



Deim Zubier Rapid Displacement Brief

Raja County, Western Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan, April 2018

Introduction

On 5 April, 2018, conflict broke out between armed actors in Deim Zubier in Raja County, Western Bahr el Ghazal (WBeG) displacing people from the region. Internally displaced persons (IDPs) travelled to multiple locations within WBeG and to neighbouring states and countries (See Map 1). Due to the rapid onset of the conflict, little is known about the displacement routes or needs of the affected population. To fill this knowledge gap, REACH carried out sudden onset remote displacement tracking in Wau Protection of Civilian (PoC) site to provide an initial overview of population movement. From 18 April to 4 May, REACH conducted 4 focus group discussions (FGDs), which included participatory mapping exercises in Wau PoC site with 10 male and 19 female IDPs recently displaced from Deim Zubier, totalling 29 participants. Primary data was complemented by consultations with humanitarian partners operating in the area. Beyond displacement patterns, this assessment covers access to food, livelihoods, water and education as well as IDP intentions and reported needs in Wau PoC site. While all data was collected at Wau PoC site, participants were asked broadly about the conditions, movement, needs and intentions of IDPs from Deim Zubier. Findings should be considered indicative, not generalisable to the displaced population. Further direct data collection in the sites specified would be recommended where possible.

Key findings

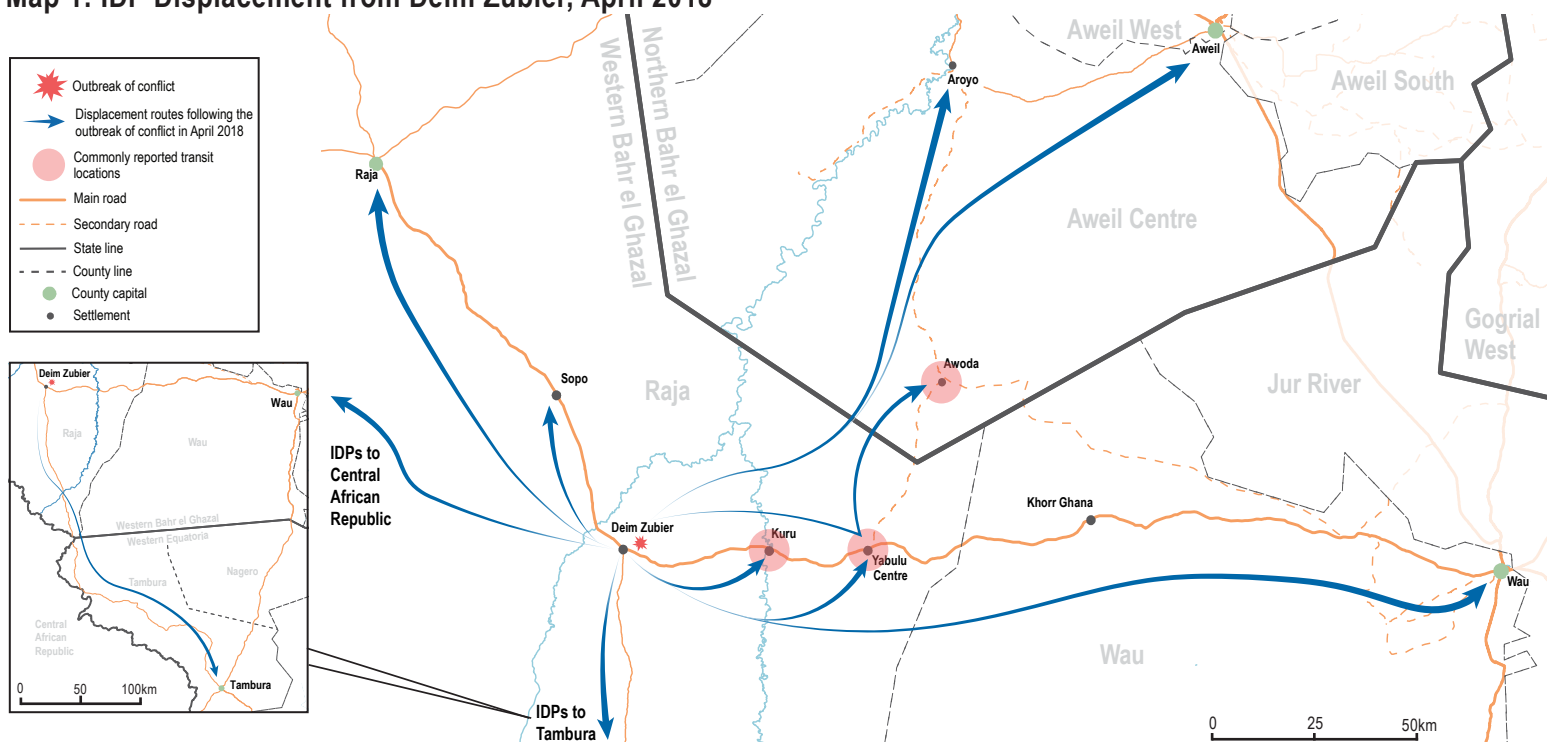
- Fighting broke out in Deim Zubier town on 5 April, 2018 between armed actors. After the initial outbreak of violence in the town, the conflict moved into settlements surrounding Deim Zubier and eventually into the bush.
- Displaced people fled to **Kuru, Yabulu Centre, Sopo and Raja in Raja County, WBeG; Wau in Wau County, WBeG; Awoda and Aroyo in Aweil Centre County, NBeG; Aweil in Aweil West County, NBeG; Tambura in Tambura County, Western Equatoria; Central African Republic; and the bush** surrounding Deim Zubier.

