

# Humanitarian Situation Monitoring

## Western and Northern Bahr el Ghazal States South Sudan October - December 2020

**REACH** Informing more effective humanitarian action

### Introduction

The protracted humanitarian crisis in Western and Northern Bahr el Ghazal (WBeG and NBeG) States continued into the fourth quarter (Q4) of 2020 (October - December). Persistent climatic shocks combined with insecurity, poor harvest and high market prices have led to the early exhaustion of food stores creating a particularly difficult beginning to the dry season. As a result, host communities as well as internally displaced persons (IDPs)<sup>1</sup> were found to commonly rely on severe coping mechanisms, further compounding already difficult food security, health and WASH-related<sup>2</sup> challenges.

To inform humanitarian actors, REACH has conducted assessments of hard-to-reach areas of South Sudan since 2015. Data is collected on a monthly basis through interviews with key informants (KIs) with knowledge of a settlement and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This Situation Overview uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across WBeG and NBeG in the fourth quarter of 2020.

### Methodology

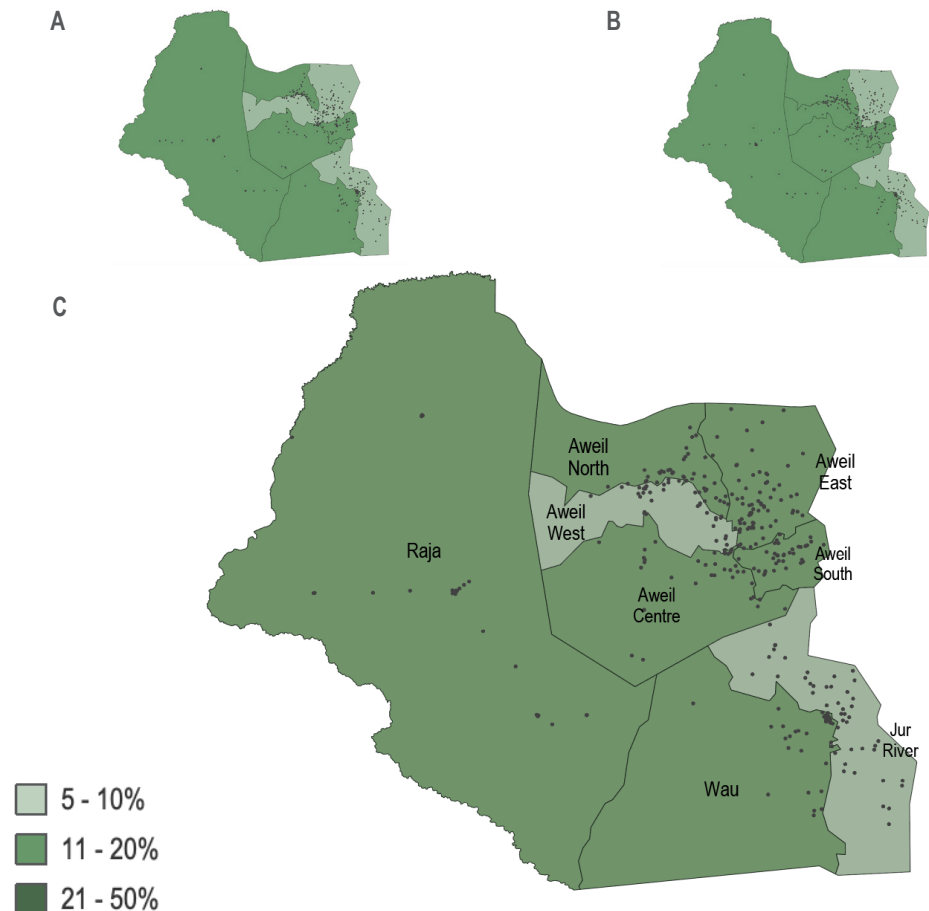
To provide an indicative overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Western Bahr el Ghazal State and Northern Bahr el Ghazal State, REACH conducts interviews with key informants (KIs) who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or “Area of Knowledge” (AoK). These interviews were conducted in the former protection of civilians (PoC) site, collective centres, and through phone calling throughout the reporting period. Findings should be considered indicative only of the situation in assessed settlements.

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.<sup>3</sup> 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<sup>4</sup> coverage over the period. Quantitative findings were triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs) and secondary sources. FGDs with people displaced from hard-to-reach areas in Northern Bahr el Ghazal State and Western Bahr el Ghazal State took place throughout October - December 2020.

More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Western and Northern Bahr-el Ghazal States, October (A), November (B) and December (C) 2020



# of key informant interviews conducted: **1052**  
# of assessed settlements: **745**  
# of counties covered: **8 (of 8)**  
# of focus group discussions conducted: **42**

1. IDPs defined as someone forced to flee their home, but remaining within his or her country's borders.

2. WASH - In reference to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene.

3. 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.

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

## Key Findings



**Population Movement and Displacement:** In WBeG, IDPs were reportedly driven to return home by perceptions of increased security in their area of origin. KIs reported the presence of IDP returnees in 72% of assessed settlements in December, remaining high and consistent with findings in September (73%), as many people reportedly continued to feel safe enough to return to their area of origin. Whilst in NBeG, population movement and displacement were reportedly driven by flooding and severe food insecurity as people sought higher ground and/or livelihood opportunities in urban centres of NBeG or further north to Sudan. In NBeG, KIs reported the presence of IDPs in 16% of assessed settlements in December, consistent with findings in September (13%).



**Food Security and Livelihoods:** Adequate access to food in WBeG and NBeG remained low despite improvements expected following the harvest season. Food insecurity was reportedly driven by the lack of harvested food stocks available, high market prices and the after-effects of severe drought and flooding. In only half of assessed settlements in WBeG State in December (53%), adequate access to food was reported, consistent with findings from September (52%). In NBeG State, KIs in only 29% of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food in December, which was again consistent with findings in September (30%).



