Gambella regional briefing note

Gambella region lies approximately 777 kms to the west of Addis Ababa. The region is located in the south-western part of the country and borders the Oromia region to the north and northeast and Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples’ (SNNP) region to the south and southeast. The region also shares an international boundary with South Sudan to the west. Gambella is comprised of three administrative zones (Anyuak, Nuer and Majang) and 13 woredas (districts), one special woreda and one city administration. There are a total of 262 kebeles (sub-districts) in the woredas of the region.

Based on the 2007 census and 2014 projection by the Central Statistical Agency of Ethiopia (CSA), the region has a total population of 396,000. There are five main ethnicities within the region: the Nuer (>50 per cent), followed by Anuak (22 per cent) while other ethnic groups (Majang, Oppo and Kumo) share the remaining per cent, including the highlanders living in the region.

Most of Gambella region is flat and its climate is hot and humid. Annual rainfall averages about 600 mm, while the minimum/maximum temperatures range between 21.1°C and 35.9°C. Animal husbandry is the main economic activity in the region, while subsistence farming, fishing, hunting and gathering are also practised. The region has potential for irrigation based agriculture, as well as commercial and small-scale farming. Forestry, fishery, manufacturing, mining and tourism could also be explored. Transport, communication and energy networks remain poor.

List of key statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population:</td>
<td>396,000 (2014 projection based on the 2007 CSA census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total under five years old population:</td>
<td>49,677 (2012 projection based on the 2007 CSA census)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 5 mortality rate (per 1,000 live births):</td>
<td>123 (EDHS¹ 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult Literacy:</td>
<td>73.3 per cent men and 36.3 per cent women (EDHS 2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to safe water supply:</td>
<td>54.5 per cent (EMDHS² 2014).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children fully immunised:</td>
<td>73.0 per cent (MoH 2012).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living below the national poverty line:</td>
<td>32.0 per cent (HICES³ 2010/11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living below the food poverty line:</td>
<td>26.0 per cent (HICES 2010/11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey
² Ethiopian Mini-Demographic and Health Survey
³ Household Income, Consumption and Expenditure Survey
UNICEF’s support
As the year 2016 marks the beginning of UNICEF’s new Country Programme and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), UNICEF will contribute to four pillars of the UNDAF 2016–2020: (a) a resilient, sustainable, and green economy, (b) basic social services, (c) governance, participation and capacity development and (d) girls and women equality and empowerment with new focus areas of adolescent girls, urbanization and integrated early childhood development. These pillars align with and support the second Growth and Transformation Plan (GTP II) of the region.

Child survival and health
According to the 2011 DHS, 27.5 per cent of women aged 15-49 who gave birth in Gambella region delivered in a health facility, compared with the national average of 10 per cent. Routine immunisation coverage is improving. 70 per cent of children have received the Penta-valent-3 vaccination, low in comparison to the 84 per cent national average. According to a multiple malaria indicator survey (2011), 70 per cent of households have Long Lasting Insecticidal Nets (LLINs), of these, 62 per cent use them.

However, despite immense progress, health and nutrition outcomes in the region are continuously threatened by recurrent emergencies. The hot climate, poor hygiene and shortage of safe water during dry season amplifies the risk of epidemic diseases such as acute respiratory illnesses, malaria, measles, relapsing fever and water borne diseases such as Acute Watery Diarrhoea (AWD). The last time that AWD cases were reported in the region was in 2006, when more than a thousand people were affected and a significant number of deaths reported. However, stunting and underweight rates have decreased from 29.3 and 26.7 per cent (EDHS 2005) to 21.8 and 18.7 per cent (mini EDHS 2014), respectively. Under nutrition is still one of the major public health challenges in the region. Household food insecurity, poor child feeding practices, recurrent floods and inadequate access to sanitation and safe water are contributing factors to malnutrition. On top of such challenges, South Sudan’s conflicts bring more work to Government staff.

Capacity building has been carried out on Basic Emergency Obstetrics New-born Care (BEMOnc), Newborn Intensive Care Units (NICU), integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (iMNICI) and integrated Community Case Management (iCCM). Capacity building has also focused on cold management, immunization in practice and other aspects related to health system strengthening. Support has been given to malaria prevention and control by providing LLINs and to preparing a malaria commodity micro plan. Direct solar device and cold chain supplies, EPI boats and BEmONC equipment have been procured and supplied. Zones with low Extended Programme of Immunization (EPI) performances have been supported with technical assistance. Refugee affected health facilities have been supplied with emergency drug kits. Four Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) specialists are in place to support all woredas of the region. Nutrition supplies are being procured and supplied. Different trainings are being provided on CMAM and Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) activities.

Learning and development
UNICEF, in partnership with the Gambella people’s Regional State through the Regional Education Bureau (REB), have focused on the provision of equitable access and quality education to boys and girls at pre-primary, primary and post-primary levels. Through this partnership, the education system focuses on the most disadvantaged and vulnerable children. The partnership focuses on three key issues:

1. Pre-primary education, particularly child to child school readiness approach is being supported. UNICEF provides capacity building training for teacher facilitators and young facilitators who support children in every community school. Moreover, child to child materials translated into local languages, such as the Nuer language, in which some 1,600 copies have been printed and in the other three local languages for which materials are currently being printed.

