

Situation Overview: Greater Equatoria, South Sudan

September 2017

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

Following the outbreak of violence in Juba in July 2016, the conflict in South Sudan expanded to previously peaceful areas, including Greater Equatoria (Central, Eastern, and Western Equatoria States). Many areas in Greater Equatoria are, as of now, largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors due to insecurity. As a result, only limited information is available on the humanitarian situation outside of a few large towns and displacement sites.

In order to fill these information gaps and facilitate humanitarian programming, REACH began collecting monthly data on hard-to-reach areas in Greater Equatoria in January 2017 through interviews with Key Informants (KIs). The data was collected primarily through interviews with new arrivals to Juba Protection of Civilians (PoC)1 and PoC3 sites, and was supplemented by phone calls with additional KIs residing across Greater Equatoria.

In September 2017, REACH interviewed 275 KIs (185 new arrivals and 90 through remote calls) (Figure 1) from a total of 200 settlements: 90

Figure 1: KI breakdown across Greater Equatoria

	Central	Eastern	Western
New arrivals	110	46	29
Phone calls	25	49	16



Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Greater Equatoria, September 2017

settlements in six counties of Central Equatoria, 72 settlements in the eight counties of Eastern Equatoria and 38 settlements in seven counties of Western Equatoria (Map 1). This Situation Overview provides a summary of displacement trends in addition to access to food and basic services for both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and local communities across Greater Equatoria in September 2017.

Population Movement and Displacement

Displacement across Greater Equatoria has slowed over time (Figure 4), likely a result

of large portions of the population fleeing to Uganda and Kenya since July 2016, leaving a fraction of the pre-crisis population in the area.¹ However, ongoing fighting across the Greater Equatoria sub-region has led to widespread displacement within South Sudan; the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs increased from 8% in August to 18% in September.

Across Greater Equatoria, the majority of IDPs from the assessed settlements were displaced within the same state. The only county that reported that IDPs had crossed state lines was Maridi, where fighting in Sika-Rumbek,

Line-Zira and Nambia payams in August and September displaced many people into Central Equatoria.²

Most IDPs resided with local community members, as reported by 91% of assessed settlements. For IDPs who sought refuge in Juba PoC sites, the primary reported reasons for leaving were insecurity (44%), inadequate food (16%) and a lack of healthcare (12%) (Figure 2). Pull factors to the PoC were similar to push factors (Figure 3).

Central Equatoria

Corresponding with estimates that three-

1. UNHCR, South Sudanese refugees in Uganda now exceed 1 million, 17 August 2017.

2. OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin: Issue 14, 8 September 2017.

METHODOLOGY

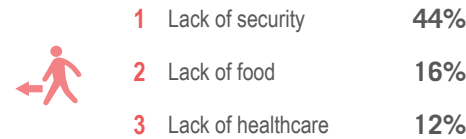
To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas of Greater Equatoria, REACH uses primary data provided by KIs living in or recently arrived from these areas, or “Areas of Knowledge” (AoK).

Information for this report was collected primarily from newly arrived KIs from Greater Equatoria to Juba PoC sites 1 and 3 and supplemented with remote phone calls to KIs living in the settlements of interest. The remote assessment involved in-depth interviews with participants selected through a snowball sampling technique, where each KI was asked to name two additional people who could be interviewed. A standardised survey tool was used that comprised questions on displacement trends, population needs and access to basic services.

After data collection was completed, all data was examined at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, it was not included in reporting. Descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis were then used to analyse the data.

quarters of the population in Central Equatoria had left their homes,³ Central Equatoria had the greatest proportion of assessed settlements (38%) reporting that more than half of the local community in the settlement had left. This was due to continued conflict and inability to access services in southern Central Equatoria, which has persisted since conflict broke out in July 2016.

