

# Situation Overview: Unity State, South Sudan

June 2016

**REACH** Informing  
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## Introduction

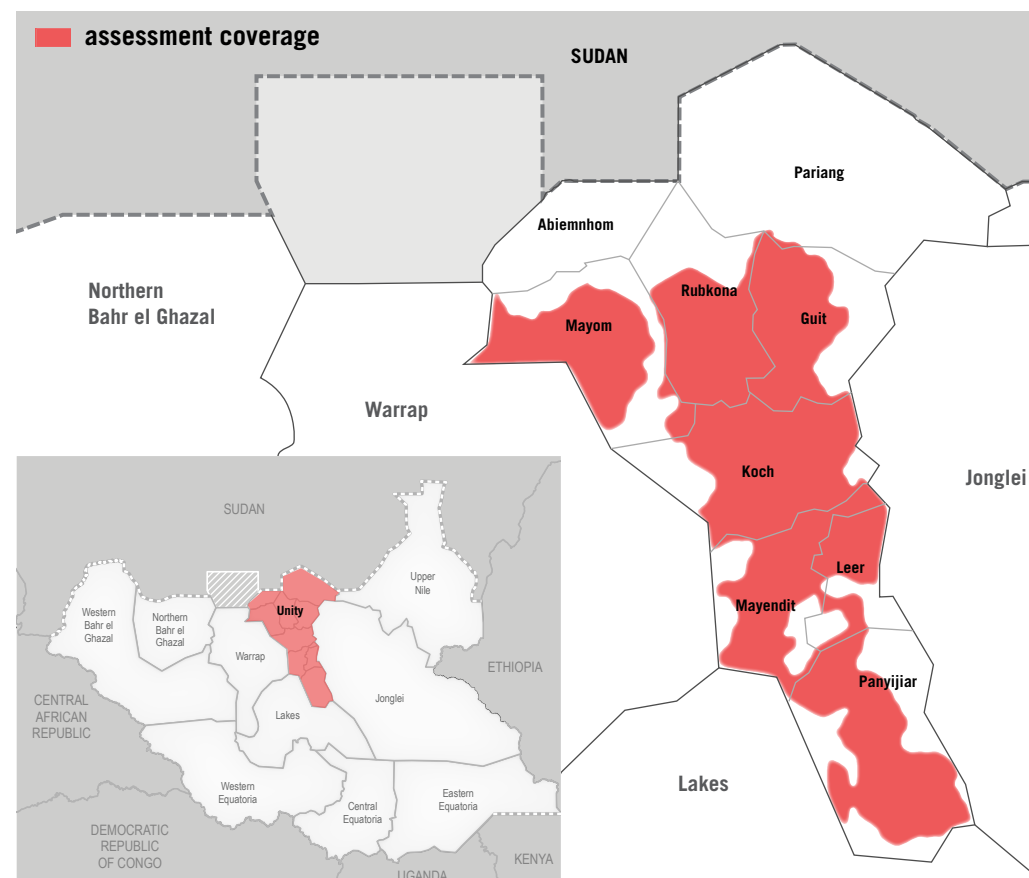
As of June 2016, Unity State continues to host the highest number of IDPs of any state in South Sudan, with some 547,738 IDPs scattered about the state.<sup>1</sup> Most are currently living outside of the only formal displacement site in Unity State, Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site, which had a population of 99,034 as of June 29th, 2016.<sup>2</sup> Because of the ongoing conflict, most of the IDPs and local host communities are still living without access to adequate food, clean water, livelihood opportunities, or other basic services. The continued progress of the peace agreement and decline in violence across the state in 2016 has allowed many IDPs to return to their pre-crisis locations or relocate to other areas within the state, where they can restart their lives and better meet their needs.<sup>3</sup> While many humanitarian actors have attempted to follow suit by expanding operations to several sites around Unity State as part of the “Beyond Bentiu Response Strategy,” the rapid rate of returns threatens to eclipse humanitarians’ ability to provide sufficient services to returning IDPs at a time when many communities around the state are witnessing a decline in services.<sup>4</sup>

To better inform the response of humanitarians working outside of formal settlement sites, REACH is conducting an assessment on hard-to-reach areas of South Sudan, for which monthly data is being collected on

displacement dynamics and service access in communities across the Greater Upper Nile region. Between June 23rd and 30th, REACH collected information about 58 of 83 communities in Unity State, through interviews with 224 key informants (KIs), 174 in Bentiu PoC and 50 in Juba PoC.

New arrivals were specifically targeted so as to get a better understanding of current displacement dynamics. Seventy percent (70%) of respondents had just arrived at the PoC for the first time, and therefore had more up to date information about the community that they had been displaced from. All findings have been triangulated using focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted at selected sites outside of the PoC, secondary data, and REACH’s previous assessments of hard-to-reach areas in Unity State.

The following document provides an update of key findings from May 2016 on displacement dynamics and humanitarian conditions in the assessed communities across Unity State. The first section examines displacement trends across Unity State. The second examines the current situation of IDPs and non-displaced persons living in each community, focusing on their access to food, water and sanitation, health, education, and protection.



