

Situation Overview: Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties, Lakes, South Sudan

July - September 2019

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

Years of insecurity and displacement have resulted in high humanitarian needs in Lakes State. With limited humanitarian access in the region, information gaps exist on the severity of these needs and the locations of vulnerable populations.

To inform humanitarian actors working outside formal settlement sites, REACH has conducted assessments of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since December 2015. Data is collected on a monthly basis through interviews with key informants with knowledge of a settlement and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This Situation Overview uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across Lakes State in the third quarter of 2019.

Key Findings

- **Movement** toward Awerial County continued in the third quarter, alongside internal **displacement** within Yirol West County driven by insecurity in border areas. Reported inadequate food access resulted in a large-scale displacement to Dor Settlement in Awerial County from Terekeka County, Central Equatoria, in July.
- **Protection** indicators continued to reflect high levels of insecurity in the eastern Lakes region, driven by cattle raiding and

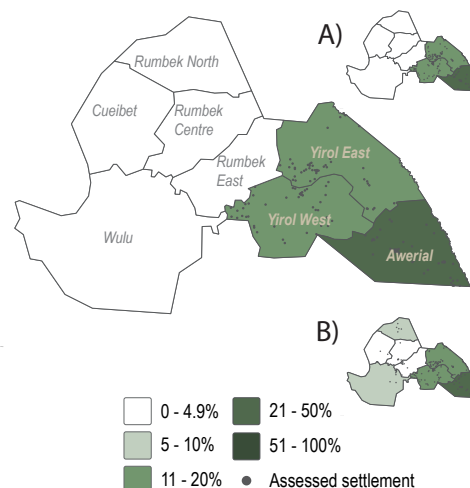
intercommunal violence (ICV). However, findings suggested marginal improvements in perceptions of safety associated with the rainy season.

- **Access to food** appeared to improve in September in line with the start of the harvest season. In areas without adequate access to food, insecurity, late rains, and flooding were reportedly driving factors.
- **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** indicators continued to suggest poor WASH conditions in eastern Lakes, where a considerable proportion of assessed settlements reported using unimproved water sources or no latrine access. In Awerial County, use of unimproved water sources¹ was particularly high, with 48% of assessed settlements reporting that their main water sources were unimproved.
- Malaria remained the most commonly reported **health** concern in 70% of assessed settlements, reflecting the high volume of rain associated with the 2019 wet season.²
- **Education** indicators in September reflected varied access to education in-between counties. Reported access to education was lowest in Awerial County, where only 30% of assessed settlements reported access to education within walking distance. While both boys and girls in assessed settlements

were reportedly able to access education when facilities were physically available, attendance was limited for boys due to agricultural work and livestock rearing, and for girls due to cultural reasons.

- **Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFI)** conditions remained stable between June and September. However, reports from assessed settlements in Yirol West and Awerial Counties suggested that Internally

Map 1: Assessment coverage in Lakes State in July (A), August (B) and September 2019



of key informant interviews conducted: **602**
of assessed settlements: **439**
of counties covered: **3 (of 8)**
of focus group discussions conducted: **9**

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation hard-to-reach areas of Lakes State, REACH uses primary data from key informants 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 key informants in Mingkaman informal settlement site in Lakes State in July, August and September 2019.

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted throughout the month using a structured survey tool. After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at 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 settlements³ in a given month were included in analysis. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month may vary. In order 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 payam⁴ coverage over the period.

Quantitative findings were triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs) and secondary sources.

More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

1. Boreholes and tap stands are considered improved water sources. All all other water sources are considered unimproved.

2. UNOCHA, South Sudan Situation Report, 2nd August 2019

3. 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 reached each month.

4.. A Payam is an administrative district at the sub-county level.

