

# Situation Overview: Upper Nile State, South Sudan

July-August 2017

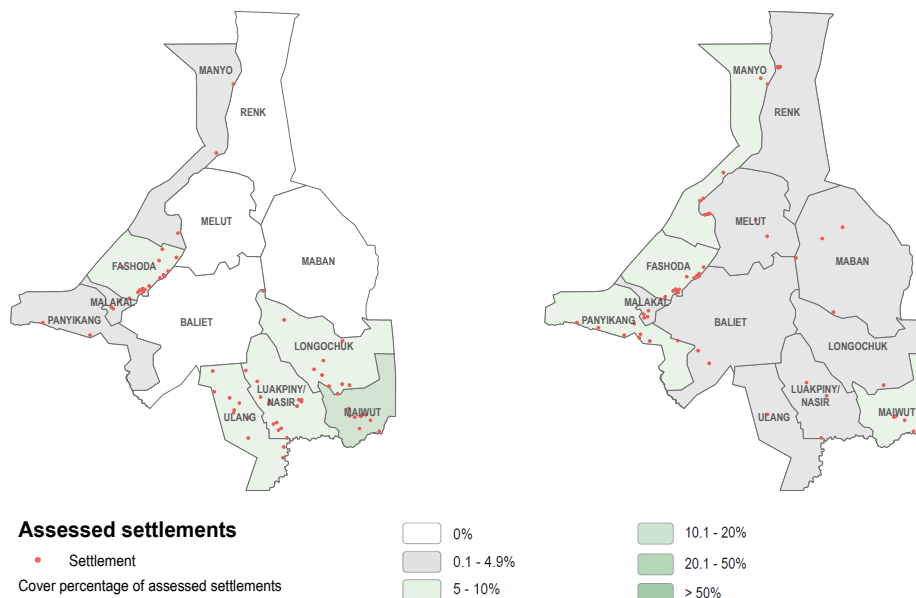
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## Introduction

Between July and August 2017, the revival of conflict and increased insecurity has disrupted livelihoods, access to services and humanitarian assistance in Upper Nile state. Moreover, insecurity has caused further displacement into Ethiopia and Sudan with continued internal displacement inside Upper Nile State.

To inform the response of humanitarian actors working outside of formal displacement sites, REACH has been conducting an ongoing assessment of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since 2015, for which data on settlements across Greater Upper Nile, Greater Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal region is collected on a monthly basis.

Between July and August 2017, REACH interviewed 190 Key Informants (KIs) from 126 settlements in all 12 counties in Upper Nile State. In order to ensure an accurate understanding of current displacement and population dynamics, all selected KIs had up-to-date information about the village from which they had been displaced, whether because they had reportedly visited the Area of Knowledge (AoK) within the last month or had been in contact with someone living in the AoK within the last month. Findings have been triangulated using KIs with humanitarian actors, secondary data, and previous REACH assessments of



**Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Upper Nile State, July 2017 (left), August (right).**

hard-to-reach areas of Upper Nile State.

This Situation Overview outlines displacement and access to basic services in Upper Nile in July and August 2017. The first section analyses displacement trends in Upper Nile State. The second section outlines the population dynamics in the assessed communities, as well as access to food and basic services for both IDP and non-displaced communities.

Due to changes in the selection of data

collection sites between July and August, **the coverage of counties where REACH has been able to assess over 5% of known settlements differed considerably between July and August (Map 1).** Counties where the proportion of total settlements assessed is below 5% are not analysed at the county level, but the settlement data is still included in the state-level analysis. For July, settlement coverage included areas where fighting was more intense and displacement was ongoing

at the time, mainly in the south-eastern portion of the state (Maiwut, Longochuk, Nasir, Ulang), which facilitates the provision of information from these areas which are known to have access difficulties and information gaps at the moment. However, the central part of the state (Maban, Melut, Baliet, Renk) was not assessed and the western bank had only one county where over 5% of all settlements were assessed (Fashoda). In August, REACH interviewed KIs from all 12 counties. However, only three counties exceeded a 5% settlement coverage in the western bank of the Nile (Manyo, Fashoda and Panyikang) and one county in the south-eastern part of the state (Maiwut). Given this geographical shift in areas covered between July and August this report does not purport to study trends between July and August. However, as July coverage was relatively similar to June coverage, observations on state-level trends between June and July have been included in this report.

