

Research Terms of Reference

Qualitative Food Security Assessment in Severely Food Insecure Communities

SSD2410

South Sudan

July 2024
V1

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

1. Executive Summary

| | | | | | |
|--|--|---|--|------------|---|
| Country of intervention | South Sudan | | | | |
| Type of Emergency | <input type="checkbox"/> | Natural hazard | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Conflict | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (<i>specify</i>) |
| Type of Crisis | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sudden onset | <input type="checkbox"/> | Slow onset | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Protracted |
| Mandating Body/ Agency | BHA | | | | |
| IMPACT Project Code | 32AZW | | | | |
| Overall Research Timeframe (<i>from research design to final outputs / M&E</i>) | 01/07/2024 to 20/09/2024 | | | | |
| Research Timeframe | 1. Pilot/ training: 22/07/2024 | | 6. Preliminary presentation: 23/08/2024 | | |
| | 2. Start collect data: 23/07/2024 | | 7. Outputs sent for validation: 06/09/2024 | | |
| | 3. Data collected: 06/08/2024 | | 8. Outputs published: 20/09/2024 | | |
| | 4. Data analysed: 09/08/2024 | | 9. Final presentation: 20/09/2024 onwards | | |
| | 5. Data sent for validation: 09/08/2024 | | | | |
| Number of assessments | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Single assessment (one cycle) | | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Multi assessment (more than one cycle) <i>[Describe here the frequency of the cycle]</i> | | | |
| Humanitarian milestones <i>Specify what will the assessment inform and when</i> <i>e.g. The shelter cluster will use this data to draft its Revised Flash Appeal;</i> | Milestone | | Deadline (can be tentative) | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Donor plan/strategy | _ _ / _ _ / _ _ _ _ | | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Inter-cluster plan/strategy | ASAP | | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Cluster plan/strategy | ASAP | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | NGO platform plan/strategy | _ _ / _ _ / _ _ _ _ | | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Other (Specify): 2024 South Sudan IPC Workshop | 30/09/2024 | | |
| Audience Type & Dissemination <i>Specify who will the assessment inform and how you will disseminate to inform the audience</i> | Audience type | | Dissemination | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Strategic | | X General Product Mailing (e.g. mail to NGO consortium; HCT participants; Donors) | | |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Programmatic | | X Cluster Mailing (Education, Shelter and WASH) and presentation of findings at next cluster meeting | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Operational | | X Presentation of findings (e.g. at HCT meeting; Cluster meeting) | | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] | | X Website Dissemination (Relief Web & REACH Resource Centre) | | |

| | | | | |
|---|--|-----|---|----|
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] | |
| Stakeholder mapping <i>Has a detailed stakeholder mapping been conducted during research design to identify all actors that could contribute to and/or benefit from the research?</i> | X | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | No |
| General Objective | To explore the food security situation in Pibor County, in order to contextualise quantitative FSNMS data and ultimately inform county-level classifications (<i>current</i> and <i>projected</i>) at the October 2024 Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) workshop. | | | |
| Specific Objective(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify the main shocks/ hazards that have contributed to food insecurity and livelihood change over the prior 6-month period, including which pillars of food security (availability, accessibility, utilisation, stability) have been impacted. • To outline the coverage and scale of life-saving humanitarian services – including gaps and disruptions – as well as how services have evolved over the prior 6-month period and how different groups or geographic areas are/were impacted by these gaps, disruptions and changes. • To identify risk factors that could impact food security dimensions in the subsequent 3- to 6-month period. • To explore community perceptions of priority humanitarian needs, and identify preferences around the type and timeliness of assistance. | | | |
| Research Questions | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. How has households' access to food changed over the prior 6-month period? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1 Which events and/ or processes (seasonal <i>and</i> atypical) have impacted food security (both positively and negatively)? 1.2 What food and income sources are available to households currently, and what are the challenges in accessing them? 1.3 How are households responding to a lack of food and money to buy food? 2. How have the coverage and scale of humanitarian assistance changed over the prior 6-month period? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2.1 What is the current level of food assistance in Pibor, and how has this changed over the past 6 months? 2.2 What events and factors have obstructed and supported the delivery of humanitarian food assistance? 2.3 What challenges and gaps do service providers face in providing humanitarian assistance? 2.4 How does access to humanitarian services vary between different areas/ groups of people? 2.5 How will the coverage and scale of humanitarian assistance evolve in the coming 6-month period, and what challenges and gaps are anticipated by humanitarian service providers? 3. How is food security in assessed areas likely to evolve in the coming 3- to 6-month period? <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3.1 Which food security pillars are most likely to be impacted, and how? 3.2 Which factors should humanitarian partners monitor to understand and anticipate the food security situation? | | | |