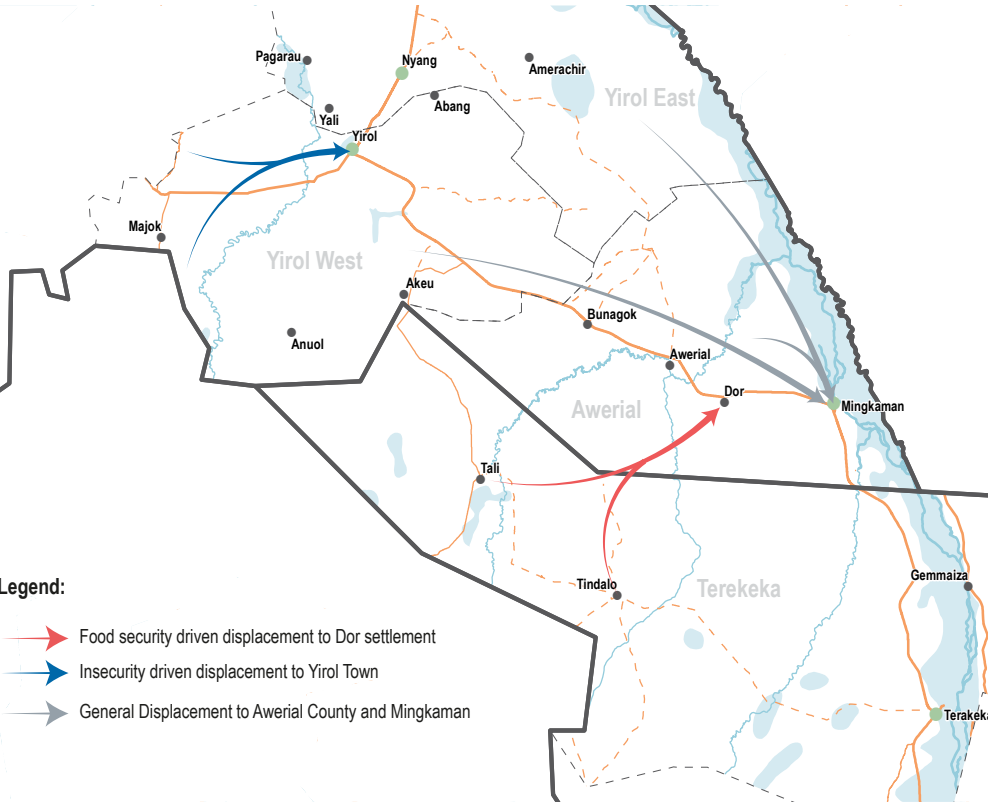
Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Awerial County faced worsed shelter conditions than the host community.

Population Movement and Displacement

Summary:

In September, assessed settlements in eastern Lakes continued to report the presence of IDPs, particularly in Awerial (21%) and Yirol West (15%) Counties. Assessed settlements

Map 2: Displacement trends to Awerial County and Mingkaman informal settlement site, Yirol Town and Dor settlement in third quarter of 2019



with IDPs in these counties reported that security was the primary pull factor at 90% and 100% respectively, reflecting the influence of cattle raiding and ICV on movement and displacement in eastern Lakes (see Map 2).

Internal Displacement in Yirol West County

In Yirol West County, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs increased from to 0% in June to 15% in September and over 50% of these settlements

reported that the IDPs came from within Yirol West County. FGD participants from Yirol West County reported that conflict along the border between Rumbek East and Yirol West Counties from June continued to be a driver of displacement within the third quarter. Most of the displaced were reported by Key Informants (KIs) as living with relatives in settlements in and around Yirol Town, with assessed settlements in these areas reporting that all IDPs were living in Tukuls or permanent shelters within the host community, potentially placing a strain on local resources.⁵

Dor Displacement

Along with insecurity, inadequate food access reportedly resulted in displacement in eastern Lakes. In July, Dor settlement in Awerial County reported the presence of displaced populations from Tali and Tindalo payams in Terekeka County, Central Equatoria. A FGD in Dor conducted by REACH in the same month suggested that the primary push factor was inadequate access to food, with insufficient rain over multiple years having an accumulative effect on crop yields. Dor was reportedly chosen as a destination due to a positive relationship with the host community and access to humanitarian actors in Mingkaman informal displacement site. FGD participants from Tali and Tindalo reported that residents had resorted to extreme livelihood coping strategies, such as selling livestock, and relocating to Dor began once these options were exhausted.⁶ A World Food Programme (WFP) registration in August reported current figures at over 5,000, and some humanitarian assistance has been provided on the basis of

multi sectoral needs assessments conducted by NGOs and Government authorities in Dor and Terekeka County.⁷