## Population Movement and Displacement

Displacement within the state of Upper Nile has been dynamic in July and August (see Map 2) as illustrated by 51% of assessed settlements reporting an IDP presence in their area in August. A large proportion of IDPs reportedly crossed the border to Ethiopia during the period

## METHODOLOGY

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

Information for this report was collected from key informants in Renk County, Upper Nile, Akobo, Jonglei State, and Juba Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in July and August 2017.

The first phase of the assessment methodology comprised a participatory mapping exercise to map the relevant settlements in Upper Nile State. In-depth interviews were then conducted with selected participants using a standardised survey tool comprising questions on displacement trends, population needs, and access to basic services.

After data collection was completed, all data was examined at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting. Descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis were then used to analyse the data.

Please note that REACH is in the process of establishing sustained data collection in Upper Nile State. As a result, the current coverage is limited. The conclusions drawn are therefore indicative of likely trends in the state.

following clashes in the south-eastern part of the state in July, and others fled to Sudan due to insecurity along the western bank in August.<sup>1</sup> <sup>2</sup> Displacement largely affected populations that were already displaced (e.g. Aburoc displacement site), which illustrates that as insecurity continues there has been a relative shrinking of safe spaces for IDPs within Upper Nile as insecurity progresses.

### Displacement in and out of Upper Nile

#### Displacement from Longochuk and Maiwut

Following clashes along the Mathiang-Pagak corridor in Longochuk and Maiwut in July, IDPs and local communities were displaced and moved toward Pagak, with an estimated 5000 people crossing the border with Ethiopia in the early stages of the armed clashes in the area.<sup>3</sup> Most crossed the border due to the combined effect of persisting insecurity and the lack of humanitarian assistance in Pagak following the evacuation of most relocatable humanitarian workers in early July. In Maiwut County, where Pagak is located, 61% of assessed settlements reported that 50% or more of the population had left their settlement in July, with the figure increasing to 80% in August, suggesting that continued fighting in and around Pagak through that month has forced more populations to leave their area.

#### Displacement along the western bank

Renewed insecurity in Aburoc resulted in further displacement from Fashoda toward Manyo County and Sudan in July and August.<sup>4</sup>

Simultaneously, insecurity also reportedly flared up at the end of July in Kaka, Manyo County, which reportedly led even more people to move toward Sudan as well as toward neighbouring Malakal.<sup>5</sup> Apart from this movement, however, the entries and exits from the Malakal Protection of Civilians (PoC) site largely stabilised following an outbound trend that lasted from February 2017 to June 2017, when the population of the site had decreased from approximately 30,000 people to 24,000.<sup>6 7</sup>

### Displacement around Maban

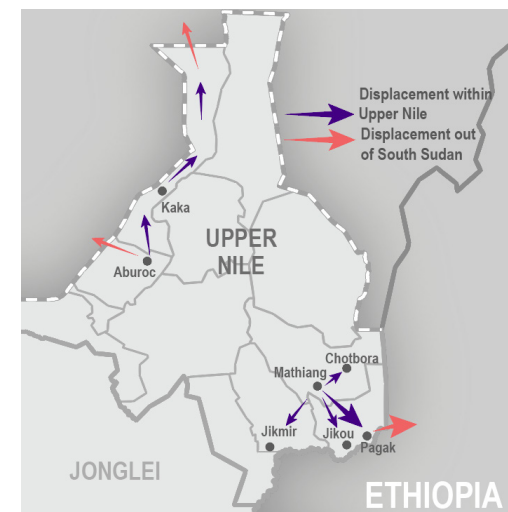
Through July and August a dispute between different communities began to build up in the Maban area, which resulted in the evacuation of 27 humanitarian personnel from the area.<sup>8</sup> Driven by insecurity in Maban, a small proportion of the population appeared to be leaving towards Sudan, as REACH recorded a few arrivals from the Kilo 10 area in Renk town in August.

## Situation in Assessed Settlements

### Food security

**Ongoing insecurity, coupled with the peak of lean season in July, led to an increasing proportion of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food.** While 46% of assessed settlements had reported having adequate access to food in June, this figure dropped to 27% in July.

