

# Situation Overview: Western Equatoria, South Sudan

April - June 2018

**REACH** An initiative of  
IMPACT Initiatives  
ACTED and UNOSAT

## Introduction

Following the outbreak of violence in Juba in early 2016, the conflict in South Sudan and especially the Greater Equatoria region (Western, Central and Eastern Equatoria states) escalated. Many areas of Western Equatoria State are largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors due to insecurity. As a result, only limited information is available on the humanitarian situation outside of a few large towns and displacement sites.

In order to fill these information gaps and facilitate humanitarian programming, REACH began collecting monthly data on hard-to-reach areas in Western Equatoria from June 2017 through interviews with Key Informants (KIs).

Between April and June 2018, data was collected through KI interviews, which were conducted in person in Yambio town who had

**Map 1: Counties in Western Equatoria, June 2018.**



direct or remote knowledge of the situation in a hard-to-reach settlement of Western Equatoria. From April to June 2018, REACH interviewed 242 KIs who had knowledge about 193 settlements in all ten counties of Western Equatoria State (Map 1).

Findings were triangulated with 2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and secondary data, including other assessments conducted by REACH in Western Equatoria State over the reporting period. Map 2 also highlights the assessment coverage attained for Western Equatoria during this quarter.

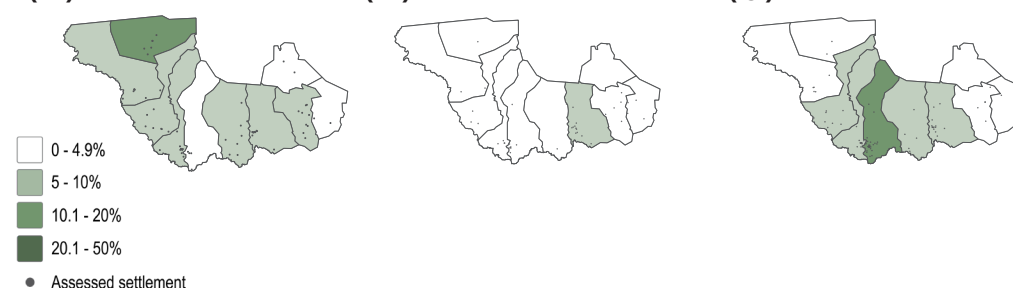
This Situation Overview provides a summary of displacement trends in addition to access to food and basic services for both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host communities across Western Equatoria State from April to June 2018. The following analysis will summarise the data and trends among the ten counties of Western Equatoria State.

## Population Movement and Displacement

During the second quarter of 2018, insecurity and armed clashes have restricted the movement of people and humanitarian actors across much of Western Equatoria.

Despite the risks associated with travel, recent clashes have caused numerous sites of new displacement, especially in the counties of

**Map 2: REACH assessment coverage of Western Equatoria, April (A), May (B) and June 2018 (C).**



Nagero and Tambura, which indicates a deterioration from the previous reporting period (January - March 2018).

The security situation also worsened in the western portion of Western Equatoria, with numerous reports of abductions and crime-related insecurity in Maridi, Mundri West and Mundri East.<sup>1</sup>

Humanitarian access has also been detrimentally impacted as a result of increasing incidents of crime-related insecurity, such as abductions, robberies and ambushes on the roads leading to Yambio town. Furthermore, some of these incidents specifically targeted humanitarian workers, including detentions and looting of aid supplies.<sup>2</sup>

This was especially the case on the main road to Tambura and the road heading east from Yambio to Maridi, Mundri East and Mundri West, which makes the situation even worse for the newly displaced.

## Ongoing and New Displacement

In June, 55% of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs (as seen in Figure 1), which is a slight decline from 66% in April, though still remains high.

Insecurity continues to drive ongoing displacement and create new sites of displacement to a degree which was not reported in the previous reporting period.

## Displacement from Nagero

During the months of April and May, insecurity and conflict in Nagero were the main causes of mass displacement from Nagero County to Bazia in Western Bahr el Ghazal and Tambura town, where there are approximately 10,123 IDPs (1,613 households) in the town.<sup>3</sup>

The situation has worsened as the humanitarian response has been impeded by multiple ambushes, detentions and abductions of aid workers on the main road from Yambio to Tambura. However, after the result of an

1. The Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project (ACLED). Political Violence and Protest Data - South Sudan. June 2018.

2. OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin South Sudan, Issue 5, 23 May 2018.

3. IRNA Fact Finding Mission, Tambura Assessment, June 2018.

## METHODOLOGY

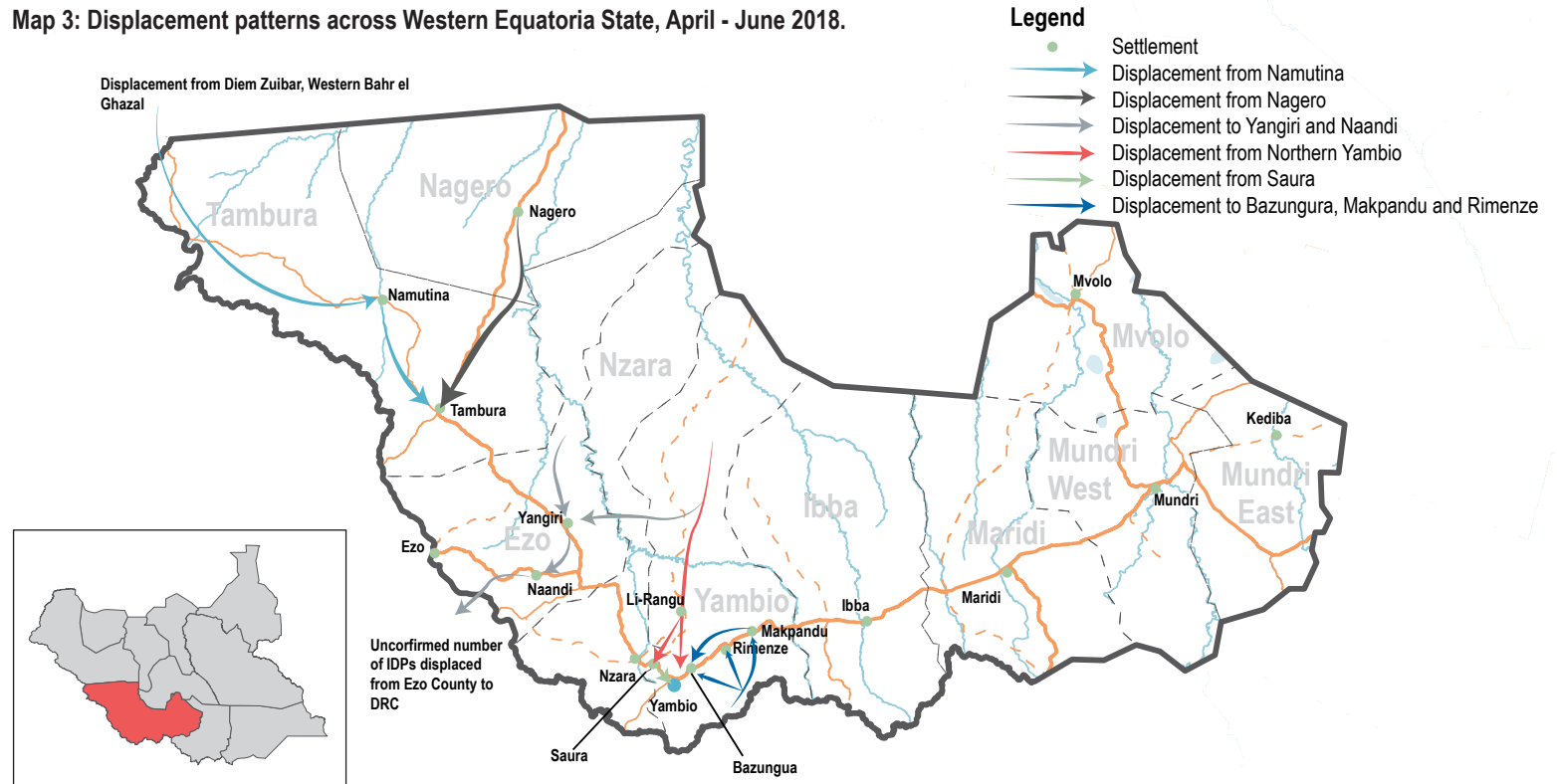
To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas of Western Equatoria, REACH uses primary data provided by KIs who are living in or have recently arrived from these areas, or “Areas of Knowledge” (AoK).