| | | | | | |
|--|--|--|--------------------------|--|---|
| Geographic Coverage | Pibor County, Jonglei State, specifically locations in the following three payams: + Gumuruk + Lekuangle + Pibor Town | | | | |
| Secondary data sources | REACH conducted a thorough secondary data review in preparing this ToR. A list of key resources is shown in Section 3.3, below. | | | | |
| Population(s) <i>Select all that apply</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | IDPs in camp | <input type="checkbox"/> | IDPs in informal sites | |
| | X | IDPs in host communities | <input type="checkbox"/> | IDPs [Other, Specify] | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Refugees in camp | <input type="checkbox"/> | Refugees in informal sites | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Refugees in host communities | <input type="checkbox"/> | Refugees [Other, Specify] | |
| | X | Host communities | X | Returnees | |
| Stratification <i>Select type(s) and enter number of strata</i> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Geographical #: Population size per strata is known? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No | X | Gender #: 2 Population size per strata is known? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes X No | <input type="checkbox"/> [Other Specify] #: __ Population size per strata is known? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| Data collection tool(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Structured (Quantitative) | | X | Semi-structured (Qualitative) |
| | Sampling method | | | Data collection method | |
| Semi-structured data collection tool (s) # 1 Key Informant Interview Tool – Humanitarian Service Providers | X Purposive <input type="checkbox"/> Snowballing <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] | | | X Key informant interview (Target #): 10-20 (but contingent upon stakeholder mapping once the team arrives in Pibor) <input type="checkbox"/> Individual interview (Target #):_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Focus group discussion (Target #):_____ <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] (Target #):_____ | |
| Semi-structured data collection tool (s) # 2 Key Informant Interview Tool – Market Traders | X Purposive <input type="checkbox"/> Snowballing <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] | | | X Key informant interview (Target #): 3 <input type="checkbox"/> Individual interview (Target #):_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Focus group discussion (Target #):_____ <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] (Target #):_____ | |
| Semi-structured data collection tool (s) # 3 Focus Group Discussion Tool – FSL & Access to humanitarian assistance | X Purposive <input type="checkbox"/> Snowballing <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] | | | <input type="checkbox"/> Key informant interview (Target #):_____ <input type="checkbox"/> Individual interview (Target #):_____ X Focus group discussion (Target #): 16 <input type="checkbox"/> [Other, Specify] (Target #):_____ | |
| Disaggregation by gender and age <i>Are you planning to conduct sex/age disaggregated analysis?</i> | Gender | | | Age | |
| | X | Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> | Yes | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | No | X | No | |
| Data management platform(s) | X | IMPACT | <input type="checkbox"/> | UNHCR | |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | [Other, Specify] | | | |
| | X | Brief #: 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Report #: __ | <input type="checkbox"/> Profile #: __ |

| | | | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|--|--------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|
| Expected output type(s) | X | Presentation (Preliminary findings) #: 1 | X | Presentation (Final) #: 1 | <input type="checkbox"/> | Factsheet #: __ |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Interactive dashboard #: __ | <input type="checkbox"/> | Webmap #: __ | <input type="checkbox"/> | Map #: __ |
| | X | [Other, Specify] #: Preliminary findings document | | | | |
| Access | X | Public (available on REACH resource center and other humanitarian platforms) A final brief for public dissemination. | | | | |
| | X | Restricted (bilateral dissemination only upon agreed dissemination list, no publication on REACH or other platforms) Preliminary findings for restricted sharing with key partners, including the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET). | | | | |
| Visibility Specify which logos should be on outputs | REACH | | | | | |
| | Donor: BHA, FCDO | | | | | |
| | Coordination Framework: NA | | | | | |
| | Partners: NA | | | | | |

2. Rationale

2.1 Background

Prior to Israel's assault on Gaza, South Sudan was the most food insecure country in the world. Between April and July 2024, the most recent Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analysis – conducted in October 2023 – projected that 56% of the population would experience acute food insecurity.¹ Furthermore, the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET) estimate that Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes will exist in forty-one (of seventy-nine) counties.² Once again, hard-to-reach areas in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) – a chronically food insecure territory in southeastern Jonglei State that was delineated following a 2014 peace agreement between the Government of the Republic of South Sudan and David Yau Yau's South Sudan Democratic Movement/ Army-Cobra Faction³ – are of "highest concern". This, combined with the relative lack of recent qualitative data on the food situation in Pibor, and information requests from partners such as FEWS NET and the World Food Programme (WFP), led REACH to plan a rapid qualitative assessment in the county.

The food security situation in Pibor County, Jonglei State, is exceptionally severe. IPC estimates made in October 2023 suggest that 80% of the population will face acute food insecurity between April and July 2024.⁴ This includes 10,987 people (5% of the population) in IPC AFI Phase-5 (Catastrophe). Since 2020, Pibor has experienced several pockets of catastrophic food insecurity – including a Famine Likely classification in 2020/15 – and at least 65% of the population has been acutely food insecure. Over time, key contributing factors have included large-deficit harvests, seasonal declines in alternate food sources (especially fish, game and wild foods), many households having only limited access to livestock, spiraling market prices, persistent insecurity, and seasonal flooding restricting the delivery of commercial goods and humanitarian food assistance.

Conditions in Pibor are likely to have deteriorated steadily throughout 2024. Most households are reported to have exhausted their food stores atypically early in February,⁶ following below-average rainfall and poor harvests in 2023. Sporadic cattle raids and armed robberies simultaneously disrupted many households' access to alternate food sources – mainly fish and wild foods – during their seasonal peak between January and March.⁷ Compounding this, residual flood water and poor road conditions prevented the

¹ IPC. "Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition. November 2023 to July 2024." November 2023.

² FEWS NET (2024) Forecasted severe flooding elevates the risk of Famine (IPC Phase 5) in flood-prone areas. Food Security Outlook, June 2024 – January 2025. Available [here](#).

³ Todisco, C. (2015) *Real but Fragile: The Greater Pibor Administrative Area*. Small Arms Survey.

⁴ IPC. "Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition. November 2023 to July 2024." November 2023.

⁵ In November 2020, the IPC's Famine Review Committee (FRC) determined that the Western area of Pibor County (Gumuruk, Pibor, Lekuangle and Verteth payams) would be in IPC Phase 5 (Famine Likely) for the period between December 2020 and July 2021. For the full report, see *IPC Famine Review, Conclusions and Recommendations for Pibor County – South Sudan – IPC Analysis – November 2020*. Available [here](#).

