

# Akobo East Market Assessment

April 2023 | South Sudan

## Introduction

As cash is increasingly adopted as a delivery modality in the South Sudan humanitarian response, there is a growing need for humanitarian organisations and decision makers to understand market dynamics. Since November 2016 when REACH conducted market supply chain analysis<sup>1</sup>, little is known about the evolution of market structures in Akobo, an area reportedly experiencing emergency (IPC Phase 4) acute food insecurity.<sup>2</sup> The Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI), a monthly data collection exercise run by REACH on behalf of the South Sudan Inter-Agency Cash Working Group (IACWG), highlighted that Akobo is one of the assessed marketplaces experiencing upward trends in food prices, high Minimum Expenditure Basket (MEB) costs, and reduced market functionality<sup>3</sup> throughout 2022.

To get a deeper understanding of the market dynamics and to fill information gaps, REACH conducted a Market Assessment in Akobo Town and Dengjok payam. **The general objective of the assessment was to inform the IACWG on supply routes and market functionality to guide an evidence-based humanitarian and development program.** This effort will support future Cash and Voucher Assistance (CVA) Programming and IACWG discussion on critical market dynamics as an integral part of cash feasibility. **Market assessment primary data collection took place from 17 to 25 January 2023.**

## Key Findings

- Findings of the Market Assessment indicate that despite reported circumstances of economic and physical access barriers particularly during the rainy season, generally, Akobo main market remains functional and **physically accessible, which plays an essential role in meeting the demand of the population in Akobo Town and neighboring payams.** Unlike in Akobo Town, Dengjok market is reportedly facing reduced functionality due to shortages of commodities in the market as a result of reported insecurity incidents which hampered the physical accessibility of the marketplace.
- According to trader KIIs, **there are gaps in market infrastructure and the business enabling environment in which traders must operate.** The main reported economic constraints hindering market functionality are fluctuating exchange rates, high cost of taxation, limited access to foreign currency, lack of access to banks and credit facilities and limited purchasing power. On the other hand, physical barriers include the poor state of roads, flooding which happens during the rainy season especially during excessive rain. Security concerns affecting physical movement of people, goods and services is common during the dry season which makes easy for the armed groups to conduct raids unlike rainy season. Both the aforementioned barriers are cross-cutting challenges that affect marketplaces in Akobo Town and Dengjok.
- According to Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with traders and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with traders and importers, **the supply of goods to Akobo Town is received primarily from Ethiopia. Traders largely depend on the Akobo/Pibor river connecting Akobo to Ethiopia as the primary supply route, while road and air are the secondary routes.** In Dengjok rural marketplace which is in close proximity to Ethiopian border as compared to Akobo Town, goods are mainly supplied from Ethiopia via river. Alternatively, traders in Dengjok are connected to Akobo main market where they get supplies via the river during the whole year. During the dry season road routes are also used. **According to an FGD with general traders in Akobo Town, there was no ongoing local crop production at the time of the market assessment due to security concerns which affected the farming activities in Akobo East.** On the other hand, trader KIIs reported that during the productive harvest seasons, they usually purchase cereals such as sorghum from the local smallholder producers from Akobo and Renk.
- According to FGDs with general traders and the Akobo trade union, market activities are expanding in Akobo Town as compared to the same period in January 2022.** Approximately 1,100 traders are operating in Akobo Town and over 100 traders are based in the adjacent payams such as Dengjok, Nyandit and others. Akobo's main market serves as a redistribution center that supplies rural markets, where availability and diversity of items are lower as compared to Akobo Town. The marketplaces in Akobo Town and Dengjok operate seven days a week which is a common practice for other neighboring rural markets as well.
- Modes of payment that are locally accepted, as reported by traders through FGDs and KIIs, include cash, credit and barter,** that are all common in both Akobo Town and Dengjok. In terms of communication services, Zain is reportedly the only mobile network service provider that facilitates day-to-day communication in Akobo Town and surrounding payams including Dengjok.

