

Situation Overview: Upper Nile State, South Sudan

April - June 2018

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

Upper Nile State (UNS) saw declining localised conflict and displacement during the second quarter of 2018 but increasing vulnerability to shocks which in turn impacted food security, shelter and WASH. With the reduction in fighting in Nasir and Ulang counties and the return of humanitarian actors, access to general services improved in these counties. However, perceived and real concerns of security together with drought hampered cultivation across the state. Further, service penetration in parts of the western bank and Maban remained limited. In this volatile and geographically varied context, data gaps present challenges to coordinating the humanitarian response in UNS.

REACH has been assessing hard-to-reach areas of South Sudan since December 2015 in order to inform the response of humanitarian actors working outside formal settlement sites. Data is collected on a monthly basis through key informant interviews from settlements across the region. To ensure information provided on settlements was current, REACH interviewed KIs who were either new arrivals

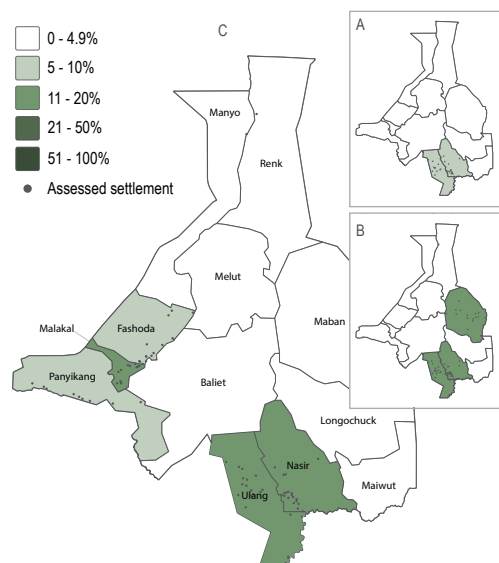
of key informant interviews conducted: **273**

of assessed settlements: **104**

of counties covered: **6 (of 12)**

of focus group discussions conducted: **3**

Map 1: Assessment coverage in Upper Nile State in April (A), May (B) and June 2018 (C)



from the assessed settlement or had contacted an individual from there within the last month. The REACH team covered Nasir and Ulang counties from April to June. The newly-opened Malakal base enabled baseline coverage of Panyikang, Malakal and Fashoda counties in June. Operational challenges in Maban limited data collection to May. No data is presently available on central UNS (Map 1).

In the second quarter of 2018, REACH interviewed 273 key informants (KIs) from 104 settlements in 6 counties of UNS. This

data was supplemented with three Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), which involved participatory mapping of displacement routes, conducted in Akobo, Jonglei State. Primary data was then triangulated with secondary information and past REACH assessments.

This situation overview (SO) evaluates changes in humanitarian needs from April to June 2018 in the three assessed regions of UNS. The first section analyses displacement and population movement to and from the area. The second section disaggregates trends on service access including food security and livelihoods (FSL); protection; shelter and non-food items (NFIs); water, hygiene and sanitation (WASH) and health; and education.

Information is presented across three geographic zones within UNS: the western bank (Panyikang, Malakal and Fashoda counties), the Maban region (Maban County) and southeastern UNS (Nasir and Ulang counties).

Population Movement and Displacement

With the onset of the rainy season, which hampered mobility, conflict and displacement in southeastern UNS markedly reduced during the second quarter. Continued, localised fighting in southeastern UNS and Akobo, in

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of UNS, REACH uses primary data provided by key informants who have either recently arrived or receive regular information from a location or "Area of Knowledge." Information from this report was collected from key informants in Akobo in Jonglei State, and Malakal and Maban in UNS in April, May and June 2018.

In-depth interviews were conducted over the first three weeks of each month. The standardised survey tool includes questions on displacement trends, population needs, food security and livelihoods, and access to basic services. After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting.