- This outbreak of conflict follows a **previous smaller clash between armed actors in Deim Zubier at the end of February**, which caused over 800 IDPs to flee from Deim Zubier south to Tambura and Nagero Counties in Western Equatoria State, during which **14 people, many of whom were children, died** as a result of fatigue and exhaustion on the way.^{1,2}
- Many who remained in Deim Zubier following the most recent clash intended to leave but were unable to pay transportation fees. Due to immobility from perceived insecurity, those who stayed reportedly had **minimal access to food, markets, clean water, education and other basic services**.
- The loss of seeds from looting, destruction of property and displacement from Deim Zubier will likely have **negative consequences on an already acute food insecurity and livelihoods situation** in Raja County.
- IDPs interviewed in Wau PoC site reported they intended to stay until security is restored to Deim Zubier, despite reporting that access to food and shelter in Wau PoC is limited.
- Reported needs in Wau PoC site include food, shelter, protection for women and non-food items (NFIs), such as mosquito nets.

Displacement from Deim Zubier

FGD participants in Wau PoC site reported displacement was caused by insecurity from the clash between armed actors in early April. According to FGD respondents, community members from Deim Zubier were displaced to many locations, reportedly leaving families separated and many people missing. Women and children were the primary reported displaced population and **some youths were reportedly abducted** by armed actors during the conflict. According to the FGD participants who arrived from Deim Zubier most recently,

Map 1: IDP Displacement from Deim Zubier, April 2018



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra
Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC



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Figure 1: Reported Challenges Faced Along Displacement Routes



many community members were still trying to leave the area but were unable due to a lack of money for transportation and immobility from perceived insecurity in the town.

Displacement east within Raja County, east to Wau County, WBeG and northeast to Aweil West and Aweil Centre Counties, NBeG

Through participatory mapping exercises in Wau PoC site, FGD participants indicated initially travelling to Kuru by foot, reportedly an eight hour walk.³ Respondents reported moving through the forest rather than on Raja Road to avoid confronting armed actors and facing other insecurities. FGD participants identified **Kuru and Yabulu Centre** in Raja County, WBeG and **Awoda** in Aweil Centre County, NBeG as **primary transit locations** for displaced people fleeing Deim Zubier. IDPs indicated they had **no access to safe drinking water while travelling between Deim Zubier and Kuru**. Consequently, many IDPs reported spending several nights in the bush on the outskirts of Kuru to access the settlement's borehole.

