

Situation Overview: Unity State, South Sudan

November 2016

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more effective
humanitarian action

Introduction

Displacement trends, population needs and humanitarian access all continue to be negatively affected by the insecurity resulting from the ongoing fighting in Unity State since July. After a partial respite in October, November saw a resurgence of violence in Unity, with pronounced fighting in Leer, Koch and Rubkona Counties in particular. These clashes have continued to trigger displacement to sites such as Bentiu PoC and Nyal and have had a negative impact on humanitarian activities outside formal displacement sites, as has impaired physical access due to poor road conditions and risks related to unexploded ordnance (UXOs).

To inform the response of humanitarians working outside of formal settlement sites, REACH is conducting an assessment on hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan, for which data on communities across the Greater Upper Nile region is collected on a monthly basis.

Between 7 and 25 November, REACH interviewed 507 Key Informants (KIs) from 75 communities in 7 of the 9 counties in Unity State. 282 KIs were interviewed in Bentiu PoC, 205 in Juba PoCs 1 and 3, and 20 in Bor PoC. It must be noted that data collected from KIs arriving in southern Unity, in Nyal, were excluded from November reporting for methodological reasons. This means that

the sample surveyed for this report differs in geographical coverage from preceding Situation Overviews, and therefore **figures reported here are not directly comparable with those in preceding Situation Overviews.**

Findings have been triangulated using focus group discussions (FGDs), secondary data and previous REACH assessments of hard-to-reach areas of Unity State.

New arrivals were specifically targeted during the data collection phase to ensure a better understanding of current displacement dynamics. Seventy-five per cent of respondents interviewed had arrived in their displacement location in October or November, and therefore had up-to-date information about the village from which they had been displaced.

This Situation Overview provides an update to key findings from the October Situation Overview for Unity State. The first section of this overview analyses displacement trends in Unity State in November, as well as the push and pull factors that shaped patterns of displacement this month. The second section evaluates the population dynamics in the assessed communities, as well as access to food and basic services for both IDP and non-displaced communities.

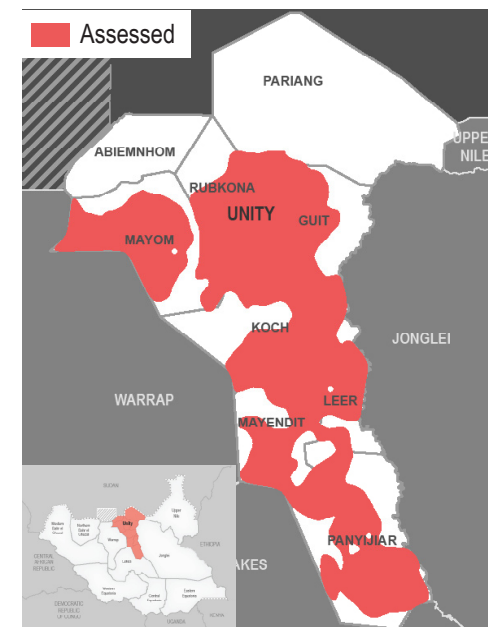
Population Movement and Displacement

The heightened instability in November has triggered the largest population increase in Bentiu PoC since early 2016. Whereas in October, large numbers of people exited the PoC to settle in nearby Rubkona and Guit Counties, leading to an overall decrease in the population, in November the PoC experienced a massive influx of new arrivals fleeing the upsurge of conflict. As a result, the population increased from 101,022 at the end of October¹ to 120,333 at the end of November.² A recent multiagency rapid assessment in Leer suggests that many vulnerable people in the most conflict-affected areas of Unity are forced to remain there because they are physically unable to make the long and difficult journey to Bentiu PoC in the north, or to the islands and Nyal to the south. These include young children, the elderly and the disabled.³

Push factors for leaving pre-crisis location

Reflecting the impact of the current security situation on population movement in Unity State, the majority of KIs (77%) reported a lack of security as the most important factor that pushed them to leave their pre-crisis location.

