



# HUMANITARIAN SITUATION MONITORING

## South Sudan

November-December 2021

### CONTEXT

During 2021, communities in South Sudan continued to face the effects of various shocks and stressors, including endemic conflict, violence, climatic shocks, COVID-19, and limited public service infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> Compounding the stresses experienced during the lean season, an estimated 700,000<sup>2</sup> people were affected by floods between May 2021 and September 2021, while 65,000 hectares of cultivated land were destroyed, and approximately 800,000 livestock died<sup>3</sup> in flood-affected states. In addition, violence and conflict events continued to disrupt people's lives, likely peaking in May and August 2021,<sup>4</sup> driving further displacement of people away from their homes and livelihoods.

The impact of these dynamics can be witnessed in the widespread humanitarian needs, which, in the past three years, continued to escalate despite the signing of the Revitalised Peace Agreement in September 2018.<sup>5</sup> By mid-2021, food insecurity and acute malnutrition reportedly reached the highest levels since independence,<sup>6</sup> with more than half of the population (60%, or 7.2 million people) projected to face acute food insecurity, with projected pockets of Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 5 (catastrophic)<sup>7</sup> levels of acute food insecurity between February and July 2021 (an estimated 108,000 people by July).<sup>8</sup> With flood levels normally receding and access to food generally improving due to the August-October cereal harvests, consumption gaps might be expected to decrease towards the end of the year. However, considering the reduced resilience of communities in areas that have experienced prolonged periods of acute food insecurity, due to their long-term reliance on erosive coping strategies and the continued occurrence and impact of shocks, the expected positive developments might not materialise.

To support humanitarian actors' understanding of the complex dynamics of vulnerability, shocks, needs, and coping capacities in South Sudan, REACH has been monitoring the humanitarian situation in hard-to-reach areas since 2015. This situation overview is built on an analysis of monthly data that was collected by REACH enumerators through structured key informant interviews conducted with key informants (KIs) knowledgeable about a hard-to-reach settlement throughout the country in November and December of 2021. Where possible, findings were triangulated with secondary sources.

Map 1: Estimated flood extent 2019-2021

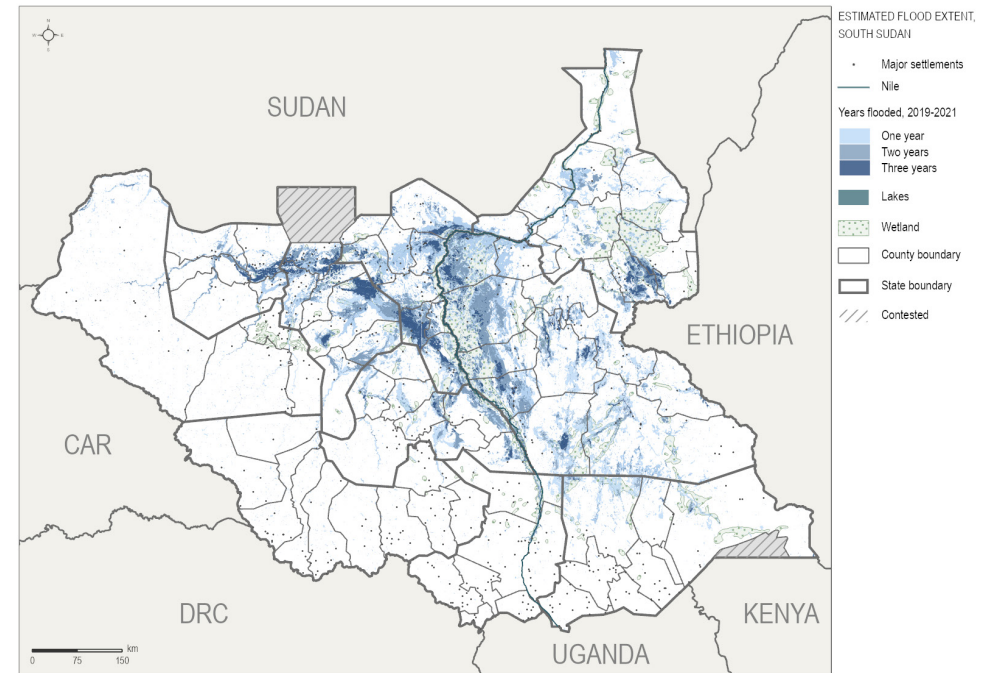
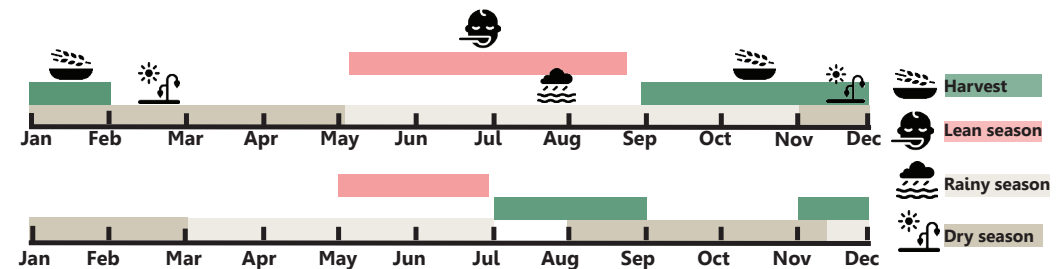


Figure 1: Seasonal calendar South Sudan (unimodal rainy season livelihood zones, above) and the bimodal Greenbelt livelihood zone



## KEY FINDINGS

- **Findings suggest that, despite the harvests of staple crops in the second half of 2021, a lack of access to food, livelihoods, and other basic needs persisted into December 2021.** Inadequate access to food was reported in the majority (51%) of settlements assessed in December, with hunger reportedly being severe<sup>9</sup> in nearly half (40%) of those settlements. Widespread flooding along the Nile and its tributaries<sup>9</sup> and dry spells experienced in the southern regions<sup>10</sup> appear to have been the main drivers of needs in December. These shocks seem to have led to a destruction of food stocks, displacement of people away from their land, and humanitarian access barriers in flood-affected areas in **Unity, Upper Nile, Warrap, Jonglei, and Lakes**, while crop wilting and harvest failure was experienced in drought-affected areas in the **Greater Equatoria** region.
- **Pockets of sub-national conflict and organised violence were spread throughout the country and continued to affect access to basic needs as well as the humanitarian response.** In addition, high year-on-year inflation<sup>11</sup> and the cumulative impact of consecutive seasons of asset-depleting coping behaviour have likely further contributed to humanitarian needs and reduced resilience.
- **In addition to affecting access to food and livelihoods, findings suggest that flooding, displacement, and insecurity severely restricted access to improved water sources,** particularly in **Unity, Upper Nile, and Warrap**, where people were reportedly commonly relying on unimproved water sources, including surface water. This suggests elevated risks for the contraction and transmission of diseases, a concern that is exacerbated by limited access to functioning health facilities found in these states and reflected in crisis levels of acute malnutrition (AMN) (IPC AMN Phase 4)<sup>12</sup> and the **recent Hepatitis E outbreak<sup>13</sup> reported by health actors in Unity.**
- **Furthermore, findings suggest the prevalence of shelter destruction (particularly reported in Unity, Upper Nile, and Warrap) and limited access to education (Unity, Upper Nile, and Jonglei) in flood and conflict-affected states.** In addition to the needs directly associated with these gaps, the absence of education and safe shelter solutions, in turn, may pose considerable protection risks for children (e.g., child labour, early marriage, forced recruitment, and other forms of child exploitation) and internally displaced persons (IDPs), **some of whom were reportedly living out in the open in Warrap, Unity, and Lakes.**