FGD participants in Wau PoC site indicated that **some IDPs stayed in Kuru and Yabulu Centre** with family or friends. The IDPs who continued travelling beyond Kuru and Yabulu Centre reportedly took one of two displacement routes:

1) **North to Awoda and Aroyo in Aweil Centre County and Aweil Town in Aweil West County, NBeG.** IDPs reportedly travelled north from Yabulu Centre towards Awoda following Awoda Road. While many remained in Awoda, others travelled further north by car or bus to Aroyo and remained there or continued east on Aweil road to Aweil Town.

2) **East to Wau Town in Wau County, WBeG.** IDPs who continued east from Kuru and Yabulu Centre cited travelling on the main road to seek transportation to Wau by vehicle, rather than on foot. Many indicated they were picked up by passing vehicles, including traders, which was reported by FGD participants as free of charge. Meanwhile, others paid 3,000 South Sudanese Pound⁴ per person for bus fares from Kuru and Yabulu Centre to Wau Town and Wau PoC site.

FGD respondents cited perceived provision of **security, shelter, food and healthcare as the greatest pull factors** for IDPs from Deim Zubier to Wau PoC site. Between 5 April and 28 April, humanitarian partners collectively registered **nearly 1,000 IDPs from Deim Zubier at Wau PoC site, Lokoloko Collective Centre and Cathedral Collective Centre** in Wau Town.⁵ At the time of the assessment, given the ongoing fluidity of the situation, individuals in Deim Zubier were still leaving the area with the reported intention of coming to Wau, meaning **displacement numbers will likely continue to grow** in the coming month.

Displacement north and northwest within Raja County, WBeG and to Central African Republic

According to FGD participants, following the clashes in Deim Zubier, individuals were also displaced up Raja Road to **Sopo**, in Raja County, and to **Raja Town**, 65km north of Sopo. Those interviewed reported that some people also travelled northwest through the bush into **Central African Republic**. IDPs in Wau PoC site reported having no communication with the people displaced in Sopo, Raja and CAR. The lack of knowledge about IDPs from Deim Zubier displaced in this area and the historic insecurity of Raja County are cause for concern about access to food, basic services and protection for IDPs in the region.⁶

Displacement south to Tambura County, Western Equatoria State

In addition to displacement within Western and Northern Bahr el Ghazal, FGD participants indicated that community members from Deim Zubier also fled **south to Tambura in Western Equatoria**. Those interviewed reported that IDPs travelling towards Tambura fled through the bush to avoid insecurity on the road. The forest south of Deim Zubier is reportedly very dense with **few accessible transit locations between Deim Zubier and Tambura**, leaving concern about access to water, food and shelter for IDPs travelling south. Given there was no active cell network reported in this region at the time of the assessment, FGD respondents indicated they have been unable to communicate with those who fled south since the outbreak of conflict. The number of IDPs displaced to Tambura after the most recent episode of violence was unknown at the time of the assessment.

Remaining population in Deim Zubier

According to recent estimations by a humanitarian partner, roughly 3,000 people were still in Deim Zubier at the time of the assessment, while an estimated 7,000-8,000 individuals resided there pre-displacement. While most IDPs have travelled to settlements and collective centres perceived as secure, many people, including **vulnerable populations, such as the sick, elderly and disabled, reportedly fled into the bush** outside of Deim Zubier.

FGD participants reported that access to basic needs for those who remain in Deim Zubier was restricted. For individuals displaced to the nearby bush, the lack of free mobility in the area due to **perceived insecurity has reportedly prevented safe access to food and shelter**. Respondents in FGDs also indicated that following the outbreak of conflict, the markets in Deim Zubier have had a limited supply of food as many of the local traders were displaced. Consequently, prices have increased with the lack of supply. Additionally, according to FGD participants in Wau PoC site, many IDPs' houses were reportedly burned and their possessions, food, seeds and livestock were looted during the clash, suggesting those who remained in Deim Zubier had limited provisions and inhibited access to livelihoods.⁷ Given cultivation is the primary source of food and livelihoods in Raja

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County, the **loss of seed stocks, restricted access to land due to the volatile security situation as well as the displacement of populations, which limits available labour during the upcoming planting season (April-May), are all likely to negatively impact this year's cultivation season.** The expected lower access to food is of concern given Raja County had been projected to be in Phase 4 ("Emergency") from February to April, according to the IPC January 2018 Update.⁸

In terms of access to water, while **boreholes are reportedly still functional in Deim Zubier** following the conflict, FGD participants indicated that **access to them may be restricted** given perceived insecurity and immobility in town.