Sixty per cent of KIs reported inadequate access to food to be the second most important



Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Unity State, November 2016

push factor. This can likely be attributed to the impact of insecurity on cultivation and harvests, wet season flooding that has destroyed crops in many parts of Unity, a lack of humanitarian access and general food distributions (GFDs) in food insecure areas such as Leer, and the looting and destruction of crops by armed groups. During FGDs conducted in Bentiu PoC with new arrivals from Leer, Mayendit, Koch and Mayom, all but one reported that their crops had been destroyed by flooding, and several added that obstructed humanitarian

1 IOM, Bentiu PoC Update: Population Count 29 - 31 October 2016.

2 IOM, Bentiu PoC Update: Population Count 28 - 30 November 2016.

3 IOM, Concern, WHO, "Leer Temporary Protection Area Rapid Assessment", November 2016.

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas of Unity State, REACH uses primary data provided by key informants who receive regular information from their pre-displacement location or “Area of Origin”.

Information for this report was collected from key informants in the Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in Unity State, Bor PoC in Jonglei State, and Juba PoCs 1 and 3, throughout November 2016.

The first phase of the assessment methodology involved a participatory mapping exercise to map the relevant communities in Unity State, as well as the identification of key informants. In-depth interviews were then conducted with selected participants using a standardised survey tool comprising questions on displacement trends, population needs, and access to basic services.

After data collection was completed, all data was examined at the community level, and communities were assigned the modal response. Descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis were then used to analyse the data.

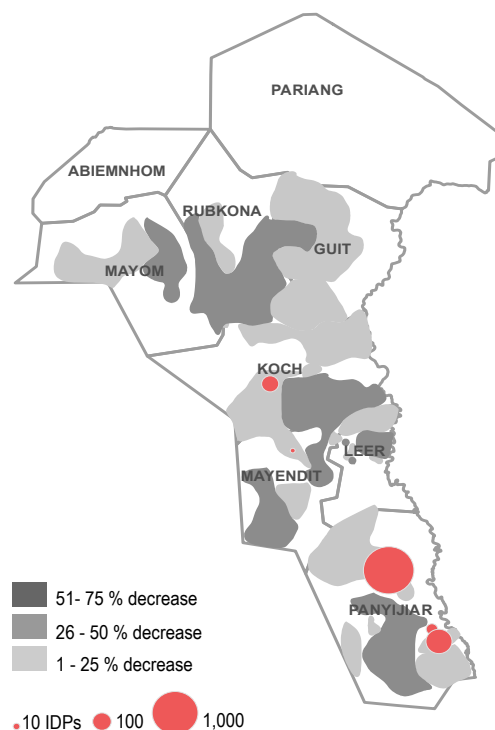
It should be noted that when no consensus could be found for a community, that community was not included in reporting. This, combined with the fact that sometimes only a subset of respondents are asked certain questions depending on their answer to a previous question, is why the total number of communities reported on may differ throughout this report.

access to their area was an important factor in their decision to come to the PoC.

Thirty per cent of KIs reported lack of health services to be the third most important push factor. This represents a shift from previous months, when more KIs were reporting lack of shelter as the third most important factor. This could be a result of the exclusion of data from KIs in Nyal, as this means that those forced to flee south to Panyijiar were excluded from the sample analysed in November, and these populations may be fundamentally different in some ways from those fleeing north to Bentiu PoC. On the other hand, this apparent shift may be linked to findings from October and November suggesting an improvement in shelter trends. Further investigation would be required to confirm this.

Pull factors for choosing current location

The major pull factors to the PoCs in Bentiu, Juba and Bor largely mirror the reported push factors. Seventy-three per cent of KIs reported perceived security as the primary reason for moving to their current location, 49% reported proximity to food as the second most important reason, and 25% reported access to health services as the third most important reason.



Map 2: Reported host community population decrease, and reported IDP populations, November 2016

Situation in Assessed Communities

Demographic profile

Remaining population in assessed villages

All 74 communities for which a consensus could be determined reported that the host community population in their village had decreased, of which nearly half (49%) reported that it had decreased by more than 50%.