## METHODOLOGY

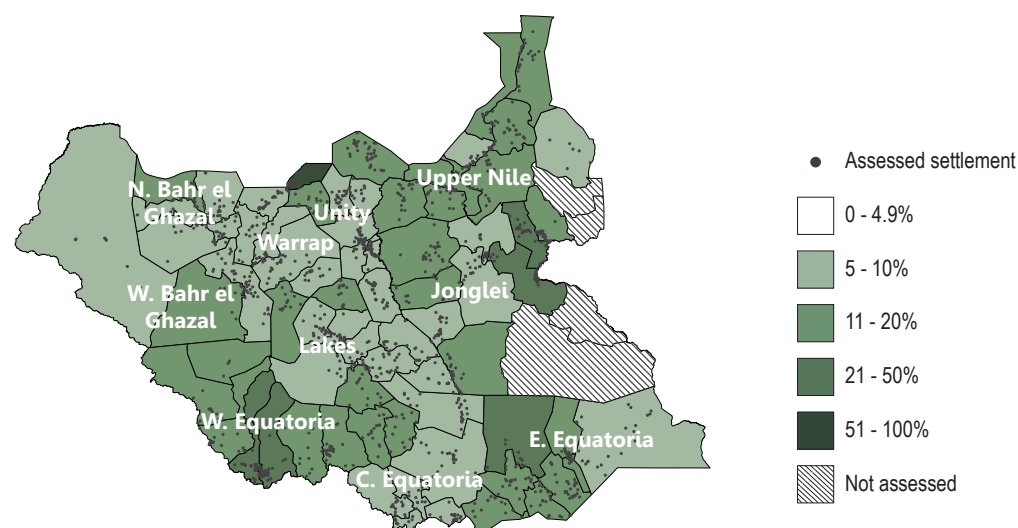
To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas, REACH uses primary data from key informants (KIs) who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK). Information for this report was collected from KIs interviewed throughout the country in November and December 2021.

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted using a structured survey tool. After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal or most credible response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting.

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of all settlements in each assessed month were included in analysis.<sup>15</sup> Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month vary. To reduce the likelihood that variations in data are attributable to coverage differences, over time analyses were only conducted for counties with at least 70% consistent payam<sup>16</sup> coverage throughout the period of analysis.

**Findings are not generalisable and should be considered indicative of the situation in assessed hard-to-reach areas in December 2021,** unless specified otherwise. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

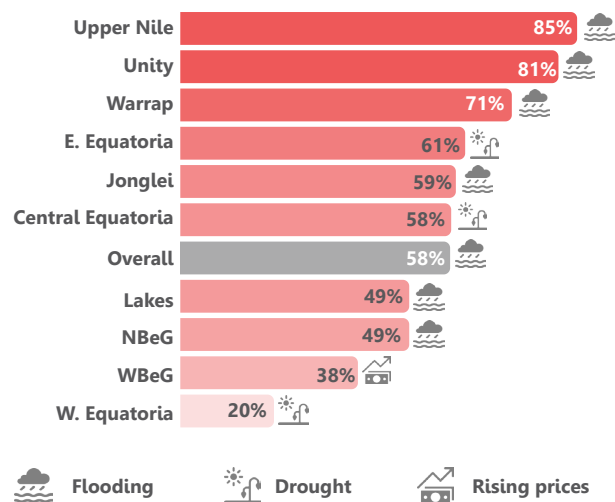
Map 2: Assessment coverage December 2021



## SHOCKS & STRESSORS

Findings suggest that communities in the assessed areas commonly faced the impacts of climatic shocks, including both widespread flooding and localised drought. Overall, shocks<sup>17</sup> had reportedly impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods in the month prior to data collection in 58% of assessed settlements. In those settlements, floods were the most reported types of shocks (51%), followed by droughts (17%), disease outbreaks (11%), and rising prices (10%).

Figure 2: Proportion of assessed settlements per state where shocks had reportedly impacted livelihoods in the 30 days prior to data collection, and most reported main shock per state



### Flooding and displacement along the Nile and its tributaries

By December 2021, flooding remained extensive for the third year in a row, mostly due to Nile River overflows and the presence of stagnant floodwaters<sup>18</sup> remaining from the previous two years of widespread flooding. In line with this, shocks were particularly commonly reported to have affected livelihoods in assessed settlements in the flood-affected Unity (83%) and Upper Nile State (85%), with flooding emerging as the most common shock event, according to KIs (compared to 49% across the other states). Similarly, floods were the most common livelihoods shocks experienced in assessed settlements where shocks were reported in Warrap (71%), Jonglei (59%), and Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBeG) (49%). In these states, which, in 2021, reportedly suffered from the most severe floods in the country for nearly 60 years,<sup>19</sup> communities were cut-off from accessing enough food and other basic needs amid livestock deaths and destroyed food stocks,<sup>20</sup> while thousands of people were displaced to higher grounds in 2021.<sup>21</sup> According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), crop production shortfalls were particularly experienced in Warrap, Unity, Lakes, Upper Nile, and Jonglei, with crop production in Warrap being the lowest one on record since 2014.<sup>22</sup>

While flooding commenced in May 2021, at the start of the rainy season, floodwaters reportedly remained stagnant<sup>23</sup> with no sign of receding, and even increased in the following months in some low-lying areas, leading to longer-term displacement.<sup>24</sup> Consistent with this; KIs in 45% of assessed settlements in Unity, and 22% in Upper Nile State reported that half or more than half of the settlements' population had left the settlement in the month prior to data collection (compared to 12% across the other states), with flooding being the main reported reason for displacement in 77% and 56% of those settlements in Unity and Upper Nile State, respectively, indicating that flooding likely continued to drive displacement in December.

