**A Shared Commitment to Reducing Vulnerability and Enhancing Coping Capacity**

**Communiqué**

A meeting on a shared commitment to reduce vulnerability and enhance coping capacity in South Sudan was held at the UN HCR Offices March 22nd, 2018. The meeting included over 50 participants from more than 25 agencies, including Heads of Cooperation, Heads of UN Agencies, UNMISS representatives, and Heads of NGOs that provide a substantial share of the humanitarian and development assistance to South Sudan. The meeting was co-hosted by UN DSRSG/HC/RC/RR, Alain Noudehou and USAID Mission Director, Jeffrey Bakken. The meeting took stock of the current and forecast state of vulnerability in South Sudan; reviewed ways of doing business differently and better to concurrently meet emergency basic needs and reinforce coping capacity; reviewed emerging business models to facilitate strategic integration across sectors, partners and agencies to build the coping capacities of people, households, communities and institutions; and took stock of the lessons and principles resulting from on-the-ground work of NGOs and UN entities in South Sudan in working with and putting communities at the center of resilience building efforts.

The following is a synopsis of presentation highlights, points of interest raised, and next steps proposed to sustain the momentum of achieving a commitment to break the trend of growing vulnerability and increasing emergency assistance in South Sudan.

**Highlights**

Recognizing the spread of vulnerability and the erosion of coping capacity across South Sudan, partners expressed the interest and the will to strengthen coordination around a shared commitment.

Participants expressed interest in focusing efforts to:

* Stop the trend of increasing vulnerability in 2018 to ensure that the number of people needing emergency assistance to meet basic needs does not continue to grow.
* Work together across humanitarian and development efforts to meet basic needs, protect coping capacities and advance recovery and resilience efforts.
* Sharpen our strategic focus on building better business models that move beyond coordination to collaboration and strategic integration that delivers on resilience.
* Advance comprehensive frameworks and partnerships for recovery and resilience in selected areas across South Sudan to create the enabling environment for people and communities to meet their aspirations and reduce aid dependence.
* Scale up the delivery of integrated efforts through improved coordination on the ground in Yambio and selected geographic areas of focus.
* Enhance mutual accountability and learning in the effective delivery of shared results and commitments on resilience.

**Issues and Points of Interest**

In 2018 South Sudan will face the largest deficit ever experienced in the amount of cereals produced. It will have the largest number of people in need of emergency assistance to meet basic needs ever experienced. This situation represents a common challenge for both the development and humanitarian assistance communities: The steady erosion of coping capacity.

The human and economic costs of rising vulnerability are massive, affecting long-term stability and prospects for economic development and poverty eradication. It is estimated that $1.7 billion is required in 2018 for humanitarian assistance for the 6 million people in need. In the first half of 2018 it is estimated that up to 5.3 million people (48%) face crisis and emergency acute food insecurity as a result of protracted conflict and displacements - which contributed to insufficient crop production - disruption to livelihoods, economic instability, climatic shocks and pests.

The reality is that conflict remains an all-pervading feature of the landscape and context of South Sudan. Any and all actions that the humanitarian and development assistance community take must, therefore, be conflict sensitive, ensuring that the actions we take do not become a source of-- or contribute to-- conflict.

This “New Way of Working” shifts the focus from “meeting needs” to “reducing needs, risks, and vulnerability.” A comprehensive approach that brings together collective efforts to address political solutions, peace building, development, humanitarian, security, and environment dimensions, increases the likelihood of achieving durable solutions. Strategic integration will require enhanced efforts to advance coordination, collaboration, co-location and commitment. The sequencing, intensity and timing of each partner’s actions will need to flexibly respond to these challenges. Already, significant steps are being taken to advance strategic integration across our emergency efforts to deliver services more efficiently. And, solid examples of new business models are emerging in Yambio, Aweil and elsewhere. We need to build on what exists and works.

There is consensus that there is no recourse but for individual UN entities, donors, NGOs and technical organizations to act together to reverse the trends of growing vulnerability. There is no silver bullet to solving the problem of declining coping capacity. We need to bring to bear all of the tools available to tackle the challenge, including conflict resolution, basic health, education and WASH services; agriculture and livelihood support; infrastructure; reconciliation, social cohesion, and peace building efforts.

**Next Steps**

The dialogue noted potential areas for collaboration in taking forward this integrated framework for building resilience and reducing vulnerability in South Sudan. The following actions are proposed to sustain the momentum to advance a shared commitment:

* Drawing on the presentations and discussions, prepare and issue an outcome statement that frames the shared commitment and actions to reduce vulnerability and increase resilience.
* Individually and collectively align with this commitment and focus our efforts to meet immediate needs and strengthen coping capacity. We can only operate at scale, together. The tools for coordination and alignment need to be advanced quickly.
* Prepare and implement a road map, including focus areas, to guide business models and partnerships for recovery and resilience in geographic areas that demonstrate readiness, including the will to advance them.
* Make the Yambio Partnership work: Ensure a coordination structure is in place to support the Yambio partnership, formally launch the partnership, develop medium-term investment plan, and establish an implementation review process.
* Organize specific events to support mutual accountability, and facilitate a critical review of the status of vulnerability and resilience, including an event in late 2018 to review and take stock of what has been accomplished.
* Map geographic opportunities, collective outcomes and targets needed for alignment to extend innovative integrated models on building resilience to aid recovery and sow the seeds for long term development and reduce aid dependency in resilience hubs.

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