

**EUROPEAN UNION EMERGENCY TRUST FUND FOR STABILITY  
AND ADDRESSING THE ROOT CAUSES OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION AND DISPLACED PERSONS IN AFRICA  
(EUTF)**

**CROSS-BORDER ANALYSIS AND MAPPING**

**Cluster 3: Western Ethiopia-East Sudan**

**August 2016**

An overview of the security, political, economic, social, environmental and migration dynamics that affects the peripheral and border areas in the Eastern Sudan-Benishangul-Gumuz Cluster. The research is part of a bigger research project, which is cross border analysis and mapping of various clusters under the European Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing the root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa (EUTF).

## Methodology

The purpose of this research report is to provide baseline information relating to security, political, economic, social, environmental and migration dynamics in the Eastern Sudan-Amhara/Benishangul-Gumuz Cluster. The report also identifies major actors that play different roles in the socio-economic affairs of the border areas and provides recommendations that could be implemented both in the two countries (Ethiopia and Sudan) and jointly across the border. The East Sudan/Amhara/Benishangul-Gumuz cluster in the Ethiopian side covers the Amhara and the Benishangul-Gumuz (BG) regions, while in Sudan the Blue Nile (BN) and Senar States shares borders with the two Ethiopian regions. In the Amhara region, three *Woredas*<sup>1</sup>, namely: Metema, Mirab Armachiho and Quara share border with Sudan, where as in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, six *Woreda*, namely, Mao-Komo special, Assosa, Kumruk, Sherkole, Sedal and Guba share borders with Sudan. In the Sudanese side, three districts from the Blue Nile State share border with Ethiopia. These are Kumruk, Geissan and Alrosairies.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> *Woreda* in Amharic could be translated into District. *Woreda* in the Ethiopian administrative setup are located below regional states.

<sup>2</sup> These are also spelled respectively as Alkurmook, Geesan and Rosaries in some other publications.

Due to the shortness of the field time, in this report, we chose to focus on the border areas between Benishangul-Gumuz region and the Blue Nile state.<sup>3</sup> In order to produce this research, the research team conducted a fieldwork in the Benishangul-Gumuz region from July 27 to August 6, 2016. During the fieldwork, the research team visited relevant bureaus of the region in Assosa, the regional capital. In Assosa, we also interviewed officials of the Assosa zone and the Assosa *Woreda* as they are located in Assosa town. In addition to Assosa, the research team visited the Guba *Woreda*, the Tsore refugee and Sherkole refugee camps. The research team conducted 45 key informant interviews and six focus group discussions (FDGs). The list of key informants and participants of FDGs are attached to this report. In addition to primary information gathered through the fieldwork, the research team used secondary published and unpublished materials. The research team was not able to visit due to administrative difficulties the Sudanese/ districts that border with Ethiopia. We, however, tried to fill the gap by use of interviews of Sudanese we met in Ethiopia and use of secondary data.

This report is organized reflecting the structure of the research guide. Consequently, the first section presents findings of the research that would answer general questions that provide the overall picture of the border areas and gives a context to the forthcoming discussion. These include information on demographics, infrastructure, resources and economic activities and sources of vulnerabilities. The second section shall cover the migration and stability dynamics in both sides of the border. A third section will cover actors and actions with a view to present available responses and key stakeholders. Finally, the last section presents recommendations that could be undertaken to minimize the adverse impacts of irregular migration through actions that include socio-economic development and better management of borders and migration.

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<sup>3</sup>Information on the Amhara side of the border shall be presented at a later stage.

## General Description of the Context of the Cluster

**What is the size, population and ethnic composition of the border area? Specify the exact size and location of the border areas being studied.**

The population size in the six *Woredas* of BG Region bordering Sudan is about 228,524 (50.6% M, 49.4% F) in according to the 2007 National Census. This constituted 29.1% of the population in BG Region. The size of the population in these *Woredas* in 2016 is estimated to be 254,804 persons, as per a projection made by CSA based on the 2007 Census. Of these, 128,445 (50.4%) are male and 126,359 (49.6%) female, which is similar to what has been the case in 2007. The population distribution by place of residence shows that a substantial majority of the population, i.e. 234,688 (92.1%), reside in rural areas, while only 20,116 persons (7.9%) live in the urban areas. There are no nomadic people registered by the census and projection.

**Table 1: Population of six Woredas in BGR, 2007 Census**

Population Census 2007	BG Region	Assosa Woreda	Guba Woreda	Kurmuk Woreda	Sherkole Woreda	Sedal/S.Abay Woreda	Mao Komo Sp. Woreda
All	784,345	104,147	14,907	16,734	24,679	17,996	50,061
Male	398,655	52,968	7,484	8,604	12,288	9,192	25,055
Female	385,690	51,179	7,423	8,130	12,391	8,804	25,006

**Source: Benishangul-Gumuz, Census 2007 Tables**

These *Woredas* cover 19,218.68km,<sup>2</sup> which is equal to 37.9% of BG Region, with a population of 254,804 persons representing 24.6% living in BG Region. The population density of all six *Woredas* is below the average for BG Region, which is 20.39% and that is below the national average. Comparing *Woredas*, Assosa Woreda is the most populated with a density of 33.24% while Guba is the least with 2.61 persons/km<sup>2</sup> (See Table 2 below).

The Blue Nile state is one of the eighteen states of the Sudan. The Blue Nile State is located in the southeast of Sudan and borders the Sudanese state of Sennar and shares international boundary with Ethiopia and South Sudan. Its topography characterized by both flat plains and hills in the south and south west (Medani 2003). Historically, the Blue Nile state was part of the Funj Sultanate (1504 to 1821), which was brought to an end by the Turco-Egyptian forces in 1821 (Gramizzi 2013: 11). Still now, some of the indigenous groups of the region identify themselves as Funj. It has an area of 45,844 km<sup>2</sup> administratively divided into six districts that include Damazin, Kurmuk, Baw, Geissan, Tadamon, and Alrosairies. The population of Blue Nile

State was according to the 2006 Census estimated 832,112. The population of the Blue Nile State is estimated to rise to 1.2 Million in 2013 by Africa Development Bank (2013).

**Table 2: Size and Population of the six Woredas in BGR**

Woreda	Area in Km <sup>2</sup>	Population Size by Sex: July 2016 Projection					
		Male	Female	Total	Urban	Rural	Density
Assosa <sup>4</sup>	2,903.06	48,768	47,730	96,498	0	96,498	33.24
Kurmuk	1,289.88	10,621	10,034	20,655	1,121	19,534	16.01
Sherkole	1,978.59	15,191	15,347	30,538	1,833	28,705	15.43
Sedal	2,456.56	12,256	11,710	23,966	5,530	18,436	9.76
Mao Komo	2,958.36	31,575	31,652	63,227	6,885	56,342	21.37
Guba	7,632.23	10,034	9,886	19,920	4,747	15,173	2.61
Total for all Woredas	19,218.68 (37.9% of BGR)	128,445 (24.5% of BGR)	126,359 (24.7% of BGR)	254,804 (24.6%)	20,116 (9.4% of BGR)	234,688 (28.7% of BGR)	
Total for BGR	50,698.66	524,000 50.7%	509,999 49.3%	1,033,999	215,001 20.8%	818,998 79.2%	20.39

Source: Projection based on Census 2007 as shared by BoFED-in Assosa

Only three of the districts in Blue Nile State share borders with Ethiopia. These are Kurmuk, Geissan and Alosairies. While Al Rosaries borders the Amhara Region, Kurmuk and Geissan share border with BG Region. These bordering districts have a population of 414,481 where the larger proportion is for Alosairies with 215,857 followed by Kurmuk's 110,815 and Geissan's 87,809. Of this, there is an estimated 71.9% percent who are in rural areas, while the rest are residents of urban areas such as Roseries, Kurmuk and Geissan. There are also significant numbers of nomads living in these areas (19,755 in total). (See table below for detail)

**Table 3: Population profile Al Rosaires, Geeisan and Kurmuk**

	Total			Rural	Urban	Nomad
	Total	Male	Female	Total	Total	Total
Blue Nile	832,112	421,758	410,354	597,858	202,353	31,901
Alosairies	215,857	108,314	107,543	148,009	58,712	9,136
Geissan	87,809	43,806	44,003	81,263	0	6,546
Kurmuk	110,815	56,943	53,872	99,889	6,853	4,073

Source: 2006 census

<sup>4</sup>Assosa woreda excludes Assosa city, the capital of BGR

## Ethnic Composition

The BG region is multi-ethnic. According to the 2007 census, it is composed of the Berta (25.4%); Amhara (21.69%); Gumuz (20.88%); Oromo (13.55%); Shinasha (7.73%); Agew Awi (4.22%) and the remaining 6.43% of the regional population comprises other ethnic groups. Of these the Berta, Gumuz and Shinasha as well as Mao and Komo ethnic groups are considered indigenous to BG Region. The major ethnic groups in the cross-border areas are of similar composition to those of the wider region and with little variations when compared across *Woredas*. Accordingly, the majority are Berta followed by Amhara in Assosa Zone, while it is the Gumuz followed by Shinasha in Metekel Zone and the Gumuz followed by Oromos and Amharas in Kemashi Zone. The largest population group in Mao Komo Special *Woreda* are the Oromo followed by Mao ethnic groups and then Berta. The indigenous Komo are small in number (7,241) even in the special *woreda*.

