

# Situation Overview: Greater Equatoria, South Sudan

November 2017

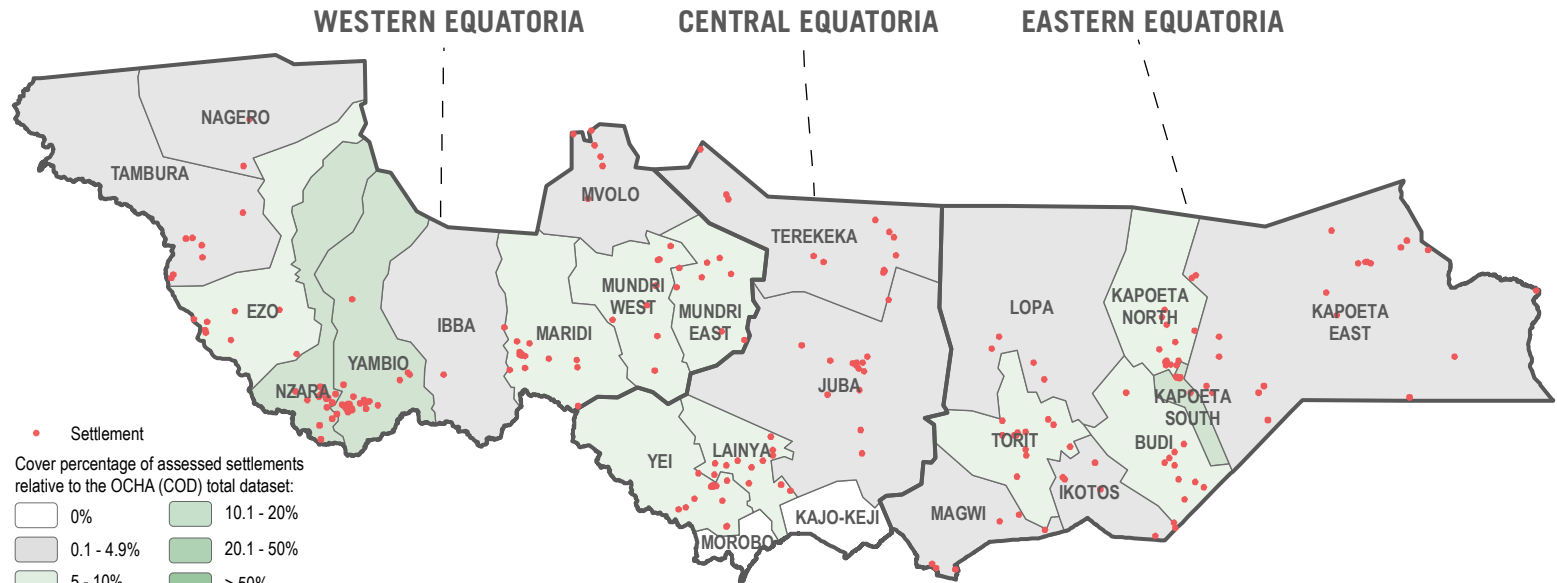
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## Introduction

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

In order to fill these information gaps and facilitate humanitarian programming, REACH began collecting monthly data on hard-to-reach areas in Greater Equatoria in January 2017 through interviews with Key Informants (KIs). The data was collected primarily through interviews in Yambio town and Kapoeta town and was supplemented by phone calls with additional KIs residing across Greater Equatoria.

In November 2017, REACH interviewed 296 KIs that had knowledge about 248 different settlements: 58 settlements in four counties of Central Equatoria State, 87 settlements in all eight counties of Eastern Equatoria State and 103 settlements in all ten counties of Western Equatoria State (Map 1). In November, REACH was able to assess over 5% of known settlements in 12 counties across Western, Central and Eastern Equatoria State, allowing



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

for more detailed county level analysis of humanitarian needs and population movement in those counties (Map 1). Counties where the proportion of total settlements assessed was below 5% were not analysed at the county level, but the settlement data was still included in the region-level analysis.

This Situation Overview provides a summary of displacement trends in addition to access to food and basic services for both Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and host communities across the Greater Equatoria region in November 2017.

