

Situation Overview: Unity State, South Sudan

July - September 2019

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

In the third quarter of 2019, the population of Unity State continued to experience restricted access to food and essential services. Specific information about humanitarian needs in remote areas of the state remained scarce and difficult to obtain, creating barriers for humanitarian programming and targeting of assistance.

To inform humanitarian actors working outside formal settlement sites, REACH has conducted assessments of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since December 2015. Data is collected every month through interviews with key informants (KIs) with knowledge of a settlement and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This Situation Overview uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across Unity State in the third quarter of 2019.

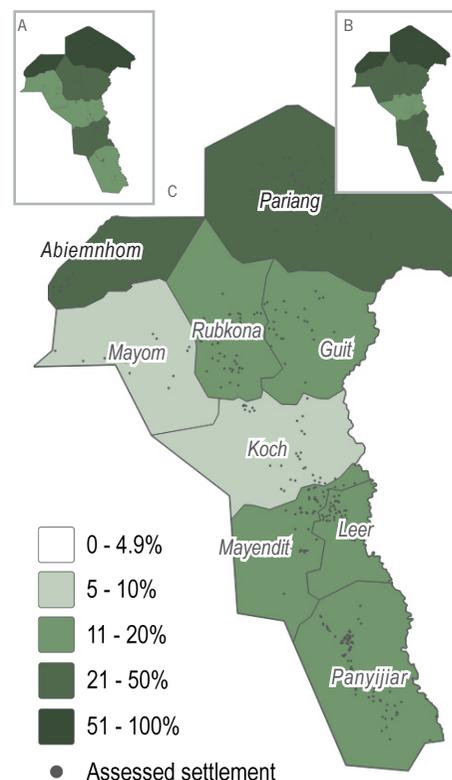
Key Findings

- Recent large-scale **displacement** declined from 44% of assessed settlements reporting a recent large-scale movement out of the settlement in June to 30% in September 2019. However, localised forms of conflict and flooding caused internal displacement.
- Food security and livelihoods (FSL)** needs remained high, although the proportion of assessed settlements

reporting adequate access to food increased towards the end of the quarter from 68% in July to 80% in September. Flood-affected areas experienced the destruction of crops, which may limit the availability of locally-produced food in the next quarter.

- The proportion of assessed settlements reporting **protection** concerns decreased during the third quarter, likely due to the absence of large-scale conflict incidents. However, according to KIs, cattle raiding, revenge killings and localised violence remained common. September had the lowest proportion since January 2019 of assessed settlements reporting most people felt unsafe most of the time (22%).
- Shelter** destruction due to flooding reportedly affected 20% of assessed settlements state-wide. By September, shelter conditions for IDPs appeared to be inadequate in Mayendit and Leer, where 17% and 16% of assessed settlements with IDPs, respectively, reported that those IDPs lived in improvised shelters.²
- WASH** conditions were found to be inadequate. In September, 17% of assessed settlements reported that people used surface water sources for drinking water, while 28% reported people used latrines.

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Unity State, July (A), August (B) and September 2019



of key informant interviews conducted: **1002**
of assessed settlements: **560**
of counties covered: **9 (of 9)**
of focus group discussions conducted: **8**

METHODOLOGY

To provide an indicative overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Unity State, REACH uses primary data from key informants (KIs) who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or “Area of Knowledge” (AoK). Information for this report was collected from KIs in Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site, Nyal Town and Jamjang Town in Unity State in July, August and September 2019.

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted on a monthly basis using a structured survey tool. After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal or most credible response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting.

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of all settlements¹ in a given month were included in analysis. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month vary. In order to reduce the likelihood that variations in data are attributable to coverage differences, over time analyses were only conducted for counties with at least 70% consistent payam³ coverage over the period.

Quantitative findings were triangulated with FGDs and secondary sources.

More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

¹ To calculate the percentage of AoK coverage, the total number of settlements per county is based on OCHA settlement lists in addition to new settlements mapped by KIs reached each month.

² Improvised shelter is a type of makeshift housing built with waste materials as a temporary emergency accommodation structure

³ A payam is a South Sudanese administrative sub-division below the county level

- Access to **health** services was reportedly restricted due to long distances, as 63% of assessed settlements reported it takes more than one hour to access the closest medical facilities.
- A lack of access to **education** services was reported in 25% of assessed settlements state-wide. Among assessed settlements without access to education services, 82% reported the reason for this was that facilities do not exist.

