



Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Rapid Market Assessment

Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Counties, Western Equatoria State, South Sudan, February 2020

Introduction

As cash is increasingly considered as a delivery modality in the South Sudan response, there is a growing need for humanitarian organisations and decision makers to understand market dynamics. Little is known about market structures in Western Equatoria – an area where humanitarian organisations identified ample potential for cash programming.

To fill this information gap, REACH carried out a rapid market assessment in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Counties, which consisted of 4 focus group discussions (FGDs) with trade unions, 3 FGDs with households, additional key informant (KI) interviews with traders, local authorities and humanitarian partners, as well as direct observation. Directly assessed marketplaces include Yambio Town Market, Nzara Market, Ezo Market, and several satellite marketplaces in surrounding areas (see map 1). These locations were chosen because of their importance to the overall market system in the region, and to adequately represent various sub-systems. Primary data collection took place from 24 February to 2 March 2020.

Key Findings

- **Marketplaces in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties reportedly receive supplies from Uganda via the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and/or Juba.** According to KIs, cereals, fruits and vegetables are predominantly produced locally.
- **Many marketplaces exist in the region.** However, most reportedly host very few traders, only supply the most basic goods and are open only one day per week.
- **County capital markets in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Town offer a diverse set of food and non-food items.** According to KIs the availability of items is lower in rural marketplaces, as a result of which many people throughout the region reportedly visit the county capital markets, particularly for non-food items (NFIs).
- KIs reported that market activities in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties have declined since the onset of conflict in South Sudan in 2013, and become increasingly concentrated in Yambio Town. Local production of agricultural goods has reportedly reduced as demand from outside the region has decreased due to conflict.
- According to FGD participants, most households derive cultivated foods from sustenance farming. They mostly depend on markets for other items, such as sugar, and non-food items. **Households throughout the region generally have physical access to marketplaces**, though many struggle with high prices, which create a high financial barrier.

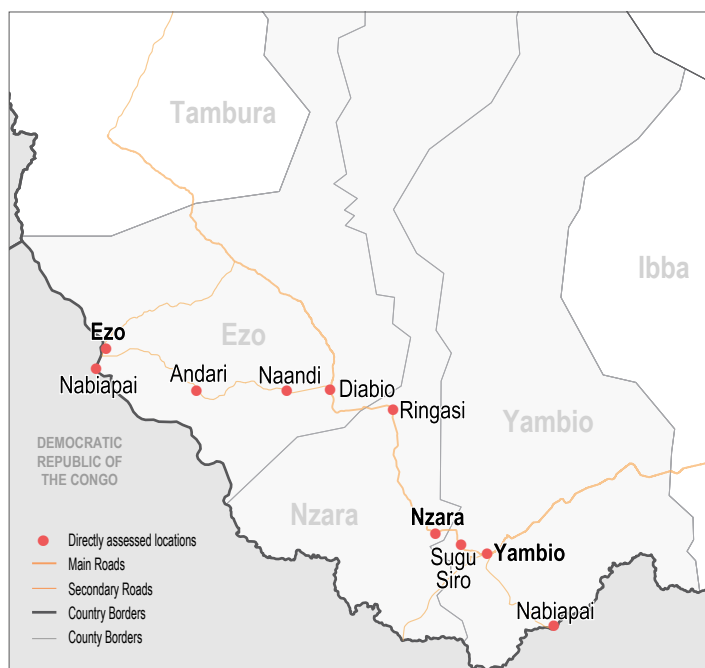
Context and Background

Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties are located in the south-west of South Sudan in Western Equatoria State. It borders DRC to the south and west, and the Central African Republic (CAR) to the west. Yambio Town, the capital of Western Equatoria State, is the regional hub for administration, trade and humanitarian aid. Most settlements in the region are concentrated in the south of Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Counties, with the majority being located within 10 km from Yambio or Nzara Towns. However, many more remote communities exist too.

The region is located in South Sudan's so-called greenbelt, an area towards the southern border known for its lush vegetation which is colloquially referred to as the country's bread basket. The local population has traditionally been highly reliant on subsistence farming.