⁶ FEWS NET (2021) *Humanitarian response to Famine Likely (IPC Phase 5) in Pibor remains inadequate*. January 30th. Available [here](#); FEWS NET (2021) *Pibor Famine Monitoring: a multisectoral humanitarian response is necessary to prevent Famine Likely (IPC Phase 5)*. March 30th. Available [here](#).

⁷ Widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) likely at the peak of the lean season. South Sudan – Food Security Outlook, February-September.

⁷ Widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) likely at the peak of the lean season.

movement of heavy trucks and commercial goods to markets in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA),⁸ many of which were already poorly stocked or in a state of disrepair.⁹ Furthermore, poor local pasture in March drove livestock migration to distant dry season grazing areas, reducing households' access to livestock products.¹⁰ Taken together, these factors suggest that many households' access to typical food sources was restricted through the first half of the year. In turn, it is likely that households depend increasingly on humanitarian food assistance.

It is possible that the situation in Pibor is worse than projected by analysts during the latest IPC workshop in October 2023. In October 2023, FEWS NET warned of "large to extreme food consumption gaps" in Pibor in the first quarter of 2024 were violence to escalate.¹¹ Since the beginning of 2024, armed clashes, sporadic cattle raids and robberies have disrupted many households' access to food.¹² Furthermore, attacks on humanitarian convoys along the Bor-Pibor road disrupted supply chains and blocked humanitarian access.¹³ By March, FEWS NET labelled Pibor County a "conflict hotspot" and warned that any increase in conflict – and consequent disruptions to humanitarian assistance – would drive a "higher proportion of households in Catastrophe than is currently projected".¹⁴ It is plausible that this assumption has materialized, considering cross-border attacks in April and violence against civilians in Lekuangle payam in May.¹⁵ Disruptions to and suspensions of humanitarian assistance through March and April likely worsened the situation¹⁶ by depriving the most vulnerable households of their main – if not, only – source of food. These challenges amount to a severe but lesser-understood situation, particularly in those remote, insecure and inaccessible areas of the western payams, namely Lekuangle, Gumuruk and Vertheth. Indeed, in June the Commissioners of Gumuruk, Vertheth and Jebel Boma issued urgent calls for humanitarian assistance, and the Vertheth Commissioner reported hunger-related deaths to the World Food Programme.¹⁷

2.1 Intended impact

This research aims to inform a more comprehensive understanding of the food security situation in Pibor County at the 2024 Integrated Phase Classification workshop (scheduled for late-September/ early-October). The IPC is the primary mechanism for allocating humanitarian food assistance in South Sudan. It ensures that humanitarian resources are distributed on a needs-based basis. This assessment will complement quantitative data collected by WFP between July 1-18, as part of its annual Food Security & Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) exercise. In turn, our findings will support evidence-based classifications for Pibor County, whilst ensuring that donors and humanitarian actors have an accurate understanding of the conditions and extent of needs.

3 Methodology

3.1 Methodology overview

This assessment draws on both primary and secondary data. First, the team conducted a thorough secondary data review, which is explained in more detail in Section 3.3. Primary data collection follows a qualitative approach involving Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) with people living in acutely food insecure communities, and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with humanitarian service partners and market traders. The main research questions that we will aim to answer during primary data collection are as follows:

| RQ | Sub-RQ | Data Collection Tool |
|--|--|----------------------|
| How has households' access to food changed over the previous 6-month period? | Which events (seasonal <i>and</i> atypical) have impacted food security (both positively and negatively)? | FGD |
| | What food and income sources are available to households currently, and what are the challenges in accessing them? | KII (Market traders) |
| | How are households responding to a lack of food and money to buy food? | |

⁸ Widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) likely at the peak of the lean season.

⁹ FEWS NET (2023) Over 1 in 2 people are expected to need urgent food assistance by early 2024. South Sudan – Food Security Outlook, October 2023 – May 2024.

¹⁰ Widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) likely at the peak of the lean season.

¹¹ Over 1 in 2 people are expected to need urgent food assistance by early 2024.

¹² UNMISS calls for restraint and peace in Jonglei State and Greater Pibor Administrative Area.

¹³ FEWS NET, 2024, Widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) likely at the peak of the lean season.

¹⁴ Widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) likely at the peak of the lean season.

¹⁵ UNMISS responds rapidly to protect civilians and restore calm amid fresh outbreak of intercommunal violence.

¹⁶ FEWS NET, 2024, Widespread Emergency (IPC Phase 4) amid high cost of assistance delivery. April.

¹⁷ Letters issued to humanitarian partners operating in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area. Copies on file with REACH.

| | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|
| How have the coverage and scale of humanitarian assistance changed over the previous 6-month period? | What is the current level of food assistance in Pibor, and how has this changed over the past 6 months? | KII (Humanitarian service providers) |
| | What events and factors have obstructed/ supported the delivery of humanitarian food assistance? | KII (Humanitarian service providers) |
| | What challenges and gaps do service providers face in providing humanitarian assistance? | KII (Humanitarian service providers) |
| | How does access to humanitarian services vary between different areas/ groups of people? | FGD |
| | How will the coverage and scale of humanitarian assistance evolve in the coming 6-month period, and what challenges and gaps are anticipated by humanitarian service providers? | KII (Humanitarian service providers) |
| How is food security in assessed areas likely to evolve in the coming 6-month period? | Which food security pillars are most likely to be impacted, and how? Which factors should humanitarian partners monitor to understand and anticipate the food security situation? | FGD |

3.2 Population of interest

Next to Pibor Town, REACH will visit two locations (Gumuruk and Lekuangle payams) in Pibor County between July and August 2024. In March 2024, FEWS NET projected that remote and inaccessible areas in Gumuruk and Lekuangle payams will host populations in IPC AFI Phase-5 (Catastrophe) through the second projection period (April-July 2024), owing to households' limited resource bases, their heavy reliance on wild foods and hunting, and the difficulties they face in accessing humanitarian food assistance. The situation in these areas has likely deteriorated in the intervening period as a result of persistent insecurity and suspensions on humanitarian food assistance.