Population Movement and Displacement

Internal displacement trends

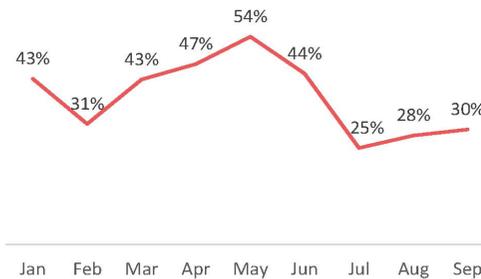
During the assessed period, Unity continued to host nearly 250,000 Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)⁴. By the end of the quarter, 62% of assessed settlements state-wide reported the presence of IDPs. Nevertheless, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting recent large-scale displacement was lower compared to previous years. In June, 44% of assessed settlements from Unity reported large-scale displacements out of the settlements, but this percentage decreased to 30% by September 2019 (See Figure 1).

Localised forms of conflict were found to be the most common trigger of internal displacement. In September, 71% of assessed settlements with IDPs from Unity reported that insecurity and local tensions pushed the most recently arrived IDPs to leave their previous locations. When choosing the area of destination, 64% of

assessed settlements with IDPs reported IDPs travelled to areas perceived as secure and 18% to reunite with relatives.

Furthermore, during the assessed quarter, the severe flooding that affected much of South Sudan⁵ also triggered displacement in flood-affected areas of Panyijiar, Mayom and Mayendit counties. According to KIs, the high water levels inundated shelters and grazing land and forced households from these counties to abandon their houses and evacuate towards higher lands.

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting large-scale displacement of households in the last month, January - September 2019



Population movement to access food and essential services

During the assessed period, the population of Unity reportedly moved to access food and essential services as well as to engage in livelihood activities. Most of these movements were in reaction to the population's high needs, while others are characteristic of seasonal migration patterns. KIs reported that travelling to cattle and displacement camps were relatively common coping mechanisms in settlements without adequate access to food. By the end

of the quarter, assessed settlements from Rubkona (24%), Mayom (23%) and Guit (17%) reported that some people sent their children to cattle camps when there was not enough food in the settlement. Meanwhile, 27% of assessed settlements in Rubkona, 21% in Guit and 10% in Koch reported some people coped by sending their children to displacement camps.

The population of Unity reportedly travelled long distances to access water, markets and health services. Twenty-eight per cent (28%) of assessed settlements reported that most people travelled more than one hour to fetch water. Similarly, 70% of assessed settlements reported it took an equal amount of time to access the nearest marketplace, including a 3% which reported people require multiple days of travel to access the nearest market.

According to REACH's Port and Road monitoring in Nyal (Panyijiar county) in September, 13% of households arriving to Nyal's ports reported the purpose of their trip was accessing health services. A large proportion of these households reportedly travelled all the way from Leer and Mayendit counties, occasionally transporting critically ill patients and pregnant women⁶.

These findings highlight how frequent and lengthy intra-state movement is as well as reportedly linked to limited access to food and basic services in much of Unity State.

IDP and refugee returns stabilised

State-wide, IDP and refugee returns continued, although appeared to slow down by the end of the quarter. In July, 55% of assessed

settlements reported that the most recent IDP returns occurred in the past three months, but this percentage declined to 36% in September 2019. Similarly, the proportion of assessed settlements with presence of refugee returnees reporting that these returns happened within the same timeframe fell by the end of the quarter, from 87% in July to 56% in September.

The reduction in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting on IDP and refugee returns might be linked to the uncertainty surrounding the formation of a national government in November 2019, coupled with a perceived improvement in the security situation in Sudan, from where refugee returnees were reportedly travelling in large numbers during the previous quarter. Additionally, the reported deterioration of transportation routes due to heavy rains and flooding may have also deterred some people from returning at this time.

The impact of this uncertainty about the political process in people's decision to return was discussed with KIs. In Nyal and Bentiu, FGD participants reported that some households remain hesitant about the prospects of lasting stability, and prefer to test conditions by making partial returns before moving with the entire family to areas of origin.⁷

These changes in trends of returns seemed to affect the population of the Bentiu PoC. Before September 2019, more frequent IDP and refugee returns originating from the Bentiu PoC in Rubkona was possibly one of the factors causing a reduction of the PoC headcount. However, since then, the population has increased⁸, further supporting the trend of a

4. International Organisation for Migrations (IOM). "Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) - Mobility Tracking Round 6". October 2019

5. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). "South Sudan Situation Report" September 2019

6. REACH South Sudan, "Nyal Port and Road Monitoring Factsheet". September 2019

7. FGD, Bentiu and Nyal, August 2019

8. IOM. "Bentiu PoC Site Population Count", September 2019

reduction in the rate of returns across the state.