## Population Movement and Displacement

Localised displacement intensified in November 2017 in line with reports of heavy fighting in Kajo-Keji County and the Greater Mundri area (Mundri East, Mundri West and Mvolo Counties).<sup>1,2</sup> As armed actors began to regain territory with the onset of the dry season, heavy clashes displaced civilians to the bush and to nearby settlements.<sup>3</sup> KIs explained that able-bodied IDPs kept on walking from these areas for several days to reach other areas perceived to be safer further south, along the Mundri-Yei

road.<sup>4</sup> From there, some settled in Bangolo and Tore Wandu Payams.<sup>5</sup> Map 2 reflects this recent displacement, showing the highest proportions of assessed settlements with IDP presence in Mundri West, Yei and Maridi Counties. Other displaced people have reportedly crossed to Aba camp in the Democratic Republic of Congo where they reportedly intend to remain until they feel safe enough to return.<sup>6</sup> Those most vulnerable, however, remained in the bushes. An influx of IDPs was also reported in Yambio County, which might be related to armed clashes earlier in the year in northern parts of Yambio County (Nadiangere area) and

1. OCHA. Humanitarian Snapshot. 12 December 2017.

2. REACH. Mundri West Displacement and Service Access Brief. December 2017.

3. ACLED. Political violence and protest data. November 2017

4. REACH. Mundri West Displacement and Service Access Brief. South Sudan, December 2017

5. Ibid.

6. Ibid.

## METHODOLOGY

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

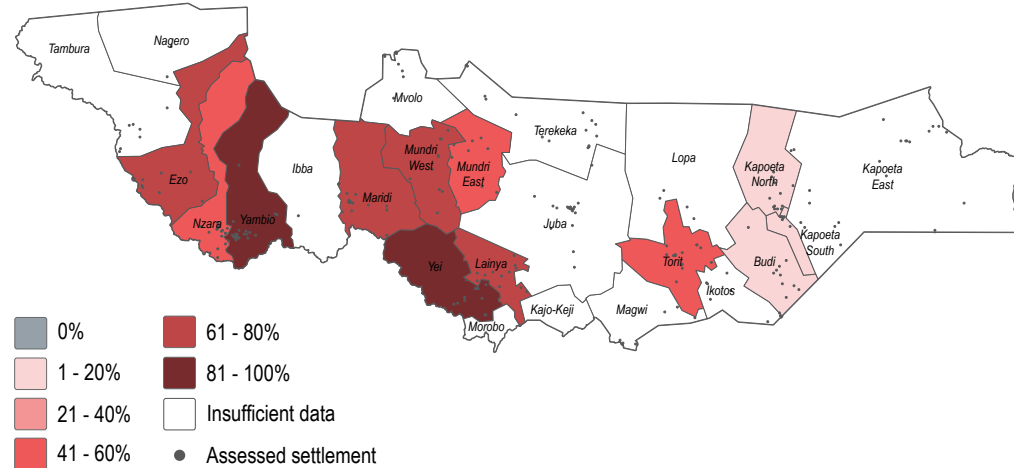
Information for this report was collected primarily from newly arrived KIs from Greater Equatoria to Yambio and Kapoeta Towns and supplemented with remote phone calls to KIs living in the settlements of interest. The remote assessment involved in-depth interviews with participants selected through a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

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

protracted displacement from people affected by sporadic fighting near Ezo town, Ezo County, and Source Yubu, Tambura County.

Armed clashes also forced 17,500 people to flee from existing IDP sites in Kajo-Keji to new displacement locations, particularly in Liwolo Payam, a well as neighbouring Morobo and Lainya Counties, two areas where insecurity

Map 2: Percentage of assessed settlements in Greater Equatoria reporting IDP presence



was rife.<sup>7</sup> This new displacement further compounded food insecurity in Kajo-Keji, a county that was already classified as facing an “Emergency” level of food insecurity (Integrated Phase Classification Phase 4).<sup>8</sup>

In Eastern Equatoria State, REACH also conducted an assessment in Gunyoro village, Ifwotu Payam, in the southern portion of Torit County. IDPs have been displaced in southern Torit following waves of armed clashes in and around Torit town between March and June 2017. The IDPs were found to be in need of assistance due to insecurity on the roads preventing them from accessing commodities and services in Torit town.<sup>9</sup>

### Displacement outside of South Sudan

In addition to triggering increased internal displacement, the aforementioned armed clashes led to an increase in refugees

crossing the borders of South Sudan into other countries. Many households (HHs) that were already displaced in IDP settlements within Kajo-Keji County along the border with Uganda, were further displaced by heavy armed clashes nearby, and were reported to have crossed to Uganda while fleeing insecurity. Other HHs were reported to have crossed to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to escape the fighting in Mundri West County.<sup>10</sup>