3.3 Secondary data review

The team conducted a [secondary data review](#) to understand the food security situation in Pibor County. The review focused on the following in particular:

| Secondary source | Purpose of source |
|--|---|
| Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) | Food security classifications |
| Food Security & Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) ¹⁸ | Food security outcome data, including the Household Hunger Scale (HHS), the reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI), and the Livelihood Coping Strategies-Food Security (LCS-FS) |
| Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM) in South Sudan | Food production |
| Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) | Market trends |
| FEWS NET Food Security Outlooks/ Updates | Information on shocks and stresses that impact food security |
| Armed Conflict Location & Event Data (ACLED) | Conflict events |
| Standardised Monitoring and Assessment of Relief and Transitions (SMART) Methodology | Nutrition and health outcomes |

3.4 Primary Data Collection

Data collection follows a qualitative approach involving Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) with people living in acutely food insecure communities, and Key Informant Interviews (KII) with humanitarian service providers and market traders. The main aims for each data collection tool are as follows:

¹⁸ Datasets on file with REACH.

| Data Collection Tool | Main aims |
|---|---|
| Focus Group Discussions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify events (seasonal <i>and</i> atypical) that have impacted food security (both positively and negatively) in the previous 6-month period. Identify households' main food and income sources, and the challenges to accessing them. Identify consumption- and livelihood-based coping strategies that households are using in response to food shortages. Identify the challenges that households in different areas, and from different groups, face in accessing humanitarian food assistance. To understand how the food security situation could evolve in the subsequent 6-month period, and the events/ processes that will influence this. |
| Key Informant Interviews (Humanitarian Service Providers) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore the coverage and scale of humanitarian service provision, and how this evolved over the previous 6-month period. Identify events and factors that have obstructed/ supported the delivery of humanitarian food assistance. Identify challenges and gaps that undermine humanitarian service provision. Anticipate how humanitarian service provision will evolve in the subsequent 6-month period, as well as the challenges and gaps that will exist. |
| Key Informant Interviews (Market Traders) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore market functionality and identify barriers to market access. |

A qualitative approach was selected for one main reason: Food Security & Nutrition Monitoring System (FSNMS) data collection, led by WFP, will produce *quantitative* data that determines the severity of food insecurity and acute malnutrition, as well as the prevalence of shocks and household vulnerability, in Pibor County. By comparison, our assessment aims to identify *contributing factors* to food insecurity, so as to support IPC analysts in interpreting and contextualising quantitative data collected during the FSNMS exercise. As such, our questions are primarily descriptive and relational in nature, making a qualitative approach the most suitable. This considered, findings from this assessment can combine with FSNMS results to present a comprehensive picture of contributing factors and food security outcomes in Pibor County.

The data collection team includes the Food Security & Livelihoods Senior Assessment Officer (FSL SAO), one Field Officer (FO) and the Food Security & Emergencies Specialist (FSE Specialist). The SAO and Specialist will lead data collection, while the FO will support primarily with logistical aspects (e.g., facilitating introductions to authorities and humanitarian partners, overseeing casual hires (e.g., translators), and procuring incentives for participants). **Data collection is scheduled to take place between Wednesday 24th July and Monday 5th August 2024.**

REACH will interview two types of Key Informants: Humanitarian Service Providers and Market Traders. KII participants will be sampled purposively based on consultation with key stakeholders and a stakeholder mapping exercise undertaken before the start of data collection. KIIs with humanitarian service providers will be conducted mostly in Pibor Town; ad-hoc interviews with field staff operating in assessed locations will be conducted, if appropriate. Interviews with market traders will be conducted in Pibor Town and, if possible, with traders operating in Gumuruk and Lekuangle payams.

FGD participants will be sampled purposively based on consultation with key stakeholders, mainly community leaders and the county-level Relief and Rehabilitation (RRC) office. Participants include community members residing in each location. The research team will target heads of households, or, failing that, adults with a firm understanding of the food security situation in each community. **FGDs will be conducted separately with men and women** to reflect standard practice, enable an open environment for discussion, overcome cultural barriers, and capture varied perspectives on the food security situation. Previous research in South Sudan suggests

that someone's gender shapes their behaviours and the options available to them following food shocks. Women and men may hold different decision-making responsibilities¹⁹ and aspirations²⁰ for household resources and livelihood activities. Disaggregating FGDs by gender, we can begin to understand how this impacts households' access to food and the coping strategies that people resort to. During data collection, **the sample will not be disaggregated by displacement status**. This is because Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) data from June identifies only 3,000 IDPs in Pibor.²¹ And it is likely that most IDPs reside in Pibor Town, rather than the payams that REACH will focus our assessment on.

Most KIIs with humanitarian service providers will be conducted in Pibor Town before visiting Gumuruk and Lekuangle payams. The team aims to conduct four humanitarian service provider KIIs per day; this number will be adjusted based on the time taken to complete each exercise (if KIIs conclude quicker than expected, the number of interviews conducted per day might increase, whereas if the KIIs take longer than expected, the number might decrease). On this basis, and assuming that the team spend five days in total in Pibor Town, it is possible to conduct a maximum of 20 KIIs with humanitarian service providers during this assessment. On top of this, REACH aims to conduct a minimum of three KIIs with market traders operating in Pibor Town, Gumuruk and Lekuangle. **During our time in Gumuruk and Lekuangle, the team aims to conduct a minimum of three FGDs per day**; this reflects the time available in the field, and the number of available research staff. As above, this number will be adjusted based on the time taken to complete each exercise. Assuming that the team spend four days in total in these locations, it is possible to conduct at least 12 FGDs in Gumuruk and Lekuangle. In addition, depending on logistical factors and access to communities, the team aim to conduct a minimum of four FGDs with recently displaced persons residing in Pibor Town. Overall then, REACH will conduct 16 FGDs during this assessment. Each FGD should not take longer than ninety minutes in order to mitigate fatigue and/or frustration among participants. FGDs will comprise of between four and six people who are of the same gender.