Figure 2: Reported primary reason for leaving previous location by new arrivals



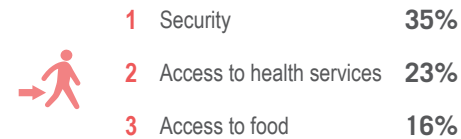
Settlements in Central Equatoria also showed the greatest increase in reported presence of IDPs across the region, from 5% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs in August to 21% in September (Figure 4). Most IDPs were reportedly from Lainya or Yei counties, as reported by two-thirds of assessed settlements, representing a change from August when two-thirds of assessed settlements reported that most IDPs came from Terekeka and Yei. This was likely due to the sustained effects of increased violence in Bazi Payam and Yei Town in Yei County in August.⁴

The percentage of assessed settlements reporting the presence of returnees were similar to previous months (51% in September compared to 43% in August) supporting reports that South Sudanese refugees in Uganda have continued to return to South Sudan due to ration cuts in Ugandan refugee camps.⁵

Eastern Equatoria

Eastern Equatoria had the highest proportion (42%) of assessed settlements reporting that less than half of the population had left. In addition, one-fifth of assessed settlements reported returnee presence in Eastern

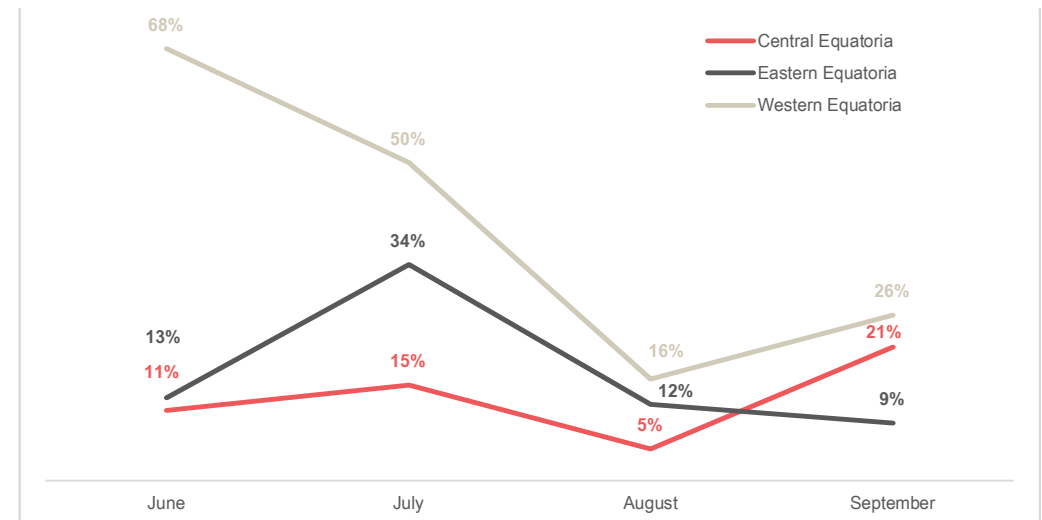
Figure 3: Reported primary reason for coming to their current location by new arrivals



Equatoria in September, a reduction from 49% in August. These numbers are unsurprising, given that the Greater Kapoeta area has been largely unaffected by conflict, and Torit has seen large numbers of returns over the wet season.⁶ However, Magwi County remains one of the most conflict-affected parts of the sub-region.⁷

Eastern Equatoria also had a relatively low proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP presence in September (9%) (Figure 4), reflecting reports that most IDPs in the state fled to Kenya and Uganda in the first half of

Figure 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting presence of IDPs



2017.⁸ Within Eastern Equatoria, 80% of assessed settlements reported that most IDPs came from Magwi County, primarily due to ongoing conflict in August.

Western Equatoria

Assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reported a slight increase in the presence of IDPs, from 16% of assessed settlements reporting IDP presence in August to 26% in September (Figure 4), suggesting increased conflict in Lukudu (Mundri West County), Gulum (Morobo County) and Sika-Rumbek, Line-Zira and Nambia (Maridi County) payams.⁹ This reflects the nature of conflict-induced displacement dynamics in Western Equatoria, where most IDPs tend to flee to nearby areas, and return as soon as the threat subsides. The highest reported presence of displaced IDPs came from Maridi County (67%), where active fighting was still ongoing.