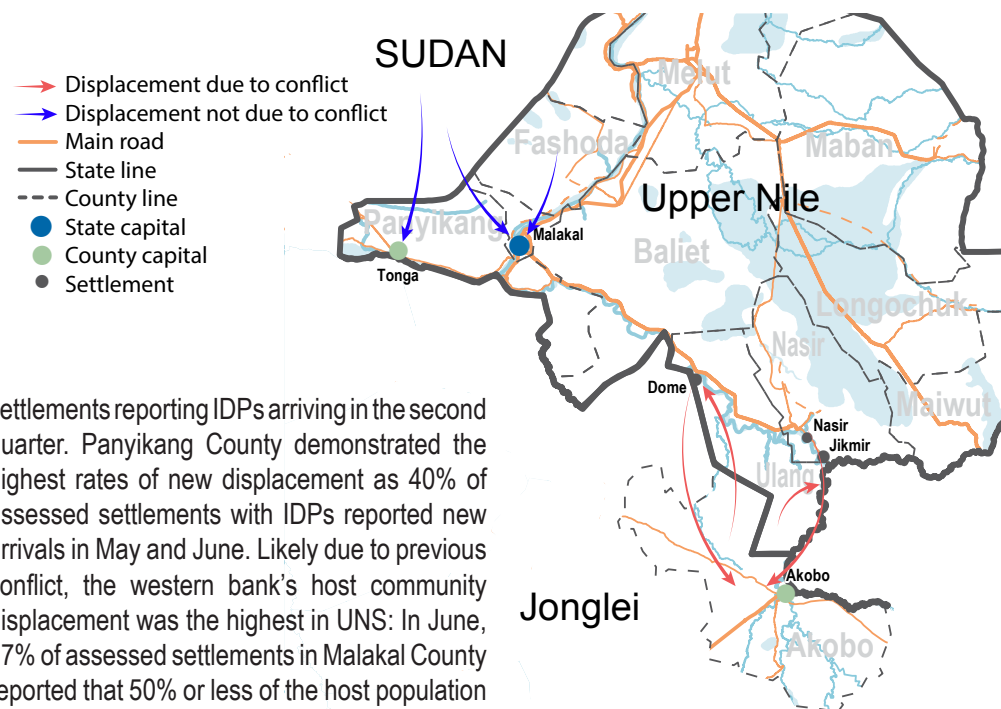
Data was analyzed at the county level using descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis. Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of settlements for a given month were included in analysis. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month vary. Thus, some changes over time reported in this situation overview might be due to variations in coverage.

neighbouring Jonglei State, spurred small-scale displacement from April to June 2018 within and into UNS. Clashes between armed actors in Nasir displaced people along the Sobat River into other settlements of Nasir, Ulang and Akobo counties.¹ Recurrent conflict in Akobo, coinciding with routine cattle migration at the end of the lean season, spurred continual flows of displacement into Ulang as evidenced earlier this year.² Almost three-quarters (74%) of assessed settlements in southeastern UNS reported presence of IDPs in June, which, while the highest reported presence of IDPs in UNS, represented a substantial decline from 96% reported in April. Nevertheless, returns remained limited, with no assessed settlements in Nasir and only 5% of those in Ulang reporting new returnees as of June.

In Maban, no KIs reported new displacement in assessed settlements this quarter. Although 53% of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs in May, 100% were reported as people having arrived in previous years from other settlements in Maban, chiefly (77%) in 2015 or before.

Similarly, likely due to the relatively stable security environment in the western bank over the last months, reported displacement was low in this quarter. Secondary data highlights some displacement from Fashoda County and Sudan into the Malakal Protection of Civilians (PoC) site, majorly due to food insecurity and desires to reunite with family.³ In June, 53% of assessed settlements in the western bank noted the presence of IDPs, with 22% of these

Map 2: Displacement into and out of UNS, April-June 2018



settlements reporting IDPs arriving in the second quarter. Panyikang County demonstrated the highest rates of new displacement as 40% of assessed settlements with IDPs reported new arrivals in May and June. Likely due to previous conflict, the western bank's host community displacement was the highest in UNS: In June, 67% of assessed settlements in Malakal County reported that 50% or less of the host population remained and 22% of assessed settlements in Panyikang County reported that no host community members remained. Secondary data suggests some returnees have arrived in Tonga from Liri, Sudan in order to access humanitarian aid and reliable water sources.⁴ However, in general, returns remain limited due to the concerns over stability in the region.⁵

