

Situation Overview: Unity State, South Sudan

April 2016

REACH Informing
more effective
humanitarian action

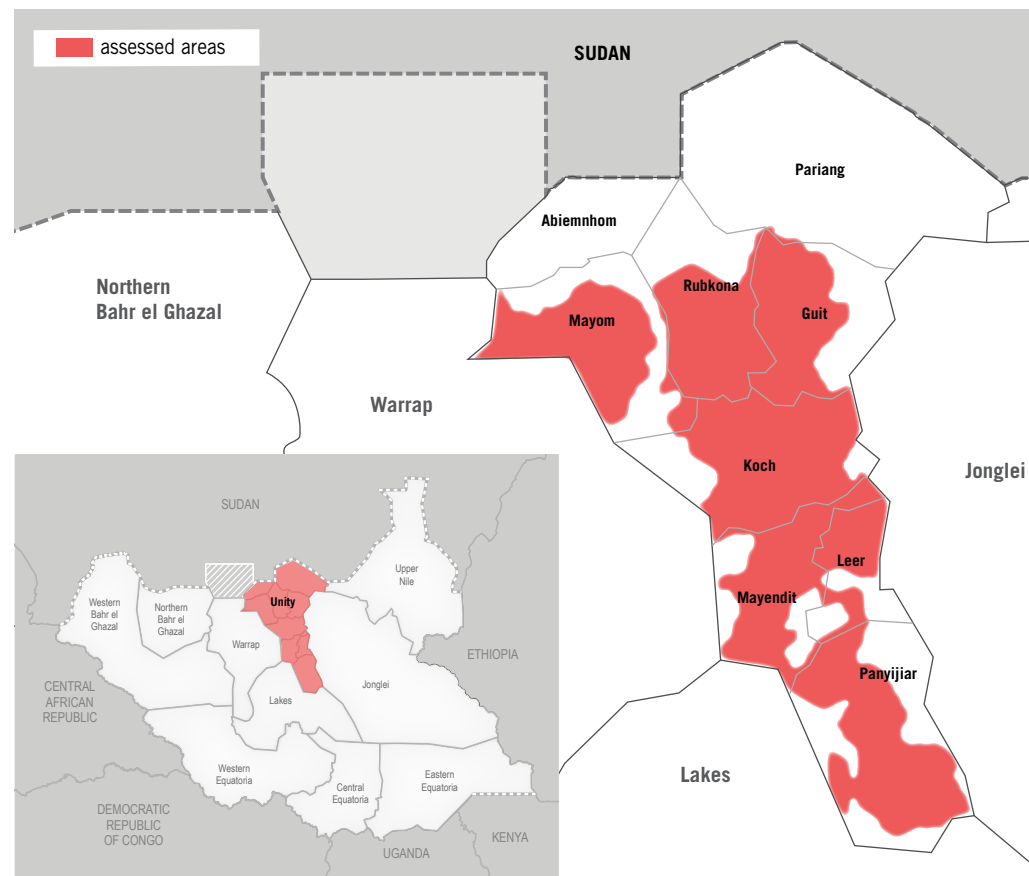
Introduction

The advent of the 2016 wet season, coupled with an improved security situation, has created a shift in displacement and migration patterns in Unity State. As a result of this change there has been a rapid increase in the number of internally displaced persons (IDPs) returning from Bentiu PoC and host communities to family lands or migrating to areas where livelihood opportunities are more readily accessible.¹ 9,426 IDPs left the PoC during the month of April, accounting for 9.2% of the overall population.² IDPs from both the PoC and other areas are starting to migrate to communities that were previously avoided due to security concerns. In particular, Bentiu Town has seen a large increase in IDPs during 2016, with an estimated 25,000 currently living there.³

Despite the pause in violence, critical services, such as health care and education, remain unavailable to the majority of communities across Unity State, and many people still require significant assistance in order to secure livelihoods. To meet this need aid agencies are re-establishing activities in previously inaccessible places, and providing aid to new locations as part of the Beyond Bentiu Initiative. Shifts in assistance are further influencing the movements of IDPs, as it improves their capacity to support themselves in selected local communities across the state.⁴

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 monthly data collection on communities across the Greater Upper Nile region will be conducted throughout the course of the year. Between April 8 and 28, REACH assessed 67 of 83 communities in seven of nine counties in Unity State, collecting information from 305 key informants (KIs) – 219 KIs from Bentiu PoC, 16 KIs from Bor PoC, and 69 KIs in Bentiu Town. Findings have been triangulated using focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted at selected sites outside of the PoC, secondary data, and REACH's previous assessments of hard to reach areas of Unity State.

The following document provides an update to key findings from March 2016, related to displacement dynamics and humanitarian conditions in the assessed communities across Unity State. The first section examines displacement trends to Bentiu Town over the dry season (November 2015 to April 2016), and the push and pull factors that shaped patterns of displacement.⁵ The second examines the current situation of IDPs and non-displaced communities currently living in each community, with regards to access to food and the functionality of basic services, including water, sanitation, health, and education.



Map 1: Unity State location and assessment coverage

1. Small arms survey, Human Security Baseline Assessment (HSBA) for Sudan and South Sudan; REACH situation Overview of Unity State, February 2016 and March 2016
2. IOM registration figures, April 2016
3. Ibid
4. Beyond Bentiu Initiative Response Strategy, March 2016
5. REACH situation Overview of Unity State, February 2016 and March 2016

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas, the study uses primary data provided by key informants, who receive regular information from some place outside of their current displacement site, usually their pre-displacement location or, "Area of Origin".

Information for this study was collected from key informants in Bor and Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site, Unity State, during April 2016.

A two-stage methodology was employed, beginning with the identification of key informants and participatory mapping, followed by in-depth interviews with selected participants to understand the current situation in places outside of Bentiu PoC that they received regular information from.

Each participant was matched with a geographic area about which s/he could provide information. During the second stage, key informant interviews were conducted with selected participants. A standardised survey was used to collect information about the situation and needs of the remaining host community and any displaced persons residing there.