### Dry spells affecting crop conditions in the south

While the northern states suffered from erratic rains and river overflows, findings suggest that communities in the southeastern flank of the country were affected by dry spells. Delayed rains, particularly in Greater Kapoeta (Eastern Equatoria), led to below-average cumulative rainfall between October and December 2021. This, in turn, drove wilted crop conditions, a projected below-average maize yield, and a surge in cereal prices on local markets, according to reports by the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).<sup>25,26</sup> Many settlements in this region depend on subsistence agriculture (reported in 85% of settlements) and/or market purchases (61%) for their food access, with a food system that is reliant on a unimodal rainy season followed by the main harvests between August and October.

In line with this, the occurrence of shocks that had affected livelihoods in the month prior to data collection was reported in 58% and 61% of assessed settlements in Central and Eastern Equatoria State, respectively, in December 2021 (down from 75% and 90% in November 2021). In both states, "drought" was the most reported type of shock, with KIs in 56% and 54% of settlements affected by shocks reporting drought had been a main livelihoods shock in December.

### Localised violence and conflict throughout the country

In addition, while conflict was not commonly reported as a specific shock to livelihoods, findings suggest that **sub-national violence and insecurity continued to affect daily life and indirectly drove needs in various parts in the country towards the end of 2021**. In particular, conflict in Tonj North (Warrap; see box 1) and Leer and Mayendit counties (Unity) reportedly led to large-scale displacement, infrastructure destruction, and civilian casualties, while also hindering the humanitarian response.<sup>27</sup>

More generally, findings suggest that violence affected daily life in 32% of assessed settlements in the month prior to data collection in December 2021. This was particularly commonly reported in Eastern Equatoria (66%), Western Equatoria (58%), and Warrap (55%), in line with conflict dynamics observed in Quarter 3 of 2021.<sup>28</sup> Across these states, gender-based violence, cattle raiding, and violent crimes (e.g., murder and assault), were the most reported types of violence.



**Box 1. Zoom-in: Violence and displacement in Warrap State**

**Reflecting reports from the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)<sup>30</sup> and the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED),<sup>31</sup> findings indicate that violence in Warrap was concentrated in Greater Tonj.** Cattle raiding and revenge killing were reported in most assessed settlements, followed by sexual or gender-based violence and violent crimes, including murder and assault. This is further reflected by widespread feelings of insecurity, with KIs in 100% and 73% of assessed settlements in Tonj East and Tonj North reporting that most people felt unsafe most of the time (compared to 23% overall).

**According to various reports, violence and insecurity in greater Tonj hampered access to basic services, humanitarian access, and displaced thousands of people.<sup>32,33</sup>** Displacement was particularly reported in assessed settlements in Tonj East, with KIs in 53% of assessed settlements reporting that half or more of the settlements' population had left in the month prior to data collection (compared to 18% country-wide), which was most commonly contributed to conflict. However, mobility is not always an option to cope with violence; findings from two September 2021 Rapid Assessment conducted by REACH in Tonj South and East, and Tonj North, suggested the presence of vulnerable, isolated communities in Greater Tonj that were unable to displace to access food and basic needs due to insecurity and flood-related movement barriers.<sup>34</sup>

**Findings indicate those people that could leave their settlement engaged in micro-displacements within their own county;** in the majority of settlements across Greater Tonj from where departures had been reported, KIs reported people departed to locations within the same county. Insecurity might have restricted mobility further down south, as the presence of blockades and insecurity had reportedly **prevented vulnerable groups, including older persons, persons with disabilities, and female-headed households, from displacing towards Tonj South.**<sup>35</sup> Considering the widespread destruction of infrastructure and limited access reported in Greater Tonj, these limited mobility patterns could add further stress on already scarce resources in affected areas. In line with this, in 19% of assessed settlements in Tonj North, KIs reported expecting an increase in violent conflict in the 1-3 months following data collection (compared to 10% overall), with pressure on key resources (e.g., water and food) being the most reported reason for this perception.

In conflict-affected areas in Warrap (Tonj North and East counties in particular) and Western Equatoria (Tambura and Nagero counties), conflict featured among the main reported reasons for a lack of access to sufficient food in settlements assessed in December. Moreover, the expansion of conflict and violence in surplus production areas in Greater Equatoria likely negatively affected food availability in market-dependent areas that were not directly affected by conflict.<sup>29</sup>

**High year-on-year inflation**

**While staple prices generally decreased slightly in most places due to the depreciation of the South Sudanese Pound on the national market throughout 2021, prices remained exceptionally high<sup>36</sup> due to the consecutive years of floods, conflict, and dry-spells, as well as regional and global macro-economic pressures, which contributed to a steady increase in cereal prices over time.<sup>38</sup>** As of July 2021, South Sudan maintained the position of the country with the second highest year-on-year inflation in East Africa, with food prices that remained significantly elevated compared to the five-year average.<sup>37</sup> In line with this, items being too expensive was reported in 79% of assessed settlements where market access had been reported (90%), marking this as the most reported market access barrier in December 2021.

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), the impact of this inflation on cereal prices was particularly visible in assessed markets in the Greater Equatoria region, where "very high price increases" at key markets were reported in September 2021.<sup>38</sup> For instance, by December 2021, after the harvests, monitored maize grain and sorghum prices in Juba markets remained considerably higher compared to the same time last year and the 5-year average,<sup>39</sup> and had a negative impact on purchasing power, particular among livestock and market-dependent households.<sup>40</sup> In 90% of assessed settlements where market access was reported in Greater Equatoria (98%), market prices being too high was a reported market access barrier. **While market dependence is typically relatively low in December due to the presence of harvested food stocks, high prices might pose considerable barriers to food access among shock-affected households, including displaced populations, that had been unable to harvest their crops and have hence become more dependent on markets to access food.**

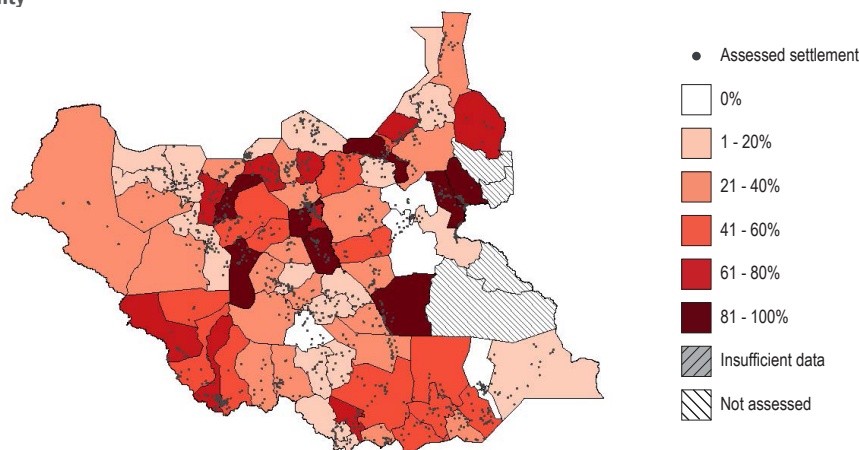
**Presence of displaced populations in flood and conflict-affected states**

**The various shocks described in the previous sections seem to be witnessed by the presence of displaced populations, particularly in flood and conflict-affected states, as indicated by the findings.** In December 2021, the presence of internally displaced persons (IDPs) was most commonly reported in assessed settlements in Warrap (56%), Upper Nile (52%), and Unity (49%) (compared to 28% across the other states).