Nevertheless, returns reportedly remained frequent with Rubkona as the main source of IDP returnees. By the end of the quarter, 49% of assessed settlements with presence of IDP returnees reported that they originated from Rubkona, 9% from Leer, and 7% from Panyijjar. These IDP returnees are reportedly travelling back to areas of origin in Central and Southern Unity (See Map 2).

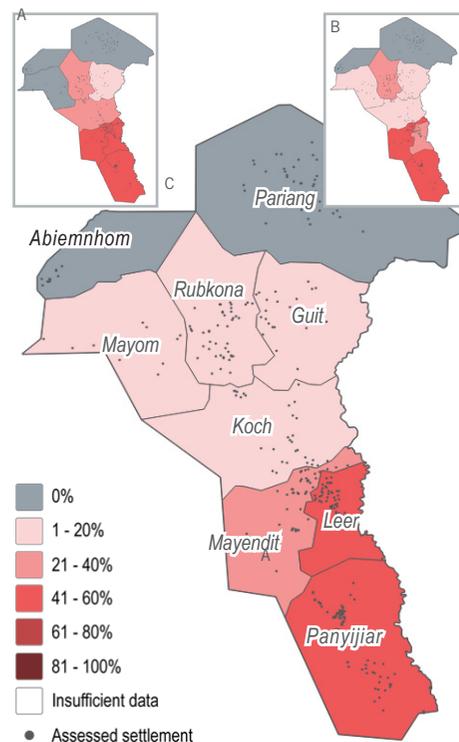
Meanwhile, neighbouring countries remained the main sources of refugee returnees. Eighty-one per cent (81%) of assessed settlements with presence of refugee returnees reported that most returned from Sudan and 13% from Uganda. In 46% of assessed settlements with refugee returnees, the main push factor leading to the decision to return was the intention to reunite with family. In other cases, the severe living conditions in areas of displacement has forced IDP and refugees to return, making the journey back to areas of origin a coping mechanism in itself.⁹

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Food security and livelihoods (FSL)

During the assessed period, the population of Unity faced high levels of food insecurity. The integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) estimated in August 2019 that over 660,000 people faced food insecurity at crisis level (IPC phase 3) or above¹⁰. Nevertheless, by the end of the quarter, reports of adequate access to food slightly increased from 68% of

Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting most recent IDP returnees arrived in the last three months, July (A), August (B) and September 2019 (C)



assessed settlements in July to 80% in September (See Figure 2).

This increase was a likely consequence of seasonal trends which benefited cultivation, harvesting of crops and access to cattle. While the main sorghum harvest mostly occurs in the final quarter, harvests of crops such as maize and the proximity of cattle to homesteads during the third quarter likely contributed to the increased access to food.

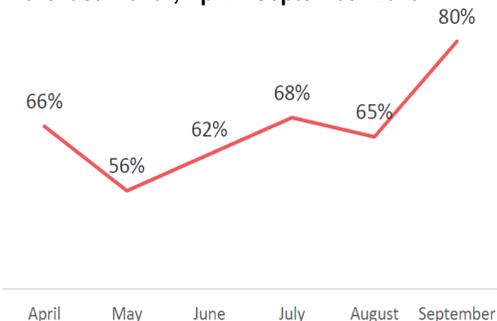
Heavy precipitations characteristic of this time of the year may have positively impacted food production, especially in the rainfed agriculture of Unity State. However, in flood-prone areas of the state, the unusually heavy rains reportedly disrupted local food production. By the end of the quarter, 24% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food cited the destruction of crops due to flooding as the main reason most people could not access adequate food in the month prior to data collection, with the highest proportion of reports coming from KIs of Central and Southern Unity.

The destruction of crops coupled with logistical barriers of transporting food into the state reportedly caused an increase in food prices. Indeed, trading routes into Unity involve lengthy and complicated trips through waterways (Juba to Southern and Central Unity) or poorly maintained roads (Sudan and northern Unity into Central counties) which dramatically deteriorated during the current rainy season.¹¹

This was confirmed by the findings of this assessment as increased food prices was the most commonly reported reason why most people were unable to access enough food in 26% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food in September 2019.