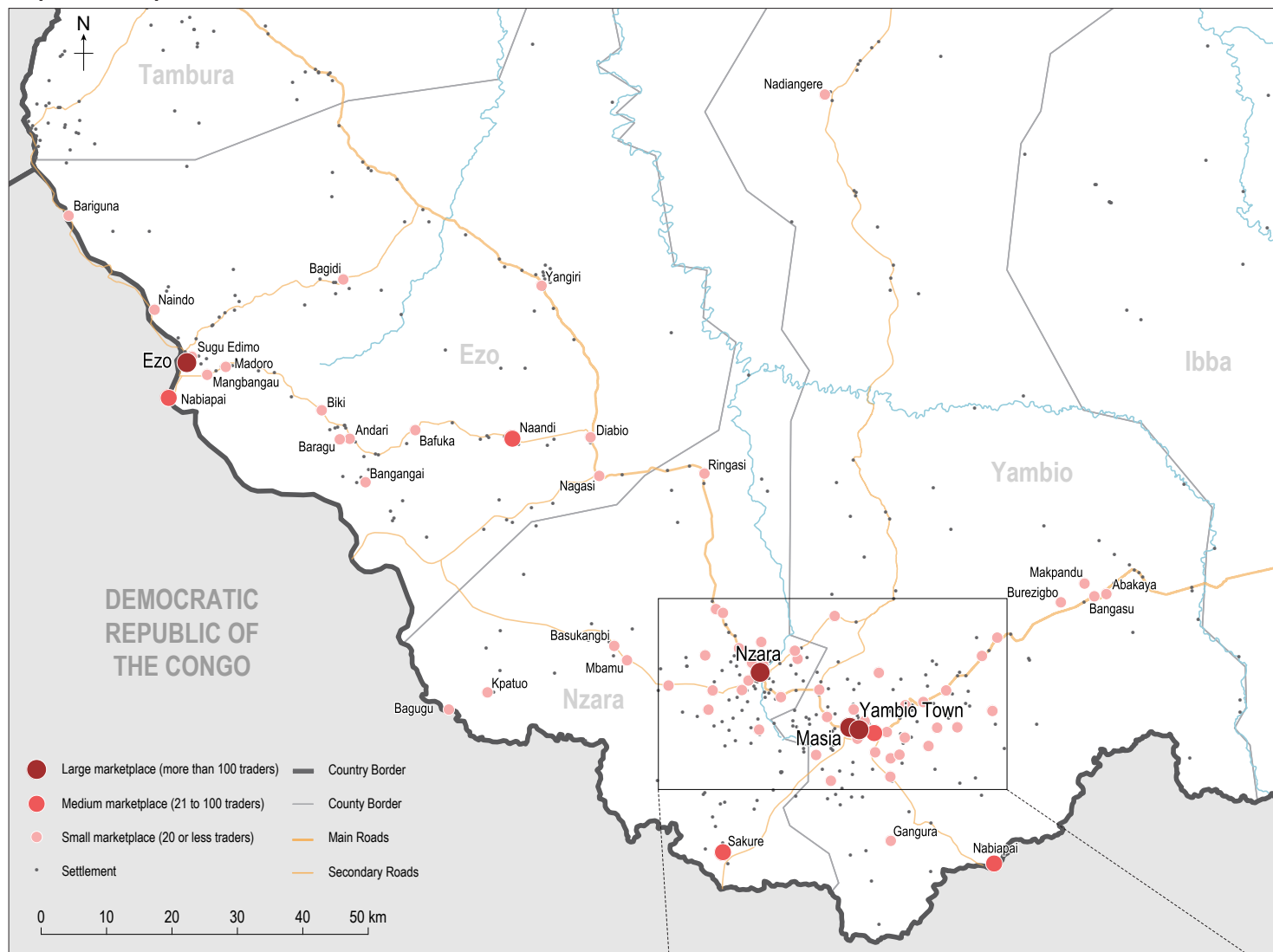
According to KIs, conflict-related violence in 2015 and 2016 reportedly led to large migration movements throughout the region. Large parts of the population reportedly fled to neighboring DRC and to Uganda, while some of the population near Ezo Town were displaced to CAR. Many households from rural communities, however, moved to Yambio Town, which led to a further concentration of market activities in and around the state capital. In recent years, the situation has reportedly stabilised and remained peaceful. However, conflict has had a lasting and disrupting impact on population movements, agricultural production and trade activities.

Map 1: Locations Directly Assessed by REACH



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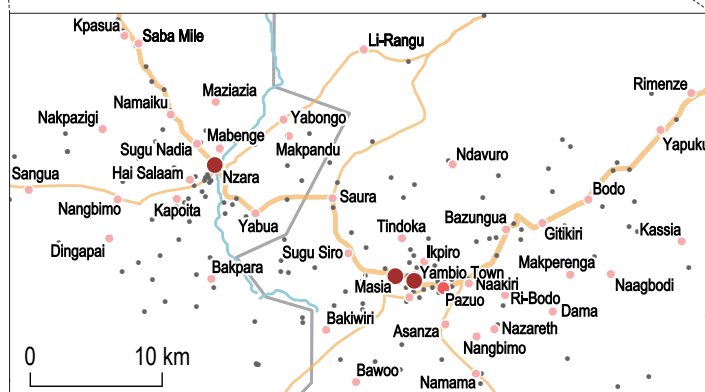
Map 2: Marketplaces in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Counties



Regional Structure

Compared to other regions in South Sudan, there is a relatively high density of marketplaces in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Counties. In total, REACH mapped 74 marketplaces in the region through KI interviews. Many of these marketplaces are located in and around Yambio and Nzara Towns, which is where the majority of the local population is concentrated. According to trader and government KIs, the marketplaces in Yambio Town, Yambio Town market (1,920 traders) and Masia (450), serve as the hubs through which many goods are redistributed to satellite markets throughout the region. Other important markets are located in Ezo Town and Nzara Town with 150 and 109 traders respectively.

Besides the main marketplaces, which are located in the county capitals, many small satellite markets exist throughout the region. Most of them are situated along one of the few roads, and particularly along the region's main road, which connects Yambio with Maridi (to the east) and Tambura (to the north-west).



The satellite markets have market days, which is when the market is held. Most markets are held once per week (some twice), mostly on Sundays. According to trader and government KIs, most of these marketplaces have fewer than 20 permanent traders and many are shut entirely on non-market days. During market days, however, the size of the rural marketplaces may increase to over 50 traders due to the influx of mobile traders from Yambio Town.

