

Humanitarian Situation Monitoring

Eastern Equatoria State - South Sudan April - August 2021

Introduction

The April-August period of 2021 was characterised by high food insecurity driven by irregular rain patterns, increased dependence on markets, and high food prices. Return movements from countries of asylum continued steadily while displacement within Eastern Equatoria State (EES) seemingly decreased. Sporadic insecurity and high prices likely limited access to healthcare and a lack of infrastructure created critical needs in water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH). In addition, the legacy of COVID-19 restrictions, as well as a lack of teaching staff, seemingly continued to negatively impact access to education services.

As insufficient regular assessments are conducted across the region due to access and resource constraints, limited accurate information is available to humanitarian actors to inform their response. 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. This Situation Overview uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across EES from April to August of 2021.

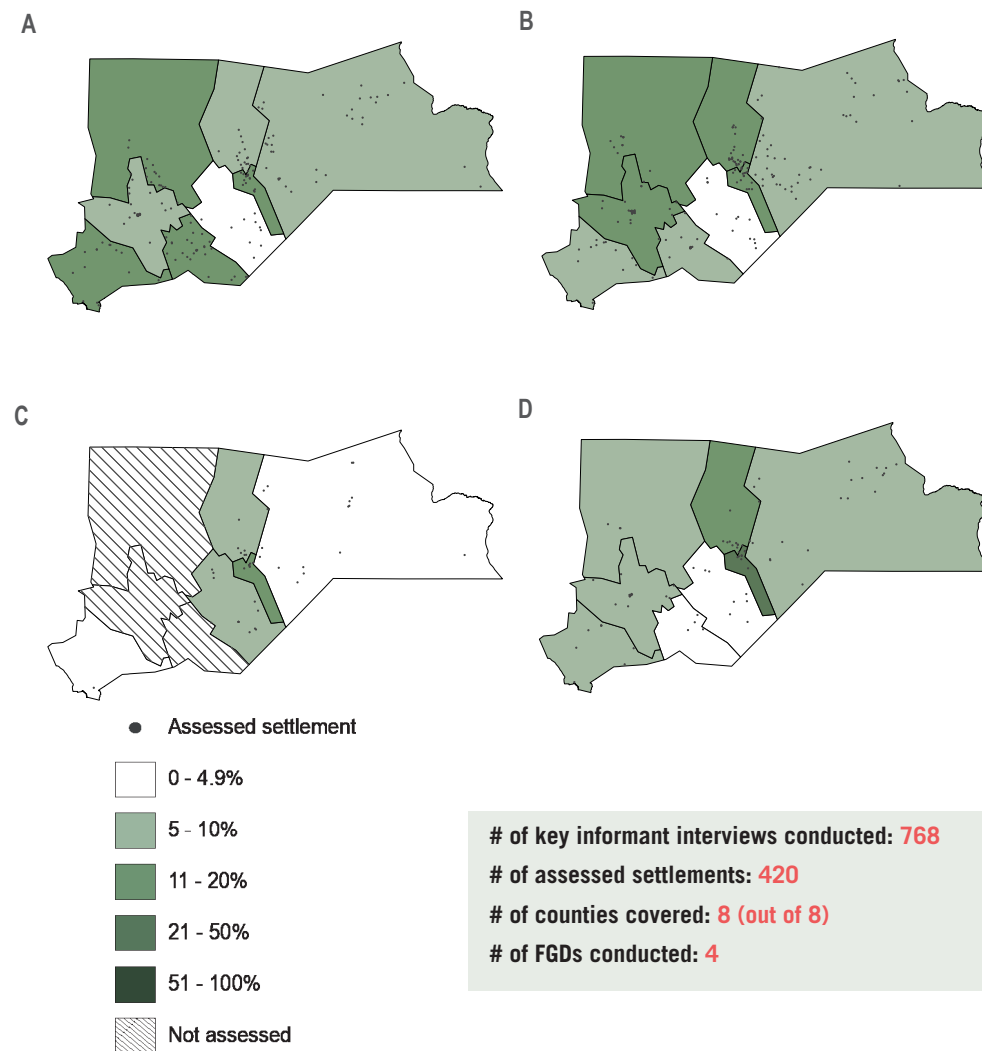
Methodology

To provide an indicative overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of EES, REACH conducted interviews with 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 directly from KIs in interviews conducted in Kapoeta town and Torit town in April and May (2021). Interviews for Greater Torit were conducted by phone from June through August (2021).

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted on a monthly basis 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 was 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 the analysis.¹ Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each County each month may vary. In order to reduce the likelihood that variations in data are attributable to coverage differences, over time analyses were only conducted for counties with at least 70% consistent payam.² coverage over the reporting period. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#). Quantitative findings were triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs) that were conducted in Budi County and Greater Kapoeta and secondary sources.³

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of the EES, April (A), June (B), July (C) and August (D) 2021:



1. 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.

