

# Situation Overview: Displacement in Upper Nile State

South Sudan, January - February 2017

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## Introduction

For the first part of the 2016 dry season the security situation in Upper Nile State remained relatively stable. However, conflict re-started in earnest in January 2017, concentrated around the hotspots of Nasir, Malakal and Renk, causing both primary displacement of the local community and secondary displacement of IDPs, most notably around Malakal and Wau Shilluk. Although Renk was the site of some of the most intense fighting in Greater Upper Nile between 2014 and 2015, it had enjoyed a period of comparative calm until February 2017, when conflict broke out approximately 30 minutes northwest of Renk Town. The town's close proximity to the Sudanese border makes it a key transit route for cross-border displacement, whilst its perceived stability and low cost of living have increasingly made it an attractive location for displaced people from across South Sudan. To better inform humanitarian organisations' understanding of the current context of Upper Nile, including potential future displacement, REACH conducted a rapid assessment in Renk from 19-31 January 2017 in order to further understand the displacement dynamics in Upper Nile, both prior to and after the recent outbreak of conflict. In addition, REACH also conducted two rapid assessments in January in Wanding, Ulang County, and Jikmir, Nasir

County, in order to map new displacement trends triggered by the spread of fighting in Nasir in early January 2017.

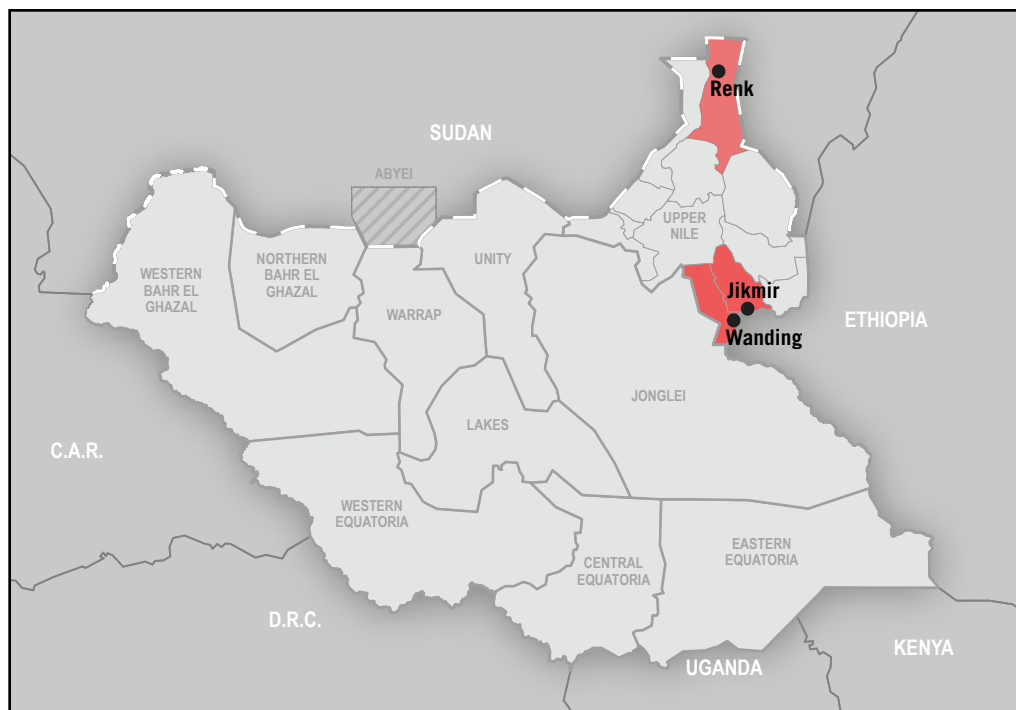
The following report is divided into three sections. The first charts the recent outbreak of conflict in Upper Nile and the implications on displacement, based on data collected on historical displacement trends and secondary data sources from humanitarian partners. This section also briefly outlines movement from Juba to Upper Nile via government-sponsored

cargo flights, a trend that has emerged over the last few months. The second section presents more in depth data on the drivers of displacement, based on the assessment findings from Renk Town. Although fighting broke out nearby Renk immediately after the REACH assessment, which has likely impacted displacement patterns, an understanding of historical displacement routes is still valuable for informing future humanitarian intervention. The third and final section summarises the assessment findings


on displacement into Wanding and Jikmir from Nasir, including push and pull factors and IDP intentions.

## Methodology

REACH conducted a rapid assessment in Renk Town, Upper Nile State, from the 19-31 January 2017, involving 15 focus group discussions (FGDs) with a total of 43 IDPs and local community respondents, and key informant (KI) interviews with a total of 54 IDP and local community respondents. New arrivals were specifically targeted during the data collection phase to ensure a better understanding of current displacement dynamics into Renk, as well as broader movement trends across the state. Additional information on displacement trends in Upper Nile comes from two rapid assessments carried out in Wanding, Ulang County, from 12-14 January, and Jikmir, Nasir County, from 28-30 January, which gathered data on displacement routes, and humanitarian needs in the areas of displacement as well as