In food insecure and disaster-affected communities, relative improvements in humanitarian access allowed aid actors to deliver food assistance. Access incidents and bureaucratic impediments continued but were noticeably lower compared to the same period of 2018.¹² This improvement in humanitarian

Figure 2: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting most people accessed adequate food in the last month, April - September 2019



access has been fundamental to ensure the timely delivery of food assistance, which reportedly remained the primary source of food in 51% of assessed settlements state-wide.

Meanwhile, the impact of new arrivals on access to food was found to be high, although less frequently reported towards the end of the quarter. The proportion of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food reporting most people were unable to access food because of new arrivals slightly declined from 23% in July to 16% in September, which is consistent with the reduction of IDP and refugee returns reported in the population movement section.

The ongoing work of humanitarian agencies to assess the impact of returnees on host communities and link this population to existing mechanisms of humanitarian assistance may also have partially contributed to this reduction in the perception of returnees' impact on food availability.¹³

Northern Unity

In Northern Unity, access to food reportedly

9. OXFAM. "No simple solutions". October 2019.

10. Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC): "IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis: August 2019 to April 2020". September 2019

11. South Sudan Cash Working Group. "Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) 1-7 September". September 2019

12. OCHA. "South Sudan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot" August 2019

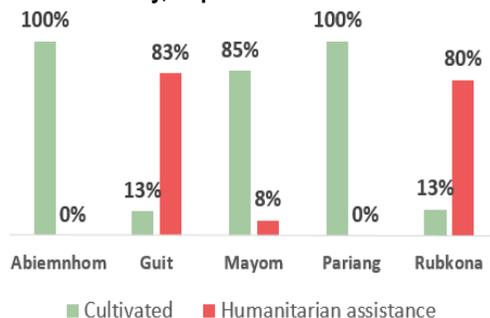
13. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) "Situation update: Spontaneous refugee returns from Sudan". June - July 2019

increased towards the end of the quarter, especially in Central and Southern parts of the state. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food by September 2019 was consistently 80% or above across most of Northern Unity. This increase was reportedly driven by the beginning of the harvest season in Abiemnhom, Pariang and Mayom, and food distributions in Rubkona and Guit (See Figure 3).

By September 2019, all assessed settlements in Abiemnhom and Pariang, and 85% in Mayom reported that most people obtained their food predominantly through cultivation. These three counties also have in common high proportions of assessed settlements reporting enough access to tools and seeds, combined with the lowest proportions of assessed settlements reporting challenges to access market places.

Meanwhile, despite rough road conditions resulting from the heavy rain, the proximity of Guit and Rubkona to the Bentiu-based humanitarian agencies and food warehouses reportedly allowed prompt and continued food distributions.

Figure 3: Main food source in the last month, Northern Unity, September 2019



By September, humanitarian assistance was reportedly the main source of food in 83% of assessed settlements in Guit and 80% in Rubkona. Nevertheless, by the end of the quarter, 20% of assessed settlements in Rubkona and 13% in Guit still reported that most people were unable to access enough food, with new arrivals as the most commonly reported reason for inadequate access to food.

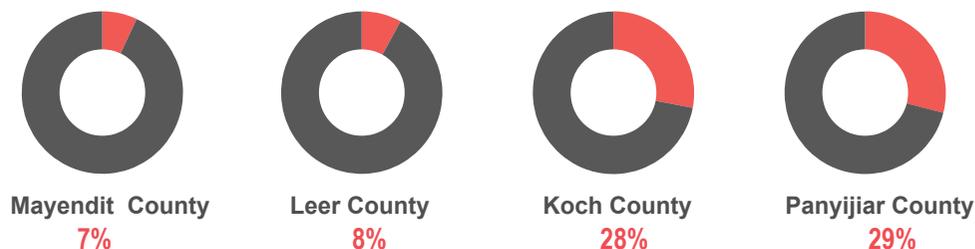
KIs reported that in 58% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food in Guit and 49% in Rubkona, people coped through the consumption of seeds. Furthermore, 82% of these settlements in Rubkona and 79% in Guit also reported that some people travelled to displacement sites to access food through their markets or relatives. FGD participants confirmed that this type of population movement and coping strategy take place in the Bentiu PoC, and generally involve long travel times.¹⁴

Central and Southern Unity

The proportion of assessed settlements from Central and Southern Unity reporting adequate access to food increased between June and September, from 58% to 93% in Mayendit, and 71% to 92% in Leer. Reported adequate access to food in assessed settlements from Panyijiar and Koch also increased, although by September both counties had the highest proportions of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food at 29% and 28% respectively (See Figure 4).

