlander residents reported discovering gruesome scenes among the dead. Examples include two naked women tied together, back-to-back, by their arms; one woman lying naked with a stick in her vagina; one woman and her child burned to death in their home; one child hanged from a tree; one man and one woman, both naked, placed in the position of sexual intercourse and killed.<sup>64</sup>

Highlanders in these Kebeles had not been armed: only the Kebele militia (Anuaks) were armed. Thus, they were entirely unable to protect themselves, and too far away from any assistance to get any outside protection. Reports also cited killings in the other gold mining settlements of Addisu Neche Dingay, Tubwa and Addisu Kamp, likely evidencing higher numbers from the entire area.<sup>65</sup>

The village of Tubwa is reported to be only three hours walk from the Sudan border. One Highlander businessman interviewed in Tubwa alleged that he personally counted 192 dead in the Majoch massacre. Most were Highlanders, he said, but there were also some Surma and Opo people. He also claimed that no one was killed in Tubwa, they all had escaped to Majoch. He reported that UNHCR, ICRC, and Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA)<sup>66</sup> brought tents and food after the rebels attacked Tubwa [but it was not clarified if the tents and food went to Tubwa or Majoch].<sup>67</sup>

Nuers, Anuaks and Highlanders comprise the majority of police forces in Dimma town; there are also a few Majengers and Opo. One police source explained that police were not able to visit the gold mining areas after the violence due to the heavy ENDF search and cordon operations that followed on the heels of the massacres of Highlanders. The source cited with certainty that at

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<sup>62</sup> Record # M-42: 30 October 2005.

<sup>63</sup> Record # M-43: 31 October 2005.

<sup>64</sup> Record # M-38: 30 October 2005; Record # M-39: 30 October 2005; Record # M-43: 31 October 2005.

<sup>65</sup> Record # M-38: 30 October 2005; Record # M-39: 30 October 2005; Record # M-40: 30 October 2005; Record # M-42: 30 October 2005; Record # M-43: 31 October 2005.

<sup>66</sup> The Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) is an Ethiopian government institution and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees' (UNHCR) primary implementing partner in the refugee camps in Ethiopia.

<sup>67</sup> Record # K-57: 30 October 2005: The Omo are another black, minority indigenous group in the Gambella region.

least 56 Highlanders killed in Addis Kamp, 48 in Majoch. “At that time it was the soldiers who investigated so we [regional police] cannot know how many were killed. What they told us here is that ‘it is the Anuak who are killing people in those villages.’ ”<sup>68</sup>

One regional government official reported 90 people total killed in Majoch and Addisu Kamp. “People are exaggerating the numbers of dead [both Anuaks and Highlanders] in these places,” he said. “The military went there and counted these numbers [bodies] in the towns and in the bush. The same is true in the bush around Dimma: actually, we can’t know how many Anuaks died but we found fifteen bodies in the bush outside Dimma.”<sup>69</sup>

### **28-29 January 2004: Dimma Town**

The surviving Highlander population fled Majoch, Tubwa and other areas, running to Gessena, Korkora and finally to Dimma town. Two officials reported 21 to 23 Anuak civilians killed in Korkora in retaliatory attacks by Highlanders on approximately January 25-28, 2004.<sup>70</sup>

According to all reports, Highlanders fleeing the gold mining areas under attack by the rebels (January 2004) arrived in Dimma town—some apparently in very rough condition due to the difficult trek and days without water or food. The numbers are unclear, but one official source estimated no less than 1000 and perhaps up to 7000 Highlander IDPs arrived in Dimma town.<sup>71</sup>

In the next day or two the highlander population became increasingly angry and violent: most estimates confer that between 20 and 30 Anuak women, girls and men were confirmed killed in Dimma town on or around 28 or 29 January 2004 in retaliatory attacks.<sup>72</sup> There were at least six people seriously wounded. People were clubbed with pangas (a crude axe) on their heads, arms and legs. Wounded were later taken by police to Mattu Hospital near Gambella. Most of the Anuak population of Dimma town fled in the direction of Merkez, or ran into the bush, prior to the start or after.<sup>73</sup>

The military and rebels have apparently engaged in major fire fights over the past two years but the information about these is hard to come by. One firelight allegedly occurred in Gedu town on 29 January 2004, after the ENDF forces returned from Majoch and Addisu Kamp, took a truckload of soldiers and engaged Anuak rebels allegedly coming from the Majoch/Tubwa areas; one rebel was reportedly killed. This is the same day as the killings of Anuak civilians in Dimma town, and this is the reason most ENDF were reportedly absent from Dimma town.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

<sup>69</sup> Record # K-62: 31 October 2005.

<sup>70</sup> Records # K-60, K-62: interviewed on 31 October 2005 and again on 1 November 2005.

<sup>71</sup> Record # K-62: 31 October 2005.

<sup>72</sup> Record # M-44: 31 October 2005.

<sup>73</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

<sup>74</sup> Record # K-62: 31 October 2005.