Map 1: Unity State location and assessment coverage

<sup>1</sup>OCHA

<sup>2</sup>IOM South Sudan: Bentiu PoC Update, June 2016

<sup>3</sup>Sudan Tribune, “Nearly 7,000 displaced return to Unity State homes,” June 2016

<sup>4</sup>Beyond Bentiu Response Strategy, March 2016



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## METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas, the study uses primary data provided by key informants (KIs), who receive regular information from some place outside of their current displacement site, usually their pre-displacement location or “area of origin.”

Information for this study was collected from KIs in Juba and Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites, in Central Equatoria and Unity States, during June 2016.

A two-stage methodology was employed, beginning with the identification of key informants and participatory mapping, followed by in-depth interviews with selected participants to understand the current situation in places outside of the PoCs that they received regular information from.

Each participant was matched with a geographic area about which s/he could provide information. During the second stage, KI interviews were conducted with selected participants. A standardised survey was used to collect information about the situation and needs of the remaining host community and any displaced persons residing there. Not all KIs had to respond to each question, so the number of responding communities often varied between indicators.

After data collection finished, all data was examined at the community level, and communities were assigned the modal response, from which descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis were used to analyze the data. Those without a mode, or, “no consensus” were removed from the analysis.

## Key findings

The month of June has seen continued IDP movement across Unity State, as well as returns to pre-displacement locations. More and more IDPs are leaving the PoC in order to cultivate and re-establish their livelihoods in their pre-displacement locations and other parts of Unity State. This is most notable in “catchment” areas, which are places that are easily accessible by the host community and IDPs in the surrounding area, and by humanitarian organizations that have established limited services there.

The proportion of communities reporting access to services has declined, especially in key areas like health, WASH, and livelihoods. This is likely a direct result of the influx of returning IDPs to these communities. Most health facilities are more than an hour away, and education opportunities remain limited. Access to clean water has also declined, though the number of functional boreholes has remained the same, indicating that the

**Figure 2: Reported pull factors for choosing current displacement site during the 2015-16 dry season**  
The darker the colour, the more commonly reported

	First Reason	Second Reason	Third Reason
Security	88%	5%	3%
Food Access	3%	70%	15%
Health access	3%	14%	51%
Aid	0%	1%	7%
Join Family	1%	4%	6%
Education access	3%	4%	6%
Water access	0%	0%	2%
Other	2%	2%	10%

inaccessibility of water is likely more related to physical distance than a lack of infrastructure. More returning host community and IDPs are sleeping outside, suggesting that shelters have not yet been constructed to house the returning population. Land access has reportedly increased, and was available in nearly all communities, but agricultural inputs like seeds and tools were available to fewer than 10% of communities, robbing both the local community and IDPs of opportunities to cultivate available land.

## Population Movement and Displacement

### Push factors for leaving pre-crisis locations

As in previous months, pull and push factors have a tendency to mirror one another. Ninety-two percent (92%) of KIs reported that they had left their homes primarily due to insecurity, while 88% reported security as their primary reason for coming to a PoC. A lack of food (78%) and healthcare (55%) ranked as the second and third most reported reasons for leaving their precrisis locations, and were also the second and third most reported reasons for coming to a PoC (74% reported food, and 51% reported healthcare).

While the need for food has always been an important displacement factor, its importance over health indicates the increasing prioritization of food by IDPs, and is likely driving the current rush to plant outside of the PoC. Other reports have highlighted the return of IDPs to their homelands, noting that they

**Figure 1: Reported push factors for leaving pre-displacement location**

The darker the colour, the more commonly reported

	First Reason	Second Reason	Third Reason
Insecurity	92%	1%	3%
Lack of Food Access	1%	74%	17%
Lack of Health Access	2%	12%	51%
Lack of Aid	0%	1%	7%
Lack of Family	0%	2%	3%
Lack of Education	2%	3%	6%
Lack of Water Access	0%	0%	1%
Other	3%	7%	10%

are taking advantage of the improved security situation in Unity State to check on family and remaining possessions that they may have left behind.<sup>5</sup> The findings are supported by FGDs conducted by REACH at several field locations, where the team observed that many IDPs were leaving the PoC in order to cultivate, particularly in “catchment” areas, where humanitarian aid is being distributed as part of the “Beyond Bentiu Response” Strategy.<sup>6</sup>

### Key displacement trends

During June, the REACH team focused mainly on new arrivals to the PoC; 96% of respondents had not been interviewed before, and 70% were recent arrivals. Map 2 shows the major displacement movements of IDPs currently staying in the two PoCs where REACH conducted data collection in June 2016. It is important to keep in mind that the number of IDPs interviewed from each location determines the detail of information for each location, so the greater the number

of IDPs sampled in a given location, the more representative the information collected. Like previous months, the vast majority of IDPs living in Bentiu PoC reportedly came from Rubkona and other neighbouring counties. Sixty-two percent (62%) of IDPs reported that they had already been displaced to other locations, where they had stayed some time before coming to the PoC. Given that the conflict began over two and a half years ago, and the level of devastation that Unity State has suffered since then, it is unsurprising that most new arrivals to the PoC have been displaced multiple times.