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

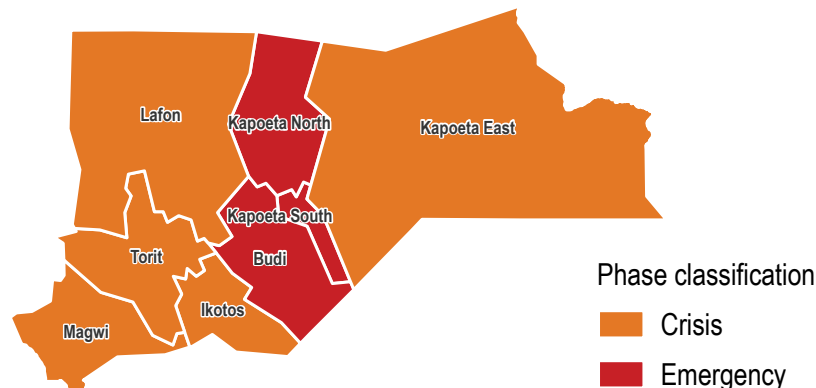
3. All findings are indicative rather than statistically generalisable.

Key Findings:

Displacement: Across EES, findings suggest that displacement decreased from April to August due to marginal improvements to the security situation in recent months. Reported displacement decreased 19 percentage points, with KIs in 91% of assessed settlements in August indicating that none of the original population of the settlement had left in the 30 days prior to the interview (72% in April).⁴ In fact, the reporting period was characterised by continued refugee returns particularly to Torit County as poor living conditions elsewhere and greater perceived security in South Sudan reportedly motivated people to return home.⁵

Food Security and Livelihoods: Food insecurity remained very high in EES during the reporting period, with a lean season (April-July) that began uncharacteristically early across EES this year due to last year's climate and pest-affected harvest.⁶ In June, KIs in 98% of assessed settlements reported that most people in their settlement were not able to access enough food. Food insecurity was reportedly driven by disruptions in rain patterns, high reliance on markets for food and high food prices across the region, which have been increasing in EES since 2019.⁷ These needs are likely to continue into the fourth quarter, particularly if the second harvest (October-November) of the season is not robust. Life-saving humanitarian assistance may be needed in EES to prevent serious hunger as the dry season begins.

Map 2: IPC Acute Food Insecurity Situation Projection Map, Eastern Equatoria, April to July 2021.⁸



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH): Findings suggest that absence of sanitation facilities, lack of access to clean water sources, and high soap prices drove severe WASH needs in EES during the reporting period.⁹ Sanitation is lacking, especially in Greater Kapoeta, where KIs in 97% of assessed settlements reported that no one in their settlement used a latrine in June. Access to clean water was also reportedly unavailable in one in five (19%) of assessed settlements in June and was reportedly a source of conflict in some settlements.¹⁰ Finally, findings suggest that high soap prices limited hand-washing practices in EES in the reporting period, compounding the risk of diarrhoeal disease in the state.¹¹ The WASH Severity Classification report released in May 2021 found that WASH conditions were at Phase 4 (Critical) levels in six out of the eight counties in EES, confirming the severe situation indicated by KIs during the reporting period.¹²



Health: Distance, insecurity, and a lack of functional health facilities across EES likely impacted people's ability to access medical facilities, care and appropriate medicine. In 38% of assessed settlements, KIs reported that it took up to half a day of walking to reach the nearest health facility and insecurity reportedly hampered movement during the reporting period.¹³ A lack of healthcare workers was also commonly reported across EES, as low pay and security concerns affected health workers throughout South Sudan.^{14 15}



Protection: Overall perceptions of safety were low across the state, KIs in 66% of assessed settlements reporting people not feeling safe in their settlement in June. Findings suggest that protection concerns and insecurity have persisted in EES, particularly in Greater Kapoeta, Budi, and Ikotos Counties. In Greater Kapoeta and Budi County, cattle raiding and revenge killing continued to be prevalent in the reporting period, impacting people's ability to conduct their daily activities.¹⁶ According to KIs, the main safety concern for women was conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence, which remained prevalent and unchanged throughout the reporting period.



Shelter/ Non-Food Items (NFI): Findings suggest that returnees in Greater Torit faced challenges in gaining access to permanent shelter due to high market prices of non-food items. However, findings suggest that access to shelter was generally high in EES as displacement decreased over the reporting period.



Education: Overall, access to education seemingly improved, but still remained limited, across EES since the same time last year. KIs in only 41% of assessed settlements reported that children had access to education services within walking distance in June (18% in June 2020). Gender disparities in school attendance continued in EES during the reporting period, with about half as many girls aged 6-17 reportedly attending school as boys of the same age in June.

