



**Assessment of resource-based conflict flashpoints
along the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor**

South Kordofan, Sudan

SOS Sahel International UK

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1. Introduction and methodology

This report presents the findings of an assessment of the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor, focussing on conflict flashpoints and trends in the Misseriyya pastoralist livelihood system. It was commissioned by SOS Sahel UK as part of the foundation of its programme expansion into Babanusa and Abyei Localities. The field assessment was conducted by a five-person team comprising three SOS Sahel UK staff members and two staff from Ministry of Agriculture, based in El Fula, who have extensive knowledge of the area combined with expertise in natural resources management and pastoral livelihood systems. The assessment was focused on Babanusa Locality and on the northern part of Abyei Locality. There was no access available to the southern part of Abyei Locality at the time of the first field visit; therefore, a separate mission was sent to Abyei at a slightly later date, which conducted consultation meetings with stakeholders within the town of Abyei – the security situation did not permit travel outside of the town. The findings of this separate consultation have been included in this report.

Data collection was carried out between October and November 2009 in Babanusa and Muglad in order to gather facts from the ground about the area. This initial field assessment took place over two weeks and covered the northern part of the area as above; a second trip of one team member only covered the southern part (Abyei town) in January 2010. The team met and discussed with a wide range of stakeholders, including local leaders, administrators, pastoralists, ex-pastoralists, farmers, government and NGO employees, and traders, in Babanusa, Muglad and all along the livestock corridor. Locations where fieldwork was undertaken include: Babanusa, El Fula, Muglad, Kedayed, Abu Raffaya, El Habeel, El Sudore, Bota, Rahad El Hamal, Kozi, Atgel El Donkey, Gheseenat, Umm Kashawaya, El Gentore, Umm Osh, Abu Khabob, and Abyei.

Data collection and field analysis focussed on natural resources, livelihoods strategies, and resource-based conflict flash points, which were examined within the broader environmental, social, political and economic context to take into account the institutions, policies, and processes affecting the livelihood mechanisms of both pastoralists and subsistence farmers in the area. Special attention was paid to the relationships between different livelihood groups in the area (particularly the Misseriyya and Dinka Ngok), in order to map evidence for competition over natural resources and to identify other points of possible conflict.

The following tools were used to collect the data:

- Meetings with government technical staff at Locality level.
- Reviews of secondary data available at Locality level from various government departments, including the Range and Pasture Department, the Forestry Department, the Animal Resources Department, and from the UN agency IFAD.
- Meetings, discussions, and consultation with a range of stakeholders at Locality level, including representatives of Pastoral and Farmers' Unions, the Native Administration, Women's Unions, and the Locality Commissioner.
- Meetings, discussions, and consultation with staff of local and international NGOs and UN agencies with projects currently under implementation in the two Localities, including the Abyei-based NDO, Concern Worldwide, and IFAD.
- Global Positioning System (GPS) readings to locate pastoralist resting and grazing areas (*makharif*) along the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor system.
- Published reports.

2. Background

SOS Sahel UK works with poor and marginalised dryland dwellers in Sudan to promote their rights and livelihoods, to reduce the inequalities they experience, and to enhance the sustainability of the fragile environment on which they depend. SOS Sahel UK has worked in North Kordofan for over 17 years, and has become well-respected for its thoughtful and effective work to bring about sustainable natural resource management and to reduce conflict between pastoralists and farmers. Since 2007 it has extended this successful work on conflict reduction and natural resources management into three Localities of South Kordofan State (Dilling, Kadugli, and Rashad), which is ongoing, and in 2009 it further expanded these programme activities into two Localities in the western sector of South Kordofan (Muglad and Abyei).

This work with nomadic pastoralists and settled farmers is not spatially defined by state administrative boundaries: it is, of necessity, defined by the livelihood mechanisms of the pastoralists themselves. They migrate seasonally along livestock corridor systems, some of which are hundreds of kilometres long and span both North and South Kordofan States. While the general principles of the programme are consistent across the Greater Kordofan region, the large distances involved and the characteristic Sudanese 'patchwork' of different ethnic and environmental situations means that each part of the region needs its own tailored approach.

Certain programme resources were therefore allocated to support a detailed assessment along the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor, which passes through Babanusa and Abyei Localities, in order to review the situation on the ground and to develop baseline data indicators for the proposed future programme work.

3. Assessment goal, purpose, and outputs

The overall goal of this assessment is to locate, and understand in context, resource-based conflict flashpoints along the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor and to develop, with reference to SOS Sahel's existing work in Kordofan, recommendations for appropriate interventions.

The overall purpose of this assessment is to gather a range of information concerning the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor, recognising that this area has its own specific dynamics, and that specific information will therefore be required to develop a defined baseline situation and appropriate data indicators. This is needed to support a long-term programme commitment that will begin in early 2010, and forms part of the inception phase of this long-term programme. To ensure that the programme has a strong foundation, the assessment needs to develop an evidence base, by reviewing existing reports, data, and local knowledge; by formalising and standardising the mapping work; and by drawing from these activities a defined baseline situation and appropriate data indicators as above.

The deliverable outputs of this assessment are a written survey report with recommendations for intervention types and locations, accompanied by a baseline map for this livestock corridor.

4. Context

Kordofan occupies a central strategic location in Sudan. It is inhabited by a diverse 'patchwork' of ethnicities, cultures, and livelihood groups that is characteristic of Sudan, and it is influenced by events in all of its neighbouring regions including Darfur, Eastern Sudan, Northern Sudan, and South

Sudan. Kordofan was previously divided into three States (North, West, and South) but was restructured following the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) into just two States, North and South Kordofan. The two Localities under consideration were previously in West Kordofan and are now in South Kordofan.