Over the course of June, the population of Bentiu PoC increased slightly from 95,126 in May to 99,034.<sup>7</sup> The increase in the number of people might be a response to the coming “lean season,” during which crops are not yet ready for harvest, and people begin to run out of food and resources.<sup>8</sup> In addition, large inflows of IDPs are still seen around periods of food distribution.<sup>9</sup>

**Table 1: KI Reported Displacement by Season/County**

*Displacement time aggregated as: Dry Season: Jan - Apr and Wet season: May - Oct, End of the year (Dry Season): Nov-Dec. Highest proportions for each county have been highlighted.*

	2014			2015			2016	
	Dry	Wet	End	Dry	Wet	End	Dry	Wet
<b>County</b>								
Guit	14%	5%	0%	9%	14%	0%	14%	45%
Koch	0%	6%	0%	6%	11%	0%	6%	72%
Leer	0%	7%	0%	0%	7%	0%	7%	80%
Mayendit	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%
Mayom	8%	0%	0%	6%	17%	4%	19%	47%
Panyijiar	0%	3%	3%	0%	10%	0%	3%	80%
Rubkona	32%	18%	5%	5%	5%	0%	5%	29%

**Map 2: Main displacement routes by new arrivals to data collection sites**



5. OCHA, Initial Rapid Needs Assessment Nierni, April 2016

6. Beyond Bentiu Response Strategy, March 2016

IOM reported that the population in Bentiu Town has also continued to grow, from 29,911 in May 2016 to 31,692 in June. However, most of these are not returning host community, as only 2,553 of the town's former residents are reported to have returned, compared to 10,224 still living in the PoC.<sup>10</sup> The same IOM report suggests that these trends will continue; since January, 3,305 individuals from Bentiu PoC have not only relocated, but also changed their registration to Bentiu Town. Many people have relocated to other catchment areas outside of the PoC; IOM registered over 1,850 new households in four catchment areas (Dingding, Nhialdu, Kuach, and Niemni) in June, and over 5,000 IDPs who have changed their registration to a location outside of the PoC.<sup>11</sup>

In addition to displacement to the PoC and to Bentiu Town, the REACH team also looked at IDP movements to other places in Unity State. Several interesting trends are notable. In Rubkona, Mayom, and Koch, IDPs are generally displaced within the same county, while IDPs in Leer and Mayendit have mostly fled to one another's counties. Many IDPs from Leer and Mayendit also continue to flee south into Panyijiar. Instability resulting from political tensions is likely driving IDPs out of these counties, while IDPs in other, more stable counties, are going to places where they can better access services.

## Situation in Assessed Communities

### Demographic profile

#### Remaining population in assessed communities

All but one of the 58 assessed communities reported that there were members of the host community still living there, although 55 communities reported that there had been a decrease in population since the beginning of the crisis. However, there has been less of a decrease in the population than in previous months, with only 15 communities reporting that over 50% of the population had been displaced. In May, 47 of 60 communities had reported this. This is likely due to the continued overall stable security situation, which has allowed more and more IDPs to return to their homelands.<sup>12</sup>

Only 52% of communities reported that a majority of host communities are staying in their homes. However, a sizable majority of people appear to be living indoors, with 20% of communities reporting that most people are living in someone else's home. When considered alongside current trends, this may be due to an influx of returning local community who have not yet been able to construct new homes for themselves.

Most of the host communities' reported reasons for staying suggest that security and livelihoods are improving: KIs in 84% of communities reported that they were staying

there because the area was now safe to live in, and 68% reported that they could receive food there.

#### IDP population in assessed communities

Thirty of fifty-three (57%) responding communities reported hosting IDPs, down from the 50 of 68 of communities that reported IDPs in May. This is likely an extension of the trends observed in previous months, in which IDPs both inside and outside the PoC continue to return to their home communities in order to cultivate. Given that many of the reported locations are in Rubkona and Guit counties, two counties that the "Beyond Bentiu Response Strategy" has targeted to deliver aid outside of the PoC, it is likely that many of these IDPs are attempting to regain some semblance of their normal lives while remaining within access of NGO services.

Aside from Rubkona and Guit, small populations of IDPs were reported in Northern Koch and Panyijiar, and a substantial population of IDPs were reported in Leer county, where services have recently been established by NGOs as well.