**Protection:** Protection concerns reportedly remained high in WBeG and NBeG, and particularly in Jur River County. Overall in WBeG and NBeG, KIs in 42% of assessed settlements reported that people felt safe most of the time, consistent with findings in September (39%). However, in Jur River County, KIs in only 4% of assessed settlements reported that people felt safe most of the time, once again consistent with findings in September (6%). Feelings of insecurity in Jur River County were likely due to migrating pastoralist communities from neighbouring Warrap State engaging in competition for grazing land, leading to sub-national violence.<sup>5</sup>

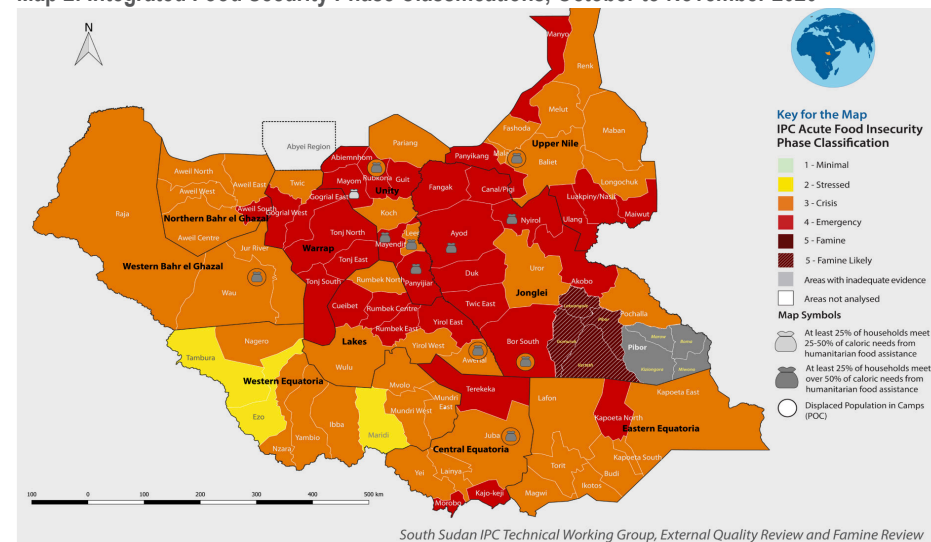


**Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Access to boreholes and clean water sources was reportedly limited for people in both WBeG and NBeG across the reporting period. KIs in 31% of assessed settlements reported in December that most people access water from unsafe sources,<sup>7</sup> consistent with findings in September (31%). This is reflected in the high proportion of settlements where KIs reported water borne diseases such as typhoid or diarrhea as one of their main health concerns (28% in December).



**Health:** Lack of access to health facilities persisted in WBeG and NBeG as people were reportedly unable to receive basic health care for curable illnesses. Across both states, KIs in 18% of assessed settlements reported that fever was the main cause of death,

Map 2: Integrated Food Security Phase Classifications, October to November 2020<sup>8</sup>



consistent with findings in September (18%). Furthermore, KIs in 35% of assessed settlements reported that it took over an hour to reach the nearest health facility by foot.



**Shelter/Non Food Items (NFI):** Insecurity in parts of WBeG, and flooding in NBeG has likely impeded access to adequate shelter and driven displacement throughout the fourth quarter as people sought access to refuge and services. In December, in 32% of assessed settlements in Jur River County, KIs reported that there had been incidents of property looting in the month prior to data collection. Whilst in 25% of assessed settlements in Aweil West and 22% in Aweil North, KIs reported that shelters had been washed away by flood waters.



**Education:** Education services (beginning with primary 1 and senior 4)\* have slowly begun to reopen over the course of the reporting period, following closures due to COVID-19 restrictions for most of the year.<sup>9</sup> In 63% of assessed settlements KIs reported that there were education services available within walking distance, a 40-percentage point increase since September (23%).



**Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP):** AoK findings throughout the reporting period indicate that there were considerable gaps in humanitarian service delivery across both WBeG and NBeG. In only 34% of the assessed settlements that had reportedly received humanitarian assistance in the six months prior to data collection in December (60%), KIs reported that people were generally satisfied with the assistance received, an 18 percentage point decrease since September (52%).

5. REACH seasonal cattle grazing areas map.

6. A borehole is a bored well used for drinking purposes.

7. Potentially unsafe water sources in this case are defined as coming from a pond, river, swamp, well or delivered by donkey.

8. Integrate Food Security Phase Classifications (IPC). South Sudan October 2020.

9. UNICEF and UNESCO 23 September 2020. [UNICEF and UNESCO welcome the decision to reopen schools in South Sudan.](#)

\* Primary 1 and Senior 4 are the first year of primary school and the last year of secondary school respectively.

## Population Movement and Displacement

Overall, the proportion of assessed settlements with reported IDP presence remained consistent between September (14%) and December (19%) across WBeG and NBeG. The primary push factors of displacement in WBeG were reportedly flooding and conflict (particularly in Jur River County); whilst in NBeG, findings indicate that push factors for IDPs were climate induced as people were reportedly displaced due to flooding, or poor harvests following a drought affected planting season.