Overall, the increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in this part of Unity was likely

Figure 4: Proportion of assessed settlements from Central and Southern Unity reporting most people could not access adequate food in the last month, September 2019



due to seasonal trends, which benefited local agriculture and food harvesting. The proportion of assessed settlements in Koch, Leer, Mayendit and Panyijiar reporting most people obtained food through cultivation increased from 5% in July to 22% in September 2019.

The comparatively lower proportions of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in Panyijiar and Koch are likely due to recent shocks, such as floods and high food prices, coupled with the cumulative effects of the conflict on households' ability to produce food and bring goods to markets. In some settlements of Panyijiar, floodings reportedly destroyed crops and waterlogged agricultural land, damaging the current harvest and disrupting planting, which may affect the availability of food in the dry season (See Figure 5). This is part of the large-scale flooding crisis which affected other areas of Unity and led to the declaration of a national state of emergency in October 2019.¹⁵

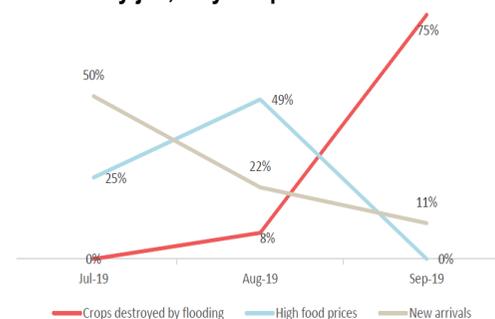
In a context of high food prices¹⁶, it is likely that the destruction of crops will increase the dependency of the population from Panyijiar and flood-affected areas of Mayendit on

assistance. According to FGD participants, the food they receive only lasts one month after which they have to wait until the next quarterly food distribution.¹⁷

KIs reported that people from Panyijiar continued to deal with food consumption gaps through various coping strategies. Over two-thirds (71%) of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food reported that people reduced meal sizes to make food last, a strategy that is commonly used across the state.

In Koch, various forms of conflicts reportedly disrupted access to food. Thirteen per cent (13%) of assessed settlements with inadequate

Figure 5: Main reasons people could not access enough food in assessed settlements from Panyijiar, July - September 2019



14. Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) FGD Bentiu, August 2019.

15. OCHA. "South Sudan: Floods Emergency" November 2019

16. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO): "GIEWS Country Brief South Sudan". August 2019

17. FSL FGD Nyal, August 2019

access to food reported the leading cause was the destruction of crops due to fighting. This likely refers to the long-term consequence of crop losses resulting from the cumulative effects of past conflict, and more recent localised forms of violence.

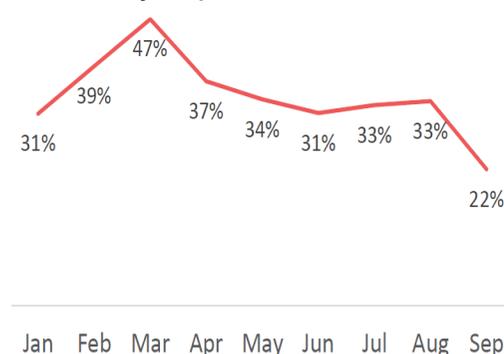
Furthermore, as many as 59% of assessed settlements that reported incidents of conflict in which at least one civilian was killed or incidents of looting reported that these incidents had a large impact on the ability of most people to access food.

Protection

During the assessed period, the population of Unity reportedly continued to experience multiple safety and protection concerns. By September, 22% of assessed settlements reported most people felt unsafe most of the time, although the proportion of assessed settlements reporting safety concerns has steadily decreased since January 2019 (See Figure 6). This quarter also had the lowest proportion of assessed settlements reporting incidents of conflict in which at least one civilian was killed at 8% and looting at 22% (See Map 3).