Ninety-six per cent of assessed communities reported that conflict was the primary reason for host community displacement.

Eighty-one per cent of assessed communities reported that the majority of the host population lived in their own homes. However, a slight majority of the communities assessed in conflict-affected Mayendit (6 of 11), and half of the communities in Koch (4 of 8) reported that most of the host community was living outside their homes, either in someone else's home or in the bush. This is consistent with FGDs conducted with new arrivals from conflict-affected areas, which suggest that many tukuls have been abandoned or destroyed due to the fighting.

IDP population in assessed villages

Seven per cent of assessed communities reported that they were hosting IDPs in November, predominantly in stable Panyijiar. Far fewer communities have reported an IDP presence in October and November compared to previous months. This may suggest that many IDPs have moved to formal displacement sites, as reflected by the large increase in the population of Bentiu PoC, or left Unity State altogether. However, further investigation would be required to confirm this.

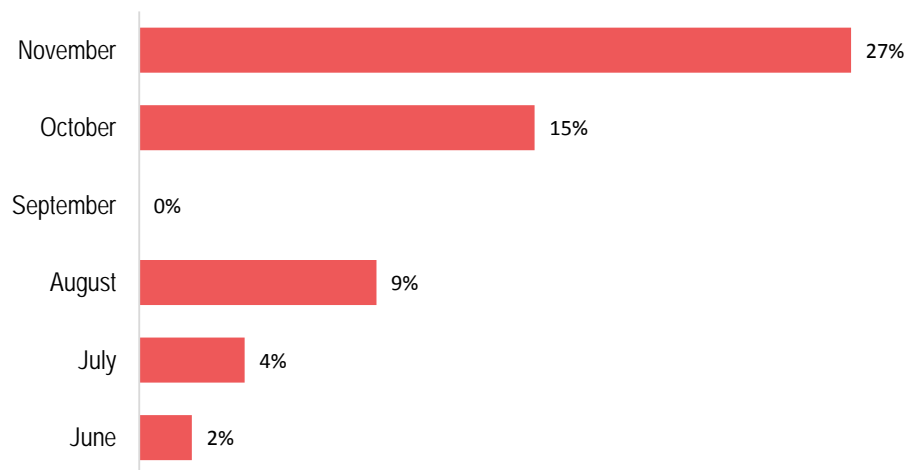
Protection

The protection context in Unity State has changed in highly concerning ways since July, with reports of major violence committed against civilians, particularly in counties such as Leer, Koch and Mayendit. According to

FGDs conducted with new arrivals in Bentiu PoC and Nyal, this trend has only continued, with fighting reportedly spreading further to new areas in November and triggering additional displacement.

Forty-eight per cent of assessed communities reported having access to protection services in November. Thirty-six per cent of assessed communities, all in Leer, Mayendit and Koch, reported that women would be unsafe at any time of day if they had to leave their shelter. Sixty-six per cent reported the same for men, including communities from all counties. FGDs suggest that this gender discrepancy is attributable to the disproportionate targeting of men for physical violence and forced recruitment. This is also supported by the recent Nonviolent Peaceforce assessment

Figure 1: Communities reporting forced recruitment as the most important protection concern for men, June - November 2016



of the Temporary Protection Area in Leer, in which IDPs reported that although sexual violence is a serious threat for women, men experience an even higher risk of being injured or killed by armed groups.⁴ As in previous months, in November the majority of assessed communities (70%) reported that **being killed or injured is the biggest protection concern for men**.

Sexual violence is the biggest protection concern for women, as reported by 75% of assessed communities. A recent multiagency rapid assessment in Leer indicated that women are most vulnerable when outside their village (for example, while fleeing violence) and when collecting firewood.⁵

Forced recruitment continues to rise as an important protection concern for men, as

reported by 15% of communities in October and now 27% in November.⁶ Populations in Mayom and Guit are disproportionately vulnerable to forced recruitment for political reasons.