The most frequently cited reason for low levels of adequate access to food across Upper Nile



**Map 2: Displacement from Longochuk County, July 2017, and from Aburoc and Kaka, August 2017.**

was insecurity, as 38% of assessed settlements without adequate access to food reported that it was too unsafe to access land for cultivation in their area in July. Destruction of crops by fighting was the second most frequently cited reason (36%) for the lack of food in the settlements that reported inadequate access to food, which reinforces the hypothesis that persisting insecurity in Upper Nile was the main factor preventing households (HHs) from accessing food over the period.

### Access to food in south-eastern counties

Indicative of a lack of normal sources of food due to disruption of livelihoods by insecurity, the majority of settlements in both Maiwut and Longochuk were reporting reliance on foraging

1. OCHA. Flash Update. 7 July 2017.

2. OCHA. Humanitarian snapshot. July, August 2017.

3. OCHA. Humanitarian bulletin. Issue 11. 15 September 2017.

4. OCHA. Humanitarian snapshot. August 2017.

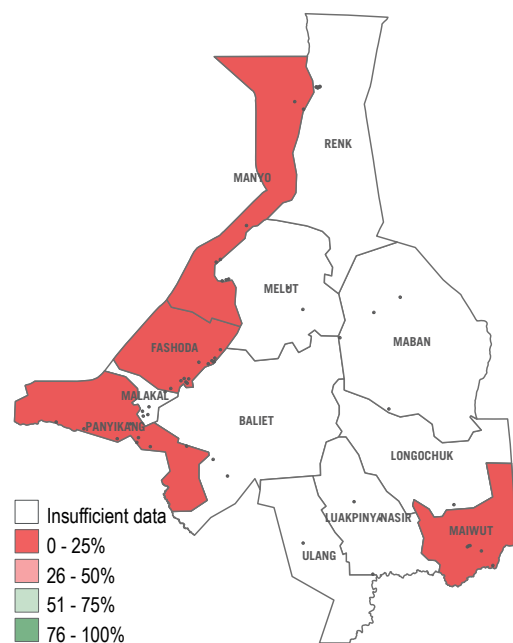
5. OCHA. Humanitarian bulletin. Issue 11. 15 September 2017.

6. IOM. DTM Malakal PoC. August 2017.

7. Ibid.

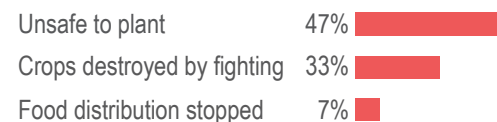
8. WHO. Upper Nile Weekly Update. 7-16 August.

as their main source of food (71% and 57% of assessed settlements respectively). While the consumption of wild fruits is indeed seasonal during the lean season in the area, such high reliance on foraging as a primary source of food is indicative of a depletion of alternative food sources, likely as a result of continued insecurity. Indeed, Maiwut was the only assessed county where no settlements reported to be relying on either purchased or cultivated food in July. Foraging was also a major source of food in neighboring Longochuk in July (57%) but in contrast with Maiwut 43% of assessed settlements were also relying primarily on cultivation, potentially indicating availability of



**Map 3: Proportion of settlements reporting adequate access to food, August 2017**

**Figure 1: Top three reported reasons for lack of food in settlements that reported inadequate food access, August 2017**



green crops in some areas. In both Maiwut and Longochuk, markets were found to be widely inaccessible in July, with only respectively 25% and 20% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of a functioning market in their area, thereby preventing HHs from purchasing goods in the absence of alternative livelihood sources.

Continued insecurity prevented planned distributions from the Integrated Rapid Response Mechanism in Longochuk and Maiwut in August, which further impeded access to food in a time of disrupted livelihoods.<sup>9</sup>

Although the food security situation was found to be less dire in neighbouring counties of Nasir and Ulang, the spillovers from conflict in July were still felt as Ulang and Nasir both had high proportions of assessed settlements reporting no adequate access to food (40% in Ulang in July and 54% in Nasir). Similar findings were reported in a WFP assessment of the Sobat corridor (Ulang, Nasir and Baliyet) which found that the 'food and nutrition situation had deteriorated', with disruption of livelihoods and markets due to insecurity and displacement.<sup>10</sup>

### Access to food along the western bank

Adequate access to food has remained challenging in the western bank of the Nile

following a trend of decline in adequate food access over the previous months. The insecurity that was prevalent in this area between February and May likely led to the depletion of food reserves through frequent displacement and looting and halted cultivation in many areas. Moreover, this phenomenon was compounded by pests that reportedly damaged maize and sorghum crops during cultivation.

