

Humanitarian Situation Monitoring

Western Equatoria State - South Sudan October - December 2020

Introduction

Quarter four of 2020 was characterised by negative impacts of flooding on people’s needs occurring in quarter three, continued currency depreciation and pockets of insecurity. In addition, COVID-19 related restrictions continued to negatively impact access to livelihoods, likely increasing the vulnerability and humanitarian needs across Western Equatoria State (WES).^{1,2}

Information remains critical for an informed humanitarian response, especially while COVID-19 related restrictions, logistic and security constraints have negatively impacted humanitarian access to many areas across the state. To inform humanitarian actors, 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 (KIs) with knowledge of a settlement and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs) and secondary data. This Situation Overview analyses changes in observed humanitarian needs in WES in quarter four of 2020.

Methodology

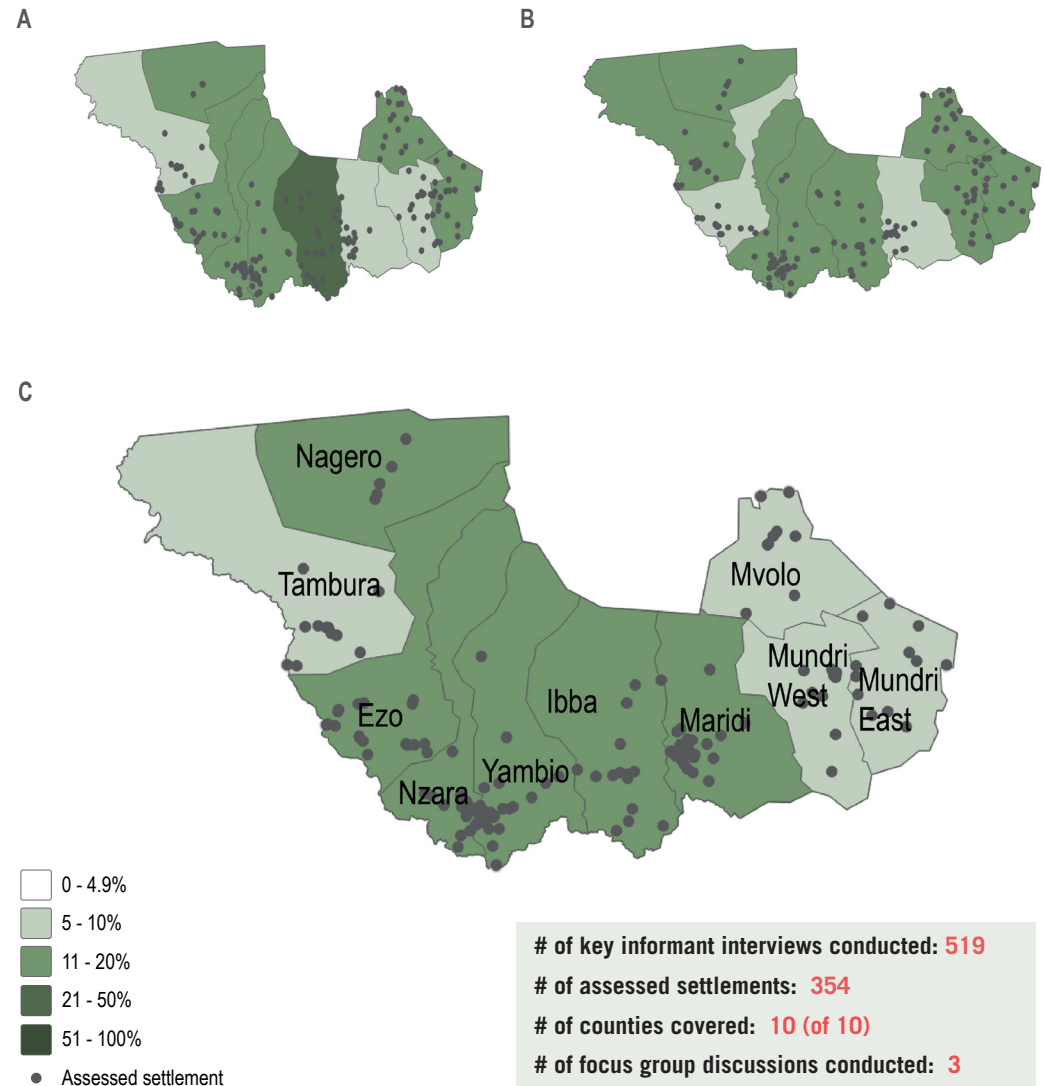
To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of WES, REACH uses primary data from KIs who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or “Area of Knowledge” (AoK). Information for this report was collected from KIs in Yambio and Maridi towns in WES between October and December 2020.