Shelter

Shelter conditions continue to be gradually improving for host communities compared to previous months. The most common type of shelter reportedly used by host communities in November is the rakooba (62%), followed by the tukul (38%). Rakoobas are temporary structures that are easily set up and taken down, and therefore are often a sign of displacement, or that permanent shelters (tukuls) have been damaged, destroyed, or are considered unsafe to inhabit due to frequent fighting that forces people to abandon their traditional residences. However, a higher proportion of communities reported tukuls as the most commonly used shelter in their village than in October (23% of assessed communities), itself an improvement on September (9%). This could be indicative of an emerging positive shelter trend, although the likely effect of excluding data collection in Nyal from November analysis must also be taken into account.

Of the few communities reporting an IDP presence, all for which a consensus could be determined reported that the majority of IDPs live in rakoobas. Sharing of shelters by IDPs and host communities was also reported by all assessed communities reporting an IDP presence. These findings are an indication that, despite possible improvements, **shelter**

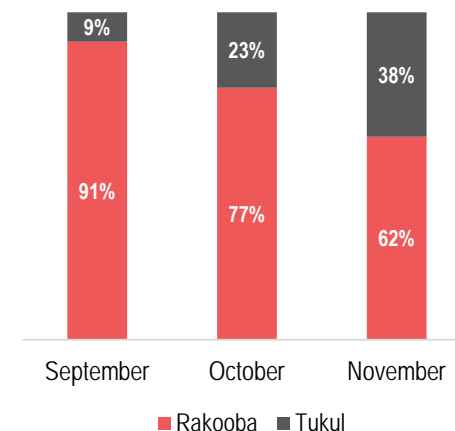


Figure 2: Most common types of shelter reportedly used by host community, September - November 2016

remains a high-priority need outside formal displacement sites.

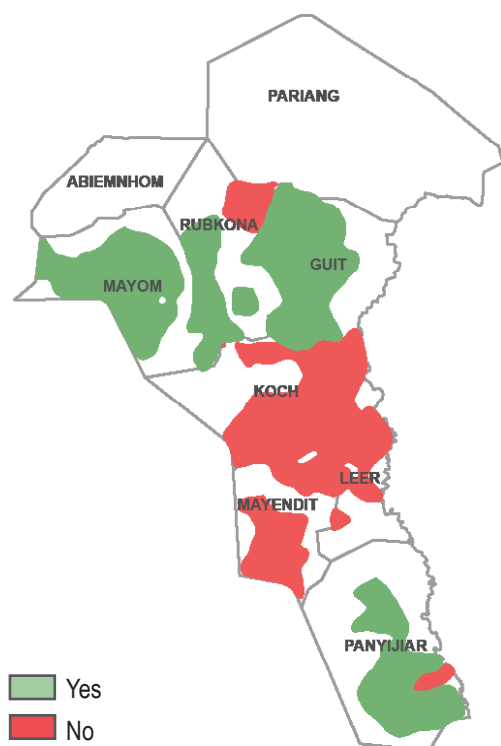
Food security

Thirty-eight per cent of communities assessed in November reported that deaths from hunger had occurred in the past three months, including 82% of assessed communities in Leer and half of those in Koch and Panyijjar. Furthermore, 53% of assessed communities reported that they had inadequate access to food in November, including all assessed communities in the conflict-affected counties of Leer, Mayendit and Koch. **These figures are a strong indication that large parts of Unity State, and particularly those areas that are most affected by the conflict, are currently experiencing high levels of**

4 Nonviolent Peaceforce, "Protection Assessment Report: Temporary Protection Area, UNMISS Base, Leer Town", December 2016.

5 IOM, Concern, WHO, "Leer Temporary Protection Area Rapid Assessment", November 2016.

6 November figures are not directly comparable with figures from previous months due to the different samples used. Comparisons have only been made in this report when the data strongly suggests continuity or an ongoing trend.



Map 3: Communities reporting adequate access to food, November 2016
food insecurity.