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Food security and livelihoods

UNS is split between two livelihoods zones: the Northern sorghum and livestock (the western

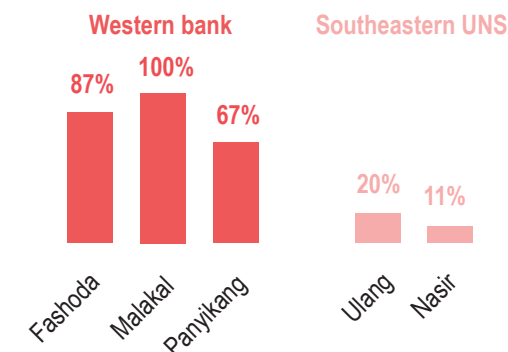
bank and Maban) and the Northeastern maize and cattle zones (southeastern UNS).⁶ Nevertheless, assessed counties of UNS highlighted limited practice of livestock-rearing and access to land for cultivation, presenting challenges to food security across assessed areas of the state (Figure 1).

Despite historic reliance on livestock, assessed counties reported limited livestock-rearing during this quarter. In the western bank (June) and Maban (May), only 33% and 12% of assessed settlements, respectively, described engaging in livestock-related livelihood

activities. Disease outbreak further stymied livestock-rearing activities in Maban, with 75% of assessed settlements reporting livestock disease outbreaks having a large impact the ability of settlements to access enough food in May. While reported livestock-rearing practice was higher in southeastern UNS, it declined from 88% among assessed settlements in April to 64% in June.

Additionally, legacies of conflict hampered UNS residents' access to land for cultivation. In Ulang and Nasir counties, 100% of assessed settlements reported access to land for cultivation in April, which declined to 64% by June. Correspondingly, the largest portion (25%) of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food cited insecurity limiting land access as the primary contributing factor. Similarly, in the western bank (June) and Maban (May), of settlements reporting inadequate access to food, the largest share pointed to insecurity preventing access to land

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food, June 2018



1. According to FGD participants from UNS interviewed by REACH in Akobo, April 2018.

2. Ibid

3. IOM, Displacement Site Flow Monitoring: Malakal PoC Site, 2018.

4. IOM, Tonga Inter-Cluster Needs Assessment, May 2018.

5. Ibid

6. FEWSNET, South Sudan Livelihood Zones, 2017.

for cultivation (35% and 50%, respectively) and disruption due to displacement (13% and 50%, respectively) as the primary reasons.

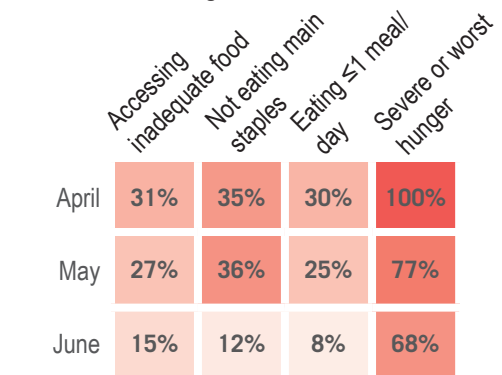
Thus, while large-scale fighting has abated in most of UNS, its legacies of degraded agricultural inputs, protracted displacement and sustained tensions over land access limited agricultural activity and hampered livelihoods resilience across assessed counties of the state.

Southeastern UNS (April-June 2018)

Food security trends in southeastern UNS showed relative improvement from April until June (Figure 2). By June, only 15% of assessed settlements in Ulang and Nasir counties reported inadequate access to food, an improvement from 31% in April.

Improvements in food security in southeastern UNS evidenced in the second quarter are likely due to humanitarian assistance. Of assessed settlements without enough food, 100%

Figure 2: FSL indicators reported in assessed settlements of Ulang and Nasir counties



attributed their hunger to the stopping of food distributions in May as compared with 13% by June. However, general food distributions (GFDs) were ongoing in Ulang and Nasir counties throughout this period.⁷ Thus, this data likely reflects households' increasing ability to access air drop points for distributed food aid with the reduction in fighting by June. Consequently, improved access to food assistance (with access reported by 46% of assessed settlements in May increasing to 67% by June) helped reduce food insecurity.