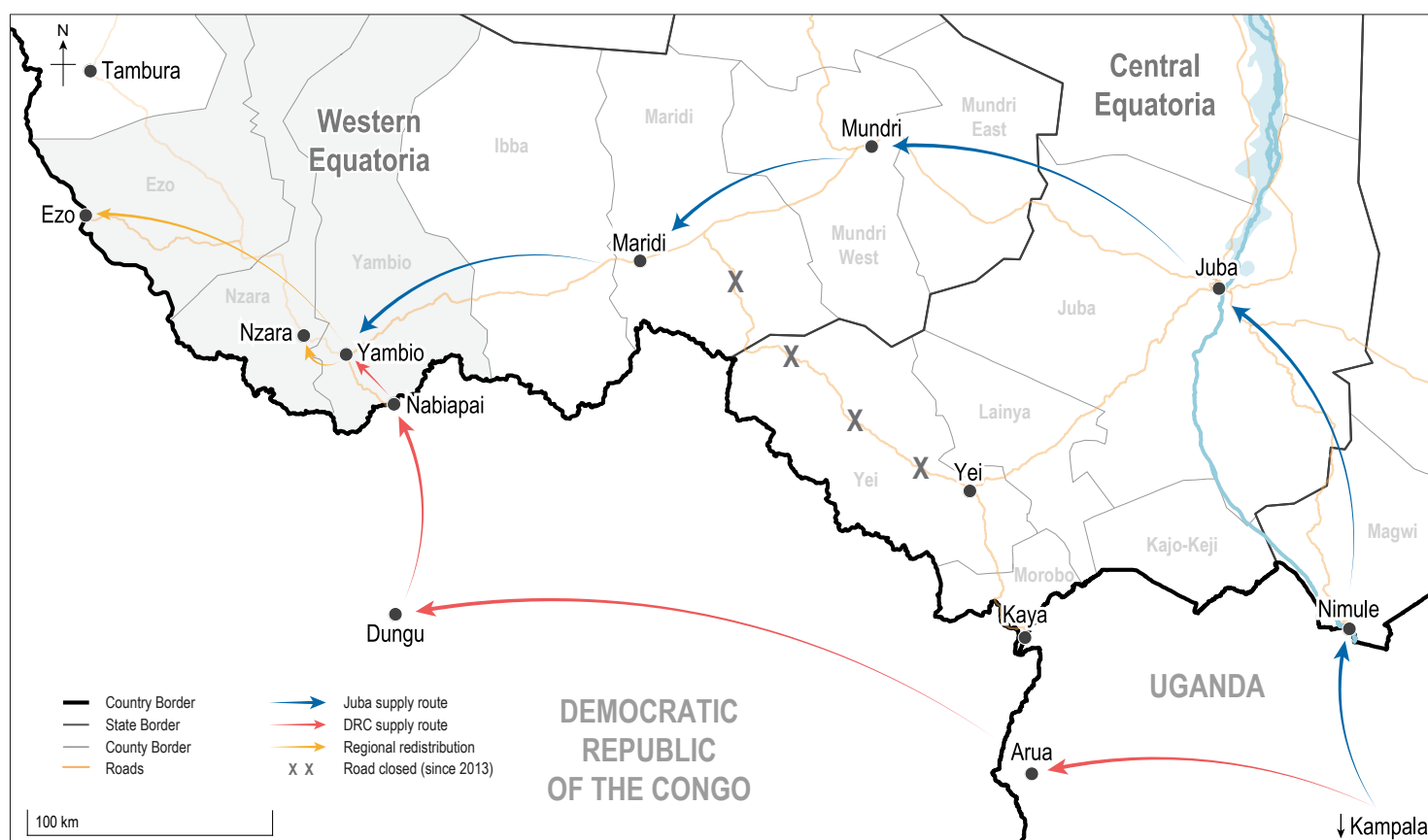
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Another particularity of the market system in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties are the border marketplaces (*"Nabiapai"* in local Azande language), such as Nabiapai and Sakure, which are located along the borders with DRC and the CAR. On market days, mobile traders and customers from both sides of the border visit these border markets, which they are reportedly free to access without border restrictions. Congolese customers reportedly use these markets to buy imported goods from Uganda, such as sugar, salt, soap and clothes from South Sudanese traders as there is reportedly no nearby market in DRC that carries such items. South Sudanese customers, on the other hand, buy locally produced cereals, fruit, vegetables, bush meat and palm oil from Congolese traders, as these items tend to be cheaper than in South Sudan.

Supply Routes

Traders in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties sell goods from two distinct supply chains: (1) imported goods (e.g. sugar, salt, non-food items) from Uganda, and (2) locally produced goods (crops, vegetables and fruit) from within the region. As there is no domestic production of most consumer goods these goods are largely procured from Kampala, Uganda.¹ At the time of data collection, supplies were reportedly being transported from Uganda to the region via two routes, (1) the DRC route, and (2) the Juba route.

Map 3: Supply Routes



While most medium and large traders in Yambio and Nzara restock directly from Uganda, only a few traders in Ezo and Naandi (Ezo County) can afford to do so. Traders in Ezo county, and small traders in Yambio and Nzara counties, reportedly restock from wholesalers in Yambio Town using bicycles, motorcycles and sometimes cars. These modes of transport are also used by mobile traders from Yambio Town, who sell at satellite marketplaces on market days.

DRC Supply Route

Traders in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo restocking directly from Uganda tend to transport goods along the DRC route, as it tends to be cheaper and more secure than the Juba route. Goods are trucked from Kampala to Arua (Uganda), where traders cross from Uganda into DRC. After passing through Dungu (DRC), they head north to the South Sudanese border at Nabiapai (Yambio County), from where they continue their journey to Yambio Town.

According to the Chamber of Commerce of Western Equatoria state, most traders only use the DRC route in the dry season. However, some traders in Yambio and trade unions in Nzara and Ezo Towns reported that the route remains open and in use throughout the year, although road conditions become challenging in the wet season from May to December, and particularly between August and November. The 1,000 km journey from Kampala to Yambio takes around one week by truck in dry season.

¹ According to trader KIs, some traders in Yambio Town also procure goods from Kenya, or even from India and China (via Mombasa port in Kenya).

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Traders reportedly hire 35 and 50-ton trucks to transport goods.² Only large traders in Yambio Town can afford to hire trucks on their own. According to KIs, most traders that import goods themselves join together with other traders to share costs. Transportation on both the DRC and Juba routes from Kampala reportedly costs approximately 500,000 Ugandan Shillings (UGX) per ton.

According to KIs, traders pay 600 USD per truck, irrespective of size, at the border to cross from Uganda into DRC. Checkpoint fees in Dungu, DRC, are reportedly 150 USD per truck. The fees of crossing into South Sudan are reportedly 40,000 SSP. Upon arrival in Yambio, goods are taxed by local authorities at 50,000-70,000 SSP depending on the type of items carried (fees imposed on building materials are relatively high compared to other goods).

KIs reported that the DRC route was safer than the Juba route and that insecurity has not been a major challenge for traders. However, they reported that taxation along the supply route in DRC was increasing.

Juba Supply Route

Even though most traders in the region rely on the DRC route, there are reportedly many medium and large traders in Yambio Town who supply via the Juba route. These traders enter South Sudan from Uganda at the Nimule border crossing, and then head to Juba. Subsequently, they continue to Yambio via Mundri and Maridi along the main road.