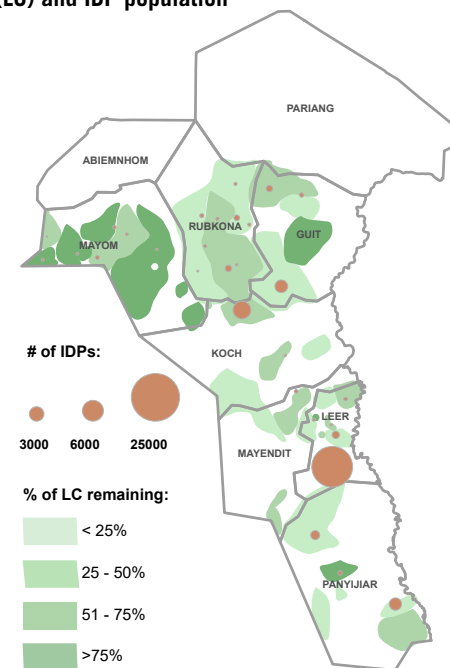
Ten of twenty-eight (36%) communities reported that most IDPs were staying with relatives, while another ten reported that most people were staying with other members of the host community. Twenty-five of twenty-eight (89%) communities reported that IDPs settled in a particular community because they believed the area was safe, while 86% reported coming because of the presence of

food. These are similar to the reasons reported by the host community. Together this indicates that most IDPs are interested in going to places where they can restart their livelihoods and still remain in a secure environment.

#### Returned local community

Forty-two of fifty-seven responding communities (74%) reported that members of the host community that had been displaced had returned to the area. This is an increase over the 41 of 68 responding communities (60%) that reported this in May and suggests an increasing return to normalcy in Unity State. Reported disputes over land have also

**Map 3: Reported non-displaced host community (LC) and IDP population**



7. IOM, South Sudan: Bentiu PoC Update, June 2016

8. IPC, South Sudan – Rising Food Insecurity and Critical Malnutrition, June 2016

9. IOM DTM registration figures

10. IOM, Greater Bentiu: Population Movement Trends, June 2016

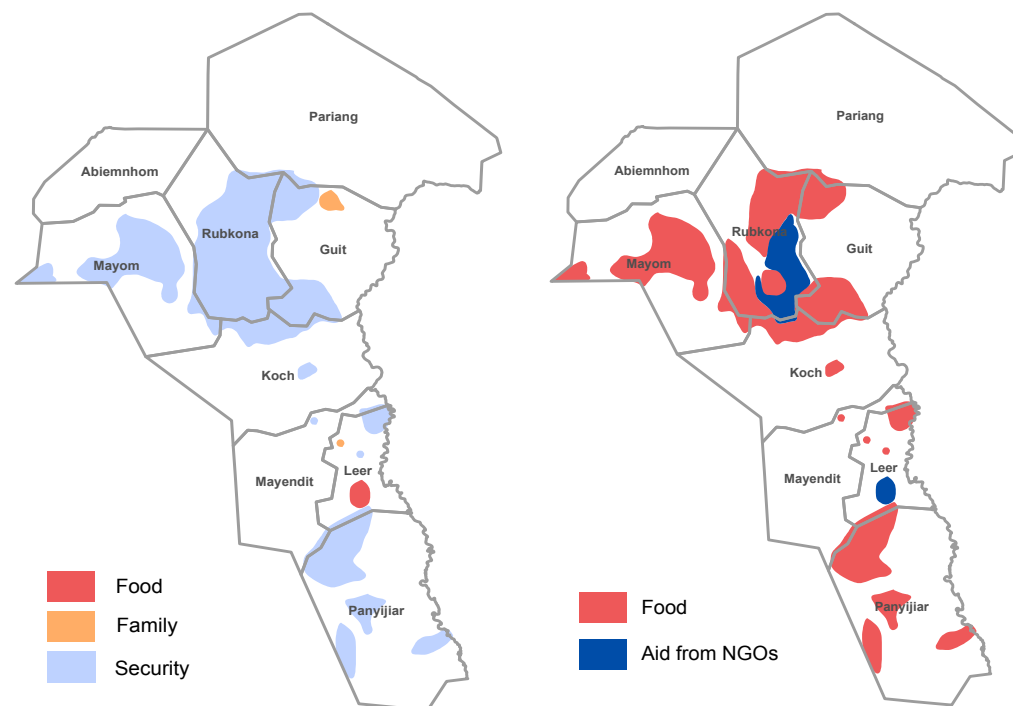
11. IOM, Kuach, Guit County: Biometric registration update, June 2016

12. While the REACH team differentiated between non-displaced and returning host community, many respondents often conflated the two, so lower levels of displacement often signal higher numbers of returned host community.



#### Map 4: First (left) and second (right) most important reasons for IDPs choosing to come to their community

Communities without a mode, or "no consensus" have been removed from the analysis, hence the differing coverage between maps.



declined. Only 9 of 54 communities, primarily in Koch and Leer, have reported any disputes of land, far lower than the 35 of 68 communities that reported land disputes in May.

Returns were reported across all of Unity State, primarily in Mayom, Rubkona, Leer, Koch and northern Mayendit. The largest numbers were reported in Koch and Leer Counties, suggesting that IDPs are increasingly willing to move further and further away from the PoC in order to return home. In previous months, the highest numbers of returns were reportedly much closer to the PoC, usually in nearby

Mayom, Guit, and Rubkona.<sup>13</sup>

#### Shelter

In 45 of 54 (86%) communities, the non-displaced host community reported tukuls as either the first or second most popular type of shelter. A further 44 (82%) communities reported that rakoobas were either the first or second most popular form of shelter, which suggests a large number of returning host community, given that rakoobas are much less permanent structures. In 22 (79%) and 21 (75%) communities, most IDPs were staying

in rakoobas or tukuls, respectively. Unlike previous months, no communities reported using tents as a primary source of shelter.