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 settlements in a given month were included in analysis.³ Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month 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 focused group discussions (FGDs) with male and female local community members from all ten counties of WES and secondary sources. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of the WES region, October (A), November (B) and December (C) 2020



1. Sudan Tribune 19 November 2020: A call for people centred national security strategy in Africa. [Link](#)

2. IMF approves 52.3 million loan to South Sudan to support mitigate impact of COVID 19. Radio Tamazuj. 12 November 2020. [Link](#)

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. Payam is the administrative unit below the county-level.

Key Findings

Displacement: Quarter four of 2020 was characterized by returns of internally displaced people (IDPs) and cross border displacements likely as a result of ongoing insecurity in the Central African Republic (CAR) and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). The highest proportion of assessed settlements where IDP presence was reported in December were in Tambura (60%), Mundri East (58%), and Nzara (55%) counties.

Food Security and Livelihoods: Although access to food reportedly remained stable in most assessed settlements in WES, in 50% of assessed settlements in Nagero and 20% of assessed settlements in Tambura counties, KIIs reported that most people had inadequate access to food and that some employed extreme coping strategies such as skipping days without eating. The reported inadequate access to food is likely due to flooding in Nagero County and insecurity along the border of South Sudan and CAR, which is increasing the arrival of refugees and likely adding pressure on the already limited resources.

Protection: In the majority (92%) of assessed settlements in December across WES, KIIs reported that most people felt safe most of the time. However, reported presence of armed groups in the bush, continuous insecurity in CAR and DRC, and gender-based violence remained protection concerns in WES.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH): The proportion of assessed settlements where access to boreholes was reported remained low in most eastern counties of WES⁵ (Ibba 33%, Maridi 46%, Mundri East 25%, and Mundri West 30%) in December compared to September (34%). Findings suggest that communities in Mvolo County had significant access to boreholes, where KIIs in only 11% of assessed settlements in December reported that most people in the settlements did not have access to a functional borehole. Despite a relatively high proportion of assessed settlements where KIIs reported access to a functional borehole in the western counties of WES in December, KIIs in more than half (57%) of assessed settlements reported the main source of water in December to be an unprotected well, which is considered to be an unimproved water source that could increase risks of water borne diseases.⁶

Health: The proportion of assessed settlements where KIIs reported that most people had access to health care services increased between September and December 2020. However, it reportedly took most people more than an hour to reach the health facility

in 32% of assessed settlements in December (32% took more than an hour). This apparent long time it takes to reach a health facility could likely encourage communities to use traditional medications, which are readily available in the communities. Furthermore, lack of medication, ambulances and health care workers at the facility were the most commonly reported barriers to access health care services in December.

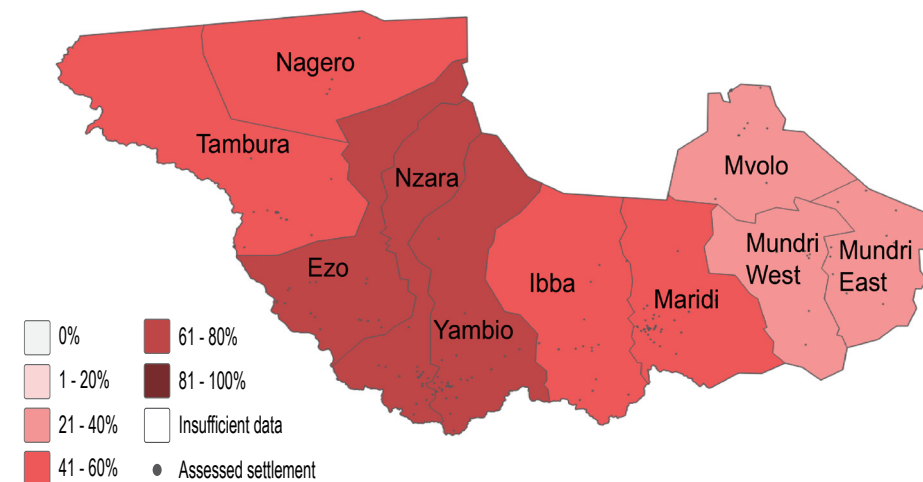


Shelter/ Non Food Items (NFI): In quarter four of 2020, reported access to shelter remained similar to quarter three for both host community members and IDPs with tukuls⁷ and rakoobas⁸ reported as the most common shelter types in December. The reported use of rakoobas in December was particularly high in assessed settlements in Nagero County (reported in 50%), likely due to shelters being destroyed in quarter three of 2020 because of flooding.