Population Movement and Displacement

Displacement

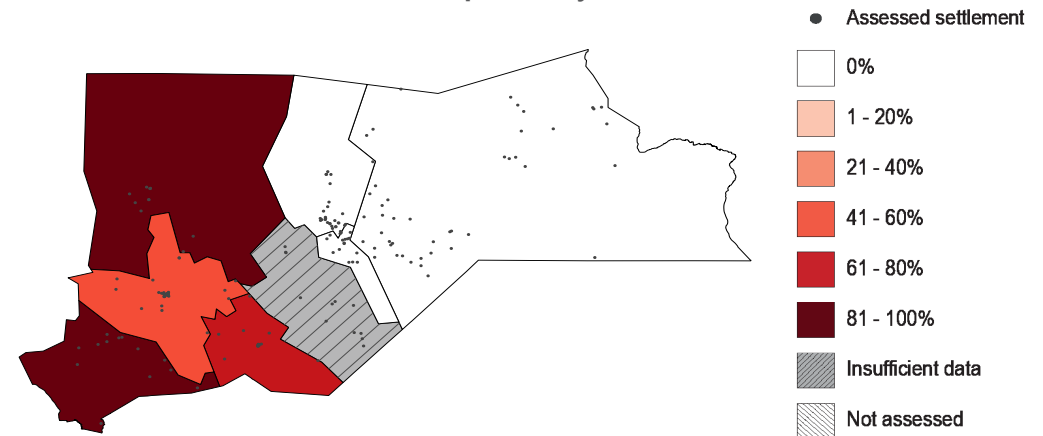
Across EES, findings suggest that displacement decreased during Q2 and Q3. In fact, reported displacement decreased 19 percentage points, with KIs in 91% of assessed settlements in August indicating that none of the original population of the settlement had left in the 30 days prior to the data collection, compared with KIs in 72% of assessed settlements reporting the same in April.¹⁷ In 89% of settlements were at least some people had reportedly left in the 30 days prior to data collection, KIs reported that the main reason for leaving the settlement was a lack of access to food. This may point to the marginal improvements to the security situation over the recent months, but also illustrates the continued severity of food insecurity in the state.¹⁸

Further illustrating stabilisation of movements, reported presence of internally displaced persons (IDPs) also remained low throughout the reporting period, with KIs in 93% of assessed settlements reporting that there were no IDPs in the settlement in August (92% in April).¹⁹ KIs in 64% of those settlements where IDP presence was reported in June, reported that the IDPs had been in the settlement for more than three months, indicating that most were not displaced by events that happened recently. Indeed, the Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) maintained by the International Organization on Migration (IOM) did not capture any significant IDP movement in Eastern Equatoria between January and June 2021.²⁰

Returnee Movement to Greater Torit

Findings suggest that return movements from Uganda, Kenya, and Central Equatoria to Greater Torit continued in the reporting period, as poor living conditions elsewhere and greater perceived security in EES motivated people to return home.²¹ The presence of returnees in Greater Torit remained steady over time,²² with KIs in 76% of assessed settlements reporting IDP or refugee returns in August (67% in April). KIs in 79% of assessed settlements where the presence of returnees had been reported in June, reported that those returnees had returned from other countries (Uganda and Kenya). Local authorities in Greater Torit have also reported an influx in returnees in recent months.²³ According to the 2021 Spontaneous Returns Situation overview of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) a perceived improved security situation in South Sudan, as well as a lack of livelihoods and education opportunities in countries of asylum, drove returns to EES in the reporting period.²⁴ These factors will likely lead to continued returns in the Greater Torit area into the fourth quarter.

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported the presence of recent returnees (last 3 months) in June 2021, per county:



Food Security and Livelihoods

The annual lean season (April-July) began uncharacteristically early across EES this year due to last year's climate and pest-affected harvest.²⁵ In June, KIs in 98% of assessed settlements reported that most people in their settlement were not able to access enough food. This indicates persistent high levels of food insecurity as the percentage of assessed settlements where KIs reported people not having access to enough food increased from April (84%) to August (98%).²⁶

Food insecurity was reportedly driven by disruptions in rain patterns, high reliance on markets for food and high food prices across the region, which have been increasing in EES since 2019.²⁷ The most common reasons cited by KIs for why people were unable to access enough food, across all the counties in June were a lack of rain (31% of assessed settlements), no stock (22% of assessed settlements), and high prices (18% of assessed settlements).

Last year in June, KIs in EES also reported lack of rain (38% of assessed settlements) as the most common reason for people being unable to access food, but the other two most commonly reported reasons were previous harvest exhausted (13%), and crops destroyed by pests (12%). This indicates an increased reliance on markets for food in EES this year, which is problematic as food prices have continued to increase since 2020, as reported by the Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI). Furthermore, the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET) shows prices of maize, a staple food, were up by about 33% from last year in Torit during the reporting period.^{28 29}

15. Global Health Workforce Alliance. South Sudan. November 2021.

16. FGDs with participants from Greater Kapoeta and Budi. June 2021.

17. Over-time analyses exclude Budi and Ikotos Counties, due to insufficient coverage in these counties throughout the reporting period.

18. IPC. South Sudan TWG Key Messages Oct 2020 July 2021. December 2020.

19. Over-time analyses exclude Budi and Ikotos Counties, due to

insufficient coverage in these counties throughout the reporting period.

20. IOM. Event Tracking Summary January – June 2021. July 2021.

21. IOM. Event Tracking Summary January – June 2021. July 2021.

22. Over-time analyses exclude Budi and Ikotos counties due to insufficient coverage in these counties throughout the reporting period.