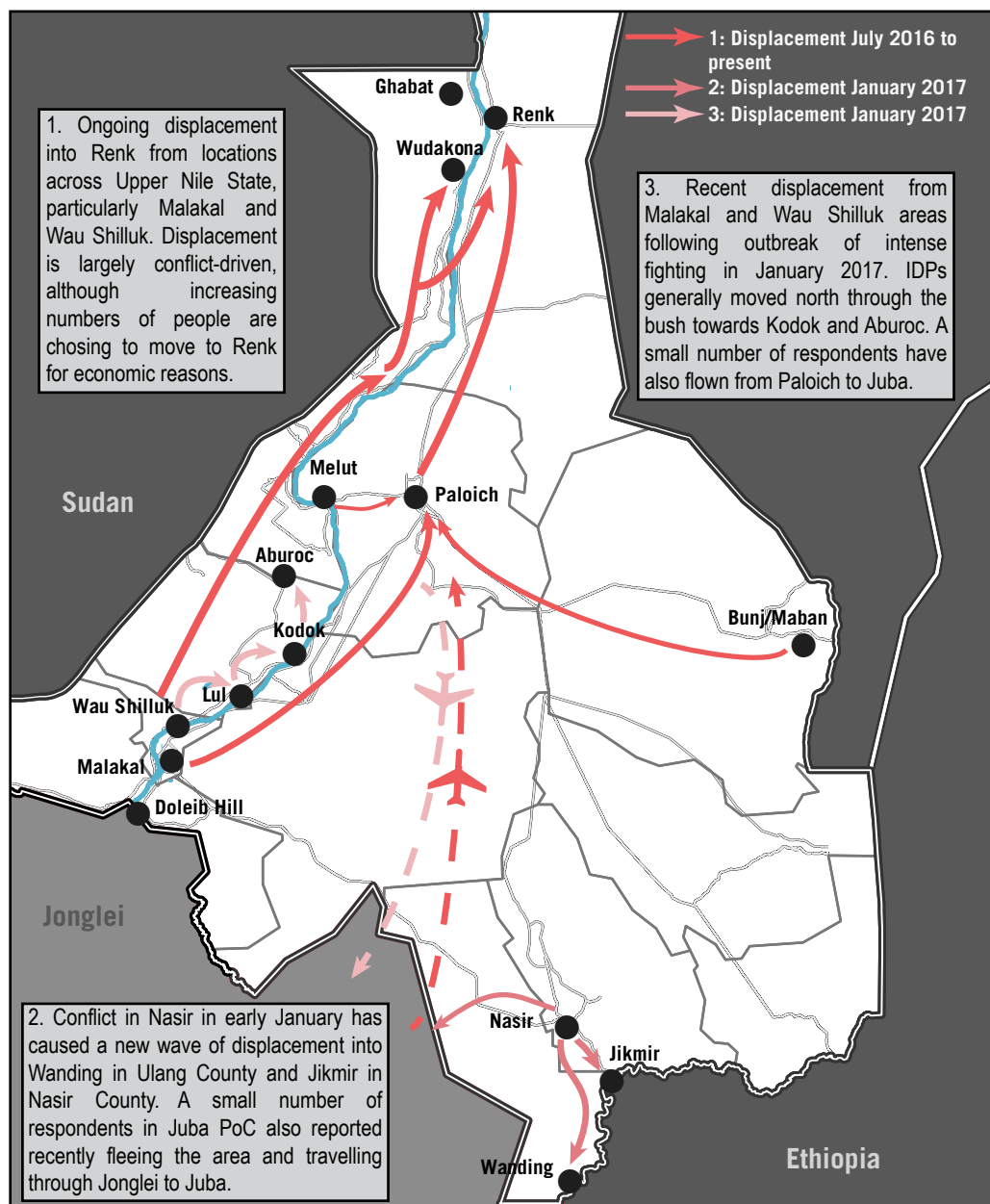
Map 1: REACH assessment locations in Upper Nile, South Sudan

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Map 2: Upper Nile displacement patterns 2016 - 17

areas of origin. During these two assessments REACH conducted 25 FGDs with a total of 172 IDPs and local community members.

REACH is also carrying out monthly data collection in UNMISS UN House PoC, Juba through in-depth interviews with selected participants, using a standardised survey tool comprising questions on displacement trends, population needs and access to basic services. While the current figures produced from this data are low to be statistically significant, the overall trends emerging from the data have been used to further strengthen the information presented in this situation overview.

Primary data findings have been further triangulated by secondary data from a range of media and INGO sources. Due to the purposive sampling of the KIs and FGD participants, findings cannot be generalised to the entire population but remain indicative of the situation assessed.

## Overview of displacement in Upper Nile state

After several months of relative stability in Upper Nile, fighting re-started in earnest in late December 2016 in Maban, and in January 2017 in Nasir, Malakal and Renk. **Conflict has been the key push factor for displacement in the state.** Whilst displacement in Maban has largely remained within the county,

small numbers of local community members and previously displaced IDPs have started moving northwards towards Paloich and Renk. Similarly, conflict around Malakal and Wau Shilluk in February 2017 has resulted in local community and previously displaced IDPs moving northwards towards Kodok and Aburoc. Even prior to this, increased numbers of IDPs had begun to leave Malakal PoC and move north to Renk and Sudan since July 2016, citing fears of fighting in the camp as the key motivation for leaving. In January, fighting spread to the bomas south of Nasir Town for the first time since 2013, causing a new wave of displacement to the settlements of Jikmir and Wanding. Small numbers of IDPs have also arrived from Nasir into Juba, having travelled through Jonglei along the river. Finally, a new movement pattern is emerging from Juba to various locations in Upper Nile by government-facilitated cargo flights. This is generally secondary displacement from locations in Greater Equatoria and Jonglei, and is reportedly primarily driven by financial needs.