### Returns from Kenya

Toward the end of November, REACH conducted an assessment in Kalobeyei refugee settlement in Kenya to assess intentions among South Sudanese refugees, most of whom are originally from Eastern Equatoria State.<sup>11</sup> Residents reported that some returns to South Sudan were taking place, particularly among youth looking for

income generating activities. The assessment also highlighted that insecurity and the limited provision of basic services were major push factors from Kalobeyei.<sup>12</sup>

### Returns from Central African Republic (CAR)

In November, REACH conducted an assessment in the towns of Tambura and Source Yubu, in Tambura County, where it was reported that high numbers of South Sudanese refugees had started to return from Obo refugee camp, CAR.<sup>13</sup> FGD participants mainly cited a lack of food inside of the camp, a lack of livelihood opportunities as well as insecurity as main push factors from CAR. Most returnees were reported to be originally from Source Yubu. Many returnees reportedly found their original houses destroyed, looted or occupied, and therefore temporarily settled in and around Tambura town.<sup>14</sup>

## Situation in Assessed Settlements

### Food security and Livelihoods

In November, only 23% of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food. In line with the conclusion of the harvest season in most parts of the Greater Equatoria region, this represents an increase to the preceding month (11%), yet shows that quantities of crops accumulated during the latest harvest were not sufficient to feed HHs in many areas. The lowest proportions of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in November were found in the counties most affected by conflict during

7. OCHA. Humanitarian Bulletin. 17 November 2017.

8. FEWSNET. South Sudan Key Messages. November 2017.

9 REACH. Southern Torit County Displacement and Service Access Brief. November 2017

10. REACH. Mundri West Displacement and Service Access

Brief. December 2017.

11. REACH. Regional Displacement of South Sudanese Brief - Returns from Kalobeyei Refugee Settlement. December 2017.

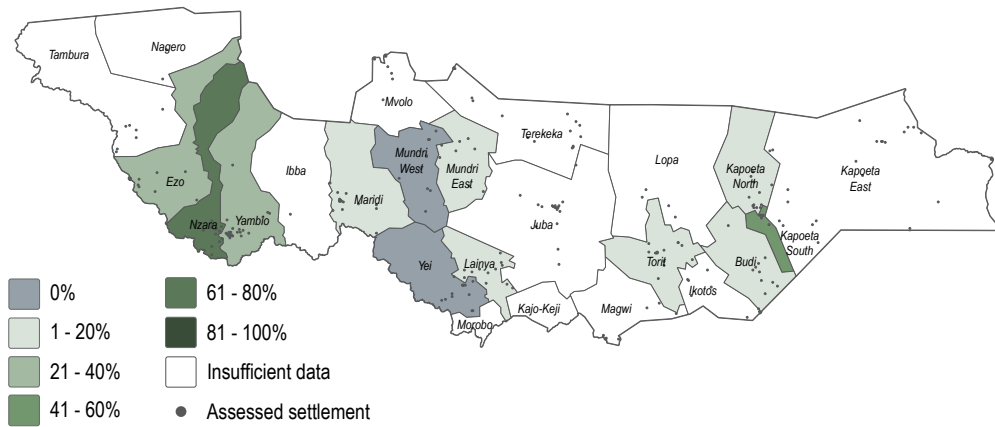
12. Ibid.

13. REACH. Tambura Displacement Brief. , South Sudan,

November 2017.

14. Ibid.

**Map 3: Percentage of assessed settlements in Greater Equatoria reporting adequate access to food**



this year's cultivation season, such as Mundri East (13% of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food), Lainya County (8%), Mundri West County (0%) and Yei County (0%).

Although still low, access to food appeared to be slightly improving in Yambio, Nzara and Kapoeta South County. This could be related to the proximity of Yambio, Nzara and Kapoeta markets to direct supply routes from neighbouring countries (DRC, Kenya) allowing for easier supply, in addition to generating income generating activities such as casual labour opportunities around the markets. Main towns of the Greater Equatoria region increasingly became relatively safe, allowing for cultivation in their vicinity, in contrast with insecure rural areas of the region where cultivation is still heavily obstructed by fear of armed clashes, attacks or looting of property or harvests.