Overall, REACH aims to conduct the following exercises:

| Data collection tool | Target group | Number of exercises |
|--|--|---------------------|
| Focus Group Discussion | Community members living in Gumuruk and Lekuangle payams | 12 |
| | Recently displaced persons residing in Pibor Town | 4 |
| Key Informant Interview (Humanitarian Service Providers) | Humanitarian service providers based in Pibor Town; | 10-20 |
| Key Informant Interview (Market Traders) | Traders (minimum one in each of Pibor Town, Gumuruk and Lekuangle) | 3 |

3.5 Data Processing & Analysis

During FGDs, the lead researcher will take detailed notes while moderating the discussion through a translator. During KIIs, the researcher will take detailed notes while asking questions in English. Ideally, notes are typed directly onto a laptop – in the Data Collection Exercise tool template – to ensure they are as close to verbatim as possible and they capture additional details such as participants' body language, expressions and non-verbal responses throughout the conversation. Completed transcripts are saved in a dedicated folder space under password protection.

Qualitative data is analysed using a Data Saturation and Analysis Grid (DSAG). Depending on time available, each transcript is entered into the DSAG within 24 hours of data collection – to identify commonalities, key findings, issues worthy of follow-up in the next day's data collection, and opportunities for optimising the data collection tool(s). Any modifications to the data collection tools will be recorded in a clear and structured manner, so as to maintain transparency and track lessons learned. At all times during the analysis, team members will follow the **IMPACT Standards Checklist for Semi-Structured Data Processing and Analysis**.

¹⁹ See, for example, Kim *et al.*, 2020: "Women's limited decision making authority over material resources likely impedes their ability to grow and maintain social connections" ... "while men control decisions related to household assets, women have authority over decisions related to a household's food...including whether, and with whom to share small amounts." (Kim, J. J. *et al.* (2020) *The Currency*)

²⁰ See, for example, Humphrey *et al.*, 2023: "Gender is especially powerful in shaping livelihood aspirations" [and] "[a]spirations, among other psychosocial factors...are increasingly recognized as critical resilience capacities, and can be accurate predictors of whether households...are able to recover from shocks and stresses without employing distress strategies." (Humphrey, A. (2023) *Dynamism in the Drylands: Evidence from South Sudan for Supporting Pastoral Livelihoods During Protracted Crises*. London: Supporting Pastoralism and Agriculture in Recurrent and Protracted Crises (SPARC).)

²¹ Dataset on file with REACH.

3.6 Limitations

Due to the qualitative and non-probabilistic nature of this study, findings can be considered indicative only. Furthermore, REACH cannot guarantee that we are not missing a particular (vulnerable) population groups' experience. However, by stratifying the focus groups further by gender, it is assumed that a wider variety of perspectives and experiences will be captured to provide a good enough understanding of the wider population of interest in Pibor County. In conducting focus groups separately with men and women, we also aim to distinguish unique points of view by gender.

It is unlikely given the sample size and time available for data collection that saturation will be reached for any of the data collection tools. This means that findings should not be interpreted as exhaustive of all themes.

Because REACH is unable to record the audio of interviews, it is likely that "transcripts" will more resemble notes. Because responses will be translated from the local language to English during the interview, it is also likely that some details will be lost in translation, or that responses may be abbreviated by the translator.

4 Key ethical considerations and related risks

The proposed research design meets / does not meet the following criteria:

| <i>The proposed research design...</i> | <i>Yes/ No</i> | <i>Details if no (including mitigation)</i> |
|---|--------------------|---|
| ... Has been coordinated with relevant stakeholders to avoid unnecessary duplication of data collection efforts? | Yes | |
| ... Respects respondents, their rights and dignity (specifically by: seeking informed consent, designing length of survey/ discussion while being considerate of participants' time, ensuring accurate reporting of information provided)? | Yes | |
| ... Does not expose data collectors to any risks as a direct result of participation in data collection? | Yes | |
| ... Does not expose respondents / their communities to any risks as a direct result of participation in data collection? | Yes | |
| ... Does not involve collecting information on specific topics which may be stressful and/ or re-traumatising for research participants (both respondents and data collectors)? | No | <p>This assessment involves collecting data on food security in areas exhibiting IPC Phase-4 and -5. Sensitive findings around food insecurity – including violent events that have restricted access to food – could arise. Furthermore, it is possible that people report on difficult and potentially sensitive decisions that they made in order to deal with food shortages (e.g., child marriage, sexual exploitation, family separation).</p> <p>During data collection, the purpose of the exercise will be explained clearly to all participants – who will be given the opportunity to ask questions and/ or raise concerns. Before each exercise begins,</p> |

| | | |
|--|-----|--|
| | | <p>participants will be asked for their informed consent to participate. Those who wish not to participate can refuse to answer any question, without repercussion. So too can they withdraw from the discussion at any time.</p> <p>The data collection team will familiarise themselves with relevant protection partners operating in Pibor – to whom sensitive issues can be raised, provided the participant gives their consent. Facilitators will observe signs of psychological distress and end or pause interviews when necessary.</p> |
| ... Does not involve data collection with minors i.e. anyone less than 18 years old? | Yes | |
| ... Does not involve data collection with other vulnerable groups e.g. persons with disabilities, victims/ survivors of protection incidents, etc.? | No | It is possible that participants include survivors of protection incidents. If reported during data collection, these incidents shall not be probed. Should participants raise experiences related to Sexual Exploitation & Abuse (SEA), this will be flagged to in-country coordination. |
| ... Follows IMPACT SOPs for management of personally identifiable information ? | Yes | |