Information for this report was collected primarily through direct in-person interviews with KIs in Yambio town who had recent knowledge of the situation in a settlement of Western Equatoria, and supplemented with phone call interviews conducted out of Juba with KIs who were in a settlement of interest. The KIs contacted for the phone interviews were selected through a snowball sampling technique, where each KI was asked to name two additional people who could be interviewed.

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of settlements for a given month were included in the analysis. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month vary. Thus, some changes over time reported in this situation overview might be due to variations in coverage.

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, it was not included in reporting. Descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis were then used to analyse the data.

Map 3: Displacement patterns across Western Equatoria State, April - June 2018.



inter-agency needs assessment and access negotiations, humanitarian actors have been able to reach Tambura town to provide lifesaving assistance to 2,000 households.<sup>4</sup>

### Displacement from Namutina, Tambura

As previously mentioned in the REACH January-March Greater Equatoria Situation Overview, there was displacement from Deim Zubier in Western Bahr el Ghazal State to Namutina.<sup>5</sup> As a result of further insecurity and conflict during April and May, there has also been additional displacement, which has forced IDPs staying in Namutina to move to Tambura town and the surrounding areas.<sup>6</sup>

### Displacement to Yangiri and Naandi

Yangiri, Ezo County, has also been a site of newly arrived IDPs where people have fled from Northern Yambio, such as Nadiangere, and the countryside of Ezo as a result of insecurity and armed clashes. IDPs were reportedly mainly staying in the compounds of churches.<sup>7</sup> However, as seen on Map 3, IDPs also moved from Yangiri to Naandi (Ezo County), where there are approximately 976 IDPs, which were recorded as of 14<sup>th</sup> June.<sup>8</sup>

These IDPs reportedly fled due to insecurity around Yangiri. During June, it was even reported that some households were relocating

from Naandi and moving to the Democratic Republic of Congo in order to seek a safer location.<sup>9</sup>

### Displacement from Northern and Southern Yambio

Recent armed clashes in April and May also caused new displacement from Saura to Ngandi, Nabanga, Akorni and Gangura

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP presence, June 2018.



4. OCHA, Humanitarian Snapshot South Sudan, June 2018.

5. REACH, Deim Zubier Displacement Brief, April 2018.

6. OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin South Sudan, Issue 6, 16 July 2018.

7. Humanitarian Coordination Forum, Yambio, June 2018.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

Emilla, which is a settlement of Yambio town. According to FGD participants from Saura, most of the 3,000 IDPs in Saura have left the area. There were also a reported number of IDPs that had been displaced from Li-Rangu.<sup>10</sup>

Most of the IDPs from Saura sought refuge in Gangura Emilia, but the main challenges have been the lack of shelter and food. In addition, some IDPs from Saura were also reportedly staying in church buildings of Yambio town as they are perceived to be the safest locations within the town, which is also the case in Naandi and Yangiri.<sup>11</sup>

In May, armed clashes in Nadiangere and Li-Rangu (Yambio County) also caused displacement from these areas to Yambio town and the surrounding area.

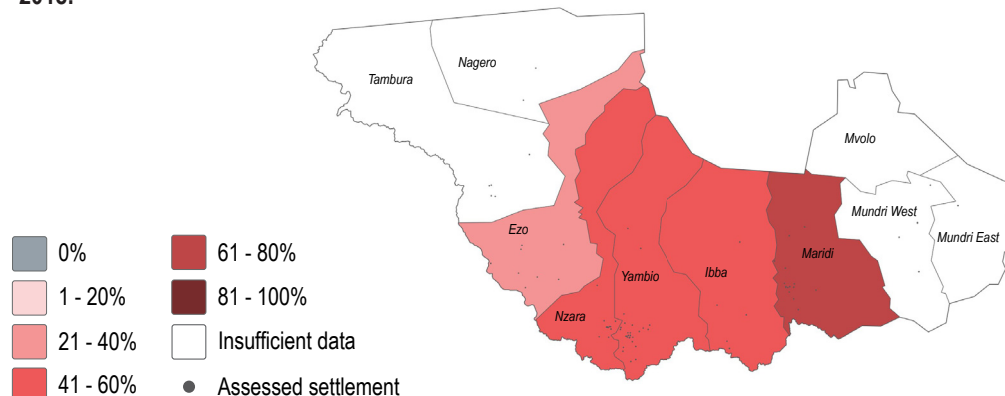
### Displacement to Makpandu and Rimenze