The lingering violence and insecurity across the state seemed predominantly linked to socioeconomic and cultural factors. Incidents of cattle raiding, revenge killing and intercommunal violence were relatively common, and reportedly disrupted access to food and livelihood activities in some of the most severely affected settlements.¹⁸

Figure 6: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting most people felt unsafe most of the time, January - September 2019



Many communities are also reportedly facing severe protection risks as they conduct livelihood activities. FGD participants reported that women face risk of being attacked while collecting water or searching for wild food. In addition to these protection concerns, participants reported that wild animals and snakes attack community members in the forest or rivers from which they collect food and water.¹⁹

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting protection concerns driven by political violence such as harassment, forced recruitment and family separations remained low and relatively uncommon compared to previous years when the large-scale conflict was at its peak. Instead, the main safety concerns for women in 27% of assessed settlements was domestic violence; while it was reported that the main safety concern for men in 8% of assessed settlements was looting.

Furthermore, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting unaccompanied and

separated children (UASC) have also declined substantially from 17% at the start of the year to 0% in September, which may suggest that the perceived relative stabilisation of Unity State has been instrumental in facilitating processes of family reunification or alternative care.

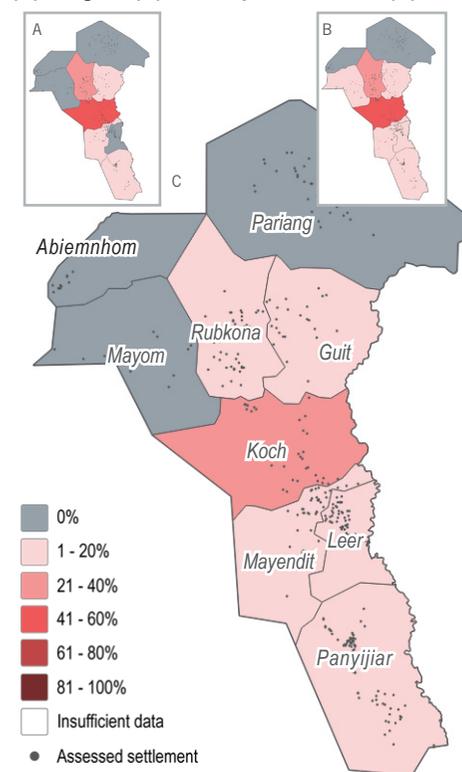
Shelter and Non-food Items (NFIs)

July - September was the second consecutive quarter in which the proportion of assessed settlements reporting shelter damage due to fighting was below 1%. The perceived stabilisation of the security situation in the state from September 2018 onwards (see protection section) might be the main factor for the reduction in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting conflict-related shelter destruction.

Instead, flooding reportedly became a relatively common reason for shelter destruction and population movement between July and September. First incidents of flooding reportedly happened at the end of the second quarter, and peaked during the assessed period. By August 2019, 16% of assessed settlements from Unity reported that shelter damage because of flooding happened in the last month, with the highest percentages found in Panyijjar (81%) and Mayendit (12%) (See Figure 7).

Host communities from assessed settlements have reportedly continued to transition from rakoobas²⁰ to tukuls²¹ throughout 2019. In Koch, Leer and Mayendit, where mass shelter destruction occurred during the peak of the large-scale conflict, the host communities have

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting incidents of conflict and looting, July (A), August (B) and September 2019 (C)



started to move to tukuls. The most noticeable changes occurred in Central Unity, where the proportion of assessed settlements reporting most people lived in tukuls increased between January and September from 48% to 86% (Koch), 5% to 40% (Leer) and 22% to 56% (Mayendit).

Shelter conditions for IDPs have remained relatively stable throughout 2019 and into the current quarter. After the rapid decline in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting

18. For more information, see the FSL section of this Situation Overview

19. FGD Nyal, September 2019

20. Makeshift housing built using plastic sheeting, wood poles and elephant grass

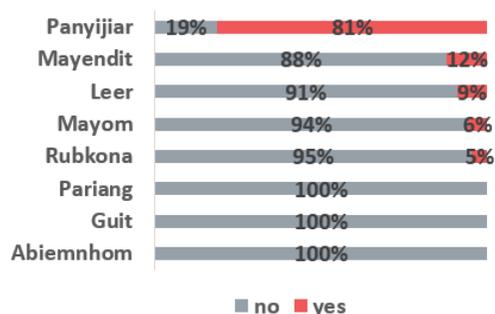
21. Shelter built with mud, grass, wooden poles and a conical roof, which is more durable and provides better protection against environmental factors.

most IDPs lived in improvised shelters noted in the first quarter of 2019 (32% in January to 6% in March), the proportion of assessed settlements with IDPs reporting those IDPs lived in rakoobas has remained relatively high and stable. In September, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting most IDPs lived in rakoobas was 61% and 22% in tukuls. The reported high proportion of IDPs still living in rakoobas is problematic because these makeshift housing structures do not provide enough protection against environmental factors or harsh weather conditions.