3. FAO, GIEWS Country Brief South Sudan, 14 September 2017.

4. OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin: Issue 14, 8 September 2017.

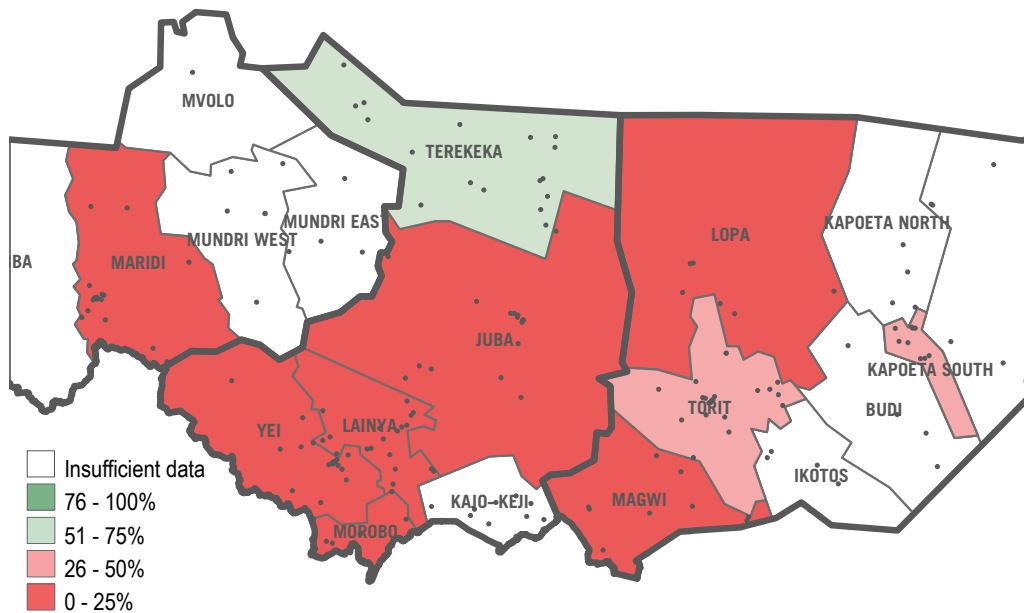
5. As reported by REACH national staff.

6. HSBA, Issue Brief: Spreading fallout, May 2017.

7. As reported by government officials, REACH field coordinators and KIs.

8. As reported by REACH field coordinators.

9. OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin: Issue 14, 8 September 2017.



Map 2: Percentage of assessed settlements in Greater Equatoria reporting adequate access to food

The push and pull factors for IDPs from Western Equatoria in the PoC sites were different from those in Eastern and Central Equatoria. Insecurity remained the driving force for displacement, reported by 28% of newly arrived IDPs. Unlike other states, where insecurity was the overwhelmingly dominant reason for displacement, distance from family was also cited as a push factor for 21% of IDPs who had recently arrived to the Juba PoC sites, and lack of jobs by another 14%. This suggests more complicated reasons for displacement in the Greater Equatoria region, possibly the result of greater linkages with the regional economy.

Greater stabilisation in the security environment in Western Equatoria appears to have allowed for more people to return to their

homes: 30% of assessed settlements reported returnee presence in the settlement.

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Food security and livelihoods

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in September remained low across Greater Equatoria (24%) (Map 2), in line with Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) predictions of low crop production in the region due to mass displacement in Central and Eastern Equatoria.¹⁰ As in August, among settlements with inadequate access to food, the primary reported reasons were conflict related, with unsafe access to land for cultivation and crop destruction from fighting reported by 26% and

21% of assessed settlements, respectively.

Eastern Equatoria

Food Security

Only 19% of assessed settlements in Eastern Equatoria reported having adequate access to food, corroborating reports of emergency Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates in Torit, Kapoeta North and Kapoeta South counties.¹¹ Among settlements with inadequate access to food, nearly half cited that the causes were conflict related: Twenty-five percent (25%) reported crop destruction from fighting and 21% reported unsafe access to land for cultivation. Assessed settlements also reported a lack of food distributions (21%) and high market prices (17%) as reasons for lack of adequate access to food.