After data collection finished, all data was examined at the community level, and communities were assigned the modal response, from which descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis were used to analyze the data.

Key findings

The end of the 2015/2016 dry season saw a dramatic change in the flow of people throughout Unity State. The improved security situation has allowed IDPs to continue to migrate from Bentiu PoC to other secure communities. In particular, a gradual increase in migration of IDPs from other parts of Unity State to Bentiu Town and selected "catchment" areas⁶ has been observed. These "catchment" areas are outside of the PoC, but mostly remain within easy reach of humanitarian organizations based in Bentiu. In part, anticipation of the 2016 wet season is driving this movement as, according to FGDs, many people are migrating with the intention of cultivating food crops, which can supplement the food aid provided by WFP.

The sustained shift of IDPs from the PoC to other areas of Unity State is the main focus of the displacement section below.

Figure 1: Reported pull factors for choosing current displacement location
Bold text denotes that a majority of respondents reported the reason

Push Factors

1. Security
2. Food
3. Health
4. Aid
5. Family

Figure 2: Reported push factors for displacement to data collection site
The darker the colour, the more commonly reported

	First Reason	Second Reason	Third Reason
Lack of Security	88%	2%	1%
Lack of Food	6%	32%	33%
Lack of Health	4%	56%	31%
Lack of Aid	1%	6%	23%
No Family	0%	1%	4%
Lack of Education	1%	1%	4%
Lack of Water	0%	1%	5%
Other	0%	0%	0%

Over half of communities reported that less than 50% of their original inhabitants remain. However, findings indicate that there has been a slight increase in the proportion of males within communities, with 59% of responding communities reporting to consist of all or mostly women, compared to 66% in March. Further, since March a larger proportion of communities reported the return of displaced community members, from 31 of 54 (55%) communities reporting returned host community in April compared to 23 of 59 (39%) in March. However, 73% of these communities reported that the returned local communities were considered temporary.

Although access to food and livelihoods has improved since the beginning of the year, the majority of KIs continue to report that communities are struggling to provide for themselves. 57% of responding communities reported insufficient availability of food and 65% reported food distributions as their primary food source. To compound this issue, 88% of communities reported they have had at least some cattle stolen and 40% reported no

access to land to cultivate. Further, availability to basic services is poor, with only 12% of responding communities reporting access to safe drinking water, 8% to education, and 6% to health care.

Population Movement and Displacement

Pull factors

Pull factors for Bentiu Town largely reflected push factors for displacement. Most KIs reported security in Bentiu Town as the main reason for migrating there, followed by health services, and food. For IDPs that moved multiple times before arriving in Bentiu Town, most fled to places that they believed would be safe. Overall, IDPs in Bentiu Town reported less emphasis on family and friends when choosing a displacement site than IDPs from the PoC. FGDs clarified that most IDPs in Bentiu Town find the PoC to be confining, and prefer to go to places where they are free to move and have access to land for cultivation.

6. Locations commonly referred to as "catchment" areas, are areas outside of formal IDP sites in which large amounts of IDPs are gathering, this is usually due to the provision of aid to an area. These areas usually encompass multiple communities, and consist of a main town.

7. REACH Situation Overview of Unity State, February 2016 and March 2016

Push factors for displacement to Bentiu Town

Similar to IDPs in the PoC, the primary factors driving displacement of IDPs to Bentiu Town were insecurity in their home areas, followed by a lack of health services and food.⁷ However, unlike those coming to the PoC, many KIs residing in Bentiu Town stated that a lack of general aid was also an important factor for displacement, suggesting that IDPs in Bentiu Town may be more concerned with deteriorating livelihoods than those inhabiting the PoC. Timelines of displacement trends to Bentiu Town also reflected those of the PoC, with the largest proportion of IDPs initially fleeing their homes during the 2015 wet season. However, the majority (78%) did not arrive in Bentiu Town till 2016.

Key displacement trends

Map 2 shows the main displacement trends reported by new arrivals to Bentiu Town during the 2015/2016 dry season. Like their counterparts in the PoC, most came from Leer, Mayendit, and Koch where an increase in fighting fuelled displacement that tripled the size of the PoC.