Several interviewees and eyewitnesses to killings strongly implicated ARRA in the attacks against Anuaks in Dimma town. According to these, on 28 or 29 January 2004, the Highlander population, armed with weapons obtained from ARRA, and accompanied by the military, went through town in search of Anuaks. Said one interviewee: “ARRA provided pangas and made them sharp for killing.”<sup>75</sup>

Another claimed that Highlanders went with the pangas to the ARRA compound, where “a technician from ARRA sharpened the pangas”, before ENDF grouped together with Highlanders attacked Anuaks throughout the town. He alleged that Anuak Woreda administrators collected the surviving Anuak and brought them to the gate outside the ARRA camp. He cited eighteen Anuaks reported killed, but believes it was many more. He said most Anuaks fled to Pochalla, Sudan, but that many died of exposure in the bush.<sup>76</sup>

The coordination of the Highlander attack, with military and ARRA support, is widely alleged. One interviewee recounted the timing and organization: “When the Highlanders reached [Dimma] they got pangas from ARRA and they came from the ARRA camp. They had an appointed time and they filled the road looking for Anuak. When it was around 12 noon they just started killing and shooting Anuaks.” The witness claimed he and others saw two Anuak health bureau officials killed: first surrounded, an ENDF soldier pointed his gun at them and then Highlanders with pangas hacked them to death. “We couldn’t even bury them—their bodies were taken and we don’t know where.”<sup>77</sup>

One Anuak official was protected by ENDF as he escaped in a car. He saw one Anuak man killed next to his car and the ENDF shot off his gun when Highlanders stoned the car. He alleged that ENDF arrested Anuak men who were running from other villages, made them collect the dead bodies in a truck, drove them out to the bush and forced the Anuak men to bury them in a mass grave. The detainees—reportedly covered in blood—were jailed in the ARRA compound, later transferred to Gambella prison (where they allegedly remain). The official eventually worked with police to gather surviving Anuaks and escort them to an area outside the ARRA camp where they demanded ENDF protection. Joined by Anuaks from the bush who had fled other villages, the mostly Anuak women and children were camped outside the ARRA camp for at least 16 days with some ENDF protection. He later went with another official and located the mass grave. They found 15 dead bodies in the bush on the way.<sup>78</sup>

According to one police source, of the entire Dimma Regional police force only seven Highlander police officers felt sufficiently secure to enter the town and try to calm the violence. In addition, by January 28, 2004, sixty-six of the approximately 100-man strong military force

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<sup>75</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

<sup>76</sup> Record # K-59: 31 October 2005.

<sup>77</sup> Record # K-64: 27 October 2005.

<sup>78</sup> Record # K-62: 31 October 2005.

reportedly present in Dimma when the violence erupted had been sent to outlying areas to deal with violence there. Thus, only 33 military remained in Dimma town. The seven police and 33 military were insufficient to quell the angry violence, and as a result, they were unable to prevent the deaths of Anuaks; at the same time, some ENDF participated in the killing.<sup>79</sup>

According to one interviewee, the ENDF confiscated the weapons of all Anuak police after the killing began in Dimma town; ENDF arrived at the police station and took machine guns and other weapons. One Anuak policeman reported that they tried without weapons to protect Anuaks from the attack: "They [ENDF] took my gun and they said: 'We are still planning to kill you, all of Anuak.'"<sup>80</sup>

One local official alleged that Murle rebels were also mixing with the Anuak rebels in January 2004, though Anuak rebels predominated. The official was arbitrarily arrested and detained by the military on 6 January 2004 at the ENDF military prison located inside the ARRA compound in Dimma town; he was detained for at least thirty days. This interviewee, as well as others, reported that the military have a camp and a weapons cache inside the ARRA compound both of which allegedly remained functional through 2004 and 2005 and until the time of the team's visit in October. The interviewee said: "ARRA and the military have good relations."<sup>81</sup>

Another interviewee reported that he had been arrested during the violence in Dimma town and taken to the military prison in the ARRA compound, where he was held illegally for three months. He was guarded by military guards, and routinely interrogated and beaten. One official estimated at least 44 Anuaks detained in the ARRA compound since about 1 February 2005.<sup>82</sup>

The direct collaboration between ARRA and the military appears to have been blatant and coordinated in Dimma. Indeed even today, the only secure area of Dimma town is the ARRA compound: security is provided for WFP, UNHCR and other international NGOs there, as well as for refugees and families of compound residents and workers.

In March 2004 there was another firelight between rebels and ENDF along the Gog-Dimma road; at least two ENDF allegedly died.<sup>83</sup>

By February 2004, ENDF in Dimma increased to over 1000 in number. There were reportedly numerous military camps established in the Dimma area; one in Dimma town across the Akobo river bridge, another on the Anuak side of Dimma town, and more in the outlying villages of

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<sup>79</sup> Record # M-44: 31 October 2005.

<sup>80</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

<sup>81</sup> Record # K-59: 31 October 2005; Record # M-28: 27 October 2005; Record M-29: 28 October 2005.

<sup>82</sup> Record # K-62: 31 October 2005.

<sup>83</sup> Record # K-62: 01 November 2005.

Merkez, Gedu, Awaya, Koy and Achanya, with further military outposts in smaller villages. Some 40 trucks of ENDF troops arrived in February 2004.<sup>84</sup>

On the day of the Dimma attacks and in weeks to follow many Anuak men and boys were arbitrarily arrested and detained without charge on accusation of being rebels. Detentions and extra-judicial executions of Anuak men were reportedly widespread and have continued to occur throughout the region.<sup>85</sup>

There were reportedly 1565 people—mostly Anuaks—in Gedu before January 2004: the team found 40 in the village on the day of the survey, but villagers reported a population of 500, all in flux, many out mining for gold, many “newcomers.”

Highlanders have gradually returned to the gold mining settlements in small numbers. In Majoch and Tubwa, there are very few Anuaks, and a smattering of Surma and Nuer individuals there. Almost no Anuaks have returned to Majoch.

According to official data from the Dimma Rural Development Bureau, as of October 2005, from a prior population of approximately 3,000 Anuaks and 2,000 Highlanders (plus a few of other ethnicities), Majoch has some 1347 people, and Tubwa 1589 people, both predominantly Highlanders. However, UNICEF observed that the populations of these places are in fact dramatically smaller than the officials reported. While formerly much larger, the Anuak populations are today 470 at Bandera; 420 at Merkez (reportedly had a population of over 2600); 385 at Awaya. No Anuaks have returned after being displaced from Korkora. During vaccinations, UNICEF staff found only six children under age five in Majoch, and eleven in Tubwa. In Gessena, there were nineteen children under age five.