Cultivation was the primary source of food in 70% of assessed settlements, with most (89%) reporting having access to land for cultivation, typically in the form of small gardens close to homes. However, due to the conflict and accompanying lack of access, food aid has been highly restricted in most of Eastern Equatoria, and the high dependence on home food production is more a reflection of the lack of alternative food sources, rather than sufficient cultivation. Additionally, 13% of settlements reported foraging for wild foods and purchasing food as primary sources.

Eastern Equatoria had the highest proportion of assessed settlements (73%) reporting inadequate access to food using any food consumption coping strategy (Figure 6). Assessed settlements reported limiting meal sizes (95%), reducing the number of

meals consumed daily (91%), consuming less expensive or preferred foods (83%), prioritising feeding children over adults (78%) and skipping days without eating (76%). The high proportion of settlements employing food consumption coping strategies indicates severe food consumption gaps in the state.

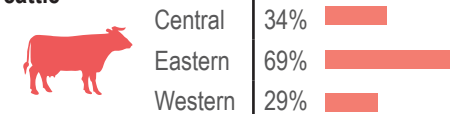
Livelihoods

The lack of subsistence farming to satisfy food needs is likely due to a lack of agricultural inputs; subsistence farming was cited as the primary source of livelihood in Eastern Equatoria by 80% of assessed settlements, while at the same time, 63% of assessed settlements reported a lack of agricultural inputs.

Consistent with traditional livelihood patterns in parts of the state, 64% of assessed settlements reported that community members participated in livestock keeping. Additionally, 69% reported that community members possessed cattle (Figure 5), although 47% of assessed settlements reported livestock disease outbreaks in the month preceding data collection. In order to fill food consumption gaps, 51% of assessed settlements reported selling livestock as a livelihood coping strategy.

Eastern Equatoria also had the highest proportion of assessed settlements reporting

Figure 5: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting that community members possessed cattle

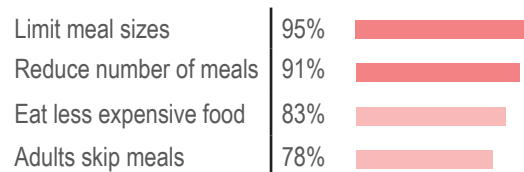


10. FAO, GIEWS Country Brief South Sudan, 14 September 2017.

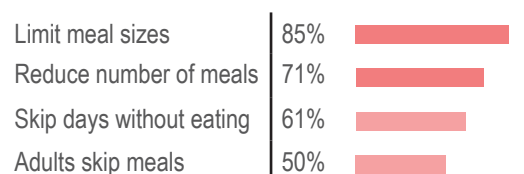
11. As reported by NGO partners.

Figure 6: Reported food coping strategies among assessed settlements with inadequate access to food in September 2017

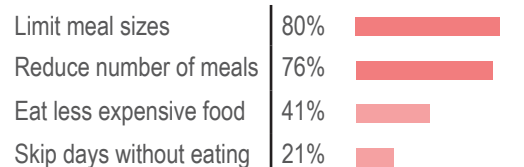
Eastern Equatoria



Central Equatoria



Western Equatoria



the use of any livelihood coping strategies among assessed settlements that reported inadequate access to food (41%). Gathering wild foods and consuming seed stock were reported as coping strategies by 69% of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food. These are extreme coping strategies that are likely to inhibit long-term recovery as assets are depleted in favour of short-term food consumption.

Western Equatoria

Food Security

Similar to Eastern Equatoria, only 19% of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria

reported adequate access to food. Reflective of a deteriorating security situation across the state in Greater Mundri and Yambio counties,¹³ 85% of assessed settlements reported that barriers to food access were conflict-related: 40% reported crop destruction from fighting, 30% reported unsafe access to land for cultivation and 15% reported stolen crops as the primary reason for lack of adequate access to food.