- **High market dependency was reported by the two consumer FGDs held in Akobo Town.** Through a proportional piling exercise, the two FGDs with consumers stated that on average, 90% of household food and non-food items are obtained through market purchases, a tendency that was largely attributed to absence of local crop production activities at the time of data collection. **According to consumers, the main market access limitations facing consumers in Akobo Town are low purchasing power and limited access to cash.** In Dengjok, the assessment team could not conduct consumer FGDs due to security concerns that led to the displacement of the majority of households.
- In the two FGDs with consumers in Akobo Town, participants reported in the event of humanitarian intervention, **they would prefer cash as compared to in-kind assistance.**

## Context and Background

Akobo County is administratively within Jonglei State in the Greater Upper Nile Region of South Sudan. The county is located in the eastern part of South Sudan near the international border with Ethiopia. Akobo borders Nyirol, Uror, Pibor and Pochalla Counties in Jonglei State, Ulang County in Upper Nile State to the north, and Ethiopia to the east. The main livelihood activities are farming, fishing, livestock keeping, beekeeping, casual labor and other small-scale income-generating activities such as petty trade, firewood, wooden pole and sand collection which are used for shelter construction. The main crops grown locally are sorghum, maize, okra, pumpkins and cowpeas. Recurrent livelihood hazards that are common in the area include conflicts, cattle raiding, pests, diseases for humans and livestock and climatic shocks like flooding and drought.

Akobo experienced flooding which is a chronic climatic shock that regularly affects the area during the rainy season of July to September depending on the magnitude of rain. Seasonal conflict is common during the dry season. Both seasons have had negative impacts on the local economy by causing market disruption and loss of livelihood assets. Flooding in November 2022 which affected the four payams of Bilkey, Dengjok, Gakdoank and Nyandit led to large-scale displacement of the population. Security incidents are also common, including one in January 2023 which caused population displacements in Dengjok and Nyandit and closure of marketplaces in Akobo town and neighboring payams due to fear of inter-communal conflict.<sup>4</sup>

## Methodology

**Between 17 and 25 January 2023, the REACH assessment team conducted a total of five FGD (four in Akobo Town and one in Dengjok) joined by 32 participants.** The FGDs included two supply route mapping FGDs with trade unions, two consumer FGDs and one general trader FGD.

Additionally, **the team conducted face-to-face, semi-structured KIIs with 15 respondents**, comprised of six trader KIIs, seven price monitoring KIIs with traders and two importer KIIs. The participants of the FGDs and KIIs were disaggregated by gender and selected through purposive sampling in Akobo Town and Dengjok payams in Akobo East.

**Due to concerns regarding insecurity and related access issues, a lower number of interviews were conducted than initially planned.** Participatory tools such as proportional piling and seasonal calendars were used to extract in-depth information and community perceptions regarding seasonal events, market activities, access and use of cash at the household level.

During the assessment, the REACH team also undertook transect walks to assess market functionality outlook and availability of goods in Akobo Town main market and Dengjok.

## Market system

In terms of the existing market system, marketplaces are located in and around Akobo Town, where the majority of the local population is concentrated. The REACH assessment team conducted its assessment in Akobo Town and Dengjok town.

According to participants from the supply route mapping FGD and FGD held with general traders, **the main market is located in Akobo Town which supplies households living in Akobo Town and adjacent rural markets such as Dengjok, Nyandit, Alali, and others.**

In FGD with general traders, it was mentioned that they are mainly connected to suppliers in neighboring Ethiopia and local producers within South Sudan, particularly cereal producers in Akobo area and Renk especially during good harvest season. During bad harvest season in Akobo area and Renk, cereal importers in Akobo order supplies from Ethiopian suppliers. Alternatively, some traders in Akobo have connections with Juba based suppliers who deal with mixed goods.

**The number of traders has reportedly increased in Akobo Town main market as compared to January 2022. This is due to an increase in demand, high population density, influx of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and absence of trade barriers preventing new traders from entering the market.**