One part of the complex web of instability in Kordofan is conflict between nomadic pastoralists and settled farmers. Pastoralists share the natural resource base with small-scale farmers. Prior to the 1970s, they co-existed relatively peacefully, with each production system complementing the other. However, several factors have since increased pressure on natural resources and have disturbed this equilibrium. These factors include but are not limited to:

- Drought and environmental degradation.
- Changes in patterns of livestock production.
- Expansion of mechanised farming.
- Oil exploration and production in the area.
- The impact of the civil war. Pastoralists' movements were disrupted by the war: some livestock corridors were abandoned, while others were unofficially opened.
- Implementation of the CPA, particularly the Permanent Court of Arbitration decision on where to locate the disputed boundaries of Abyei.
- The ambiguous status of traditional governance institutions. The Native Administration system has been greatly weakened since the 1970s. However, some traditional leaders continue to command significant personal authority and are still important actors.

4.1 Location of the study

The study area covers two Localities of South Kordofan State: Babanusa and Abyei Localities, which include the settlements of Babanusa, Muglad, and Abyei. Abyei currently has 'special administrative status' under the Abyei Protocol (which formed part of the CPA process) and will follow a separate path to determine its future governance arrangements.

4.2 Population

Based on the national population census of 2008, the population of the studied area is 242,898 persons. Population density varies throughout the area, with an average of around 12 persons per square kilometer. One-third of the total population is estimated to make use of the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor.

Locality	Management unit	No of families	Total population
Abyei	Abyei Town	N/a	N/a
	Abyei Rural	N/a	N/a
	Muglad Town	9,931	59,586
	Rural Muglad	4,331	25,986
	El Mayram	9,413	56,478
	El Dibab	7,314	43,884
Babanusa	Babanusa Town	9,269	55,614
	Rural Babanusa	225	1,350
Total			242,898

Source: National Population Council, 2008

4.3 Local governance structures

Each Locality is governed by a Commissioner who is a member of the State Council of Ministers, assisted by senior executive officials representing the Ministries at the State level. Abyei has a separate administration under the Presidential Council owing to its disputed status. The Locality Council is the institution that has legislative power to supervise the local government. Formally, the Judiciary is the institution that settles disputes; the Native Administration plays an important role in solving problems between members of tribes. Also, there are civil society organisations (CSOs) such as the Pastoral Union, the Farmers' Union, the Women's Union, and local NGOs and CBOs which exert varying levels of influence on local governance.

The typical structure of the Native Administrations in the area is as follows: for the pastoralists, at the level of both the *farig* (smallest social unit of nomadic communities), and the village, there is a *sheikh* or leader who represents up to about fifteen extended families. At the next level, there is the *umda* who sometimes assumes the role of *mandoub* (delegate) representing a group of *furgan* (more than one *farig*) or a group of villages. At the top level (the tribal level), an *amir* or *nazir* oversees the whole tribe's welfare as well as other tribes living in his *dar* (homeland). The structure for the settled farmers (Dinka) similarly consists of several *umada* or Sultans and an *amir* or Chief Sultan.

4.4 Survey proceedings

Meeting with Ministry of Agriculture and IFAD WSRMP

The survey team first met with the Ministry of Agriculture, in El Fula, and discussed broad ideas about SOS Sahel UK's interventions and about the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor. The meeting was attended by Abdo Abdel Bagi, the Deputy Director of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fadlallah El Manna the director of the IFAD Western Sudan Resource Management Programme (WSRMP). This programme is focussing on the livestock corridors to the east and to the west of the 'central' Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei corridor under consideration by SOS Sahel UK, so the two programmes are in harmony. They described the 'central' corridor as extending north-south for about 300 kilometres, with 60% of it within what was considered to be 'Misseriyya land', and the other 40% within 'Dinka land'.

The main conflict flashpoints in their opinions were three, as follows:

1. Demarcation of the Abyei area and disputes over its future governance.
2. Oil exploration expanding into grazing areas.
3. Lack of services along the corridor, particularly within the 'Misseriyya land' part.