The route reportedly remains open for heavy trucks all year. However, from May to December, the road conditions between Juba and Yambio deteriorate due to rain, and many trucks get stuck along the way. While the transfer from Juba to Yambio only takes three days in dry season, it takes up to one month in the wet season.

Traders reported that insecurity is the main challenge along the Juba route, particularly on the stretch between Mundri and Maridi. Traders reportedly risk being looted and physically attacked in this area. Furthermore, they face taxes at formal checkpoints and additional fees at informal ones. While this route is faster than the DRC one, taxation tends to render it more expensive. The costs arising from taxation on the Juba route reportedly vary from trader to trader, and depend on connections with taxing authorities encountered along the way.

Upon crossing into South Sudan, traders reported paying custom tax in Nimule, which costs 50,000-70,000 SSP per truck depending on the imported goods. At two separate checkpoints in and before Juba, they are taxed 20,000-25,000 SSP per truck, and another 15,000 SSP upon leaving Juba. There are between seven and eight checkpoints between Juba and Yambio, each charging 80,000

² Occasionally, in wet season, some large traders also reported restocking by plane, even though it is more expensive, when demand for a particular item shoots up and supplies are insufficient.

Figure 1: Seasonal Calendar of Supply Routes

Supply route	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
DRC route	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)
Juba route	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)	(✓)

✓ : open normally (✓) : open irregularly ✕ : closed

SSP per truck for passage. At arrival in Yambio, traders face a final tax of 25,000 SSP per truck (See Figure 3 for a breakdown of the cost of transporting 50kg of sugar).

Other Supply Routes

Prior to the outbreak of conflict in 2013, the Yei route, which connected the border crossing at Kaya with Yei and Maridi towns, was reportedly preferred by traders. However, since 2013 the road between Yei and Maridi has been shut entirely due to insecurity. Traders were thus forced to fall back on the DRC and Juba routes, which are longer.

The supply of goods from DRC is limited to produce, which is sold in border marketplaces. No goods are reportedly supplied from CAR, Sudan, or from other areas in South Sudan such as Tambura and Wau, given the bad road conditions towards the north.

Local Supplies

Foods sourced almost entirely from local production include maize, sorghum, rice, sesame, groundnuts, fruits, vegetables, fish and meat. Many are reportedly available all year round.

Local goods are reportedly produced in two different ways. Most of the farming outputs are produced by households, who plant on their own plots and on a small scale. Another practice is for households to form cooperatives. This reportedly allows them to produce on a larger scale, hire casual labor to work in the fields, and better market their farming outputs. In most cases households and cooperatives sell their goods to traders, who specialise in the trade of local food items.

According to KIs, local production is well below pre-conflict levels and could be increased to meet the demands of the wider South Sudanese population. Before 2013, local produce used to be sold to customers across South Sudan (e.g. Tambura, Wau and Juba). Insecurity in the region and throughout South Sudan led to a reduction in trade activity and external demand. Despite an improving security environment, demand has reportedly not returned, and traders struggle to market their goods outside of Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties.

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Figure 2: Availability of Items in Local Marketplaces*

	Yambio	Nzara	Ezo	Nabiapai (Ezo)	Typical satellite market**
Urban / rural	urban	urban	urban	rural	rural
Number of traders	2,500	109	150	80	<20
Staple cereals	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Pulses	✓	✓	✓	✗	(✓)
Sugar	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Cooking oil	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Vegetables	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)
Fruit	✓	✓	✓	✓	(✓)
Meat	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗
Fish	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗
Milk	✗	✗	✗	✗	✗
Wild foods	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
WASH items	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	(✓)
Cooking equipment	✓	✓	(✓)	✗	(✓)
Firewood	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Agricultural tools	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Seeds	✓	(✓)	(✓)	✗	✗
Livestock	✓	(✓)	✗	✗	✗
Building materials	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗
Clothing	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fuel	✓	✓	✓	✗	✗
Medicine	✓	✓	✓	(✓)	✗
Phone credit	✓	✓	✗	✗	✗

✓ : available (✓) : limited ✗ : unavailable

* The data was obtained through KI interviews and direct observation.

** Compiled using what is most commonly reported by KIs in satellite markets.

Availability

As illustrated in Figure 2, the availability of basic items varies considerably between marketplaces. Markets in Yambio Town have greater availability across and within different categories of items. Items sold by traders in these marketplaces include basic food items and NFIs such as vehicle spare parts, iron-ware, electronics and building materials.

Outside of the main markets in Yambio Town, diversity is much lower. Basic items (as represented in Figure 2) are still largely available in Nzara Town, and to a lesser extent in Ezo Town. However, traders in rural satellite marketplaces typically only sell the most basic items, such as cereals, sugar and clothing. On market days, the availability of goods in satellite marketplaces reportedly increases due to the presence of mobile traders from Yambio Town.

³ These amounts are approximations based on KI reports.

Figure 3: Cost breakdown of transporting a 50 kg bag of sugar from Kampala to Yambio and Ezo³

Wholesale price at factory (Kampala, Uganda)		
9,250 SSP		
+	+	
Truck and driver cost to Yambio	Truck and driver cost to Yambio	
2,350 SSP	2,350 SSP	
+	+	
Clearance at Uganda-DRC border	Clearance at Uganda-South Sudan border	
250 SSP	75 SSP	
+	+	
Checkpoint fees in the DRC	Checkpoint fees in South Sudan	
50 SSP	825 SSP	
+	+	
Fees at DRC-South Sudan border		
50 SSP		
+		
Clearance in Yambio		
75 SSP		
+		
Offloading in Yambio	Offloading in Yambio	
60 SSP	60 SSP	
=	=	
Total costs to supply to Yambio	Total costs to supply to Yambio	
<u>12,085 SSP</u>	<u>12,560 SSP</u>	