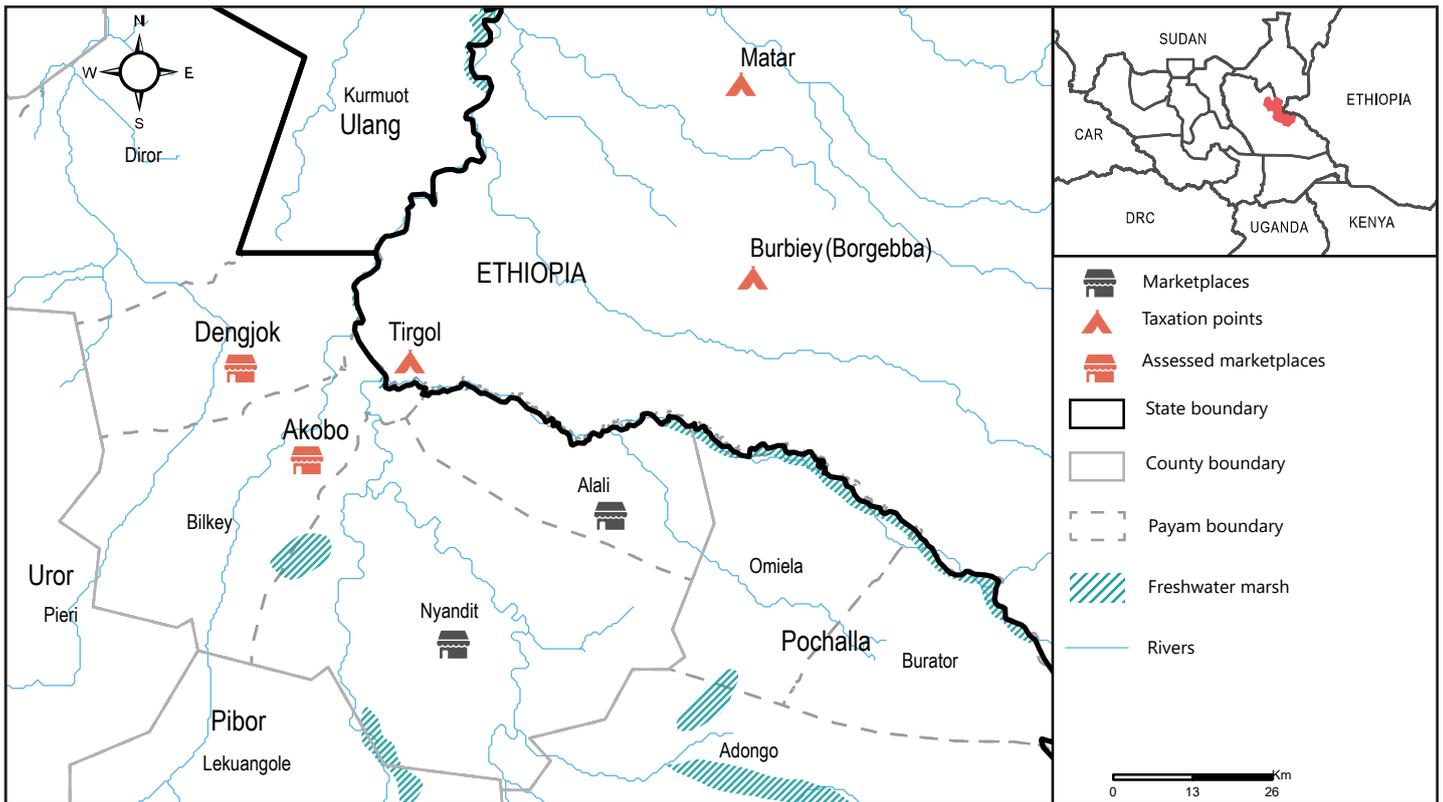
The Akobo River, also locally known as the Pibor, is the main transportation line that connects Akobo town to Ethiopia, as well as to surrounding payams and settlements. Traders reported that there is a network of transporters such as boat and vehicle operators that enable movement of people and supplies.

The table below illustrates the number of traders operating both in urban and rural market settings. The estimated numbers were provided during supply route mapping FGD with the trade union based in Akobo Town.

Figure 1: Number of traders in Akobo town, Dengjok and Nyandit

S/No	Location	Set-up	Estimated # of traders	Supply sources
1.	Akobo Town	Urban	1,100 (900 retailers + 200 wholesalers/ importers)	Ethiopia, Juba, Renk & producers in Akobo
2.	Dengjok	Rural	35 (25 retailers + 10 wholesalers)	Ethiopia and Akobo main market
3.	Nyandit	Rural	50	Akobo main market