A combination of prolonged insecurity during cultivation season and reported presence of the Fallarmy Worm has destroyed crops, disrupted livelihoods and appears to have compounded lack of food in the normal lean season, with a continued deterioration of adequate access to food across the Western Bank of the Nile from June to August.<sup>11</sup> Adequate access to food declined from 67% of assessed settlements reporting access in May to 25% in August. This decrease in adequate access to food was accompanied by high prevalence of malnutrition, which was the most frequently cited health issue in Manyo County in the month of August (40% of assessed settlements). In Panyikang, adequate access to food also decreased from 63% in June to 25% in August whereas in Fashoda, all assessed settlements reported no adequate access to food in July and the figure remained stable in August (8%). All cases suggest a grim trend across the western bank of the Nile.

### Consumption-based coping strategies

In July, 84% of assessed settlements that reported inadequate access to food also reported that households were reducing meal

size portions. Moreover, 49% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food reported that households were purchasing less expensive food at the market as opposed to only 23% of assessed settlements reporting the same coping strategy in June, thus suggesting that the quality of the diet consumed may increasingly suffer from a lack of diversity.

The adoption of coping strategies to offset the impact of diminishing adequate access to food was also associated with a vast majority of settlements assessed in August (83%) - mostly on the western bank - reporting that they were not expecting any food distribution in the short term.

### Livelihoods

In July, 74% of assessed settlements reported that cultivation for subsistence was taking place in their area, which is an encouraging sign given depleted harvest reserves and the general stress on access to food at the end of the lean season. However, the state level figure conceals persisting low levels of cultivation taking place in the western bank of the Nile.

In August, when REACH predominantly assessed the western bank, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that cultivation was taking place decreased to 33% with two of the most food insecure areas of Upper Nile (Manyo County and Panyikang County) reporting that no cultivation was taking place. Access to land for cultivation was also reported to be low in Panyikang (14%), Fashoda (8%) and Manyo (0%), potentially as a result of a resurgence of incidents and skirmishes in both

9. WFP IRRM Update. 21 August 2017.

10. WFP South Sudan Country Brief, August 2017

11. WVI. Special Report on Infestation by the Fallarmy Worm. 4 August 2017.



Manyo and Fashoda.

While access to land remained relatively high in July, with 69% of assessed settlements in Upper Nile reporting access, a sharp decrease was recorded between June and July in Longochuk (from 87% to 44%) and Maiwut (from 85% to 44%). In July, 63% of assessed settlements of Longochuk reported that cultivation for subsistence was taking place and 71% in Maiwut, down from 88% and 92% in June. This decrease is presumably associated with 25% of assessed settlements in Longochuk and 29% in Maiwut reporting that a majority of seeds and agricultural tools had been stolen or looted in July. However, at the state level most tools and farm implements were either reported to be with their owners, hidden or looked after by the community or the family of the owner. In the other assessed counties of the south-eastern area, access to land for cultivation remained stable, suggesting that fighting along the Mathiang-Pagak corridor did not affect cultivation as much in neighboring Nasir and Ulang.

Cattle reportedly remained accessible to their owners in both the south-eastern corner of Upper Nile and along the western bank of the Nile, thereby allowing for adequate access to livestock products for areas where cattle ownership is higher. However, cattle possession itself was found to be very low among counties of the western bank (14% of assessed settlements in Panyikang, 17% in Fashoda and 0% in Manyo) in August and to have reduced in Maiwut from 71% in July to 40% in August.

In the case of the western bank counties, this can be explained by a relatively slow decrease in reliance on cattle due to months of insecurity, raiding and displacement of cattle owners whereas in Maiwut it appears that the sudden armed clashes that affected the area at the end of July and in early August led to sudden loss of cattle among pastoralists, presumably due to displacement or looting/raiding.

In addition to limited cultivation and cattle activity in the western bank of the Nile, only 20% of assessed settlements of Fashoda reported that fishing was taking place in July, which could be due to both rising insecurity and the level of the Nile during the rainy season, as households are mostly not equipped for deepwater fishing. In the south-eastern counties assessed in July, however, over 50% of assessed settlements reported that fishing was taking place, presumably indicating better access to fishing equipment and relative security near ponds and along the parts of the Sobat river that were not directly affected by the armed clashes along the Mathiang-Pagak corridor.