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Protection

Protection indicators continued to reflect high levels of insecurity in the eastern Lakes region driven by cattle raiding and ICV, with 43% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reporting that they felt safe most of the time (see Map 3). However; this proportion is a marginal increase on the June figure of 28%, likely the result of the rainy season in which fewer incidents of cattle raiding and ICV are typically reported. Despite this, incidents of cattle raiding and ICV in the early 2019 rainy season were reportedly higher than expected.⁸

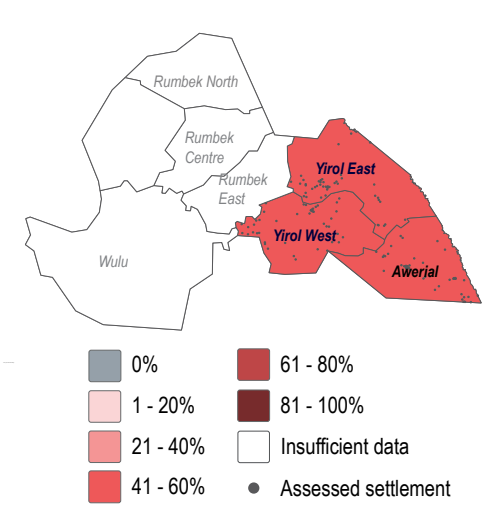
The proportion of assessed settlements reporting that residents felt safe most of the time increased the most in Yirol East County, from 11% in June to 43% in September, corresponding with a reduction in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting incidents of looting between June (67%) and September (40%). The increase in perceptions of safety in Yirol East County is likely attributable to the rainy season and some limited livelihood recovery from heavy cattle raiding and ICV that reportedly occurred in parts of the county over April through June. Yirol West County also showed improvements in perceptions of safety, with the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that they felt safe most of the time increasing from 18% in June to 39% in

5. Mingkaman Informal Settlement Site Yirol West County IDP KI Interview, 15th October 2019.
6. REACH, Notes on Population Movement and Displacement FGD in Dor settlement 8th July 2019.
7. Multi Sector assessments conducted by NGO partners in Mingkaman, July - September 2019.
8. NGO KI interview, September 2019.

September, though KIs reported that ICV along the border with Rumbek East County was still driving insecurity in the region.⁹ Settlements in Awerial County continued to report marginally higher perceptions of safety, with 48% of assessed settlements reporting that they felt safe most of the time. However, cattle raiding and theft were reported by FGD participants in Awerial County as an increasing threat, with notable incidents reportedly occurring in September.¹⁰

While these numbers suggest positive changes in protection indicators, they are reflective of cyclical trends of insecurity in the region. In eastern Lakes, cattle raiding and ICV are less common in the rainy season due to cattle keepers with their cattle migrating closer to their home settlements and difficulty of travel for raiders caused by excess surface water and

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reporting ‘no’ to most people feeling unsafe most of the time in September



increased vegetation. Therefore, the reported increases in perceptions of safety in September may not continue into the upcoming quarter in which rains begin to subside.

Moreover, despite the reported reduction in cattle raiding and ICV, these were still the main reported protection concerns for men in assessed settlements within eastern Lakes in September (43%), with 55% of assessed settlements in Yirol West County reporting these as the primary protection concerns. Of assessed settlements reporting the existence of protection concerns for boys (45%), the reported concerns were similar to those for men, with 22% reporting ICV and cattle raiding to be the primary protection concern for boys. Furthermore, FGD participants across eastern Lakes continued to report the negative influence of cattle raiding and ICV on livelihoods and food coping strategies, which will be discussed further in the next section.¹¹

On the other hand, when protection concerns were reported for women (52% of assessed settlements) and girls (47% of assessed settlements), they were more commonly located within their own settlements. As such, the main protection concern for women in assessed settlements in September was reportedly domestic violence (19%) and forced early marriage for girls (30%).