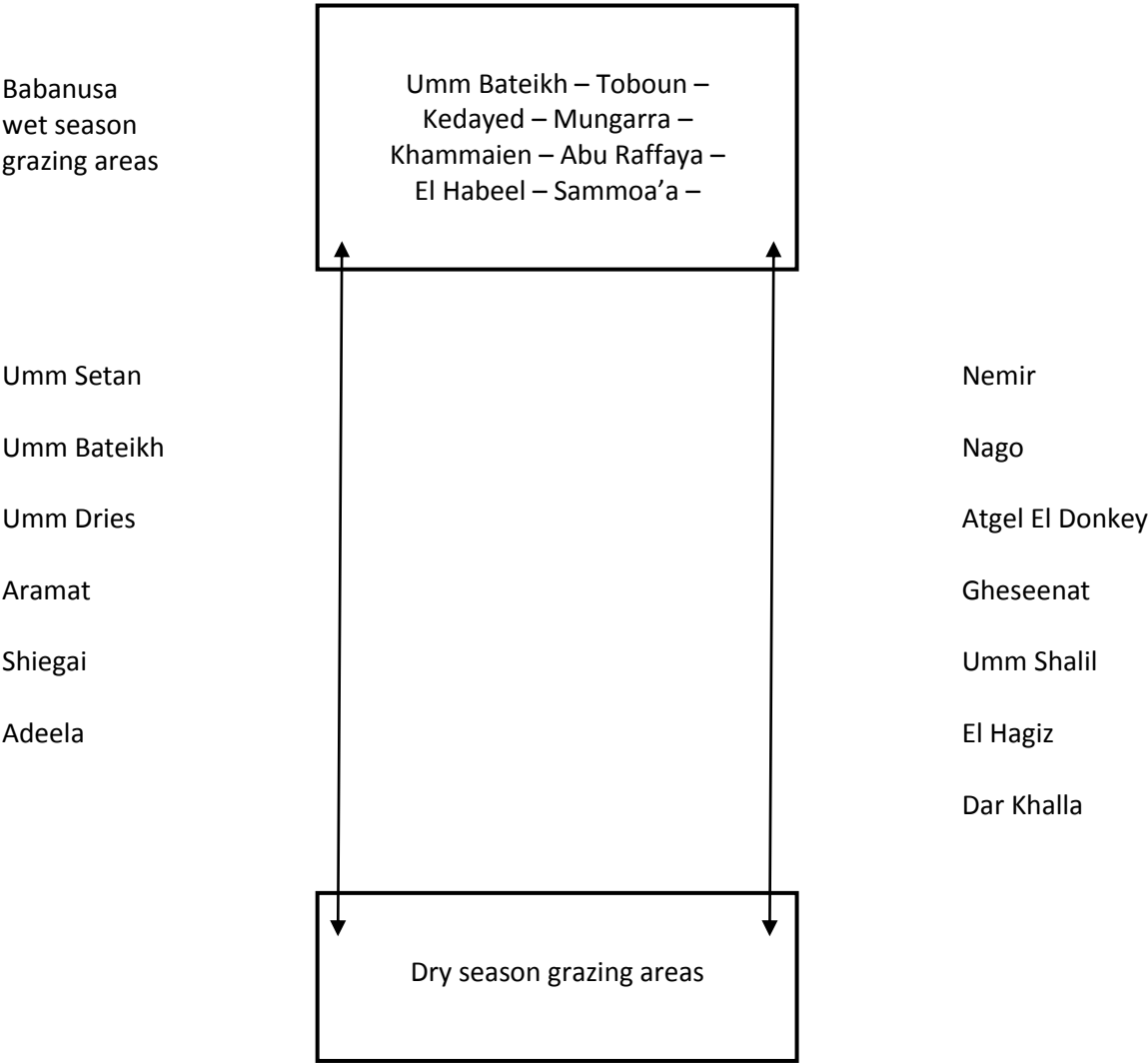
They recommended that the survey team consult with the extension team of the IFAD WSRMP programme, the Commissioner of Muglad, and the Native Administration, and that they make field visits to both the dry season and wet season grazing areas.

Meeting with extension team of the IFAD WSRMP programme

The team consists of Ibtesam Tawour, Yasir, Hanadi, and others. Currently, they are working with 15 communities in both Babanusa and Abyei Localities. The committee for the selection of communities is chaired by the Commissioner. They explained that all of the Babanusa area is used as wet season grazing. The current activities of this NRM programme within IFAD include range and pasture, animal health, water, forestry, opening of fire break lines, community development, support to CSOs, training, literacy classes, and maternal health (through midwives).

The extension team of the IFAD NRM programme kindly arranged the meeting with the Babanusa Authorities. We agreed with them the agenda of the meeting which was limited to the purpose of the visit and field survey, an introduction to SOS Sahel UK and our work, and the opportunity to hear feedback from the Authorities. The Babanusa meeting was attended by Maki Ali Nemir, the Executive Director of the Locality, Abdallah Abu Elgasim Musa, the representative of the Native Administration, Abdel Rahman Ismail El Bakry, a local community leader, *umda* Diefallah Eldod, *umda* Adam Hasaballah, and Baballah, the Chair of the local Pastoral Union.

The participants of the Babanusa meeting described the wet season grazing areas and the ‘central’ livestock corridor schematically as follows:



Meeting with key stakeholders in Muglad

The meeting in Muglad was attended by the following participants:

- The commissioner of the locality
- Ahmed Gameer Ismail – Chair of Farmers’ Union
- Hashim Ismail Naif – Pastoral Union
- Fadul Adam Suliman – *umda*
- Mareeda Giger Suliman – Farmers’ Union
- Hassan Hamid Suliman – Range and pasture department
- Idris Breema Gadel Karim – Animal Resources Department
- Khater Hamad Tebin – Forestry Department
- Hilal Mohammed Dawood – Farmers’ Union
- Ahmed Omer Ahmed – Executive Director
- Ahmed Azoom – *umda*
- El Nazeef Adam Akhbash – *umda*
- Ibrahim – *umda*
- Adam Abu Asala Omer – representative of El Mazkhna sub-tribe
- Mohammed Yousif Mabrouk – Representative of Concern in Muglad

The participants welcomed SOS Sahel UK and stated that they needed more NGOs to work in this area. However, they were also fed up with meeting with NGOs and subsequently finding that there is no commitment to start work. They hoped that SOS Sahel UK is committed and can start with tangible activities, and they made detailed suggestions in this regard, as follows.

The ‘central’ corridor is lacking all essential services – for example there is good pasture in the sandy soils, but these sandy soils do not hold rainwater for more than one week. The solution is to construct boreholes in such grazing areas. There was also insect damage to the pasture. There are 15 communities, under 15 *umada*, using the ‘central’ corridor and because of lack of water in the northern part of the corridor the pastoralists have started to move to Abyei earlier in the seasonal cycle, around November and December, which has created more problems with farmers.