Retail price in Yambio

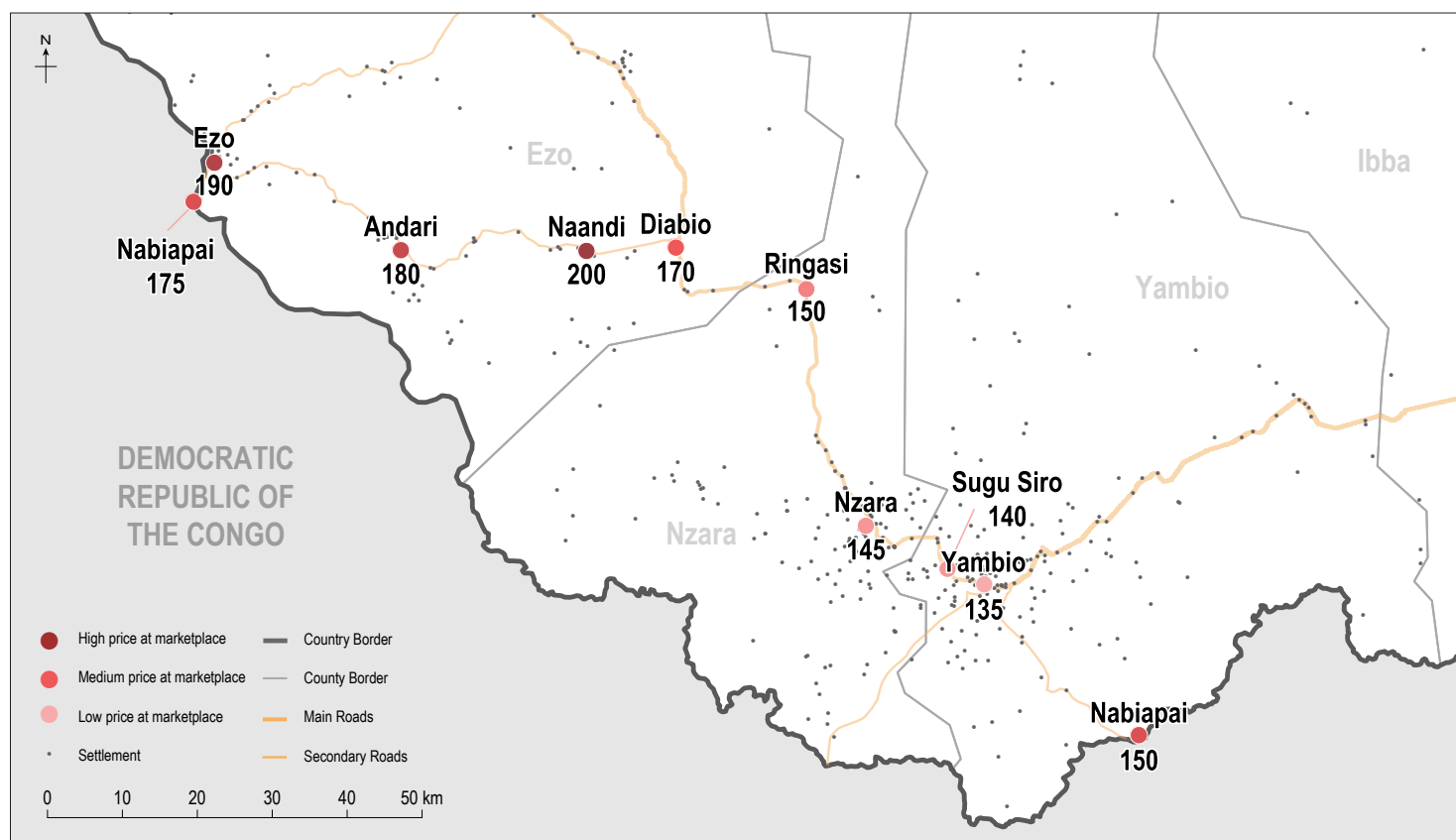
13,000-14,000 SSP
+
Porter in Yambio
100 SSP
+
Transport costs to Ezo (by car)
2,500 SSP
+
Taxation
150 SSP
+
Porter in Ezo
50 SSP
=
Total costs to supply to Ezo
<u>16,800 SSP</u>

Retail price in Ezo

20,000 SSP

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Map 4: Price of a Mug of Sugar (490g; in SSP)



Prices

Drivers of Retail Prices

In all the marketplaces visited by the assessment team, traders reported that they are free to set their own prices. They confirmed that the primary factors affecting the retail prices of imported goods in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties are wholesale prices in Kampala, Uganda, and transportation costs.

Figure 3 shows a cost breakdown, based on trader KI estimations, of the costs associated with transporting goods to Yambio and Ezo from Kampala. Although transportation reportedly costs the same on both supply routes, the lower costs for taxation on the DRC route (roughly 3.5% of the final retail price in Yambio) make it slightly less expensive than the Juba route where taxation reportedly makes up 7% of the cost. Transportation costs account for 18% of retail prices in Yambio and 24% in Ezo. Additional transportation costs are reportedly the main reason why retail prices vary in settlements across the region.

Variation in Retail Prices

The price of maize grain reportedly fluctuates seasonally. In the harvest season between July and December, a malwa⁴ of maize

grain in Yambio Town reportedly costs 150 SSP, rising incrementally per month to 250 SSP in the non-harvest season. Imported food items are cheaper in the dry season, when it is reportedly easier and less costly to transport them. NFI prices reportedly remain fairly stable throughout the year.