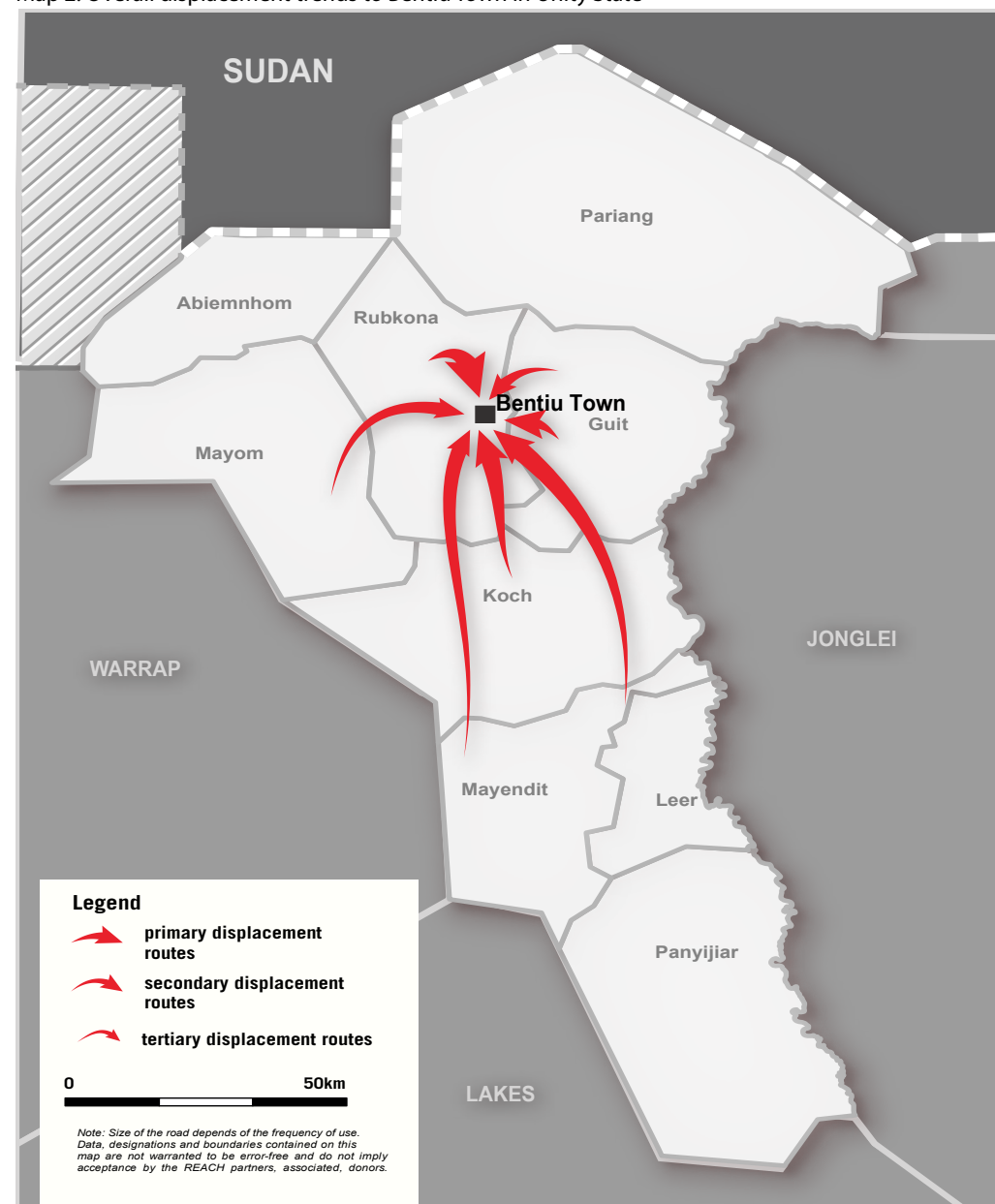
Most of the IDPs interviewed in Bentiu Town initially fled into the bush and then arrived in early 2016 to Bentiu Town following further displacement. Like IDPs in the PoC, over three quarters of KIs experienced multiple displacements, though they were not as likely to flee to places where they knew people; instead, safety was the primary reported reason for going to a new location. However, IDPs in Bentiu Town had in general been displaced less times than IDPs in Bentiu PoC, with most KIs fleeing to a single place before arriving in Bentiu Town in early 2016.

Table 1: KI Reported Displacement by Season/County

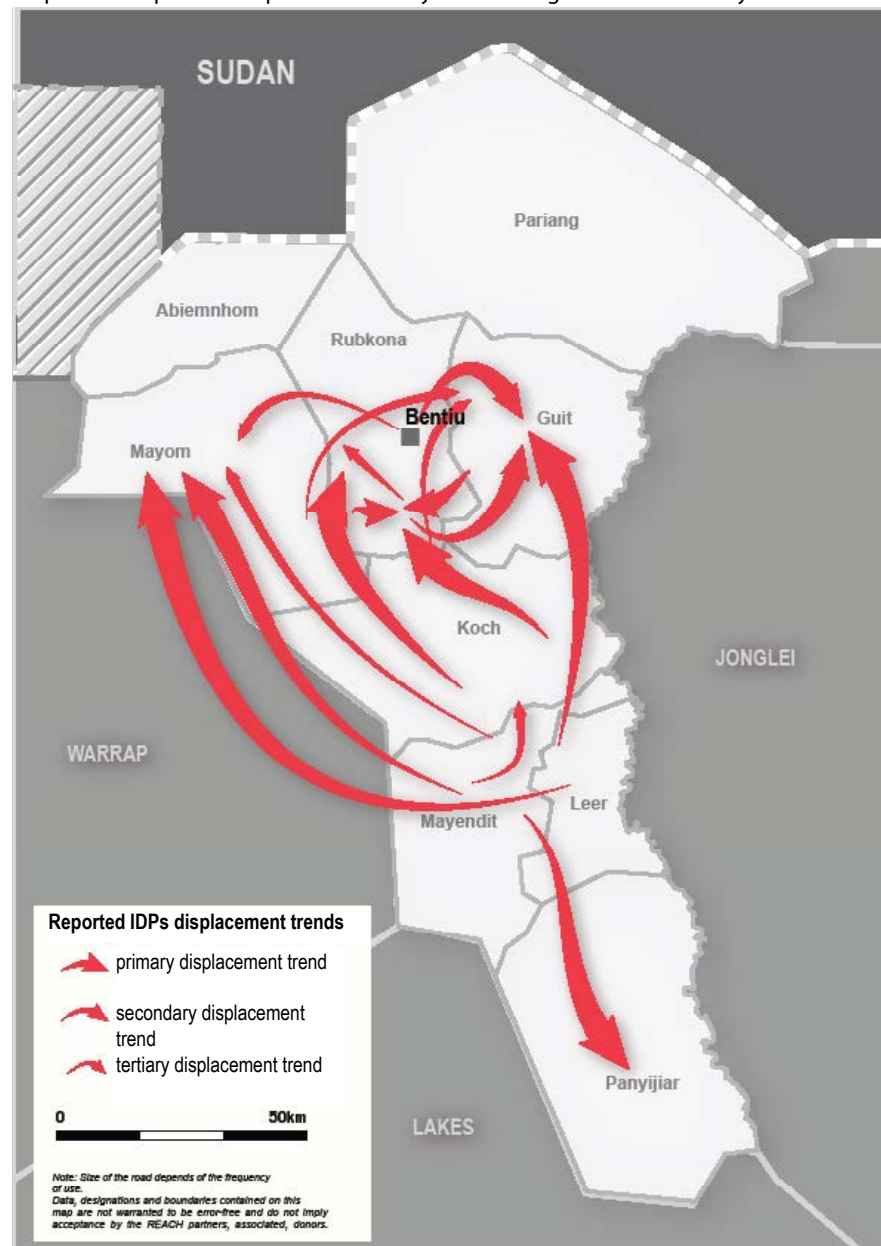
Reported displacement into Bentiu Town by season and county (taken from last site of displacement
Dry Season: Jan - Apr, Wet season: May - Oct, End of the year (Dry Season): Nov-Dec.