Settlements were reportedly willing to risk insecurity to access food because cultivation remained the primary source of food in 68% of assessed settlements, with 87% of assessed settlements reportedly having access to small garden plots of land for cultivation. Despite a clear need for food assistance, only 11% of assessed settlements reported getting the most of their food from humanitarian food aid, likely due to restricted access from the insecurity, which has prevented humanitarians and potential beneficiaries from reaching one another.

Livelihoods

Western Equatoria had the highest proportion of assessed settlements (89%) reporting subsistence farming as a livelihood activity, although settlements in Western Equatoria had the lowest reported access to agricultural inputs (26%) across Greater Equatoria. This suggests that the marginally better security situation has had significant effects in allowing people to cultivate, though a lack of seeds and tools still limits most people's abilities to grow sufficient food.

Livestock keeping was the second most

commonly reported livelihood activity in the state, reported by 66% of assessed settlements. Additional livelihood activities, including casual labour employment and fishing and hunting, were reported by 41% and 38% of assessed settlements, respectively.

Assessed settlements in Western Equatoria also had the lowest reported use of livelihood coping strategies across assessed settlements of Greater Equatoria, with 44% reportedly consuming seedstock, 44% reportedly selling livestock and 41% foraging for food as a coping mechanism. However, the extreme nature of these strategies suggests that localized areas of Western Equatoria are still experiencing extreme food insecurity.

Central Equatoria

Food Security

Central Equatoria had the highest proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food (29%). Among assessed settlements with inadequate access to food, the primary reasons were conflict-related, with 48% citing unsafe access to land for cultivation and 25% citing crop destruction from fighting. Confirming reports of active clashes in Jalei Payam of Kajo Keji County,¹⁴ 67% of the assessed settlements that reported inadequate access to food in Kajo Keji County also cited crop destruction from fighting as the main reason for lacking adequate access to food.

Despite conflict-related risks, cultivation remained the primary source of food in two-thirds of assessed settlements in Central Equatoria. Access to land and agricultural

inputs were similar to the rest of the assessed settlements in the Equatorias; 72% of assessed settlements reported having access to land for cultivation, typically garden plots adjacent to the home.¹⁵

Settlements with inadequate access to food reported coping by limiting meal sizes (85%), reducing the number of meals consumed daily (71%), skipping days without eating (61%), prioritising feeding children over adults (50%) and consuming less expensive food (45%).

Livelihoods

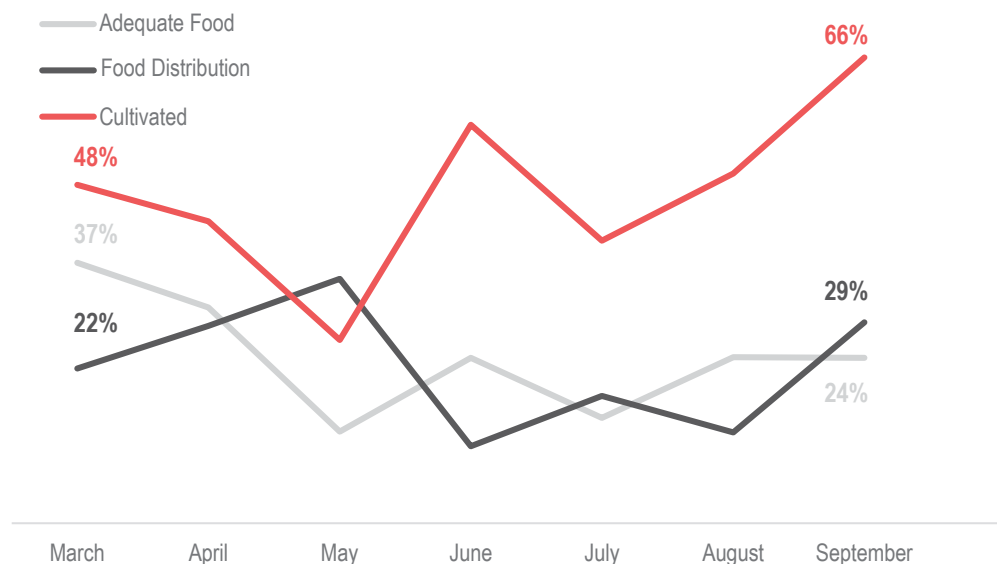
The pattern of increasing dependence on subsistence cultivation and shrinking overall access to food was also reflected in livelihoods patterns. Consistent with findings in previous months, farming for sustenance was the primary livelihood activity in Central Equatoria, cited by 81% of assessed settlements. Subsistence farming occurred despite over half of assessed settlements (58%) reportedly lacking access to agricultural inputs. Fishing and hunting was the second most cited livelihood activity in the state (49% of assessed settlements), which suggests constraints on other sources of livelihood given that fishing is not among the primary sources of livelihoods in the state due to the scarcity of streams and fish. Incidentally, fishing and hunting was also cited by 43% of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food as a livelihood coping strategy. Assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food in Central Equatoria also reported increasing the short-term availability of food through foraging (58%).

13. OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin: Issue 14, 8 September 2017.

14. OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin: Issue 14, 8 September 2017.

15. OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin: Issue 14, 8

Figure 7: Proportion of assessed settlements in Greater Equatoria reporting adequate access to food compared with proportion reporting cultivation as the primary source of food and proportion reporting having received a food distribution in the last three months, March 2017 - September



Within traditional pastoralist communities such as Kajo Keji and Terekeka, 44% and 40% of assessed settlements, respectively, reported livestock keeping. Cattle possession was reportedly greatest in Terekeka, where 92% of assessed settlements reported that community members possessed cattle, although 56% of assessed settlements in Terekeka reported an outbreak of livestock disease in the month preceding data collection, impacting adequate access to food. This is particularly severe for the Mundari of Terekeka, who are more reliant on cattle than many other tribes in Central Equatoria State for their livelihoods. Reflective of efforts to meet food consumption needs, 67% of assessed settlements that reported inadequate access to food in Terekeka reported that community members

had engaged in livestock sales as a coping mechanism, reducing the overall resilience of communities and inhibiting long-term recovery.

Protection

Ninety percent (90%) of assessed settlements reported that they only sometimes felt safe (72%) or never did (18%). This is directly related to the security situation in the Equatorias, which remains unstable; 61% of settlements reported that at least one protection incident had occurred in which at least one person was killed in September. Although actual levels of violence have fallen across Greater Equatoria at the beginning of a delayed wet season in June, fighting has persisted at sustained rates throughout the wet season; ACLED recorded 25, 26, and 21 armed conflict incidents in July,

August, and September, respectively.¹⁶

Central Equatoria reported the worst security situation of all three states, consistent with reports of fierce fighting in Yei and Kajo Keji counties at the end of August.¹⁷ Two-thirds of assessed settlements in Central Equatoria reported incidents of conflict, during which civilians were killed or property was damaged within the last month. Reported armed incidents in Eastern and Western Equatoria were similarly high; 58% of assessed settlements reported at least one incident in which civilians were killed.

September saw a shift in the type of protection concerns for different groups of people. Most assessed settlements (46%) reported sexual violence as a primary protection concern for women. This was most pronounced in Western Equatoria, where 73% of assessed settlements reported sexual violence as the primary protection concern for women. This is likely due to a reduction in active fighting in parts of Western Equatoria, lessening fears of death and injury caused by fighting and increasing concerns related to armed groups; in assessed settlements of Central Equatoria, where armed incidents were more frequent, 25% of assessed settlements reported that women's primary concern was killing or injury.

The shift away from killing/injury being the primary protection concern was also seen in men. In September, only 32% of assessed settlements reported it as a primary protection concern among men, down from 46% in August. This was offset by concerns over forced recruitment, which rose from 10%

in August to 20% in September; this was particularly pronounced in Western Equatoria, where 31% of assessed settlements reported forced recruitment as the primary protection concern for men.