According to FGD respondents, **schools in Deim Zubier, Kuru and Yabulu Centre have closed following the outbreak in conflict.** Many teachers reportedly fled and children were prevented from travelling to school due to perceived insecurity. In light of the volatile security situation, access to education is likely to remain restricted in the weeks to come.

Humanitarian needs of IDPs from Deim Zubier in Wau PoC Site

Given the rapid-onset of the conflict, many IDPs from Deim Zubier reported not being able to bring food, clothing or NFIs with them, leaving those recently displaced unable to meet basic needs. Through FGDs in Wau PoC site, REACH recorded the primary humanitarian needs cited by new arrivals from Deim Zubier:



FGD respondents identified **access to food and inclusion in General Food Distributions (GFD) in Wau PoC site as the greatest primary need.** FGD participants from Deim Zubier emphasized they had not been registered in Wau PoC site and thus had not received ration cards. Given new arrivals do not have an established livelihood, FGD respondents emphasized they had insufficient income to purchase food.



FGD participants emphasized **more shelter space** as an urgent need across FGD discussions as well. Further, FGD participants reported that there were more than 12 people residing in some shelters, leaving insufficient room for all residents to sleep and carry out daily activities.



FGD respondents also cited **protection concerns for women** in and around the PoC site as a key issue. Women reported facing regular insecurity while travelling into the forest to collect firewood to sell in the PoC site.



FGD participants indicated needing **non-food items (NFIs), specifically mosquito nets, blankets, sleeping mats and jerry cans.**

IDP Intentions

According to FGD participants, the majority of new arrivals in Wau PoC site from Deim Zubier **intend to stay until there is peace and stability in Deim Zubier and Raja County.** Fear of insecurity was cited as the biggest barrier to return for IDPs from Deim Zubier and all respondents indicated they felt safer within the PoC site than in Deim Zubier. Some FGD participants reported not wanting to return to Deim Zubier at all, given they had lost their homes and livelihoods. However, insufficient access to food and cramped living spaces within Wau PoC site led others to emphasize their desire to leave the PoC site as soon as possible—once the region was secure again. The IDPs who expressed a desire to return to Deim Zubier indicated they were eager to begin cultivation to regain their livelihoods and access food.

Conclusion

An outbreak of conflict in early April 2018 in Deim Zubier sparked displacement from Deim Zubier within northern and eastern parts of Raja County, as well as north to Aweil Centre and Aweil West Counties, east to Wau County, south to Tambura County and northwest to Central African Republic. Given the displaced population fled to a wide range of settlements, including remote locations with restricted communication, the conditions and needs of IDPs from Deim Zubier are of concern. Additionally, the limited knowledge of the exact scale of displacement could leave many IDPs unaccounted for.

Individuals who were displaced to the bush surrounding Deim Zubier had a high level of perceived insecurity and immobility, causing a reported lack of access to food and basic services. Further, as the conflict reportedly caused the destruction and looting of property, many were left without shelter or livelihoods and with the pending arrival of the cultivation season, the population's inability to plant crops will likely have a negative impact on a region that already faces an acute food insecurity and livelihoods situation.

While Wau PoC site has already accommodated hundreds of IDPs from Deim Zubier following the most recent conflict, this number will likely increase given that, at the time of the assessment, individuals reportedly still had intentions to leave Deim Zubier. Given the volatile security situation, REACH will continue to monitor displacement trends and the ongoing humanitarian needs of the displaced population over the coming weeks.

Endnotes

1. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, South Sudan: Humanitarian Dashboard, March 2018.
2. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, South Sudan: Humanitarian Snapshot, March 2018.
3. FGD respondents reported that it took longer for IDPs traveling with children or elderly people to arrive in Kuru.
4. 3,000 SSP was equivalent to roughly 11 USD at the time of the assessment.
5. Information informally provided by a humanitarian partner.
6. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, Humanitarian Bulletin, April 2018.
7. In terms of livestock, FGD participants reported having chickens, goats and some cattle previously.
8. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, KEY IPC Findings: January-July 2018, January 2018.