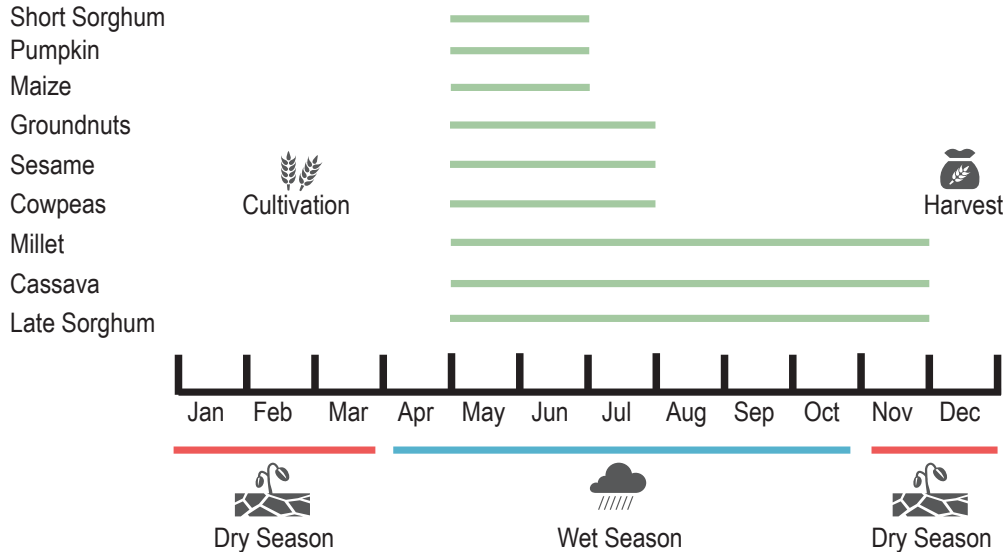
Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL)

FSL indicators showed improvements between June and September in line with the beginning of the harvest season, with the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate

access to food increasing from 30% to 63% between June and September (see Map 4). Furthermore, assessed settlements across eastern Lakes reported that 69% of assessed settlements ate at least two meals a day, marking an increase from 34% in June.

However, when inadequate food access was reported, food security needs were frequently high. In September, over 60% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food reported that levels of hunger were severe. Moreover, in Yirol East County in August, 10 000 people were reported to be in Phase 5 (Catastrophe) food security conditions, reflecting continued high needs in a number of settlements.¹²

Figure 1: Typical cultivation and harvest dates for crop staples in eastern Lakes according to FGD participants from Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties¹⁴



Beginning of the harvest season and food access

Reported increases in adequate access to food in assessed settlements were likely driven by increased availability of crop staples, matched with continued access to cattle and livestock. According to FGD participants across eastern Lakes, a number of crops had become available for harvest by September, namely maize, short season sorghum, ground nuts, sesame, pumpkin and cowpeas.¹³ By December, these stocks will be supplemented by the harvest of millet, late season sorghum and cassava (see Figure 1).

A number of indicators highlight the importance of the recent harvest period for improved food access. Similar to June, both staple grains and pulses were eaten by over 80% of assessed

9. Mingkaman Informal Settlement Site Yirol West County KI Interview, 15th October 2019.

10. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 24th September 2019.

11. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 24th September 2019.; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol East County 20th September 2019.; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol West County, 18th September 2019.

12. IPC, South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Analysis August 2019- April 2020, 11th September 2019.

13. IREACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 24th September 2019.; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol East County 20th September 2019.; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol West County, 18th September 2019.

14. Dry and wet season dates included in Figure 1 are based on typical seasonal dates in eastern Lakes according to FGD participants. In 2019, the wet season began later in May, and is ongoing as of November.

settlements in eastern Lakes, a number of which are cultivated as sustenance crops, a livelihood reported by 92% of assessed settlements in September (see Figure 1). In assessed settlements that did not report adequate access to food, low rainfall dropped as the main reported reason for inadequate food access from 43% in June to 7% in September, suggesting that rainfall during the 2019 wet season was sufficient for crop cultivation in a number of settlements.

Along with crop cultivation and harvest, livestock has remained an important source of food and livelihoods for assessed settlements in eastern Lakes. Livestock rearing was reported as a livelihood activity by 96% of assessed settlements, and dairy and meat were reported as a food source by 67% and 33% of assessed settlements respectively. Both cattle

possession and access reportedly remained high at 93% and 83% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes. As the rains begin to subside in October and November, cattle will begin to migrate towards grazing lands near the Nile, potentially decreasing access to cattle within eastern Lakes for the dry season.

According to key informants (KIs), the influx of harvested foods and access to livestock, along with limited time for cash making activities resulting from the need to engage in agricultural work, reduced reliance upon markets for food in September.¹⁵ As such, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that they bartered for food dropped from 18% to 0%, and the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that they bought food remained low at 11%.