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting that members of the community were engaging in casual labor activities remained very low in both July (6%) and August (13%), which means that very few people were able to access typical lean season income generating activities that would help households to purchase goods from the market in the absence of crops reserves from the previous harvest. Adding to the aforementioned obstacle to the purchase of market goods, nearly all assessed

settlements (between 90% and 95%) reported market prices increases for oil, sugar and sorghum during the month of August, which further indicates reduced purchasing power inhibiting household's ability to purchase nutrient-rich products such as fish, meat and vegetables.

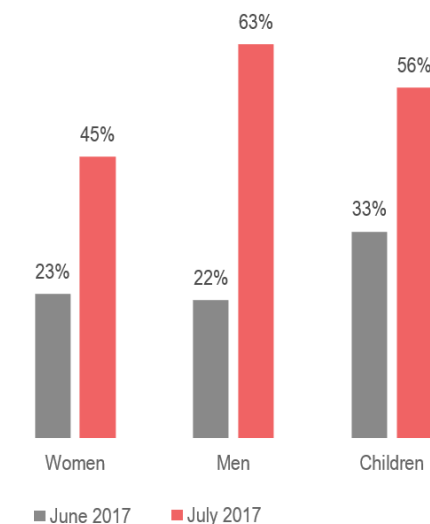
With prices of staples such as cereals indeed at "exceptionally high levels" at the moment according to the Global Information and Early Warning System (GIEWS), lack of casual labor opportunities coupled with damaged harvests is likely to cut off large amounts of settlements from their usual two main sources of food: their own production and the market. Indeed, high prices and insecurity could prevent people to afford food from the markets while simultaneously preventing them from producing their own crops. This could lead to continued food insecurity even beyond the upcoming seasonal maize and sorghum harvests.<sup>12</sup>

### Protection

Perceptions of insecurity have largely increased at the state level from June to July, likely reflecting that June featured both a respite in conflict in the western bank as well as a generally calm south-eastern portion of the state, as opposed to July and August which were much more tense.

While in June 23% of the overall assessed settlements of Upper Nile reported that women never felt safe when moving outside of their houses, the figure rose to 45% in July (see Figure 2). A similar trend was reported for men,

**Figure 2: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting that women, men and children never feel safe, June-July 2017.**



with 22% of assessed settlements reporting that men never feel safe in June as opposed to 63% in July, as well as for children, where 33% reported that children never feel safe in June whereas the figure increased to 56% in July. In both July and August the main protection concern reported for children was abduction, which is driven by the widespread insecurity.

The counties where incidents were reported largely drove this upward trend - amongst counties that were assessed by REACH in July, perceptions of insecurity for women increased from 60% in June to 71% in Fashoda, with a marked increase in settlements reporting that sexual violence was the main protection concern for women in the area, from 31% in June to 64% in July. Perhaps associated with

12. FAO. GIEWS Update. 14 September 2017.

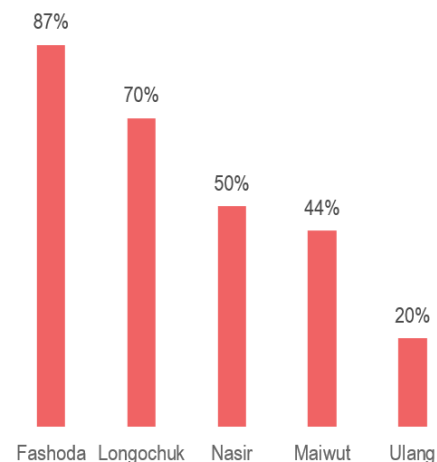
this perception of insecurity is that 67% of assessed settlements reported that relations between IDPs and host communities were poor in Fashoda in August, as opposed to other assessed counties reporting good relations.

Perception of insecurity also increased from 25% to 75% for men in Maiwut in July, with main reported concerns being largely associated to the ongoing conflict, namely forced recruitment and killing. Accordingly, the same trend was noted in Longochuk, which was affected by the same armed clashes and where the proportion of settlements reporting that men never feel safe increased from 7% in June to 57% in July.