The Chair of the Farmers’ Union stressed that the communities living along the ‘central’ corridor practice both pastoralism and farming, and that training in farming techniques and provision of water for livestock away from farming areas were important activities. The other member of the Farmers’ Union mentioned that trees are being cut down for wood and that the Forestry Department should monitor this and prevent it. They also stated that it would be good if the ‘central’ corridor is demarcated and it is made clear that this is a livestock corridor and is therefore protected from encroachment.

The representative of the Pastoral Union stated that the ‘central’ corridor extended from El Gentore in the far north to Abyei and that there are many problems including shortages of pasture and water, cutting of trees, oil exploration, lack of para-vets and veterinary drugs, and widespread unintended burning of grasses.

Meeting with Concern Worldwide staff

- Mohammed Yousif Mabrouk – Team Leader
- Mohammed Abaker Omer – Food Security Officer
- Roshdi Badawi – Water and Sanitation Officer
- Omer Mohammed Osman – Health Officer
- Khada El Tegani Abdel Gader – Women’s Development Officer

Concern Worldwide has operated in Muglad for seven years and is now expanding to other areas in South Kordofan in partnership with local and national NGOs such as Angato, SUDO, Zumzam and NDO. In the process of developing their programmes in the area, they have conducted situation analyses in Abyei and El Salam Localities (the latter including Babanusa).

Field trips to key sites along the ‘central’ corridor

The survey team was split into two teams and each was accompanied by representatives from tribal leaders, the IFAD NRM programme, and the Ministry of Agriculture. The two teams visited 23 grazing and transitional areas in the northern part of the corridor but were prevented by government security people from visiting the southern part of the corridor in the proximity of Abyei. During the survey, only ten water sources were identified in the northern part. Most of them are either broken water yards or seasonal rainwater pools. These are as follows:

- Donkey El Gashrat – water yard
- El Regaia’a – *rahad* (seasonal rainwater pool)
- El Magabi – *rahad* (seasonal rainwater pool)
- Kedayed – *rahad* (seasonal rainwater pool)
- El Gentore – water yard
- Umm Neran – water yard
- Feg El Hala – water yard
- Abu Raffaya – water yard
- Umm Dariana – water yard
- El Habeel – water yard. El Habeel is a settled village consisting of a railway station and local market.

The survey team took GPS readings for all the ‘central’ corridor sites visited which will assist in producing an accurate map for the corridor. In addition they prepared a schematic sketch map (Annex 1).

5. Livelihood profiles

Pastoralism and subsistence farming have traditionally been the two main livelihood systems in Babanusa, Muglad, and Abyei Localities. Pastoralist communities include both nomadic and semi-nomadic livelihoods. Although nomadism was the dominant system prior to the mid-1980s, an increasing trend towards transhumance was noted in 1985 by El Sammani, and it has now become obvious that many pastoralists families prefer maintaining a ‘home base’ and only migrating seasonally rather than being completely nomadic. This trend towards transhumance, and even permanent settlement, has been attributed to a growing understanding amongst the Misseriyya of the challenges their livelihood faces related to the implementation of the CPA and the Abyei Protocol in the Abyei district, particularly over access to dry season grazing areas (*masaif*).

Settled communities engaging in farming activities include smallholders and owners of large mechanised farms who are also mainly drawn from local communities, usually from the main population centres of El Fula, Babanusa, Muglad, Debab, and Siteib). It is important to note that there has never been a clear division between the two livelihood systems: many households engage in both, combining pastoralism and farming to diversify their livelihood risks (see Pantuliano, S., et al., March 2009, Put out to pasture: war, oil, and the decline of Misseriyya pastoralism in Sudan, Humanitarian Policy Group, Overseas Development Institute, UK.)

5.1 Production systems

Production systems in South Kordofan State are based on traditional systems of cropping and animal husbandry, together with mechanised farming. The major staple food crops grown are millet and sorghum, and the major cash crops are groundnuts, hibiscus (*karkaday*), gum arabic, and cotton. Other crops include watermelons, cowpeas, okra, and forestry products. Animals raised are cattle, sheep, goats, and horses. Three main production systems can be defined in the studied area based on the type of crop and the degree of settlement of households. These are livestock production, field crops, and forestry products.

5.2 Livestock production systems

Transhumant pastoralism

Cattle are the main type of livestock raised along the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei corridor – hence the Misseriyya are one of the groups known as cattle-herding people (*baggara*), though they also raise sheep and goats. Misseriyya Agaira (Olad Kamil, Mezakgna, and Feyareen) are the main sub-tribes using this corridor, which accommodates about one-third of the total livestock found in Babanusa and Abyei Localities. Pastoralists usually migrate, following the traditional grazing routes, to the rainy-season grazing lands of the north (*makharif*) when the rains begin, to avoid the high incidence of biting insects and mud associated with cracking clays during the rainy season. During the dry season, they migrate southward again, to the rich dry-season grazing lands (*masaif*).

- *Babanusa*: a northern sandy area with good grazing, mainly used during the wet season, which starts in June/July.
- *Muglad*: a clay soil area, separated from Babanusa by the Hajiz watercourse, used during the northward movement in June/July and the southward movement from September to November. Families often split up here, with some members staying to look after the gardens and others continuing the migration.
- *Bahr*: this area is the far southerly limit of the pastoralists' migration, which provides sufficient water during the height of the dry season. The timing and distance of the migration to the Bahr depend on a variety of factors, including the size of the cattle herd, water availability, and the balance employed between herding and cultivation.

Livestock types and populations

The total livestock population of Greater Kordofan is estimated at 31.5 million animals, consisting of about 8 million cattle, 12.5 million sheep, 3 million camels, and 8 million goats. Considerable numbers of poultry are also kept, as are horses. Babanusa and Abyei Localities accommodate 3.06 million livestock animals, with one-third of this number (1.013 million) using the 'central' Babanusa-

Muglad-Abyei corridor. The security situation, drought, diseases and parasites, and other factors govern the management of flocks and the exact seasonal use made of this rangeland.