23. Humanitarian Partners and RRC. IRNA Report on Returnees in Ikwoto, Lafon, Magwi and Torit Counties. April 2021.

While the months of April through August are typically categorised as the lean season in South Sudan,³⁰ findings suggest that the level of food insecurity in EES in the reporting period was severe. According to the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) projections for EES, five counties were expected to be in Phase 3 “Crisis,” and three counties (Kapoeta North, Kapoeta South and Budi) were projected to enter into Phase 4 “Emergency” between April and July 2021.³¹ Additionally, KIs in 20% of assessed settlements in June, about 1 in 5, reported that adults were not eating so that children could eat, compared to 6% last June. This is an extreme coping strategy which may signify a serious deterioration in food security.

Greater Kapoeta and Budi – Kapoeta East, North, South and Budi Counties

Greater Kapoeta and Budi reportedly experienced higher than normal market prices throughout the reporting period, severely affecting the food security of many people who rely on market goods, particularly following a poor harvest. In June, KIs in fifty-eight percent (58%) of assessed settlements in Greater Kapoeta indicated high prices or no stock were the main reasons that people in their settlements could not access enough food, compared to KIs in 1% of assessed settlements who reported these reasons in June of last year.

The large increase since last year points to an increased reliance on the market at a time when market prices were also high. Though market data for Greater Kapoeta is limited, the JMMI shows food prices spiking in Kapoeta Town in early 2021, continuing to rise in EES throughout the reporting period, and remaining much higher than the average 2020.³²

High market prices, combined with a poor first harvest, may have caused ripple effects through people’s management of their livestock in Greater Kapoeta, a traditionally pastoralist region. Findings suggest that food insecurity may have impacted livelihoods in Greater Kapoeta, with KIs in 55% of assessed settlements reporting that they were selling or slaughtering more livestock than usual in June, compared to 1% reporting the same last year.

This may have knock-on effects for food security and livelihoods in Q4, as pastoralists in Greater Kapoeta will have fewer cattle to use for food or income as the year progresses. Since food in this region often comes from livestock and purchased items with cultivation as a supplement, the combination of fewer cattle, high market prices, and a poor harvest could lead to serious food insecurity in the dry season (December-March).^{33 34}

In Budi County, food shortages were likely caused by increased insecurity, with instances of cattle raiding and sub-national violence reportedly impacting access to food and basic services. In July, KIs from 92% of assessed settlements reported that conflict or looting had an impact on people’s ability to access enough food. Sub-national violence seemingly affected food security and livelihood opportunities as cattle and livestock was reportedly stolen and insecurity on the roads caused drivers’ to strike, potentially impacting supply chains.³⁵ FGD participants from Budi County and Greater Kapoeta in June cited insecurity on the roads as a cause of food shortages in Budi County, as traders reportedly feared transporting goods to certain locations within Budi.³⁶

Figure 1: Most commonly reported reasons for inadequate access to food (98% of assessed settlements), by % of assessed settlements per County, June 2021 (July 2021 for Budi county):

	Kapoeta North	Kapoeta East	Ikotos	Kapoeta South	Budi	Torit	Magwi	Lafon
Lack of rain	10%	16%	20%	29%	31%	41%	62%	100%
High prices	41%	13%	0%	35%	8%	16%	0%	0%
No stock	24%	47%	20%	6%	54%	8%	6%	0%

Market access

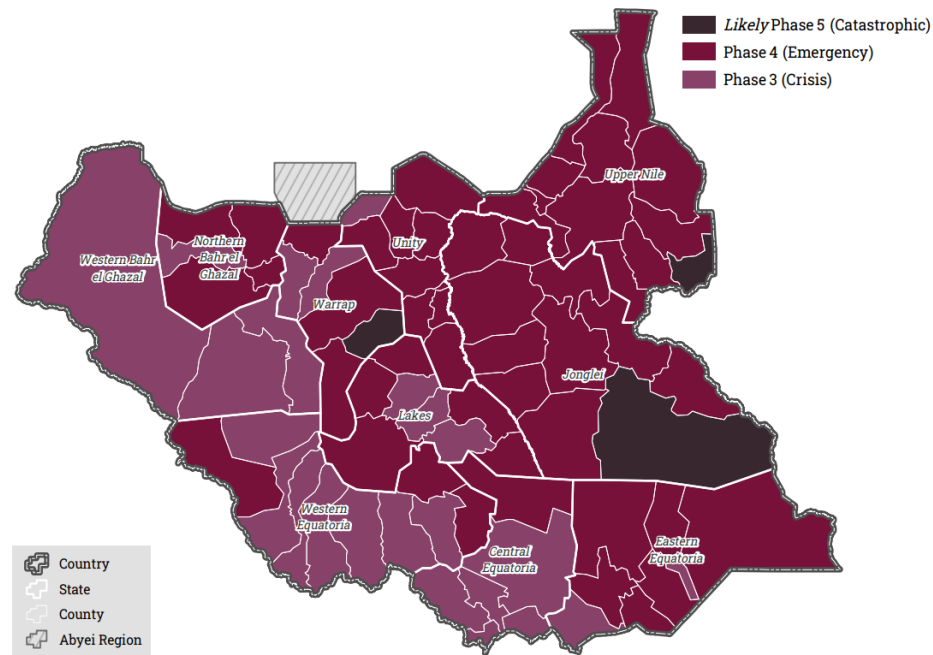
KIs in most assessed settlements in EES reported barriers in accessing markets and challenges upon arriving at the market. This finding seems to be triangulated by the relatively low proportion of assessed settlements (22%) where KIs reported that people could reach the nearest marketplace in less than one hour. Access appears to have decreased slightly since June of last year, when KIs in 32% of settlements reported that people in the settlement were able to access the marketplace in less than one hour.