Many areas of the Greater Equatoria region such as most of Kapoeta East County are largely cut off from access to market due to bad road conditions, particularly in the rainy season but also in the dry season. In spite of insufficient harvest yields, 62% of assessed settlements reported that cultivation was their most common source of food in November. Purchased food was the second most common source of food, as cited by 26% of assessed settlements. However, only 53% of assessed settlements reported access to functioning markets. FGD participants from those remote areas explained that they walk for up to 5 days to reach the only functioning market where they can exchange livestock for commodities in Kapoeta town. Once there, they either sell livestock or resort to casual labour to purchase food, which they then carry back to their settlements.

Due to below-average rainfall in the semi-arid

**Figure 1: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food**



part of the region (the Greater Kapoeta area), cattle herds owned by pastoralist communities have reportedly decreased drastically over recent years, exacerbating food insecurity in that area. FGD participants explained that large losses of cattle occurred between 2015 and 2017 due to a lack of sufficient water and pasture, which led to disease of cattle. Violent cattle raids furthermore affected some communities, including a major raid reported by KIs to have resulted in the disappearance of 25,000 heads of cattle from the Kauto area, leaving them without any means for sustenance. In November, 61% of assessed settlements reported the outbreak of livestock diseases, which represents a remarkable increase compared to 32% in the preceding month. Pastoralist communities rely on the consumption of milk and cattle blood and selling of livestock to purchase other food groups. The reduction of the herds therefore causes more violent raids to regain lost herds,

**Figure 2: Reported incidents during which civilians were killed or property damaged**



during which men are likely to be killed.

### Coping strategies

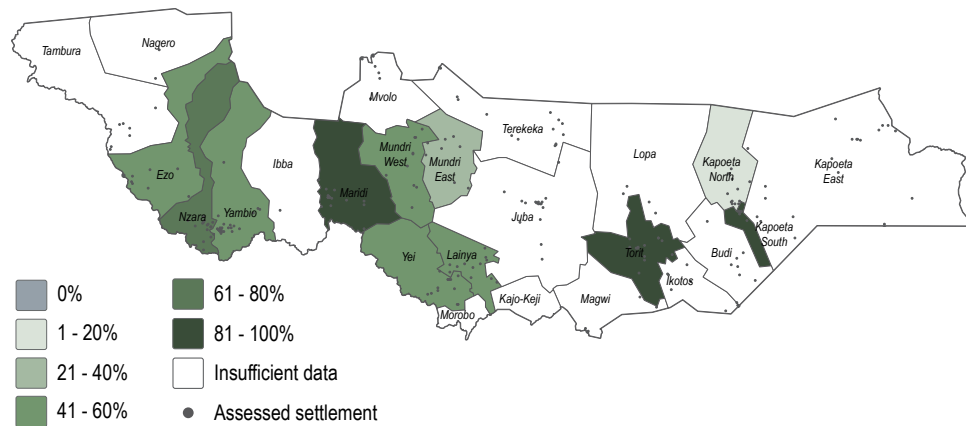
While consumption-based coping strategies were evenly reported across the Greater Equatoria region, livelihood based coping strategies varied between areas according to livelihood zones.<sup>15</sup> In agricultural areas, such as most of Western Equatoria State and the green belt, assessed settlements exclusively relied on gathering of wild foods to compensate for limited harvests. In pastoralist zones such as the Greater Kapoeta area, assessed settlements reported that common coping strategies included moving to cattle camps where HHs members, including children and women, could access milk and cattle blood. As cattle camps are a likely target for violent cattle raids, it is risky for women and children to be present at the sites. According to FGD participants, elderly people typically remain in villages, relying on foraged food.

### Protection

In November, only about one-fifth (21%) of assessed settlements reported that their population felt safe at all times. The highest proportions came from less conflict-affected counties such as Nzara, Tambura and Kapoeta South Counties (75%, 63%, 57%, respectively). The high proportion of assessed settlements that reported not feeling safe at the time (79%), is in line with intensified armed clashes at the onset of the dry season. After a remarkable increase in reported incidents between September and October 2017, conflict density trends remained high in November, showing the highest numbers of incidents in

15. FEWSNET. South Sudan Livelihood Zones. 2013.

**Map 4: Percentage of assessed settlements in Greater Equatoria reporting access to health care services**



Central Equatoria State (27 incidents).<sup>16</sup>

Corresponding to the above, the main cited protection concerns for men were killing, injury, and forced recruitment. In Central Equatoria State this was mostly directly related to conflict, while in pastoral areas, this was mainly related to violent cattle raids.