### Displacement from Maban

Ongoing tension between the local community, IDPs and Sudanese refugees erupted into fighting over Christmas 2016 between refugees and local community. The conflict resulted in the temporary displacement of an estimated 8,000 from the host community and a further 10,000 Sudanese refugees<sup>1</sup>. Although

1. Radio Tamazuj. Death toll rises to 32 in Maban fight. 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

2. OCHA. South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot. December 2016.

3. REACH. 2016. Conflict and tensions between communities around Doro Camp, Maban County. UNHCR. (yet to be published)

the majority of the South Sudanese who were displaced over Christmas 2016 have remained within Maban County<sup>2</sup>, a small number of IDPs were interviewed by REACH in Renk. Whilst the **displacement caused by the most recent fighting has been relatively localised**, it is important to be aware of potential movement patterns to other parts of Upper Nile, such as Renk, as these may become more prevalent if conflict continues.

Respondents from Maban reported that the recent insecurity stemmed from ongoing tension between host community, IDPs and Sudanese refugees around access to resources (land, firewood), as well as dissatisfaction with the concentration of aid and resources on refugees at the perceived expense of the host community and previously displaced IDPs. Since 2015, REACH has conducted several assessments in Maban in an attempt to understand the conflict dynamics<sup>3</sup>. It found that the host community had been struggling to cover basic needs, in particular adequate food production, even prior to the influx of 130,000 refugees from Blue Nile state in 2011. The situation has been further complicated by a relatively small but dynamic population of IDPs who have been moving in and out of the area since the December 2013 crisis.

## Displacement from Malakal and Wau Shilluk

Conflict re-emerged in the traditional hotspots of Wau Shilluk and Malakal at the end of January 2017, **causing rapid displacement to Lul and Kodok, and later to Aburoc**. Humanitarian partners estimated that approximately 23,000 IDPs have started moving north from Wau Shilluk since fighting began<sup>4</sup>. Reports further suggest that previously displaced IDPs and local community members had all but “abandoned” Wau Shilluk by 3 February<sup>5</sup> following the fighting.

Even prior to the latest outbreak of fighting in Malakal, **increased movement of IDPs out of the Malakal PoC has been observed in small numbers since the July 2016 crisis** in Juba. IDPs, the majority of whom are women and children, appear to be travelling north, either along the eastern bank of the Nile, or through the Shilluk Kingdom on the western bank. Whilst some are settling in Renk County, evidence suggests that others are continuing north through Manyo County to Sudan. A number of KIs and FGD respondents who had recently arrived in Renk from Malakal PoC cited fears of violence in the camp as the predominant reason for leaving. This is potentially indicative of decreased trust in the ability of UNMISS to protect IDPs living in the PoC.

## Displacement from Nasir

In early January 2017, fighting spread to the bomas southeast of Nasir Town for the first time since the December 2013 crisis. This has resulted in a **new wave of displacement of approximately 37,000 IDPs<sup>6</sup> to Jikmir in Nasir County and Wanding in Ulang County**. Whilst a small number of IDPs have reportedly moved into Ethiopia, and an even smaller number have travelled to Juba PoC, the majority currently remain in these two locations.

REACH conducted two rapid assessments in Wanding in early January, and took part in a further Interagency Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA) in Jikmir in February<sup>7</sup>. All three assessments identified food insecurity as a key concern in Wanding and Jikmir, even prior to the recent influx of IDPs. Both local community members and IDPs reported adopting coping strategies to supplement their diets, including relying on wild fruit and fish; both food sources that will continue to dwindle as the dry season progresses. There is clear need for immediate humanitarian intervention, prioritising food and non-food items (NFIs) such as cooking implements and mosquito nets in both locations.

## Displacement from Juba – Paloich

**A new movement pattern from Juba to Upper Nile has begun to emerge over the last six months**. Respondents in Renk, who were from various locations across

Greater Equatoria, as well as further afield, reported travelling to Juba in order to take a government-sponsored cargo plane to Paloich. There is currently limited data on the movement of people using cargo planes, making it difficult to estimate the total number of people who have travelled from Juba to Paloich since the flights began in 2016. Whilst most people appear to be transiting through Paloich to other locations in Upper Nile, most commonly Renk, or crossing into Sudan, some are reportedly staying in the PoC and other IDP settlements around Melut, as well as the temporary settlement in Paloich Town.

The cargo flights to Paloich, alongside reported displacement routes from Maban, Melut and Malakal into Paloich, indicate that the town is becoming a significant transit hub for displaced people moving to other locations in Upper Nile. Whilst Paloich currently remains stable, its location in the Palogue oil field makes it a strategic military target, which may be deterring IDPs from settling there permanently<sup>8</sup>.