Relations between IDPs and host communities remain positive; 97% of assessed settlements reported good or very good relations. However, 15% of assessed settlements in Maridi County reported relations to be poor, likely a consequence of the ongoing fighting.

Shelter

Following patterns of violence across Greater Equatoria, shelter destruction continued to be reported by a majority of assessed settlements (56%) in September. This has been a consistent trend since the mid-year. Across Greater Equatoria, assessed settlements of Central and Western Equatoria reported relatively higher levels of destruction in September (63% and 61%, respectively) than Eastern Equatoria (43%). This corresponds with attacks during this period. Unlike previous months, where destroyed shelters tended to be concentrated in particular counties, assessed settlements in September reported that destroyed shelters were more evenly spread across counties, suggesting a widening scope of the conflict.

Spreading violence was also reflected in the type of shelters that people used. September saw a drop in the use of tukuls by both Host communities and IDPs; 70% of responding settlements reported that host communities were primarily living in tukuls, while 36% of settlements reported that IDPs were sleeping in tukuls; in previous months, 90% and 76% of

16. Raleigh, Clionadh, Andrew Linke, Håvard Hegre and Joakim Karlsen. 2010. Introducing ACLED-Armed Conflict Location and Event Data, *Journal of Peace Research* 47(5) 651-660.

17. OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin: Issue 14, 8 September 2017.

settlements reported that host community and IDPs, respectively, were living in tukuls.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Most assessed settlements (80%) reported that most of the water in the settlement came from an improved water source, mainly from boreholes (60%) or protected wells (9%). Although not always the main source, a majority of settlements (83%) reported the presence of boreholes, of which a subset of 85% reported the boreholes to be functional. Access to clean water has fluctuated wildly in each states over the last six months, often following conflict patterns, although access has largely stabilized since July, likely due to the overall decline in violent incidents.

Similar to clean water access, reported latrine usage across Greater Equatoria has remained consistently poor throughout the wet season, with 83% of assessed settlements reporting that less than half of the population were using latrines. The effects of poor water infrastructure and sanitation continue to

Figure 8: Proportion of assessed settlements in September 2017 reporting that less than half of the population in the settlement used latrines

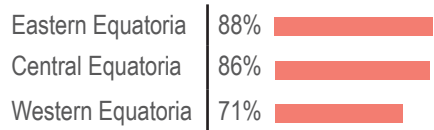


Figure 9: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting access to clean water



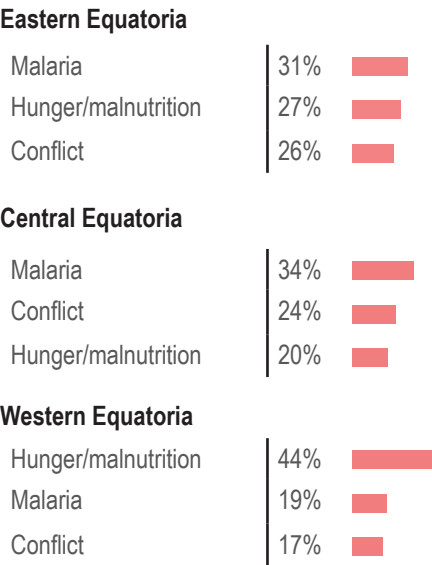
have dire consequences. One-fifth (20%) of assessed settlements reported waterbourne illnesses (typhoid, cholera, bilharzia, and diarrhoea) as the primary health concern. In September, humanitarians responded to a cholera outbreak in Budi county in Eastern Equatoria, where sanitation standards have historically been poorer for both cultural reasons and a lack of WASH infrastructure.¹⁸