	County	2013		2014		2015		2016	
		End	Dry	Wet	End	Dry	Wet	End	Dry
	Guit	10.00%	50.00%	30.00%	0.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Koch	6.25%	31.25%	12.50%	0.00%	12.50%	25.00%	6.25%	6.25%
	Leer	5.17%	10.00%	0.00%	10.00%	0.00%	70.00%	10.00%	0.00%
	Mayendit	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	16.67%	66.67%	16.67%	0.00%
	Mayom	16.67%	16.67%	0.00%	16.67%	8.33%	8.33%	25.00%	8.33%
	Renk	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%	100.00%	0.00%	0.00%	0.00%
	Rubkona	21.74%	34.78%	4.35%	0.00%	21.74%	13.04%	0.00%	4.35%

Map 2: Overall displacement trends to Bentiu Town in Unity State



Map 3: IDP displacement patterns in Unity State during the 2015/2016 dry season



Bentiu Town is just one of many places in Unity state where IDPs have begun to congregate. Map 3 shows other reported displacement patterns to locations where IDPs have settled during the 2015/2016 dry season. Several trends are apparent; a large number of IDPs have left Koch, Leer, and Mayendit, the three most heavily damaged counties in 2015, and the three most unstable in terms of security, and have either moved south to Panyijiar or north to Guit, Rubkona, or Mayom. Large numbers of IDPs have reportedly moved from Mayendit and Leer to Western Mayom, and several groups from Rubkona, Koch, and Leer are now staying in Northern Guit. Many from Koch and Guit have gone to the Nhialdu area in southern Rubkona County, which is now a major focus of humanitarian interventions.⁹

Situation in Assessed Communities

Demographic profile

Remaining population in assessed communities

All 67 responding communities reported that at least some of the original local community was still living there, showing little change since March.^{10 11} However, in all assessed counties except Koch, at least half of responding communities were reported to have less than 50% of their original inhabitants remaining.

Of those who remain, half were reportedly living in their own homes, and just under one third in another village or settlement. Only 6 communities (11%) reported the largest proportion of people as living in the bush, which is a substantial decrease from March (40%). This movement out of hiding in the bush suggests an improvement in the security situation which is driving returns. 59% of communities are all or mostly women, a slight decrease from the 66% reported in March, indicating that some displaced men may be starting to return to their homes. 28 of 50 assessed communities reported that there is about the same number of children as adults living in the community, whilst 17 reported there to be more children. However, the absence of men continues to raise questions about actual and perceived safety of males residing outside of formal IDP sites.

The most frequently cited first or second main reasons the community members have stayed in their pre-crisis locations was that they were unwilling to desert an area they considered to be their home (71%), followed by the community being safe (53%). 46% of communities reported food availability, likely through food distributions in the area and/or presence of land that can be utilised for cultivation, as the primary or secondary reason for local community remaining. As with current IDPs, insecurity (75% of communities) and lack of access to food (71%) were the most frequently reported potential drivers of displacement in the community.

9. Beyond Bentiu Initiative, Response Strategy, March 2016

10. REACH Situation Overview Unity State, March 2016

11. Not all KIs had complete knowledge of all conditions in the community they were in contact with. If a KI did not have any updated knowledge about a particular sector, they were not asked about it. As a result, not all communities are included in the analysis.

IDP population in assessed communities 18 communities (29%) reported that they were hosting IDPs; the average caseload was 564, though individual reports ranged from 15 to 5000 individuals. The largest concentrations of IDPs were reported in Panyijiar County, while smaller groups were reported in communities in Guit, Koch, and Mayom. Like previous months, most IDPs were integrated with their host communities; 57% reported that the majority of IDPs were living with their relatives, while 29% were reportedly living with host community that they were not related to. None were reported to be sleeping in the bush.¹²

Returnees to assessed communities

Over half (31 of 56) of responding communities reported that community members had returned, increasing from roughly one-third in March. The largest numbers of returned community members were reported in Leer, Western Mayom, and Guit. Marginally smaller numbers were reported in Koch and Rubkona. Most of the returned community members have reportedly come back in response to improved security (89%).

However, of the 55% of communities reporting returned community members, 73% reported that returns were only temporary. FGDs found that returned local community members were often considered temporary because, although they wished to stay, they believed that they may be forced to leave at any time due to a change in the security situation. Most IDPs also noted in these discussions