Whilst this movement is not forced, and not technically considered displacement, information from respondents who had made this journey raised two key issues; first, that the ongoing financial crisis is resulting in people leaving Juba, where the cost of living has become untenable for some, and second, that Renk is perceived as an attractive destination

4. DRC Summary Review of Malakal Fighting 22<sup>nd</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

5. Ibid.

6. Nile Hope. Rapid Assessment of Nasir IDPs. 11<sup>th</sup> January 2017.

7. REACH. Wanding Situation Briefing. January 2017; REACH. Wanding Situation Overview. January 2017. REACH. Jikmir Situation Overview. February 2017. (All yet to be published)

8. Radio Tamazuj. Fears of fighting shifting to Paloich area. 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2017.

for people from across South Sudan – survey respondents came from eight of the ten [former] states<sup>9</sup>. The primary reasons that respondents gave for choosing Renk as their displacement destination was security and low market prices.

## Displacement into Renk County

The close proximity to both the oil pipeline and the Sudanese border have made Renk a strategic military target since the outbreak

of conflict in 2013. Intensive fighting between the SPLA and the SPLA-IO in 2015 caused displacement to an informal IDP settlement north of the town, and later secondary displacement into Sudan. Renk County currently hosts three IDP settlements, one of which, Abayok, has recently started receiving a steady stream of new arrivals from other parts of Upper Nile, as well as people moving northwards from Juba. Whilst fighting was reported to the northwest of Renk in February 2017, it is likely that the town's perceived

stability and low cost of living will continue to attract IDPs from other parts of South Sudan.

### Historical displacement patterns

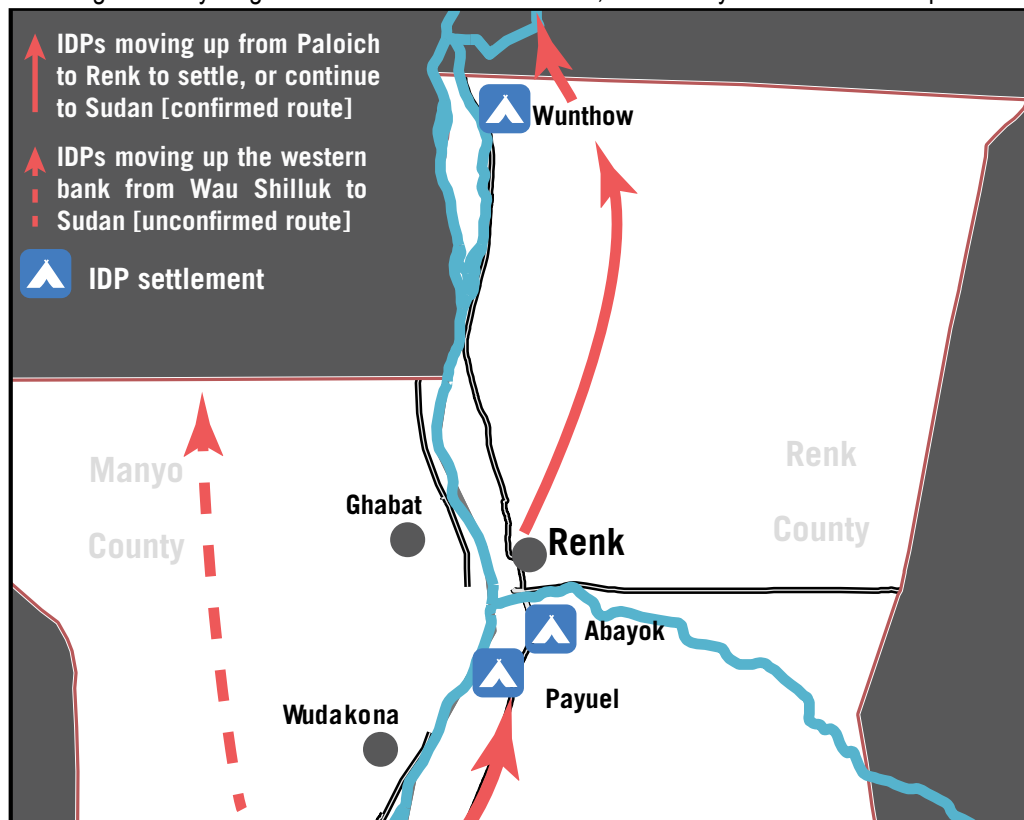
Renk County has historically been of strategic importance in South Sudan for three main reasons. Firstly, the town itself is an important transport hub for trade with Sudan and, prior to the December 2013 conflict, was a key port for riverine traffic between Malakal and Khartoum. Secondly, the presence of a number of mechanized agricultural projects make it one of South Sudan's most productive food-producing counties<sup>10</sup>. Finally, the oil pipeline threads through the county from the Paloich oilfields to refineries in Sudan, meaning that controlling the county is thus synonymous with controlling the pipeline. For these reasons, Renk was the site of some of the most intense conflict in Upper Nile State in early 2015 when the SPLA-IO occupied the town of Wudakona, in Manyo County on the western bank of the Nile, and attempted to take Renk Town through a campaign of heavy shelling from across the river. During this period, much of the county population, as well as civilians living on the western bank, fled to Wunthow, a small town on the border with Sudan. Fighting later reached Wunthow causing a further wave of displacement into Sudan where several refugee camps were established. Government forces eventually repelled the SPLA-IO in April 2015, and the area has enjoyed a period of relative stability since then, although a high number of those displaced into Sudan have reportedly remained there.