In the Dimma region, Anuak rebel activity has targeted both Highlander and Anuak civilians. In fact, in the heavily Anuak areas along the road from Dimma towards Gilo Woreda, Anuak civilians reported that these wholly Anuak villages had been attacked numerous times in 2004 and 2005 by Anuak rebels, houses burned, looted, and threatened. The residents of these villages seem to be squeezed between attacks by Anuak rebels, and current efforts by Dimma authorities (military, administrative and police) to conduct sweeps targeting alleged rebels and alleged rebel supporters or collaborators.<sup>86</sup>

Very few of the civilians who fled Dimma Woreda in the 2004 violence have returned; each village we visited reported that less than half—in some cases only 25 percent—of the prior population has returned from Sudan or areas near the Sudan border. Those who have returned are mostly women, children, and elderly. Some men reportedly return to assess the situation, and many of these are reportedly either arbitrarily arrested and detained for lengths of time with no

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<sup>84</sup> Record # K-64: 27 October 2005.

<sup>85</sup> Record # K-64: 27 October 2005.

<sup>86</sup> Record # K-50: 29 October 2005; Record # K-51: 29 October 2005; Record # M-34: 29 October 2005.



due process rights, and often mistreated in the process, or they see the risks and immediately flee again.<sup>87</sup> These villages have a feeling of being extremely unpopulated, and the houses have been destroyed numerous times such that the village has a temporary atmosphere.

ENDF allegedly pulled out of most outlying areas in August 2005. The ENDF pulled out of Dimma town from 1-5 November 2005. According to ARRA security officials, ENDF were being rotated to other areas: fresh ENDF arrivals were on their way (the day of the interview) to Dimma. The two top ARRA officials claimed that there were no major problems in the region at the time. However, both apparently do not leave the ARRA compound without a military escort (one commented that it would not be safe for him to take a meal at the local Ethiopian Hotel).<sup>88</sup>

One noted that armed Surma are not a problem, since tourists come to see them often, and that any armed Anuaks will be arrested. The same official confirmed numerous reports that armed Surma freely arrive in Dimma town, surrender their weapons while there, and retrieve them when they leave.<sup>89</sup>

“We [ARRA] have a very good relationship with the [ENDF],” he said. “The [ENDF] is here inside the ARRA camp and outside in two places in Dimma town... They are not involved in any politics or administration. If there is a problem they [ENDF] are just sent to pacify the place.”<sup>90</sup>

The heavy military presence in the villages of Dimma Woreda created the same atmosphere of intimidation that the team has found in other areas of Gambella region—the military presence restricts access to water, to firewood, restricts freedom of movement, all due to the threat against women of sexual violence by military and the threat against men of beating or arrest on accusation of being alleged rebels or their affiliates.

In addition, drug use and alcohol use in villages around Dimma appeared to be a universal pastime. By midday in Bandera, Merkez, Gedu and Tubwa, men and women were drunk or high.

The climate of extreme fear continues throughout Dimma Woreda, and a few of those approached for interviews were clearly too fearful to share their situations with UNICEF.<sup>91</sup>

### **Water and Firewood:**

Both water and firewood were flagged as major issues by almost every interviewee, and these issues were also discussed briefly in Section VI of this report. Interviewees sometimes said they

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<sup>87</sup> Record # M-33: 29 October 2005; Record # M-34: 29 October 2005; Record # M-35: 29 October 2005.

<sup>88</sup> ARRA Head of Security, ARRA compound: 31 October 2005; ARRA Coordinator for Dimma, ARRA compound: 31 October 2005.

<sup>89</sup> ARRA Head of Security, ARRA compound: 31 October 2005; see also Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

<sup>90</sup> ARRA Head of Security, ARRA compound: 31 October 2005.

<sup>91</sup> See for example: Protection Records # K-39 to 40, # K-46 to 49; # K-52 and # K-65.

had no problems with access to water, they could get water easily in the river—with all the concomitant water borne diseases resulting. One police official reported that ENDF had routinely beaten and “abused” women who went to the river for water.<sup>92</sup>

With the exception of people living within the ARRA compound, all those interviewed in Dimma town reported problems with access to water. These problems primarily revolve around security limitations on freedom of movement. Anuaks and Highlanders both reported purchasing firewood from Nuer refugees in town, who are the only ethnic group who risk going into the bush to collect it. All groups are fearful of attacks by *shifta*.

The issue of control of access to firewood—where Nuers monopolize the collection of wood—is complicated by reports of inter-ethnic conflict between Nuers and Anuaks in Dimma. In June 2004, according to a survivor, Nuer refugees allegedly went with spears to kill Anuaks in a village called Amene, near Dimma town; ENDF reportedly followed and interceded to protect Anuaks.<sup>93</sup> Other Anuaks, however, reported good relations between Anuaks and Nuers.<sup>94</sup>

Highlanders in Majoch reportedly buy their firewood from armed Surma; people also reported paying Surma for protection. Water in Majoch is very difficult to obtain: people are digging holes in the desert.<sup>95</sup>

### **Education:**

As discussed in Section VI of this report, all aspects of education—in all places in Dimma Woreda—have been dramatically impacted due to the pronounced insecurity and conflict in the Dimma region: few or no options in towns, no schools at all in remote areas.

“I had to stop school [Merkez] three months ago [July 05] because food is a problem.”<sup>96</sup>

Several Anuak interviewees reported that they had sent their children to schools in Pinyudo or Gambella, for protection reasons. This was especially true for students of adolescent or teenage age, as the parents indicated that they would be targeted as rebels (males) or sexually preyed upon (females). Government officials in positions with higher salaries reported fewer problems with access to education.