The relative spread of IDPs across assessed settlements proxied by the AoK findings can be triangulated with the estimated number of IDP individuals provided in the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM), which indicate that Warrap and Unity were hosting the highest absolute numbers of IDPs (over 420,000 and 380,000, respectively) in December.<sup>41</sup>

In 74%, 59%, and 29% of those settlements in Unity, Warrap, and Upper Nile where presence of IDPs had been reported, respectively, KIs reported that half or more of the settlements' population comprised IDPs (compared to 17% of assessed settlements with IDP presence across the other states). Particularly in those settlements, the presence of IDPs might further compound pressure on limited resources in communities where access to livelihoods and basic needs has already been compromised by stagnant floodwaters and/or insecurity-related barriers.

**Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements with reported IDP presence, per county**



## ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS & SERVICES

### Flooding and insecurity driving food consumption gaps across the country

**Findings suggest that food insecurity remained a key concern for many hard-to-reach communities in December 2021**, a period during which food needs are traditionally relatively eased in most areas after the August to October harvests of sorghum and other cereals<sup>42</sup> and the subsequent price drops on local food markets.<sup>43</sup> In line with the variation in shocks and stressors experienced in the different regions described in the previous section, **the drivers of limited access to food appear diverse and region-specific, with pockets of concern spread throughout the country** (e.g., see Box 2).

**Overall, in December 2021, KIs in 51% of assessed settlements reported most people were unable to access sufficient amounts of food**, with hunger being described as “severe” in nearly half of those settlements (40%). In those settlements where limited access to food was reported, flooding (35%) was the main reported reason, particularly in Unity, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Warrap, and Jonglei. Other reported reasons included “no stocks” (13%), which might indicate the early exhaustion of some food stocks due to the various shocks described in the previous section, and a lack of rain (12%), the latter of which was mostly reported in Greater Equatoria, reflecting the delayed, below-average rains<sup>50</sup> and subsequent crop wilting experienced in the region.<sup>51</sup>

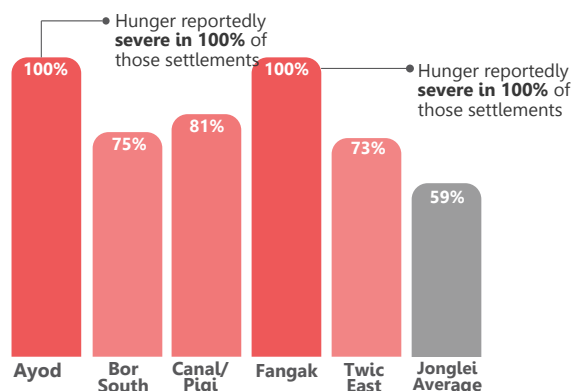
**In Warrap, KIs in 65% of assessed settlements reported most people in their settlement were unable to access enough food, with hunger reportedly being “severe” or “worst it can be” in 47% and 2% of those settlements, respectively.**

In line with the floods and insecurity witnessed in Greater Tonj (see Box 1), findings suggest food insecurity was particularly experienced in settlements in Tonj East (limited access to food reported in 92% of assessed settlements), Tonj South (85%), and Tonj North (77%). In these counties, flooding and insecurity reportedly prevented people from accessing sufficient food, which seems to suggest a continuation of the already critically constrained situation observed in September 2021<sup>52</sup> and only marginal improvements since March 2021,<sup>53</sup> indicative of a severely eroded resilience in those communities where traditional coping mechanisms may have degraded or even fully collapsed as a result of the compounding shocks and stressors experienced over time.

**Similarly, findings suggest stagnant floodwaters<sup>54</sup> and flood-related crop and harvest stock destructions also drove food needs in the flood-affected areas in Jonglei, Lakes, Upper Nile, Unity, and Northern Bahr el Ghazal (NBeG)**, with the majority of the population in assessed settlements across these states also reportedly being unable to access enough food due to flooding and a lack of stock.

Flooding and subsequent displacement has likely had a negative impact on usual cultivation cycles. While most people would reportedly engage in cultivation in a normal year in the vast majority of assessed settlements across these five states (86%), KIs in only 51% of assessed settlements reported cultivation was a main source of food in December 2021.<sup>55</sup> Considering stocks usually last until at least February in most locations in a normal year, this relatively low proportion could be indicative of an early exhaustion of harvested stocks in some areas, reflective of the decrease in harvested cropland and yields observed across these flood-affected states in 2021.<sup>56</sup> Findings indicate that communities in these states commonly relied on livestock activities (49%), fishing (43%), market purchase (38%), and humanitarian assistance (22%).

Hunger seems to have been particularly critical in Unity State, where severe hunger was reported in 63% (compared to 40% overall) of those settlements where inadequate access to food was reported (54%), and in some areas in Jonglei. In particular, in 100% of settlements assessed in Ayod and Fangak counties (Jonglei), KIs reported inadequate access to food and hunger being “severe”<sup>57</sup>, which they almost unanimously contributed to flooding. In both Ayod and Fangak, findings suggest that settlements were almost exclusively reliant on foraging wild foods, fishing, and bartering (the latter being only reported in 94% of assessed settlements in Fangak).<sup>58</sup> These findings suggest a prolonged situation of food insecurity since the lean season, with both counties having been projected to face emergency levels of food insecurity (IPC Phase 4) at the same time last year (December 2020) and during the 2021 lean season (April and July 2021).<sup>59</sup> **The impact of long-term consumption gaps in Jonglei are reflected in pockets of Phase 5 levels of acute food insecurity forecasted by the April to July 2022 IPC projections, which estimate that 67,000 persons in Fangak, Canal/Pigi, Pibor, and Ayod will be facing catastrophic levels of food insecurity, in the upcoming lean season.**<sup>60</sup>



**Figure 3: Top five counties in Jonglei with the highest proportion of assessed settlements where most people were reportedly unable to access sufficient food, compared to state average (December 2021)**