Map 1: Marketplaces



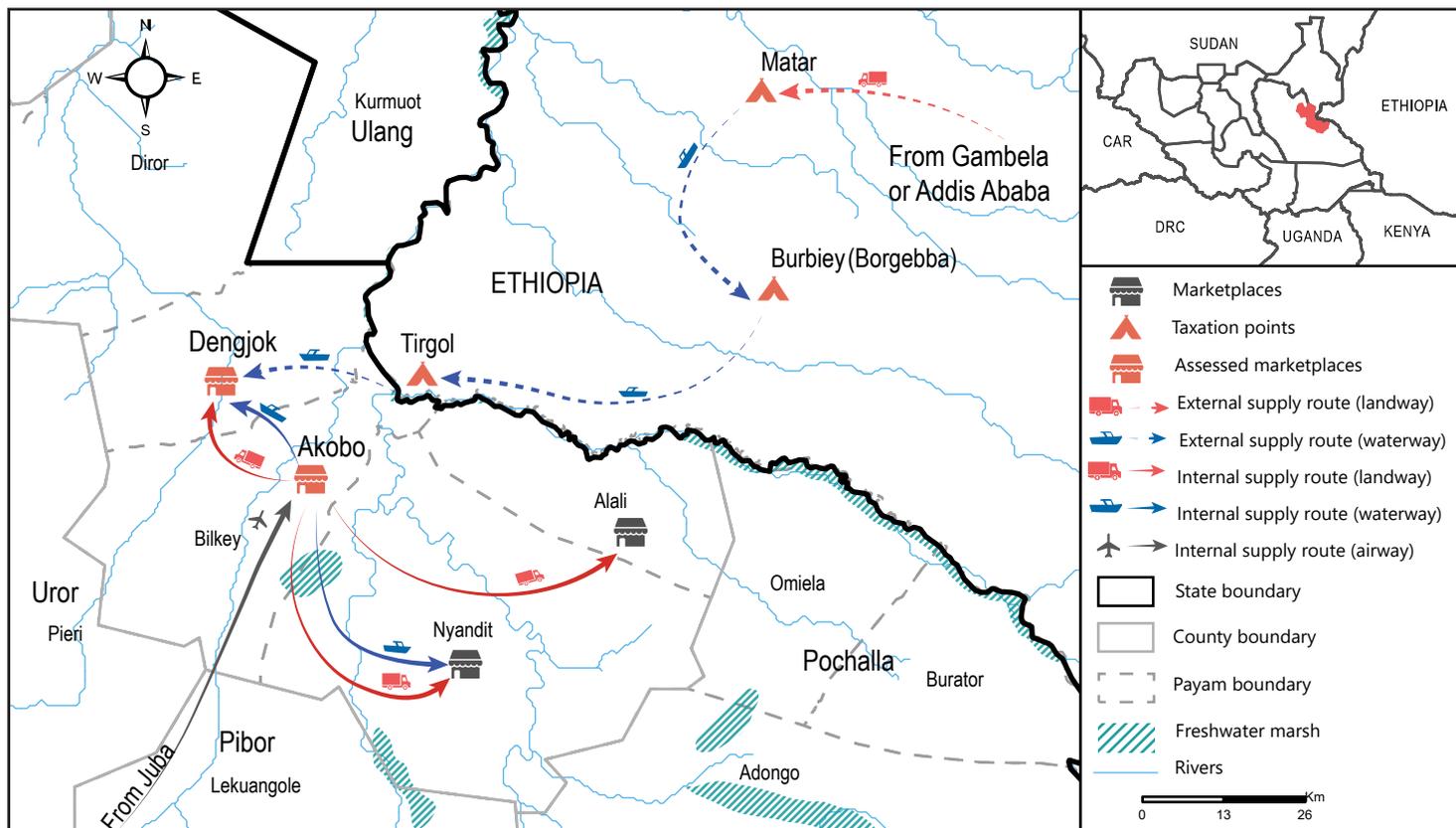
As reported by trader FGD participants, **the main available food items in Akobo Town main market are sorghum grain, sorghum flour, beans, lentils, sugar, okra, wheat flour, salt, rice, sesame, cooking oil and fish. In Dengjok market the team could only record the availability of sorghum during the price monitoring. Non-food items are mainly available in Akobo town and include soap, jerry cans, mosquito nets, plastic sheets, cooking utensils, buckets, clothing, firewood and tools. In Dengjok, soap is the only NFI that was available for recording during the price monitoring exercise.** The reason for the low diversity of items in Dengjok market was attributed to fear of insecurity that led to closure of the majority of the shops in the market.

The main consumers who buy from Akobo Town markets are host communities, IDPs, returnees and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) while in Dengjok the consumers are mainly the host communities.

In terms of the existing financial infrastructures, according to general traders FGD and importer KII it was reported that **there are reportedly no bank services in Akobo Town except local money transfer agents and dealers in money exchange services mainly exchange of Ethiopian Birr (ETB) and South Sudanese Pound (SSP).** The nearest banking facilities are in Ethiopia, particularly in Gambela, where the majority of the traders in Akobo are connected to. It was reportedly mentioned that South Sudanese traders have access to banking services in Ethiopia where they purchase goods in ETB.

Some traders reportedly also use banks in Juba. **Zain is the only mobile network service provider that facilitates communication services** within and outside Akobo town and Dengjok, playing a key role in business connectivity. In terms of regulation of the market environment, the local trade union is the body that regulates prices, taxation and oversees business matters.

Map 2: Supply routes



## Supply routes

Traders in Akobo Town and adjacent payams such as Dengjok mainly sell imported goods such as sorghum grain, sorghum flour, rice, beans, sugar, wheat flour, cooking oil, soap, clothing, and building materials. Goods that are available in Akobo Town market such as sorghum, livestock products (meat and milk), and vegetables are produced locally depending on the season. Fish is available throughout the year both in Akobo Town and Dengjok.