KIs have also reported that improvised shelter remained the main shelter type for IDPs in assessed settlements of Central Unity reporting the presence of IDPs. Leer and Mayendit had the highest proportion of assessed settlements with IDPs across Unity, where reportedly some IDPs are still living in improvised shelters. By September, 16% of assessed settlements with presence of IDPs from Leer and 17% from Mayendit reported improvised shelter was the main shelter type used by IDPs, which leaves this population exposed to the rain, mosquitoes, and ensuing health risks.

Some returnees are also reportedly living in improvised shelters. By September, 18% of assessed settlements state-wide reported the main shelter of IDP returnees was improvised shelter, with the highest percentages reported in Leer (39%) and Mayendit (35%). FGD participants explained that returnees are afraid to invest time and resources into building more permanent shelter structures

Figure 7: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting shelter destruction due to flooding, August 2019



in case conflict restarts, and that improvised shelter allows them to rapidly pack and leave if the security situation deteriorates.²²

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Water

Between July and September, access to clean water remained limited in nearly a fifth of assessed settlements across Unity. By the end of the reporting period, 17% of assessed settlements state-wide reportedly used surface water sources (ponds, rivers and swamps) as their main source of drinking water. Adding to the health hazards, as many as 40% of assessed settlements in September reported that animals used the same water sources as people or grazed close to them.

By September, counties with the largest proportions of assessed settlements reportedly accessing water through these surface water sources were Guit (58%), Mayom (62%) and Rubkona (44%) (See Map 4). One of the main

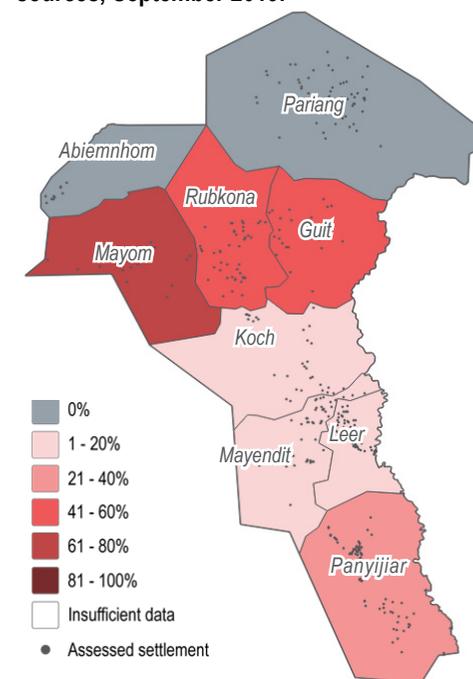
reported reasons was the lack of boreholes. According to KIs, by the end of the quarter, 42% of assessed settlements in Guit, 62% in Mayom and 44% in Rubkona did not have any boreholes. Furthermore, in 38% of assessed settlement from Guit that reported presence of boreholes, none of them are functional.

In addition, in some assessed settlements, the proximity to ponds, rivers and swamps reportedly made it more practical to access drinking water from surface water than walking to the nearest functioning boreholes. Even when using surface water sources, communities can face long traveling time to fetch water. KIs have reported that the amount of time to reach their preferred water sources involved round-trips of one hour to a full day in 77% of assessed settlements from Mayom, 44% from Rubkona and 29% from Guit. Long trips to access water pose protection concerns for women and take away time that could be spent on livelihood activities, further reducing access to food for food insecure households.

Sanitation

As in the previous quarter, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting latrine access was low in Unity, and has shown no substantial signs of improvement this year. Since January 2019, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting any latrine access has consistently stayed below 30% state-wide. At the end of the quarter, only 28% of assessed settlements reported any people accessed latrines. Counties with the highest proportions of assessed settlements reporting no one accessed

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting most people use surface water sources, September 2019.



latrines in the last month were Guit (92%), Koch (90%), Mayom (92%), Pariang (93%) and Rubkona (93%). In assessed settlements without latrine access, the most commonly reported reasons in September were that none were available (67%) while 17% reported cultural factors.