Health

Likely the result of a decline in violence across the region allowing for increased access by health actors, more than half of assessed settlements (56%) reported access to healthcare in September. This is a marked increase over August, when less than half of assessed settlements (46%) across Greater Equatoria reported having access to healthcare. Even conflict affected counties such as Lainya and Yei reported increased levels of access (50% and 73%, respectively). The lowest levels were reported in Eastern Equatoria (37%), particularly in remote areas like Ikotos, Kapoeta East, and Lopa/Lafon counties. Reasons for the lack of health services continue to be linked to the security situation, outlined in the previous August 2017 Situation Overview for Greater Equatoria.¹⁹

The security situation continues to limit the distance from which beneficiaries may access health services. Distance from healthcare centres did not change between August and September; in both months, nearly two-thirds of assessed settlements reported that most people were less than an hour away from the nearest functioning health centres.

Figure 10: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting primary causes of morbidity in September 2017



Congruent with the continued wet season, malaria continues to be the leading health concern in 37% of assessed settlements; a further 30% of assessed settlements reported it as the primary cause of morbidity (Figure 10). Many KIs noted that the lack of food over many months has begun to have an effect on people’s health. A further 28% of assessed settlements reported hunger and malnutrition to be a leading cause of death; this was particularly pronounced in Western Equatoria, where the proportion was 44%.

Education

Access to education was reported to have dropped between August and September, falling from 65% of assessed settlements to 45%. Like other sectors, the shift most closely mirrors the spread in conflict, with the lowest

reported levels emanating from the most conflict affected or remote areas. Lainya and Morobo counties in Central Equatoria reported access in only 11% and 14% of assessed settlements respectively, while the assessed settlements in Lopa/Lafon and Ikotos counties in Eastern Equatoria reported no access.

The main reasons for a lack of education were similar to previous months: 46% of assessed settlements reported that education facilities had been destroyed, followed by 20% reporting there were never any facilities to begin with, and 24% reporting that teachers had fled, stopped work or for some reason were not there. The similar levels of education access month after month suggests that education services are unlikely to expand until outstanding protection issues are dealt with, and teachers and students feel safe enough to return.

Boys consistently attend class at higher rates than girls; 25% of assessed settlements reported that less than half of girls were attending class, while 52% of settlements reported the same for boys. Though girl attendance rates are similar to previous months, boys rates have increased from August, suggesting that in locations where education services are still available, access has improved.

Figure 11: Reported access to education across Greater Equatoria in September 2017



18. REACH, Situation Overview: Kapoeta Town, November 2016.
19. REACH, Situation Overview: Greater Equatoria, August 2017.

Conclusion

September has seen a continuation of trends in Greater Equatoria that began in early July; fighting from earlier in the year has died down, but continues, albeit at lower levels than during the months of the dry season. Displacement patterns have abated accordingly; with levels of new arrivals in Uganda and Kenya reportedly dropping. However, the proportion of settlements reporting the presence of IDPs has seen a recent increase, possibly a result of belated displacement and returns settling in other villages because their own have been destroyed, suggesting that displacement patterns may worsen.

Food and livelihoods continue to see a steep decline; in all three states, an overwhelming majority of assessed settlements reported local cultivation as their primary source of food. At the same time, nearly all settlements reported inadequate access to food. Together with insecurity that has prevented people from producing enough through their own cultivation, this strongly suggests that conflict is still the main impediment to adequate access to food for most people.

Protection trends have remained relatively constant since the level of overall conflict fell in July, with most assessed settlements reporting protection concerns related to insecurity since then. The types of concerns, however, have shifted; concerns about death and injury by both men and women have been largely superseded by concerns of sexual violence (for women) and forced recruitment (for men) suggesting that active fighting, although

still ongoing, has given way to problems associated with idle armed groups.

Most other services, including WASH, Shelter/ NFI, Health and Education, have remained constant since the decline in violence in July, suggesting that access remains the key problem towards expansion of most services in Greater Equatoria, where the inability of NGOs to safely access populations remain the main obstacle to providing life saving services to civilians trapped in towns and villages across the region. Unless adequately addressed, populations will continue to suffer due to a deteriorating access to limited services, and a declining food security situation that threatens what was once South Sudan's most food-secure area.

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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