One Anuak widow—one of the oldest surviving women seen anywhere in Gambella region in the course of this study—she thinks she is 50—reported that her children, ages 18 to 30, left her behind in Merkez around October 2004. (Three of her eight children died as children.)

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<sup>92</sup> Record # K-53: 29 October 2005.

<sup>93</sup> Record # K-64: 27 October 2005.

<sup>94</sup> Record # K-59: 31 October 2005.

<sup>95</sup> Record # K-58: 30 October 2005.

<sup>96</sup> Record # K-48: 28 October 2005.

Exemplifying the lasting insecurity in the region, the five fled after the killing of February 2004, after everything calmed down again. “My children feared the killing so they went to Pochalla, Sudan.”<sup>97</sup>

### **Killings, Arbitrary Arrest, Assault and Detention Without Trial:**

In Dimma Town, the civilian population of all ethnicities live in extreme fear of attack. The team received numerous reports of beatings and arrests that have occurred in 2005.<sup>98</sup> In June 2005 an Anuak man was stoned unconscious by two ENDF soldiers near the Ethiopia Hotel in the centre of Dimma town.<sup>99</sup>

One interviewee in Dimma town reported: “In 2005 the problem is [ENDF] getting drunk and beating people... Also if Highlanders don’t know you they accuse you and then the ENDF may come and put you in jail.”<sup>100</sup> In Merkez village, the team received reports of more than ten Anuak men beaten and arrested in 2005 by the military on accusation of rebel affiliation.<sup>101</sup> One eyewitness, a Kebele leader, reported numerous civilian victims of arbitrary arrests, robberies, beatings, and killings by ENDF in 2004 and 2005; one victim allegedly beaten by ENDF in Dimma was killed and thrown in the Akobo river: the dead body came up later.<sup>102</sup>

Kebele authorities in these areas (Gedu, Bandera) reported that the Woreda council had issued a standing instruction that the Kebele authorities were to continue to seek out and hand over rebels and rebel collaborators, and that any males returning to these villages are to be considered suspect. One Kebele authority reported that the Woreda authorities have direct contact with certain individuals in each Kebele who keep them apprised of the situation in those villages. This individual alleged that the Woreda authorities visit each Kebele regularly, expecting the authorities to hand over accused rebels and collaborators. If the Kebele leaders do not hand over someone each time, they risk being arrested themselves and accused of assisting the rebels. This situation continues in these Anuak Kebeles, which are governed by Anuak Kebele leaders, and the instruction from Dimma Woreda is reportedly coming from the Anuak head of the Woreda council.<sup>103</sup>

One Highlander in Tubwa reported that soldiers “call meetings two or three times a week and ask the people to identify the dangerous Anuaks. They ask everyone—Highlanders, Anuaks, Surma—in these meetings. They arrest Anuaks in this way.”<sup>104</sup> Another Tubwa interviewee

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<sup>97</sup> Record # K-47: 29 October 2005.

<sup>98</sup> Record # K-40: 27 October 2005; Record # K-53: 29 October 2005.

<sup>99</sup> Record # K-53: 29 October 2005.

<sup>100</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

<sup>101</sup> Record # M-32: 28 October 2005.

<sup>102</sup> Record # K-56: 30 October 2005.

<sup>103</sup> Record # M-34: 29 October 2005.

<sup>104</sup> Record # K-57: 30 October 2005.

indicated that the Kebele chairman was always spying on Anuaks and reporting them for anything he didn't like.<sup>105</sup>

The same interviewee reported that ENDF arrived in Tubwa at the same time as the rebels in late January 2004; they chased rebels to Sudan, camped on the Sudan border for almost one year, returned to Tubwa in January 2005, and lived within the village for six months. "While soldiers were here we were very few [in number] and they were keeping the peace."<sup>106</sup>

Allegations of shootings were received, reportedly having occurred in the villages of Gedu, Bandera, Awaya, and Dimma town. According to one witness, when soldiers were [camped] near Gedu they would run into the village early in the morning. Such sudden assaults on the village frightened people: once a boy started running and the ENDF pointed their guns at him but the Kebele chairman saw it in time and yelled at them that he was a boy known to be from Gedu [thus protecting the boy from the likely ENDF presumption that he is unidentified, and thus a rebel].<sup>107</sup> According to one interviewee, at times more than 60 ENDF would come into the village of Gedu, sometimes sitting in the village all day intimidating the population. This interviewee reported that this occurred regularly in Gedu until the ENDF pulled out, in approximately July 2005.<sup>108</sup>

### **Rape & Sexual Assault:**

Several interviewees cited cases of alleged sexual violence, however the problem is likely submerged behind the cultural taboos associated with rape.

One young female interviewee was targeted by two uniformed ENDF, in broad daylight, in Dimma town, around January 2005. The interviewee reported: "The soldiers beat me. I met them and they were drunk. One soldier would not let me pass so I changed my direction and he followed me so I stopped and I said: 'Why are you following me?' And the soldier, he said: 'Are you not a woman?' And I said: 'So what if I am woman, what are you going to do?' Then they hit me and kicked me and pushed me down. Then some [Anuak] men came and they threatened to beat the soldiers so the soldiers left. But they said they would come back with their gun(s) to punish us."<sup>109</sup>

Another interviewee stated, "Anuaks do NOT come to report problems to police. Especially the women, they won't come and if they do they are afraid to say the truth. The ENDF are even raping and sexually abusing the Highlander women and they [Highlander women] can't or don't come to report it. One Highlander woman did come to report [being raped in Dimma by ENDF

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<sup>105</sup> Record # K-56: 30 October 2005.

<sup>106</sup> Record # K-57: 30 October 2005.

<sup>107</sup> Record # K-54: 29 October 2005.

<sup>108</sup> Record # K-52: 29 October 2005.