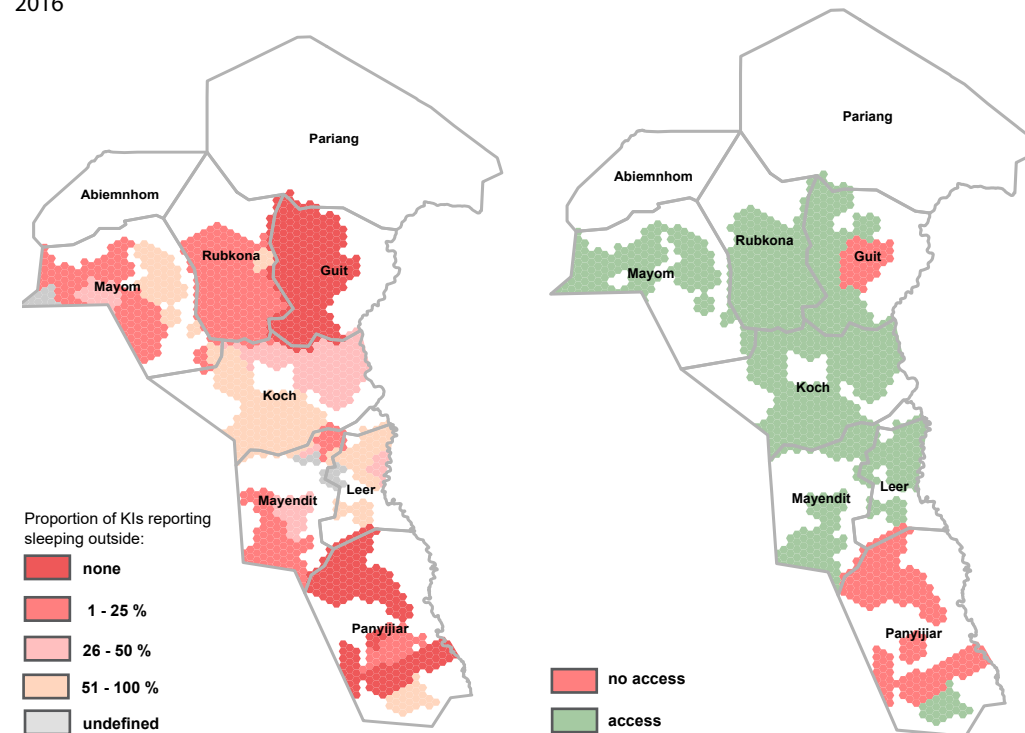
that they had returned in order to cultivate during the fertile rainy season. Together, this information suggests that most returning IDPs are motivated by the prospect of food. In particular, they are unable to acquire enough food in the PoC, so they are taking the risk to return to potentially insecure areas in order to increase their own food supply.

Shelter

Similarly to March, over half of communities reported that at least 50% of the community were sleeping in the open air. Issues with lack of shelter were largely concentrated in Guit, Rubkona, and Panyijiar counties, though all counties' shelter availability had suffered substantially due to the conflict. Leer, Koch, and Mayom appeared to have recovered somewhat in the last month, possibly due to a resumption of NGO activities in the area.

An average of four households were now reportedly sharing each shelter, a decrease from previous months, when almost twice as many households shared each shelter. This suggests that some households that were previously sharing shelters have started to acquire separate shelters. IDPs and returned host community were not heavily dependent on the local community for shelter in the majority of communities. Only 7 of the 17 communities reporting the presence of IDPs reported that more than half of the host community was sharing their shelters with IDPs. Similarly, 13 of 40 communities reported that more than half the local community were sharing with returned host community, about the same as

Map 5: Reported proportion of the community sleeping outside (left) and reported food access, April 2016



the month prior.

38% of all communities (23 of 60) reported that adequate shelter materials were available, a substantial improvement over March, when only 25% of communities reported this.¹³ It is important to note that during site visits to some communities available shelter materials through foraging were observed, indicating that a reported lack of shelter materials may refer mostly to a lack of NGO provided materials like synthetic rope and plastic sheets. Additional site visits in April showed that IDPs and returned host community continued to

construct new, permanent shelters in some communities.¹⁴

The most frequently reported shelter types used by both IDPs and the original community were tukuls and rakooba. Tent usage has increased among both the local community and IDPs; 32% of communities reported that members of the community were using tents, while 68% of communities reported tent use by at least some IDPs.

12. Unity State Situation Overview, February 2016 and March 2016.

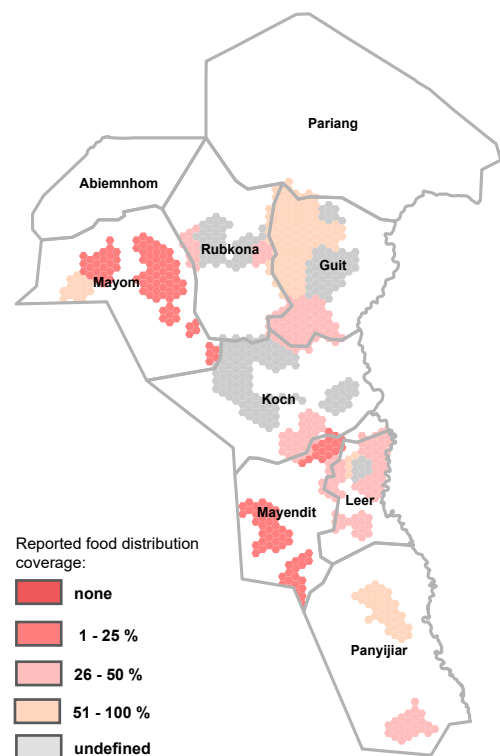
13. REACH Situation Overview, Unity State, March 2016

14. These site visits were to Nhialdu, Niernni, and Kuach

Access to Food

Though there have been some slight improvements, food security continued to be a critical issue across Unity State. 36 of 64 (57%) responding communities reported that they did not have enough food this month, primarily in Mayom, Koch, Mayendit, and Guit. This is a slight improvement over March, when 70% of communities reported that they did not have access to enough food. Similarly, recent food security reports show food security to have improved slightly across Unity State in