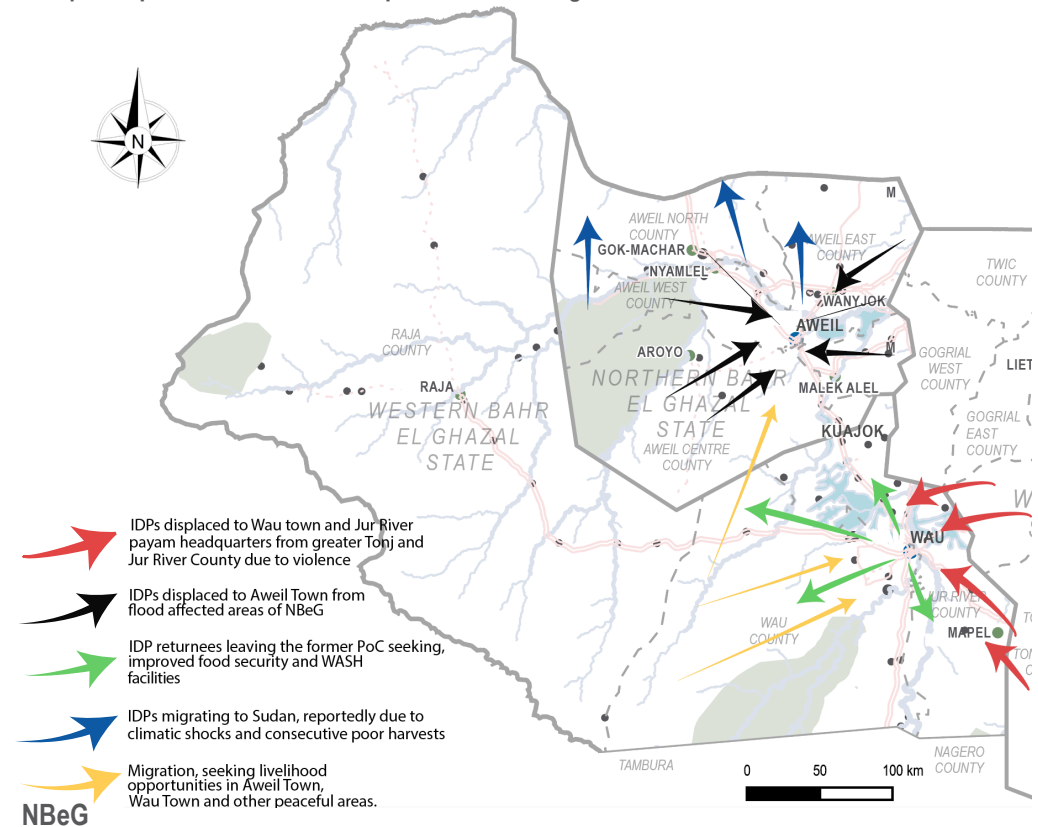
### WBeG

Sub-national conflict and insecurity continued to be a major push factor for IDPs from assessed settlements in Jur River County throughout the reporting period. In the majority of assessed settlements in Jur River County (67%), security was reported as the main pull factor for IDPs to travel to a new settlement in December. In FGDs conducted in the former Wau Town Protection of Civilians (PoC) site in November, participants recently displaced from Jur River County reported that many IDPs were fearful of travelling back to their settlement because of persisting insecurity.<sup>10</sup> Further, they reported that other IDPs had been displaced to payam headquarters,<sup>11</sup> such as Rocrocdong and Kuajjena centre (both major towns in Jur River County) due to perceived safety.

Following a reportedly poor harvest season, much displacement in Wau County was driven towards urban centres within the county and further on to Aweil Town. In 38% of assessed settlements, KIs reported that there were IDPs living in the settlement in December, an 18-percentage point increase since September (20%). In FGDs conducted with persons displaced from Wau County in December, participants reported that many people had left their settlements in search of better livelihood opportunities in areas that were perceived to be more peaceful, in particular urban centres such as Wau Town and Aweil Town.<sup>12</sup> This level of movement could be indicative of people willing to relocate to make up for harvest shortages as well as a result of easier routes between settlements, as the flood waters preventing transport in much of the state have gradually receded.

Due to reportedly poor conditions in the former PoC and collective centres of Wau Town, many IDPs made the difficult decision to return and rebuild, in hope of better food security and livelihood opportunities. Overall, the proportion of assessed settlements in WBeG where KIs reported the presence of IDP returnees continued to remain high and consistent between September (73%) and December (72%). FGD participants reported that, since June, many IDPs had made the decision to return as there was not enough food, land or adequate shelter in the former PoC.<sup>13</sup> The Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) found that displaced people and returnees living in urban settlements such as the former PoC site tend to have higher proportions of damaged shelters.<sup>14</sup> The deterioration of conditions in the former PoC site has likely prompted IDPs to feel they cannot stay safely where they are, but also do not feel safe to return home.

Map 3: Population Movement, Displacement and Migration in WBeG and NBeG, October - December



In NBeG, there were reportedly large-scale displacements throughout the reporting period due to climatic factors. Between October and December, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) reported that flooding in NBeG accounted for 31% of all displacements (an estimated 34,721 people) recorded across the country.<sup>15</sup> According to a [REACH](#) NBeG Climate Impact and Displacement profile conducted in December, drought, flooding or both had driven displacement for large parts of the year and up until the end of the reporting period.<sup>16</sup> In the worst affected counties of Aweil South and Aweil West, the proportion of assessed settlements where IDPs were reportedly present increased by 14 percentage-points between September (4%) and December (17%). It was reported in December that over 50,000 people in Aweil West alone had been affected by flooding.<sup>17</sup> Meanwhile, an Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA) conducted in October found that many displaced households in Aweil North were sleeping in the open on higher ground areas and roadsides following the flooding of the River Lol as it burst its banks.<sup>18</sup>

10. FGD, participants displaced from Jur River County to Wau Town, November.

11. Denotes the major town with the payam administrative area.

12. FGD with participants displaced from Wau County to Wau Town, December

13. FGD with participants displaced from Wau County to Wau Town, December

14. OCHA [Humanitarian Needs Overview](#) 2021

15. 12. IOM - DTM WBeG state event tracking [report](#), October - December

16. Climate focused FGDs with participants from NBeG in December

17. OCHA [Humanitarian Snapshot](#) December

18. ICWG, IRNA, Aweil North, October



Displaced households reportedly moved in search of improved shelter, food access, livelihood opportunities, and to access humanitarian assistance. According to FGD participants from each county of NBeG in December, the combined shocks of drought and flooding prompted displacement to other counties, and further north to the border town of Kiir Adem and into Sudan, as many households were facing food insecurity reportedly due to the aforementioned climatic shocks.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, FGD participants reported that the delivery of humanitarian assistance over the border in Sudan was perceived to be better, by people preparing to make the journey. When asked why this year was different to other years, participants reported that the combination of the drought in June-July, which delayed planting, and the heavy rains in August-September, which destroyed much of the immature harvest, had greatly affected crop production and access to food. It was also mentioned that households would have moved earlier but were unable to travel due to the flood waters cutting off roads and COVID-19 travel restrictions. Households were reportedly able to cope by finding alternative food sources via fishing and foraging for wild food.