<sup>109</sup> Record # K-45: 28 October 2005.

in 2005]. There are some Highlander women coming to report what [rape] is happening to them.”<sup>110</sup>

The team received reports of five rapes of civilian women by military troops in Merkez, also in 2005.<sup>111</sup>

There were reports by one interviewee that ENDF and Highlander men in gold mining areas compete for sexual access to the few resident Highlander girls and women—given the lucrative commerce and transitory populations, often men without families, demand for sex workers increases; the interviewee claimed that rape and prostitution involving only Highlander females were both prevalent in Tubwa and Majoch.<sup>112</sup>

### **Complaints, Responses and Official Investigation:**

In February 2004, the Regional Government from Gambella reportedly sent the Commissioner of Police and another official to “calm things down;” some ENDF reportedly arrived with them: after their arrival, guns were given back to the Anuak police.

Fifteen ENDF allegedly forcibly displaced all the people from a small Anuak gold-mining village named Ginebab: the entire village was forced to move, ostensibly for their own protection; some resettled in Tubwa, others went to Gambella or added to the already uncountable numbers of IDPs.<sup>113</sup>

Police and Wordea Administration officials all claimed they had sent numerous letters to Dimma Regional and Gambella Regional authorities; complaints are reported to remain generally unanswered.<sup>114</sup>

Kebele chair people have reported sending numerous letters to Dimma Woreda officials and police and that these have also been unanswered. One interviewee claimed that Woreda officials came and told him to just keep silent.<sup>115</sup>

One old Anuak man who allegedly went to the Woreda Administration to report that he saw rebels crossing the river reported that the ENDF arbitrarily arrested him and held him in detention in the military prison on the ARRA compound in Dimma town.<sup>116</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

<sup>111</sup> Record # M-32: 28 October 2005.

<sup>112</sup> Record # K-56: 30 October 2005.

<sup>113</sup> Record # K-56: 30 October 2005.

<sup>114</sup> Record # K-62: 31 October 2005.

<sup>115</sup> Record # K-56: 30 October 2005.

<sup>116</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

In 2005, police apparently sent a letter complaining about rape of women (of all ethnicities) in Dimma to the ENDF commanders and Woreda Administration in Dimma: no response was received and the problems continued.<sup>117</sup>

One attempted rape survivor who had been beaten by soldiers, and threatened with death while escaping, went with her brother and reported the incident to police. The police told the complainants that they should report it again if ENDF come back, but took no action.<sup>118</sup>

### **SECTION IX: CONCLUSIONS**

UNICEF/Gambella has been facing obstacles in the effective implementation of its programmes in Gambella region since its office opened there. Repeated attempts to improve the lives of the women and children in Gambella were failing, and strategies that worked elsewhere were not working in Gambella. Thus this study was developed.

The concept on which this study was grounded was that in order to most effectively address the problems of livelihood and the vulnerabilities of Gambella's women and children, UNICEF must first develop an in-depth understanding of the challenges they face. Empowering the women and children to speak for themselves, UNICEF embarked on an extensive field mission to speak to the civilian population in Gambella region, in as many areas as security and infrastructure permitted.

The results were astounding. UNICEF uniformly began by asking questions about access to basic resources for daily survival—potable water, sufficient firewood, movement to and from markets, sustainable incomes, access to education and medical care. The population uniformly responded that all these aspects of their lives are directly and dramatically impacted by—*problems of security and protection*.

Women cannot get to the water pump—where a pump does exist—because the soldiers have occupied the pump and threaten sexual violence against them. Women cannot collect firewood because the soldiers or rebels have consistently engaged in attacks against women in the bush.

The civilian population cannot travel on the roads to the market or to obtain medical care in neighbouring areas—where a clinic does exist—because in so doing they risk attacks along the road by soldiers or rebels. The civilian populations are highly transient, especially men and boys, who are running for their lives in fear of arbitrary arrest and detention without charge. Many of those who have risked returning for the sake of reuniting with their families have found

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<sup>117</sup> Record # K-60: 31 October 2005.

<sup>118</sup> Record # K-45: 28 October 2005.

themselves separated again from their families while they linger in prison in violation of their rights of due process.

Civilians have been the victims of attacks by military forces and rebel forces that have targeted them for extra-judicial killings, beatings and torture, sexual and gender-based violence, looting and burning of civilian property, and threats to commit any of these. The region is plagued by a comprehensive atmosphere of terror; civilians remain either because they have no choice or because the alternative is a life in exile and displacement, separated from their family and their community.

The violence and militarization that attend the Gambella region may be a consequence of a systematic policy of the Federal government to use any and all means necessary to defeat the insurgency threat. Or, the terrorisation may be primarily due to a struggle over control of natural resources. Or, the attacks may be part of a policy of insurgent groups to use military means to gain political objectives. The violence may be due to a combination of the above agendas. Regardless of the aims of the violence, targeting civilians is a violation of Ethiopian and international law.

Peoples' capacity to feed, cloth, educate and care for themselves, and to move around freely in search of ways to do this, have been grossly interfered with and diminished and, in many cases, eliminated all together.

Many of the people interviewed for this assessment are living and dying under a permanent and intense state of anxiety and fear—very real—that ENDF soldiers or armed rebels will return at any moment and again terrorize them.

Civilian women and children in Gambella have endured and continue to endure: physical and sexual violence, including beatings, rapes, and corraling of civilians; deprivation of food, water, shelter, and necessary medical attention; terrorisation; direct threats and an atmosphere of intimidation and lack of redress, often due to the permanent presence of the alleged perpetrators of violence living amongst their victims or survivors; mental harm caused when the dead bodies of relatives, family members or friends are removed without proper acknowledgement, eliminating the possibility or capacity to have closure with loved ones through burial and other family or community rituals; mental harm due to witnessing friends, families and neighbours being victimised;

There is a climate of complete impunity for protection problems caused by state officials and ENDF soldiers throughout Gambella region; many if not most duty-bearers have been, at best, arrested only to be released later and, at worst, promoted for their crimes, and survivors believe that government sanctions these activities and behaviours.