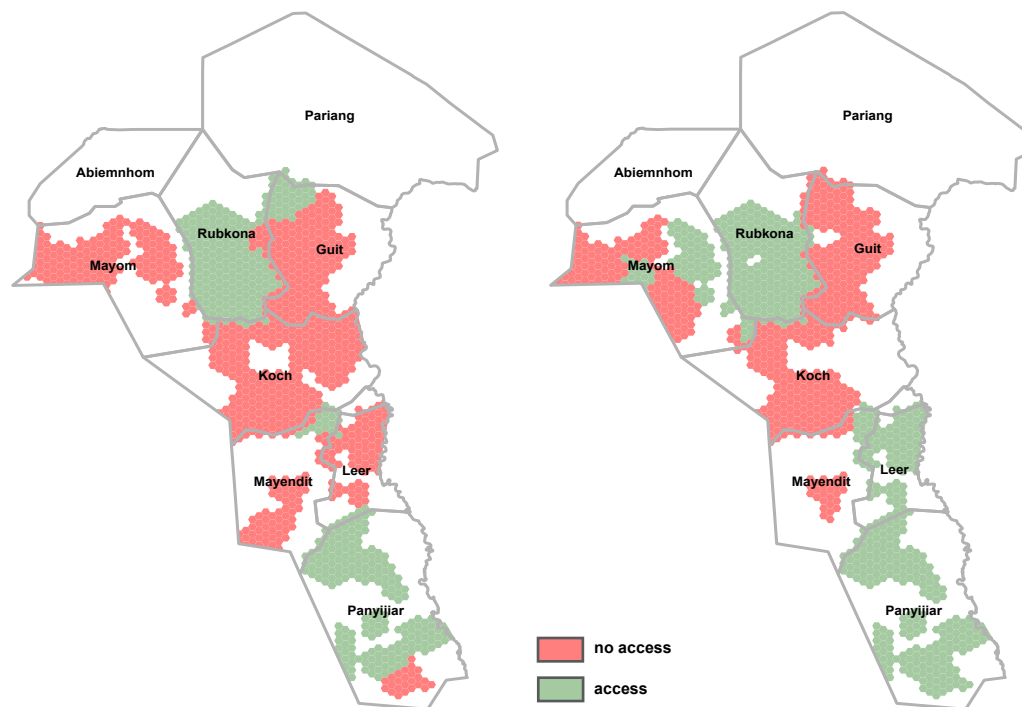
Map 6: Reported receipt of food distributions



the last month, though Guit, Koch, northern Mayendit and Leer remain in emergency acute food insecurity phase. Panyijiar and southern Mayendit were classified as being in crisis (one stage better than emergency) but would be worse had it not been for WFP food interventions throughout the 2015/2016 dry season.¹⁵ The same report identified rising food prices as a continuing problem; in particular, sorghum prices were approximately 400% above the five year average in Juba. Currency prices continued to fluctuate wildly in response to the ongoing political crisis.

37 of 60 responding communities reported receiving food assistance, while 28 of 43 reported WFP distributions as their main source of food. Of those communities that received food, 44% said that at least half of the community had received food aid, and 66% received a food distribution within the last three months.¹⁶ These findings indicate that food distributions are sometimes used to supplement other food supplies, and are not always sufficient in quantity or frequency to constitute the main source of food in the community. FGDs revealed that most local community and IDPs share food aid, and try to supplement their rations with foraged wild foods. WFP and its partners carried out distributions in all of the assessed counties except for Leer and Guit during the month of April. However, communities in many counties, particularly Mayom and Mayendit, claimed that less than 25% of the population received enough food. Further, almost half of all communities reported that over half of the

Map 7: Reported access to a market (left) and reported access to casual labour employment opportunities(right).



population has been displaced due to hunger.

All responding communities reported adopting a variety of coping strategies in order to stretch what little food they had. In particular, communities reported eating less expensive food, borrowing food from neighbours, and gathering wild food at least two days a week. Borrowing money and consuming seed stock meant for planting in the next growing season were almost as common. Assessments across Unity State noted very high malnutrition rates, particularly for children.¹⁷ MSF estimated acute malnutrition rates at 28-34% in Leer County¹⁸

and an assessment in Panyijiar estimated the global acute malnutrition prevalence (GAM) at 24%.¹⁹

Livelihoods

Unlike previous months, the presence of livelihood opportunities has shown marginal improvement between March and April. A majority of communities, 32 of 53, reported having access to land for cultivation.²⁰ In addition, 21% of communities reported that residents generally had access to agricultural inputs, such as seeds and tools. This is still a clear minority, but it is much more than then

15. FEWSNET, South Sudan: Food security deteriorates to Emergency (IPC Phase 4) IN Northern Bahr el Ghazal, April 2016

16. IPC, South Sudan Integrated Food Security Phase Classification Report, December 2015

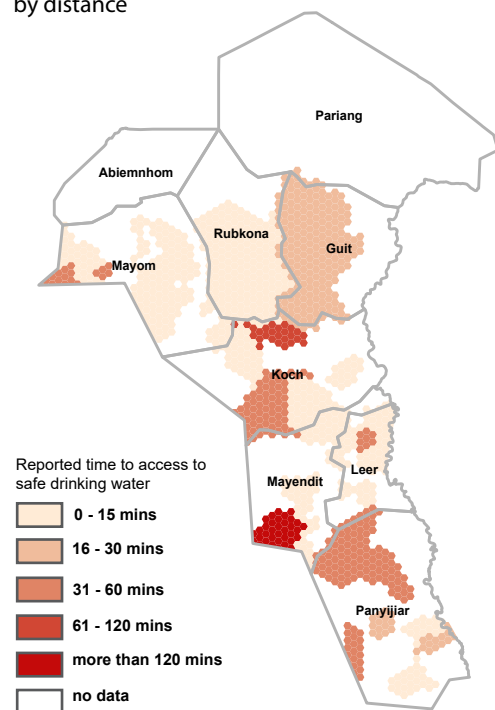
17. Niemni Rapid Assessment, March 2016; Nhialdu rapid assessment, March 2016

18. South Sudan: Trapped by violence in Unity State (October 2015) Unity State

19. Crisis Impacts on Households in Unity State 2014-2015 (January 2016) Office of the Deputy Humanitarian Coordinator for South Sudan

20. REACH Situation Overview, Unity State, February 2016 and March 2016

Map 8: Reported access to safe drinking water, by distance



6% of communities that reported having agricultural inputs last month. However, with the impending wet season, more support with agricultural inputs and land availability is clearly needed. A similar improvement in livelihood opportunities has been observed in urban and peri-urban areas, with 33 of 55 communities reporting the availability of casual labour employment, and 19 of 58 reporting the availability of jobs selling goods in the local markets.

However, like previous months, a large proportion of responding communities (46 of

52) reported that the majority of the cattle that people had prior to the crisis had been stolen, while only 6 reported that they are being looked after by family. It is likely that much of the cattle were stolen during raids, with 50 of 56 responding communities reporting that they had experienced a cattle raid in the last six months. Further, all communities that had experienced cattle raids reported that people had been displaced due to raiding.