At the time of data collection, local farms were reportedly not being cultivated due to security concerns. For Akobo Town marketplace, the supplies of goods were reportedly mainly being transported from Ethiopia and within South Sudan, particularly Juba. It was reported that traders in Dengjok get their supplies mainly from Ethiopia and Akobo Town.

### Ethiopia supply route

According to FGDs with general traders, a supply route mapping FGD with the trade union, and KIIs with importers, the flow of imported goods originates mainly from Gambela and Matar in Ethiopia, while some large-scale traders based in Akobo Town get supplies directly from Addis Ababa. When goods are being transported from Gambela and Matar, the boats carrying goods pass through the transit locations of Burbiey (Borgebba) and Tirog on the Ethiopian side of the border.

Traders reported that when bringing in goods from Ethiopia, the goods must transit through major taxation points. In January 2023, each boat in Matar was reportedly taxed 7,000 Ethiopian Birr (ETB), in Burbiey (Borgebba) 3,000 ETB per boat, and in Tirog one bag of goods weighing 100 kg was taxed 400 ETB. In comparison, at the time of data collection, 1,000 ETB was equivalent to 9,000 SSP as the per exchange rate information reported by the traders.

On the Ethiopia supply route, traders depend on the river. Road transportation takes place between Addis Ababa to Gambela and from Gambela to Matar. When transporting goods from Matar to Akobo Town and Dengjok, traders switch to the river since the river is the sole supply route connecting from Matar to Dengjok and Akobo Town. Items such as food (sorghum, wheat flour, beans, sugar, rice, cooking oil, etc.) and NFIs (soap, cosmetics, utensils, construction materials, etc.) are reportedly being supplied from Ethiopia. Traders reported that it is easier for the traders to get heavy supplies from Ethiopia due to its proximity and better road infrastructure as compared to Juba and any other major town in South Sudan. Importers reported that they bring in supplies once per month with no reported changes of supply routes depending on seasonality.

### Juba supply route

Even though the majority of traders in Akobo Town rely on the Ethiopian supply route, there are some traders who order supplies from Juba which is transported via commercial flights. **Those items are often light non-food items (NFIs) such as clothes. This air route is only accessible during the dry season, since the Akobo Town airstrip is not tarmacked.** Supply of goods via road from Juba is not economically viable and is logistically challenging since the roads connecting Akobo to Bor in South Sudan are in poor condition. Supply of heavy commodities from Juba by air is costly, therefore rarely used.

### Local supplies and supply routes

**During the harvesting season, traders reported they buy locally produced commodities such as sorghum and maize, which are brought to Akobo main market by local producers mainly from the nearby small-scale seasonal farms.** It was reported that locally produced supplies are facing challenges related to the climatic shocks, such as flooding during the rainy season and drought and insecurity during the dry season, which ultimately affects production outcomes.

**It was reported that traders in Akobo town do sometimes get their sorghum supplies from Renk via the river route. Due to insecurity at the time of data collection, this practice was not reported to be used.** As a risk mitigation strategy, importers reportedly changed their supply routes and opted to source sorghum from Ethiopia.

### Supply route from Akobo Town to rural markets

According to traders, rural markets such as Dengjok and Nyandit were supplied via rivers during the dry and rainy seasons. The supply of goods to Dengjok, Nyandit and Alali was reported to be done through road networks only during the dry season, and only with commercial vehicles and sometimes by individual traders carrying items of small volume which was reportedly mentioned by the interviewed traders in Dengjok. **During the rainy season of July and August, roads are reportedly impassable due to mud.** The diagram below describes road conditions throughout the year as reported by participants in the general trader FGD.

Figure 2: Seasonal calendar for road condition



### Supply timeframe

During trader KIIs, retailers in Akobo Town reported that it takes just one to three hours to restock from Akobo-based wholesalers for both dry and rainy season. **Wholesalers and importers who depend on Ethiopian markets reported that during the dry season it takes them approximately two weeks to get supplies from Gambela and Matar, while during the rainy season it takes them one week** since it is easier for large boats to navigate through high river water levels. Due to its greater distance, it takes approximately three weeks to get supplies from Renk.

Flights from Juba during the rainy season depend on the condition of the airstrip. When the airstrip is flooded or muddy, it is not feasible for planes to land until it dries up. During the dry season commercial flights come to Akobo Town from Juba two to three times per week.