Livestock populations in Babanusa and Abyei Localities

Type of animals	Two Localities	'Central' corridor only
Cattle	1,700,000	560,000
Sheep	1,000,000	333,000
Goats	300,000	100,000
Horses and donkeys	60,000	20,000
Total	3,060,000	1,013,000

Source: Ministry of Animal Resources - Muglad

5.3 Migration patterns

Originally there were nine main livestock routes in the western sector of South Kordofan. The number of livestock routes was subsequently reduced to three (western, central, and eastern) for planning and development purposes. However, owing to civil war, the conflict in Darfur, and drought patterns, migration has adapted and retreated: some livestock routes have been abandoned and other new ones opened. Some routes have also been shortened and the duration of stay in the northern, rainy-season grazing areas (*makharif*) has been prolonged for as long as water is available.

5.4 Sedentary farming systems

This system includes both agricultural and livestock components and is dominated by cropping activities based on a bush fallow-food crop cultivation system to maintain the fertility of the soil. Major crops include millet and sorghum. Very few farm crops were seen in the northern part of this corridor, around El Gentore and Abu Raffaya villages, during the survey period. However, discussion with stakeholders suggested that the main agricultural crop farming areas are in El Agad, Siteib and around Abyei. The farmers in the northern part of the corridor are also mainly from the Misseriyya tribe, while those farming around Abyei are Dinka.

6. The central livestock corridor

The central livestock corridor (Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei) extends from El Sudore, Umm Osh and El Gentore in the far north of Babanusa Locality to Shiegai, Abyei and Bahr El Arab in the far south of Abyei Locality. In places the corridor runs uncomfortably close to, or even directly across, mechanised farms and some newly-established traditional farms. These areas are mainly around Siteib and El Agad. Also, oil fields in the Difra area, and potentially in other areas currently under consideration for prospecting, will affect the livestock corridor in the near future. The central corridor consists of 3 parallel routes covering an area about 20km wide and 300km long. Along each separate livestock route there are about ten main camping or resting stations (*manzil*) where livestock and herders stop for one or two days before moving on again.

In years with normal rainfall, most of the nomads go towards the north to stay in their wet-season camping areas (*makharif*) for about three months before returning south. In years of poor rainfall, they usually reduce the distance travelled and return earlier to the south, within six weeks to two months. Use of livestock routes is governed by customary rules and procedures that are well known to each group. Before moving, the scout (*mandoub rawwag*) of the group inspects the whole route,

evaluates the suitability of forage resources and water sources, and resolves anticipated major social problems. At the time of writing, there is minimal conflict between farmers and nomads in the central corridor. However, the potential for conflict resulting from the disrupting effects of mechanised farming and oil extraction is well-recognised. Hence there is still a need for corridor demarcation as part of a process to protect the corridor from encroachment and to promote the sustainability of this migration system and the livestock mobility upon which it depends.

Security in this corridor has been a problem since the 1980s. During the second north–south civil war in Sudan (1983–2005), the area experienced massive population displacement. However, pastoralists' herds were still able to access water and grazing resources relatively easily, facilitated by bilateral agreements between Misseriyya and Dinka, reinforced by the military strength of government-supported Misseriyya militias. Since the signing of the CPA, however, access to the Bahr al-Arab in particular has become increasingly difficult for pastoralists.

Major areas of high livestock concentration during the wet season (*makharif*) are mainly in Babanusa Locality, and include Abu Khabob, Umm Kashawaya, Khammaien, El Ardeiba, Braish, Umm Dariana, Abu Raffaya, Fera El Habeel, El Kedaïd, El Gentore, Umm Osh, El Sudore, Bota, Rahad El Hamal, Kozi, Atgel El Donkey, Gheseenat, and Talo. The dry season livestock concentration areas (*masaif*) are mainly in the southern part of Abyei Locality, and include El Fuda, Siteib, El Magareen, El Agad, Difra, Antela, Abu Gazala, Shiegai, Abyei and Bahr El Arab.

6.1 Trends and changes in pastoralism

Although traditionally the assessment area has been dominated by nomadic and transhumant pastoralist production systems, there are major discussions amongst pastoralists today about shifting to sedentary and/or intermixed production systems. This has been accelerated by the implications of the complex redefinition process of the boundaries of Abyei, which has involved vague and controversial historical evidence (as reviewed by the Permanent Court of Arbitration) and which is not primarily, or even secondarily, concerned with the rights and livelihoods of pastoralists – the boundary decisions have been intensely scrutinised but mainly for their consequences in terms of demographics (and hence likely voting patterns in any future referendum under the Abyei Protocol) and consequent state control of oilfields and mechanised farms.

All of the tribal leaders and local government authorities met with during the assessment emphasised the need for water and pasture development in Babanusa Locality and the northern part of Abyei Locality to counter difficulties that were emerging with the traditional system of livestock mobility. There is concern that pastoralist youth, in particular, no longer recognise sufficient incentives for continuous mobility with big herds, and instead they are considering mixing other income options with economically viable livestock production.

Representatives of pastoralist groups using the central livestock corridor stated clearly that they have been, and will continue to be, affected by three main issues:

- Determination of future of Abyei.
- Oil exploration.
- Lack of development and basic services in the area.