Education: In around half (56%) of assessed settlements in December across WES, KIIs reported that children had access to any educational services. Reports of access to educational services were particularly uncommon in assessed settlements in Ibba (40%), Mvolo (33%), Nagero (33%), Mundri East (17%) counties. The reported low access to any educational facilities in some settlements might be due to continued closures of schools for candidate classes as part of the COVID-19 prevention, particularly since some locations have less candidate classes.⁹

Proportion of assessed settlements where KIIs reported unprotected water sources as the main drinking water source in December 2020



5. Eastern counties of WES consist of Ibba, Maridi, Mvolo, Mundri East and Mundri West.
 6. Western counties of WES consist of Yambio, Nzara, Ezo, Tambura and Nagero.
 7. Tukuls are mud huts with more permanence.
 8. Rakoobas are temporary shelters made from straw.
 9. UNICEF Press release. UNICEF and UNESCO welcome the decision to reopen schools in South Sudan. 21 September 2020. [Link](#).

➔ Population Movement and Displacement

Quarter four of 2020 seemed relatively calm with less internal displacement compared to quarter three. Similarly, cross border movement remained limited likely as a result of COVID-19 movement restrictions. Nevertheless, flooding in Mundri East, Mundri West, Nzara, Nagero counties and insecurity in Tambura County, DRC and CAR seemed to have caused both internal and cross border displacements during the reporting period.

Internal Displacement and Returns

Based on findings from United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 69,000 IDPs were estimated to be living in WES in November 2020, which was a decrease from 71,000 in September 2020.^{10, 11} Correspondingly, the proportion of assessed settlements with a reported presence of IDPs decreased notably from 72% in September to 39% in December. This reported decrease could be due to a perception of stability in the region. Additionally, the dry season may have encouraged people to return to build shelters as the dry season allows them to construct shelters without interruptions of rainfall. Subsequently, in December, reporting on the presence of IDPs was more common in assessed settlements in Tambura (60%), Mundri East (58%), and Nzara (55%) counties compared to other counties in WES. In Tambura, Mundri East and Nzara counties in December, the most common reasons reported by KIs in assessed settlements for people to leave their former settlements were lack of access to health care services (33%), insecurity (33%), lack of food (17%), and lack of job opportunities (17%). In December, displacement seemed to be primarily localised, in all assessed settlements where KIs reported presence of IDPs, displacement within the same counties was reported, except in Mundri West County where IDPs in 50% of assessed settlements with IDP presence were reported to be from Mundri East County. The reported arrival of IDPs may increase pressure on resources in host communities where resources are already limited due to flooding and insecurity.

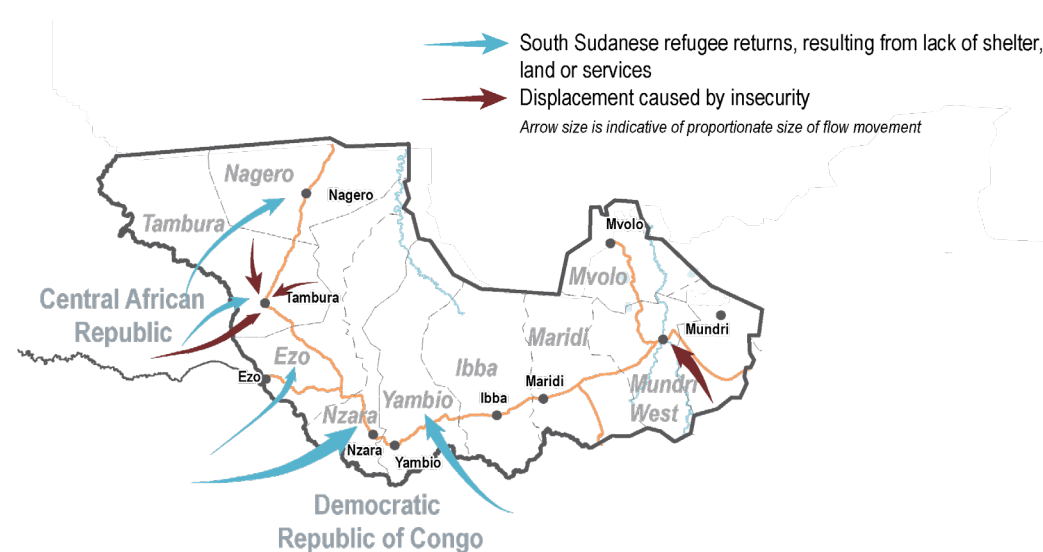
Cross-border movements

Reported presence of refugee returnees remained stable between quarter three to four (reported in 23% of assessed settlements in both September and December). In December, KIs from the majority of assessed settlements reported that refugees were returning from DRC and KIs in almost a quarter of assessed settlements reported that refugees returned from CAR. Potentially reflecting an increased need for people to access land for cultivation with the cultivation season coming in quarter one of 2021, in December, KIs in 30% of assessed settlements with returnee presence reported a lack of access to land as the main reason for returnees to leave their former settlements. In addition, FGD participants from Tambura County described perceived stability and access to health care services as a reason for people to return to Tambura County.¹² Moreover,

FGD participants mentioned lack of food, diseases, sexual violence, killings, long distances travelling and loss of property as challenges encountered by refugees and refugee returnees from CAR.