### Shelter

In July, 60% of settlements assessed in Upper Nile reported that shelters had been destroyed

**Figure 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting shelter damage in Upper Nile by county, July 2017**



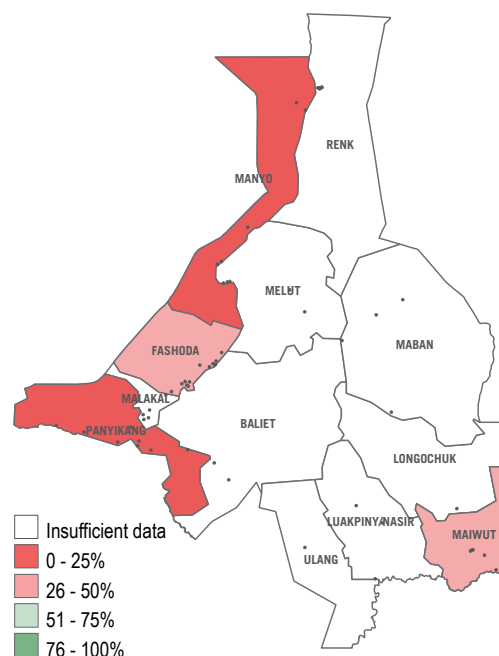
or damaged, including 70% of settlements assessed in Longochuk, which bore the brunt of armed clashes in that period (see Figure 3). Furthermore, 44% of assessed settlements of neighboring Maiwut reported shelter damage or destruction in July but this figure increased to 80% in August as armed clashes moved further down into Maiwut and toward Pagak. This increase is in line with the number of assessed settlements in these counties reporting an worsening of perceptions of safety and is reflective of ongoing security trends.

Most settlements assessed in Upper Nile reported that local communities were primarily living in tukuls in both July and August. The same was also reported for IDPs with the notable exception of Maiwut, in July, with 100% of IDP-hosting settlements reporting that IDPs were living in tents. This is reflective of IDPs that fled from Mathiang, in Longochuk, and settled in various areas of Maiwut County, mostly at the border with Ethiopia.

### Health

In July, access to healthcare services decreased in Upper Nile, with the proportion of assessed settlements reporting healthcare services to be available decreasing to 29% after the rate had remained stable (between 50% and 60%) over the past four months.

This overall decrease at the state level can partly be explained by the fact that the counties most assessed by REACH in July were largely located in the south-eastern portion of Upper Nile from where humanitarian actors were



**Map 4: Proportion of settlements reporting access to healthcare facilities, August 2017**

evacuated following clashes in Mathiang. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting that healthcare services were available in Longochuk county indeed decreased to 25% from 73% in June and 75% of those settlements reporting a lack of access to healthcare services specified that the destruction of facilities by conflict was the main explanation.

Access to healthcare facilities remained low in August in the counties of the western bank of the Nile, where only 25% of Panyikang settlements reported access to healthcare services, 31% of Fashoda settlements and 0% of Manyo settlements. In Manyo, the two main

reasons cited for lack of access to healthcare in August were that there were never facilities to begin with (50%) and that staff had left (50%). Lack of personnel because of displacement and delayed salaries is concurrent among all sectors (see the Education section below) and is indicative of a large portion of the civilian population still displaced outside of Manyo.

As malaria transmission is usually more active in the rainy season, malaria remained the most frequently cited health concern among assessed settlements (50% in July, 65% in August).

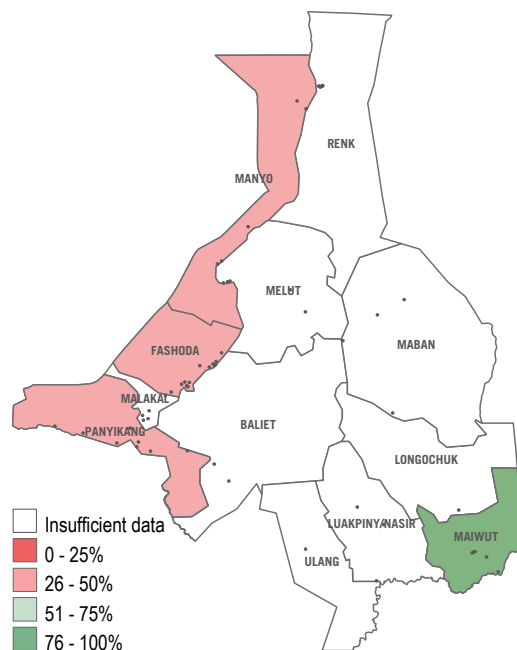
### WASH

In August the proportion of assessed settlements reporting open defecation to be common practice was very high in the assessed counties of the western bank of the Nile (80% in Manyo, 88% in Panyikang, 92% in Fashoda). High rates of open defecation remain a cause for concern given the ongoing cholera outbreak and proximity with the Nile which is a key point of active cholera transmission.<sup>13</sup> Humanitarian partners are currently actively working on cholera prevention in Melut, Maban and Renk, however no response appears to be ongoing in the western bank of the Nile.<sup>14</sup>