Unless the food security and WASH situation were to improve in NBeG, findings from FGDs conducted in December suggest that movements (often of entire communities) to Sudan are likely to continue particularly amongst vulnerable households with the ability to make the journey. Whilst other households with elderly or disabled members, which are less able to move to access livelihoods may be unable to travel and therefore even more vulnerable.<sup>20</sup>

## Food Security and Livelihoods

Overall in WBeG and NBeG, security concerns, climatic shocks and poor harvest seasons reportedly limited access to food during the reporting period. In December, KIs from 34% of assessed settlements across the region reported that people were able to access enough food, which is relatively consistent with findings from September (40%). These findings are in line with the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification's (IPC) report which found the entirety of WBeG to be in IPC – Phase 3 (Crisis), including 69,000 people in Phase 4 (Emergency). Whilst in NBeG, the IPC found most of the state to be in IPC – Phase 3 (Crisis), including the entirety of Aweil South County and a further 151,000 people state wide to be in Phase 4 (Emergency).<sup>21</sup> Correspondingly, in FGDs held in October, participants from both WBeG and NBeG reported that food insecurity was the most significant challenge faced by people in both states.<sup>22</sup>

### WBeG

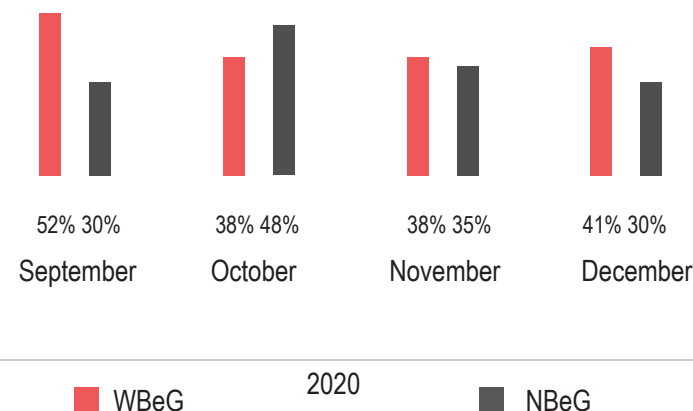
In Jur River County, findings suggest a slight improvement in access to food, likely due to the harvesting of late maturing crops, particularly in the northern payams of the County, where less insecurity was reported. KIs in 57% of assessed settlements reported that most people were not able to access enough food in the month of December, a notably high proportion for this time of

year but a slight improvement since September (67%). KIs in 98% of assessed settlements in Jur River County reported cultivation as their main source of food, a 15-percentage point increase since September.

However, even with harvest yields from late maturing crops, AoK findings suggest that assessed settlements in Jur River County were facing considerable food security and livelihood challenges. In assessed settlements where KIs reported insufficient access to food in December (57%), the main barriers to accessing enough food were reportedly that the previous harvest was exhausted (17%) and having a large family and not enough food to adequately feed all members (17%). This harvest shortage in the county was likely due to insecurity, as FGD participants from Jur River County reported that continuing sub-national violence was affecting food security and livelihood opportunities, as cattle and livestock had been stolen and opportunities for work in the markets had become severely limited.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, participants reported that many people in settlements of Jur River County did not have access to land for cultivation, nor could they safely forage for wild food due to insecurity and fear of killings. This situation is likely to persist into the dry season as [REACH](#) seasonal cattle grazing mapping indicates that migrating cattle keepers from neighbouring Warrap State will move into areas of Jur River County, potentially further increasing tensions and putting pressure on limited resources.<sup>24</sup>

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements in WBeG and NBeG where adequate access to food was reported, September - December 2020.

**34%** of assessed settlements reportedly had adequate access to food across Western and Northern Bahr el Ghazal States in December 2020.



19. Climate focused FGDs with participants from NBeG in December

20. Climate focused FGDs with participants from NBeG in December

21. Integrated Food Security Phase Classifications (IPC), South Sudan October 2020.

22. AAP focused FGDs with Participants from WBeG and NBeG in October

23. FGD Participants displaced from Jur River County to Wau Town, November

24. [REACH](#) seasonal cattle grazing areas map.

Findings suggest that, in both Wau and Raja Counties, the food security situation deteriorated throughout the reporting period likely due to a lower than expected harvest yield, combined with the continuing fluctuation of the South Sudanese Pound driving up the price of food and other goods in the market.<sup>25</sup> In 53% of settlements in Wau County, KIs reported that most people were able to access enough food in the month of December, whilst in only 22% of assessed settlements in Raja County, KIs reported that most people were able to access enough food in December, representing approximately a 20 per cent decrease in each county since September. In an FGD conducted in December, participants recently displaced from Wau County suggested that the current food security situation was due to a combination of consecutive poor harvests and high prices of goods in the market, as a result of inaccessible trade routes limiting supply.<sup>26</sup> A trade union representative from Wau County reported that taxation and checkpoints along trade routes were driving up market prices and as many goods in Raja County come from Wau, these expenses were likely to be driving up the price of goods in Raja County.<sup>27,\*</sup>