Challenges purchasing desired items at the market were also common, with KIs reporting that some items were deemed too expensive in 99% of assessed settlements and that some items were not available in 60% of assessed settlements. This is likely due to high prices recorded in EES during the reporting period,³⁷ persistent supply chain difficulties across South Sudan,³⁸ and insecurity on the roads.³⁹

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

The Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Severity Classification report released in May 2021 found that WASH conditions were at Phase 4 (Critical) levels in six out of the eight counties in EES, confirming the severe situation indicated by KIs during the reporting period.⁴⁰ Sanitation is lacking and open defecation is commonly practiced, especially in Greater Kapoeta, where KIs in 97% of assessed settlements reported that no one in their settlement used a latrine in June. Access to clean water was also reportedly lacking in one in five (19%) of assessed settlements in June and was reportedly a source of conflict.⁴¹ Finally, high soap prices limited hand-washing practices in EES in the reporting period, compounding the risk of diarrhoeal disease in the state.⁴²

Map 4: WASH Severity Classification, May 2021.⁴³



Water

Access to clean water in EES remained steady in the state compared to last year, with boreholes seemingly being present in most assessed settlements, but reportedly absent in a sizeable minority (19%) in June. The water from some of the boreholes reportedly had problems like bad colour (reported in 12% of assessed settlements), bad taste (11%) and bad smell (7%) according to KIs in June, which deterred people from using the borehole water and opting for less safe water sources.

Additionally, in 4% of the assessed settlements, people had reportedly gotten sick after drinking water from the borehole. A REACH mapping report of WASH facilities in Magwi County confirmed this reported situation, finding that water collected from some water points was unsafe.⁴⁴ This may explain why though KIs in 80% of assessed settlements reported a functioning borehole in their settlement (82% last year in June), KIs in only 68% reported a borehole as the main source of water.

Lack of access to clean water facilities has likely led to the common use of unimproved, open water sources. In about one in five (18%) of assessed settlements, the main source of drinking water was reportedly either open water or an unprotected well in June. These are both unimproved sources which can lead to diarrhoeal disease and also provide breeding grounds for malaria-carrying mosquitos. A REACH report on WASH conditions in January 2021 found that from 25-51% of households in Greater Torit were using such unimproved water sources.⁴⁵ Low access to adequate quantity and quality of water can also decrease hand-washing and other hygiene practices, which in turn can impact diarrhoeal disease and nutrition, especially for children.⁴⁶

In addition, findings suggest that physical barriers, such as distance to water points, long waiting times, and insecurity, also contributed to WASH needs. In June, KIs in 18% of assessed settlements in EES reported it took between one hour and half a day to access and return from their main water source.

This was particularly notable in Ikotos County (60%), which also reportedly faced insecurity during the reporting period. Moreover, long water collection times likely influenced livelihoods and education for women and girls, who usually are tasked with this chore.⁴⁷ Additionally, an Association of Volunteers in International Service (AVSI) report from Ikotos County showed that WASH issues intersected with protection, as disagreements over the use of water sources were a source of conflict for almost half of households surveyed.⁴⁸

35. Radio Tamazuj. Public transport drivers on strike, demand security in E. Equatoria. June 2021.
36. FGDs with participants from Greater Kapoeta and Budi. June 2021.
37. REACH. Joint Market Monitoring Initiative. October 2021.
38. FAO. Food and Nutrition Security Resilience Programme Multi-dimensional context analysis in South Sudan. 2021.
39. Radio Tamazuj. Public transport drivers on strike, demand security in E.

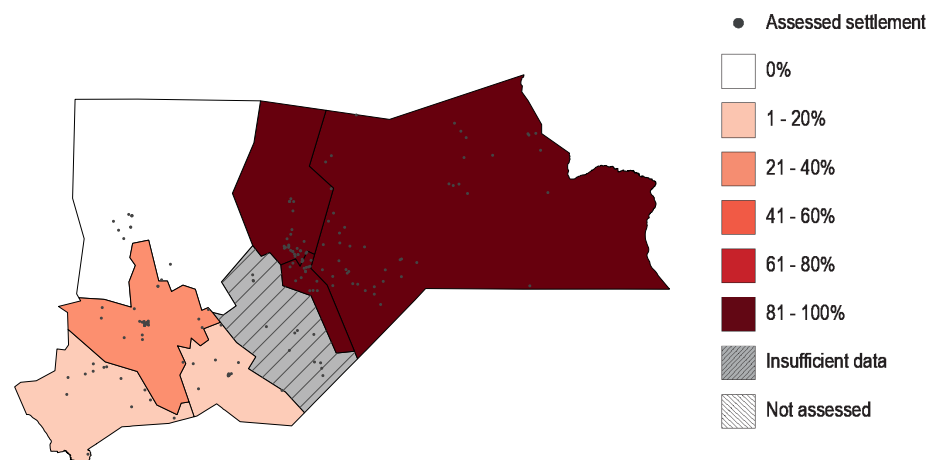
Equatoria. June 2021.
40. Wash Severity Classification. South Sudan Overview. May 2021.
41. AVSI. Multisector Household Survey Ikwoto County. March 2021
42. REACH. Joint Market Monitoring Initiative. October 2021.
43. REACH, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Global WASH cluster.
44. REACH. South Sudan WASH Report — Lakes State, Western and Eastern Equatoria. January 2021.