Water and Sanitation

Only 7 of 58 communities (12%) reported access to clean drinking water, the majority (87%) of which get their water from boreholes. Most (70%) were within 30 minutes of clean drinking water, though 10% of communities reported needing to travel over an hour to reach clean drinking water sources. FGDs conducted at selected locations in Unity State, revealed that, even though a lot of communities still have functional boreholes, due to these being far away, many people still get their water from unprotected sources like swamps and rivers.²¹ FGDs conducted with IDPs in Bentiu PoC revealed that if a clean water source is more than a 15-20 minute walk away, people will typically choose a closer unprotected source. 54 of 55 communities reported destroyed water points as the first, second or third main reason that there is no access to clean water. 48 reported water source being broken, and 45 that the water source is not safe to use.

There has been an increase in the proportion of communities reporting the bush as the primary location for defecation, from 77%

reporting this in March, compared to 87% in April. This is likely due to both the large influx of returns and minimal sanitation infrastructure left from the conflict.

Health

The presence of health care remained one of the most critical pull and push factors for IDPs coming to Bentiu PoC and Bentiu Town. Similar to previous months, only 4 of 62 communities reported that healthcare was available. Given the absence of permanent health care facilities in Guit County, reported access to healthcare here suggests that mobile clinics have been effective in reaching out to IDPs and local communities living in remote areas.²² In nearly all areas, most people in the community were over an hour away from the nearest health care facility.

The main reason for low availability of healthcare services continues to be conflict induced, with 71% of communities reporting that health facilities have been destroyed by violence, 68% reporting that staff have fled, and 64% reporting inaccessibility due to insecurity.²³

Malaria, diarrhoea, and malnutrition continued to be the highest reported health problems. However unlike previous months, 33% of communities reported fever to be a major problem as well. The findings are congruent with other health assessments, which found that these, along with acute respiratory tract infections and war related injuries, are the most common causes of death since the

beginning of the crisis.²⁴

Mobile clinics and other recent NGO initiatives to reach outside of the PoC have had a clear impact, as several new areas of Unity State, particularly in Guit and Rubkona, are now reporting health care access. However, health care availability remains strained; the ending of the emergency drug fund (EMF) by donors in June 2015, which guaranteed a baseline amount of drugs in South Sudan, has significantly curtailed the ability of NGOs to react to the increase in diseases that comes with the wet season.²⁵

Education

Unlike other sectors that recovered somewhat in the last month, education levels in Unity State remained poor. Only 5 of 63 reporting communities reported access to education. All communities reporting access to education reported the presence of primary education while none reported the presence of secondary education. Even in places where there were schools, 61% of communities reported that there are still children who are not attending school. Most communities reported that over half of primary school age boys are attending school, but less than half of primary school age girls are. This is likely because girls are often tasked with collecting water and food, and are therefore unable to attend school as consistently as boys.²⁶

As in previous months, the majority of communities continued to report that education is being provided by the government, even

21. Nonviolent Peaceforce, Niemni Protection Assessment, March 2016

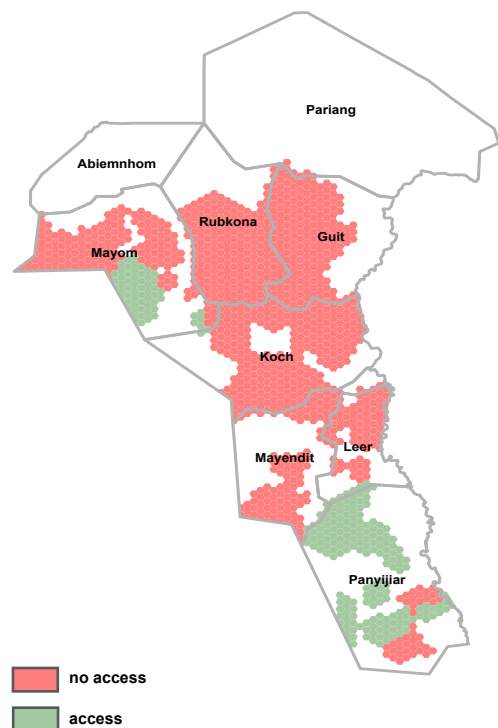
22. Beyond Bentiu Initiative response strategy, March 2016

23. REACH Situation Overview, Unity State, March 2016

24. MSF, South Sudan: Trapped by violence in Unity State, October 2015; WHO, South Sudan Situation Report, July 2015

25. MSF, South Sudan: MSF issues open letter on nationwide lack of medicines, 7 April 2016

Map 10: Reported access to education



though most schools in Unity State are actually supported by local communities, while a few receive support from NGOs. This suggests that most people in Unity State are uninformed about who is supporting their schools. Further, 104 formal and informal education programs have been reopened in Unity State, indicating that many communities may not be aware of strides made in education by partners there, or only consider formal education spaces when responding to this indicator.²⁷ An Initial Rapid Needs Assessment in Mayom County (March

2016) indicates that even when schools are present the vast majority lack supplies, shelter, and payment for teachers, which may further contribute to under reporting of access to schools.²⁸

Recent assessments in “catchment” areas outside of Bentiu reported IDPs living in many of the remaining school buildings. All communities who reported that education services were not available cited displacement of teachers as the main reason, quickly followed by 87% that reported that the facilities had been destroyed. A further 80% also reported insecurity as a major barrier.

Protection

52 of 60 responding communities reported having no police/protection services. The effects of a lack of protection in Unity State was noted by KIs, with over 62% of communities reported that women’s greatest concerns were being harassed by different communities, while 17% reported being attacked by other communities as their chief protection concern. 87% of communities reported that men’s primary protection concern was being attacked by members of other communities. This finding indicates that for both sexes aggression from other communities continues to be the main protection concern. This is consistent with other protection reports, which cited women as most at risk of being physically or sexually harassed when collecting firewood or water in dangerous areas, while men are more likely to be killed or physically assaulted.