### Access to improved water sources in flood-affected areas

**In addition to affecting access to food and livelihoods, findings suggest that flooding, displacement, and insecurity further compounded access to improved water sources.**<sup>61</sup> In 55% of assessed settlements in both Unity and Upper Nile State, and 52% in Warrap, KIs reported there were no functional boreholes available in the settlement (compared to 25% across the other states), which might be due to the observed flood-induced destruction of WASH infrastructure in these states between 2019 and 2021,<sup>62,63</sup> as well as displacement away from low-lying settlements to higher grounds that might lack adequate infrastructure and/or suffer from increased pressure on shared resources.<sup>64</sup>

### Box 2. Zoom-in: Localised conflict and food insecurity in Tambura (Western Equatoria State)

**While findings suggest food insecurity was not a common experience in most counties in Western Equatoria (lack of access to enough food was reported in only 8% of assessed settlements), considerable consumption gaps were likely affecting communities in Tambura and Nagero.** In 52% of assessed settlements in Tambura and 20% in Nagero, the majority of people reportedly did not have access to enough food, with hunger being severe in virtually all those settlements in December 2021, which is reflected by the fact that both counties featured among the country's 13 “areas of extreme concern” in the Food Security & Livelihoods Cluster Sectoral Severity Classification in the 2022 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO).<sup>44</sup> These findings indicate a continuation of a prolonged experience of acute food insecurity in these counties, reflected by the IPC acute food insecurity analysis findings that classified both counties in IPC Phase 4 (emergency) at the same time last year (December 2020) and during the 2021 lean season (April and July 2021).<sup>45</sup>

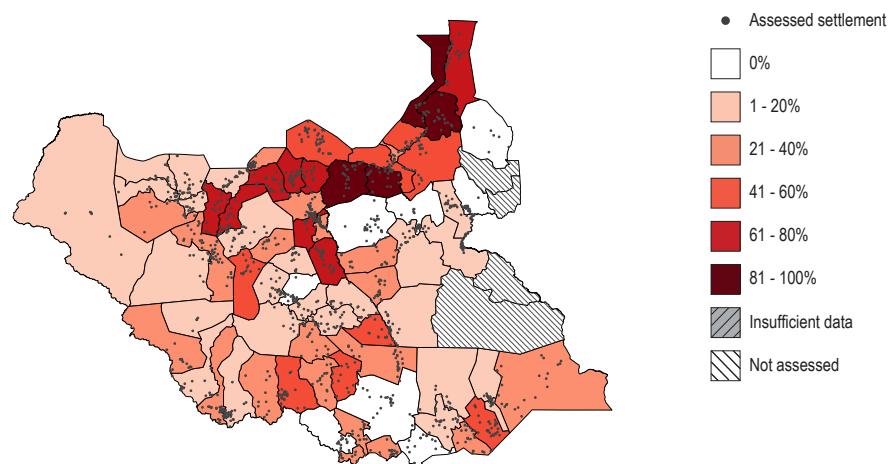
**Food insecurity in these states appears to be almost exclusively driven by sub-national violence and insecurity**, particularly concentrated in Tambura but with likely spillover in Nagero, with conflict emerging as the only reported reason for limited access to sufficient food in both counties. According to ACLED data, violence in Tambura peaked between July and October 2021, with violent attacks leading to hundreds of civilian casualties<sup>46</sup> and an estimated 80,000 displaced by December 2021.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, violent crimes (including murder and assault) had reportedly happened in the month prior to data collection in 70% of assessed settlements in October 2021, compared to 19% in December 2021.

**However, despite the apparent relative lull in violence in December, fears of flare-ups have reportedly made many displaced populations reluctant to return to their settlements.**<sup>48</sup> This has likely prevented them from engaging in seasonal cultivation practices and might have reduced their access to harvested food stocks, while driving pressure on communal resources in settlements of displacement. In line with this, while KIs in 100% of assessed settlements reported that most people would engage in cultivation in a normal year in December 2021, cultivation was only reported as a main food source in 48% of settlements. Instead, findings suggest that people atypically relied on humanitarian assistance (57%), hunting (46%), and food provided by family, friends, or local people (29%). The high reliance on assistance is concerning considering the fact humanitarian access was severely limited in the most insecure areas,<sup>49</sup> and might indicate severe consumption gaps among vulnerable populations that found themselves isolated from their land as well as humanitarian food assistance.

Moreover, access to preferred water sources was reportedly constrained by insecurity in 32% of assessed settlements in Warrap and 21% in Unity (compared to only 8% across the other states).

**In the majority of those settlements without functional boreholes in Unity, Upper Nile, and Warrap, people were reportedly reliant on open water or unprotected wells,** which was reported in 89%, 87%, and 73% of settlements without functional boreholes in those states, respectively. In line with this, WASH featured among the most commonly reported types of humanitarian assistance most needed in Upper Nile State, further indicating water access stress experienced in the assessed settlements.

**Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements where most people reportedly relied on an unimproved water source per county**



### Limited access to healthcare and risk of disease outbreaks

**Findings suggest access to functional health facilities was severely constrained across Unity and Upper Nile, as well as Jonglei.** This is particularly concerning considering that inadequate access to improved sources for drinking water and the chronic lack of sanitation facilities (latrines were reportedly not available in 61% of assessed settlements),<sup>65</sup> carries considerable health risks, including the transmission of communicable diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, Hepatitis E, and typhoid.<sup>66</sup>

In December 2021, KIs in 24% of settlements assessed in Unity, 18% in Jonglei, and 14% in Upper Nile reported there were no functional health facilities that people could reach from the settlement (compared to 1% across the other states). In those settlements, distance to healthcare facilities and the absence of staff, perhaps due to displacement, were the most commonly reported reasons.

**Coinciding shocks and limited infrastructure are likely to further exacerbate the risk of disease outbreaks.** According to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), which runs a clinic in Bentiu IDP camp (Unity State), the lack of access to improved water sources, sanitation facilities, and sewage infrastructure, compounded by additional pressure due to the influx of flood-displaced populations, the omnipresence of remaining flood waters, and the inability to continue vaccination campaigns in flood-affected areas<sup>67</sup> **culminated in a considerable threat of disease outbreaks.**

Perhaps reflective of this, the caseload of malaria and other water-borne diseases was reportedly rapidly increasing in November 2021.<sup>68</sup> **Health needs in the region were further witnessed by the outbreak of Hepatitis E,** which reportedly started in Bentiu IDP camp in August 2021 and has since spread outside the camp boundaries to Bentiu and Rubkona,<sup>69</sup> which is particularly concerning considering the fact that KIs in 28% of assessed settlements in Rubkona reported no access to any type of healthcare facility in December 2021.