**Table 4: Ethnic groups in cross-border areas in BG Region**

Ethnic group	BGR	Assosa Zone	Metekel Zone	Kemashi Zone	Mao Komo Spec Woreda
Agew-Awi	33,061	250	31,312	109	-
Amhara	170,132	74,171	48,050	11,279	323
Berta	199,303	186,325	559	2,877	9,410
Fedashe	2,656	593			2,061
Gumuz	163,781	418	101,638	61,493	86
Komo	7,773	500	9	7	7,241
Mao	15,384	1,921	9	187	13,228
Oromo	106,275	32,050	30,654	24,993	17,569
Shinasha	60,587	644	59,702	81	1
Tigray	5,562	3,865	1,241	79	3
Others	19,831	10,085	3,193	438	139
Total	784,345	310,822	276,367	101,543	50,061

**Source: Census 2007, Tables for BG Region**

The 2007 Census captured statistics on the religion of the population by *Woreda*. As per the relevant data tabulated below from the findings of the survey, the most popular religion at the regional level is Islam followed by Orthodox and protestant Christianity. At BG region level, the proportion of Muslims is 45%, Orthodox 33.3%, Protestant 13.5% and 7.1% traditional, Catholic (0.6%) and other religions (0.5%). Moreover, Islam is the most common religion in all the *Woredas* bordering Sudan. It is followed by 98.2% of the population in Sherkole *Woreda*, 95.8% in Kurmuk *Woreda*, 94.6% in Mao Komo Special *Woreda*, 87.3% in Guba *Woreda*, 63.3% in Assosa *Woreda*, and by 29.7% in Sedal/SirbaAbay *Woreda*. Orthodox is the second most common religion in all the *Woredas* except in Sedal where Protestants are larger than the Orthodox.

Like that of the BG region, Blue Nile state is multiethnic. It has also been affected by inward migration. The indigenous communities of the Blue Nile state by and large speak Nilo-Saharan languages and belong to more than a dozen ethnic groups and include the Ingessana, Berta, Burun, Gumuz, Hamaj, Jumjum, Koma, Ragarig, and Uduk.<sup>5</sup> In addition to the indigenous groups, a large number of migrants from both Sudan and other parts of Africa, particularly West Africa are found in the Blue Nile State.

The majority of the people in the Blue Nile state follow Islam. There are also some Christians and those who kept African traditional beliefs. Although they partially converted to Islam and, more recently, Christianity, a significant proportion of Blue Nile communities have long maintained their traditional tribal beliefs and religious practices (Gramizzi, 2013).

#### **What infrastructure is available on each side of the border? What cross-border infrastructure is available (e.g. roads, shared facilities, etc.)?**

Established in 1992, the Benishangul-Gumuz region is one of the four regions of the Ethiopian federal system, which in comparison with the other regions of the country shows weaker performance in terms of socio-economic indicators. For most of the 1990s, many of the woredas were not accessible by motorized transportation. According to Tadele 'the region had only 560 km of road with the road density only 11 km per 1000 sq.km in 1991, and it improved this figure to about 40 km per 1000 sq.km in 2013/14, which is still by far behind the national average of 78.2 km/ 1000 sq.km.' (2011:30). Until the recent construction of a dam that connects the Assosa Zone and the Metekel zone over the Blue Nile in Guba, one has to travel hundreds of kilometers via the Oromia region to travel from Assosa, the regional capital to Gilgel Beles, the capital of the Metekel zone.

The region has historically been peripheral to Ethiopia's political economy. This is manifested by little integration to the politics and economy of the country, particularly in the period prior to 1991. According to a report by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), the Primary Gross Enrolment Rate for Benishangul-Gumuz region in 1994/95 was 35.4%. There was also lower regional coverage in the provision of health services. In expansion of both education and health services, there has been tremendous progress in recent years. For instance, the data for recent years shows close to a 100% Primary Gross Enrolment Rate (see ODI, 2011:9). In spite of the progress in primary enrolment, literacy rates for the population above seven years remains low – 13.2% in Guba; 9% in Sherkole, and 21% in Kurmuk (DRMFSS, 2014).

The same source also provides a variant data on accessibility to basic services. These are summarized in the table below.

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<sup>5</sup> While there is official data in Ethiopia about ethnic composition at federal, regional and woreda levels, there is no reliable data on ethnic composition about the Blue Nile state of the Sudan.

**Table 6: Infrastructure in BG region**

<p>Healthcare services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There are 407 health posts, 45 clinics and 6 Basic healthcare services. Coverage increased to 92% by the end of 2015/2016 fiscal year.</li> <li>• 27 physicians, with the ratio of 1 physician: 41,414 persons. 973 nurses with the ratio of 1:1,022. 939 health extension workers with the ratio of 1:979 persons.</li> <li>• 32 ambulances deployed in rural areas</li> </ul>	<p>Water Supply and forestry</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to water coverage: is 85.7% for all, 87.5% for rural and 77.2% for urban population.</li> <li>• 428 hand pump wells, 45 developed springs, 876 shallow wells and 24 deep wells. 1,373 facilities in total providing to 433,058 rural populations.</li> </ul>
<p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were 35 kindergartens (26 run by private sector), 558 primary schools (years 1-8), 62 secondary schools (years 9-12), 1 teachers training college, and 11 technical and vocational schools operating in BG region by the end of the GTP period in 2015/16.</li> <li>• There is also the Assosa University which is run by the federal government.</li> <li>• Participation in pre-schools stands at 6.9% benefiting 2,572 children in urban areas and 1,101 children from rural areas.</li> <li>• O-Class in 26 urban and 396 rural areas and 122 Children-to-Children centres (6 in urban and 116 in rural areas)</li> <li>• Net enrolment rate in primary schools 88.8%</li> <li>• Number of schools teaching in mother tongue is 299 in 2015, reaching 78,140 (36,237 female) children of the five indigenous ethnic groups; as a result, the enrolment rate of indigenous children grew to 58.6% (55.2% Female) in 2015.</li> </ul>	<p>Electricity, gold mining and environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available in 118 of the 475 <i>kebeles</i> in both urban and rural areas, which makes the coverage 24.8%</li> <li>• There are 133 cooperatives engaged in traditional gold mining. These have produced a total of 5,848.923 grams of gold to the National Bank of Ethiopia.</li> <li>• A total of 20 communities based in protected eco-tourism parks in the region by the end of 2015.</li> </ul>
<p>Transportation and roads</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation coverage has risen from 10% to 37% in the region between 2010 and 2015.</li> <li>• 356 vehicles provide public transportation services</li> </ul>	<p>Veterinary services</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Veterinary healthcare service coverage: 78.9% expanded by constructing new animal health posts and strengthening or refurbishing existing ones.</li> <li>• Livestock vaccination service: 92%</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Road infrastructure by the end of GTP-1: Paved roads (asphalt) 156km; gravel roads 1867.8km;</li> <li>• Road density in the region: 40.1 /1000km<sup>2</sup> in 2015, which is still lower than the national average which is 95km/1000 km<sup>2</sup>.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Source:</b> BG Region Report on Implementation of the first GTP 2010/11-2015/16 (Translation ours)</p>	

**Table 7: Accessibility of basic services**

Accessibility to:	Guba	Sherkole	Kurmuk
<b>Roads</b>	80% of the households did not have any access. Average time to reach the nearest paved road is almost 3 hours; to urban centre about 5 hours.	68% of the household do not have access. Average time to nearest paved road is 38 minutes; to nearest urban centre 3 hours and 44 minutes	Good access. Average time taken to reach the nearest paved road is only 20 minutes; to nearest urban centre 1hr and 15 minutes.
<b>Electricity</b>	None	Only 9% of the household located in the community have electricity and 2% of them have electricity connection.	23% of the households are located in the community with electricity, while 11% of the households are actually connected
<b>Veterinary facilities</b>	78% of them reported to have poor (very poor) access to veterinary service and livestock drugs.	59% of the household are able to access poor/ very poor veterinary services and livestock drugs	92% reported to have poor/very poor access to veterinary services and livestock drugs.
<b>Agri. Extension service</b>	33.3% of the households	44% of the households	23% of the households
<b>Water</b>	2/3rd of the population obtain drinking water from rivers and wells	59% of the household drink water from rivers, ponds, lakes and rain water harvesting.	58% of the households have home-based or communal piped water, while 16% obtain it from rivers.
<b>Sanitation</b>	36% of the households use an outdoor latrine	65% of them use outdoor latrines/hole	375% of the households use outdoor latrine

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Source: DRMFSS, 2014: *Woreda Disaster Risk Profiling Programme*

The Blue Nile State has been severely affected by the conflict that started in 1987 and ended in 2005 after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) between the Sudanese government and the Sudanese Liberation Movement (SPLM). But the conflict in Blue Nile resumed in 2013. Because of war, displacement and also limited opportunities, there is a high incidence of poverty in the state (UNDP, 2010). Regarding provision of health services, the Blue Nile has a lower performance in comparison to other central Sudan states. In this respect, Blue Nile has higher rates of infant and child mortality in comparison to the neighbouring Sudanese states (Ibid.). There is, however, a relatively good distribution of health facilities in the three BN districts bordering Ethiopia.