Civilians have been targeted arbitrarily and systematically on accusation of affiliation with rebel groups. Such attacks under the veil of counter-insurgency operations as they are currently being carried out are *not* legitimate efforts on the part of the government to hold rebel groups accountable; they are instead violations of Ethiopian and international law.

In Gambella region today, there is a sustained climate of fear amongst virtually all sectors of all populations encountered. This means that people will remain afraid of officials, official places, official programs, or even attending functions such as rallies or social events. There may also be an increase in destructive and violent behaviours in affected populations in Gambella; further, people are afraid to voice their opinions in public, or in private, for fear of being victimized later.

It is thus impossible to separate the problems of livelihood and vulnerability of Gambella's women and children from their problems of security. Protection problems have *caused* them to be exceedingly vulnerable. Any attempt by any organisation to address vulnerabilities that does not address the protection problems in Gambella will fail at best; at worst, such efforts may serve to entrench and enrich the duty bearers while further devastating the civilian women and children.

What is necessary is a comprehensive response by the international community, civil society, and local and Federal government to engage in broad reaching and inclusive strategies towards conflict resolution, peace-building, capacity-building, monitoring and reporting of ongoing violations, and access to effective justice and an end to impunity for the duty bearers.

Failing urgent action in Gambella region, UNICEF fears a further downward spiralling of violence and suffering heaped on the shoulders of the women and children of Gambella. Absent some comprehensive and decisive response, UNICEF programs and the programs of other humanitarian agencies will serve only as band-aids on the otherwise festering wounds of the Gambella region.

This report about suffering, violence, hunger, hopelessness and other miseries, is not about the past, it is about the present: ENDF military have recently redeployed in large numbers throughout Gambella. UNICEF needs to immediately focus resources and attention to institute the necessary emergency livelihoods intervention strategies needed to enable immediate survival of populations and to halt the ongoing disaster.

## **SECTION X: RECOMMENDATIONS**

According to UNICEF's *Technical Notes: Special Considerations for Programming in Unstable Situations*, UNICEF, Programme Division and Office of Emergency Programmes, 2001: UNICEF describes a list of country-level child protection activities which fall directly under



UNICEF's mandate, and which are to be implemented in emergency contexts as well as in pre- and post-emergency phases. These activities dictate that UNICEF:

- “Promote laws and values that embody respect for children and their rights, including the dissemination of appropriate conventions and principles;
- Promote international standards (especially the CRC) and national legislation that embody respect for children and women and their rights;
- Negotiate with governments and rebel movements to gain formal commitments for the CRC, Geneva Conventions and humanitarian principles;
- Monitor violations of child's rights commitments embodied in the CRC, Geneva Conventions, national laws, refugee conventions and other legal instruments;
- Respond to violations of child rights through protests to those responsible and the channelling of information to the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, or other measures;
- Protect children and women against sexual violence and abuse through improved safety features in camps and the training of military and others;
- Oppose climates of impunity through support for international tribunals, truth commissions and other measures to ensure enforcement of law against the perpetrators of child rights violations.”

The following recommendations are being made in line with these aspects of UNICEF's mandate for the protection of women and children:

❖ **Recommendation #1:**

**RED FLAGGING:**

Attention needs to be given to Gambella region: the region should be red flagged within UNICEF for funding, programming, advocacy and publicity. Through advocacy, Gambella should also be brought up on the agendas of other UN agencies.

❖ **Recommendation #2:**

**CAPACITY BUILDING:**

- Local government capacity building in all aspects of administration, democratisation, human rights, the political process, management, accounting, computers, tolerance;
- Capacity building for Ethiopian civil society organizations and NGOs, such as WLA and EHRC, with inter-ethnic inclusion of community leadership of the different ethnic groups in Gambella;
- Capacity building and support to educational, training and vocational institutions in the region to ensure that the youth of tomorrow have more opportunities and skills than the youth of today.

It will be the combined efforts of many of the attempts at capacity building that will yield results. Actions with one or two individual partners will not bring about significant change in a reasonable time span.

UNICEF should focus on its areas of expertise such as the capacity building of HAPCO, BOLSA (Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs), WLA and WAO. Given the pervasive insecurity of the region, it is strongly recommended that at least one full-time international staff member be committed to this task to enable the international S/M to be used to deflect blame, ensure the effectiveness of the capacity building and follow-up its impact.

UNICEF should advocate for those agencies that have the relevant specialities to take on the roles that UNICEF itself does not have the full speciality to undertake. This could include encouraging and supporting fully NGOs who have sufficient capacity and boldness to come and work in the environment of Gambella, or asking sister UN agencies to become more fully involved in the region.

### **Recommendation #3:**

#### **TRAINING:**

- Police/military/prison authorities/prosecutors: training in international human rights law (with CRC emphasis), international humanitarian law, due process standards, prison standards (this could include local and possibly international NGOs such as Prison Reform International, and other international NGOs);
- Laws of war training for the rebels in Anuak language;
- Judges and lawyers in international humanitarian law, due process standards.

### **Recommendation #4:**

#### **PEACE-BUILDING—Direct:**

- The UN should encourage and support the Federal and Regional government in their efforts to negotiate a peaceful solution to the conflict in Gambella;
- Equally, the UN through their presence in South Sudan and Kenya, should both initiate discussions with the rebel group and facilitate their contacts for peace negotiations.