Environmental and man-made challenges such as drought, insecurity, mechanised farming and oil exploration have induced many changes in migration routes, have shortened migration distances drastically, and have accelerated the shift from transhumance to sedentarisation. If the current shift to sedentarisation continues, without changing the animal breeds to more suitable productive

breeds in this new arrangement, this will lead to loss of herds and increasing pastoralist poverty. Sedentary farming is not unsuccessful – currently, transhumant pastoralists grow grain crops (sorghum and millet) around villages in Babanusa Locality and in the Siteib area in Abyei Locality – but these crops only supply up to 20-30% of household food requirements, so they remain dependent on livestock.

It was observed that movement of the cattle to the *masaif* at Bahr El Arab is now done mainly by the young men of the clan, rather than by the movement of the whole household as happened previously. Camels which rarely move south of latitude 13°N are now found in South Kordofan. During the assessment, the team observed two camel herds in Babanusa Locality. However, there was no sign of any milking cows with Kenana or Butana blood in the settlements along the central corridor, suggesting that there have not yet been significant attempts by the communities there to change their cattle breeds to more economically sound breeds under their new circumstances.

7. The heart of the matter: conflict flashpoints around Abyei

The current conflict flashpoints are mainly found around Abyei town, at sites jointly used as agricultural land by the Dinka and as dry-season grazing areas by the Misseriyya pastoralists.

The balance of use was managed well in the past but now is difficult for many reasons. First, climate change has affected the quality and length of the rainy season. This has in turn affected the seasonal movement of pastoralists. They now move back to Abyei area earlier in the year, before farmers have harvested their crops. Secondly, demarcation of the Abyei boundaries and the expected results of the ‘popular consultation’ of Abyei people over the future of Abyei. This will affect the rights of grazing for pastoralists. Thirdly, expansion of mechanised farming and oil exploration in the area. All together these factors have diminished the grazing areas available, while pastoralists have maintained very large herds of animals and have been reluctant to abandon their livelihood for both cultural and economic reasons.

The existing cattle breeds and numbers are suitable for the traditional transhumance system. This depends on mobility: the herds must migrate north-south to sustain themselves because there are insufficient natural resources to allow them to stay in one place – the carrying capacity of the environment is not high enough. Also, this system depends on flexibility: the pastoralists must be able to respond to the changing environment, staying longer in the north if the rains are good, and moving back earlier to the south if the rains are poor. As it has been expressed, it is the animals that decide, and the owner has to follow them. If it is not safe to move along the livestock corridor at the necessary time, then the pastoralists have to be willing to face the risk of conflict. There is no alternative to mobilising the herd when the environmental and seasonal conditions dictate movement.

7.1 Key findings

Multiple external factors are affecting traditional pastoralist livelihood mechanisms in the central Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei corridor. The stakeholders interviewed by the assessment team, including tribal leaders, the Pastoral Union, community representatives (*manadeeb*), and relevant government employees in the area, all confirmed that oil exploration in the area is expanding into grazing areas and that the political decision about the Abyei boundaries and the expected results of the 2011 South Sudan referendum will have negative impacts on the Misseriyya pastoralist livelihood systems. Many suspect that the expansion of oil exploration and mechanised farming represent deliberate policies as part of Sudan government strategy. Support to Misseriyya pastoralists to adapt to their

changing circumstances is widely seen as preferable to resistance to these changes. Others think that there is still enough grazing space for viable livelihoods but that the livestock corridors need to be better protected against the expansion of oil fields and mechanised farming.

There are not enough basic services in the northern part of the corridor. The lack of basic services along the central livestock corridor has been mentioned by everyone consulted. The assessment team has visited 23 sites in the northern part of the corridor, where either there was no permanent water source at all, or if there was one, it was not working. Of eight water yards visited along the corridor, only three were operational. There are no schools or health centres outside of the towns of Babanusa, Muglad, and Siteib – and the reason is clear: they cannot operate without water sources.

There may be mobile schools and health workers moving with the pastoralists, but this could not be confirmed with the pastoralists themselves as they had already returned to the southern part of the corridor in the Abyei area and the assessment team was prevented from travelling there for security reasons. Alternative arrangements were immediately made to get access to Abyei at a later date. While provision of water and other basic services along the northern part of the corridor is important and represents a long-term solution to some of the livelihood sustainability issues, immediate negotiation to facilitate access to natural resources around Abyei is crucial in reducing the risk of violent conflict.

The Abyei area continues to witness many incidents of resource-based conflict, despite the political solutions that have been agreed to the boundaries of Abyei. The area is a homeland for the Dinka Ngok, who are agro-pastoralists, but is also traditional summer grazing land for Misseriyya pastoralists who spend around 3-5 months in the Abyei area each year. The SOS Sahel UK representative of the assessment team (Ajak Deng) visited Abyei in a separate trip in January 2010 and met with key stakeholders including senior staff from the Ministry of Agriculture, traditional leaders, local communities, and local NGOs working in the area.

A meeting was held with the Director General of the Ministry of Agriculture and the Director General of the Department of Animal Resources in Abyei. They welcomed the new work of SOS Sahel UK in the area around Abyei and emphasised local needs (including suggesting that the SOS Sahel UK office be in Abyei rather than in Muglad). In their opinions, the main activities required to reduce conflict in the area were as follows:

- Provision of water services for pastoralists at sites well away from settled farmers, which would tend to delay the arrival of the Misseriyya pastoralists in the Abyei area by enabling them to spend longer further to the north.
- Assistance in the opening of firebreak lines to reduce the incidence and spread of fire outbreak, so as to protect pasture land.
- Awareness-raising for both pastoralists and farmers on management of, and safe access to, natural resources.
- Clearly identified and mapped cattle routes (based on actual usage by the pastoralists) and specified summer grazing areas, being put together into a managed system rather than the present uncoordinated movements.
- Re-activation of livestock corridor committees which used to be active in the area and which would help in solving the problems related to movement of nomads within the area.