**Table 8: Health Facilities by district**

Locality	Hospital	Health Centre	Health Unit	Total
Alosairies	3	6	48	57
Geissan	2	1	42	45
Kurmuk	2	1	35	38

Source: UNDP, 2010

In spite of the presence of facilities, as reported recently by UNOCHA (2014), many localities in the BN do not have access to health care. The situation is worse in those areas which are either controlled by the rebel SPLM-N or are places where active military confrontation is taking place. Similarly, the Sudan Consortium reported in March 2015 that the conflict has severely affected the health system in BN. It said, because of conflict, the number of clinics providing services has severely declined. Moreover, there are shortages of medical professionals, drugs and medical equipment. As a result, the number of children receiving immunizations has declined (UNOCHA, 2014). Education and water and sanitation services have also been seriously affected by the prevailing instability. Before the beginning of the 2013 conflict, BN had shown improvements in terms of providing education and water and sanitation services. Nevertheless, the gains that were accrued between the signing of the CPA in 2005 and the onset of the 2013 conflict, have been subsequently lost.

Regarding roads, the BN state has weak capacity. The only asphalt road connects Khartoum to Damazin, the capital of the state, which is 5050 km away from the national capital. There are no good roads that connect Damzin with the capitals of the districts (UNDP, 2010).

The Blue Nile State of Sudan and Benishangul-Gumuz region share the Blue Nile, which contributes more than 85% of the waters of the Nile. So far the countries of the Nile Basin have not produced a mutually agreed framework for the sharing of the waters of the Nile. The management of the Blue Nile is beyond the mandates of the regional governments. There is a sharp division between the upper riparian countries of the Nile, such as Ethiopia, Kenya,

Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and Tanzania, and the lower riparian countries like Sudan and Egypt. The upper riparian countries call for a new water regime which allows fair and equitable sharing of the waters of the Nile, while the lower riparian countries seek to maintain the status quo which privileges them at the expense of the upper riparian countries (see Dereje, 2010). The on-going construction of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) by Ethiopia over the Blue Nile in the Benishangul-Gumuz region bordering the Sudanese Blue Nile State could create a new dynamic in the relationship between the three major riparian countries – Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt. The three countries have already signalled their interest to seek cooperation instead of confrontation over the Ethiopian dam.

**What economic activities are practiced in the border areas? What economic and social connections exist between communities on both sides of the border?**

### **Benishangul-Gumuz Region**

The main category of livelihood in the BG Region and targeted *Woredas* is crop and livestock production. Besides, the area is known for its gold mining, fisheries and wild food collection. This goes with the endowment of the region with natural resources including large cultivable land, marble, gold, sandstone, wild game, fish, wild plants, seeds and fruits and Gum Arabic (Save the Children, 2014). However, challenges such as inefficient farming, lack of skilled human resources and new technologies, poor infrastructure, and crop and livestock diseases leave the population, particularly the indigenous population, vulnerable to food deficit.

Agriculture is rain fed and crops are grown in only one season. The major crops cultivated in the region include: sorghum, millet, maize, and oil seeds like sesame, niger seeds and sunflower. The indigenous communities practice what is called shifting or slash and burn farming. Farmers, whose origins are from other regions of Ethiopia where oxen ploughing are practiced, use animal power, such as oxen and donkey, to till their land. Among the indigenous groups, women play a central role in all aspects of agriculture and food production, processing, and marketing as well as preparation of food at the household level. Women in the BG region in general have less access to land, limited or no control over resources, fewer economic opportunities, and face risks of gender-based violence.

Mining of gold, marble, quarry stone and other resources are commonly carried out using traditional methods. The indigenous communities, in particular the Berhta use gold mining to complement their agricultural livelihood. Fishing is also practiced among the indigenous communities, although is predominantly used for household consumption. The indigenous communities use hooks and traps when they fish from the waters of the region. Recently, the regional government introduced modern fishing using motorized boats and gillnets in the Guba *Woreda* of the Metekel zone as a way of generating income activities for unemployed youth (BG BoAD, 2013).

## Land Governance and Agricultural Investment

After the removal of the imperial government in 1974, Ethiopia undertook a radical land reform. The 1975 land proclamation nationalized all land in the country. The military government expropriated land from landlords and divided it amongst peasants. The policy of state ownership of land continued after the collapse of the military government in 1991. The 1995 Federal Constitution of Ethiopia provides that land in the country belongs to the state and its peoples, and prohibits the sale and mortgaging of land. In other words, the constitution recognizes the right to use land and, accordingly, peasants are promised free farming land. Moreover, the right of pastoralists for grazing land and water is also recognized. In line with the federal constitution, both the federal and regional governments have issued land use proclamations. The BG regional land use proclamation issued in 2010 affirms the right of peasants to have free land for farming and contains procedures for leasing land for investors and developers.

In spite of the enactment a proclamation that seeks to bring land governance into a formal/legalistic framework, much of the land in the region is administered by customary land tenure systems (Negassa, 2016). This is mainly explained by livelihood strategies of the indigenous ethnic communities of the region. As noted by Negassa, the indigenous communities of the region “usually have large areas of communal land which is used as grazing field, for collection of firewood, honey and wild fruits, or for slash and burn agriculture” (Ibid.:16).

The region, as compared to highland regions of the country, is sparsely populated. The presence of large tracts of ‘communal land’, which are not farmed but used by the indigenous communities to support their livelihoods, gives a sense that the Benishangul-Gumuz region has unused fertile land that should be put to use to expedite national development. No wonder then why the region has been one of the top recipients of domestic and international agricultural investment as discussed below.

With the aim of enhancing the land security of peasant farmers, the Ethiopian government has, since 1998, put in place a system of registering and certifying agricultural farming plots to farmers. The scheme was first tried in Tigray in 1998 and then introduced to the other three populous and predominantly agricultural regions, Amhara, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People’s. In the four regions, land registration has two components. Firstly, plots sizes are temporarily registered after local people give verification on plot size and neighbours. Secondly, formal land certificates bearing the pictures the farmer (and his/her spouse) and the geographic (cadastral) coordinates of the plot size are issued. In 2009, the four regions registered more than 70 percent of the farming plots (Deininger et al, 2012).

Land registration and certification were introduced in Benishangul-Gumuz after the enactment of the regional land use proclamation in 2010. But the performance of the region, in undertaking land registration during the first GTP covering the period from 2010-2015 was weak. According to the report of the Regional Bureau of Finance and Economic Development,

the region planned to register 462,352 plots of farming land and provide land certificate to 92,470 farmers. At the end of the GTP period, the region only managed to register 153,097 farming plots and provide certificates to 30,619 individuals (BG, BoFED, 2010).

In addition to problems of capacity, two major reasons have hampered progress in land registration and certification in the region. Firstly, during registration, individual households are only allowed a plot size of ten hectares. The official reasoning of the regional government for putting a ceiling on plot size is to encourage the indigenous communities to engage in farming instead of entering into sharecropping arrangements with farmers coming from other regions and also to redistribute land to those who are landless. As noted by Negassa (2016), farmers of the indigenous communities were lukewarm towards this ceiling, as they have more than ten hectares of land and benefit from sharecropping and land renting arrangements. As a result, there was low public interest in the scheme and hence lower performance. Secondly, the programme of resettlement or villagization in the region (discussed in section 2.4.5) in the stated period also adversely affected the pace of land registration. The ceiling on plot size of individual farmers echoes the feeling by policy makers that the BG region has abundant and fertile land, which should be put into use. According to the first BG GTP report, the region planned to transfer 80,000 hectares of land to the regional land bank from 2010-2015. It, however, only managed to transfer 58, 000 hectares of land.

Because of the lower density of population and good moisture, the BG region has attracted a large number of domestic and international agricultural investors. There is no reliable data on the size of land that was made available in the Benishangul-Gumuz region to investors. The problem partly lies in the provision of land to investors by both the federal and regional governments. The regional report on GTP states that, by 2015, the region had provided an estimated 284,431 hectares of land (BoFED, 2010:35). Dereje T/Mariam and his colleagues in a recent study citing sources from Ministry of Agriculture contend that the amount of land that was made available to investors from the Benishangul-Gumuz region was 600,254 hectares (Dereje et al, 2016:8)

The BG region has also attracted significant interest from those who were interested to invest in biofuel production as indicated in the table below.