Access to clean water in Upper Nile has remained stable from June to July, with 80% of assessed settlements reporting access in the latter month. However, assessed settlements in the western bank of the Nile reported access to safe drinking water in lower proportions, which, coupled with the higher levels of

13. WHO. Cholera Response Updates. September 9th 2017.

14. Ibid.



**Map 5: Proportion of settlements reporting access to safe drinking water, August 2017**

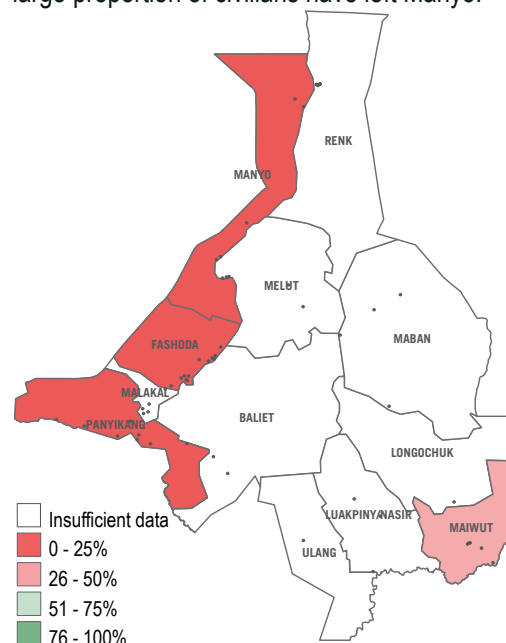
open defecation in these counties, increases vulnerability to cholera (see Map 5). In July, nearly all (94%) of assessed settlements were mainly drawing safe water from a borehole and with the exception of 15% of assessed settlements in Nasir County, all assessed settlements using a borehole reported that the borehole was located within a one hour walk.

## Education

Following improvements in levels of access to education in some areas of Upper Nile in June, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that education services were available decreased from 39% to 16% in July.

Destruction of facilities by conflict remained the most frequently cited reason for the lack of education services in all assessed counties except Maiwut and Ulang in July, where most settlements were reporting that facilities had never existed in the first place. However, in August, once again reflective of intensification of conflict in the area, the proportion of assessed settlement reporting that the main reason for the lack of education services was destruction by conflict reached 67% in Maiwut.

Manyo was the only county that reported the absence of teachers or displaced teachers as major reasons why education services were not accessible, which substantiates reports that a large proportion of civilians have left Manyo.



**Map 6: Proportion of settlements reporting access to education facilities, August 2017**

## Conclusion

Armed clashes affected service provision and access to food in many areas of Upper Nile in the period of July and August.

### Displacement overview

Following a respite in fighting along the western bank of the Nile around May and June, numerous insecurity related incidents have taken place across Upper Nile State and internal displacement within Upper Nile certainly increased although no official figures were available as of the end of August. In the south-eastern corner of the state, the period of relative stability seen over the past few months came to an end and fighting in July caused further displacement along the Sobat river and over the border into Ethiopia.<sup>15</sup>

### Priority needs and targeting of response

In conflict-affected Longochuk and Maiwut County, **declines in perception of safety and food access as well as in access to education and health services indicate that humanitarian needs have increased.** However, conflict is still largely preventing humanitarian actors from going back to the area.

At the same time as levels of adequate access to food have continued to decline as Upper Nile entered the last portion of the lean season, livelihood trends indicate worrying signs. It is questionable whether some counties will be able to replenish depleted crop reserves following the harvest season given damages reported to crops by pests and conflict, for example in

Manyo County where NGO KIs familiar with cultivation in the area estimated that up to 50% of crops may have been damaged.

In only a few months, South Sudan will be entering the dry season, when armed clashes typically intensify. Yet, insecurity is already on the rise in Upper Nile and the eruption of various security incidents, mainly in the southeastern counties but also in Maban, Fashoda and Manyo suggest that vulnerable populations may face increasing difficulties in accessing basic services.

### About REACH

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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