While in areas most affected by conflict, the main protection concerns reported by women were also killing and injury, protection concerns in less conflict-affected areas were mostly sexual and gender based violence in its different forms. Female FGD participants in Kapoeta town reported that particularly domestic violence is often aggravated by the consumption of alcohol by male family members.

Pastoralist communities in the Greater Equatoria region usually pay high dowries for marriage. According to KIs, in the Greater

Kapoeta area a dowry is around 100 heads of cattle. Girls starting from the age of 10 get married off by their fathers. Although this is partly culturally anchored, extreme food insecurity and massive cattle losses during the past dry seasons have aggravated this tradition as heads of HH try to recover their herds.

Almost half (49%) of assessed settlements reported the presence of unaccompanied minors across the Greater Equatoria region. According to FGDs conducted in Kapoeta town, while some of these children became orphans due to conflict, others were sent away or neglected by their families due to a lack of food, which is not enough to feed large families. REACH observed several dozens of unaccompanied minors starting from the age of approximately seven in Kapoeta South County, most of whom survived on casual labour (often carrying water to shop owners

and restaurants) as well as grabbing leftovers from restaurants.

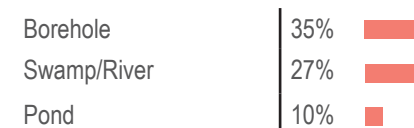
### Shelter

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting shelter destruction during the previous month decreased from 57% in October to 16% in November. This suggests that although conflict intensified, it has largely been localized in specific areas (Kajo-Keji, Mundri West Counties), while in most of the rest of the Greater Equatoria region the armed actors were holding on to their territories and little expansion was made in November.

Shelter trends remained similar to the preceding months, with 78% of assessed settlements reporting tukuls to be the primary shelter type for local communities, followed by 17% reporting the primary shelter type to be the rakooba, a type of shelter typically less solid than the tukul. IDPs living in settlements of the Greater Equatoria region often have more precarious access to housing than local communities. The majority of IDPs were also primarily reported to be staying in tukuls in 52% of assessed settlements, but the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that IDPs were mostly staying in rakoobas was higher than for host communities (39%).

Across the Greater Equatoria region, only 3% of assessed settlements reported that

**Figure 3: Three main water sources in assessed settlements**



**Figure 4: Access to functioning boreholes**



the main shelter type was improvised shelter. The same proportion of assessed settlements reported improvised shelter to be the main type of shelters for IDPs settled in their settlements, suggesting that most IDPs in the Greater Equatoria region are either integrated with host communities within settlements, or staying in the bush away from assessed settlements.

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

A little over half (56%) of assessed settlements reported the presence of functioning boreholes inside their settlement. Only 35% cited borehole as their main source of water, which either suggests that amounts of water supplied at the borehole(s) were not enough for the whole community or that community members relied on other sources of water out of habit or convenience. Large proportions of assessed settlements therefore reported using surface water sources such as rivers and swamps (27%) and ponds (10%) as their main source. FGDs conducted in Kapoeta town revealed that most people drink this water without any prior treatment, which regularly causes waterborne diseases, and likely exacerbated the present cholera outbreak, which was particularly devastating in the Greater Kapoeta area between May and August 2017, with a total of 993 suspected cases recorded

16. ACLED. Political violence and protest data. November 2017.

**Figure 5: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting primary causes of morbidity**



in Kapoeta North County since April, 1,017 suspected cases in Kapoeta South County and 2,015 in Kapoeta East County.<sup>17</sup>

With the onset of the dry season causing the water tables to lower, safe drinking water will increasingly become scarce. In semi-arid areas such as Greater Kapoeta, people mainly resort to digging wells inside of the dried up riverbanks of seasonal rivers, a source which is typically shared with their animals. Female FGD participants explained that fetching water from these sources is a security concern for them, as they are likely to encounter armed cattle keepers at the wells.

One third (33%) of assessed settlements across the Greater Equatoria region reported that no one was using latrines in their area, and over a third more (38%) reported that less than half of the population used latrines during the previous month. The practice of open defecation was particularly reported to be prevalent in Eastern Equatoria State, with the vast majority of assessed settlements reporting that no one in their settlement had been using latrines (100% of assessed settlements in Kapoeta North County, 91% in Kapoeta East County and 89% in Budi County), further suggesting high vulnerability to waterborne diseases, including cholera.