**Table 8.** Regional distribution of biofuels energy company name and land hold within region in the country.

NO.	Company Name	Region	Land acquired (ha)	Out Growers Land(Ha)	crop type
1	Sun Biofuels Eth/NBC	Benishangul	80,000		Jatropha
2	Amabasel Jatropha Project	Benishangul	20,000		Jatropha
3	Jatropha Biofuels Agro Industry	Benishangul	100,000		Jatropha
4	IDC Investment	Benishangul	15,000		Jatropha

5	ORDA	Amahara	884		Jatropha
6	BDFC Ethiopia Industry	Amahara	18,000	30,000	Sugarcane/sugar beat
7	Jemal Ibrahim	Amahara	7.8		Castor bean
8	A Belgium Company	Amahara	2.5		Castor bean
9	Flora Eco Power Ethiopia	Oromia	10,000	5,000	Castor bean
10	Petro Palm Corporation Ethiopia	Oromia	50,000		Castor/Jatropha
11	VATIC International Business	Oromia	20,000		NA
12	Global Energy Ethiopia	SNNPR	2,700	7,500	Castor bean
13	OmoSheleko Agro Industry	SNNPR	5,500		Palm
14	Sun Biofuels Eth/NBC	SNNPR	5,000		Jatropha
Total			327,094	42,500	

Source: Abreham and Belay, 2015

With the decline of the price of petrol in the global market and the higher cost of producing biofuel, the high interest in biofuel investment in Ethiopia appeared to have severely declined. A scoping study by the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) in 2013 in selected developing countries including Ethiopia about the state of biofuel investment found a very low performance of firms who leased land to produce biofuel. The report states that of an estimated 575, 902 hectares of land given to bio farm projects in Ethiopia, only 15,000 hectares were developed for the production of castor beans (Locke and Henley, 2013:10)

According to our sources and also the regional GTP report, the majority of agricultural investors produce: sesame, cotton, soybeans, oil seed and rice. As discussed in section 2.4.5, agricultural investment in the region could be considered as a source of vulnerability to the local, particularly indigenous communities. It reduces their communal land, which they use to secure their livelihood. It could also induce tension and conflicts between the different users of land.

**Table 10: Land provided to investors by the regional government**

No	Investors type	No	Size of land by hectare
1	Foreigners who entered agreement with Federal Gov	2	53,000

2	Diaspora	29	28,231
3	Investors – from other regions and including from indigenous groups	361	217,820.89
	Total		299,051.89

Source: BG Environmental Protection, Land Administration and Use Bureau, 2016

From among the *woredas* that border with Sudan, there is a higher concentration of investors in the Guba *woreda*. Reportedly, close to 300 agricultural investors have acquired land and started farming in the *woreda*. However, there are few local investors, particularly former government officials from the indigenous groups of the region. Over all, the share of the local people in investments in the region is very limited and may not exceed five percent, as stated by our informants.

Agricultural investors and those who have the concessions for the extraction of incense and gum usually bring workers from other regions of Ethiopia, mostly from Amhara, Tigray regions, Oromia and SNNP regions. Certain trends can be identified in the employment of people from different regions.

- Amhara from Dera and north Shoa are preferred for the collection of gum and incense (mainly in Guba and Kurmuk)
- Wolayta from southern region are sought for the collection of cotton or the uprooting of cotton plants.
- Amharas are generally selected for harvesting sesame, sorghum and other oil seeds.

The number of workers engaged in commercial farms differs from investor to investor. Investors employ between 2,000 to 10,000 workers in a season, although the average stands at around 4,000 to 5,000 workers. One investor with 3,500 hectares of farmland is said to have seven camps where he may employ around 10,000 workers during the weeding season. More than half a million workers are said to be mobilized and employed by investors in Guba Woreda during the high season in the production of mostly sesame, corn and cotton.

The BG region has also a high potential for mining. In 2014, Ascom, an Egyptian precious minerals company, made the largest discovery of gold deposit (30-40 tones) in the history of gold mining in Ethiopia in the Kurmuk *woreda* of the Benishangul-Gumuz region. The company is expected to start extracting the mineral in the coming few years (Ethiopian Reporter, 2014).

### **Blue Nile State**

The main source of livelihood for the people of the BN is agriculture, farming and livestock. The main crops produced in BN include: Sorghum, sesame and groundnuts using rain water. In addition, farmers produce vegetables, maize and fruits using irrigation (UNDP, 2010). In the northern parts of BN state, pastoralism is practiced (Ibid.). In the BN districts that border

Ethiopia, namely, Alosairies, Kurmuk and Geissan, the local people augment their income by mining gold and traditional quarries (Ibid.).

BN state has huge potential for agriculture. Before the onset of the conflict in 2013, close to 1.5 million feddan<sup>6</sup> was cultivated (UNDP, 2010:23). Crop production in BN can be divided into three categories on the basis of machinery usage. These are mechanized, semi-mechanized and traditional agriculture (Ibid.). Large commercial farms practice mechanized farming. Both the mechanized and the semi-mechanized farms used seasonal labour for weeding and harvesting. They largely produce sorghum, sesame, sunflower and cotton (Ibid.). Traditional agriculture refers to subsistent agriculture with limited use of technology and no hired labour (Ibid.).

Next to agriculture, animal husbandry is the most important means of livelihood particularly for nomadic pastoralists in the BN state. A 2010 estimate states that BN has six to eight million heads of livestock (Ibid.). There is, however, a problem in realizing the huge potential that livestock provides to economic welfare because of cultural attitudes and lack of market development (Ibid.).

**Table 10: Source of Rural Household Income in BN**

Source of income	% of households
Rain fed agriculture	70.1
Horticulture	8.0
Livestock	4.6
Fishing	3.0
Agriculture labour	1.2
Non-Agriculture	5.0
Undefined (others)	8.10
Total	100

Source: UNDP, 2010:23

### **Border markets**

There is cross border trading between the border communities of Sudan and Ethiopia. Much of the trading has been informal. Since 2002, the Ethiopian and the Sudanese government, as part of their aim to enhance cross-border cooperation, have agreed to allow cross-border trading by the border communities. Accordingly, the two governments issue licenses, import and export permits to traders. The market days are different from one crossing point to another. Outdoor markets are held every Thursdays and Sunday in Kurmuk, on Sundays at Gizen, and on Mondays and Tuesdays at Almahel. From the Ethiopian side vegetables, coffee, chicken, eggs and manufactured goods such leather shoes and cosmetics are brought to the market. The Sudanese tend to sell manufactured goods such as soaps, sugar and mats. During the dry season in Ethiopia, when vegetables will be expensive, traders bring onions from Sudan. While formalization of cross-border trading is an important move to regulate trading and also

<sup>6</sup> One feddan of land is equivalent to 0.42 hectares,

encourage collaboration among the border communities, there are several challenges that undermine the initiative.

The major challenge that limits the advantages that could be earned from the cross-border trading arrangement is the old regulations from the Ethiopian side. The directive that was issued by the former Ethiopian Ministry of Trade and Industry in 2001 sets the maximum amount of money allowed for business transaction at 2000 Ethiopian Birr (which is equivalent to 90.27 USD by current exchange rate) and the areal scope for trading is limited to 90km from the border trading sights (Ethiopian Ministry of Industry and Trade, 2001). These two points contained in the directive hamper the growth of formalized cross-border trading. The 2000 ETB cap on border trading, considering higher inflation rates both in Ethiopia and Sudan, discourages traders from using the formal trading channel. The 90km limit also creates obstacles to traders to reach Assosa town, which is the major market in the region and the capital of the Benishangul-Gumuz.

As a result of the difficulties that still prevail in undertaking formalized cross-border trading, illicit trading is still high in the border areas. Illicit trading in the border region includes smuggling of livestock, coffee, alcoholic drinks and bamboo from Ethiopia. Ethiopian traders buy from their Sudanese counterparts parts, largely manufactured goods such as sugar, soap, textile, and others.

Cross-border markets, according to our informants in the region, also serve as conduit points for irregular migrants from Ethiopia to the Sudan. When Ethiopians cross the border on market days, they are required by Ethiopian border control to deposit their identity cards. Most of the prospective migrants leave their IDs and then continue their journey with the support of their brokers. This is practiced in transit points such as Gizen, Sherkole, Kurmuk and Almahl-Guba. For instance, in a market day in Guba, close to 500 people may cross the border in the name of going to the market in the Sudanese side, however many of these may not return. As the authorities do not systematically keep the records, it is difficult to have a reliable estimation about the number of people who go to the Sudan using the cross-border markets.

## Social interactions and shared resources

The border markets provide the opportunity for social interactions between Ethiopians and Sudanese people. Common ethnicity and language also facilitate this. Gumuz, Berta (called Funj in Sudan) and Komo ethnic groups live on both sides of the border. In other words, many of the ethnic groups and tribes straddle the border areas of the two countries and this allows closer cross border relations among kindred groups. Many of the border groups share ethnicity, language and religion and hence cross-border intermarriages and also seasonal migrations are practiced. People cross the border – formally with entry permits and informally without securing entry permits for different reasons. They may visit relatives who reside across the border or to seek medical services either in Sudan or Ethiopia.