Sanitation

In addition to difficulties accessing clean water, open defecation was commonly reported throughout the reporting period in EES due to a lack of sanitation infrastructure. KIs in 60% of assessed settlements reported that people were not using latrines at all in June, a slight improvement from June 2020 (72%).

Findings suggest that sanitation is particularly lacking in the Greater Kapoeta area, where KIs in 97% of settlements reported that no one in their settlement was using a latrine in June. The main reason reported for non-use of latrines in Greater Kapoeta in June was that there was none available (86%). This lack of sanitation infrastructure combined with use of unimproved water points, puts people at risk of diarrhoeal disease, which is one of the leading causes of death in children under five in South Sudan.⁴⁹

Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported that none of the people in their settlement used a latrine, by County, June 2021:



Hygiene

Challenges with maintaining hygiene levels seemingly continued to be complicated by the high market prices of essential NFIs such as soap across EES. KIs from only 25% of assessed settlements in June reported that most people in their settlement washed their hands with soap, while people reported using only water in 42% of assessed settlements. These findings are likely influenced by the assessed settlements' reported barriers in accessing water, as well as soap prices having increased by 50% since 2020.⁵⁰ Indeed, in 14% of assessed settlements,

KIs reported that people were washing their hands with locally available materials, such as ash or sand, which may point to the financial difficulty of purchasing soap. Given the rising prices of food and other items throughout the state, people may have used limited financial resources to purchase other basic needs instead of soap.^{51 52}



Distance and lack of functional health facilities likely impacted people's ability to access medical facilities, care and appropriate medicine. Furthermore, violence and insecurity reportedly hampered movement in EES, making it harder for already vulnerable people to reach healthcare facilities.⁵³ In June, KIs in 83% of assessed settlements reported that the nearest functional health facility was a Primary Health Care Unit, the most basic government-provided health facility in South Sudan. Distance to the health facility was a commonly cited barrier to accessing healthcare in June, with KIs in 38% of assessed settlements reporting that it took from one hour to half a day to travel to healthcare services on foot. Given that KIs and FGD participants reported insecurity that limited movement, protection issues may have intersected with long distances to health facilities to make people feel unsafe accessing care.⁵⁴

Indeed, in almost all the assessed settlements (94%), KIs reported experiencing barriers in accessing healthcare in June across EES. The most commonly reported barrier to healthcare in June was not enough medicine being available (86%). Findings from Kapoeta East indicated this was a particular challenge in the county, with KIs in 100% of assessed settlements reporting that availability of medicine was a barrier to health care in their settlement in June. Availability of medicines is a problem throughout South Sudan, with even basic medications such as paracetamol and treatments for malaria being absent at times.⁵⁵ In addition, FGD participants from Kapoeta East reported in June that insecurity on the roads restricted movement in the county.⁵⁶ This may contribute to supply chain issues further compounding routine inaccessibility of some settlements due to poor roads.⁵⁷

Likely due to low pay and security concerns, which seemingly affected health workers throughout South Sudan, in June, KIs in 57% of assessed settlements indicated that there was not enough staff at the health facilities.^{58 59} This seemingly was a severe problem in Budi County, where KIs in 85% of assessed settlements reported that limited healthcare workers was a barrier to health care in July. In Budi County, this may be related to some incidents of insecurity in the county during the reporting period, including the killing of a worker at a healthcare providing NGO in May and a laboratory technician in June, both in Chukudum.^{60 61}

45. REACH. South Sudan WASH Report — Lakes State, Western and Eastern Equatoria. January 2021.

46. OCHA. Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021. January 2021.

47. Oxfam. COVID-19 and female learners in South Sudan. The impact of school closures in Juba, Rumbek, Kapoeta, Torit and Pibor. August 2021.

48. AVSI. Multisector Household Survey Ikwoto County. March 2021.

World Health Organization. Country Cooperation Strategy South Sudan.

May 2018.