With political instability and armed conflicts in both quarter three and four in CAR and DRC, there was a slight increase in the number of refugees registered in WES in the past five months, as of 31 December 2020, a total of 10,617 refugees were registered compared to 10,025 in August 2020.¹³ According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), most of the refugees were residing in Makpandu Refugee Camp (Yambio County), Ezo Town, Naandi and Andari (Ezo County), and in Source Yubu and Tambura Town (Tambura County).¹³ The presence of refugees in WES could likely increase humanitarian needs and competition over scarce resources between the host and refugee communities and increasing social tensions.

Map 2: Population movement WES, October to December 2020



🌾 Food Security and Livelihoods

In the last quarter of 2020, reported access to adequate food remained relatively high, KIs in 90% of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in December, an increase from 86% in September. The apparent increase in access to food could be due to stability in the region increasing production and harvest yields and access to markets in the neighboring counties.^{14, 15} Similarly, in 91% of assessed settlements in September and 94% of assessed settlements in

10. OCHA. Humanitarian Snapshot. November 2020. [Link](#).
 11. OCHA. Humanitarian Snapshot. September 2020. [Link](#).
 12. REACH FGD with participants from Tambura County 08 December 2020.
 13. UNHCR. South Sudan Refugee Population Statistics. 31 December 2020. [Link](#).
 14. Radio Tamazuj. Rome negotiations, agreement on principles to advance peace process. 7 December 2020. [Link](#).

15. Crop Monitor Early Warning, no.56. December 2020

December, KIs reported own cultivation as the main source of food, which could be a result of improved access to land for farming, access to agricultural inputs and timely rainfall in 2020.¹⁶ On the contrary, reporting of a perceived better harvest fell across WES from 54% of assessed settlements in September to 48% in December with the most reported reasons being reduction of rainfall (33%), too much rain (27%) and pest infestation (18%).

Despite the increase in assessed settlements where KIs reported adequate access to food, hunger reported as severe increased from being reported in 31% of assessed settlements in September to 59% in December. The proportion of assessed settlements with KIs reporting hunger as severe was notably high in Ezo (100%), Ibba (100%), Mundri East (100%), Yambio (100%), Tambura (67%) and Nagero (67%) counties in December. This could be due to flooding destroying crops during the last rainy season, as well as insecurity in the CAR preventing people to access land for cultivation along the border, and increased refugees and returnees, which could have increased pressure on the available food for the host community.^{17, 18}

Despite poor roads and movement restrictions due to COVID-19, the proportion of assessed settlements with reported access to markets remained high between quarter three and four (99% in September and 96% in December). The high proportion of assessed settlements where access to markets was reported in quarter four could likely be due to dependency on markets for basic goods and end of year holidays during which most households buy gifts for their families. However, physical access to markets seemed to be a challenge. In 17% of assessed settlements in Mundri East and Nagero counties, KIs reported safety concerns as a barrier to access markets in December. Additionally, FGD participants from Nagero County described that flooding destroyed bridges, preventing them from accessing the markets.¹⁹ Limited access to markets may have contributed to the relatively high proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported hunger as severe in Nagero County.

In December, the most commonly reported coping strategies used were the consumption of less expensive food and reducing meal size, which were reported by KIs in 82% and 73% of assessed settlements, respectively.

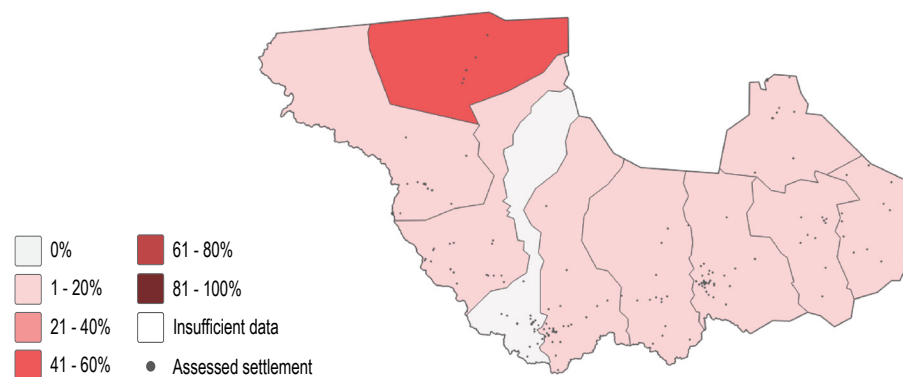
Furthermore, the proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported consumption of wild foods as part of a meal remained high throughout quarter three and four (45% in December and 48% in September). In December, KIs in over half of assessed settlements in Nagero (83%), Mundri East (58%) and Ezo (56%) counties reported people were consuming wild foods. However, KIs in 41% of assessed settlements in Nagero County reported sickness after consumption of wild foods was common. The apparent consumption of wild food known to make people sick in Nagero County

could be of great concern and may be linked to reported limited access to markets and availability of food.