During FGDs and KIIs with traders it was reported that, **since the river is the main supply route, Akobo Town and surrounding rural markets depend on boats and canoes as their primary means of transporting goods.** Alali, which is not accessible via the river, is an exception.

During the dry season, vehicles are used to transport goods to marketplaces in Dengjok, Nyandit, and Alali; Some rural traders, especially in Dengjok, carry goods by foot from Akobo main market, which is in a walking distance of about one to two hours during the dry season and three to four hours during the rainy season. Within Akobo town, delivery of goods from wholesalers to retailers is done individually or with the help of wheelbarrows for carrying heavy items.

**Cost-sharing models exist for the transportation of goods. When ordering goods from Ethiopia, traders reportedly hire boats jointly and share the expenses.** At the time of data collection, it was reported that boats charge 1,000 ETB (equivalent to 9,000 SSP) to transport a 100 kg bag of sorghum from Gambela to Akobo Town. Therefore, with one bag of 100 kg of sorghum costing 55,000 SSP in Akobo Town, the cost of transportation represents 16% of its price. Fluctuating fuel prices were mentioned as one of the key driving factors that determine the means of transport and transportation of goods. The table below illustrates a breakdown of transportation and taxation costs per sack of 100 kilogram in SSP.

**Figure 3:** Breakdown of transportation/taxation cost

<b>Gambela route to Akobo Town</b>	<b>Charges per 100 kg in SSP</b>
Transport cost from Gambela to Akobo Town via river	5,000
Border tax at Tirgol	4,000
Clearance charges in Akobo Town by trade union (applies to all items except sorghum)	2,500
<b>Total cost in SSP per 100 kg</b>	<b>11,500</b>
<b>Gambela route to Dengjok payam</b>	<b>Charges per 100 kg in SSP</b>
Transport cost from Gambela to Dengjok via river	1,000
Border tax at Tirgol	4,000
Clearance charges in Dengjok by trade union	2,500
<b>Total cost in SSP per 100 kg</b>	<b>7,500</b>
<b>Akobo Town route to Dengjok</b>	<b>Charges per 100 kg sack in SSP</b>
Transport cost from Akobo Town to Dengjok by car	3,000
Transport cost from Akobo Town to Dengjok by canoe	2,500
<b>Juba route to Akobo Town</b>	<b>Charges per 100 kg sack in SSP</b>
Transport cost from Juba to Akobo Town by plane	180,000

### Supply route challenges

Traders reported that **taxation is the main challenge that affects the supply of goods. Other reported challenges are high transportation costs, increasing fuel prices, insecurity and river accidents** which are not very frequent.

Taxation, high fuel prices and volatility of exchange rates are common during dry and rainy seasons and negatively affect supply routes from Ethiopia to Akobo, Dengjok and other adjacent rural markets.

With the aim of cross-checking the evolution of the challenges, the assessment team made an analysis and comparison of the previous REACH assessment findings and as such, similar protracted supply route challenges such as the depreciation of the SSP, high taxation and insecurity were also reported during REACH market supply chain analysis conducted in Akobo Town in 2016.<sup>5</sup>

Increased transportation cost is reportedly common during the dry season due to the higher fuel consumption of boats because of the lower river water levels.

During the dry season, the most common road route challenges are insecurity risks between Gambela and Matar, as well as along routes connecting Akobo to adjacent payams like Dengjok and Nyandit.

Comparing the Markets Assessment findings of January 2023 with the findings of Akobo Markets Supply Chain Analysis conducted by REACH in November 2016, **the availability and diversity of goods in the Akobo market has improved with time.** Many challenges related to the depreciation of the SSP against the ETB and the United States Dollar (USD), high taxation, insecurity, and restrictions of exporting certain goods from Ethiopia seem to be protracted, however. Additionally, both assessments found that Ethiopia has remained the primary supply source for Akobo East marketplaces.

### Availability of items

The availability of basic items varies considerably between the assessed marketplaces. **The market in Akobo Town has relatively greater availability of different categories of items. Different to that, Dengjok has a lower diversity than Akobo Town** which is only limited to some basic food items such as sorghum and NFIs like soap. The majority of the items sold in the marketplaces in Akobo Town and Dengjok are imported goods.