Both Wau and Raja Counties seemingly continued to experience high prices in the market throughout the reporting period severely affecting the purchasing power of many people who rely on market goods, particularly following a poor harvest season. In Raja County, in assessed settlements where KIs reported insufficient access to food in December (78%), the main barriers to accessing enough food were reportedly the ending of food distributions (38%) and high prices in the market (19%), indicating that there is a reliance on markets and humanitarian assistance in

Figure 2: The main reported reasons why people could not access enough food, by % of assessed settlements in WBeG and NBeG where inadequate access to food was reported in December 2020.<sup>28</sup>

	Jur River	Raja	Wau	WBeG	Aweil Centre	Aweil East	Aweil North	Aweil South	Aweil West	NBeG
Flooding/heavy rains	2%	0%	0%	1%	5%	20%	17%	14%	31%	18%
Crops destroyed by conflict	11%	0%	2%	5%	5%	8%	10%	5%	5%	7%
Harvest exhausted	17%	3%	6%	9%	19%	6%	13%	5%	16%	11%
High food prices	0%	19%	57%	26%	3%	1%	3%	0%	3%	2%
Family too large	17%	22%	4%	14%	0%	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%
Lack of rain	2%	0%	0%	1%	24%	18%	28%	41%	13%	24%
Food distribution stopped	15%	39%	11%	20%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

order to access enough food. As such, in 33% of assessed settlements in Raja and 64% in Wau County, KIs reported that most people bought their food in December, corresponding with the main sources of food FGD participants reported during consumer focused FGDs conducted in Raja in December.<sup>29</sup> The REACH Joint Market Monitoring Initiative ([JMMI](#)) found increases in the price of the multi-sectoral survival minimum expenditure basket (MSSMEB) in both Raja County (17% in Deim Zeiber and 8% in Raja town) and Wau County (18%) from November to December, and in fact in Wau County this represents an almost doubling of market prices (93% increase) compared to the same time last year.<sup>30</sup> High market prices have drastically decreased households purchasing power, and consequently people have reportedly had to resort to severe consumption coping strategies at a time of year when they would normally have food stores from the harvest.

NBeG

Access to food continued to deteriorate across NBeG throughout the fourth quarter as people across the state experienced the effects of a climate-affected growing season. In 23% of assessed settlements where inadequate food was reported (70%), KIs reported that the main barrier was drought, followed by a short growing season (14%), crops having been destroyed by flooding (13%), and exhaustion of the previous harvest (11%) (see figure 2 for a full breakdown of food access barriers in December by county and state). In climate focused FGDs conducted in Aweil North in December, participants reported that drought severely impacted agricultural output whereby conditions during the typical April-June cultivation were too arid leading to delayed planting of key crops.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, the dry conditions also impacted the availability of wild food commonly used to supplement meals, particularly during the lean season. Periods of drought, late rains and flooding led to essential cereal crops (largely sorghum as NBeG is located in the Western flood plain of South Sudan) and short crops, such as groundnuts and sesame, being washed away in the second half of 2020, according to FGD participants. Irregular climate and weather events have likely led to the reported early depletion of food stocks, which were expected to last until June/July of 2021, prompting a potentially severe food security situation across the state.<sup>32</sup>

Across NBeG, AoK findings suggest that the early depletion of food stores has severely affected severity of hunger and level of dependance on humanitarian aid. In assessed settlements where KIs reported insufficient access to food (70%), KIs in three quarters of these settlements (75%) reported that hunger was severe for most people, a 16-percentage point increase since September (59%). Participants from an FGD conducted in Aweil South in October, reported that normally they would not be facing this level of food insecurity and lack of access to livelihood opportunities at this time of year, however this year there are entire communities dependent on humanitarian food assistance (HFA) for survival.<sup>33</sup> Participants from AAP focused FGDs suggested that due to the volatility of the markets and continued inflation of the South Sudanese Pound, in-kind assistance

25. [Bloomberg](#) - "South Sudan currency crisis sees shops close as prices surge."  
26. FGD with participants displaced from Wau County to Wau Town, December.  
27. Expert key informant Interview conducted in Raja County in December.  
28. Note that not all possible responses are represented, only the most common.  
29. Market Focused FGDs with participants from Raja County in December.  
30. REACH [JMMI](#), December 1-7.  
31. Climate focused FGDs with participants from NBeG in December  
32. Coping strategies include reducing meals, skipping days and only children eat.  
33. Climate focused FGDs with participants from NBeG in December  
\* REACH Raja market assessment expected to be published in May 2021

may be preferred as a modality as opposed to cash, as cash is not useful in increasingly expensive markets or if there is little supply of goods.<sup>34</sup>

Findings indicate that consumption and livelihood coping strategies were being employed across NBeG in order to cope with the diminishing food stores and lack of livelihood opportunities. In 65% of assessed settlements in NBeG, reducing the number of meals in a day was reported as a consumption coping strategy in December, consistent with findings in September (60%). Whilst in 22% of assessed settlements in NBeG adults forgoing meals so that only their children eat was also reported as a consumption coping strategy in December. In addition, in FGDs conducted in NBeG in October, participants reported that many people were migrating to Aweil Centre in search of livelihood opportunities, particularly to urban centres, such as Aweil town.<sup>35</sup>

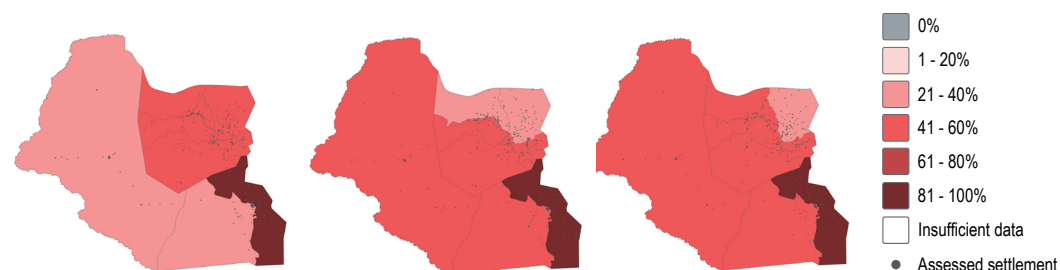
Compounding climatic shocks (drought, late rain, heavy rain and flooding) throughout 2020, and consecutive poor harvest seasons, have reportedly impacted and likely led to a deterioration of food security and livelihood opportunities. The Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWSNET) have reported that severe food security outcomes are likely throughout much of 2021,<sup>36</sup> with projections in Aweil South East and North particularly worrying having been classified in IPC-Phase 4 (emergency) for December 2020 to March 2021.<sup>37</sup>