However, crop harvests, livestock and reported decreases in cash generating activities were not the only reasons for the reported reduction in market use. Overly expensive goods (93%) and unavailable items (44%) were reported as important barriers to market access, likely influenced by poor road conditions limiting movement of goods and people. According to KIs, these issues reportedly inhibited residents from supplementing harvested food stocks with market bought goods, potentially reducing the quantity and diversity of food in some settlements.¹⁶ As such, the beginning of the harvest season has resulted in some reported improvements in food access, however needs remained high in a number of settlements.

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting 'yes' to having adequate food access in September

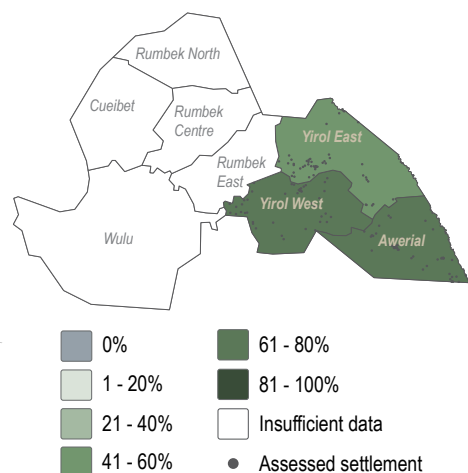
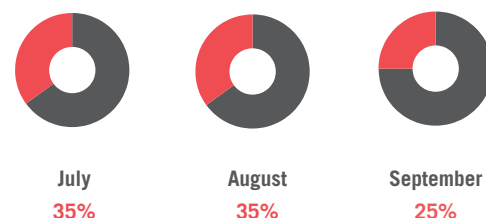


Figure 2: Proportion of assessed settlements in Awerial County with inadequate access to food reporting that flooding was the main reason in the third quarter



Inadequate food access driven by insecurity and unfavourable weather

In assessed settlements that did not report adequate access to food in September (37%), a short growing season and flooding were reported as the main reasons. FGD participants in every county reported the influence of insecurity on livelihood coping strategies, suggesting that when food access was inadequate the effects were compounded by these protection concerns.¹⁷ In Yirol East County, where 10,000 people were reported to be in Phase 5 (Catastrophe) food security conditions in August, insecurity caused by ICV and cattle raiding was reported as a driving factor.¹⁸

Climactic shocks resulted in inadequate food access for a number of assessed settlements. In September, a short growing season was reported by 35% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food as the main reason for insufficient food access, particularly in Yirol East and Yirol West Counties where a short growing season was reported by 47% and 41% of assessed settlements respectively. According to FGD participants from these

counties, insecurity in some settlements resulted in unsafe access to land until later in the growing season. In other settlements, delayed rains resulted in smaller harvests.¹⁹ Awerial County was reportedly more affected by flooding, where it was reported as a primary reason for inadequate access to food consistently across the third quarter (see Figure 2). Assessments conducted by numerous NGOs in Awerial County support the reports of flooding reducing the yield of crop harvests in affected settlements.²⁰

In addition to climactic shocks, livelihood strategies continued to be impacted by insecurity. FGD participants in all counties reported that the livelihood activities of fishing, hunting, gathering wild foods and charcoal making were largely inaccessible due to insecurity, with only charcoal making (28% of assessed settlements) being reported as a livelihood by over 10% of assessed settlements.²¹ The low proportion of assessed settlements reporting these livelihood activities is also potentially influenced by the early harvest season, when available crops reduce the need for non agricultural livelihood strategies and more time is devoted to cultivating and harvesting.

Other livelihood and food consumption coping strategies remained consistent in assessed settlements between June and September, suggesting that these settlements still depended upon a variety of strategies. Similarly to June (19%), the extreme food coping strategy of skipping entire days without eating was reported by 10% of assessed settlements, while the most common consumption strategies remained

15. Mingkaman Informal Settlement Site Awerial County KI Interview, 15th October 2019.

16. Ibid.

17. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 24th September 2019.; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol East County 20th September 2019.; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge for Yirol West County, 18th September 2019.

18. IPC, South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Analysis August 2019- April 2020, 11th September 2019.