The widespread prevalence of morbidity and the limited quantity and diversity of food, exacerbated by the disrupted access to, and destruction of, health centers and nutrition treatment services,<sup>70</sup> have reportedly led to the majority of counties in Upper Nile, Unity, and Jonglei being classified in IPC Phase 4 (critical) for acute malnutrition at the same time last year (November 2020 to March 2021) and during the 2021 lean season projection (April to July 2021).<sup>71</sup> **Considering the continued lack of access to food and health services indicated by AoK findings in December 2021, as well as funding shortfalls,<sup>72</sup> acute malnutrition may have remained a key concern for children under five in flood-affected areas in these regions towards the end of the year.**

More broadly, given the severe food gaps found in assessed settlements in these counties indicated by the IPC analysis<sup>73</sup> and the presence of counties of severe or extreme concern in the Food Security and Nutrition Monitoring (FSNMS+) Round 27 analysis,<sup>74</sup> **it is likely that constrained access to health and nutrition services might further exacerbate the risk of morbidity and mortality in the region.**



**Shelter destruction, education service gaps, and related protection concerns**  
Findings suggest flooding and insecurity contributed to shelter and education-related needs and further contributed to protection concerns for displaced and vulnerable non-displaced populations in affected states.

In the majority of assessed settlements in Unity (68%) and Warrap (69%), as well as in Upper Nile (40%), KIs reported flooding and/or conflict-related damage to shelters had occurred in the month prior to data collection (compared to 10% across the other states). In 62%, 36%, and 49% of those settlements in Unity, Warrap, and Upper Nile respectively, KIs estimated that half or more of the settlements' shelters had been destroyed.

While the main shelter types for the host communities in these states were reported to be tukuls or other permanent shelter types, KIs in 88% and 58% of settlements in Unity and Warrap, respectively, where IDP presence had been reported (49% and 56%) reported that IDPs were staying out in the open without shelter, which leaves them vulnerable to protection risks, particularly considering the prevalence of localised conflict and insecurity in these states.

**In addition, in 52% of assessed settlements in Unity, followed by 50% in Jonglei and 40% in Upper Nile State, KIs reported there were no education facilities that could be reached from the settlement** (compared to 22% across the other states). In these states, a lack of access to education was most commonly contributed to facilities being located too far away, facilities having been destroyed by disasters, and a lack of teachers, which might be due to flood-driven displacement and infrastructure damage. A lack of education bears considerable protection concerns for children, leaving them at risk of child labour, early marriage and pregnancy, abduction, forced recruitment, or other forms of exploitation.<sup>75</sup>

## COPING & ADAPTATION

**Reflective of the limited access to food and other basic needs observed throughout the country in December 2021, findings suggest that communities commonly resorted to various erosive coping strategies to address gaps in access to basic needs and services.** In December 2021, the use of consumption-based coping strategies by most people in the settlement was reported in all settlements (100%) where food access was reportedly inadequate (51%). Findings suggest rationing of food was the most common form of coping throughout the country; reducing the number of meals consumed (63%), limiting portion sizes (62%), and relying on less preferred, less expensive types of food (51%) were the most commonly reported types of strategies used in settlements where food access was reportedly inadequate.

### Box 3. Zoom-in: Sexual and gender-based violence in the Equatorias

**Sexual or gender-based violence (SGBV) and related protection concerns were relatively commonly reported in Greater Equatoria, compared to the other regions in South Sudan.** In 68% and 61% of assessed settlements in Eastern and Western Equatoria, respectively, SGBV had reportedly affected life in the settlement in the month prior to data collection in December 2021, compared to 12% of settlements assessed across the other states. SGBV also emerged as the most reported main safety concern for women, reported in 67%, 41%, and 76% of settlements assessed in Eastern, Central, and Western Equatoria, respectively (compared to 8% across the other states), as well as one of the main protection concerns for girls in 27%, 21%, and 37% of settlements (compared to 5%) and boys (15%, 21%, and 18%, respectively, compared to 1%).

The concerns indicated by these findings are further reflected by the fact that **protection was among the most reported priority needs for women** in Eastern and Central Equatoria, reported in 12% and 10% of assessed settlements, respectively, compared to 2% across the other states.

Elevated reporting of the impact of SGBV on people's daily life and feelings of safety might be related to armed attacks and violence observed across both states in November and December 2021.<sup>76</sup>



**While SGBV was most commonly reported in Greater Equatoria, the issue is likely much more widespread, although the full extent of sexual violence in South Sudan remains hard to estimate.** Stigma, fear of retaliation, and trauma, as well as a lack of formal accountability in many areas and persisting patriarchal values, are likely to prevent many victims and their families from reporting SGBV incidents.<sup>77</sup>

### Asset liquidation and prolonged use of severe coping strategies

**More severe types of consumption coping strategies were seemingly used in shock-affected counties throughout the country, suggesting an atypically early depletion of harvested food stocks.** In Warrap, the consumption of wild foods known to make people sick was reported in 55% of settlements where inadequate food access was reported (65%) (compared to 11% across the other states), with wild foods reportedly making up half or more of the main meals in 77% of those settlements.



Moreover, in Nagero and Tambura counties (Western Equatoria), most people in 100% and 91% of settlements where inadequate access to food was reported (20% in Nagero, 48% in Tambura) reportedly went entire days without eating. In addition, in 27% of those settlements in Tambura, adults were reportedly skipping meals so that children could eat. This latter strategy was also reportedly adopted by most people in the majority of assessed settlements where insufficient access to food had been reported in Leer, Mayendit, and Panyijar counties (Unity), as well as Fashoda (Upper Nile), Rumbek North (Lakes), Ayod and Twic East (Jonglei), and Morobo (Central Equatoria).

**Most of these counties have been experiencing crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse levels of food insecurity for prolonged periods of time,<sup>78</sup> potentially indicating a general erosion of available strategies, and in some areas, potential exhaustion.** An atypically early depletion of food stocks in these counties, combined with deepened erosion of coping strategies, might lead up to an early start of the lean season and emergency levels of food insecurity. In addition, the liquidation of productive assets, while temporarily alleviating experienced hunger or livelihoods stress, is another crisis strategy used that is indicative of a potential deterioration of access to food in the medium-term.

Overall, in assessed settlements across states where shocks had reportedly affected livelihoods (58%), KIs reported the consumption of seed stocks meant for next season (12%) and the sale of more animals than usual for this time of the year (14%), with both strategies being most commonly reported in Eastern Equatoria (23% and 49% of shock-affected settlements, respectively). While these strategies were less reported in assessed settlements in other shock-affected states, signs of access barriers and use of crisis level coping reported throughout this situation overview could suggest that some communities may have already exhausted these strategies at the time of data collection.