While the cholera outbreak has largely subsided across the country over the past few months, all of the areas where suspected cholera cases were reported in November were in the Greater Equatoria region.<sup>18</sup> Suspected cases of cholera were reported in Juba County (New Bongo) following a lull in reported cases. Active transmission of cholera is still reported in Budi County.<sup>19</sup>

**Health**

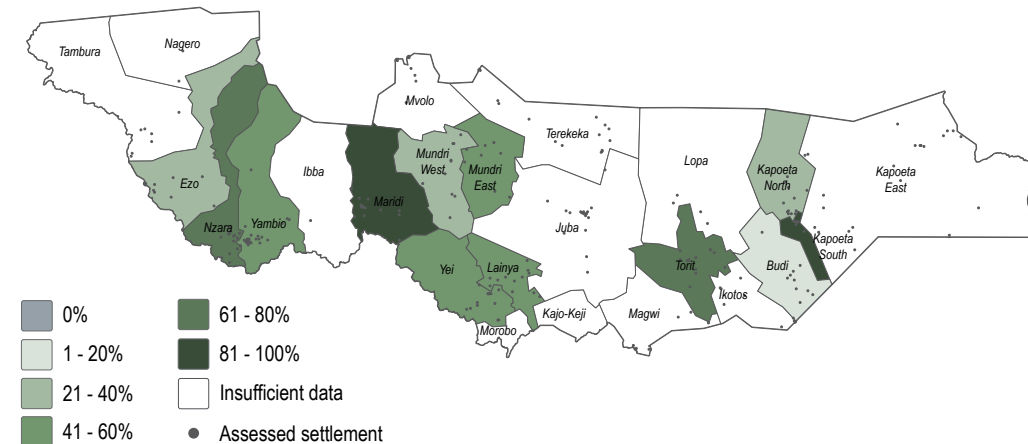
Proportions of assessed settlements reporting access to healthcare remained stagnant since July, commuting around an average of 53%. Prior to this, reported access to health showed a drastic drop between June and July from 85% of assessed settlements reporting access to 52%, likely related to conflict intensity, which spiked around May (Map 4).<sup>20</sup>

The reason most cited by assessed settlements

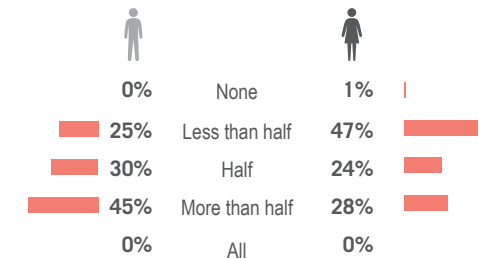
without access to healthcare was that facilities were never available (63% of assessed settlements). In Mundri West County, Western Equatoria State, 75% of assessed settlements reported that the main obstacle to accessing health services was that healthcare facilities had been destroyed by fighting, which is reflective of reports of serious insecurity in that county around mid-November.<sup>21</sup> According to NGO KIs, the disruption in salary payments for public officials is another reason for low access to health services. Payrolls were reportedly frozen around April/May. As a result, health workers in rural areas are reportedly opting for supporting their family through cultivation activity during the season, while those in urban areas turn to casual labour or employment in humanitarian organizations.

Some of the counties that were affected by a flare-up in cholera cases in October and

**Map 5: Percentage of assessed settlements in Greater Equatoria reporting access to education services**



**Figure 6: Reported proportion of 6-17 year old girls and 6-17 year old boys attending school in assessed settlements**



November (Budi County and Juba County) or that were heavily affected in previous months (Kapoeta North County) were among the counties where access to health care facilities was reported by the lowest proportions of assessed settlements in November, with respectively 38% of assessed settlements reporting access to health facilities providing services in Budi County, 24% in Juba County and 8% in Kapoeta North County.

In spite of reported active transmission of cholera in multiple areas of the Greater Equatoria region, malaria remained by far the most frequently cited primary health concern in assessed settlements (63%), even as the rainy season was drawing to an end. 91% of assessed settlements reported that medication against malaria was among the most needed health care items in their settlement.