Sudanese who seek asylum sometimes exploit the similarity in culture with their kindred groups in Ethiopia. Some of those who fled from the conflict in BN may cross the border and settle in Ethiopia, without notifying the authorities. Many people in the border areas may have dual citizenship of the two countries, even if the countries do not allow dual citizenship. According to an informant in Assosa, in one screening effort instigated by a community-based conflict, the government identified around 2,000 Sudanese settlers in Ethiopia in Gengen *Kebele*-Kurmuk *woreda*. Upon identification, the Sudanese who settled in the Kebele without informing the authorities were given one option - encampment in a refugee camp or repatriation. Refugees living in camps may also use close ties with cross border community members to escape from camps and engage in income generating activities including agricultural labour and gold mining, and then return back to the camp when they wish.

In sum, cross-border relations between the different groups are by and large peaceful and collaborative. There are no cross-border intra-or inter-ethnic conflicts over resources between ethnic and tribal groups living in Ethiopia and the Sudan along the border.

Regarding shared resources, there are rivers (tributaries of the Blue Nile), forests, quarries and sands shared across the border. Communities on both sides of the border are engaged in gold mining, production of incense and gums, charcoal, and stones and sand for construction. The soil from the Ethiopian side is more fertile and green. It grows more grass, which attracts the Sudanese to cross the border for grazing of cattle and goats. There are parks on both sides of the border: the Dendir Park in Sudan and a newly established park in Dangur *woreda* of the Metekel zone of Ethiopia. The parks are homes to wild animals including lions and antelopes.

There are also practices that harm the environment in the border areas, such as forest fires used to clear farms, and for the production of incense and gums, and the cutting of trees for the production of charcoal. The problem is more pronounced in the Kurmuk *Woreda* of the region.

There is a bridge shared by both Sudanese and Ethiopians in Kurmuk. From the Ethiopian side, there is an asphalt road that connects Assosa to Kurmuk, while the road from Sudanese Kurmuk to Demazin the capital of BN is a poorly maintained dirt road. Both governments had agreed to upgrade the road, however the Sudanese side could not complete the road due to the war in the BN state since 2013. The other border points – Gizen and Al Mehal do not have roads and

these hamper closer cooperation between the authorities and economic interaction by the border communities.

Mobile technology facilitates cross-border interactions as Sudanese and Ethiopian mobile signals penetrate tens of kilometres over the border and remain functional. Thus the peoples of the two countries share the mobile infrastructure.

**What are the sources of vulnerabilities in the border areas? – e.g. unemployment (how high is unemployment), high numbers of female headed households, limited land or landlessness, population pressure, insecure or irregular access to water, fluctuating food or transport prices, irregular availability of waged labour opportunities, conflict with surrounding communities, etc.**

There are several factors that undermine sustainable socio-economic development and are vulnerable to food insecurity and other socio-economic shocks. These include natural and manmade factors. In what follows, we will briefly assess the major sources of vulnerabilities in the region. These include drought, land degradation, low levels of farm technology, villagization, agricultural investment and population movements.

### **Benishangul-Gumuz**

First, even if the BG region is in comparison to other regions of Ethiopia less affected by drought; drought in the form of erratic rainfall, which causes crop damage, water shortage and malnutrition, is a source of vulnerability.

Second, land deforestation and land degradation. The BG region in comparison to other regions of the country has better vegetation estimated at 60 % in 2007 (IRIN, 2007). Because of a number of interrelated factors, there is a high degree of deforestation in the region. Traditionally forest fires are practiced to clear the land for farming and also to collect honey. Fallowing, meaning leaving the land idle for some years, would compensate the damage to the ecology caused by the fires. The practice of fallowing which the indigenous communities of the region practice is presently diminishing due to the introduction of different kinds of land users and hence land is vulnerable to degradation and deforestation. Agricultural investors who take large plots of land in the region do not follow ecologically friendly farming methods. Many of the agricultural investors do not follow technologies that would help preserve soil fertility. According to our informants, the commercial farmers usually clear the land of forests without following requirements set by the regional bureau of agriculture to protect the environment. They are accordingly required to leave at least 70 trees on a hectare of farmland and not to clear trees/bushes for about 40 meters when their land borders with a river.

Similarly, those highland farmers who come largely from the Amhara and Oromia regions and settle spontaneously in Benishangul-Gumuz region without securing authorization from the regional government clear the land of its vegetation cover and do not follow farming methods

that respect the ecology. As a result of these factors, there is a high rate of deforestation. Deforestation and intense cultivation of the land without fallowing exposes the shallow soil of the region for degradation.

Third, another source of vulnerability in the region is inefficient traditional farming system which is particularly practiced by the indigenous communities. They by and large still only use manual labour and do not use modern farm inputs. As a result, productivity remains poor and the communities have difficulty in building household assets.

Fourth, introduction of new users of land, such as agricultural investors and spontaneous settlers, and construction of infrastructure like Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD) all contribute to pressures on land availability, and thereby generates vulnerabilities amongst indigenous communities. According to field based sources in Guba woreda, 4 of the 17 kebeles in Guba Woreda (namely Babizenda, Yarenja, Jadiya and Fankuso) have been resettled as a direct consequence of the construction of the GERD. More specifically, a total of 1,245 households were resettled from these four Kebeles to a new area between 2010-2015, because their residence area is believed to be more likely to be inundated by flooding from the construction of the dam. The resettlement was made by paying compensation to the resettlers, which was calculated taking into account the household's properties, particularly size of the land and property. The latter includes assessment of the make and kind of the household's residence, if the household has fences, vegetable gardens, beehives, and trees in general and coffee or mango trees in particular, and other things, which enhance the value of the house or land, possessed by the household.

The assessment was held by establishing a committee representing the community, the construction company and the local government. The woreda officials revealed that, as far as they know, the minimum paid for a household as damage was ETB 49,000 while the maximum, was ETB 200,000. Almost all of the resettled households were from the Gumuz ethnic group, with very few Amharas and Shinashas. Every household involved in the re-settlement is provided with a residential house with corrugated iron roofing as well as access to water points, roads, health care institutions, schools, grain mills, farmers training centres and agricultural extension services.

Fifth, population movements and changing demographic balance – BG is a region where there is a large presence of non-indigenous populations, close to 47%. There is already political tension between the indigenous and the non-indigenous communities in the region. On top of the existing non-indigenous population, inward migration to the BG region from other regions of Ethiopia, in particular from the neighbouring Oromia and Amhara regions has, reportedly, increased in recent years because of the need for hired labour by commercial farms and the on-going construction of the Great Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (GERD). There are also highland farmers who may settle spontaneously, clear forests and start farming or enter into sharecropping arrangements. While reliable data is limited, there is a large flow of such migrants to the region. According to our informants, on average ten cross country buses come to Assosa on a daily basis and most of these travellers are newly arriving labour migrants

seeking jobs and economic opportunities. As a consequence, the population makeup of the region is changing. In addition to inward migration from other parts of Ethiopia, because of the conflict in the BN state, there are close to 50,000 refugees in the region. To sum up, the large presence of both internal and external migrants exacerbates existing vulnerabilities in the region.

### **Blue Nile State**

The Blue Nile State of the Sudan faces multifaceted vulnerabilities that are natural as well as man made. These include: ongoing conflict between the government and rebel forces; poor infrastructure; environmental vulnerabilities; lack of livelihood options other than agriculture; issues of land rights; migration; and the inability by the local people to benefit from investment in the state.

Firstly, the major source of vulnerability is the ongoing conflict between the troops of the Sudanese government and rebel forces of the Sudanese People Liberation Movement (SPLM)–North. The conflict could be considered as a spill over of the North-South Sudan Conflict, which ended after the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. Even if there were several attempts to bring a negotiated settlement in BN, the region is still a war zone. The conflict has led to the displacement of tens of thousands of people from BN.

Secondly, adverse environmental factors are also sources of vulnerability, even if BN State in comparison to other states of Sudan has better potential for both irrigated and rain fed agriculture. Both subsistence and commercial farming are vulnerable to environmental risks. The subsistent farmers are dependent on rain and hence rain variability affects their productivity. Due to loss of soil fertility and erosion, the productivity of commercial farms is low (UNDP, 2010).

Thirdly, poor infrastructure and social services not only undermine sustainable development but also limit the capability of the population in BN to cope with ecological and environmental shocks. Parts of the region, which are close to the Blue Nile and its tributaries usually suffer during the rainy season from flooding.

Fourthly, even during peacetime, there are limited livelihood options for the local people. The only sector, which was the main provider of employment to the population of BN state, was agriculture. Lack of diverse livelihood opportunities makes people even more dependent on agriculture, and creates underemployment and unemployment and hence increase vulnerabilities.