5 Roles and responsibilities

| Task Description | Responsible | Accountable | Consulted | Informed |
|--------------------------------------|---|-------------|---|--|
| Research design | Food Security & Livelihoods SAO (FSL SAO) | FSL SAO | Food Security & Emergencies Specialist (FSE Specialist) IMPACT HQ WFP VAM | REACH Country Coordinator (CC) REACH Deputy Country Coordinator (DCC) |
| Supervising data collection | FSL SAO, FSE Specialist, Field Officer (FO) | FSL SAO | DCC | CC |
| Data processing (checking, cleaning) | FSL SAO | FSL SAO | DCC | CC |
| Data analysis | FSL SAO | FSL SAO | IMPACT HQ | CC |
| Output production | FSL SAO | FSL SAO | FSE Specialist DCC IMPACT HQ | CC WFP VAM |

| | Research Cycle Name, release date | | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----|----|---|
| Dissemination | FSL SAO | DCC | CC | WFP VAM IPC TWG IPC state analysts |
| Monitoring & Evaluation | FSL SAO | DCC | CC | IMPACT HQ |
| Lessons learned | FSL SAO | DCC | CC | IMPACT HQ |

Responsible: the person(s) who executes the task

Accountable: the person who validates the completion of the task and is accountable of the final output or milestone

Consulted: the person(s) who must be consulted when the task is implemented

Informed: the person(s) who need to be informed when the task is completed

6 Toolkit

South Sudan – Qualitative Food Security Assessment

Focus Group Discussion Tool

| | | | |
|------------------------|--|--------------------------|-----------|
| Moderator name | | Assistant moderator name | |
| Date | | Location | |
| Number of participants | | Start time: | End time: |

FGD participant details:

| County | Gender | Age |
|--------|--------|-----|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |
| 4. | | |
| 5. | | |
| 6. | | |

Introduction (5 minutes)

Facilitator's welcome, introduction and instructions to participants

Welcome and thank you for agreeing to take part in this Focus Group Discussion. My name is _____. I am part of the REACH Assessment Team.

The information you provide today will inform more effective food security analysis by humanitarian organisations working in South Sudan. Please note that this interview does not have any impact on whether you or your household will receive humanitarian assistance in the future.

You have been asked to participate because your point of view is important, and we want to hear your opinions. In particular, we'd like to ask you about the food security situation in your community, and what people do when they don't have enough food or enough money to buy food. Please note that everything you tell us will be anonymised, and it will not be attributed to you.

Your participation in this discussion is entirely voluntary, and anyone who does not want to participate can leave now or at any time during the discussion. You can decide whether you want to answer questions or not once the discussion starts. If you choose not to take part or to skip any questions, it will have no negative impacts on your ability to access services from any agency. Please feel free to ask me any questions now, or at any point during the discussion. **Do you consent to participate in this discussion?**

This discussion will take no more than one hour and thirty minutes.

Group agreements

Before we begin, it is important that we create a safe environment for this discussion where people feel free to speak openly. Therefore, it will be good if we can make certain agreements among the group. What should we include in these agreements?

Start by suggesting one and wait for people to come up with other agreements. If any of the below agreements are not mentioned by the participants, suggest to also include those.

- The most important rule is that only **one person speaks at a time**. There may be a temptation to jump in when someone is talking but please wait until they have finished.
- There are no right or wrong answers.
- You do not have to speak in any particular order.
- When you do have something to say, please do so. There are many of you in the group and it is important that we hear from all of you.
- You do not have to agree with the views of other people in the group.
- All participants must be respectful towards one another.
- Everyone must respect the confidentiality of the discussion and not repeat what is discussed here, or attribute it to participants.
- Does anyone have any questions? (answers)

Please can everyone confirm that you agree with these community agreements? OK, let's begin.

During this conversation, we want you describe **the situation in your community**, rather than the situation in your households.

Questions

Food security [60 mins]

1. **What are the main challenges in your community?**
 - a. *[Probe if necessary]* What about the current food situation? Do people have enough food?
 - i. What foods are people consuming currently? How does this compare with the same time last year?
 - ii. Where do people access these foods from?
 - iii. What are the main challenges people face in accessing these foods?
 - iv. When will these foods run out or exhaust?
2. **Why has the food situation deteriorated in the past 6 months?** *[Probe until all shocks/stressors are covered].*
 - i. Weather patterns (e.g., drier local conditions reduced the availability of wild foods while driving livestock migration away from the homestead)
 - ii. Insecurity (e.g., violence disrupted households' access to fishing and hunting grounds)
 - iii. Market trends (e.g., increased prices and many households' reduced purchasing power meant few people could afford staple foods)
 - iv. Disruptions to humanitarian assistance (e.g., disruptions forced some households to rely on dangerous and arduous food-gathering activities)
3. **How does the current food situation compare with the same period last year** *[add other periods (e.g., attacks in December-January 2022, famine-likely classification in 2020), where appropriate]?*
 - a. What makes it better/worse than last year? *[Probe on how people understand and compare the level of severity, and how different limiting factors have held or worsened over time, i.e. levels of conflict, disease outbreaks, reduced access to services, market prices, etc.]*
 - b. *[If the situation is similar]* What has prevented the situation from improving?
4. **Which areas are experiencing different levels of hunger?**
 - a. Which parts of this payam are experiencing the worst hunger?
 - i. Why these areas? *[Probe until fully understanding the situation]*
 - b. Are there any areas that are experiencing less severe hunger *(can be in the same payam or elsewhere)?*
 - i. Why these areas? *[Probe until fully understanding the situation]*
5. **What do people in your community currently do when they do not have enough food or money to buy food?**
 - a. Why do people use these strategies instead of others?
 - b. What are the challenges and risks associated with these strategies?
 - c. How do people in your community perceive the severity of these strategies?
 - d. Are these 'typical' strategies people that normally use at this time of year? If no, why are people not engaging in those 'typical' strategies?
6. **How do you think the food situation (availability of and access to food sources) in your community will change in the next 6 months?** *[Improve, worsen, stay the same]?*
 - a. Why will it *[improve, worsen, stay the same]*?
 - b. Which food sources will people rely on? *[Probing if necessary for cultivation, livestock, wild foods, fishing, hunting and humanitarian food assistance]*
 - c. Which events might impact people's access to food? *[Probing if necessary for weather patterns, insecurity, market trends, availability of humanitarian assistance]*