Moreover, in Southern Yambio, IDPs have also sought refuge at the Rimenze IDP site and Makpandu refugee camp (mainly refugees from Democratic Republic of Congo) due to insecurity in the areas of James Diko, Kisi and Ugo.<sup>12</sup>

However, there have also been incidents of armed clashes and crime-related insecurity at these sites and in settlements along the main road, such as Bodo, which highlights the extent of insecurity in the area, and caused additional displacement to Bazungua (there are approximately 4,000 IDP households).<sup>13</sup>

Furthering risks of insecurity, there are increasing tensions over resources and access to services, as they are being shared between IDPs, refugees and the host communities at

**Map 4: Percentage of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reporting IDP presence, June 2018.**



Makpandu.<sup>14</sup>

### Road monitoring in Yambio

The majority of departures and arrivals recorded by REACH road monitoring teams in Yambio town over the last quarter were households travelling to and from neighbouring Nzara County.<sup>15</sup>

Even though there were incidents of armed clashes on the route to Saura, a town near the border of Nzara County, people were still able to access and use a number of feeder roads. Households have also been recorded moving within Yambio County and further afield to counties such as Maridi and Tambura, but these could be considered exceptions rather than the normality.

Insecurity has been the crucial factor as many people have refrained from travelling further afield due to the risk of crime-related insecurity, especially on the roads as previously stated. During this quarter, most people were mostly moving to reunite with their families, and

access markets and healthcare services.<sup>16</sup>

### Origin of IDPs

Despite the new displacements from Nagero and Ezo counties, overall, IDPs are predominantly from Yambio as 39% of assessed settlements reported that most IDPs were from Yambio County and 27% reported that they were mostly from Maridi County. For Yambio County, this could be due to recent conflict in the county, which has caused IDPs to seek safety and shelter in Yambio town and the IDP site in Rimenze.<sup>17</sup>

As can be seen in Map 4, the counties of Maridi (73%), Ibba (60%), Nzara (55%) and Yambio (50%) were the main locations where assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs. The high proportion of assessed settlements hosting IDPs in these counties highlights the severity of insecurity across numerous locations of Western Equatoria State, which has caused displacement during this quarter.

## Situation in Assessed Settlements

### Food security and Livelihoods

Food insecurity appears to be a prevailing issue in Western Equatoria as only 15% of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food in June (as seen in Figure 2). This is below the countrywide level, whereby 26% of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food. The only regions reporting worse than Western Equatoria were Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal (both 13%). To add as a caveat, these are perception based questions and this is likely most reflective of relative severity in comparison to what is considered “normal” and cannot be used in isolation to determine the severity of the situation.

For instance, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) for South Sudan between the period of May and July 2018, classified counties within Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal as Phase 3 (Crisis) or Phase 4 (Emergency), while in comparison, counties in Western Equatoria were classified as mainly Phase 2 (Stressed), with Yambio and Ezo County classified as Phase 3, and Mvolo and the Mundris as Phase 4.<sup>18</sup>

This is as a result of insecurity as 28% of **Figure 2: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food, June 2018.**