Prior to the recent outbreak of conflict in January 2017, Renk was experiencing a sustained level of cyclical cross-border movement, with people moving into the area from Sudan for short periods to access healthcare, markets and general food distributions, as well as passing through in transit to locations further south or across the border to the north. Data collected by IOM indicates that, whilst the flow of people in and out of Renk Town is continually fluctuating, the net outflow has remained at a fairly constant level over the last six months<sup>11</sup>. Additionally, this movement is generally not driven by insecurity but by the declining value of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) against the Sudanese Pound, which has dramatically raised the cost of living for refugees.

### IDP settlements in Renk County

The county hosts three informal IDP settlements: **Abayok**, **Payuel** and **Wunthow**. Abayok was originally established in 2011 when returnees from Sudan began settling in Renk. The majority of the camp population is Shilluk, but there are also Nuer and a small number of Dinka living there. In 2015, at the time of the last registration, IOM estimated that there were approximately 4,240 individuals, though it is highly likely that this figure is higher than the actual number currently living in the settlement, as many people fled north to Sudan when conflict broke out later in 2015. However, Abayok is now receiving the majority of new arrivals into Renk from other parts of South Sudan.

Payuel settlement was established in



Map 3: Renk IDP settlements and historical displacement patterns

9. Although the 28 state system was announced in October 2015, it remains highly contentious. For this reason REACH continues to operate under the original 10 state system.

10. HSBA. 2015. The Conflict in Upper Nile State: Update.

11. IOM Movement Trend Tracking Data.

2012 when a group of returnees, mainly of Equatorian origin, travelled into South Sudan from Khartoum as part of a relocation programme facilitated by IOM. Although the final relocation destination was intended to be to Greater Equatoria, the move was disrupted when conflict broke out in 2013 and the majority of people have remained in Renk County since then. Payuel has a population of just under 2,000 individuals (as estimated by the camp Sheikh) with only a small number of reported new arrivals over the last six months; the majority of whom have travelled to Renk to rejoin their families.

Wunthow sits right on the Sudanese border and was established in 2015 when fighting was at its most intense in the county – at this time, IOM estimated the total population at 4,910 individuals. However, the majority of the settlement population fled across the border when the camp was attacked by the SPLA-IO in April 2015, and most have not returned. Currently, very few new arrivals are settling in the camp, with most IDPs either choosing to stay in Abayok or crossing straight over the border to Sudan. However, given the outbreak of fighting close to Renk Town in January 2017, Wunthow may begin to receive IDPs from other parts of the county.