Despite the increase in more permanent housing, only 42 of 51 responding communities reported that less than 50% of the local community are sleeping outside. Only 10 of 28 responding communities reported that less than 50% of IDPs were sleeping outside. Thirty-four of thirty-nine communities reported that less than 50% of the returned local host community were sleeping outside. While most communities reported having shelter for at least half of the people there, these findings suggest that IDPs and returning host community are exceeding the ability of most communities to house them.

Most communities (90%) reported an abundance of grass, while 53% reported having enough mud for shelter construction. However, no communities reported adequate access to other necessary building materials like rope or timber for building new shelters. These materials are clearly needed in order to alleviate the shortages of shelters across Unity State.

The vast majority of communities, 53 of 58 (91%) reported that some of their shelters had been damaged. However, a recovery is clearly underway: 37 of 48 (77%) responding communities reported that most of the shelters that had been destroyed had been rebuilt.

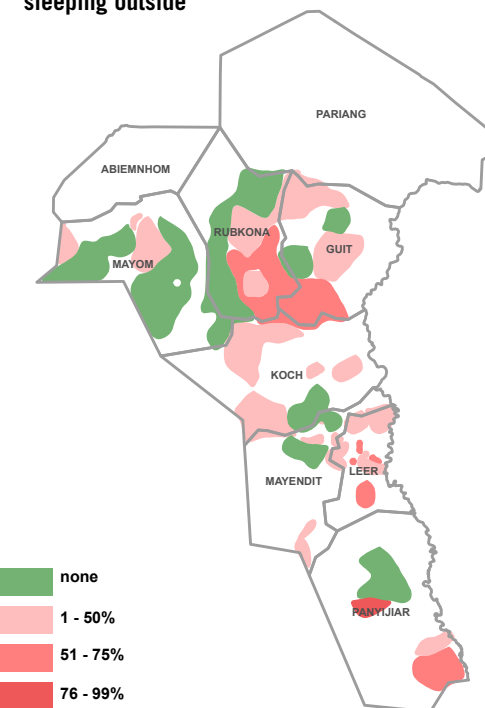
Mosquito nets were reportedly being used by

the same proportion of communities (98%) as last month, though only 5 of 49 (10%) reported that over 75% of the people in communities are using them, which is significantly less than the 28 of 65 (43%) communities that reported this in May 2016.

#### Access to Food

Twenty-four of fifty-five (44%) responding communities reported that they had access to enough food in the last month, which is about the same as in May and April 2016. In addition, only 32% of communities that reported hosting IDPs also reported having enough food,

#### Map 5: Reported proportion of host community sleeping outside



13. REACH, Unity State Situation Overview, May 2016

suggesting that the added influx may be straining local food resources.

Forty-one of fifty-one (75%) responding communities reported that their main food source was through food distributions, while 11 (20%) reported producing most of their own food through cultivation. This indicates a dependence upon humanitarian assistance for survival. This may be due to the early harvesting of crops in the wet season; FGDs held outside of the PoC found that many people were attempting to cultivate their own food.

Fifty-four of fifty-eight (93%) communities reported that they had received a food distribution in the last six months, which is a similar proportion to the 53 of 59 (90%) communities that reported this in May. Thirty-seven of fifty-two (71%) communities also expected to receive a new food distribution within the next month.

Despite the improvement in food security, most communities still reported food shortages. Despite many people not planting in the countryside, the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, which measures food security by levels of severity, still classes Unity

State as the worst in the country, with 65% of the state classified as being in either an emergency or catastrophe acute food security phase. A variety of coping strategies were reportedly still being used on a weekly basis in each county. Most commonly, reducing meal sizes was reported in 61% of communities, buying less expensive or preferred food was reported in 55% of communities, and borrowing food in 46%. Most worryingly, 48% or almost half of all surveyed communities reported going at least one day a week without eating any food.

These trends may be related to a lack of market access; only 15 of 57 (26%) communities reported access to a functioning market in June, similar to the 22 of 67 (33%) communities that reported access in May. For half of all communities, the closest market is over an hour away. The purchasing power of most households continues to worsen due to inflation, limiting what can be bought to supplement their meagre rations.<sup>14</sup>