While rearing livestock²⁰ is a livelihood activity conducted by most people in the settlements in WES, assessed settlements where KIs reported that most people have access to cattle decreased in Mundri East (from 67% in September to 25% in December) and Mundri West (from 38% in September to 10% in December) counties.²¹ This might be because of flooding, which destroyed infrastructure and made feeder roads impassable, and pockets of cattle raids and insecurity.

Potentially linked to flooding and insecurity, reported engagement in livelihood activities changed between quarter three and four. While casual labour was reported as the most common livelihood activity by KIs in the majority of assessed settlements in December (90% and in 70% in September), crops for sustenance was reported as the most common livelihood activity by KIs in the majority of assessed settlements in September (94% and in 84% in December). Moreover, hunting as a livelihood activity was reported by KIs in around half (53%) of assessed settlements in December, a notable increase from September (27%). Hunting reported as a livelihood activity was especially high in Nagero (reported in 100% of assessed settlements), Ezo (94%), and Ibba (67%) counties in December. The increase in assessed settlements where KIs reported hunting as a livelihood activity could be due to the dry season and loss of livelihood activities as a result of COVID-19 movement restrictions. Similarly, likely linked to reduction of water levels during dry season, assessed settlements where KIs reporting fishing as a common livelihood activity was high in Nagero (reported in 100% of assessed settlement) and Mvolo (78%) counties.

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements in WES where KIs reported inadequate access to food, December 2020



16. CLIMIS rainfall data for WES 2020. [Link](#)

17. OCHA. South Sudan. Flooding situation report 18 December 2020. [Link](#).

18. OCHA. South Sudan. Humanitarian Needs Overview January 2021. [Link](#).

19. REACH FGD with participants from Nagero County 16 October 2020.

20. Goats, sheep, poultry and cattle.

21. FEWS NET. Livelihoods Zone Map and Descriptions for the Republic of South Sudan (updated). August 2018.

Areas of concern

Nagero County

In both quarter three and four of 2020, the proportion of assessed settlements where inadequate access to food was reported remained consistently high in Nagero County (83% in September, 50% in December), however, decreased in quarter four in line with the harvest. Despite this slight increase in assessed settlements where access to food was reported, FGD participants from Nagero County described continued limited access to food because flooding in the previous rainy season had destroyed their crops resulting in less successful harvest and impeding access to markets to buy food.²²

The proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported inadequate access to food in Nagero County was consistent with the October 2020 Integrated Phase Classification²³ (IPC) projections, in which Nagero County was classified to be in the phase of crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity. This situation is reflected in common reporting on the use of severe coping strategies in Nagero County in December; in 33% of all assessed settlements in this county, KIs reported that people employed extreme consumption coping strategies, such as skipping the entire day without food and adults not eating so that children can eat. Although the proportion of assessed settlements where people were reportedly skipping the entire day without food decreased between quarter three (83% in September) and four (33% in December), continued use of this coping strategy could have negative effects on the health of the households. According to FGD participants, previous insecurity, arrival of returnees, high prices, and flooding continued to affect most people and could negatively challenge the recovery and resilience of households.²⁴ Additionally, in December, people in 33% of assessed settlements in Nagero County reportedly consumed seeds meant for the next planting season. Consuming seeds meant for farming could be of great concern, as it could have a negative consequence for access to food in the future and is indicative of the tough decisions that household needs to make, between short term and long term access to food.