Access to humanitarian assistance [30 mins]

1. **Are people in your community receiving food assistance?**
 - a. Probe for:
 - i. Is everyone in this area receiving assistance?
 - ❖ Which people are receiving assistance, and which are not?
 - ii. Does everyone get the same type/ amount of assistance? Or are there differences?

- b. Probe for:
 - i. What type of food do people receive?
 - ii. How much food do people receive?
 - iii. How often do people receive food?
 - iv. Where do people go to receive food?
 - v. For how long does the food last most people?
 - vi. How are people using the assistance they receive (e.g., sharing, selling)?
- 2. **What challenges do people face in accessing humanitarian food assistance?**
- 3. **Have there been any changes to the quantity, type and frequency of food assistance in your community the past 6 months?**
 - a. If there have been changes, **why do you think these changes occurred?** And what impact did they have on households' access to food?

Conclusion (1 minute)

- Thank you for participating in our conversation and for sharing your opinions with us. This has been a very helpful discussion and your perspective is very important for us to understand.
- I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be anonymous.
- Please let us know if you have any questions for us or any feedback.

South Sudan – Qualitative Food Security Assessment

Key Informant Interview Tool – Market Traders

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Moderator name | | Assistant moderator name | |
| Date | | Location | |
| Start time: | End time: | | |

KII participant details:

| | |
|-------------|---------------|
| Role | Gender |
| | |

Introduction (5 minutes)

Facilitator's welcome, introduction and instructions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this Key Informant Interview. My name is _____. I am part of the REACH Assessment Team.

The information you provide today will inform more effective food security analysis by humanitarian organisations working in South Sudan. Please note that this interview does not have any impact on whether you or your household will receive humanitarian assistance in the future.

You have been asked to participate because your point of view is important, and we want to hear your opinions. In particular, we'd like to ask you about market conditions in Pibor County. Please note that everything you tell us will be anonymised, and it will not be attributed to you.

Your participation in this discussion is entirely voluntary; can leave now or at any time during the discussion. You can decide whether you want to answer questions or not once the discussion starts. Please feel free to ask me any questions now, or at any point during the discussion. **Do you consent to participate in this discussion?**

This discussion will take no more than one hour.

Questions

Market access & functionality

1. Can you provide an overview of the current market situation in Pibor County, especially in the western payams (Gumuruk and Lekuangle)?
 - a. Where are markets available?
 - b. What foods are available in these markets?
 - i. Why and from where are these foods available?
 - c. When, how and how often are these markets supplied?
 - i. What are the main supply routes to these markets?
 - ii. How/ Where do suppliers purchase and transport their supplies to these markets?
 - d. How has the market situation changed over the past 6 months (*probe for availability of goods [including prices and types] and access to markets [including financial, physical and social access]*)
 - i. How does this situation compare with the same time last year and previous periods of severe food insecurity (e.g., 2020, 2022)?

2. What challenges exist to market functionality at the moment [*probe for additional challenges over the prior 6-month period*]?
 - a. Probe for challenges around:
 - i. Financial access (e.g., prices)
 - ii. Physical access (e.g., accessibility)
 - iii. Social access (e.g., gender roles)
 - iv. Logistics (e.g., stocks, storage and supply)
 - b. Probe for events/ factors that create(d) these challenges, including:
 - i. Weather patterns
 - ii. Insecurity

3. How is market functionality likely to change or evolve in the next 3- to 6-month period?
 - a. Probe for:
 - i. Availability of foods (including prices and types)
 - ii. Access to markets (including financial, physical and social access)
 - iii. Logistics (including stocks, supply and storage)
 - b. Probe for events/ factors that might undermine market functionality, including:
 - i. Weather patterns
 - ii. Insecurity
 - iii. Harvest

South Sudan – Qualitative Food Security Assessment

Key Informant Interview Tool – Humanitarian Service Providers

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Moderator name | | Assistant moderator name | |
| Date | | Location | |
| Start time: | End time: | | |

KII participant details:

| | | |
|---------------------|-------------|---------------|
| Organisation | Role | Gender |
| | | |

Introduction (5 minutes)

Facilitator's welcome, introduction and instructions

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this Key Informant Interview. My name is _____. I am part of the REACH Assessment Team.

The information you provide today will inform more effective food security analysis by humanitarian organisations working in South Sudan. Please note that this interview does not have any impact on whether you or your household will receive humanitarian assistance in the future.