10. Displacement FGD with participants from Saura conducted in Yambio town, May 2018.

11. Interviews with NGO staff in Yambio town.

12. Humanitarian Coordination Forum, Yambio, June 2018.

13. Ibid.

14. Ibid.

15. REACH, Yambio Town Road Monitoring, June 2018.

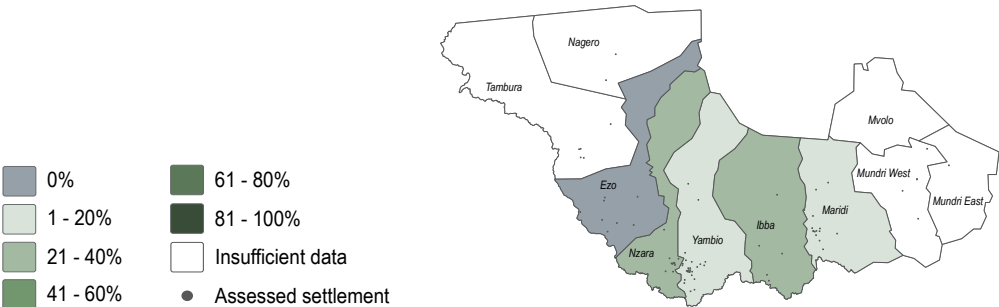
16. Ibid.

17. Interviews with NGO staff in Yambio town.

18. IPC, The Republic of South Sudan, Key IPC Findings:



Map 5: Percentage of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reporting adequate access to food, June 2018.



settlements without adequate access to food reported that insecurity was the main reason for the lack of adequate access to food. FGD participants from Saura reported that insecurity prevented people from freely accessing their farms in order to cultivate the land and prepare for the harvesting season.<sup>19</sup>

This was especially the case in Yambio County as 50% of assessed settlements without adequate access to food reported that the main reason was due to the area being unsafe. Furthermore, an additional 28% of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food reported that displacement prevented people from gathering the harvest. Displacement disrupting agricultural activities was reported frequently by assessed settlements without adequate access to food in Ezo County (57%).

Agriculture is highly important within Western Equatoria as in June, 84% of assessed settlements reported cultivation as the main source of food and 94% of settlements reported engaging in crops for sustenance. This could prove to be a serious issue over the next quarter as people cannot cultivate

enough food to sustain themselves and their families due to the disruption of their planned agricultural activities as a result of insecurity.

The disruption of cultivation has forced settlements to seek alternative food sources. However, the economic crisis has restricted the ability of households to purchase food as a viable alternative to agriculture as only 6% of assessed settlements reported the purchasing of food as the main source of food in June. It seems unlikely that this was due to the lack of markets, as 69% of assessed settlements reported that they could physically access markets from the settlement. Rather it may be due to low purchasing power induced by the ongoing economic crisis. Nine percent (9%) of assessed settlements reported that inadequate access to food was as a result of high prices, which was especially the case in Nzara County (14% of assessed settlements) and Ezo County (14%).

Instead, settlements are increasingly reporting consuming wild foods as their main source of food. In June, 64% of assessed settlements reported that people sometimes relied on wild foods as part of a main meal. The percentage

of assessed settlements relying on wild foods all of the time has also increased from 6% in April to 19% in June. The consumption of wild food all of the time was particularly high in Yambio County, which was reported by 32% of assessed settlements. According to FGD participants, people heavily depended on wild foods during the rainy season in Saura as a key coping strategy to survive.<sup>20</sup>

Coping strategies

During a time where many people lacked enough food or resources to purchase food, households in the assessed settlements have adopted various livelihood coping strategies. In June, the most noticeable coping strategy was to borrow food from friends, family or neighbours, which was reported by 45% of assessed settlements, which can be seen in Figure 4. This was followed by consuming seeds (36%).

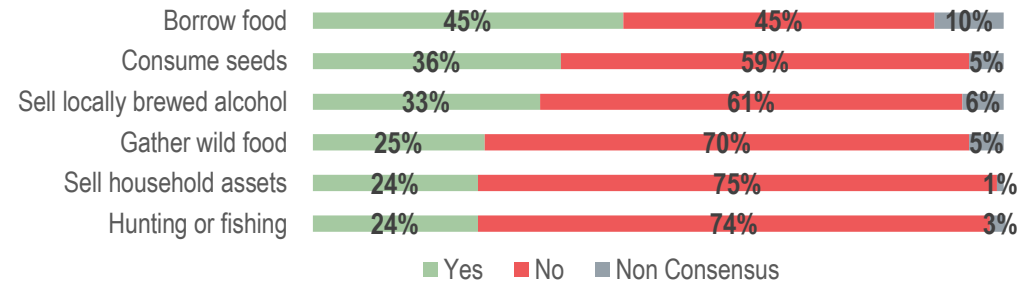
In addition, another 24% of assessed settlements reported that households had sold household assets. Consuming seeds and selling household assets are particularly urgent issues as households are consuming resources that have potential to provide

additional food in the long term. The depletion of such assets could lead to worsening food insecurity and more extreme coping strategies in the next quarter as households have less assets to increase their resilience against future stresses and shocks.