## Protection

Protection and insecurity concerns have persisted in WBeG State, particularly in Jur River County, throughout Q4. In 96% of assessed settlements in Jur River County, KIs reported that most people felt unsafe most of the time in December, consistent with findings in September (94%). In addition, in 80% of assessed settlements, KIs reported that conflict or looting had an impact on the ability for most people to access enough food in December, a slight reduction since September (92%), but still very high. In FGDs conducted in November and December, participants recently displaced from Jur River County indicated that they had been cut off from livelihood opportunities and are unable to employ coping mechanisms such as collecting wild food as it is too unsafe to do so. Participants also indicated that they were expecting an increase in insecurity over the coming months due to cattle migration.<sup>40</sup> As a result, it is likely that there are populations in Jur River County facing deteriorating food security outcomes whilst not being able to travel due to security fears.

In Wau and Raja Counties, the proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported that most people felt safe most of the time decreased from 71% in September to 43% in December, likely due to the beginning of the dry season prompting cattle migration and increasing fears of potential sub-national violence and disputes over grazing land.<sup>38</sup> The threat of insecurity has likely impacted food security outcomes as well; in FGDs held with recently displaced persons from Raja county in

**Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements where it was reported that most people were not feeling safe most of the time, October, November and December 2020**



December, participants reported that the threat of violence (killing, looting, raping) was preventing people from engaging in food security and livelihood activities in the months prior to data collection.<sup>39</sup>

AoK Findings indicate that the former PoC site, Hai Masna, and other collective sites for IDPs in Wau Town are perceived to be unsafe by people who live in these areas. In FGDs held in the former PoC and Hai Masna in December, participants in nine out of ten FGDs reported that they generally felt unsafe and at high risk of looting by armed groups.<sup>41</sup> FGD participants also reported that these feelings of insecurity were linked to uncertainty over the re-designation of the PoC to an IDP camp, many people reportedly preferred to leave, however, often lacked livelihood opportunities in their home settlements and the financial resources to do so.<sup>42</sup>

Perceptions of safety across NBeG remained stable throughout the reporting period, a rather notable finding in a traditionally pastoralist state, where conflict was expected to increase heading into the dry season. KIs in 49% of assessed settlements reported that most people felt safe most of the time in December, consistent with findings in September (43%). In FGDs conducted in October, participants from Aweil East and South reported that there were no problems of livestock or cattle raiding in the settlement and people were mostly able to travel and move freely.<sup>43</sup>

## WASH

Findings suggest that WASH needs have remained high throughout the reporting period in both WBeG and NBeG as flooding and insecurity has likely affected access to clean water facilities. KIs in 25% of assessed settlements reported that people in WBeG and NBeG did not have access to a borehole in their settlement in December, which is consistent with findings in September (24%). Furthermore, KIs in 24% of assessed settlements reported the use of unimproved water sources. It

34. AAP focused FGDs with Participants from WBeG in December

35. FGD Participants from Aweil east and South, October

36. FEWSNET food security predictions.

37. Integrated Food Security Phase Classifications (IPC), South Sudan October 2020.

38. REACH seasonal cattle grazing areas map.

39. FGD with participants displaced from Raja County to Wau Town, December.

40. FGD with participants displaced from Jur River County to Wau Town, November and December

41. AAP focused FGDs with Participants from WBeG in December

42. UNMISS press release detailing the PoC transitions

43. FGD Participants from Aweil east and South, October



is possible that the use of unimproved water sources is largely due to access constraints; KIs in 22% of assessed settlements in Aweil Centre and 23% in Jur River County reported that it took people over one hour to reach their preferred water source. FGD participants from both WBeG and NBeG reported throughout the fourth quarter that latrines, hand pumps, and boreholes damaged during the flooding have largely not been repaired, likely resulting in people drinking from unsafe sources (see figure 3 for a full breakdown of water sources) and not maintaining safe hygiene practices, possibly leading to negative health outcomes such as typhoid or diarrhoea (see Health section).<sup>44</sup>

**Figure 3: Proportion of assessed settlements where it was reported that most people were using an unimproved water source, December 2020**<sup>45</sup>

	Jur River	Raja	Wau	WBeG	Aweil Centre	Aweil East	Aweil North	Aweil South	Aweil West	NBeG
Borehole	36%	83%	21%	44%	57%	77%	95%	76%	78%	79%
Donkey Cart	0%	0%	45%	15%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Pond	19%	0%	6%	9%	14%	3%	3%	5%	6%	6%
River	6%	0%	4%	4%	0%	3%	3%	0%	6%	2%
Well	28%	11%	15%	18%	24%	7%	0%	14%	3%	9%

In addition to difficulties with accessing clean water, open defecation was commonly reported throughout the reporting period in both WBeG and NBeG. Across both states, in half (53%) of assessed settlements, KIs reported that people were not using latrines at all, consistent with findings in September (61%). The main reasons for open defecation reported by KIs in assessed settlements were that there were no latrines available (58%) and overcrowding of latrines (22%), which is also consistent with findings in September (61% and 20% respectively).