### Distress migration and longer-term displacement

In South Sudan, mobility is a common resource to adapt to a lack of access to basic needs,<sup>79</sup> with people engaging in distress migration to mitigate the impact of shocks and disrupted access to basic needs. In line with the shocks and limited access to basic needs described earlier in this situation overview, departure of half or more of the population away from the settlement was mostly found in Unity State (47% of assessed settlements), Warrap (24%), and Upper Nile (24%) (compared to 7% across the other states). In the vast majority of counties where this was reported, people reportedly mostly departed to higher grounds within the same county, with some populations along the northern border with Sudan reportedly engaging in cross-border displacement.

### Box 4. Zoom-in: Mobility and barriers in Canal/Pigi

In Canal/Pigi County (Jonglei) departure of the entire population was reported in 34% of assessed settlements (compared to only 1% overall), which indicates a continuation of the situation described by focus group discussion (FGD) participants during an October 2021 Rapid Assessment conducted in the county.<sup>80</sup> In October, FGD participants commonly reported that displacement had led to the establishment of new settlements, with many IDPs reportedly not having any intentions to return or displace again, due to the stagnating floodwaters in their settlements of origin. A lack of assets among IDPs, further exacerbated by limited opportunity to rely on social connections, left IDPs largely dependent on host communities.<sup>81</sup>

**Findings highlighted the particular vulnerability of IDPs and IDP-hosting communities in South Sudan;** in Canal-Pigi, years of cumulative shocks and asset-depletion reportedly contributed to a considerable decrease in community wealth and an erosion of community coping mechanisms, severely reducing the resilience of both IDPs and hosting households to withstand future shocks and stressors.<sup>82</sup> Considering the persistence of floodwaters and the continued food insecurity indicated by the AoK findings, the displacement dynamics and impacts found in Canal/Pigi might indicate that the ability to recuperate assets is limited in the county, rendering communities at risk of a worsening situation if floodwaters do not recede in the upcoming months and harvests do not materialise.

**Figure 4: % of assessed settlements by proportion of the population that had reportedly departed from the settlement in the month prior to data collection, by state (December 2021)**

	C. Equatoria	E. Equatoria	Jonglei	Lakes	NBeG	Unity	Upper Nile	Warrap	WBeG	W. Equatoria
All	0%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	5%	1%	0%	0%
More than half	3%	0%	3%	3%	0%	17%	5%	11%	0%	1%
Half	5%	1%	8%	9%	1%	30%	14%	13%	6%	1%
Less than half	7%	35%	37%	4%	14%	34%	33%	25%	9%	3%
None	84%	58%	37%	77%	75%	11%	26%	48%	50%	89%

## ACCESS TO HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

**While the lean season response had ended in Greater Equatoria and Greater Bahr el Ghazal by November 2021, delays in the delivery of humanitarian food assistance (HFA) due to insecurity and flooding had led to the extension of the response in flood-affected areas in Jonglei and Upper Nile State into December 2021.**<sup>83</sup> This is likely why humanitarian assistance remained to be atypically reported as one of the three main food sources in the majority of assessed settlements in the affected counties of Tambura (Western Equatoria), Luakpiny/Nasir, Panyikang, Ulang, and Maban (Upper Nile), Guit, Panyijar, and Rukbona (Unity), and Akobo and Nyirol (Jonglei) in December 2021.

However, while the lean season response was prolonged to extend the reach to affected communities, by mid-December, flooding of roads in Upper Nile, Jonglei, Unity, and Northern Lakes (particularly in Cueibet, Rumbek North and Center), as well as flooding and insecurity in Warrap, Western Equatoria (Tambura and Nagero) and Unity State reportedly **continued to prevent humanitarian access to some of the worst-affected communities.**<sup>84</sup> Moreover, the use of air vessels to transport goods to flood-affected settlements drove up costs and indirectly contributed to limited access of people to humanitarian aid due to persisting funding shortages.<sup>85</sup>

In line with these barriers observed in flood-and conflict-affected states, people in 40% of assessed settlements across Jonglei, Lakes, Unity, Upper Nile, Warrap, and Western Equatoria had reportedly not received any type of humanitarian assistance in the 3 months prior to data collection, which was particularly commonly reported in Warrap (62%). It should be noted that these findings will likely not reflect an inability of humanitarian actors to reach populations across all settlements as not all counties were prioritised for an extended lean season response.

**That said, the cessation of food distributions was a relatively commonly reported main perceived reason for limited access to food in flood-affected assessed settlements where severe hunger had been reported in Jonglei, Unity, Warrap, and Lakes.** In particular, the stop of food distributions was the second most commonly reported reason for a lack of access to food in Leer and Mayendit (Unity) and featured among the reported main reasons in Greater Rumbek and Bor South (Jonglei), Renk (Upper Nile), and Gogrial West (Warrap).

## CONCLUSION

Findings suggest that three consecutive years of flooding, as well as dry spells, sub-national conflict and violence, displacement, and persistently high staple prices continued to drive widespread food security and livelihoods needs well into December 2021, despite the August-October harvests and the common use of consumption and livelihoods coping strategies.

While drivers of needs were diverse and multifold, needs were found throughout the country. At the state level, the magnitude of humanitarian needs appeared highest in the flood-and conflict-affected Unity, Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Warrap States. Findings suggest that, in these states, access to sufficient food, improved drinking water sources, as well as health and education services was severely constrained in most assessed settlements. However, pockets of severe needs were also found across all other states, including but not limited to Tambura and Nagero (Western Equatoria) and Rumbek North (Lakes).

The combination of a reported lack of food stocks relatively soon after the harvests, as well as the stagnation of floodwaters in low-lying areas, the continuation of insecurity and displacement, and the prolonged use of asset-depleting coping strategies might indicate an early start of the 2022 lean season, particularly in areas where humanitarian access is constrained by insecurity. In the upcoming months, receding floodwaters and a consequent increase in humanitarian access in some areas, as well as the second harvest in bimodal rainfall Greenbelt agricultural region, might offset some of these dynamics.

## ABOUT REACH

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidencebased decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and indepth 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).