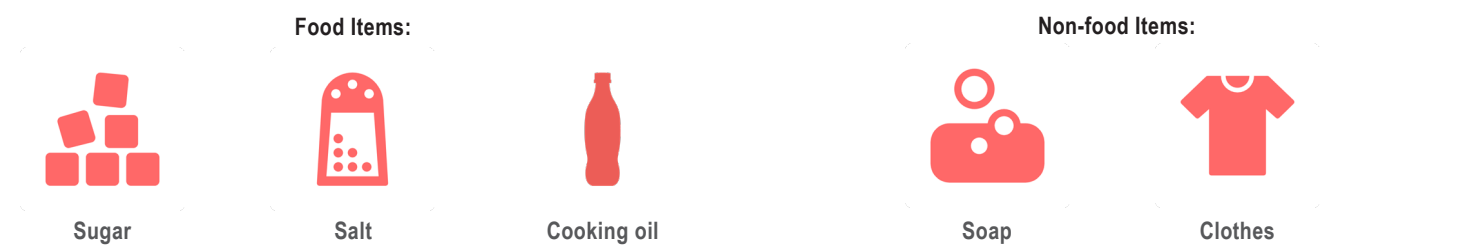
Prices of imported goods in Yambio Town are reportedly higher than found in Juba due to the costs of transportation and taxation. In Yambio Town, a mug (490g) of sugar reportedly cost 135 SSP in February 2020, but only 120 SSP in Juba. A similar mark-up reportedly applies to soap (200 SSP in Yambio vs. 150 SSP in Juba for a 600g bar) and other imported goods.

In contrast to imported goods, prices for locally produced goods such as crops and vegetables tend to be lower in Yambio Town than in Juba. While a malwa of maize grain cost 480 SSP in Juba in February 2020, it reportedly cost only 250 SSP in Yambio Town. The prices of locally produced goods only include minor mark-ups for transport and taxation.

There are also measurable variations in the prices of imported goods within the region. Map 4 illustrates how the price of a mug of sugar (490g) varies across marketplaces. In nearby markets, such as Nzara and Sugu Siro, prices are just slightly higher than the county capital markets, as they are easily supplied from Yambio and attended by mobile traders from Yambio on market days. In more remote marketplaces in Ezo County, however, prices reportedly

⁴ A malwa is approximately 3 litres or 4 kilograms

Figure 4: Most Commonly Bought Food and Non-food Items



go up to 200 SSP per mug. The relatively higher prices for these imported goods in remote marketplaces can be explained by the added transportation costs that retailers incur when restocking from a wholesaler in Yambio Town.

Maize grain prices reportedly vary substantially across marketplaces within the region, from 200 to 500 SSP per malwa. As maize is supplied by local producers, prices tend to fluctuate, particularly in satellite marketplaces, depending on the volume supplied and the number of buyers.

Demand Side

Market Dependence

Markets reportedly play a critical role for many households in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties. The level to which households are dependent on markets varies across urban and rural communities and depends on the item category and seasonality. As NFIs are not produced locally (with very few exceptions), households buy them throughout the year in both rural and urban settings. The most commonly bought and sold NFIs are soap and clothing.

Throughout the wet season, households typically harvest produce from their own farming activities. Even urban households tend to have access to small plots of land, facilitating some small-scale farming. Communities therefore tend not to depend on markets for crops, vegetables and fruit from June to December, instead, communities reportedly tend to limit their spending to imported

complementary goods, such as sugar, salt and cooking oil. In the dry season, following the harvest period, more urban households become market dependent. Rural households, however, reportedly tend to have more stocks and only some depend on markets for crops from January to June.

Access to Cash

Households engage in a variety of livelihood activities to generate income. The most common livelihood activity is farming, which reportedly takes place from March to December, with the harvest starting around June/July. However, the harvested crops, fruits and vegetables are mostly intended for consumption within the home. Only some households reportedly sell portions of their produce to traders. Other activities include collection of firewood and charcoal production, selling of grass, as well as rearing livestock (such as goats and chickens) to sell. In urban settings, households may also run small businesses, such as selling clothes, tea or bread. Some reportedly also engage in casual labour such as laying bricks or fetching water. Few households in Yambio Town reportedly receive cash income from salaries.

KIs in Yambio Town reported that access to disposable cash is usually low for many households at the beginning of the year, due to expenses incurred around Christmas celebrations, school fee payments in January, and debt repayments. In Nabiapai (Yambio County), KIs pointed out that rural communities often faced limited access to cash in May and June, when crops planting leaves little time for other livelihood activities.

Access to Markets

Generally, the household members who travel to marketplaces to buy basic goods tend to be women. In many cases, women may also sell items at markets, such as natural resources that the household has gathered or produced. According to KIs, men may occasionally be sent to the marketplace, especially when heavy or bulky food items are to be bought or sold. Most people reportedly go to the market on foot or by bicycle. According to REACH's Area of Knowledge (AoK) data in February 2020, 98% of assessed settlements in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties had access to a market place, and in 89% of these settlements it reportedly took two hours or less for most residents to reach the marketplaces where they usually buy their cereals.⁵