However, severe coping mechanisms employed at the beginning of the quarter are likely to have long-term, negative effects on livelihoods in southeastern UNS. In April, 31% and 12% of assessed settlements reported selling and slaughtering, respectively, more livestock than usual in order to cope with food insecurity. Due to southeastern UNS's reliance on both land for maize cultivation and cattle-rearing, issues of land access and sale or slaughter of cattle during conflict are likely to erode long-term resilience and further increase reliance on humanitarian assistance.

Maban (May 2018)

Food security in Maban was highest of reached areas of UNS: 82% of assessed settlements in May reported accessing sufficient food. Unlike southeastern UNS, Mabanese settlements did not mainly rely on GFDs. Rather, the majority (53%) of assessed settlements highlighted cultivation as their primary reported source of food. However, competition over land spurred tensions between different groups, including

between Sudanese refugees and Mabanese host communities in Bunj, in this quarter.⁸ Increasing physical scarcity of land coupled with perceptions of insecurity precluding cultivation on available land may disrupt future food security in Maban.

Western bank (June 2018)

In June, the western bank demonstrated signs of serious food insecurity: 86% of assessed settlements in the western bank reported being unable to access enough food, including 100% of assessed settlements in Malakal County. In Panyikang County, specifically, 17% of assessed settlements reported hunger as the worst it can be.

At the same time, 75% of assessed settlements in the western bank reported no access to food assistance, including 100% of those in Malakal County. Only 12% of assessed settlements reported access to supplementary nutritional feeding programmes such as Plumpy Sup or CSB++. As a result, 27% of assessed western bank settlements reported sending families to displacement camps in order to receive humanitarian assistance. Severe food insecurity across these three counties is a reflection of the negative impact of prolonged displacement and continued tensions across the western bank.

Protection

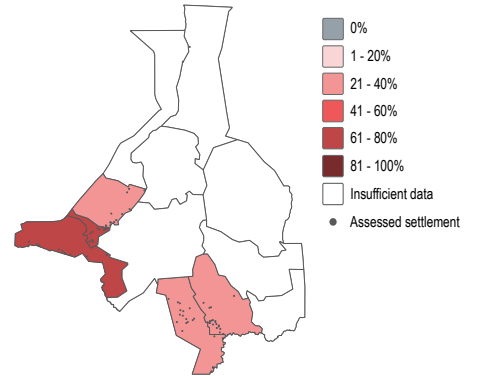
UNS demonstrated low levels of protection incidents by the end of the quarter. Nevertheless, protection concerns highlight sustained challenges across UNS (Map 4 and Figure 3).

Southeastern UNS (April-June 2018)

Though protection incidents were more commonly reported in southeastern UNS than in other areas of the state, they declined in the quarter, likely as a result of the improved security situation. Sixty-two percent (62%) of assessed settlements reported an incident that resulted in a civilian death in April, as compared with 31% in June. Relatedly, assessed settlements reporting looting declined from 42% in April to 18% in June. As conflict-related displacement abated, assessed settlements noting presence of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) fell from 77% to 56% between April and June.

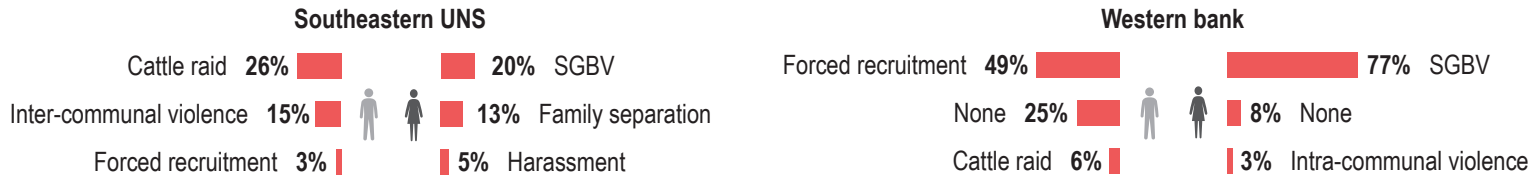
The primary reported protection concerns in June were acts of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) for women and girls and cattle raids and inter-communal violence for men and boys. Such issues reflect that while large-scale conflict in southeastern UNS declined, localised

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting conflict as the major protection concern, June 2018



7. WFP, WFP Weekly IRRM Plan, April-June 2018.
8. DDG, Displacement, Disharmony and Disillusion, 2018.

Figure 3: Most common protection concerns for men and women (18 years and older) reported by assessed UNS settlements, June 2018



fighting remained a challenge.