Livelihood coping strategies do not appear sufficient to maintain food consumption for many assessed settlements. Thirty-six percent (36%) of assessed settlements reported that most people were only eating one meal per day, which suggests restricted food consumption for the majority of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria. In June, 74% of assessed settlements reported that many households had to reduce the number of meals consumed each day in order to cope with a lack of food. This was closely followed by purchasing less expensive food, which was reported by 70% of assessed settlements.

This suggests that many households have some means to cope with inadequate access to food. However, for some settlements, only the most extreme coping strategies remain an option. The impact of hunger among people not being able to access enough food was reported as severe by 44% of assessed

Figure 3: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting livelihood coping strategies, June 2018.<sup>21</sup>



19. Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) FGD conducted with participants from Saura in Yambio town, May 2018.  
20. FSL FGD conducted with participants from Saura in Yambio town, May 2018.  
21. "No consensus" stands for settlements on which multiple key

informants were surveyed but there is no modal answer for the respective indicator.

settlements. Hunger being perceived as severe suggests that not only hunger was a major issue during this period, but that there were limited options to cope with reduced access to food.

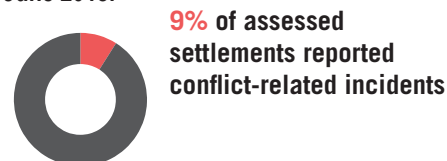
A smaller proportion of assessed settlements reported adopting additional coping strategies that are adopted by those facing severe hunger, such as spending entire days without eating (10% of assessed settlements) and only feeding children within the household (25%). Skipping meals for entire days was reported by 29% of assessed settlements in Yambio, which could be as a result of insecurity and displacement. Data indicates that the high incidence of such coping strategies is in specific locations such as Yambio and Maridi County, and not across the whole of Western Equatoria.

In comparison to wider trends across the country, the frequency of reporting of reliance on severe coping strategies was not as high as in other locations, such as Raja County in Western Bahr el Ghazal State (61% of assessed settlements reported skipping entire days without eating a meal), Leer County in Unity State (61%) and Mayendit in Unity State (55%), where there have been persistent armed clashes and insecurity.

## Protection

Perceptions of safety were low during the reporting period, as in June, 21% of assessed settlements reported that people never felt safe. This represents a serious deterioration since April, as 0% of assessed settlements reported never feeling safe. Yambio County

**Figure 4: Reported incidents during which civilians were killed or property was damaged, June 2018.**



was the area where the most severe situation was reported in June as 43% of assessed settlements reported that people never felt safe. Insecurity on the roads and the presence of armed actors in the bush and rural areas across the majority of Western Equatoria may have been the main drivers. Crime-related insecurity has become more of a prevalent issue during this quarter, especially during June.<sup>22</sup>

The reporting of conflict related incidents increased across the reporting period, as 9% of assessed settlements in June reported an incident of conflict, which is an increase from April (1%). Fourteen percent (14%) of assessed settlements in Yambio County reported an incident of conflict, which was higher in comparison to the other counties. This was a similar trend for incidents of looting in June (28%) and April (20%).

For women, the primary protection concern most cited in June across assessed settlements in Western Equatoria was sexual violence (31%), followed by domestic violence (26%). Among men, the primary protection concerns were being killed or injured (33%). This was followed by harassment (13%) and abductions (11%).

For both women and men, the protection concerns are severe and also demonstrate the consequences of conflict on civilians. Conflict has also affected children in Western Equatoria. In June, 25% of assessed settlements reported that there had been cases of children having no caretaker to look after them.

## Shelter

The majority of assessed settlements reported that host community members were primarily staying in tukuls (93%). In comparison, 39% of assessed settlements with IDPs reported that IDPs were using rakoobas as their primary shelter.

Only 39% of assessed settlements hosting IDPs reported that IDPs were staying in tukuls, which is a sign of recent displacement. Moreover, according to participants from an FGD in May, IDPs that had come from Saura were sleeping in the open due to the lack of affordable shelter in Yambio town.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, in conjunction with the lower use of tukuls, this shows IDPs have high shelter needs.