Challenges with maintaining hygiene levels continue to be complicated by high prices of essential NFIs such as soap in the markets.<sup>46</sup> KIs in only 30% of assessed settlements reported that people were using soap to wash their hands in December, consistent with findings in September (34%). Alternatives to washing hands with soap being used were, only water (35% of assessed settlements), ash (14%) and sand (9%). Furthermore, KIs in 98% of assessed settlements reported that most people had heard of the virus COVID-19 and in 93% most people reportedly knew how to

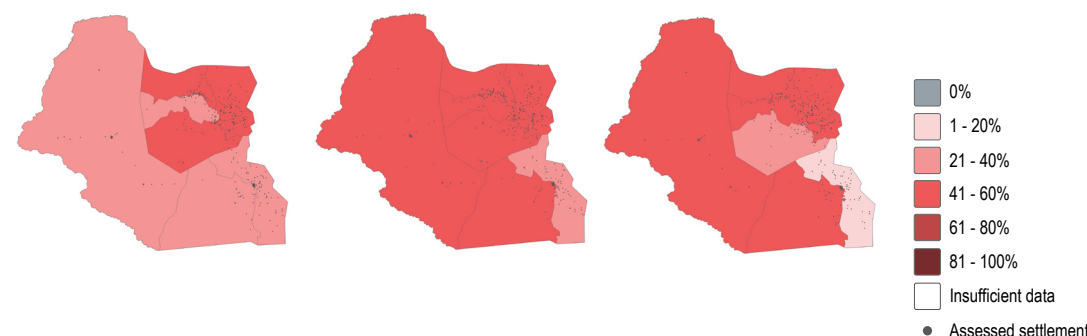
protect themselves, suggesting that people were unable to purchase soap, likely because of the aforementioned high prices and more pressing food security and livelihood needs.



Health problems appear to have continued in WBeG and NBeG throughout the reporting period as food security, livelihood and WASH challenges likely impacted people's ability to access medical facilities, care and appropriate medicine. Violence and flooding damaged existing health facilities in 2020, making it much harder for already vulnerable people to access essential health services, with WBeG and NBeG reportedly amongst the worst affected states.<sup>47</sup> In December, KIs from assessed settlements in both states reported that the main barriers to accessing health care were facilities being too far away (10%) or out of medicine (18%) in December, consistent with findings in September (20% and 12%). Despite this, having moved into the dry season, the proportion of assessed settlements where it took over one hour to reach health facilities reportedly reduced, with KIs in 34% of assessed settlements across both states reporting that it took most people over one hour to reach health facilities by foot in December, a decrease since September (49%).

Due to compounding climatic shocks leading to poor food security outcomes over the course of 2020 common and preventable diseases have likely led to severely negative health outcomes in both WBeG and NBeG. Across both states, KIs in 18% of assessed settlements reported that fever was the main cause of death, consistent with findings in September (18%). Additionally, in three FGDs held throughout the reporting period, participants from both WBeG and NBeG reported perceiving that curable diseases such as malaria and typhoid were among the highest causes of morbidity.<sup>48</sup>

**Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements where malaria was perceived to be the most common health concern, October, November and December 2020**



Furthermore, in addition to malaria (40% of assessed settlements), KIs in 16% of assessed settlements across both states reported that typhoid appeared to be the most common health problem, likely due to the reported difficulties with accessing clean, potable water. In FGDs held in the former Wau PoC site in December, participants reported that accessing healthcare was one of their main challenges, as they did not have the financial means to fill prescriptions or purchase medicine from pharmacies.<sup>49</sup>

## Shelter/ NFI

Accessing adequate shelter and essential NFIs continued to be difficult for people in both WBeG and NBeG throughout the reporting period. Conflict in Jur River County, overcrowding in IDP sites in Wau County and flooding in most of NBeG have resulted in considerable shelter and NFI needs. In an FGD conducted with recently displaced people from Jur River County in November, participants reported that many shelters in their settlements had been burned during conflict, which was also the reported main reason why they cannot return to their settlements of origin.<sup>50</sup> Across all counties in NBeG besides Aweil Centre, KIs reported in December that in 21% of assessed settlements previous flood waters had washed away shelters likely leading to the aforementioned displacement to urban centres, such as Wau and Aweil Towns, and across the border into Sudan.

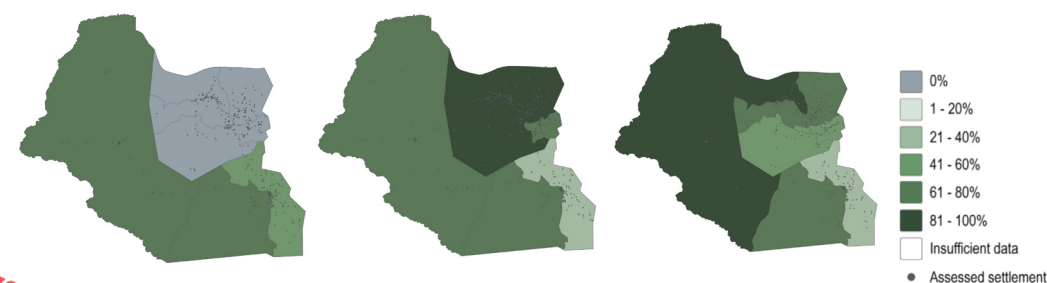
In the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), WBeG was state identified with the highest proportion of shelter damage across the country, with IDPs and returnees living in camp settings or small urban settlements reportedly facing higher shelter damage ratios.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, in FGDs conducted in the former Wau PoC site in December, participants reported that shelters had not been repaired in years, their grass roofs have deteriorated and tarpaulin walls and lack of doors and locks are a major security concern.<sup>52</sup>

The continued rise of the prices of goods in the market have made essential NFIs, needed in order to repair shelters, inaccessible for the most vulnerable people. Furthermore, it was reported that vulnerable people country-wide were the least likely to be able to access and afford essential NFIs in the markets as they had to prioritise money for food.<sup>53</sup> In an FGD conducted in the former Wau PoC in November, participants from Jur River County reported that their main shelter type was plastic sheeting and that they had no access to essential NFIs in the market.<sup>54</sup> These living conditions, where shelters could not be fixed or repaired due to prices in the market, continued to be a major concern for IDPs living in the former Wau Town PoC as well as collective centres and settlements across the region.