Maban (May 2018)

In May, no assessed settlements in Maban reported incidents of violence resulting in civilian death while only 12% reported cases of looting.

However, prevailing protection concerns highlighted continued displacement-related challenges across the county. In May, 41% of assessed settlements reported the presence of UAMs, suggesting the dissolution of family structures as a result of protracted displacement. Further, though tensions between Mabanese hosting communities and humanitarians mounted over allocation of resources to refugees,⁹ no assessed settlements reported poor relations between IDPs and the host community. This likely speaks to a redirection of host community antagonism away from IDPs and toward humanitarian actors and refugees due to perceived economic marginalisation.

Western bank (June 2018)

In June, no assessed settlements in the western bank reported incidents of violence resulting in civilian death or cases of looting.

However, the key protection concerns reported

by gender and age group raised several worrying trends. The majority of assessed settlements cited SGBV as the primary protection concern for women and girls (77% and 69%, respectively). Notably, 33% of assessed settlements specifically referenced forced marriages as the main protection issue for girls younger than 18. With bride price being a common practice in South Sudan, forced marriage may be evidence of an extreme livelihoods coping mechanism as families seek to access more livestock, assets and cash.¹⁰

For men and boys, the primary protection concern was forced recruitment (49% among men and 36% among boys), particularly in Panyikang and Malakal counties. This suggests there is still a perceived risk of renewed conflict in the western bank (Map 4).

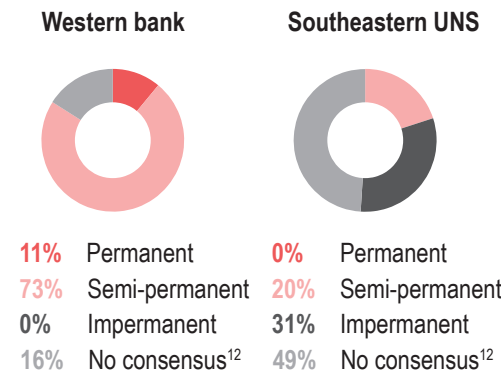
In Panyikang county, specifically, as perceptions of stability have increased, partners report growing rates of returnees, particularly to Tonga.¹¹ With limited humanitarian interventions in the area, the population has likely expanded faster than available resources. Correspondingly, tensions between hosting and displaced populations were higher than in other assessed counties with 20% of assessed settlements reporting poor relations between

IDPs and host communities.

Shelter

Across UNS, IDPs inhabited less permanent shelters than their host community counterparts. In June, the majority (66%) of assessed settlements reported that the primary host community shelter type was the tukul. In comparison, in June, the largest portion (29%) of assessed UNS settlements with IDPs reported IDPs living in rakoobas. However, in Ulang and Nasir counties, the most common shelter type for IDPs was impermanent structures such as tents, improvised shelters, abandoned and community buildings, as

Figure 4: Primary shelter type of IDPs in assessed settlements, June 2018

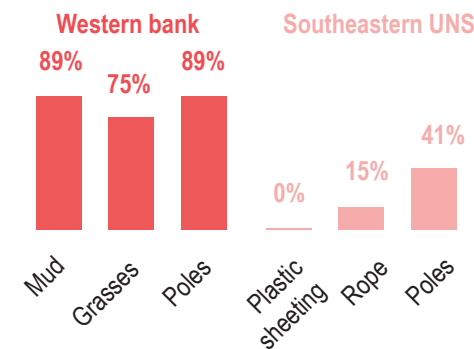


reported by 31% of assessed settlements with IDPs in June. Nevertheless, IDPs in UNS were less commonly living entirely without shelter as the largest share of assessed settlements with IDPs (39%) reported that 50% or fewer of IDPs were living in the open without any form of shelter.