### **Recommendation #5:**

#### **CONFLICT RESOLUTION:**

- Partner with, but above all advocate for, and support, NGOs who are experts on peace building and conflict resolution with involvement of local government. A number of both local and international NGOs are currently involved in this activity, but are severely hampered by their fear of addressing conflict between the government and the Anuaks;

- Inter-ethnic conflict resolution programming, especially at the youth level, using UNICEF's comparative advantage;
- UNDP to be approached to provide a specialist to build the capacity of local government;
- Capacity building in good governance, democratization.

**Recommendation #6:**

**OHCHR:** Advocating for immediate deployment of OHCHR to Gambella.

**Recommendation #7:**

**SOCIAL SERVICES:**

- More appropriate partnerships for a conflict area (NGOs, CSOs, Church, etc.) to be advocated for and encouraged in the sector of delivery of social services;
- Break out of the box in programmatic functioning—more ABE, mobile clinics, community interventions rather than government interventions (water point protection, sanitation etc.);
- Continue to support government partners where appropriate.

**Recommendation #8:**

**Approaching UNDP to encourage and advocate for income generating projects that benefit young women and adolescent girls.**

**Recommendation #9:**

**One page list of ideas brought to Petronas management offering suggestions of ways they can contribute to peace building efforts in Gambella.**

**Recommendation #10:**

**UNHCR must be approached and advocated for a distancing between UNHCR and ARRA:** ARRA is affiliated by the population with the ENDF and has in fact been seen to support ENDF operations in the past; they thus form a contributing factor to insecurity in Gambella region.

**Recommendation #11:**

**Youth programming:** adolescents of all ethnic groups could join together to do programming to address their needs:

- Inter-ethnic and co-ed youth centres;
- Independent youth radio.

**Recommendation #12:**

**Follow up studies:**

- On Governance and the Justice sector (possibly with DFID funding);
- Inter ethnic issues impact on livelihoods and vulnerabilities.

Relevant International NGOs involvement (formally or informally):

- Oil exploration link to human rights violations: Global Witness, International Crisis Group;
- Governance: No Peace Without Justice;
- Women and girls and Income generating projects: IRC;
- Radio programming for conflict resolution: Talking Drums, Radio La Benevolencija;
- War Child: alternative based education.

**Recommendation #13:**

- Multi-ethnic based programming—student groups joining together across ethnic lines to advocate for issues relating to youth;
- Sexual- and gender-based violence project;
- Democratization programming: NDI, USAID, DFID.

**Recommendation #14:**

**UN Security management in Gambella goes through ARRA.** UN Security in Addis Ababa should be encouraged to be involved in a full and frank conversation with government counter parts to ensure that UN Security can gain access to the rebel groups for reasons of security.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX I: Introduction to Anuak & Nuer People of Gambella Region**

The Anuak people were the primary landholders of the region, their systems of land ownership and control based on customary, patriarchal institutions. Polygamy, child marriage, a dowry system, and tribal infighting were all part of this patrilineal indigenous society. At the top was the King of kings, but the kingship system was undermined and forbidden under the rise of the Derg power structure after the late 1960's.

While the number of Anuak kings recognized by the Anuaks today is reported to be around 10-15, the King of kings, Ato Agada Akwey Cham, resides in Ado, Sudan, a large village near to the Anuak refugee camp at Pochalla, Sudan.

The Anuak culture was reportedly once rich in painted pottery and carved gourds (only occasional examples of these can still be seen); acceptable behaviours were regulated and encouraged—and unacceptable behaviours discouraged—by communal edict and custom; alcoholism and smoking were apparently kept in check by a moral code administered by the Kings and their hierarchies. Individual, family, communal and tribal disputes were mitigated by a hierarchal communal mediation system strictly adhered to and respected. Inter-tribal and inter-ethnic warfare was apparently far less casual, or devastating, as in modern times, though the extent of these conflicts is unqualified (herein).

Prior to the invasion of western Christianity, the Anuak and Nuer cosmologies—and likely the cosmologies of other indigenous groups of the area—revolved around a nature-centered or animist belief system, and human existence was insured by indigenous knowledge systems and survival strategies gained over the millennium.

Indigenous beliefs cantered around a Supreme Being, or creator. According to one Anuak creation myth: Jwok, an androgynous God, created first an elephant, then a buffalo, a lion, a crocodile, and last a little dog; then Jwok created man and woman. The name of the first man was Otino; the name of the first woman was Akongo. Jwok is regarded as the creator of all things.

These indigenous cosmologies (e.g. of Anuaks, Nuers, others) also dictated beliefs in, and a deep respect and reverence for, the omnipotence of nature: powerful forces, or nature spirits, resided in water (rivers and lakes), trees and plants, and certain animals. Big snakes (pythons) were especially revered by the Anuak, and never killed (even today), and extraordinary events involving nature, or the appearance of its extraordinary creations (e.g. a giant tortoise in Dimma), were counted as sacred and entered into local mythology and oral history. In the Anuak cosmology, failure to respect the spirits of the land resulted in sickness, fatalities caused by wild

animals, natural disasters, epidemics, famines or crop failures, and the malevolence of the offended spirits took retribution on the offending individual(s) or Kebeles, or on the entire Anuak society. Anuaks today remain predominantly animist, but there is a strong and growing effort to convert more Anuaks to Christianity. However, these indigenous customs, animist beliefs and superstitions appear to predominate in many Anuak areas today, often with healthy affects.

Once the predominant ethnic group and landholders both inside the Gambella region of Ethiopia and outside in the parallel territory on the Sudan side, the Anuak population in Gambella has seen increasing encroachment and in-migration by other ethnic groups, especially Nuers from Sudan. However, beginning around 1984, the Derg government began (sometimes forcibly) resettling Highlanders to the region, bringing in more than 30,000 outsiders to Gambella from 1984-1988; all were resettled on land customarily claimed by the Anuak people. Despite the collapse of the Derg government, migration of Highlanders has continued to this day—due mainly to the fertile land in the region—and numbers of Highlanders now exceed 60,000.