Children are also victims of protection issues, with 74% of communities reporting children involved in the conflict, and 53% reporting unaccompanied children. The continued presence of protection concerns are likely to feed into the high levels of trauma experienced by communities across South Sudan. The protection cluster has identified that, of 84 people assessed across 13 payams in Leer, 90% had at least one relative killed due to the conflict, 46% knew at least one person who had been raped, 36% had at least one relative who had been recruited as a child soldier.³⁰ As more of Unity State opens up for NGOs, increase protection monitoring and trauma recovery programs are needed.

Unexploded Ordnance

As in previous months, despite having joined the international mine ban treaty in 2011, mines and unexploded ordinance (UXOs) continue to be used in the conflict.³¹ 14 of 50 assessed communities (28%) reported that there are mined areas or roads.

There have been severe consequences from the presence of mines; all 14 communities reporting mines indicated having experienced at least one accident; however, most of these occurred six or more months ago. 14 out of 50 reporting communities (28%) reported that mine and UXO clearance activities had been carried out in the area.

However, comparatively little mine risk education has been carried out; 73% reported that no mine risk education had been carried

out, and a majority of respondents said that it has been at least six months since it occurred. While the strides that mine action organizations have made to clear Unity State from UXOs are significant, much still needs to be done to prevent more people from being harmed by mines and UXOs.

Conclusion

April 2016 saw almost no active fighting in Unity State, which has resulted in a shift of IDP displacement trends and local community demographics. In particular, there has been an increase in IDPs returning to their communities or migrating to other areas of resettlement. Bentiu Town, an area previously avoided by many IDPs, has seen one of the largest increases of IDP populations, as well as “catchment” areas that receive NGO assistance.

This assessment has found that most new arrivals to Bentiu Town initially fled into the bush for protection, and are only now leaving the bush to seek services. Good levels of security is the main reason IDPs cite for choosing Bentiu Town as a destination, followed by availability of health care and food. Assuming that the security situation remains stable, this trend is likely to continue.

The movement of IDPs out of the PoC, is a positive indication that the humanitarian situation in Unity State is improving. Further, the opportunities for IDPs wishing to return home or move to another location, are being strengthened by an increase in scope of

26. Ibid

27. UNICEF South Sudan Situation Report 21 April 2016

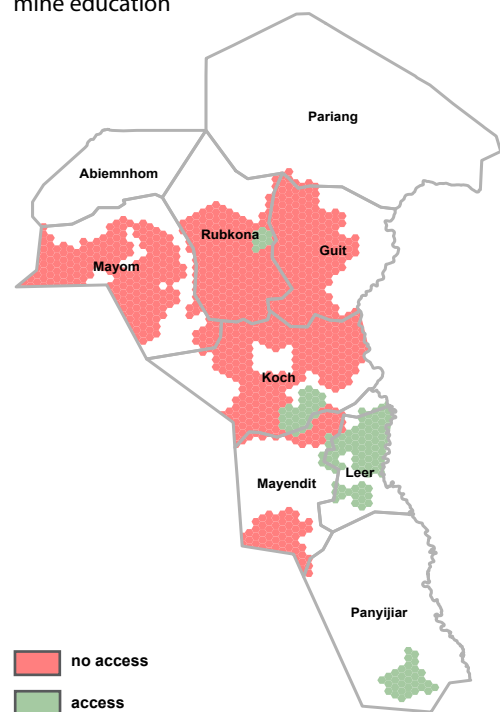
28. Education Cluster: Initial Rapid Needs Assessment, Mayom county, March 2016

29. OCHA, Humanitarian Needs Overview, January 2016

30. MSF, South Sudan: MSF issues open letter on nationwide lack of medicines, 7 April 2016

humanitarian aid across the county. The largest improvements in the humanitarian situation since March 2016 have concerned the availability of food and livelihood opportunities. 59% of reporting communities reported insufficient access to adequate food, compared to 70% in March. Nevertheless, 65% of responding communities continued to report food distributions as their primary source of food, indicating this change is likely a result of increased food aid rather than improved capacities to buy or cultivate food. Over half of communities in Unity State now reported

Map 11: Communities that reported receiving mine education



that people have access to land, indicating that many families may be able to cultivate their own crops during the 2016 rainy season. However, the extent of asset loss during the conflict indicates that for subsistence farming to partially or totally replace the need for food aid, communities across the state will continue to need assistance with agricultural inputs.

Although there has been tangible progress in the provision of basic services and food aid to vulnerable communities across the state, conditions are still poor for IDPs and original community members living outside of the PoC. In particular there remains a pressing need for NGO and/or governmental assistance with livelihood inputs and provision of basic services. Only 12% of responding communities reported access to safe drinking water, 8% to health services and 6% to education. Further, no community reported access to secondary education.

FGDs with IDPs living in Bentiu PoC indicated that many are leaving despite the poor humanitarian situation in communities across Unity State. They reported that while it is safer outside the PoC than before, most IDPs are forced to risk leaving because they cannot get enough food in the PoC, and must supplement it by cultivating crops. It was commonly reported that there is not a high level of confidence that the security situation will stay stable, or that they will be able to stay outside the PoC indefinitely.

Overall, these findings indicate that, despite continuing (though decreased) security

concerns, there is currently strong motivation for IDPs to return or relocate from the Bentiu PoC or other places of refuge to communities that are receiving assistance. Qualitative data collection indicates that desire to utilise upcoming cultivation season to supplement other food supplies may be in part driving this. However, it is not clear to what extent this movement is motivated by people's desire to return to normalcy, after over a year of displacement, even if they continue to face protection concerns in the local community. Therefore, to better understand the extent to which the 2016/2017 dry season will see a reverse in this trend, intentions to remain in the communities in the face of a changing context needs to be further investigated. Nevertheless, current evidence indicates that if access to basic services remains poor to non-existence return migration will slow or even reverse as people seek higher levels of NGO assistance.

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.

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