In a separate meeting with traditional leaders, who form a key part of existing civil society in this area, all of the leaders expressed their welcome to SOS Sahel UK's Abyei initiative. They had faced so many problems and they hoped that the organisation would help them find suitable solutions (and as above, they suggested that the SOS Sahel UK office be in Abyei rather than in Muglad). As expressed

by one leader, access to range and rights of usufruct have been acknowledged throughout the history of the area, as stated in binding customary laws; although each group has its own identity and views on land boundaries, all groups should respect each other and agree to be bound by these laws. The discussion with traditional leaders resulted in the following list of suggested activities:

- The seasonal arrival of the pastoralists in the area should be regulated based on a ‘timing strategy’ so that they come to Abyei later, after the harvest is done.
- As above, the provision of water sources for pastoralists far away from farming communities to avoid conflict over water sources.
- Formation of peace committees from both sides. The committees should be trained in peace building and conflict management techniques, and should work together on related issues during the summer when the nomads are in the Abyei area.
- Awareness-raising for the pastoralists not to “allow their case to be kidnapped by politicians.” There was a view that the traditional leaders and other community structures were capable of solving problems without involving politicians.
- SOS Sahel UK should assist in the provision of water for the settled farming community.
- “Ownership” of all services to be provided must be made clear, with reference to the existing laws of Sudan: there was concern that the nomads would claim ownership of the land that accommodated any services for their benefit, which would create another source of conflict.
- Training workshops that involve ‘real’ pastoralists, the actual owners and herders of the cattle, rather than their appointed or self-appointed ‘representatives’.

SOS Sahel UK also met with the National Development Organization (NDO) in Abyei – despite its name, this is a local NGO formed in 2000 which operates around Abyei. Its initial work involved promoting peace and security through provision of water in villages around Abyei; currently, it is continuing to work in water provision and has expanded to include building schools, building health centres, and distribution of seeds. All of these projects are being implemented through partnership with existing INGOs working in the Abyei area.

NDO is in a challenging position as a ‘recognised’ local NGO in an area that is receiving a lot of attention from INGOs. NDO’s capacity in terms of staff and assets was assessed as limited – it faces the well-known problem of its good staff moving on to seek higher salaries with INGOs. Currently, NDO is working in partnership with Concern Worldwide, an INGO based in Muglad, and their current project is to build a health centre. They are looking for more partnerships to continue their work in providing basic services. They recommended that SOS Sahel UK’s work around Abyei should focus on the provision of water sources, supported by awareness-raising.

8. Addressing the underlying conflict issues

8.1 Natural resource development and management

Development of water sources and rangeland in the north of the region and along the central corridor came up clearly as the top priority from both pastoralists and farmers. The specialists in relevant technical government departments are also supportive of this priority because it will help to regulate the movement of nomads (enabling them not to move south ‘too early’), it will smooth the introduction of better cattle breeds, and it will enable improved provision of education and health services to pastoralist communities.

SOS Sahel UK and other actors can work on this priority directly, but the intervention of the State government is needed to map the natural resources of the region fully and to review the policies that

protect the rights of competing groups to have access to natural resources. The future viability of pastoralism in the region, set against the planned expansion of 'modern' development schemes, specifically oil exploration and mechanised farming, also needs to be put on the State and National government agenda.

8.2 Conflict reduction

The experience of SOS Sahel UK in working along the Sahelian dryland belt, plus the experiences of other actors, need to be studied and adapted to a project suitable for the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor. This should include both hard and soft work along the corridor, such as physical demarcation of the corridor where relevant and construction of water points, together with comprehensive conflict-reduction training workshops for all influential groups. Women's and youth groups in particular are currently kept in the background and will need assistance to move 'from the back row to the front row'.

8.3 Capacity building

Community-based organisations (CBOs) drawn from both pastoralist and farming communities need extensive capacity building to help them engage effectively with the process of development and decision-making on issues affecting the lives of the people they represent. There are emerging CBOs and local NGOs that need to be supported, to develop their organisational skills, accountability, and strategic thinking capacity. Other communities need support to organise themselves in terms of development committees, water committees, and peace committees. Women's committees and youth outreach organisations should be given priority.

The State government and INGOs/UN agencies working in the area should support capacity building of government institutions at the Locality level. Special support should be given to institutions dealing with natural resources and basic services. The Muglad Unit of the Rural Water Corporation needs to perform major rehabilitation work and therefore needs to be equipped with the necessary tools, machines, and means of transport. Moreover, there is a need to conduct water workshops to be attended by all water-using stakeholders, to discuss and agree on modalities of management of water sources through community involvement.

9. Conclusions: investing today for a safer tomorrow

9.1 The challenges

There are major challenges facing development work in the Misseriyya area:

- The community has long been reliant on the capital provided by the natural environment and they are not ready to contribute towards development work or to pay the basic costs of the services they need.
- They are used to having access to almost unlimited grazing areas, but now the mechanised farming schemes and oil fields are expanding into, and preventing access to, grazing land.
- There are no specific National or State-level policies that are pro-pastoralist or that explicitly support and favour their livelihood systems.
- The political future of Abyei and South Sudan will pose a major challenge to Misseriyya pastoralists and their current livelihoods.

- The topography of the northern part of the central corridor is not suitable for low-cost rainwater harvesting technology. Instead, water is only available from deep underground, which needs sophisticated technology to pump it out.
- The 20 years of civil war has had a strong negative impact on the traditional relationship between Dinka and Misseriyya.