The Nuer people are a traditional pastoral Nilotic people who for generations have been occupying the border areas between Sudan and South West Ethiopia. Although accurate population figures are difficult to find, there are probably at least 100,000 Nuer living in Gambella region.

The Nuer are neither a homogenous nor a peaceful people with a culture of revenge and conquest running deep within them. They have been fighting internally within themselves for many years and have equally been fighting the Anuak people to gain access to the best land in the region of Gambella.

There are six main Nuer clans in Gambella, and each main clan has at least four sub clans within it. Sub clans will fight between themselves (there is at present a long ongoing conflict between the Thiang and the Chengajaanwi of the Gajak family centred around the disputed Birhaansaalam area of Jekew woreda), and clans will fight clans. The most significant of these fights is presently between the Lou Nuer in the southern part of the Akobo Woreda and the other clans. This combat with the Lou Nuer—seen as invaders from Southern Sudan—has resulted in both loss of life (over 500 dead in the Makway area alone) and the displacement of many thousands of other Nuer as the Lou Nuer pushed them out of half of the Akobo woreda. Over one third of the Nuer people have been displaced as a result—either directly as a result of the Lou attacking them or indirectly as sub-clans attacked by the Lou Nuer move and then displace other Nuer sub-clans resulting in a domino affect.

Over the years the Nuer and the Anuak have battled for land in Gambella. Despite the relatively low population density of the region, the long dry season with temperatures in excess of 50 degrees Celsius results in much of the land completely drying up. The only fertile land remaining tends to be that which is next to the rivers of the region. Here, the Anuaks have lived for many

years tending small animals, farming some limited produce and pursuing fishing. The Nuer have entered into fights with the Anuak to gain access to this land so that, above all, their cattle can graze upon it.

Up until the events of December 2003 the results of this fighting between the Nuer and the Anuak had only gone slightly in favour of the Nuer with Anuak land slowly being eroded away and taken by the Nuer. Yet, from December 2003, the whole process of Anuak land been taken by the Nuer has accelerated dramatically. The Nuer wisely stayed out of the conflict between the Government / Highlanders and the Anuak, and they have been the main beneficiaries of the Anuaks overall losses to these forces. Weakened local Anuak forces, since that time, have been unable to effectively defend their land against the Nuer and they have moved eastwards towards Gambella at an increasing rate. Additionally, because of the reduced status of the Anuak people in the regional government either complaints about this 'invasion' have not been raised or have just not been dealt with in anyway. The Nuer have been left free to occupy Anuak lands without intervention from the government.

The present successes of the Nuer and their good relations with the Highlander settlers are unlikely to last. As they creep ever closer through the Anuak land towards the land of the Highlander settlers conflict between them will almost inevitably occur.

## **APPENDIX II: Disintegration of Traditional Customs, Rites and Culture**

There is a possibility that the culture and traditions of certain of the minority indigenous groups of the Gambella region will disappear altogether in a matter of years if the current course of events in Gambella region is maintained. The epistemological and cosmological systems of traditional peoples are recognized as valuable intellectual resources and the cultural heritage of humanity. The ways and means of traditional livelihoods—including understand and respect for rites of passage, marriage practices, traditional arts and cottage industries—are all valuable cultural and intellectual resources which have value and benefit to society.

Identity crises, erosion of ethical and moral standards, and an absence of self-respect and appreciation for their own culture are all directly connected to a loss of hope, absence of livelihoods and extreme vulnerabilities evident in the region.

Anuaks and Nuers both rely on customary land tenure and land ownership that is easily exploited under the current situation in Gambella region. These customary land rights of indigenous peoples have been enshrined by bodies of the United Nations, their abrogation is being challenged in the international legal venues, and governments around the world have ratified treaties attesting to the rights of indigenous people.

Nonetheless, the deracination of indigenous people that is evident in rural areas of Gambella is extreme. It is very likely that Anuak (and possibly other indigenous minorities) culture will completely disappear in the not-so-distant future. Cultural survival, autonomy, rights of self-determination and self-governance are all legitimate issues for these indigenous groups but all are trampled on in Gambella today.

### **APPENDIX III: Degradation of the Environment**

Research linking conflict and environmental problems has shown that severe degradation of the environment is an obvious outcome in places where populations are subject to declining opportunities and absence of livelihoods. This is already beginning to occur in Gambella. Water pollution, soil erosion, sanitation, urban migration, depletion of fish stocks, siltation of rivers, waste generation and dumping in the absence of waste disposal, local extinction of species of fauna and flora, declining agricultural productivity, and affects of dredging and alteration of hydrological systems (spills, runoff, channelization) due to oil exploration and exploitation are all immediate or coming concerns.

A primary and immediate concern is the loss of localized pockets of forests and forest resources. Over-exploitation of timber resources by starving women and children is occurring throughout the region. The limited availability of larger trees has always been a factor along the river pathways, the primary indicator being the few dugouts—in relative terms—seen on the waterways.

The felling of trees in the vicinity of Gambella town is already prohibited, but there is no enforcement—nor should there be given the absolutely miserable and backbreaking conditions under which women and children, in particular, are forced to labour under the scorching sun to gain a few birr by collecting firewood and carrying it on their heads for several kilometres and selling it in town markets. Equally inequitable is prohibition of firewood collection or charcoal production in the absence of any alternative energy source(s) for cooking, boiling polluted water, producing alcohol or firing pottery.

**The body of evidence documenting the detrimental effects of unregulated, profit-driven petroleum operations under circumstances in other African nations similar to those that exist in Gambella region is too voluminous to warrant much further comment here. However, it should be noted that the rise of a parallel economy—driven by the petroleum sector—alongside the total deracination of local populations in the Gambella region, as is occurring today, would further institutionalize existing inequalities.**