### Prices

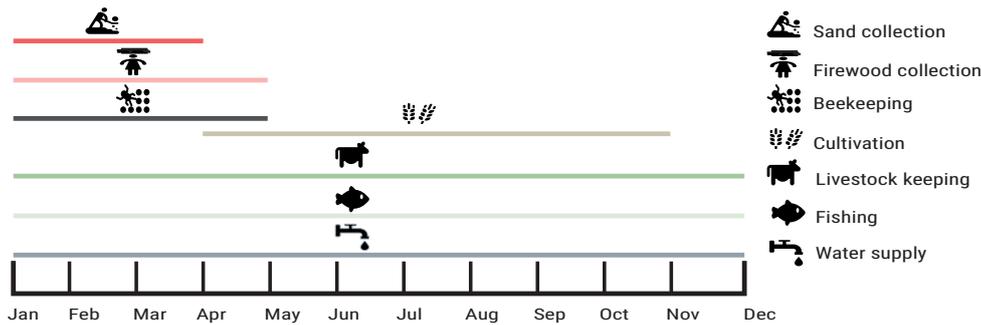
**Prices of items in Akobo Town, Dengjok and other rural markets are driven by the limitations faced by traders in supplying goods, such as transportation costs, taxation, and security-related incidents.**

Transactions are affected by the depreciation of the SSP vis-à-vis the USD, which is a vital currency when replenishing stock from Ethiopian markets. In the assessed marketplaces, traders reported that they are not free to set their own prices and it is the mandate of the trade union authorities to fix the prices by which they sell to consumers.

### Income and access to cash

**During consumer FGDs in Akobo Town, it was reported that women are mainly involved in small-scale income-generating activities such as sand collection, supply of water to homesteads and firewood collection. On the other hand, men are engaged in fishing, firewood collection, beekeeping and small-scale farming.**

Even though farming is a typical livelihood activity, during the reporting period in January 2023, consumer FGD respondents pointed out that there is no crop production ongoing due to insecurity concerns, which caused a negative economic effect on smallholder farmer households' access to income.

**Figure 4:** Livelihood strategy seasonal calendar

According to consumer FGDs it was mentioned that some **households reportedly sell livestock during the lean season to access cash since during the lean season access to cash is a problematic due to low production outputs.** Access to cash becomes difficult during the rainy season starting from July to September, which sometimes causes flooding that limits physical access to marketplaces hence affects market functionality. Additionally, **the circulation of cash is limited at times when there are insecurity incidents which disrupt market activities.**

Regarding the use of cash, consumers reported that **over 65% of household income is spent on food, an indication of high economic vulnerability.** The seasonal calendar above summarises the typical livelihood strategies reported by consumer FGDs in Akobo Town. A seasonal calendar for Dengjok could not be generated due to the security situation in the area at the time of the market assessment.

Consumers reported that the main payment modalities used in marketplaces in Akobo town are cash, credit and barter. Through proportional piling, consumer FGD participants reported credit as the most commonly used modality, constituting roughly 50% of all transactions. The use of credit is based on mutual trust and, as such, is mainly accessible to long-term customers and those who have a better connection with traders. Cash payments comprised an estimated 30% of all transactions, followed by barter exchange at 20%.

## Access to markets

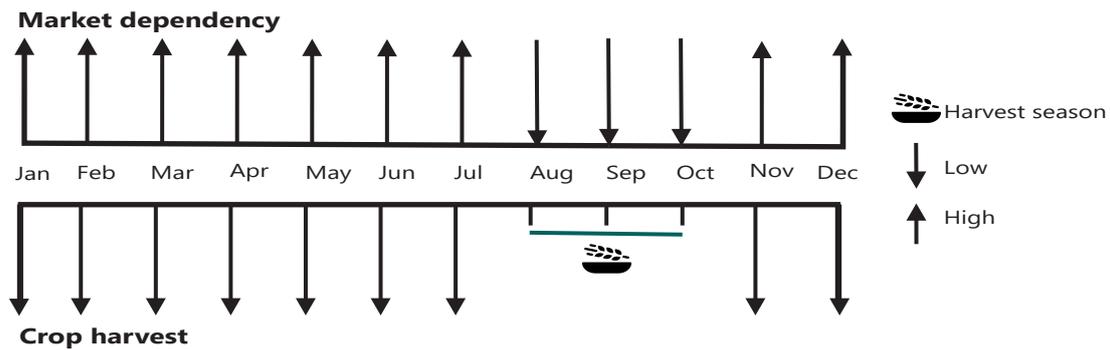
**Poor road conditions and flooding during the rainy season hinder physical movement of people, goods and services both in Akobo Town and Dengjok marketplaces.** During the dry season, access to the main market of Akobo Town and other neighboring payams such as Dengjok and Nyandit are sometimes reportedly challenging due to its susceptibility to insecurity-related interruptions which restricts movement of buyers and sellers. Consumer FGD participants reported **that when the area is secure, the population accesses marketplaces on a daily basis.** According to REACH's Area of Knowledge (AoK) data in January 2023, 79% of assessed settlements in Akobo County had physical access to marketplaces.