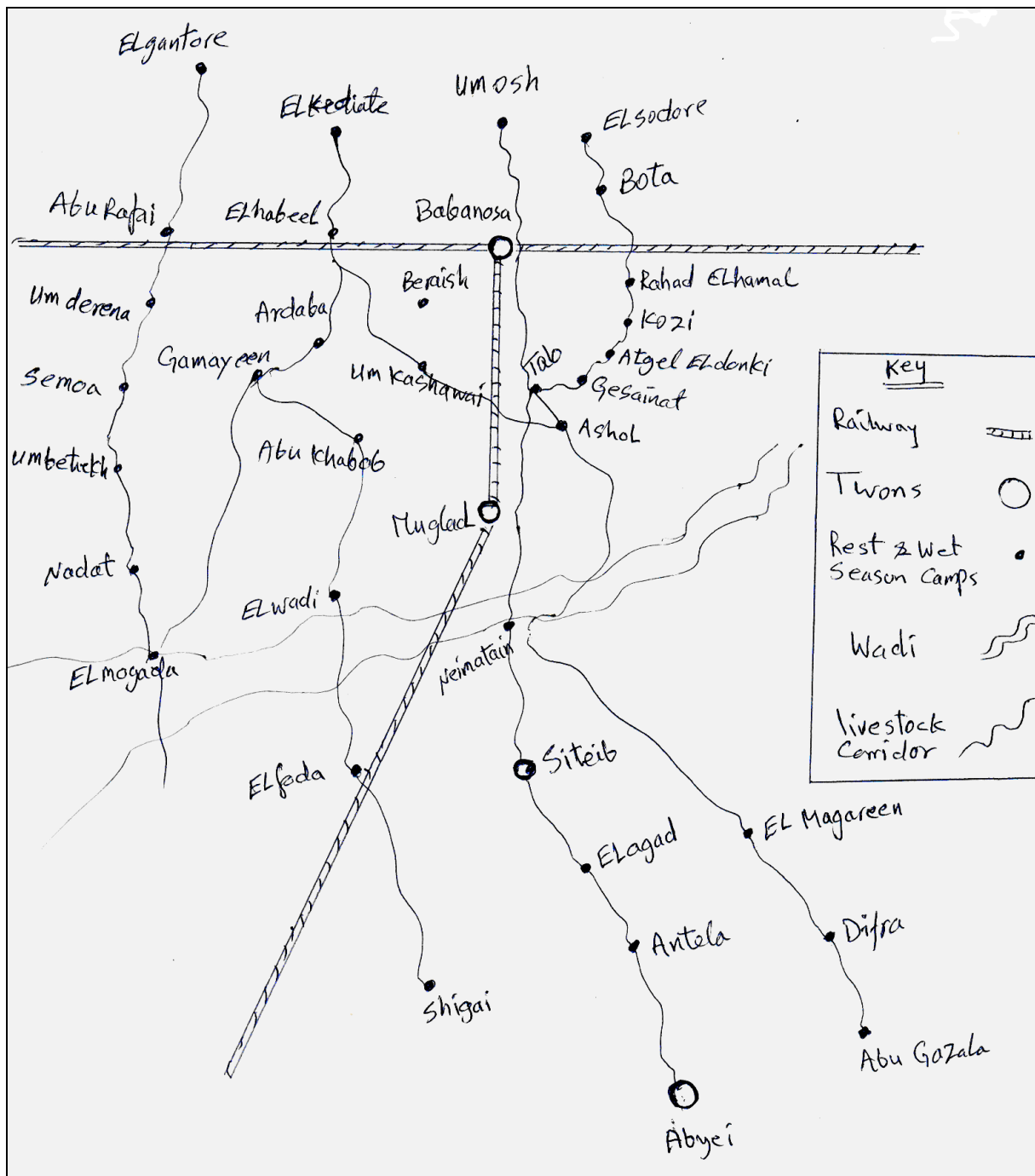
9.2 Lessons learned and priority actions suggested

Rehabilitation work, particularly of water sources, along the Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor is essential to help reverse the existing deterioration which has led to conflict over natural resources: this livestock corridor provides a livelihood for many thousands of farmers and pastoralists. But interventions also need to look to the future: the viability of 'traditional', co-existing pastoralist and farming livelihoods is being called into question by wider political, economic, and environmental changes, and by the choices of the pastoralists and farmers themselves. The following priority actions have been identified:

- Intensive capacity-building of Misseriyya CBOs to represent their people effectively, and to help them demand their rights.
- Urgent investment in the provision of water sources in the grazing areas that are currently not being used because of a lack of water. Improved water sources in these areas will relieve pressure on land and water sources elsewhere and will therefore reduce the competition for natural resources that is driving violent conflict in the area.
- The implementation of the CPA is progressing well, at least 'on paper'. The election has taken place in April 2010 as planned and the referendum on South Sudan is scheduled for early 2011. Discussion between Misseriyya and Dinka concerning future livelihood issues should start now, well in advance of the referendum, and could usefully incorporate methods of 'scenario planning' to enable different outcomes to be considered.
- Both the Government and NGOs need to review their development plans and support for existing and alternative livelihoods for Misseriyya pastoralists in the light of the existing trends and changes in pastoralism that are observable.
- Climate change is casting a shadow over this area – particularly its effect on droughts. Adaptation measures need to be adopted as soon as possible to avoid a further worsening of the situation: primarily this will involve the provision of additional water sources, as above, in the context of a long-term adaptation process.

Annex 1 : Schematic sketch map of Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridors

This was compiled from investigations by the assessment team during the visits.



Annex 2 : Overview map of 'central' Babanusa-Muglad-Abyei livestock corridor