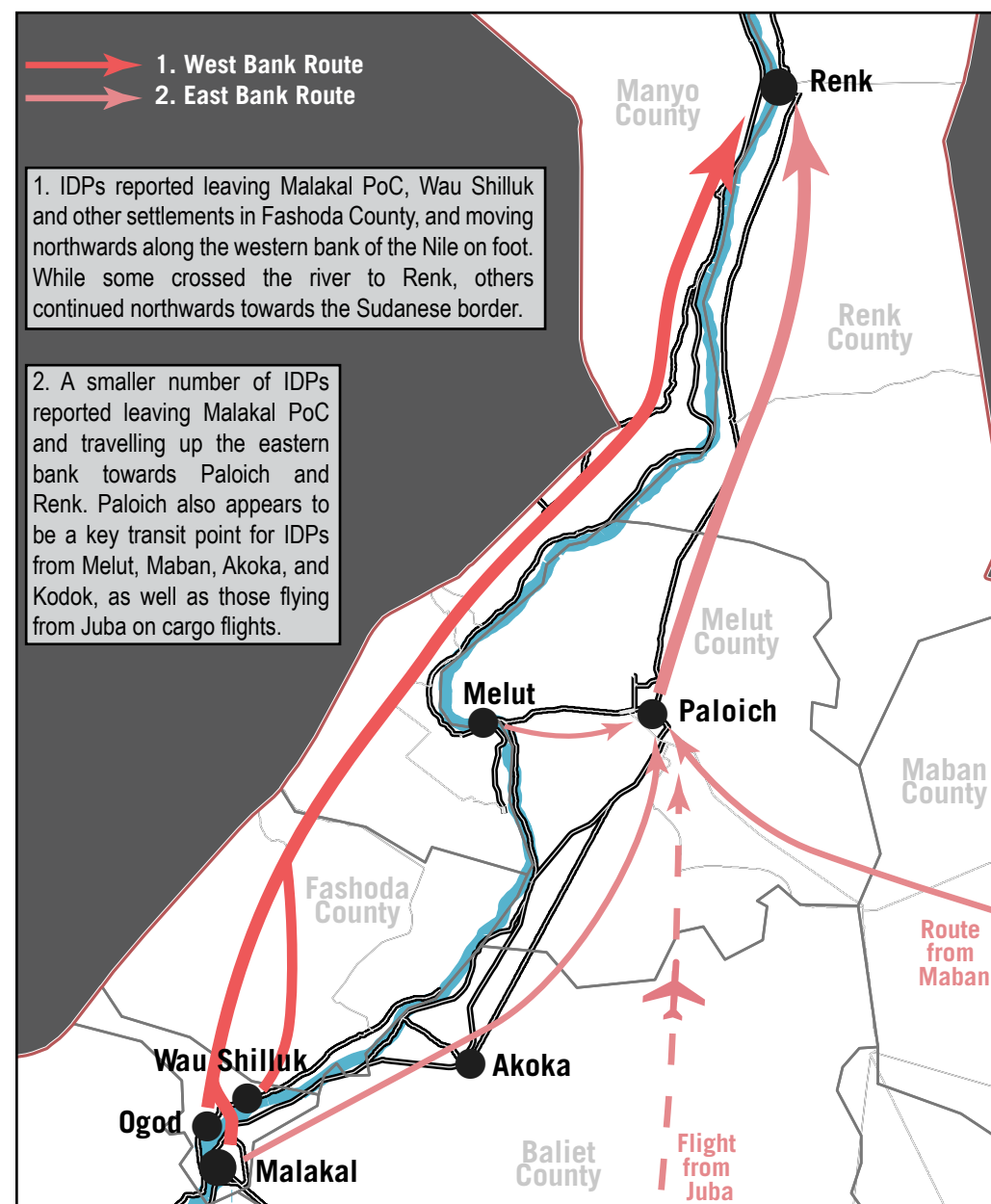
### Current displacement patterns

**Over half of all respondents had recently arrived in Renk from other locations in Upper Nile, particularly from Malakal and Fashoda Counties.** IDPs from Malakal, Wau Shilluk and other locations in Fashoda, were

almost exclusively from a Shilluk background and generally reported travelling on foot through the bush on the western bank of the Nile in small groups of 10-40 people. A small number of respondents reported walking up the eastern bank towards Paloich but commented that this route was unsafe. For instance, two women who took this route reported only travelling along the road at night in order to avoid the soldiers. Respondents who had travelled from Maban reported using military vehicles to travel to Paloich, and then paying for public transport up to Renk.

Aside from those recently arriving from locations within Upper Nile State, a notable number of respondents also came from seven other states [of the former ten]. This group included both men and women, who had most commonly travelled to Juba and then flown to Paloich on government-sponsored cargo flights. Respondents described registering with the Jubek State government when they arrived in Juba, and then waiting to be called for a flight at an informal IDP site close to Juba airport. The government is reportedly paying the transport costs for IDPs to fly to Paloich via cargo plane.

On 30 January 2017, fighting broke out in an area several kilometres to the north west of Renk Town known as Ghabat. This outbreak of fighting follows a similar pattern to that of 2015 when the SPLA-IO attempted to take Renk from the north by attacking SPLA positions on the western bank of the Nile. Whilst, at the time of writing, the conflict had not reached Renk,



12. Unofficial estimates from South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission put the number at 300 individuals.

13. Radio Tamazuj. Civilians evacuated from Wudakona after clashes: official. 2 February 2017.

a small number of civilians<sup>12</sup> were temporarily displaced from Wudakona and had crossed the river into Renk Town<sup>13</sup>. Should the fighting spread to Renk itself in the future, it is likely that very similar displacement patterns to those of 2015 will be observed, with the majority of people likely moving over the border to Sudan.

### IDPs on the Western Bank

Although the uncertain security situation prevented data collection on the western bank of the Nile, REACH interviewed some respondents who had moved across to river into Renk. Whilst the lack of NGO presence on the western bank means the exact figures are unknown<sup>14</sup>, respondents indicated that there were high numbers of IDPs entering the Wudakona area, Manyo County, from Malakal, Wau Shilluk and the surrounding villages. Additionally, KI interviews with staff working at an INGO-run clinic in Wunthow suggested that IDPs along the western bank had been seen crossing the border into Sudan in large numbers; the clinic supervisor described trucks carrying IDPs crossing into Sudan every week since December 2016. At the time of writing, there are no humanitarian organizations, both national and international, operating in Wudakona and the County Commissioner reported that there are few functioning healthcare, education and other services available.

### Push factors

**Insecurity was reported by 40% of respondents as the primary reason**

**for displacement.** The majority of these respondents came from locations in Upper Nile.

Data collected in Renk suggests that there is a growing trend of people who are leaving Malakal PoC permanently due to fear of insecurity. Respondents from Malakal PoC reported fears of inter-communal conflict sparked by “quarrelling” of children over various water points in the camp, further reporting that “many more” people wanted to move northwards but were afraid that the journey would be too dangerous and difficult with small children.

It is extremely likely that this displacement pattern has been exacerbated by the outbreak of intense fighting towards the end of January 2017 in Malakal and Wau Shilluk. Clashes involving heavy artillery and aerial bombardment were reported from the last week of January around the Dolieb Hills, to the west of Malakal Town, resulting in displacement to Kodok and later Aburoc<sup>15</sup>.