19. Ibid.

20. FSL Cluster Assessment in Dor Payam, 24th September 2019

21. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 24th September 2019.; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol East County 20th September 2019.; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol West County, 18th September

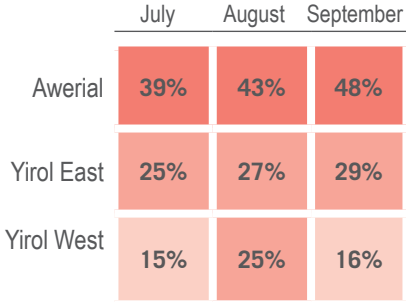
reducing quantity of meals per day (45%) and limiting meal size (48%). Borrowing food (78%) and moving to a cattle camp (59%) remained the most highly reported livelihood coping strategies, with the latter potentially increasing the vulnerability of residents to the threat of cattle raiding and ICV, reflecting that insecurity can be both a cause and consequence of inadequate food access in the region.

In the context of continued food insecurity and the presence of humanitarian access in Mingkaman informal settlement site, food assistance remained an important source of food in September in Awerial County. Over 60% of assessed settlements in Awerial County reported that they accessed food assistance in the last month. Alternatively, less than 10% of assessed settlements in Yirol East and Yirol West Counties reported receiving food assistance in the previous month.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

In September, assessed settlements continued to report low usage of improved water sources and latrines, potentially increasing the risk of

Figure 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting the use of unimproved water sources (rivers, ponds and swamps) over the third quarter



exposure to waterborne diseases, especially in areas affected by flooding.

Continued use of unimproved water sources (rivers, ponds and swamps) was reported in 31% of assessed settlements across eastern Lakes (see Figure 3). The use of these water sources was reportedly highest in Awerial County, where 48% of assessed settlements reported that their main water sources were unimproved. Concurrently, 61% of assessed settlements in Awerial County reported the presence of boreholes, and of these settlements 86% reported that the boreholes were functional.

Along with high reported use of unimproved water sources, use of latrines throughout eastern Lakes remained low, with only 16% of assessed settlements across eastern Lakes reporting that any resident used a latrine in September. The most commonly reported reason for limited latrine usage remained a lack of facilities in 94% of assessed settlements. Further, only 8% of assessed settlements reported that most residents washed their hands with soaps as there reportedly was no soap available in most settlements.

The reported use of unimproved water and practice of open defecation is of potentially higher concern in areas of flooding as flood waters can increase the transmission of waterborne diseases.²² In eastern Lakes, where a considerable proportion of assessed settlements reported drinking from rivers, ponds and swamps, flood waters may increase the risk of infection of already precarious water sources, with the reported practice of

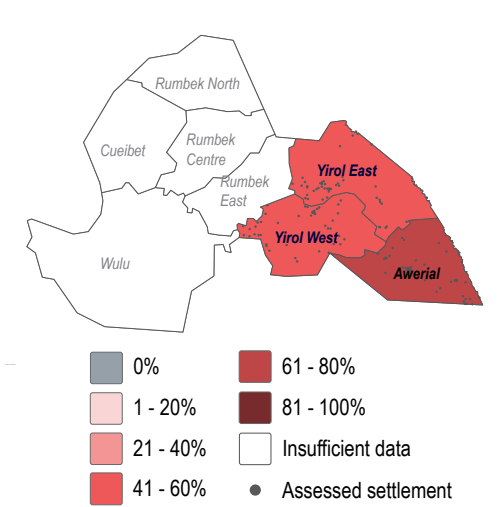
open defecation compounding the potential for disease transferal. As such, the flooding noted in the FSL section has not only potential effects on food security, but also on health due to poor reported WASH conditions in assessed settlements.

Health

Similar to June, 99% of assessed settlements in eastern lakes reported healthcare facilities were available within walking distance, however 20% of assessed settlements reported that it would take at least one full day to reach the nearest facility, suggesting that many settlements may not have sufficient medical access.

Limited medical access potentially exacerbated health concerns in eastern Lakes, where the presence of malaria and waterborne diseases was commonly reported. In September, malaria

Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reporting ‘yes’ to Malaria being the primary health concern in September 2019



remained the most commonly reported main health problem (70% of assessed settlements), reflecting the influence of a particularly intense rainy season on the reported prevalence of malaria (see Map 5). Waterborne disease was also commonly reported by as a main health problem, with 23% of assessed settlements reporting waterborne disease as their primary health concern. In areas of flooding, the risk of malaria and waterborne diseases are likely higher due to excess surface water.