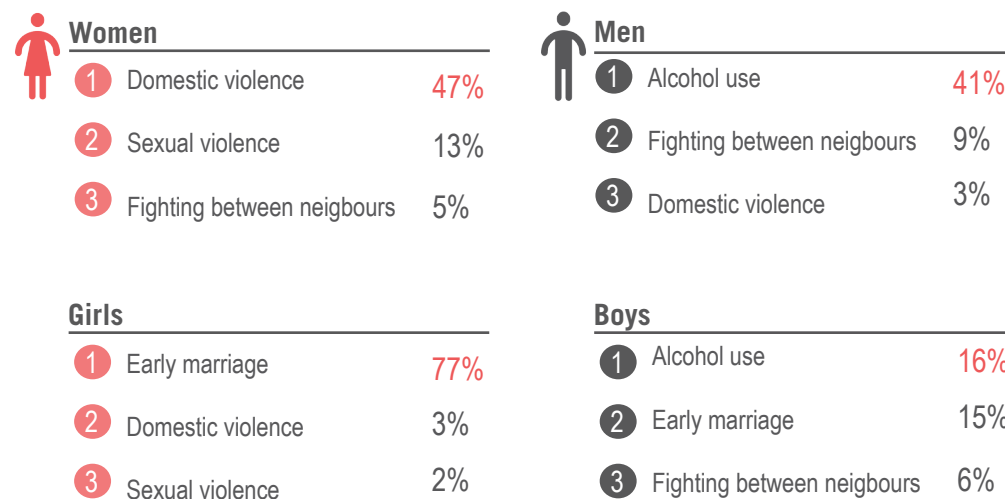
Tambura County

Indicative of less access to and availability of food in Tambura County, assessed settlements where KIs reported inadequate access to food increased from 6% in September to 20% in December, reportedly due to pest infestation (reported in 27% of assessed settlements), new arrivals (13%) and unsafe access to farmland during the planting season (13%). This was confirmed by FGD participants from Tambura County who described how insecurity impeded access to farmlands and other livelihood activities.²⁵ The reported use of extreme coping strategy such as skipping entire day without food remained stable in Tambura County between quarter three and four (reported in 7% of assessed settlements in December and 6% in September).

Likely as a result of reported inadequate access to food, the proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported people resorting to begging was relatively high in Tambura (27%), Nagero (33%) and Maridi (33%) counties in December. In addition, in 33% of assessed settlements in Nagero and Maridi counties, KIs reported people selling homes or valuable assets to cope with the lack of food. Employing these livelihood coping strategies could likely have a long-term effect on households' resilience and make recovery challenging. With the lean season approaching, the reported inadequate access to food and the use of extreme coping strategies in Nagero and Tambura counties remains a great concern as the food security situation will likely worsen.

Protection

Top 3 most commonly reported protection concerns in assessed settlements in WES, December 2020



In quarter four, while the conflict continued to impact feelings of safety, the proportion of assessed settlements across WES where KIs reported that most people felt safe most of the time had increased from 81% in September to 92% in December. The proportion of assessed settlements where people reportedly felt safe most of the time was relatively low in Tambura County, where this was reported in 73% of assessed settlements. The comparatively lower proportion of settlements where people reportedly felt safe in Tambura County might be due to continued insecurity²⁶ in CAR and along the South Sudan borders.²⁷ Additionally, re-occurring cattle raids in Mvolo County and proximity of armed actors in Mundri East County might have impacted people's perception of safety.

22. REACH FGD with participants from Nagero County 16 October 2020.
 23. IPC. South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, October 2020 update
 24. REACH FGD with participants from Nagero County 16 October 2020.
 25. REACH FGD with participants from Tambura County 13 October 2020.
 26. REACH FGD with participants from Tambura County 13 October 2020.
 27. REACH FGD with participants from Tambura County 13 October 2020.

In addition, incidents of looting in the 30 days prior to data collection were relatively commonly reported in Ezo (in 22% of assessed settlements), which FGD participants described to be related to insecurity in CAR.²⁸ Despite an increase in people’s perceived feeling of unsafety, the proportion of assessed settlements where incidents of looting was reported remained low across WES (reported in 8% of assessed settlements) in December, which might indicate that perception of safety are influenced by other factors than looting alone.

Across WES, domestic violence continued to be a commonly reported protection concern for women throughout the quarter, reported by KIs in 47% of assessed settlements in December (compared to 44% in September). The proportion of assessed settlements where domestic violence was reported is particularly high in Eastern counties²⁹ where it was reported as the main protection concern among women in all assessed settlements in December. Furthermore, the proportion of assessed settlements where sexual violence was reported as the main protection concern for women increased in assessed settlements in Tambura (from 18% in September to 33% in December), Nzara (from 0% in September to 30% in December) and Yambio (from 18% in September to 21% in December) counties. Additionally, there was a higher proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported early marriage as a main protection concern for girls (from 61% in September to 77% in December). As a result of COVID-19 movement restrictions, women lost their livelihoods and have shown at an increased risk of domestic and sexual violence, which could explain the reported increase in domestic and sexual violence between quarter three and four.³⁰ Additionally, loss of livelihoods might affect women’s ability to support their families and could potentially increase their risk of engaging in sexual activities in exchange of food or money, which could have a negative impact on their health and safety. Moreover, the closure of schools due to COVID-19 restrictions might have further impacted the prevalence of teenage pregnancies and early marriages.³¹