2. Equitable access to education is an area within which UNICEF is striving to create a conducive learning environment by constructing permanent classrooms and furnishing them with appropriate classroom furniture. Currently, a total of 48 permanent classrooms, five administrative blocks and 14 separated latrines are under construction within the host community, as well as within the six refugee camps.
3. UNICEF is partnering with the REB and other Implementing Partners (IPs) to strengthen the coordination system in the education in emergencies context. In this regard, capacity building training is being provided for teachers and education personnel. In addition to this, educational supplies are provided to children affected by different crises within the region.

**Child protection**

The Gambella region is prone to recurrent flooding, inter and intra-ethnic conflicts and internal displacements each year. Child protection in emergency (CPiE) has thus been the main focus of the field office in response to emergencies occasioned by the aforementioned factors. During 2015/16, thousands of people were forced to flee their homes as result of deadly conflicts between rival ethnic groups. In addition to this, cross-border attacks by the Murlee tribe have become more pronounced in the recent past and have affected thousands of children and women. The region hosts over 250,000 South Sudan refugees, out of whom 94 per cent are women and children. In response to Child Protection (CP) needs, UNICEF partners with the Government, as well as with UNHCR, to provide psychosocial support, Child Friendly Spaces (CFS), Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) and case management in camps and within the host community.

Cases of children in conflict with the law are rampant in the region. Factors such as growing poverty, limited access to education and life skills training and poor living conditions have pushed young adolescents into harmful coping mechanisms. Despite a lack of formal assessment on child justice, data from police and the person administration units show that an average of 5-10 adolescents are arrested and remanded at police posts on a daily bases. Most of the cases entail petty crimes, thefts and robbery. In response to this, UNICEF is working towards establishing a child justice system within the regional justice organ. Child justice facilities such as Child Friendly Benches (CFBs), Child Protection Units (CPUs) and community based Diversion Centres (DCs) have so far been established. Efforts to establish rehabilitation services and segregation of children from adults in detention centres are presently being explored.

HIV/AIDS remains a major child protection concern of the region. According to the Federal HIV Prevention and Control Office (HAPCO) projections for 2015, HIV prevalence among adolescent aged below 15 is 32.3 per cent of the population living with HIV/ADIS in Gambella region. Consequently, UNICEF’s child protection interventions include raising HIV/AIDS awareness amongst youths by establishing youth dialogue fora in youth clubs and schools.

**Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)**

UNICEF funds and supports five major areas (rural community water supply, sanitation and hygiene, institutional WASH, capacity building and emergency preparedness and response) in Gambella region. Additionally, UNICEF is the major partner within the WASH sector. The organisation provides significant support to increase community access to safe water supply by funding the construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of water supply schemes. Two years ago, UNICEF donated a drilling machine and trained a drilling crew and machine operation team. UNICEF also supports the guinea worm eradication programme in the region by providing safe drinking water.

Recently, and as part of emergency response programme, UNICEF funded a water scheme project that supplies water to two refugee camps, Itang town and a junction community with an estimated total beneficiaries of 150,000.

In partnership with the Regional Health Bureau (RHB) and selected district health offices, UNICEF supports the construction of rural household latrines, both financially and technically, through the Community Led Total Sanitation and Hygiene (CLTSH) approach. In addition to that, and in collaboration with UNCHR and INGO’s with UNICEF Project Contract Agreements (PCA), UNICEF financially supported the construction of household latrines in Kule and Teirkidi refugee camps. Furthermore, UNICEF supported the production and supply of sanitation and hygiene key information, education and communication materials to both refugee and host communities.

Moreover, UNICEF provided the Gambella Health and Education College with capacity building support to strengthen a continuous professional development that focuses on the Health Extension Programme (HEP). Additionally, UNICEF supports the Regional WASH Inventory to strengthen the Information Management System (IMS) for planning, management and decision-making as part of an overall nationwide intervention in the WASH sector.
Cross-cutting Interventions
UNICEF has positioned itself as a key partner to the Government through enhanced preparedness efforts that have positively contributed to responding to critical gaps occasioned by various crises. To this end, the commencement of a new programme cycle offers an opportunity to define the roadmap for the mainstreaming aspects of emergency preparedness within the ongoing regular programmes with Government counterparts. This, coupled with the strong partnership that the organisation has built with other UN agencies such as UNHCR, has enabled UNICEF to establish and sustain interventions even within refugee camps. Through an MOU signed with UNHCR, UNICEF seconded technical staff members to UNHCR across all sectors of focus. Through this arrangement and/or partnership, UNICEF was able to reach all categories of beneficiaries: Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLWs); youths, adolescents and children with key services. Whilst most of the seconded staff have since left, efforts are being made to reinitiate the partnership following the recommendations of a joint evaluation of partnership that was conducted by both parties.

Humanitarian Situation
The Gambella region is prone to both natural and manmade hazards. Recurrent floods, inter-communal conflict and cross-border cattle raids continue to be challenges that affect the humanitarian situation in the region.

Major rivers in the region such as Baro (Opeeno), Gilo, Alwero and Akobo have increased water levels during the rainy season (April to October) causing regular flooding to the surrounding areas. Every year, numerous flash floods result in losses of human lives and livestock, displacement, washing away of crops and pasture/grazing land, thus causing massive disruption to the lives of the population. On average, floods affect an estimated 25,000 people each year in 11 chronically flood-prone woredas.

Armed conflicts in the neighbouring country of South Sudan have frequently caused refugee influxes into the region. According to the data released by UNHCR during the month of July 2016, Gambella currently hosts over 235,000 refugees who are being hosted in six camps. Whilst the current conflict in Juba has not affected the region directly, South Sudanese refugees continue to cross the border, albeit in small numbers.

For more information and resources
Website- www.unicef.org/ethiopia
Email- ethcommunication@unicef.org