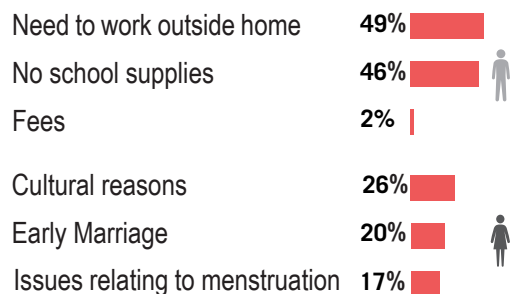
High risk of malaria and cholera also potentially impacted food security and other needs in September. Over 50% of assessed settlements reported that health problems had a large impact on the settlements capacity to access enough food, likely due to the limited working capacity of a sick family member, assistance required from other members of the family, and the sometimes considerable time taken to access health facilities noted by some assessed settlements. Further, health problems as noted in September impacted education access as they limited attendance capacity for both students and teachers, reflecting the effects of health on humanitarian needs in the region.

Education

Access to education remained stable between June and September, with 64% of assessed settlements reporting access to educational services within walking distance. The numbers varied between counties, with assessed settlements in Yirol West County (86%) reporting the highest access to education, and Awerial County (39%) the lowest. In Awerial County, FGD participants reported that

22. WHO, Technical Guidance in Emergencies, 2019.

Figure 4: Primary reported reasons in eastern lakes for lack of school attendance for girls and boys in assessed settlements in June



educational access may be low as delayed teacher payments have resulted in a number of school closures.²³ Of all assessed settlements in eastern Lakes that reported having no access to education services (36%), 98% reported the reason to be a lack of facilities. In assessed settlements that did report access to education, rates of access between boys and girls under the age of 18 were similar but low. In eastern Lakes, more than 25% of assessed settlements reported that more than half of girls and boys were attending school when facilities were available.

While reported levels of access between boys and girls were similar, reasons for not accessing education were gender-specific (see Figure 4). The main reason boys were reportedly unable to access school in assessed settlements was the need to work outside the settlements in agriculture or the cattle camps (49%). This figure reflects the agro-pastoral nature of the Lakes region, where boys are expected to assist with cultivation and cattle rearing. Similar to June, this suggests that food security needs

are limiting educational access for boys in assessed settlements in eastern Lakes.

For girls, the primary reported reasons in assessed settlements for lack of education access were cultural (26%), followed by early marriage (20%), suggesting that some traditional practices were limiting access to education for girls in the eastern Lakes region. Furthermore, KIs reported that educational access was limited in the border areas of Yirol West and Rumbek East Counties due to insecurity, with educational activities suspended due to the threat of conflict.²⁴

Shelter and Non-Food Items

Shelter and NFI conditions remained stable between June and September, with 94% of assessed settlements reporting that the main form of shelter for the host community were tukuls. Moreover, only 1% of assessed settlements reported that any shelters had been damaged or destroyed in the last month. Shelter conditions in assessed settlements with presence of IDPs reportedly varied between Yirol West and Awerial Counties, with fewer assessed settlements in Yirol East County reporting the presence of IDPs (6%). In Yirol West County, all assessed settlements with IDPs reported that those IDPs lived in tukuls or permanent shelters. In comparison, only 22% of assessed settlements in Awerial County reported that IDPs were living in tukuls or permanent shelters, suggesting that IDPs in Awerial County faced worse shelter conditions as IDPs in Yirol West County were more likely to reside with relatives in the host community.²⁵

NFI needs were consistent for assessed settlements with IDPs in Awerial and Yirol West Counties, where cooking pots were reported as the most needed NFI by 50% of assessed settlements. Across eastern Lakes, 28% of assessed settlements reported receiving NFI distribution in the last three months.

Conclusion

In eastern Lakes, humanitarian needs remained high in the third quarter. While food security and protection indicators suggested improvements, these are likely to be largely seasonal and are not reflective of future conditions according to IPC predictions for the upcoming dry season.²⁶ Wash and health indicators continued to indicate high humanitarian needs, compounded by flooding within areas of eastern Lakes.

About REACH Initiative

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).

Visit www.reach-initiative.org and follow us @REACH_info.

23. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 24th September 2019

24. Mingkaman Informal Settlement Site Yirol West County KI Interview, 15th October 2019.

25. Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol West County, 18th September 2019.

26. IPC, South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Analysis August 2019- April 2020, 11th September 2019.