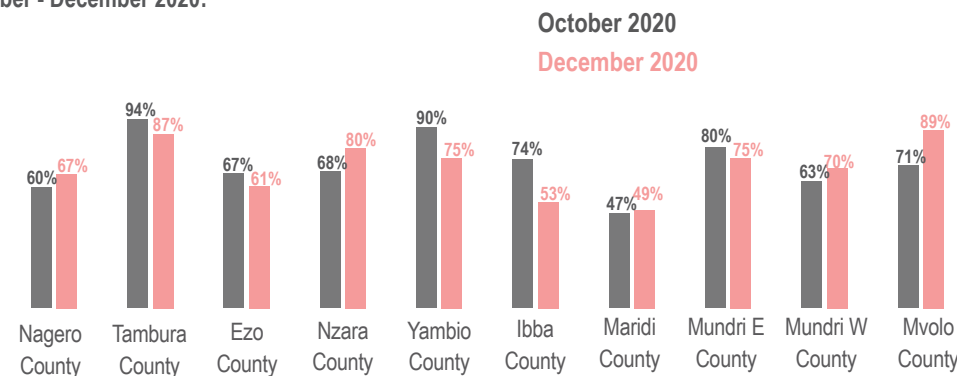
Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

The proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported the presence of a functional borehole remained stable between quarter three (69% in September) and quarter four (67% in December) but varied between counties. The presence of a functional borehole increased from being reported in 63% of assessed settlements in September to 80% in December in Nzara County. This increase could be due to the dry season, when access to boreholes is usually better as a result of less flooding in Nzara County.

KIs in around half (49%) of assessed settlements reported that people used an unprotected water source³² as their main water source. The reported use of unprotected sources of water could be

due to shorter distance as most are closer to the settlements. The reported use of unprotected water sources could have a negative effect on the health of people living in the settlements as typhoid, diarrheal and malaria were most commonly reported as the main perceived health problem in settlements in Mundri East, Yambio and Tambura counties.

Proportion of assessed settlements in WES where KIs reported the presence of a functional borehole, October - December 2020:



As the dry season approached, water pressure in boreholes likely decreased, which both could increase the time to collect water at the borehole or force people to collect water from other sources further away from their house. Likely as a cumulative effect of mounting demand and limited availability of boreholes, in more than a half (57%) of assessed settlements it reportedly took most people between 30 minutes to one hour to access and return from their preferred water source. In addition, KIs in 22% of assessed settlements reported that it took most people one hour to half a day to access and return from their preferred water source. A long distance to water source could have a negative effect on health of the household and water utilization.³³

Findings suggest that access to and use of latrines increased in WES between quarter three and four of 2020. In December, more than half of people had reportedly access to latrines in 59% of assessed settlements, compared to 39% in September. The apparent increased access could have a positive impact on transmission of vector and waterborne diseases such as cholera, typhoid and diarrheal. This increase in reporting on access to latrines might be due to improved access to markets for tools used for construction of latrines and because people often stay near their homes during dry season as they do not need to go to their farms to cultivate. In contrast, the proportion of assessed settlement where less than half of people in the settlement reportedly had access to a latrine was relatively high in assessed settlements in Mvolo (22%) and Nagero (33%) counties in December. The most common reason for not using latrines was that the latrines were not available (reported in 37% of assessed settlements).

28. REACH FGD with participants from Tambura County 13 October 2020.

29. Eastern counties of WES consist of Ibba, Maridi, Mvolo, Mundri East and Mundri West.

30. IMF approves 52.3 million loan to South Sudan to support mitigate impact of COVID 19. Radio Tamazuj, 12 November 2020. [Link](#)

31. WES, Minutes of Rule of Law meeting 12 November 2020.

32. These include river, well and swamps.

33. OCHA. South Sudan. Humanitarian Needs Overview January 2021. [Link](#).

Reporting on the use of soap remained and relatively low in assessed settlements between quarter three and four (23% in September, 26% in December). Additionally, in 10% of assessed settlements people reportedly did not wash their hands at all (compared to 42% in September). The low proportion of assessed settlements where people reportedly used soap when washing hands might be partly driven by the relatively high price of soap in comparison to households' average income.³⁴ The low proportion of assessed settlements where people practice safe handwashing indicates an increased risk of disease transmission, which could be a great concern, especially in the context of COVID-19.³⁵