In June, 4% of assessed settlements reported that shelters had been destroyed or partially destroyed in the month prior to data collection, which is a decrease from April (14%). Shelter damage was highest in Yambio County, as 11% of assessed settlements reported damage and destruction to their shelters.

The most essential non-food item (NFI) needed by IDPs were mosquito nets, which was reported by 25% of assessed settlements with IDPs across Western Equatoria. This was followed by cooking pots (18%) and blankets

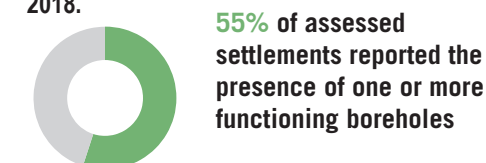
(16%). In the midst of the rainy season, there is a need for mosquito nets due to the heightened risk of malaria, which is one of the key health concerns reported by assessed settlements across Western Equatoria. For more details, see the health section of this situation overview.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Access to at least one functioning borehole was reportedly high across Western Equatoria in June, with 65% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of one or more boreholes, and 85% of these settlements reporting that at least one of the boreholes was functional. This is a decline from April, as 79% of assessed settlements reported the presence of one or more boreholes in the settlement, with 96% of those settlements reporting that at least one of them is functioning.

The primary source of water in June was also boreholes (40%). The use of unprotected wells as the primary source of water was most widely reported by assessed settlements in Ibba County (80%) and Yambio County (43%). It was reported by some KIs that even though there might be at least a functioning borehole in the settlement, it does not serve the majority of the population, so people rely on other sources of water, such as unprotected wells. Moreover, in June, 39% of assessed

**Figure 5: Access to a functioning borehole, June 2018.**



22. The Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project (ACLED). Political Violence and Protest Data - South Sudan. June 2018.

23. Displacement FGD with participants from Saura conducted in Yambio town, May 2018.

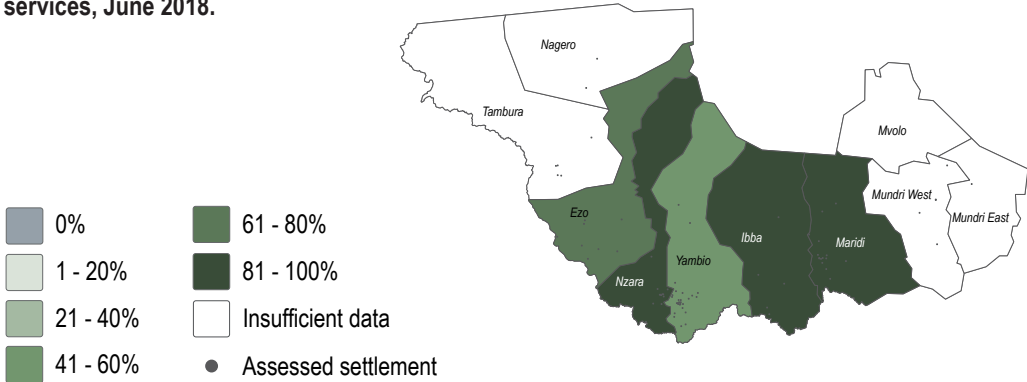
settlements reported that they had not been able to collect water from their preferred point due to safety concerns, further highlighting how conflict is increasing humanitarian needs in the state.

The use of latrines was reportedly high across assessed settlements in Western Equatoria as 25% of assessed settlements reported that all of the residents used latrines while an additional 33% of assessed settlements reported that at least half of the population used latrines. For the assessed settlements that reported that not all of the residents used latrines, the main reason was that there were no latrines available (25%). This was followed by the latrines being too dirty (20%) and being overcrowded (8%).

### Health

Access to health care services declined across Western Equatoria over the assessment period, with 71% of assessed settlements reporting that healthcare services were accessible from their settlement in June (see Map 6) compared to 87% of assessed

**Map 6: Percentage of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reporting access to health care services, June 2018.**



**Figure 6: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting primary causes of morbidity, June 2018.**



settlements in April. The reasons for the decreasing access to health care services reported by assessed settlements were facilities not being available (30%), insecurity (25%) and facilities being destroyed as result of conflict and violence (25%).