## ENDNOTES

1. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). (Feb 2022). [South Sudan Humanitarian Situation Overview](#).
2. World Food Programme (WFP). (Sep 2021). [Country Brief](#).
3. Médecins sans Frontières (MSF). (Jan 2022). [South Sudan: Hundreds of thousands still living in precarious conditions months after the floods](#).
4. Armed Conflict and Event Data Project (ACLED). Dashboard, available [here](#).
5. OCHA (Feb 2022). [South Sudan Humanitarian Situation Overview](#).
6. World Health Organisation (WHO). (March 2021). [Bi-weekly Humanitarian Situation Report](#).
7. "Households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs, even after full employment of coping strategies." [IPC Technical Manual, 3.0](#) page 37.
8. IPC South Sudan Acute Food Insecurity Oct-Nov 2020 and projections March 2021-July 2021. Available [here](#). Note that individuals in IPC Phase 3, 4, and 5 are considered to be "in need" in the HNO PiN.
9. In assessed settlements where most people were reportedly unable to access sufficient food, KIs are asked to estimate if hunger was "small", "severe", or "worst it can be" for most people when there was not enough access to food in the month prior to data collection, where "worst it can be" roughly aligns with IPC Phase 5.
10. Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) (December 2021). [Flood Impact Report](#).
11. *ibid*.
12. FAO & WFP (June 2022). [Crop and Food Security Assessment Report](#).
13. United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). [South Sudan Humanitarian situation report no. 64](#)
14. The Hepatitis E outbreak was first declared in Bentiu IDP camp in August 2021 and was ongoing in Bentiu Town, Bentiu IDP camp, and Rubkona Town at the time of the analysis. WHO (December 2021). [Hepatitis E virus - republic of South Sudan](#).
15. To calculate the percentage of AoK coverage, the total number of settlements per county is based on OCHA settlement lists in addition to new settlements mapped by KIs each month.
16. Payam is the administrative unit below the county level.
17. In the data collection tool, a shock is defined as a negative event, such as flooding, drought, conflict, or disease outbreak.
18. REACH (December 2021). [Flooding trends in counties of concern](#).
19. Floodlist (December 2021). [South Sudan - Over 800,000 affected by worst flooding in 60 years](#).
20. FAO (December 2021). [Flood impact report](#).
21. Reuters (December 2021). [Floods cut off communities in South Sudan's Unity state](#).
22. FAO (December 2021). [Flood impact report](#).
23. REACH (December 2021). [Flooding trends in counties of concern](#).
24. *Ibid*.
25. FEWS NET (November 2021). [East Africa Seasonal Monitor](#).
26. *Ibid*.
27. OCHA (December 2021). [South Sudan humanitarian snapshot](#).
28. Human Rights Division UNMISS (July-September 2021). [Brief on violence affecting civilians](#).
29. FAO (December 2021). [Flood impact report](#).
30. OCHA (December 2021). [South Sudan Humanitarian snapshot](#).
31. ACLED. Dashboard, available [here](#).
32. REACH (September 2021). [Tonj South and Tonj East rapid assessment](#).
33. UNMISS (January 2022). [Dialogue on peace and reconciliation Warrap State's Tonj area concludes with agreement](#).
34. REACH (September 2021). [Tonj South and Tonj East rapid assessment](#).
35. *Ibid*.
36. FAO (December 2021). [Flood impact report](#).
37. WFP (December 2021). [VAM monthly price monitoring bulletin November 2021](#).
38. *Ibid*.
39. FEWS NET (December 2021). [South Sudan price bulletin](#).
40. WFP (December 2021). [VAM Monthly price monitoring bulletin November 2021](#).
41. International organisation for migration (IOM). (June 2022). [DTM Mobility tracking round 12, November-December 2021](#).
- 42.
- 43.
44. OCHA (February 2022). [Humanitarian needs overview South Sudan](#).
45. IPC (December 2020). [Acute food insecurity October-November 2020 and projections for December 2020-July 2021](#).
46. ACLED. Dashboard, available [here](#).
47. Amnesty International (December 2021). [South Sudan: Survivors describe killings, mass displacement, and terror amid fighting in Western Equatoria](#).
48. CSRF (December 2021). [Tambura: Violence displacement and response](#).
49. *Ibid*.
50. FEWS NET (December 2021). [South Sudan price bulletin](#).
51. FAO & WFP (June 2022). [Crop and Food Security Assessment Report](#).
52. REACH (September 2021). [Tonj South and Tonj East rapid assessment](#).
53. REACH (March 2021). [Area of Knowledge Q1 2021 Warrap State situation overview](#).
54. REACH (January 2022). [Flooding trends in counties of concern](#).
55. KIs were asked to report up to 3 main food sources.
56. FAO & WFP (June 2022). [Crop and Food Security Assessment Report](#).
57. In assessed settlements where most people were reportedly unable to access sufficient food, KIs are asked to estimate if hunger was "small", "severe", or "worst it can be" for most people when there was not enough access to food in the month prior to data collection, where "worst it can be" roughly aligns with IPC Phase 5.
58. KIs were asked to report up to 3 main food sources.
59. IPC (December 2020). [Acute food insecurity October-November 2020 and projections December-July 2021](#).
60. IPC (April 2022). [IPC Acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition analysis February-July 2022](#).
61. Improved water sources captured in the tool include; borehole, protected well, tap-stand.
62. GWC & REACH (May 2021). [Wash Severity Classification South Sudan](#).
63. Samaritan's Purse (2021). [Flood-resilient handpumps](#).
64. *Ibid*.
65. GWC & REACH (May 2021). [Wash Severity Classification South Sudan](#).
66. [WHO Africa. Water](#).
67. Outbreak Observatory (January 2022). [Republic of South Sudan HEV Outbreak](#).
68. MSF (November 2021). [South Sudan: Severe floods and lacklustre humanitarian response leave people dangerously exposed in Bentiu](#).
69. WHO (December 2021). [Hepatitis E virus - Republic of South Sudan](#).
70. UNICEF (December 2021). [South Sudan humanitarian report 2021](#).
71. IPC (December 2020). [October 2020-July 2021 IPC analysis key messages](#).
72. UNICEF (December 2021). [South Sudan humanitarian report 2021](#).
73. IPC (April 2022). [Acute food insecurity and malnutrition situation Feb-March 2022 and projections for April-July 2022](#).
74. FSL Cluster South Sudan (January 2022). [FSNMS+ Round 27 Food Security Analysis](#).
75. Education in Emergencies (EiE) Geneva Hub. [EiE and child protection](#).
76. ACLED. Dashboard, available [here](#).
77. Human Rights Council (HRC). (April 2022). [Conflict-related sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan](#).
78. IPC (December 2020). [IPC acute food insecurity and acute malnutrition analysis October 2020-July 2021](#).
79. REACH (September 2020). [Population movement baseline report: Movement and displacement in South Sudan, 1983-2019](#).
80. REACH (October 2021). [Canal/Pigi Rapid Assessment](#).
81. *Ibid*.
82. *Ibid*.
83. WFP South Sudan (November 2021). [Situation report #297](#).
84. OCHA (December 2021). [South Sudan: Flooding situation report #3](#).
85. WFP (2021). [South Sudan Annual Country Report 2021 & Country strategic plan 2018-2022](#).