Fifthly, land rights issues and migration are other sources of vulnerabilities for the local communities. The BN state has huge potential for irrigated agriculture because of its topography and availability of water from the Blue Nile. This has attracted a large number of migrants. The commercial farms, which were established since colonial times, changed traditional land tenure systems at the expense of the minority groups in the region. People in

the BN consequently feel that they are not beneficiaries of agricultural investments taking place in their lands, and this provides another cause for instability in the area.

## Specific Context in Terms of Migration and Stability

**What are the forms of migration in the area (displacement due to what? Labour migration? Seasonal migration for pastoral grazing or agricultural practices? Resettlement? Migration as a result of environmental change, Etc.**

Irregular migration and smuggling are prevalent in the region as a result of the long border with Sudan. Crossing points are many as the border area is flat and open, particularly in Assosa Zone. The presence of irregular migration in the region is well documented by a study made by regional Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSA) in collaboration with the IOM. According to the findings of that survey, 85% of respondents (from a total of 109 respondents) drawn from 8 Woredas in the region including Guba, Pawe, Mandura, Kurmuk, Sherkole, Assosa, Mao Komo and Bambasi believe that there is smuggling from their respective Woredas. 81% percent of them said, those being smuggled are generally aged between 16 and 30, and are from both sexes.

Most of the migrants are from Amhara and BG regions, followed by those coming Tigray, SNNP and other regions. The major destinations for migrants from BG are Sudan and South Sudan as well as Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and other Arab countries. No specific reference is made to Libya or Europe in that study. Internal migrants typically originate mainly from Amhara, followed by Oromia, Tigray, SNNPR, and other regions. More than one third from Amhara, one fourth from Oromia and less from other regions, according to the findings of the study.

Information from other sources reveals that migration to Sudan was higher before the onset of the conflict in Blue Nile in 2011. The magnitude of undocumented migration to Sudan has gone down following the renewal of conflict and because of the concerted effort made by the Ethiopian Government since 2014, under the coordination of the Regional Council against 'illegal migration'. There is however fear that the exodus and flight would increase if and when there is peace and stability in Northern Sudan.

### Common exit points

The exit points for Ethiopian migrants and entry points for Sudanese refugees are spread in Woredas along the long poorly policed borderline, which run from North to South: Guba, Sedal, Sherkole, Kumruk, Assosa and Mao Komo. The most frequent and common exit points for Ethiopian migrants were the central exit points before the conflict in BN. But after the conflict, they have shifted to the peripheral exit points like Almahl of Guba and Mao Komo. The following table shows the *Kebeles* with common exit points under each Woreda.

Table 11: Month Performance report of Regional Council against 'Illegal Migration' 2015-16

Woreda	Kebeles with common Exit point
Kurmuk	Kurmuk Kebele
Sherkole	Amekezegn Kebele
Assosa	Kushmegani Kebele
Guba	Almahl kebele
Sedal	Adenkish and Apiyabala Kebele
Mao Komo	Mao Komo

Source: BG BoLSA, 2016

There are specific locations, which are common exit points under these *kebele*. For example: Common exit points in Assosa woreda include Abramo and Gengen, they are Omedla and Almahl in the Metekel zone.

**Is irregular migration (exit without authorisation, displacement, engagement in smuggling or trafficking networks) going on in this cluster? What information can be gathered about this? Are the numbers and frequency of migration known? Who is migrating? From where to where? Are the moves likely to be temporary or permanent?**

The irregular migrants from Ethiopia to Sudan include indigenous ethnic groups, such as Bertha, Gumuz, Mao, Komo and Shinasha. Of these, the mobile are Berta who are found in both sides of the border sharing similar language, culture and lifestyle, which makes it difficult for authorities to detect their movements in either side of the border. For most of these migrants, Sudan is the destination and they rarely consider secondary migration. These local groups mostly go to Sudan with the intent to work, earn income and return. In some cases, the local people, particularly Berthas exit Ethiopia by securing a pass from the authorities under the pretext of visiting family members, getting married or attending social occasions of close family members, as well as to have access to healthcare and other social services in the Sudan. Irregular migrants could also be Amharas and Oromo who reside in the region. Registered refugees from both Sudan and Southern Sudan may also irregularly migrate to and from Ethiopia because of the loose control and management of refugees in camps. There are even cases where some refugees have been involved in the smuggling of Ethiopian and Eritrean irregular migrants, mostly by giving directions to safe exit points with less border control in both sides.

Ethiopian migrants in Sudan are employed in farms, construction sites, restaurants and coffee shops. Women are mainly employed for domestic work. In a joint border meeting held in January 2016 between Sudanese and Ethiopian authorities, the Sudanese officials are said to report that close to 3 million Ethiopian migrants currently reside in Sudan. Capital Ethiopia agrees with this estimate, acknowledging that is not officially confirmed. (May 2015).

Migrants from other regions also use the regional exit points to migrate to Sudan and beyond. These are mostly from Amhara and Oromia Regional states, as well as some from SNNPR and Tigray. The Amhara tend to use Guba as an exit point, whereas Mao Komo is the preferred exit point for Oromos. According to the estimates of the regional officials, more migrants come from other regions of Ethiopia and use the region as a transit point.

There is also seasonal labour migration between Ethiopia and Sudan. The Guba exit in Metekel is dominated by labour migration. Most of the farm workers recruited and employed by investors in commercial farms in Ethiopia migrate irregularly to Sudan when weeding is over in the Ethiopian side, which ends mostly in the middle of September. This season coincides with the ripening of corn farms in the Sudanese side of the border. The Ethiopian workers thus irregularly migrate to Sudan to work in these Sudanese corn farms. The journey through the exit point of Almahl may take the migrants a total of 16 hours to cross the desert on foot, and they must remain hidden from security officials along the way. Once they have participated in the production of corn in Sudanese farms, Ethiopian migrants who entered Sudan irregularly usually hand themselves in to the Federal Police forces at the border when they intend to return. The Federal Police verify their identity and allow them to return regularly to Ethiopia through the border checkpoint. The workers usually return in April, which means they can work again in commercial farms in the Ethiopian side before irregularly migrating again into Sudan. Some of the workers are reported to stay behind in Sudan in order to engage in secondary migration to the Middle East and Europe.

Though not frequent, there are also reports of irregular migration practices by people who have come from Amhara, Oromia, SNNP and other regions through the route of Guba-Almahl. The irregular movement of labour migrants is controlled and managed by the so-called 'Salug' who are former labourers turned to brokers. They make their living by facilitating employment of farm workers in both Sudan and Ethiopia. They are said to have links with criminal gangs who work with smugglers. Ethiopian workers may also prefer to work in Sudanese farms because the payment in Sudan is higher than Ethiopia.

The third groups of migrants who use the BG region to irregularly migrate are Eritreans. Reportedly, most of these migrants come to the BG region as farm workers from refugee camps in northern Ethiopia. These are mostly recruited from the refugee camps and there is ample evidence to suggest that the whole process is controlled and managed by a network of smugglers. There are also reports that management and personnel of commercial farms and other investments in the region play a part in the smuggling of Eritreans. The preferred exit point from Ethiopia for most Eritrean migrants is through Mao Komo and in some cases Abramo-Assosa, while the preferred transit/destination is Southern Sudan. Before the eruption of the civil war in 2013, South Sudan was attractive for Ethiopians and Eritreans. Tens of thousands of people were working in the service sector in South Sudan. For such migrants, BG represents a significant corridor. Even after the eruption of the civil war in 2013, a large number of Eritreans continue to go to South Sudan through BG.

Sudanese refugees use entry points across the borderline to enter into Ethiopia including Abramo, Gengen and Kushmahal in Assosa Woreda, Gizen in Sherkole and Almahl in Guba. The South Sudanese refugees cross through Mao Komo and sometimes through Abramo-Assosa and Gizen-Sherkole.

There are reports of internal trafficking of children in BG region. In most cases girls are trafficked for domestic labour, with some reportedly trafficked for commercial sex purposes. Boys are trafficked for child labour exploitation in Khat related services, sale of peanuts and for cattle herding. There are also reports of trafficking and abduction of boys from BG region mostly to Oromia for the purpose of cattle herding (shepherding cattle, goats and sheep). Some of the internal migration of adults from other regions to BG region has some characteristics of human trafficking. For example, workers recruited to work in commercial farms may end up jobless after their arrival because the investment project is abandoned by the investor. The workers rarely get compensation or transportation back to their place of origin, and are left stranded without the means to return home.

#### **What are the reasons that people move or migrate?**

The immediate causes for irregular migration of Ethiopians to Sudan could be political, environmental and economic. The economic factors including youth unemployment, livelihood insecurity and search of better life appear to be the dominant push factors. Notwithstanding, in cases close to 90%, the cause is linked to economic factors

- The BG region is largely considered by the youth from other regions as a land of opportunities and hence large numbers of youth from all over the country come to the region. Most of these young people anticipate better job opportunities in the commercial farms, gold mining, incense and gum production sites, as well as in the informal trade or service sectors. However, there is generally a mismatch in the job supply and demand, leading many young migrants to engage in secondary migration to Sudan and beyond in the search of better opportunities.
- Weak implementation of laws that are introduced to prevent 'illegal migration'. Knowledge of anti-trafficking and smuggling laws are not well known, and more concerted efforts are needed to strengthen training to law enforcement and other key officials.