A small number of FGD respondents reported recently arriving from Melut. Similar to IDPs from Malakal, respondents from Melut cited fear of inter-communal violence in the IDP settlements around Melut Town as the primary reason for leaving. Although there have been moves towards voluntary relocation and closure of Melut PoC, the recent outbreak of fighting in Malakal to the south and Renk to the north, is likely to put these plans on hold.

Aside from insecurity, lack of food and

employment opportunities were commonly reported reasons for displacement. This was particularly the case for those respondents who travelled from Juba, who reported that food prices were so high that they were often unable to afford more than one meal a day. The below table gives an indication of food prices in Renk and Juba, as reported by respondents who had recently arrived in Renk. Respondents stated that the high food prices, transport costs and school fees in Juba had made it impossible to continue to live there.

*Table 1: Comparison of average market prices (SSP) in Renk and Juba, as reported by respondents in January 2017*

	Renk	Juba
1 Kg Sugar	100	120
1 Kg Beef	200	400
2.5 Kg Sorghum	160	500

### Pull factors

Overall, respondents in Renk came from across eight of the ten states **suggesting that people are moving into Renk from all over the country.** Even prior to the latest wave of fighting, the top reason reported by respondents for choosing Renk as their destination was security. Renk Town was perceived to be quiet, and its close proximity to Sudan provides the option of fleeing across the border should the need arise. The majority of FGD respondents from Upper Nile further commented that they felt that Renk was the only option available to them given the spread

of conflict across the state. Despite to the recent instability around Renk, humanitarian partners report that there is continued movement into the area from Malakal PoC<sup>16</sup>.

In addition to seeking security, many respondents also reported moving to Renk to join family, because they heard there were food distributions, and to access healthcare and education facilities. **For those arriving from Juba and other locations in Greater Equatoria, moving to Renk was largely a financial decision** based on the perception that the cost of living was cheaper, and that there were better employment opportunities available. The bi-monthly food distributions in the IDP sites, cheap market prices due to trade with Sudan, and food production in the county were all mentioned as reasons to chose Renk as a displacement destination.

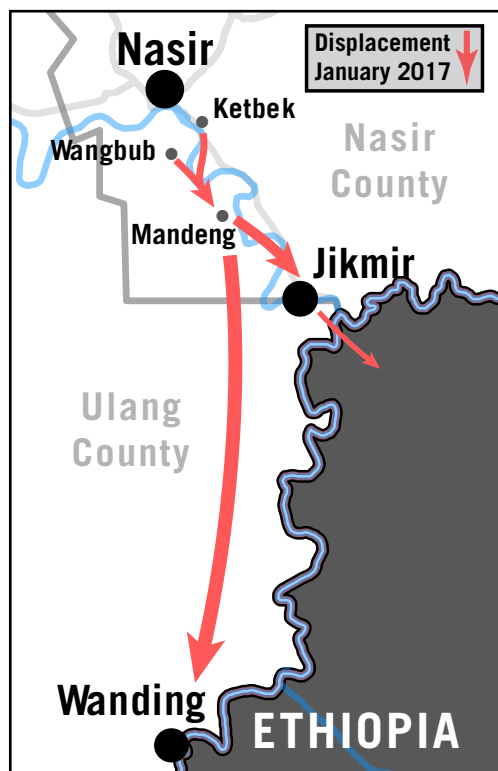
### IDP intentions

The majority of respondents reported that they were intending to stay in Renk County rather than crossing the border into Sudan, although this may change as a result of the currently deteriorating security situation in Upper Nile. Almost all FGD respondents stated that they were unwilling to return to their area of origin until peace comes to South Sudan, where “peace” referred to both a working ceasefire and an inclusive government. Some respondents from Malakal further commented that, even if peace comes, they will remain in Renk because they “*will never forget the first fighting [in 2013]*”.

14. Although IOM is conducting daily MTT in and out of Renk Town, no data is currently being collected on movement of people along the western bank.

15. NGO Forum Security Update. 30 January 2017; Radio Tamazuj. Fighting blocks humanitarian assistance in Upper Nile. 1 February 2017.

16. DRC. Weekly Security Update. 26 February - 04 March 2017.



Map 5: Displacement to Wanding and Jikmir

## Displacement into Wanding and Jikmir

Following the outbreak of conflict around Nasir County in early January 2017, large proportions of the population around southwest Nasir County were displaced. Using WFP November 2016 distribution data, local authorities estimate that approximately 32,000 people have been displaced since January. The majority of this population is now split between Jikmir in Nasir County and Wanding in Ulang County.

While precise dates of displacement were often unknown, and the time spent traveling varied wildly, most IDPs took between two and five days to travel from their homes to their present location. Due to the sudden displacement, many initially traveled alone or in small groups. Families and community members would often meet along the way or at an interim location of displacement (e.g. in a village before crossing the Sobat to the east). These groups grew in size throughout the displacement phase, and remained together at the time of assessment in their location of displacement. Reports of missing children and family separation were common.

### Push factors

IDP respondents in Jikmir and Wanding reported fleeing heavy fighting in the areas south of Nasir town, which broke out in early January, adding that this was the first time fighting had reached their villages. Respondents said that the majority (“everyone”) of people in their villages had fled into the forest once fighting started, and then moved either to Jikmir, near the border with Ethiopia, or further south to Wanding and Kier.