In the western bank, a larger share (14%) of assessed settlements in June reported shelter damage due to conflict. However, assessed settlements reported shelter construction materials needed for repair or construction of the most common shelter types – tukuls and rakoobas – as readily available: 89%, 75% and 89% accessing mud, grasses and poles, respectively (Figures 4 and 5). Thus, communities are likely to be able to rebuild damaged shelters.

In contrast, in southeastern UNS, shelter construction is more concerning. By June, in settlements with IDPs, a larger share of IDPs

Figure 5: Reported availability of shelter construction materials to most people in assessed settlements, June 2018



9. Ibid.
10. LWF, Forced and Early Marriages in the Northern Ugandan Settlements, 2018.
11. Reported by humanitarian partners during an Inter-Cluster Working Group in Malakal.

lived in impermanent structures and could not access basic construction materials needed to build rakoobas: 0%, 15% and 41% accessing plastic sheeting, rope and poles, respectively (Figures 4 and 5). This may prolong the time IDPs spend in substandard shelters.

Corresponding with the high reported shelter needs in southeastern UNS, assessed settlements reported the primary NFI needs for IDPs in June as blankets (14%), plastic sheets (10%) and jerrycans (10%), where plastic sheeting and blankets would help protect against rain and exposure. By comparison, assessed settlements in the western bank (June) and Maban (May) majorly cited (47% and 33%, respectively) need for mosquito nets. Mosquito net demands are likely seasonal as, with the onset of the rainy season, there is increasing number of mosquitos and thus a higher risk of malaria outbreak.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Health

Settlements in southeastern UNS and Maban were chiefly accessing water from boreholes while those in the western bank were primarily accessing water from rivers (Figure 6). However, 17% of assessed UNS settlements in June reported inability to access their preferred water source due to insecurity, with similar proportions in both areas of active conflict and more stable zones. This speaks to pervasive real or perceived fear of fighting across the state.

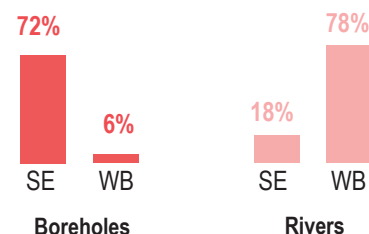
Sanitation infrastructure and practices present

challenges throughout UNS. In June, 21% of assessed UNS settlements reported no one using latrines largely due to lack of latrine coverage (40%) and overcrowding (13%). Overcrowding, in particular, is likely attributable to displacement, which has strained limited available WASH infrastructure. Nevertheless, latrine access in UNS fared above the national total: 58% of all assessed settlements in South Sudan reported no one using latrines in June. However, strain on UNS WASH infrastructure coupled with limited access to mosquito nets, likely contributed to concerns over malaria and waterborne diseases (cholera, typhoid and diarrhoea), which were cited as the primary health problems this quarter.

Southeastern UNS (April-June 2018)

Health indicators in southeastern UNS demonstrated higher levels of access to health services despite localised fighting (Figure 7). Wounds continued to be one of the most commonly cited health concerns, likely linked to these smaller episodes of violence: 15% of assessed settlements in April, similar to 10% by

Figure 6: Primary water sources of assessed settlements in southeastern (SE) UNS and the western bank (WB), June 2018



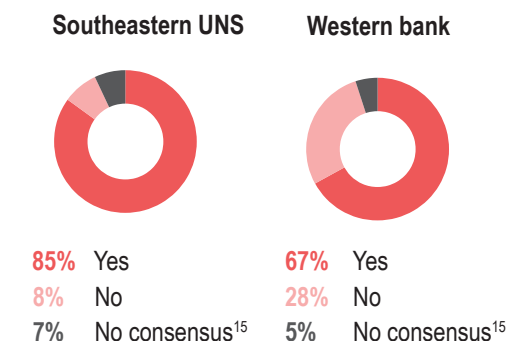
June. However, assessed settlements reporting access to health care remained high (85% in June) in southeastern UNS.