The advent of the cultivation season has allowed far more communities to rely on their own harvest for food (42% in November) compared to the pre-crisis months (15% in June). However, **25% of communities assessed in November cited foraging as their main source of food**, compared to no communities before the crisis. Foraging has likely become more prevalent because the increased instability has impeded cultivation, forcing many to flee to areas where foraging

is the only viable source of food. Furthermore, the negative impact of the renewed crisis on humanitarian access has made it difficult or impossible to conduct general food distributions in many food insecure parts of Unity State.

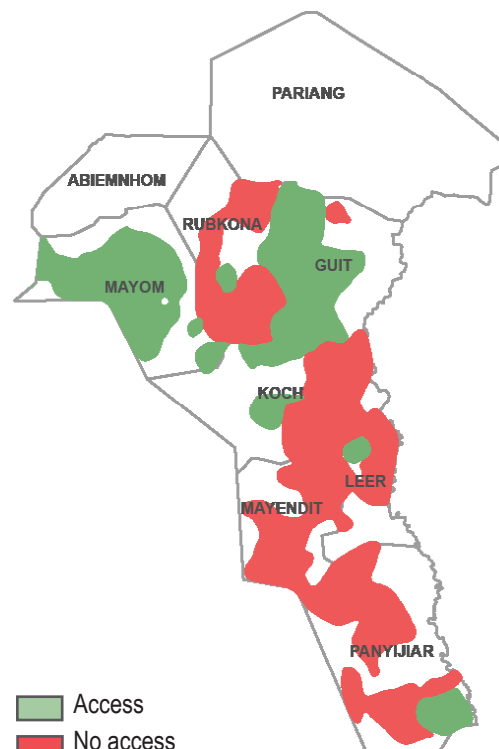
For more information about the general food security situation in Unity State, including access to markets, please refer to the October Situation Overview.⁷

Livelihoods

Ninety-six per cent of assessed communities reported that land was available for cultivation, but only 32% reported access to agricultural inputs. Furthermore, 65% of assessed communities reported that most of the farming implements and tradesmen's tools in the community had been looted. This means that although land is widely available and accessible, many communities lack the means to make use of this opportunity for cultivation to improve their food security.

Moreover, only 10% of assessed communities reported access to casual job opportunities. This is likely a reflection of the negative impact of insecurity and conflict, as well as the general economic situation in South Sudan, on livelihoods and cultivation in Unity State.

As in previous months, a large proportion of assessed communities (44%) reported that at least one major cattle raid had taken place in the past six months, predominantly in Leer, Koch and Mayendit. Of these, most reported that displacement (93%) as well as damage

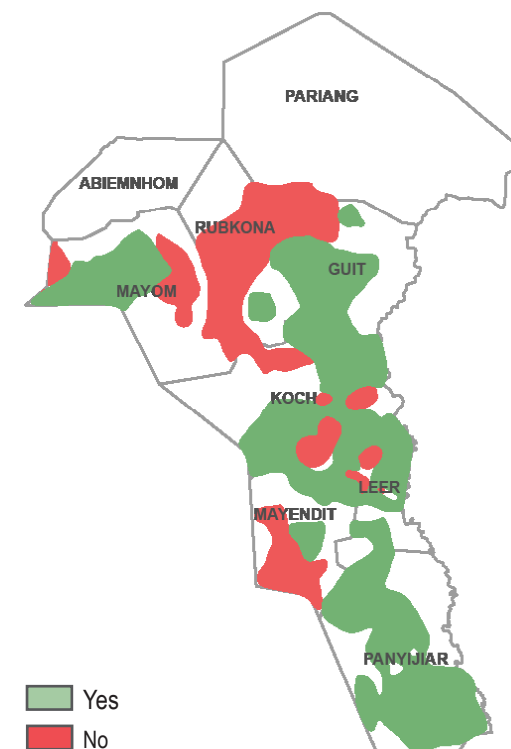


Map 4: Communities reporting access to agricultural inputs, November 2016

to personal property (85%) and community infrastructure (70%) had occurred as a result of the raid.