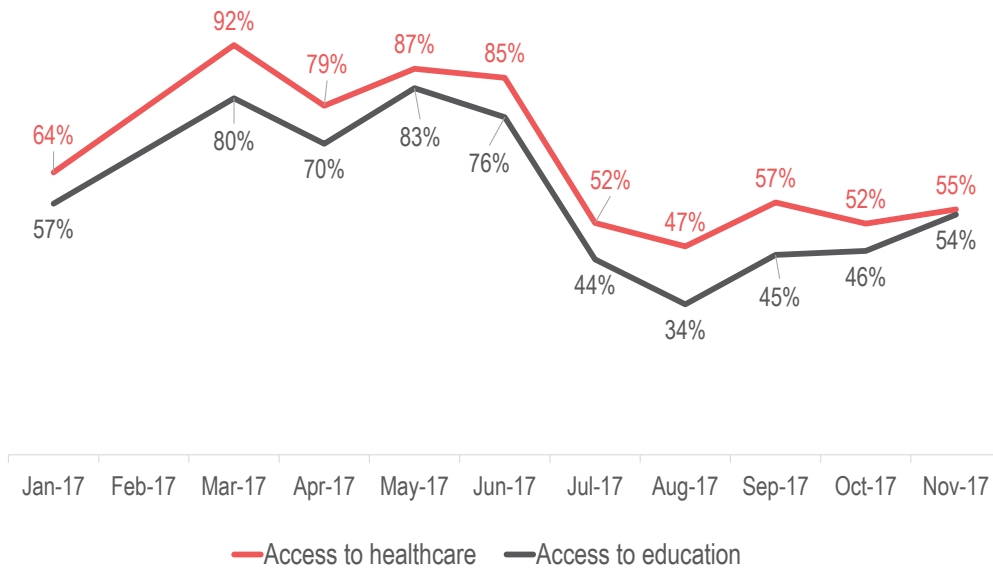
**Education**

A little over half (54%) of assessed settlements reported access to education services in November. Analysed over time, developments

17. Republic of South Sudan. Cholera Situation and Response Updates. 7 December 2017.  
 18. WHO. South Sudan Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response. Epidemiological Update W45 2017. November 2017.  
 19. Republic of South Sudan. Cholera Updates. 7 December 2017.

20. ACLED. Political violence and protest data. November 2017.  
 21. REACH. Mundris Displacement and Food Security and Livelihoods Brief. December 2017.

**Figure 7: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to healthcare and education, January-November 2017**



in access to education services in the Greater Equatoria region tend to mirror those of access to health care, with a sharp drop from 83% of assessed settlements reporting access to education services in May to 34% in August and lower levels of access that have been maintained ever since (Figure 7). Both services are highly dependent on the security situation as well as economic condition of the country, which ensures regular payment of public workers.

Even in assessed settlements where access to education services was possible, reported levels of attendance remained low across the Greater Equatoria region, where various barriers often preventing children from attending school. In November, nearly half

assessed settlements reported that less than half of the school-aged girls were attending school (47% of assessed settlements), whereas 45% of assessed settlements reported that more than half of school-aged boys were attending (Figure 6). In assessed settlements where a proportion of boys or girls were reporting to be out of school in spite of the availability of services, the reason most frequently cited were high fees for both girls (69%) and boys (75%).

Access to education services is particularly low in assessed rural settlements of the eastern portion of Eastern Equatoria State, in particular Kapoeta North County and Budi County, where 75% and 80% of assessed settlements, respectively, reported that

education services were not accessible from their settlement. In both cases, low reported access to education was due largely to the absence of education facilities. In assessed settlements of Budi where education services were reported to be available, less than half school-aged boys and girls were reported to have attended class.

### Conclusion

Localized armed clashes and generalized insecurity continued to cause waves of internal and international displacement and to limit access to basic goods and services for large proportions of the population across the Greater Equatoria region by compounding existing limitations to humanitarian access.

Access to services such as health and education remained low in November. Barriers to access such as insecurity and limited humanitarian presence were compounded by poor road infrastructures caused by heavy rains, as was the case throughout the rainy season (July-November).

With the conclusion of the harvest season in most parts of the Greater Equatoria region, reported adequate access to food improved from 11% to 23% between October and November, but remains low. Such low proportions however indicate that available quantities of harvests may not be sufficient to feed most of the population over multiple months, suggesting an early start to the lean season.

### About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

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