50. REACH. Joint Market Monitoring Initiative Factsheet. September 2021.

51. REACH. Joint Market Monitoring Initiative. October 2021.

52. Wash Severity Classification. South Sudan Overview. May 2021.

53. FGDs with participants from Greater Kapoeta and Budi. June 2021.

54. FGDs with participants from Greater Kapoeta and Budi. June 2021.

55. Radio Tamazuj. Feature: South Sudan's poor struggle to access healthcare. October 2021.



Protection

Findings suggest that protection concerns and insecurity have persisted in EES, particularly in Greater Kapoeta and Ikotos Counties. Overall perceptions of safety across the state were low, with KIs in 66% of assessed settlements reporting in June that most people did not feel safe in their settlements most of the time in the previous month, compared with 15% not feeling safe in June last year. Reports of not feeling safe seemed to be concentrated in Greater Kapoeta and Ikotos County, with KIs in 90% of assessed settlements in those counties reporting that people did not feel safe most of the time in June. This change in perceived safety may be linked to deteriorating food security, potentially causing increased conflict over resources and livelihoods, especially given the late start to the rainy season (April-October) again this year.⁶²

In Greater Kapoeta, cattle raiding and revenge killing continued to be prevalent in the reporting period. These two types of insecurity may be related, as revenge killing can be carried out after someone has been killed in a cattle raid and cattle raids can be undertaken for purposes of revenge.⁶³ In the three counties of Greater Kapoeta, KIs in 40% of assessed settlements in June reported cattle raiding having occurred in the past 30 days, remaining steady since April (44%). Additionally, KIs in 20% of assessed settlements reported being aware of incidents of revenge killing in the settlement in the 30 days prior to data collection, also steady since April (25%). As Greater Kapoeta is a pastoralist region, cattle are a vital asset and status symbol, making the impact of cattle raiding particularly significant.⁶⁴ Considering the reports of severe food insecurity driving people to slaughter or sell more livestock than usual (see FSL section), food insecurity may have driven cattle raiding prior to the start of the rainy season (April-October).

Findings suggest that populations in Budi County also experienced insecurity throughout the reporting period, likely related to increased competition over resources prior to the seasonal rains, affecting their ability to safely carry out their daily activities. FGD participants from Budi County in June reported that sub-national conflict had caused a near total cut-off of some communities within the county, as traders and vehicles stopped moving along the roads.⁶⁵ Additionally, in July, KIs from Budi reported incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) (85% of assessed settlements), cattle raiding (62%), and revenge killing (38%) affecting life in their settlements in the month prior to data collection. FGD participants reported that this type of insecurity is a chronic problem in Budi County, which decreases people's ability to meet their daily needs.⁶⁶

Conflict-related SGBV appears to have remained prevalent and unchanged throughout the reporting period as the main safety concern for women in EES. In June, SGBV was the most common safety concern for women identified by KIs across the assessed settlements in EES (51% of assessed settlements). Additionally, KIs from 64% of assessed settlements in August reported that at least one incident of SGBV had occurred in their settlement in the 30 days prior to data collection (60% in April).

The main safety concern for girls in the reporting period remained early marriage and early pregnancy. In 61% of assessed settlements across EES, early marriage was reportedly the main safety concern for girls in June. In Ikotos County, KIs in 100% of assessed settlements reported that early marriage was the main safety concern for girls in June. This may be related to the severe hunger, reported in 80% of assessed settlements in Ikotos County in June, as early marriage for girls can be used as a coping mechanism to mitigate financial strains and food insecurity.

Figure 2: Main reported protection concern for women, men, boys, and girls in EES by % of assessed settlements in June 2021:

Women		Men	
1	SGBV 38%	1	Alcohol/substance usage 52%
Girls		Boys	
1	Early marriage 61%	1	Violence within identity group 28%



Shelter/ NFI

Findings suggest that access to shelter was generally high in EES, but returnees faced challenges in gaining access to permanent shelter due to high market prices of NFIs. KIs from 98% of assessed settlements reported that host community members were living in tukuls (traditional houses) in June. However, KIs from 15% of settlements where returnees were reported indicated that returnees sometimes lacked permanent housing. Shelter issues appeared to be mostly concentrated in Magwi County during the reporting period, which might be related to Magwi having received the largest influx of returnees, compared to other counties in EES, throughout 2020.⁶⁷

In Magwi County, in those assessed settlements where the presence of returnees was reported (54% of assessed settlements), KIs reported that most returnees lived in abandoned buildings (57% of assessed settlements) or semi-permanent housing (29%). An Initial Rapid Needs Assessment in Greater Torit conducted by a consortium of humanitarian partners in coordination with the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) found some returnees facing challenges with shelter due to their shelter materials being seized at border crossing points as they re-entered South Sudan.⁶⁸ The report also noted that many returnees arrived back at their homes in South Sudan to find that many of these homes had been destroyed or had been occupied by others in their absence.⁶⁹ These factors likely intersect with high prices of NFIs in the market in Magwi Town and create an inability for returnees to purchase enough materials to create sustainable shelter.⁷⁰

56. FGDs with participants from Greater Kapoeta and Budi. June 2021.
 57. AVSI. Field Assessment in Greater Kapoeta East County. March 2019.
 58. South Sudan Medical Journal. Humanitarian and healthcare workers killed in South Sudan. August 2021.
 59. Global Health Workforce Alliance. South Sudan. November 2021.
 60. OCHA. Humanitarian Coordinator condemns killing of an aid worker in Budi, Eastern Equatoria. May 2021.