Water and Sanitation

Sixty-seven per cent of assessed communities reported access to safe drinking water (borehole), of which 95% reported that safe water could be accessed by walking for less than an hour. It should be noted that even in villages with functioning boreholes, FGDs suggest that these are often only used by those



Map 5: Communities reporting access to safe drinking water, November 2016

living in relatively close proximity to them, with those living further away obtaining their water from unprotected sources such as rivers and swamps.

Sanitation trends appear to be comparable with those reported in the October Situation Overview.

Health

Seventy-eight per cent of assessed communities reported that they did not have access to health services in November. Of

these, 42% reported that previously existing services were abandoned, looted, destroyed or otherwise unable to function due to fighting, and 47% reported that health services simply never existed in the first place.

An overwhelming majority of assessed communities (92%) identified malaria as the biggest health concern in their community, and 31% reported diarrhea as the second most important health problem. This is consistent with findings from the South Sudan Health Cluster, which reported that malaria accounted for 43% of the major causes of death in South Sudan, followed by acute watery diarrhoea (11%) for the January-August 2016 period.⁸

For information about the ongoing cholera outbreak in Unity State, please refer to the October Situation Overview. It should be noted that while cholera was officially confirmed in Bentiu PoC in October, the first cases in Nyal were confirmed on 1 November.

Education

Only 9% of assessed communities reported access to education services in November (exclusively pre-primary and primary schools). However, secondary data from education partners working in Unity suggests that education services may be underreported in REACH data because KIs are likely to report that there is no access to education if there is no school in their village, when in fact a school in a nearby village can be reasonably accessed on a daily basis. This will be rectified in REACH methodology for future reporting.

Of the 6 communities reporting access to

education, all reported that more than 50% of boys were attending school, while only 3 reported the same for girls. FGDs conducted in education catchment sites in previous months have suggested that gender disparities in school attendance rates is linked to traditional gender roles.

Access to education, which has always been limited in Unity State, has been further set back by the closing down of many schools in counties such as Leer and Koch, from which teachers have fled and NGO staff were evacuated due to the fighting in July. Many of these schools have yet to reopen. FGDs suggest that schools in conflict-affected areas are susceptible to abandonment because most teachers are young men, which makes them particularly vulnerable to targeting for physical violence and forced recruitment.

Conclusion

The fighting that began in southern Unity State in July has continued to negatively affect displacement trends, population needs and access to basic services in November. More IDPs entered Bentiu PoC in November than in any month since the renewal of the crisis in July, and its population now stands at more than 120,000.

Many host communities have either been directly affected by the fighting (with consequences such as violence, looting, destroyed property and displacement), or have been cut off from humanitarian access due to the resultant insecurity. The high prevalence of more temporary structures (rakoobas) as

the primary shelter in almost all communities is likely a reflection of the instability, fear and high levels of displacement currently being experienced by large parts of the population in Unity State. However, the reported increase in tukuls may be a positive sign that some populations are increasingly able to build or return to permanent shelters.

Access to basic services (most notably food, health and education) has remained low since the beginning of the July crisis, and continues to do so in November. Food security remains the most pronounced challenge, as cultivation has been impeded by insecurity and flooding, humanitarians have been prevented from implementing general food distributions in some of the most food insecure parts of Unity, and access to markets is extremely limited. As a result, many have had to resort to negative coping mechanisms and deaths from hunger are widely reported.

While improvements in humanitarian access are expected with the beginning of the incumbent dry season and consequent rehabilitation of roads, instability is also expected to increase as armed groups will be able to mobilise more easily. It is therefore likely that the volatile security context will continue to have a negative impact on population needs and on humanitarian access to hard-to-reach areas.

About REACH Initiative

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.

For more information, you can write to our in-country office: southsudan@reach-initiative.org or to our global office: geneva@reach-initiative.org.

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

⁸ Health Cluster Bulletin #5, 23 September 2016.