### Livelihoods

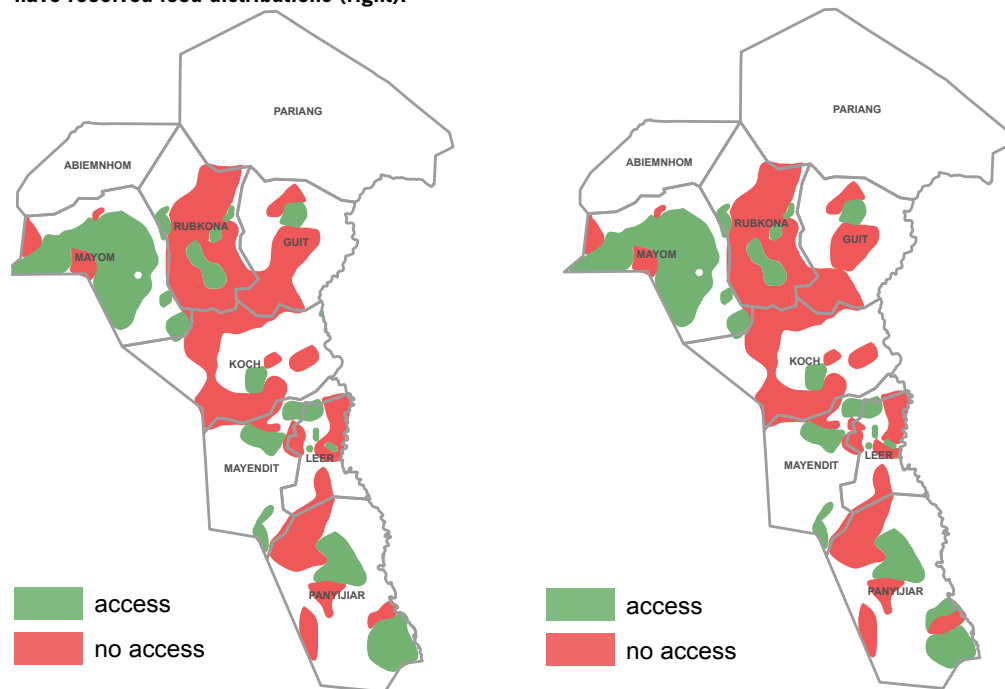
Fifty-two of fifty-eight (93%) communities reported having access to land for cultivation, about the same as in May. This reflects the increasing sense of security expressed by IDPs and host community returning to their pre-crisis homes. However, there is little chance that they will be able to take advantage of it; only 5 of 57 (9%) communities reported having access to agricultural inputs such as seeds and tools.

Forty-six of fifty-seven (81%) communities reported that a majority of people's assets had been stolen. Much of this is due to cattle raiding. Cattle are the foundation of the economy of rural South Sudan, and play a role in all significant economic transactions, from market purchases to marriage. While cattle raiding has long been a part of life in South Sudan, the conflict has created perverse incentives in which armed groups use the pretext of conflict in order to steal cattle from their victims.<sup>15</sup> Forty-three of fifty-six (75%) communities reported having experienced a cattle raid in the last 6 months. Of these, 90% reported that people had been displaced as a result of the raid, and 72% expected those people to still be displaced in three months. Sixty-one percent (61%) reported that public infrastructure had also been destroyed. With few opportunities to create livelihoods, the lack of cattle is likely to have profound effects on the ability of communities to recover.

### Water and Sanitation

Twenty-nine out of fifty-seven (51%) communities reported having access to safe drinking water, a substantial decline from the 48 of 67 (71%) communities that reported having access in May. The difference in access has likely to do more with a change in definition of access rather than a decline in actual clean water sources. In previous months, many KIs would report that they had access to clean water so long as there was a functional borehole in the community. However, FGDs conducted in April in the PoC found that

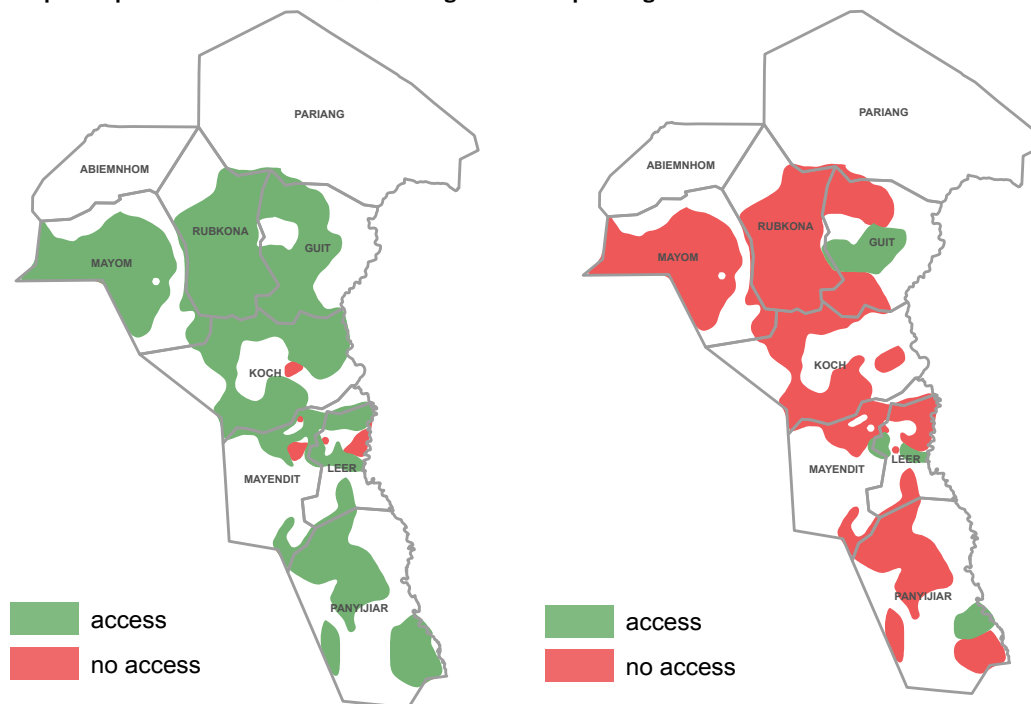
**Map 6: Reported access to adequate amounts of food (left) and proportion of communities reported to have received food distributions (right).**