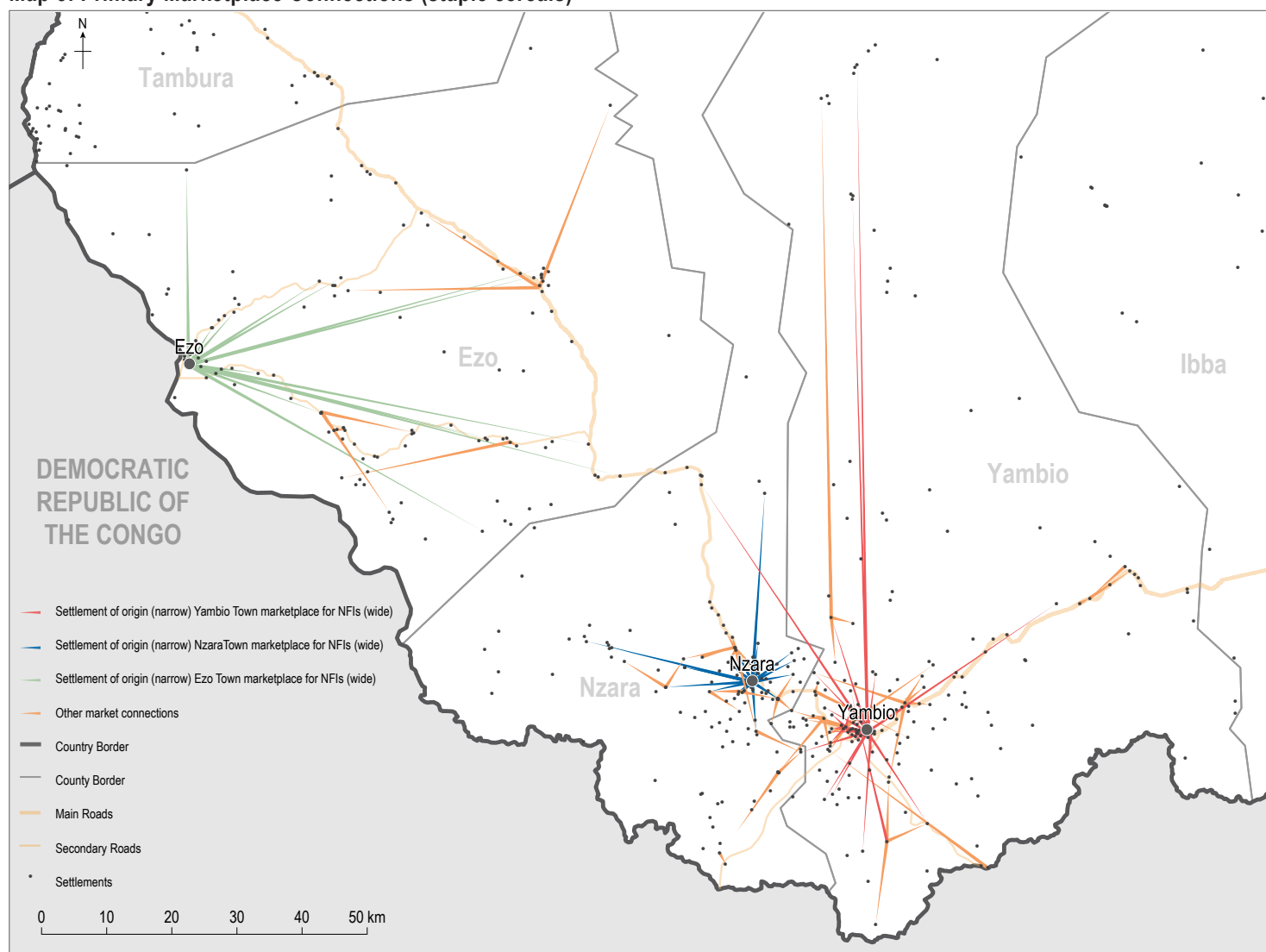
Figure 5: Seasonal Calendar of Common Livelihood Activities in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Counties

Supply route	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Farming				✓	✓	✓	H	✓	✓	✓	✓	H
Fishing	✓	✓	✓									✓
Firewood/Charcoal	✓	✓	✓									
Livestock	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Petty business	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Brick laying	✓	✓	✓								✓	✓
Dry season	✓	✓	✓	✓								✓
Wet season					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

✓ : livelihood activity available H : crop harvest

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Map 5: Primary Marketplace Connections (staple cereals)



Households generally tend to visit the marketplace that is closest to their settlement. However, in case some items are not available or too expensive in their preferred marketplace, they may visit one of the main marketplaces in the region. Maps 5 and 6 illustrate the local population's movements to marketplaces. Based on AoK data, assessed settlements are connected to the locations of the marketplaces that normally residents visit to buy NFIs (Map 5) and staple cereals (Map 6).⁵ The lines from settlements to marketplaces become wider along the path in order to indicate the direction of the connection. The number of lines converging to a specific marketplace is an indication of how many settlements depend on it, as well as the geographic area that the marketplace supplies.

⁵ Area of Knowledge (AoK), is a monthly data collection with the aim of monitoring the humanitarian situation in South Sudan. Data was collected in February 2020 from key informants in Yambio Town with recent information on settlements in Ezo, Nzara and Yambio Counties. The AoK terms of reference can be accessed [online](#).

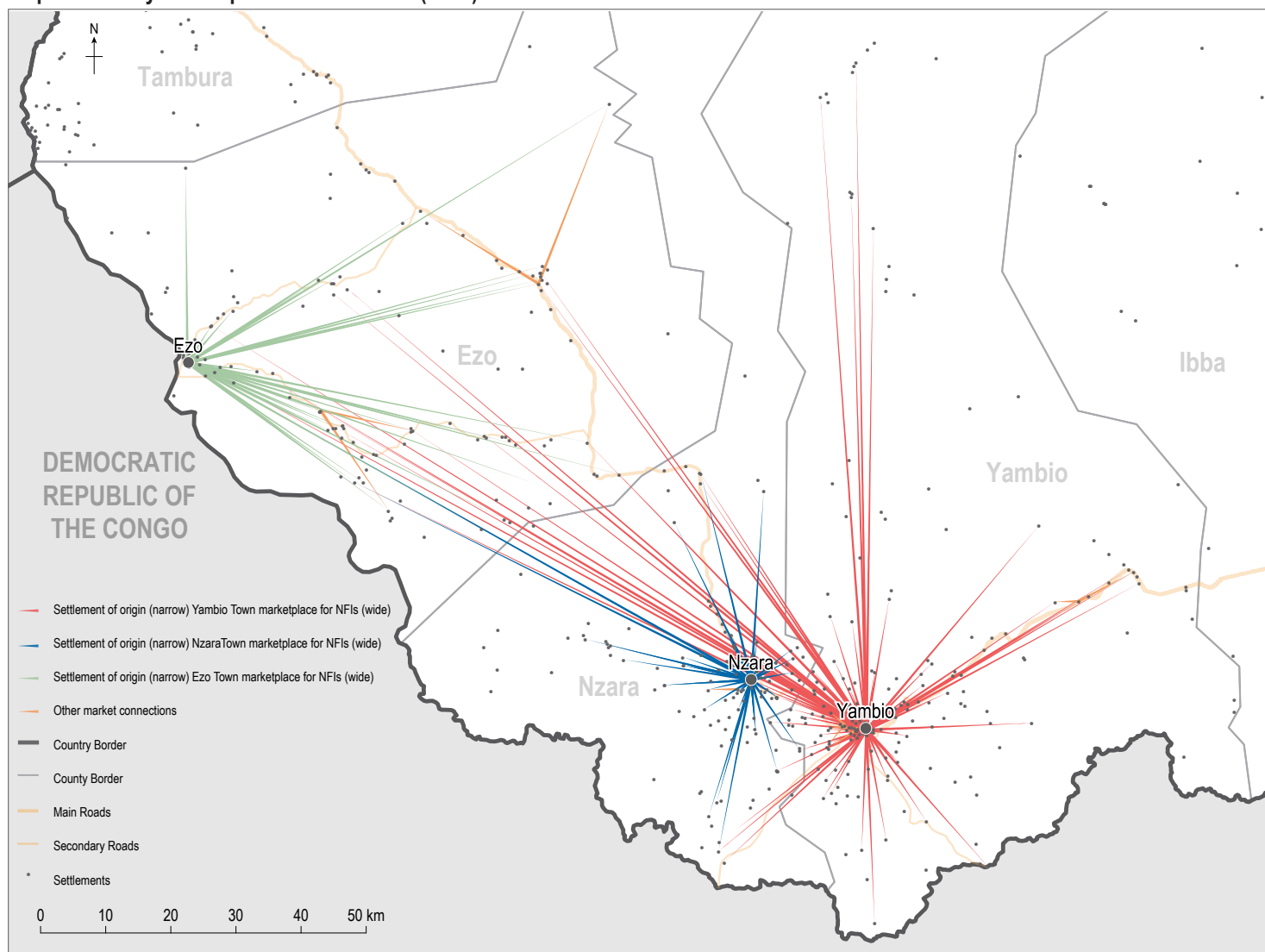
According to FGD participants, most communities across Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties have physical access to marketplaces. Common access challenges are the distances from some rural settlements to marketplaces, as well as the reported lack of roads in some rural areas. These barriers reportedly worsen in the rainy season, when heavy rainfall further decreases market access. Although KIs reported that they generally feel safe when accessing marketplaces, since there is little conflict in the area, they also reported that robberies occasionally take place. Once at the markets, further barriers include high prices and constant price fluctuations.