#### **What are the principle causes of instability or conflict? Who are the main sources of instability/tensions that affect people in the area? How do these relate to dynamics across the border?**

Both the BG region and BN State remain peripheral to Ethiopia and Sudan respectively. They are located in a zone where there are protracted conflicts. While there is a marked stability in the BG region since the beginning of the 2000s, as the region shares boundaries with Sudan and South Sudan where there are conflicts, it is prone to instability. In this section, we explore major causes of instability in both BG and BN.

### **Benishangul-Gumuz**

There are a number of causes for political instability in BG region including tension between indigenous and non-indigenous communities; political rivalries among the indigenous groups; territorial conflicts with neighboring regions and spill over of instabilities from the neighboring countries (Asnake 2013). First, the BG region is composed of indigenous groups and non-indigenous (who in the local parlance are called settlers or others). The proportion of the non-indigenous groups is high – close to 47%. But relations between the indigenous and the non-indigenous communities are far from smooth. There were violent conflicts in Metekel and Assosa during the transition after the collapse of the military regime in 1991. During the early 2000s, there was a concerted effort by the non-indigenous communities to get political representation in the regional council. The political parties of the indigenous communities, particularly the Bertha, fiercely resisted this move arguing that under Ethiopia's ethnic federalism, it is only the indigenous groups who are entitled to administer their ethnic regions. The dispute over political representation threatened regional stability during the period. There were some violent incidents. The matter was taken to the House of Federation (HoF) of the Federal Government, which is constitutionally mandated to resolve such disputes. The HoF in 2003 decided to allow the non-indigenous communities to compete for regional parliamentary seats. Representation to non-indigenous minorities, however, was worked out through inter-party arrangement between the EPRDF and the regional ruling party called the Benishangul-Gumuz Peoples' Democratic Unity Front (BGPDUF) affiliated to the EPRDF. While this political arrangement appeared to have mitigated conflict, there are still tensions between the indigenous communities and new land users such as agricultural investors and also those who spontaneously settle and undertake farming in the region (Ibid.).

Second, there have been political rivalries between the two largest indigenous groups – Bertha and Gumuz regarding political offices. These tensions reached their height in early 2000 when the Bertha in protest to the election of a Gumuz to the regional presidency withdrew from the regional government. So far tensions over political office have not turned to violence.

Third, the BG region faces territorial dispute with the neighboring Ethiopian regions – Amhara and Oromia. The dispute over territory with the Oromia region in mid 2000s turned violent and led to the death of hundreds of people from both sides.

Fourth, political tensions and disputes in the neighboring Ethiopian regions – Amhara, Oromia and Gambella could spill over and present a security risk the region.

Fifth, the BG area is vulnerable to instability as there are active conflicts in neighboring Sudan and South Sudan. There are close to 50,000 refugees in BG coming mainly from Sudan and South Sudan. While the relationship between the refugees and the host communities is generally peaceful, there are tensions and pressures which could undermine this. Moreover, the neighbouring conflicts could spill over and undermine stability in the region.

Sixth, a lack of close monitoring along the Ethiopian-Sudanese border allows rebel movements from both sides of the border to operate by crossing borders. The border security arrangement between the Sudan and Ethiopia governments actively works to prevent the use of the borders by opposition groups, but reports suggest that the outlawed Ethiopian armed opposition movements such as the Benishangul People's Liberation Movement (BPLM), Oromo Liberation Front (OLF) and Ginbot 7 use the border crossings to infiltrate their members.

### **Blue Nile State**

In BN State, there are also a number of interrelated factors that cause instability. These include inequality and marginalization, dispute between farmers and pastoralists, dispute between nomadic groups and displacement, resettlement and reintegration (see UNDP, 2010).

Firstly, the major reason for the conflict that engulfed BN since 1987 is the feeling by the local minority groups that they have not benefited from resources such as dams and large-scale farms. The issue of land is very sensitive.

Secondly, as there are both farmers and pastoralists in the BN state, there are disputes and conflicts over the use of water and pasture between pastoralists and farmers. Pastoralists accuse farmers of encroachment to their grazing land, while farmers accuse pastoralists of trespassing on their farms and destroying their crops. Such conflicts are usually intense during dry seasons and when drought occurs. Because of the expansion of commercial agriculture and conflicts, traditional routes for moving and grazing livestock have been blocked, which further exacerbates conflict between pastoralists and farmers.

Thirdly, there are disputes between nomadic groups over land resources (pastures and water), particularly in the Eastern parts of the BN state. Conflict between and among pastoral groups has intensified due to the expansion of commercial farms and also conflicts, which restrict their mobility.

Fourthly, conflicts in the neighbouring South Sudan could spill over to the BN state and exacerbate insecurity. A large number of South Sudanese refugees have already fled to the area to seek shelter in BN state, which could exacerbate existing pressures and tensions.

## Other Actors and Existing Activities

**What responses are already provided by other donors, non-governmental and civil society organisations, IGAD, and partner state governments to address migration, displacement and instability? The team should map who is working in the area, on each side of the border. Any cross border activities should be noted. The activities of each actor should be noted, and a brief summary of what is known about each activity should be provided.**

### Benishangul-Gumuz

In the BG region, several actors play a role in mitigating migration, displacement and instability.<sup>7</sup> The regional government as part of the national initiative has established a council on the prevention of 'illegal migration'. This council is chaired by the deputy president of the region and brings together such departments as justice, labour and social affairs, and others. The regional Police Commission is also a member of this regional task force. The structure of the council has been extended to the *woreda* with the exception of the *woredas* in the Metekel zone. The council has been engaged in creating awareness among the youth about the adverse effects of irregular migration. But the main challenge regarding the works of the council has been problems of capacity.

When it comes to NGOs and civil society organizations (CSOs), there seems to be a clear division between those who work on emergency/humanitarian issues and those who work on development issues. The majority of emergency/humanitarian agencies work on refugees (see table – below) and do not engage in development work. Nor do they address problems of irregular migration. In spite of this, because of the requirement of the national government, when international NGOs install structures (such as schools, water and health facilities) they are required to invest 25% of the project money to provide services to local communities. This helps to reduce friction between host communities and refugees. The local authorities also allow refugees to use government-run educational and health facilities when there are shortages in refugee camps.

Emergency and humanitarian NGOs who work on refugees by and large do not engage in cross border activities. The only organization with cross border activities that was interviewed in the BG region was the Ethiopian Red Cross Society, Benishangul-Gumuz Branch, which collaborates with its Sudanese counterpart in helping refugees locate separated family members back in Sudan

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<sup>7</sup> Because of the inability to visit the BN state, we are unable to include those actors who are active in BN.

**Table 12: Major Emergency/Humanitarian Agencies in BG and their activities**

No	Name	Major activities	Engagement in local development
1	UNCHR	Protection and supporting of refugees in collaboration with national government and humanitarian NGOs	-
2	International Organization for Migration (IOM)	Refugee resettlement – pre-departure medical screening and shelter and refugee transportation	Internship to unemployed youth (project completed)
3	World Food Programme (WFP)	Provision of food to refugees and response to local emergencies	Urban HIV programme
4	International Rescue Committee (IRC)	Water, sanitation and hygiene in three refugee camps; Prevention of Gender based Violence in refugee camps and reproductive health	Supports refugee host communities – no development programme. No programme on irregular migration
5	Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)	Education; food security and livelihood support and shelter construction for refugees.	Supports refugee host communities – no development programme. No programme on irregular migration
6	Save the Children	Early childhood care and education/development and children protection	Participated in the Canadian NGO consortium, which implemented projects on food security and economic development.  No programme on irregular migration.

In the area of development work, there are several international and local NGOs, which work in the BG region. The activities of these actors span across socioeconomic fields and includes – environment, economic and social development (see table below for more details).<sup>8</sup> These organizations operate in close collaboration with the regional government, and they enter project agreements with the BG Bureau of Finance and Economic Development (BoFED). The BoFED carries out monitoring and keeps track of their activities.

**Table 13: Major NGOs doing development work in BG region**

No	Name	Major activities
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<sup>8</sup> For a more comprehensive picture about the CSO landscape in the region, please see the attached stakeholder matrix.