14. Bloomberg, "IMF urges fiscal restraint in South Sudan as inflation soars, June 2016

15. CEPO, Strategy for mitigating the cattle raiding in South Sudan, March 2014

**Map 7: Reported access to land (left) and agricultural inputs (right)**



households will usually not use a safe water source if it is more than a 20 minute walk away. Between May and June, the REACH team modified its definition of water access to better capture how many IDPs were actually using clean water, instead of whether or not it was simply available in their community.

Most communities continue to get their water from boreholes. Forty-four of fifty-seven (77%) of communities reported having boreholes, and all communities that reported having access to clean water said that they got it from boreholes. On average, 5 boreholes per community were reported. However, only about half of the

boreholes in a given community were reported to be functional. This is roughly the same as in May, showing that WASH infrastructure, while in poor condition, has not deteriorated significantly over the last month.

All but three (95%) of the communities surveyed reported that most people were defecating in the bush, rather than a latrine, which is approximately the same as last month.

### Health

Unlike most other services, KIs reported a substantial decrease in access to healthcare

over the month of June, with only 11 of 54 (20%) responding communities reporting any access to healthcare, compared to 32 of 65 (49%) in May. This may be due to the increased influx of returning IDPs that has overloaded the limited health services available outside of the PoC. Under the Beyond Bentiu Response Strategy, most health care is provided by mobile clinics with a limited capacity to serve large caseloads, especially with the rise in disease that often accompanies the wet season.<sup>16</sup>

Sixty-nine percent (69%) of all communities reported that the reason that there is no health care is because the facilities have been destroyed as a result of the conflict, 48% reported that the facilities have no drugs and only 35% that they are inaccessible due to a lack of staff. This suggests that mobile clinics may not be reaching the large numbers of returning IDPs, or that people remain unaware of the temporary health services available in their areas.

### Education

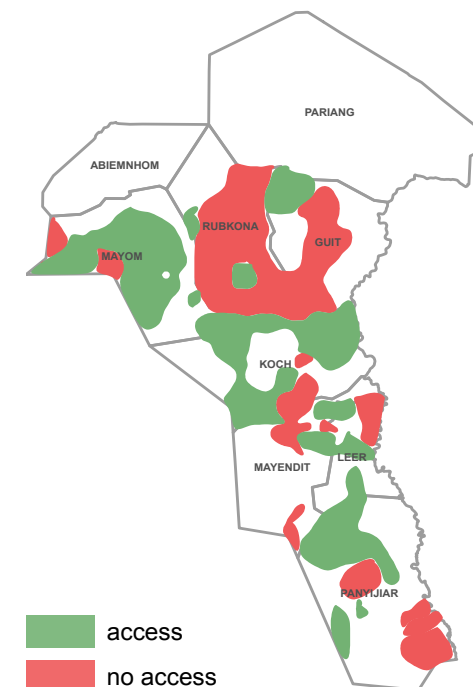
Only 8 of 58 (14%) communities reported having access to any sort of education services in the last month. Of these, only primary education was reported. This is down from 17 of 58 (29%) communities in May, but higher than in April 2016 or any other preceding month. No communities reported secondary education or any accelerated learning programs. According to a recent UNICEF report, over 79% of schools in Unity State are still closed down, but the reason for the drop in access to education programs

is unclear. It is possible that the influx of returns has overloaded what few educational institutions exist, or that children are needed to perform other necessary tasks for families attempting to rebuild their former livelihoods. Only 29% of communities reporting access to education reported that more than half of boys or girls were attending school, and in the case of girls, 38% of communities reported that the main reason that children were not attending school was because girls were needed to perform other tasks.