You have been asked to participate because your point of view is important, and we want to hear your opinions. In particular, we'd like to ask you about humanitarian service provision in Pibor County. Please note that everything you tell us will be anonymised, and it will not be attributed to you.

Your participation in this discussion is entirely voluntary; can leave now or at any time during the discussion. You can decide whether you want to answer questions or not once the discussion starts. Please feel free to ask me any questions now, or at any point during the discussion. **Do you consent to participate in this discussion?**

This discussion will take no more than one hour.

Questions

Humanitarian food assistance

4. Can you provide an overview of current humanitarian food assistance in Pibor County, especially in the western payams (Gumuruk and Lekuangle)?
 - a. Probe on:
 - i. Which areas/ households receive food assistance?
 - b. Probe on:
 - i. What type of food do people receive?
 - ii. How much food do people receive?
 - iii. How often do people receive food?
 - iv. Where must people go to receive food?
 - c. In your view, is the current level of food assistance sufficient to meet the level of need in these locations?

5. What challenges and gaps currently exist to providing humanitarian assistance in Pibor [probe also for challenges in prepositioning over the past six months]?
 - a. Probe for:
 - i. Challenges in *providing* assistance, including those related to:
 - ❖ Logistics
 - Supplies
 - Storage
 - Staff
 - Mobility
 - ❖ Events
 - Arrivals
 - Weather patterns
 - Insecurity
 - ii. Challenges in *accessing* assistance
 - ❖ Are there particular groups/ households that face greater barriers to accessing food assistance?

6. How have the coverage and scale of food assistance changed over the past 6 months?
 - a. Probe for changes in:
 - i. *Where/ Who* received assistance
 - b. Probe for changes in:
 - i. The *type* of assistance that was provided
 - ii. The *quantity* of assistance that was provided
 - iii. The *frequency* of assistance that was provided
 - iv. The *location* of assistance that was provided

7. What humanitarian assistance is planned for communities in Pibor County over the next 3- to 6-month period?
 - a. Probe on:
 - i. Which areas/ households will receive food assistance?
 - b. Probe on:
 - i. What type of food will people receive?
 - ii. How much food will people receive?
 - iii. How often will people receive food?
 - iv. Where must people go to receive food?
 - c. What challenges to the provision of humanitarian assistance could arise?

Nutrition

4. Can you provide an overview of current nutrition services in Pibor County, especially in the western payams (Gumuruk and Lekuangole)?

- a. Probe for:
 - i. Where are these services (not) available?
 - ii. What services are available?
 - iii. How and how often are facilities stocked?
- b. Probe for:
 - i. What are the main nutrition-related issues that people are reporting, considering:
 - 1. Infants and young children (<2 years)
 - 2. Children (<5 years)
 - 3. Adults
 - ii. Whether these services currently serve a greater caseload, especially in acute malnutrition, than usual?
 - 1. How has the caseload/ level of need changed during this year?
 - 2. How does the caseload/ level of need compare with the same time last year and previous periods of severe food insecurity (e.g., 2020, 2022)?

5. What challenges and gaps currently exist to providing nutrition services in Pibor [probe for additional challenges over the prior 6-month period]?

- a. Probe for:
 - i. Challenges in *providing* services, including those related to:
 - 1. Logistics:
 - Supplies
 - Storage
 - Staffing
 - Mobility
 - 2. Events
 - Arrivals
 - Weather patterns
 - Insecurity
 - ii. Challenges in *accessing* services
 - 1. Are there particular groups/ households that face greater barriers to accessing nutrition services?

6. How have the coverage and scale of nutrition services changed over the past 6 months?

- a. Probe for changes in:
 - i. The *location* of services that are available
 - ii. The *type* of services that are available
 - iii. The *caseload*, especially rates of acute malnutrition, and how this compares with previous years

7. Are you anticipating any changes in the nutritional needs of people in Pibor in the next 3- to 6-month period?

- a. What challenges to the provision of nutritional services could arise?

Healthcare

1. Can you provide an overview of current healthcare services in Pibor County, especially in the western payams (Gumuruk and Lekuangle)?
 - a. Probe for:
 - i. Where are these services (not) available?
 - ii. What services are available?
 - iii. How and how often are facilities stocked?
 - b. Probe for:
 - i. What are the main health issues that people are reporting?
 - ii. Whether these services currently serve a greater caseload than usual, and what health issues are most common?
 - ❖ How has the caseload/ level of need changed during this year?
 - ❖ How does the caseload/ level of need compare with the same time last year and previous periods of severe food insecurity (e.g., 2020, 2022)?
2. What challenges and gaps exist to providing healthcare services in Pibor [*probe for additional challenges over the prior 6-month period*]?
 - a. Probe for:
 - i. Challenges in *providing* services
 - ❖ Logistics
 - Supplies
 - Storage
 - Staffing
 - Mobility
 - ❖ Events
 - Arrivals
 - Weather patterns
 - Insecurity
 - ii. Challenges in *accessing* services
 - ❖ Are there particular groups/ households that face greater barriers to accessing healthcare services?
3. How have the coverage and scale of healthcare services changed over the past 6 months?
 - a. Probe for changes in:
 - i. The *location* of services that are available
 - ii. The *type* of services that are available
 - iii. The *caseload* and how this compares with previous years
4. Are you anticipating any changes in the healthcare needs of people in Pibor in the next 3- to 6-month period?
 - a. What challenges to the provision of healthcare services could arise?

Conclusion (1 minute)

- Thank you for participating in our conversation and for sharing your opinions with us. This has been a very helpful discussion and your perspective is very important for us to understand.
- I would like to remind you that any comments featuring in this report will be anonymous.
- Please let us know if you have any questions for us or any feedback.