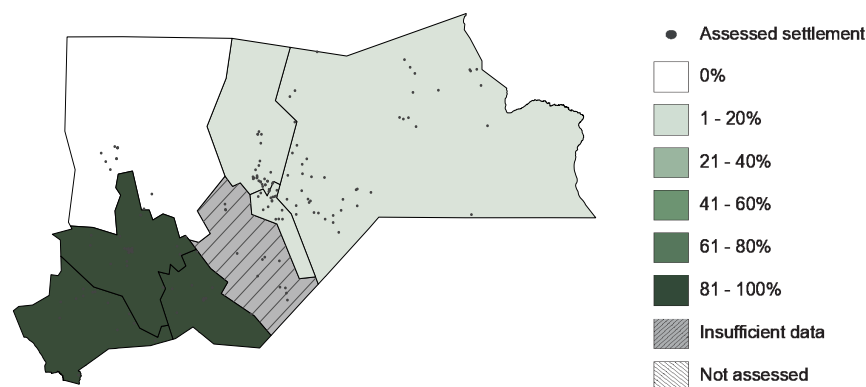
61. Radio Tamazuj. Health worker killed in Budi County. June 2021.
 62. CSRF. Kapoeta County, Eastern Equatoria State. November 2021.
 63. Feinstein International Center. Responding to Violence in Ikotos County. 2007.
 64. CSRF. Kapoeta South County. November 2021.
 65. FGDs with participants from Greater Kapoeta and Budi. June 2021.
 66. FGDs with participants from Greater Kapoeta and Budi. June 2021.
 67. CSRF. Magwi County, Eastern Equatoria State. November 2021.



Education

Findings suggested that distance to school facilities and the legacy of COVID-19 school closures combined, reportedly limited children's access to education during the reporting period, especially in Greater Kapoeta.

Map 6: Proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported children from the settlement had access to educational facilities.



In 69% and 25% of those assessed settlements where education services were reportedly unavailable (54%), KIs reported that this was mainly due to a lack of teachers and schools remaining closed due to COVID-19, respectively. Across South Sudan, teachers have been slow to return to the classroom after school closures due to COVID-19.⁷¹ The Ministry of General Education and Instruction (MoGEI) collaborated with NGO partners working in education to offer teachers in some areas financial incentives to return to teaching.⁷² The reported lack of education in Greater Kapoeta is likely tied to the difficulties of getting teachers to return to the classroom, compounded by an already low availability of education in the area prior to COVID-19 closures.

The absence of educational services was seemingly concentrated within Greater Kapoeta, with KIs in 88% of assessed settlements in Kapoeta North and Kapoeta East reporting that no education services were accessible in June. Furthermore, the only education services reportedly available in Greater Kapoeta were at the primary level, with KIs in 8% of assessed settlements reporting access to primary education at the P1-P5 level, and KIs in only 3% reporting access to P6-P8 level education. Children in none of the assessed settlements in Greater Kapoeta reportedly had access to any secondary education, from S1-S4. An AVSI assessment in Kapoeta East in 2019 found that many settlements did not have access to schools at all, and schools in others were inaccessible during the rainy season (April-October).⁷³ The reported absence of education services in June was likely partly due to this physical inaccessibility and partly due to extended closures due to COVID-19.

Gender disparities in school attendance continued in Eastern Equatoria during the reporting period, with KIs in 43% of assessed settlements where education services were reportedly present, reporting that more than half of boys aged 6-17 years were attending school, while girls' attendance was reported in about half as many settlements (21%). In June, the most commonly reported reasons why boys were not attending school were the need to work in agriculture (29% of assessed settlements), school fees (26%) and lack of supplies (21%). For girls, on the other hand, the most commonly reported main reason was early marriage or pregnancy (in 36% of assessed settlements), followed by lack of supplies (14%) and school fees (12%). An Oxfam report published in August 2021, based on research conducted partly in Kapoeta and Torit, found that girls were more likely to be affected by early or forced marriage after the school closures for COVID-19, and boys were more likely to encounter additional pressure to support their families' livelihoods.⁷⁴ These findings indicate that additional support for education will be important in the coming quarter in order to restore access to education for both girls and boys across Eastern Equatoria.

Conclusion

Findings indicate that compounding shocks such as consecutive poor harvests, irregular rain, sub-national violence, and the high prices of goods in the market have led to the deterioration of food security in EES. These factors will likely lead again to the early exhaustion of food stores and higher, irregular use of livelihood and food consumption coping mechanisms. If this occurs, life-saving humanitarian assistance in EES will remain a significant need for affected communities heading into the dry season (December-March).

Findings suggest that protection concerns also expanded in EES over the year, potentially exacerbating the food insecurity experienced in the state and limiting access to water points and health facilities. All the while, access to WASH infrastructures apparently remained limited throughout the reporting period, especially in Greater Kapoeta, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases which may potentially compound poor nutrition outcomes. Additionally, as returnees are likely to continue to move back to the Greater Torit area, findings indicate that returnees might face challenges procuring shelter materials, due to high NFI prices. These needs are likely to persist or increase as the dry season begins and competition for resources increases, as such, humanitarian assistance will be vital to prevent further deterioration of conditions in EES.

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).

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