Most residents living in Akobo Town reportedly have access to Akobo main market which is within walking distance. It takes them up to one hour to reach and come back from the market. During the consumer FGDs, respondents reported that both men and women usually go to the markets to buy goods. Men mainly buy non-food items while women mostly purchase food items. Women reportedly engage in income-generating activities such as selling firewood in marketplaces whilst men engage in petty trade such as running retail businesses and table shops.

In terms of safety and security within Akobo Town, **the consumer FGD respondents mentioned that they feel safe when going to marketplaces during the day. During night hours concerns of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) affecting women and the fear of revenge killings for men were reported.** In terms of accessing regional markets in Ethiopia, general trader FGD respondents reported that South Sudanese traders are facing mobility challenges since there are special restrictions to trade certain items within Ethiopia. For instance, transporting goods to Matar from other parts of Ethiopia, e.g., timber, iron sheets and cement, requires engaging an Ethiopian national.

During consumer FGDs, respondents mentioned that certain population groups have difficulties in accessing the market due to financial constraints. **Among those are IDPs, returnees and vulnerable host community members. The main challenges facing these groups are high food prices and limited purchasing power;** this limited their ability to buy in bulk or build up stocks at home, particularly of food, which in turn limited their capacity to respond to market shocks.

In the event of sudden shortfalls of household essential goods, they reportedly deploy **coping mechanisms such as purchasing on credit and prioritising key basic commodities such as sorghum and fish, while giving up buying commodities** such as sugar, tea, condiments, okra, jerrycans, and cooking utensils to put less stress on the already burdened household savings. Other strategies reported are selling off livestock, small-scale farming, investing in petty trade, accessing other neighboring markets (with cheaper food commodities), seeking humanitarian assistance and as a last resort opting for migration. The last point was reportedly not a common coping strategy in Akobo Town.

**Figure 5:** Market activities seasonal calendar

## Market dependency

**Akobo Town Marketplace plays a vital role for many households in Akobo and neighboring payams and settlements.** In FGDs in Akobo Town, consumers reported households are most dependent on markets during the lean season from January to July and from November to December. June and July were reported as the peak season for market dependency, while households who have access to agricultural land rely more on their own production during the harvest season of August to October.

Proportional piling exercises with consumers suggested that at the time of the data collection, on average, **90% of household food and non-food items are obtained through market purchases.** During the dry season, consumers mostly buy imported food commodities such as sorghum grain, wheat flour, fish, and salt, as well as imported NFIs like soap, clothing, shoes, torches, and cosmetics.

Household reliance on markets increases during the dry season when the harvested food stock at the household level reduces. **Consumers in Akobo reported that they prefer CVA compared to in-kind deliveries** since the market is operational throughout the year, except during episodes of flooding, which is frequent during heavy rains in the months of July to September.

## Conclusion

This report provides an analysis of market dynamics in Akobo Town and Dengjok payam in Akobo East. Akobo's main market plays a critical role as it supplies basic commodities to households in the area. Most of the goods are imported from Ethiopia where the supply routes remain open throughout the year. The remaining supplies come from within South Sudan such as supplies from Juba and cereals that are locally produced in Akobo and Renk during the harvesting season. **River supply routes to Akobo Town remain operational throughout the year despite reported constraints** of high fuel consumption of the boats during the dry season due to low river water levels.

During the rainy season road conditions and the accessibility of the airstrip are compromised. Rural markets in the adjacent payams and settlements are accessible during the dry season both by road and by river. The market in Alali that is not connected by river has reduced functionality during the rainy season. **Despite seasonality related challenges, Akobo Town marketplace is functional, accessible, and has a diversity of items available in the market.** Market functionality and diversity of items is reportedly reduced in rural markets.

Based on the REACH market assessment findings for Akobo East, the Cash Working Group (CWG) recommended the following: **firstly, working loosely with United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to improve the supply chain via rivers. Secondly, increasing traders storage facilities to enhance market stock holding capacity during times of access issues. Thirdly, linking financial service providers at local level with financial institutions in Juba to support financial inclusion of traders in remote locations.**

## Endnotes

1. [Akobo Market Supply Chain Factsheet](#), REACH, 2016.
2. [South Sudan: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Snapshot](#), December 2022
3. [JMMI dashboard](#), REACH
4. ["Jonglei-Pibor Conflict Leaves Tens of Thousands in Dire Needs of Aid - NRC,"](#) Eye Radio, 18 January 2023
5. [Akobo Market Supply Chain Factsheet](#), REACH, 2016.

## ABOUT REACH

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).