## Education

Education services gradually became available again throughout the reporting period as schools and universities reopened following the lifting of some COVID-19 restrictions.<sup>55</sup> In 63% of assessed settlements KIs reported that there were education services available within walking distance, a 40-percentage point increase since September (23%). However, challenges with accessing education seemingly persisted due to a lack of facilities, as well as teachers and students not returning to their studies. In assessed settlements in WBeG and NBeG, where KIs reported that education was not available (33%), the main barriers reported were lack of, or very poor quality facilities (44%), not enough students (19%), and COVID-19 restrictions (11%). In FGDs conducted in both states, participants reported that, normally (without COVID-19 restrictions), the main barriers preventing boys from attending school were joining armed forces and helping their families find food, whilst for girls, the main barriers were helping their families find food, looking for casual labour and early marriage.<sup>56</sup>

**Map 6: Proportion of assessed settlements where it was reported that people were able to reach education services by foot, October, November and December 2020**



## Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

The low proportion of assessed settlements reportedly having received humanitarian assistance, combined with high humanitarian needs across the region may be cause for concern unless there is a scale up in targeted assistance in 2021. KIs from only a third (34%) of settlements where humanitarian assistance had reportedly been received in the six months prior to data collection in December, reported that people were generally satisfied with the assistance received, an 18 percentage point decrease since September (52%). In WBeG, KIs in only 18% of assessed settlements in December reported receiving humanitarian assistance in the last 6 months, including only 9% in Jur River County. This is likely due to the ongoing sub-national violence and considerable security challenges impeding access to humanitarian actors. Participants from AAP focused FGDs

49. AAP focused FGDs with Participants from WBeG in December

50. FGD with participants displaced from Jur River County to Wau Town, November

51. OCHA [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021](#)

52. AAP focused FGDs with Participants from WBeG in December

53. OCHA [Humanitarian Needs Overview 2021](#)

54. FGD with participants displaced from Jur River County to Wau Town, November.

55. UNICEF and UNESCO 23 September 2020. [UNICEF and UNESCO welcome the decision to reopen schools in South Sudan.](#)

56. FGDs held with participants from WBeG and NBeG October - December



conducted in Wau Town in October reported that, whilst some humanitarian assistance has been received, it is not enough to meet their most important needs. Furthermore, it was mentioned that targeting for eligibility was ineffective, with participants indicating that some of the most vulnerable people were not receiving assistance at all.<sup>57</sup>

Changes in the administration of collective sites and information sharing practices were reportedly having a negative impact on attitudes towards humanitarian actors. FGD participants from AAP focused FGDs conducted in December reported that they were worried about the re-designation of the PoC to an IDP camp and the potential ramifications that could have on security in the site as well as the regularity of food distributions. Furthermore, participants reported that they would like to be better informed about humanitarian services, explaining that they were notified only shortly before food distribution, and that delays or suspension of services were not communicated beforehand.<sup>58</sup> Participants in AAP themed FGDs conducted in December, reported that they felt as though only local leaders were able to contact NGOs in order to speak, or make complaints, on behalf of community members. Whilst some participants preferred this method others would like to explore alternative channels of communication that do not involve people in leadership positions.<sup>59</sup> In NBeG, findings suggest that there was a considerable humanitarian response to the climatic shocks faced in the state throughout 2020. KIs from 85% of assessed settlements in NBeG reported that they had received humanitarian assistance within the last six months in December, consistent with findings from September (89%). However despite the assistance

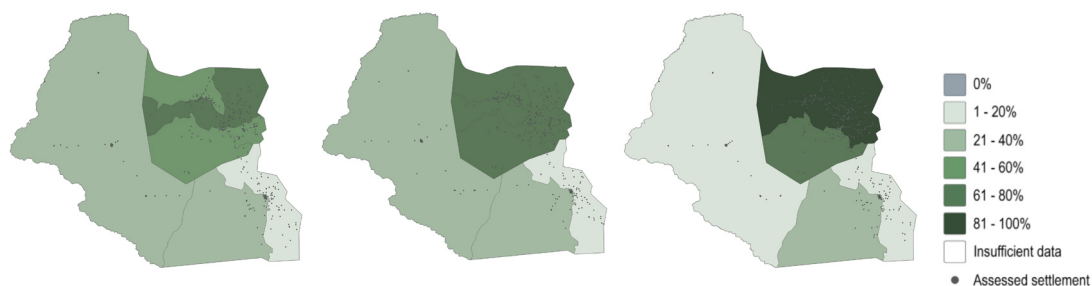
provided, gaps in services still exist in NBeG; 54% of KIs in assessed settlements in NBeG reported that food and livelihood assistance was the most needed, followed by WASH assistance (12%) and health assistance (7%) in December.

## Conclusion

Findings suggest that the humanitarian situation in WBeG and NBeG has not improved as would normally be expected at this time of year. Compounding shocks such as consecutive poor harvests, climatic shocks (particularly NBeG), sub-national violence (particularly Jur River County) and the high prices of goods in the market will likely lead to the early exhaustion of food stores and higher, irregular usage of livelihood and food consumption coping mechanisms. Furthermore, without assistance, poor access to WASH facilities combined with poor dietary diversity/reduced food consumption will likely negatively effect health and nutrition.

With roads much more accessible and trade routes opening due to the drying of flood waters, it is expected that increased connectivity might ease prices in the markets and give humanitarian actors an opportunity to deliver services where they are needed the most.

**Map 7: Proportion of assessed settlements where humanitarian assistance had reportedly been received in the six months prior to data collection, October, November and December 2020**



## 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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