1	CANGO – Consortium of Canadian NGOS –Save the Children Canada (Lead); Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief;-CHF – Partners; Canadian Food for the Hungry International; Oxfam Canada; World Vision Ethiopia	The project was entitled Benishangul-Gumuz Food Security and Economic Growth Project (BSG FSEG). Implemented during 2010-2015, the fund allocated for the programme was 20 Million Canadian dollars by CIDA. The purpose of the project was enhancing food security and economic growth in the region
2	Ethiopia Catholic Church, Bahir Dar Branch)	Health services, education and child protection. Eleven projects in different woredas of the region. Allocated cost – 143,330 USD
3	Mujejeguwaloka women Development Association	Socio economic empowerment of marginalized women in Guba woreda and renewable energy. Allocated cost – 306,416 USD
4	World Vision Ethiopia BG region Development program	Farmer Managed Natural Regeneration (FMNR) implemented in two woredas (Kohomasha and Mao-Komo). Resilient agriculture and eco friendly farming such as bee keeping and income generation activities and health in Assosa. Allocated cost – 5,757,559 USD
5	Action Aid Ethiopia Kamashi Development Area	Integrated socio-economic development in Agalo-Meti/Khamashi - Allocated cost – 912,293 USD
6	Canadian Physician for Aid and Relief	Women led, community food security and nutrition and scaling up of best achievements and promising practices of Benishangul-Gumuz Food security and Economic Growth Project. Implemented in Dibate and Guba woreda of Metekl zone. Allocated finance 369,363 USD
7	Civil Society Support Programme (CSSP), Western Business Unit	CSSP is a multi-donor programme initiated to support the Ethiopian CSOs engagement in Socio-economic development. The programme focused on marginalized/hard to reach regions and communities. In the BG region, it not only provided grants to local NGOs but also worked towards the building of their capacity.

The above discussion reinforces our contention that there is a gap in dealing with irregular migration and cross border work. Hence, it would be important to encourage international and local NGOs to work on irregular migration as elaborated in the recommendations part. International NGOs could be also helpful when it comes to cross border activities.

From among the different development interventions that we observed in BG region, the holistic and all-inclusive approach of the Consortium of Canadian NGOs, could be considered as best practice. This project was designed in response to the needs of the regional government.

Before the commencement of the project, Canadian International Agency for Development, the financier of the programme conducted a study. The other best practice is the work of the CSSP which helped strengthen the works of CSOs by providing them capacity building.

### Security Cooperation

The security cooperation between the two countries is coordinated and led by the Ethio-Sudan Joint Border Commission, which works to prevent infiltrations of their common borders by armed opposition movements. The cooperation has economic, political and security elements. A formal agreement has been signed by the two governments to give a legal and institutional framework for the border relationship. It is structured at national, regional and local levels. At the national level, there are summit meetings involving the heads of states. There is also a ministerial council, which meets at least once in a year and brings together foreign and other relevant ministers. At a regional level, there are usually meetings once every four months. From the Ethiopian side, Benishangul-Gumuz, Amhara and Tigray regions and from the Sudanese side, Blue Nile, Kessala, Gedarif and Sinjar are members of the regional sub-committee for border cooperation. At local (district) level, there are regular contacts and meetings, which are scheduled when situations of emergency happen. The joint committees at the different levels carry out their own planning and periodically evaluate their performance. The relationship involves Ethiopian and Sudanese local governments, police between the two sides and also army contingents operating in the border sides between the two countries.

## **What activities would you recommend be undertaken in these areas? What additional information may be needed to carry out the activities?**

### **Socio-economic development and irregular migration**

Migration is an important means of coping with socioeconomic distress in Ethiopia and Sudan and, if it is properly managed and regulated, it could help to promote socioeconomic development. As stated in the report, the majority of migrants from the region are young men and women who suffer from a lack of gainful employment. Interventions that could help vulnerable sections of the society to secure their livelihoods could have an impact in reducing irregular migration and promoting greater socioeconomic security. These interventions could include:

Awareness creation about the dangers of irregular migration through innovative awareness campaigns that target young people. (Possible partners – Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs; Youth and Sport Bureau, Education Bureau and Youth Associations)

- Job creation initiatives for young men and women through small and micro enterprises and the provision of startup loans, which are often difficult to obtain. For instance, the regional Micro Finance Institution requires collateral and the interest rate is considered as high 12.5%. (Possible partners – Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs, Youth and Sport Bureau, Youth Associations, Regional Micro Finance Institution)
- Expansion of technical and vocational training, and improvements to the quality of such training, which is provided by governmental and private institutions. (Possible partners – Education Bureau, Norwegian Council of Refugee (NRC)).
- While it would be important to carry out a feasibility study to ascertain exactly which economic activities are most viable for young people, there appears to be a good potential in the region in the following areas: (i) poultry, goat and sheep farming, (ii) fisheries, and (iii) gold mining. (Possible partners – Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Energy and Mines; Boro-Shinasha Development Association, Civil Society Support Programme)

### **Supporting resilience of communities in the Benishangul-Gumuz region**

The Benishangul-Gumuz region is a region in transition. There are increasing challenges to traditional means of livelihood of the indigenous communities, in particular to shifting agriculture and mining. Shifting agriculture, which was practiced in the region is particularly threatened by agricultural investment, infrastructure projects, expansion of sugar plantations, land individualization and migration of large number of highland farmers to the region for spontaneous settlement or to farm land by entering into share-cropping arrangements and by

renting land. In addition to these, the continued instability in Sudan and South Sudan could bring an increasing number of refugees to the region. The resilience of the local communities is also threatened by climate change and land degradation. Decline in the resilience of the community and ability to withstand shocks could promote further irregular migration and forced displacement. It is therefore important to support interventions that would help resilience and food security of the people of the region through development projects. Such interventions could complement existing development programmes such as the Sustainable Land Management (SLM) and others. Resilience interventions could consider:

- Safeguarding the rights of communities which are affected by investment; (Possible partners – Benishangul-Gumuz Development Associations Network (BGDN))
- Protection of the environment when investment plans are conceived and implemented; (Possible partners – Bureau of Agriculture, Bureau of Environmental Protection, Land, Administration and Use and Assosa Environmental Protection Association)
- Interventions that would help to ensure the food security of communities affected by investment and infrastructure like dams (Possible partners – Bureau of Agriculture and Benishangul-Gumuz Development Associations Network).
- Interventions that would help local people produce products that would bring higher value – goat and sheep farming, improving gold mining, using the potential of fisheries that prevail in the region. (Possible partners - World Vision Assosa and BG Bureau of Agriculture)
- Interventions that benefit local people and refugees – as the region hosts close to 50,000 refugees and there is a feeling that the refugees have better living conditions than the host community, it is therefore important to improve the conditions of the host community. If this problem is not addressed, it could trigger conflicts between the host and the local population (Possible partners – Administration for Refugees and Returnees Affairs, United Nations Higher Commission for Refugees, International Rescue Committee, Norwegian Refugee Council)

### **Providing support to victims of irregular migration/trafficking**

The study team learned that while NGOs and the government are working to improve the livelihoods of local people and cater to the needs of refugees, there are no interventions that target the victims of irregular migration, who find themselves stranded in Ethiopia and Sudan. Some possible interventions in this area include:

- Providing support for those who find themselves stranded en route or at their destination, and want to return home to their country of origin. For such activities organizations, which have cross border experience like IOM and Red Cross, could be relevant.

- Rehabilitation of those who return back to their places of domicile through training and other interventions. (Possible partners – IOM and Red Cross)

### **Capacity building of government institutions**

The capacity of the region in regulating migration is under strain, especially when it comes to collecting and analyzing data on unemployment, internal and international migration. This makes it difficult to safeguard the rights of migrant workers. Enhanced capacity at the regional Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs would help to monitor intra-state labour migration from highland regions to the region. Interventions in this respect could include: (Possible partners – Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs, Regional Police, Bureau of Justice)

- Training to personnel on management of migration;
- Support the opening of Bureaus of Labour and Social Affairs at the woreda levels
- Training and support to data collection and analysis
- Support to equipment and communication infrastructure

### **Enhancing cross border cooperation on the control of irregular migration**

The report indicated the presence of strong cooperation between Ethiopia and Sudan regarding the management and development of border areas. The Ethio-Sudan Joint Border Commission has structures that stretch to local authorities. The cooperation covers various areas including security, development and trade. Supporting the existing structures could enhance the cooperation between the two countries in the control of irregular migration. Interventions here could include: (Possible partners – border districts Police Officers, Border districts health and agriculture departments and Civil Society Organizations)

- Supporting the development of joint infrastructure in the border areas
- Supporting police forces through the provision of vehicles and communication equipment
- Providing support for joint socioeconomic initiatives, such as protection of animal diseases, use of health facilities and exchanging of agricultural technologies.

### **Peacebuilding activities between refugees and host communities**

There are close to 50,000 refugees in BG, mainly from Sudan and South Sudan. While the relationship between the refugees and the host communities is generally peaceful, there are

tensions and pressures which could undermine this. Moreover, neighbouring conflicts could spill over and undermine stability in the region. At present, NGOs operating in the cluster area tend to be split between those working with refugees and emergency/humanitarian issues and those working with communities on local development. The national government has taken steps to improve the distribution of resources between refugees and hosting communities; for example, international NGOs working to build infrastructure for refugees are required to invest 25% of the project money into services for local communities. Nevertheless, more could be done to reduce tensions and pressures between refugees and hosting communities through targeted peacebuilding activities and better integration of refugee and local development projects. (Potential implementing partners: Administration for Refugees and Returnees Affairs, Local elders, and local government officials, and Refugee committees)

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