WASH indicators in Ulang and Nasir counties improved this quarter. Southeastern UNS retained the highest reported borehole coverage in assessed counties of the state with 72% of assessed settlements accessing water from boreholes as of June. With the reduction of armed clashes, assessed settlements reporting inability to access their preferred water points due to conflict declined from 46% in April to 21% in June. Ulang and Nasir counties also saw improvement in sanitation where 42% of assessed settlements reported no latrine use in April versus 23% by June.

Maban (May 2018)

Health care was largely reported as accessible in Maban though WASH infrastructure presented challenges to health across the county. Almost two-thirds (65%) of assessed Mabanese settlements reported access to a health facility

Figure 7: Access to health services in assessed settlements, June 2018



in May. The primary health concern for the county was waterborne diseases, as cited by 47% of assessed settlements. While a larger share of assessed settlements accessed water from boreholes (53%), 30% sourced water from rivers and ponds. Further compromising water quality were widespread reports (50% of assessed settlements) that livestock are kept near to – or drink from – water points, increasing risk of water contamination.

Water is a source of tension between the different communities of Maban.¹³ Based on a previous REACH assessment, 11% of security incidents in Maban were attributable to competition over water.¹⁴ With 24% of assessed settlements reporting that their preferred water source is unavailable in the dry season, these tensions may increase after the rainy season ends in October.

Sanitation and hygiene practices were poor in Maban. Open defecation remains a widespread practice with 76% of assessed settlements in May not using latrines. Rampant open defecation increases risk for water borne disease outbreak particularly among Mabanese communities still largely sourcing water from unprotected sources.

Western bank (June 2018)

Water access presented a key challenge in the western bank. In June, 78% of assessed western bank settlements sourced water from the river. Fashoda County was the only county in the area reporting access to water from boreholes (13% of assessed settlements) while

12. "No consensus" stands for settlements on which multiple key informants were surveyed but no consensus was found for the respective indicator.

13. REACH, Conflict and Tensions between Communities Around Gendrassa and Yusif Batil Camps, Maban County, December 2016.

14. Ibid.

15. "No consensus" stands for settlements on which multiple key informants were surveyed but no consensus was found for the respective indicator.

100% of assessed settlements in Malakal and Panyikang counties reported that no functioning boreholes were present. In addition, water points are at high risk of contamination as 82% of assessed settlements observed livestock kept near to – or drinking from – the water points. Further, 13% of assessed settlements in Fashoda noted that water points are not accessible in the dry season. Such seasonality is likely to result in water shortages due to drought that began this quarter in some parts of the western bank. For example, Aburoc is currently experiencing water shortage and is relying on water trucking due to the drying up of boreholes and low groundwater potential.¹⁶ In subsequent quarters, Aburoc is likely to see displacement as some IDPs there report that once water sources deplete, they will return to their settlements-of-origin.¹⁷

Health coverage in the western bank was the lowest across UNS with only 28% of assessed settlements reporting access to a health facility in June (Figure 7). Despite water access challenges, waterborne diseases were not the primary health concern. Rather, the largest portion of assessed western bank settlements (78%) reported malaria as the major health issue. Settlements also perceived malaria as contributing to the largest share of morbidity, particularly in Fashoda County where 47% of assessed settlements reported malaria as the primary cause of death. Concerns over malaria likely relate to the onset of the rainy season and resulting abundance of mosquitos but also to limited access to mosquito nets and poor shelter conditions in the western bank.

Education

Education trends varied across UNS, with a higher proportion of assessed settlements in Ulang and Nasir counties reporting access to education services than those in Maban and the western bank (Map 5). In this quarter, assessed settlements in Ulang and Nasir counties reporting access to education improved from 50% in April to 67% in June. While in April, of assessed settlements without access to education, the primary reason for the lack of educational services was reported as insecurity (33%), by June, issues of distance (22%), lack of facilities (22%) and destruction of facilities due to conflict (11%) eclipsed acute security concerns. In contrast, only 28% and 47% of assessed settlements in the western bank (June) and Maban (May), respectively, reported accessing educational services. The primary barriers to education in the western bank were also related to conflict and insecurity, specifically,

Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to education services, June 2018

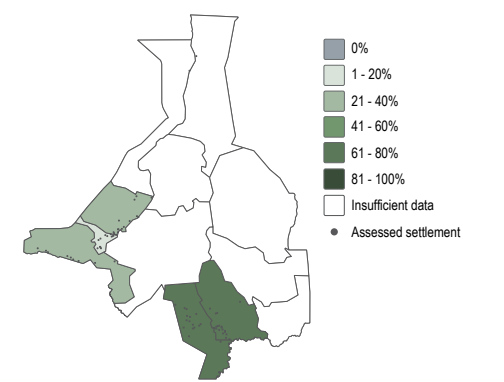


Figure 8: Most cited barriers to education for boys and girls in UNS of assessed settlements reporting half or less of boys or girls attend school, June 2018



the destruction of facilities during conflict, as noted by 64% of assessed settlements without access to education in June. Gendered barriers to education and thus girls' lower attendance prevailed across most counties. Access to education was particularly gendered in Maban where 100% of assessed settlements with education infrastructure reported that more than 50% of boys attended school while 88% reported that less than 50% of girls attended school. The primary obstacle to girls' attendance were demands for domestic work (Figure 8).

Conclusion

While UNS has seen an increase in relative stability in the last months, the aftermath of conflict still resulted in high humanitarian needs in this quarter, particularly in the western bank where destruction of infrastructure and large-scale displacement have limited access to food and services. Localised fighting in Akobo and Nasir counties continued in the second quarter of 2018, though slowed with the onset of the rainy season. This conflict spurred continued small-scale, cross-border displacement.

While FSL data from assessed settlements in southeastern UNS demonstrated positive improvement in this quarter, data on the western bank highlighted food insecurity. Nevertheless, severe coping mechanisms (cattle slaughtering and sale) employed in southeastern UNS during this period will likely challenge long-term food security. In both Maban and the western bank, populations are increasingly unable to produce sufficient food due to unavailability of land and livestock, which are historic sources of livelihoods. While access to food assistance is reportedly on the rise in Ulang and Nasir counties, access is reportedly more limited in the western bank and Maban.

Protection concerns across assessed settlements in UNS still largely focused on SGBV for women and community conflict (including cattle raiding) for men. Increased rates of forced marriage likely indicate high FSL needs across the state resulting in earlier pressures to marry in order to access bride price. Despite reported stability in the western bank in recent months, there was increasing fear among men and boys of forced recruitment. This suggests pervasive fear of the resumption of fighting.

Across UNS, the majority of host community

16. Reported by humanitarian partners during an Inter-Cluster Working Group in Malakal.
17. DRC, Aburoc, Wau Shilluk, Lul and Kodok: Context Snapshot, October 2018.
18. Reported by humanitarian partners during an Inter-Cluster Working Group in Malakal.

members live in tukuls. In comparison, in southeastern UNS, IDPs largely still occupy impermanent structures such as abandoned buildings and tents while in the western bank, the majority inhabit semi-permanent structures like rakoobas. Without widespread access to building materials in local markets, IDPs in Ulang and Nasir counties are largely dependent on humanitarian assistance. Major NFI needs were shelter materials (southeastern UNS) and mosquito nets (the western bank and Maban).

Reported access to water and healthcare improved in assessed settlements of southeastern UNS, with the majority of settlements accessing water from boreholes. In comparison, some settlements in Maban County continued to access water from unprotected sources. Water access from sources shared with livestock and exposed to rampant open defecation heighten risk for outbreak of waterborne diseases in Maban. In the western bank, drought together with dependence on water from the Nile, strained water access in this quarter. Nevertheless, primary health concerns in assessed settlements of the western bank centered around malaria while those in southeastern UNS and Maban around waterborne diseases.

Finally, education services were largely accessible in assessed settlements in Ulang and Nasir counties – increasing as fighting abated. By contrast, education access was low in Maban and the western bank, where infrastructure has been reportedly destroyed by conflict. Gendered access to education –

with boys attending school more regularly than girls – remained a challenge across assessed settlements in the state.

About REACH

REACH 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. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

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