In addition, KIs pointed out that many items they needed were not available in the nearby satellite markets, which forced them to visit larger and more distant marketplaces. The largest barrier to market

⁶ Data on Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Counties was collected between March 2019 and January 2020. Between 30% and 40% of mapped settlements were covered within this time-frame.

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Map 6: Primary Marketplace Connections (NFIs)



access for many households is financial, as they may not always have enough cash to purchase market goods.

Map 5 shows how the trade in NFIs is concentrated in the main markets of Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Town. Nzara and Ezo Town markets mostly supply settlements within the same counties, while Yambio Town markets have customers from all over the region. This illustrates that households may visit distant marketplaces even if there is one closer to their settlements. For NFIs, this is primarily driven by the lack of many items in satellite marketplaces. According to consumer and trader KIs, items such as jerrycans, mosquito nets and cooking pots are often unavailable outside of the main markets. In many cases, households reportedly have to travel to marketplaces 50 to 100 km away. This journey entails long travel times, especially if they do not have access to a bicycle, and may expose them to protection concerns.

Map 6 suggests there are fewer connections between settlements and markets for staple cereals, which reflects the local population's low dependence on markets for access to maize and sorghum,

as opposed to NFIs. Furthermore, cereal markets appear to be more decentralised, with only a few inter-regional connections. Households that access cereals through markets reportedly rely more heavily on satellite marketplaces, as those often host traders selling cereals.⁷

Conclusion

Markets are critical in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Counties as they supply basic goods to households. Since the county capital markets are highly functional, particularly in Yambio Town, there is a high potential for market-based humanitarian programming.

⁷ The Area of Knowledge (AoK) question only covers the most commonly visited marketplace. Satellite marketplaces that often serve as secondary choices are therefore not captured. As a result, some marketplaces that are functional and visited by local communities, do not have any mapped connections.

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The diversity of available items may allow for cash programming with different thematic focuses such as food security and livelihoods (FSL), shelter and non-food items (SNFIs) and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). In addition, supply routes remain open all year and market functionality reportedly only decreases in rural areas during the wet season, which suggests that there is a potential for market-based approaches throughout the year.

The concentration of NFI purchases in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Towns suggests that cash programming (such as a voucher program for NFIs) with participating vendors in the county capitals could be used to target beneficiaries throughout the region. However, while this means that cash programming could be centralised somewhat, implementation would likely still need to take place separately in each county capital. Furthermore, as households tend to travel far distances to reach one of the county capital markets cash feasibility considerations should include the potential protection concerns that these journeys may entail.

Cash programming needs to take into account local price levels. Imported goods tend to be more expensive in Ezo County. As for locally produced goods, prices fluctuate substantially. A price monitoring system should be in place in order to meaningfully inform transfer value considerations in Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties, the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI)⁵ could be expanded to track prices in these areas.

As traders reportedly do not have access to credit from financial service providers or large traders, there may be a potential for international organisations to step in with programs to provide access to capital for smaller traders. This could further stabilise the overall market system in the region and boost trade.

Supporting traders in the many rural satellite markets may increase the functionality and diversity of the items they sell. This could reduce travel times for rural households and reduce their opportunity costs. Alternatively, providing access to modes of transport may achieve a similar effect.

Yambio, Nzara and Ezo counties have traditionally had a relatively high farming output compared to other regions in South Sudan. However, many traders pointed out that external demand from outside the region has decreased substantially since the onset of conflict in 2013. They furthermore highlighted that many farmers and traders require support in marketing their goods to external buyers. There may be an opportunity for actors to help re-establish links between producers with potential buyers throughout the country, especially as the implementation of the national peace

agreement may help eliminate trade barriers such as insecurity, transport infrastructure and informal taxation.

⁵ The Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI), is an initiative run by REACH and facilitated by 25 partner organisations from the Cash Working Group with the aim of monitoring prices and market functionality across South Sudan. Find the ToRs [here](#).