### Protection

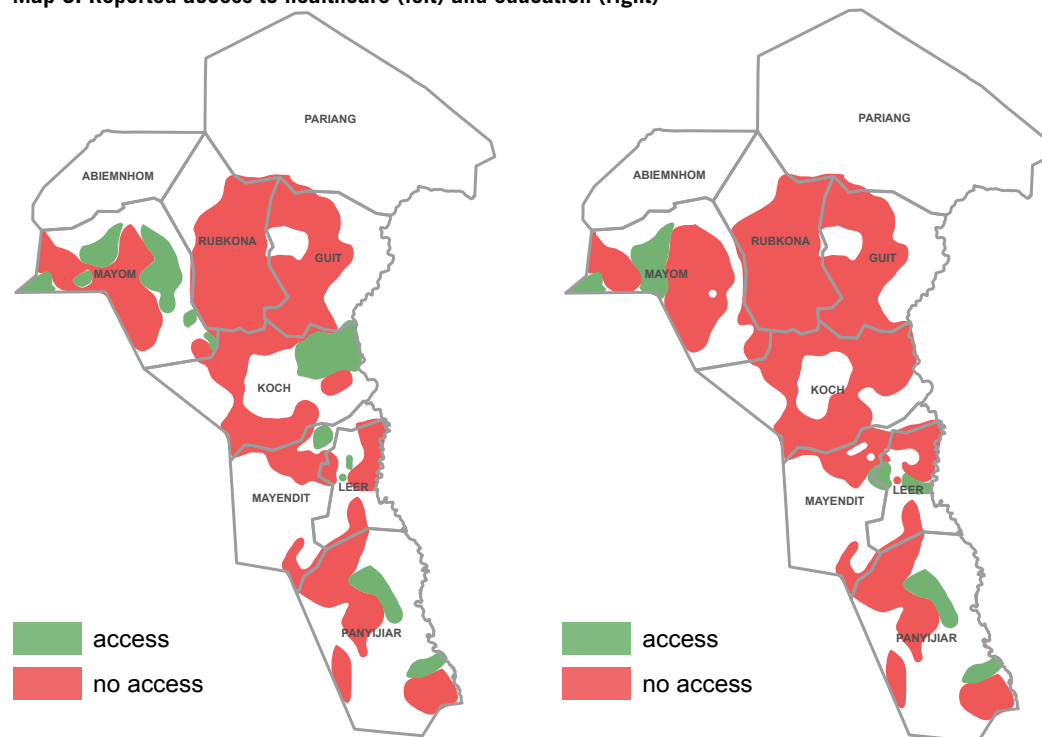
Forty of fifty-eight communities reported the

**Map 8: Reported access to safe drinking water**



16. MSF South Sudan Activity Update, June 2016

**Map 9: Reported access to healthcare (left) and education (right)**



presence of police/protection personnel. The most frequently cited types of protection services were local authorities and police. Despite this, protection concerns remain: only 17% of communities reported that women feel safe at night, while 31% reported that they never feel safe at any time of the day. Twenty percent (20%) of communities reported that men feel safe at night, while 52% of men never feel safe. Most communities (63%) reported that the primary threat to women was sexual violence, while communities were split on the largest threat for men, with 40% reporting that they feared being killed or injured by people

in the same community, and 36% reporting that they feared being harmed by people from other communities (mainly armed groups). The dangers from inside communities hint at significant unresolved trauma from the conflict.

As in previous months, relations between IDPs and the host community were reported to be good and there were no “poor” relations reported as in previous months. However it is important to ensure that adequate services are provided to prevent the overstretching of resources.

## Conclusion

As the security situation in Unity State improves, IDPs continue to return to their pre-crisis communities and other parts of the state. FGDs and other secondary sources consistently reported that IDPs are returning to check on personal assets and cultivate crops.<sup>17</sup> The stream of IDPs has declined; the number of communities hosting IDPs (30 of 53) is almost 25% lower than the 50 of 68 reporting IDPs in May 2016. On the other hand, 42 of 55 of communities reported returning host community, as opposed to 41 of 68 in May. Reports from IOM show a flow of IDPs out of the PoC to other parts of the state, confirming this influx.<sup>18</sup>

The outflow of IDPs from the PoC has created new problems as services become overloaded. Aside from land access and access to food, service access has declined across all sectors. A high percentage of IDPs and local community are reported to be sleeping outside, and fewer communities

reported that people are using mosquito nets. While many IDPs and returnees have been moved due to access to land, very few reported having access to the tools, seeds, and other agricultural inputs needed to cultivate.

On the other hand, nearly all communities reported having received a food distribution in the last six months. WASH services remain stable, though most water sources are located too far for people to access them. Access to protection services has increased, though most of it is provided by local actors rather than national ones, whom most people reportedly fear.

The lack of food and health services continues to be a major push factor driving IDPs to the PoC, and despite efforts to begin cultivating, IDPs continue to return for food distributions in order to survive. With the decision by UNMISS to allow only two more registrations of new IDPs in Bentiu PoC to promote resettlement in town, it remains unclear how IDPs will be able to rebuild their lives.

**Table 3: Main protection threats faced by men (left) and women (right), June 2016**

	Men	Women
Killed or injured, member of other community	36%	5%
Killed or injured, member of same community	40%	2%
Abduction	4%	5%
Sexual Violence	0%	63%
Looting	7%	3%
Cattle Raid	2%	3%
Family Separated	0%	0%
Early Marriage	0%	3%
Domestic Violence	4%	0%
Restricted Movement	0%	13%

### About REACH Initiative

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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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17. CCCM Cluster Meeting Minutes, 1 June 2016

18. IOM, Greater Bentiu, Population Movement Trends, June 2016