In Panyijiar, FGD participants reported that WASH interventions were scarce in the more remote areas of the county, and communities lack technical knowledge and parts to build and maintain pit latrines. As an example, participants cited a lack of squatting pans as one reason latrines become unusable and impractical.²³

22. FGD Nyal, July and August 2019

23. FGD Nyal, August 2019

In this context, open defecation remained a common practice in Unity State, aligned with nation-wide estimates, according to which the majority of the population (63%) defecates in the open in South Sudan.²⁴ During the assessed period, the combination of poor sanitation conditions and flooding increased risks of groundwater pollution and other forms of contamination.

Hygiene

Furthermore, hand-washing using soap and water remained uncommon during the assessed period. Only 8% of assessed settlements in September reported most people used soap to wash their hands, and as many as 16% indicated people do not wash their hands. Reasons for the low usage of soap include its limited availability in remote areas; that it is expensive due to high transportation costs²⁵; and that communities prefer to utilise soap for washing clothes.

Overall, the current water, sanitation and hygiene conditions continued to endanger the health and well-being of a large proportion of the population, as they are the likely cause of easily preventable health problems affecting the population of Unity.

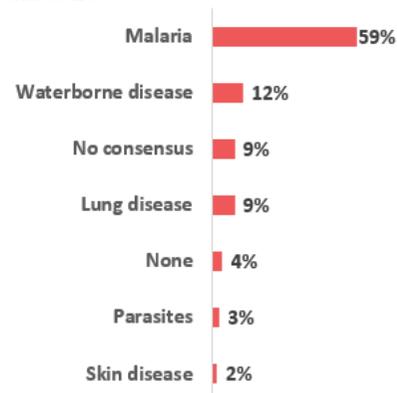
Health

Access to health services remained limited, with no substantial variations compared to the previous quarter. Although almost all (97%) assessed settlements reportedly had access to health services within walking distance,

travel times continued to be lengthy. In 63% of assessed settlements with reported access to health services, the time to reach the nearest health facility was one hour or more, and as much as a full day in 13% of the settlements.

Despite efforts to improve health services after decades of low investment and conflict-related destruction, the infrastructure remains inadequate to provide prompt and quality health services for the population of Unity²⁶. In assessed settlements without access to health services, the main reported reason was that health facilities were either inexistent (38%) or too far away (25%). FGD participants explained that people in need of specialised medical assistance would remain untreated, unless they travel to the Bentiu PoC or larger towns with presence of health services, including Juba or Karthoum in Sudan, an option only available to those with the resources to undertake long journeys.²⁷

Figure 8: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting the following main health problems, September 2019



As in the previous quarter, the most commonly reported health problems were malaria at 59% of assessed settlements, followed by waterborne diseases at 12% (See Figure 8). The proportion of assessed settlements reporting malaria as the main health problem increased since the start of the rainy season from 29% in May to 52% in September for Leer; 49% to 74% for Panyijiar; and 36% to 53% for Rubkona. The use of unimproved water sources for drinking purposes combined with open defecation, and infrequent hand-washing increase the risks of contamination and pose serious health risks for large proportions of the population.

Education

In the current period, access to education remained limited with little variations compared to the previous quarter. By September, 25% of assessed settlements reported that education services were unavailable. Issues of coverage and infrastructure reportedly caused barriers to accessing education. At the end of the quarter, 82% of assessed settlements without access to education services reported the main causes were the lack of facilities, followed by lack of teachers at 13%.

During FGDs, participants reported that even in settlements where education services are operating, children often study under trees and without textbooks. Furthermore, participants reported that some teachers are not sufficiently trained, as the most qualified people often prefer to work with NGOs.²⁸

Conclusion

In the third quarter, the population of Unity State continued to experience inadequate access to food and essential services. Nevertheless, the perceived relative stabilisation of the security situation of the state translated into less internal displacement and fewer restrictions for people to move across the state and engage in livelihood activities. Overall, seasonal improvements from the maize harvest and returns of cattle to the settlements resulted in slight improvements in access to food towards the end of the quarter. However, not all counties reported the same positive trend due to heavy rains and the ensuing flooding which affected areas of Panyijiar, Mayendit and Mayom counties, causing destruction of crops and blocking transportation routes.

About REACH Initiative

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).

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