In June, the main health concern in assessed settlements was reported to be malaria (33%), which appeared to be the main health concern throughout the reporting period (reported by 35% of assessed settlements in April). This was followed by skin disease (19%) and diarrhoea (11%).

The high rate of malaria is all the more severe given the low rate of access to malarial drugs, as 76% of assessed settlements reported that malaria drugs were the most important health care item needed. Correspondingly, malaria

was also reported to be the primary cause of morbidity in 28% of assessed settlements. In connection with WASH and shelter, this demonstrates that there is generally a high vulnerability to malaria due to the lack of appropriate shelter, mosquito nets and clean sources of drinking water.

Just over half of assessed settlements (51%) reported that no specific increase in mortality had taken place in June across Western Equatoria, but some exceptions were noted at the county level. For instance, 64% of assessed settlements reported an increase in mortality in Nzara County, which is likely to be driven by malaria, as 36% of assessed settlements also reported malaria as the main cause of death.

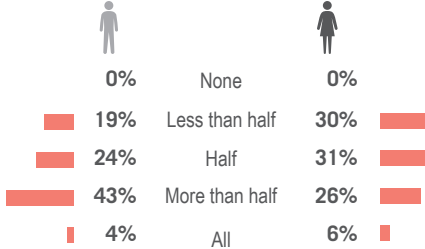
### Education

Sixty-eight percent (68%) of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reported that education services were available in June, which is a decrease from April, when it was reported by 85% of assessed settlements. This declining trend was attributed to insecurity, which was reported by 29% of assessed settlements without access to education.

Among assessed settlements without access to education in Nzara, Ezo and Yambio Counties, insecurity was reported as the main reason (100%, 33% and 33% respectively). For Maridi County, 75% of assessed settlements without education reported the main reason was because the facilities were too far.

Ibba County reported the lowest availability of education services, with 40% of assessed

**Figure 7: Reported proportion of 6-17 year old girls and 6-17 year old boys attending school in assessed settlements, June 2018.**



settlements reporting that they were not available. It was reported that this was due to the lack of teachers (50%) and that teachers had fled from the area (50%). Ezo County also reported low availability of education services (38% of assessed settlements), which was reportedly attributed to there being no facilities in the first place (33%), insecurity (33%), and education facilities being repurposed (33%).

The availability of education services does not necessarily ensure high enrolment rates for both girls and boys. In June, 61% of assessed settlements reported that half or less of the girls of the settlement were attending school, while 43% reported similar for boys. The main reason that girls could not attend school was due to school fees, which was reported by 46% of assessed settlements that reported not all girls attended school.

The second most cited reason why some girls were not attending school was that girls were required to assist with chores and work at home (26% of assessed settlements). For boys, the reasons most cited to explain low enrolment rates within the settlements were that boys were required to work around the house (26%

of assessed settlements), or needed to work on the farm (24%). For boys, 22% of assessed settlements reported that not all boys attended due to school fees. This also shows that when financial resources are limited, households often prioritise boys' education over girls'.

## Conclusion

During the second quarter of 2018, Western Equatoria experienced increasing insecurity. The deterioration of security has caused new displacement within Western Equatoria, with the incidents of armed conflict in Nagero County in May being the most prominent. This had caused thousands of people to seek refuge in Tambura town.

Thus, insecurity has also had a detrimental impact on the ability of households to achieve adequate access to food, which is heavily dependent on being able to access their farmland for cultivation, as described earlier.

Access to services over this quarter has declined, especially for health care services, access to boreholes and the availability of education services. This could be attributed to the insecurity, which deeply affected most of the counties of Western Equatoria, especially in the bush and rural areas surrounding the main towns.

The insecurity prevents the free movement of people and humanitarian actors, preventing crucial assistance from reaching some of the areas most in need. Unless there is an improvement in the security situation, access to food and services will likely continue to deteriorate.

### 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.

For more information, you can write to our in-country office: [southsudan@reach-initiative.org](mailto:southsudan@reach-initiative.org) or to our global office: [geneva@reach-initiative.org](mailto:geneva@reach-initiative.org).

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