### Pull factors

IDPs in both Wanding and Jikmir stated that they chose these locations because they are perceived to be safe, largely because of the close proximity to Ethiopia, and in the case of Wanding, because of the lack of road, which prevents easy access by armed groups.

IDPs frequently cited access to food as another reason for coming to their current location. Respondents mentioned hearing rumours of the availability of fish and wild fruit in Wanding, and WFP general food distributions (GFD) in Jikmir. However, it is clear that these areas may be considered the only “safe” places for IDPs to move to, as much of the area to the north and west of Nasir is occupied by armed groups.

### IDP intentions

At the time of the REACH assessments, IDPs arriving into Wanding and Jikmir reported that only a small number of people had moved across the border into Ethiopia, the majority stating that they preferred to remain in South Sudan “with [their] community”. FGD respondents reported that they were extremely unlikely to return to their place of origin until they were certain that fighting had stopped and that armed groups were no longer occupying not only their villages but the whole of Nasir County.

Despite these intentions, **without proper shelter, most IDPs in the area will struggle to remain past April, when the rainy season begins.** Because of this, it should not be expected for IDPs to remain in their current location without a drastic change in their access to shelter. However, when probed further, IDPs could not name another location they would resettle in if displaced by flooding, but reiterated their hope to return home soon.

The majority of IDPs commented that they

would prefer to stay in Wanding or Jikmir, and in Upper Nile more broadly, rather than move further south to Akobo, Jonglei. Several IDPs said that they had relatives in the area, and that the people of Wanding furthermore were part of their community.

After the initial wave of displacement, the IDP populations in both places appear to have stabilised with small numbers of new arrivals and little movement between each settlement. However, the **pre-existing food shortages of the host community, which are being further stressed by the new arrivals, will likely result in IDPs starting to move in search of food.** To this extent, movement may be dictated by the provision of aid, particularly given that members of the host community are already travelling to Gakdong Payam in Akobo County to receive food during Oxfam GFDs. Although respondents indicated that they were hopeful that aid would be provided in Wanding and/or Jikmir, it is likely that the IDPs will begin moving into Akobo County in large numbers if humanitarian actors do not reach them where they currently are. Similarly, should future interventions be focused on either Wanding or Jikmir, it is highly likely that this will attract IDPs from the other location.

IDPs in both areas reported that Jikmir was no longer perceived as safe; although also on the border with Ethiopia, it is reported to be on the front line of fighting at the time of the assessment, and is consequently believed to be vulnerable to attack. Despite this, the IDPs who have fled to Jikmir largely reported that

they intend to stay there, rather than making the journey south to Wanding.

## Conclusion and future predictions

Renk is a key thoroughfare for cross-border movement and, prior to the recent fighting, the town was attracting IDPs from across the country because of its relative stability, affordable living conditions and close proximity to Sudan. The highest proportion of IDPs arriving into Renk came from locations within Upper Nile, which reflects the ongoing conflict in several parts of the state. Fighting over Christmas 2016 in Maban resulted in a small number of IDPs travelling to Renk, whilst tensions in Malakal PoC and Melut IDP settlements have caused a number of people to leave the camps for Renk in search of more secure living conditions. Additionally, a number of respondents reported travelling from Juba to Renk, via government sponsored flights to Paloich, and indicated that increasing numbers of people are leaving Juba because of the high living costs. Whilst these movement patterns to Renk are likely to be mitigated by the ongoing insecurity to the north of Renk Town, it is useful to be aware of this displacement pattern in future as, should stability return to Renk, the area is likely to continue to attract displaced people from across the country.

Elsewhere in the state, the intensification of conflict around Nasir has caused a new wave of displacement eastwards to the settlements of Jikmir and Wanding, along the Ethiopian

border. High levels of food insecurity for both IDPs and local community, and a lack of basic shelter needs, have been reported in both locations, suggesting that humanitarian assistance is urgently needed in these areas.

Although at the time of writing conflict around Malakal and Wau Shilluk had de-escalated, the situation remains highly volatile<sup>17</sup>. Should fighting resume and spread as far as Kodok or Aburoc, it is likely that both IDPs and local community members, will continue to travel northwards, potentially moving into the IDP settlements around Melut. Previously expressed fears of conflict along ethnic lines in Melut could further result in the, predominantly Shilluk, IDP population continuing to move north towards Renk. Whilst not currently an immediate concern, humanitarian partners should thus be aware of the possibility of an influx of IDPs in both Melut and Renk should the current instability in Fashoda and Manyo Counties further escalate.

There is currently limited understanding of displacement patterns along the western bank of the Nile north of Melut amongst the humanitarian community. Additional research on the route and demographics of IDPs travelling up the western bank, and the numbers crossing into Sudan, would be valuable in understanding potential future displacement patterns, as well as the humanitarian needs of this population.

Finally, further assessment of movement into, and through, Paloich would be critical to better understand broader displacement patterns

in Upper Nile, as well as the increase in the voluntary population relocation from Juba to the north, which is taking place despite the ongoing insecurity in the region.

### 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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