Health

The proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported access to health care services remained stable and relatively high between quarter three and four. In December, a primary health care unit was reported as the closest functional health care facility in the majority of assessed settlements (reported in 78% of assessed settlements), a decrease from September (92%). While a primary health care unit reported as the closest functional health care facility decreased, the proportion of assessed settlements where hospitals were reported as the closest health facility increased from reported in 6% in September to 17% in December. Moreover, in December, in assessed settlements with access to a functional health care facility (96%), it reportedly took most people within one hour and between one hour to half a day to reach the health care facility (reported in 48% and 32% of assessed settlements, respectively). The longer time taken to access health care service could likely demotivate patients from accessing the facility and encourage them to use traditional treatments, which could have an impact on timely treatment. Although the reported presence of a functional primary health care facility remained high between quarter three and four, lack of medication was reported as a barrier to access health care services in the majority of assessed settlements (86%) and lack of health care workers in around half (46%). Despite the reported physical presence of health care facilities, the mentioned barriers could influence people's trust and use of the health care services which could prevent treatment of otherwise treatable diseases.

Potentially linked to the reported use of unprotected water sources (as they can serve as breeding sites for malaria vectors), malaria was the most commonly reported main perceived health concern in December (44% of assessed settlements), similar to September (39%). Malaria being reported as the main health concern could also be due to inadequate access to mosquito nets because of higher market prices and lack of drugs at the health facility.³⁶ Other commonly reported perceived health problems included cough and typhoid, which was reported in 12% and 8% of assessed settlements in December, respectively.

Shelter/ NFI

In quarter four of 2020, the proportion of assessed settlements with reported access to solid shelter types for host community, IDPs, and returnees remained stable compared to quarter three. In December, KIs in the vast majority of assessed settlements (96%) reported tukuls as the main shelter type used by host community. Furthermore, in December, in 77% and 23% of assessed settlements with reported presence of IDPs (39%), KIs reported tukuls and rakoobas,³⁷ respectively, as the main shelter used by IDPs. The use of improvised shelters and rakoobas as the main shelter for IDPs was relatively commonly reported in Nagero County in December (50%), which FGD participants from Nagero County attributed to shelter destruction as a result of flooding. Potentially linked to shelters being destroyed by flooding, people in Nagero County had been reported to be sleeping in the open without shelters or with an improvised shelter option only.^{38, 39}

In the assessed settlements where KIs reported presence of IDPs in December (39%), cooking pots, blankets and mosquito nets were reported as the most common needed non-food items reported in 31%, 30% and 15% respectively. This is likely due to higher prices of NFIs and lower temperatures during quarter four, and a reported increase in malaria being the common health problem for most people in the settlement.⁴⁰

Education

In March 2020, all educational institutions in South Sudan were closed as part of COVID-19 restrictions to prevent the virus from spreading.⁴¹ However, on the 5th of October 2020, schools resumed for candidate classes (primary eight and senior four).⁴² Consequently, the majority of school going children (primary one to seven and senior one to three) have not gone back to school, likely explaining the barriers reported to access educational services. In December, KIs in 56% of assessed settlements reported physical access to education services which people could walk to. In addition, KIs in 43% of assessed settlements reported no candidate classes as the main barrier to access educational services and in 26% KIs reported COVID-19 restrictions. The closure of schools due to COVID-19 might have further impacted the prevalence of teenage pregnancies and early marriages among girls.⁴³

34. REACH FGD with participants from Tambura County 13 October 2020.

35. Doctors want COVID 19 preventive measures reinforced. Eye Radio. 18 October 2020. [Link](#)

36. Global Humanitarian Response Plan COVID-19, April - December 2020. [Link](#)

37. Rakoobas are temporary shelters made from straw.

38. REACH FGD with participants from Nagero County 16 October 2020.

39. Global Shelter Cluster, South Sudan, November 2020.

40. REACH. South Sudan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMIMI) 1-7 December 2020. [Link](#)

41. UNICEF Press release. UNICEF and UNESCO welcome the decision to reopen schools in South Sudan. 21 September 2020. [Link](#)

42. IOM South Sudan, Bi-weekly situation report. Update #29

43. WES, Minutes of Rule of Law meeting 12 November 2020.

Conclusion

COVID-19 restrictions, impacts of floods and insecurity in parts of WES and CAR seemed to have a continued effect on the needs of people living in WES.⁴⁴ The findings presented in this situation overview especially illustrate how households in Nagero County are facing high intersectoral needs largely driven by challenges in accessing food, despite the expected increase in food availability from September following the harvest season.

Additionally, despite findings suggesting an increase in access to boreholes in some counties, assessed settlements continued to face limited access to WASH infrastructures, indicative of a high risk of waterborne diseases and likely vulnerability to COVID-19 transmission.

In addition to the reported insecurity in parts of WES and CAR, sexual and gender-based violence remained a protection concern for most of the assessed settlements in quarter four across WES.

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.