

Situation Overview: Unity State, South Sudan

October 2017

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

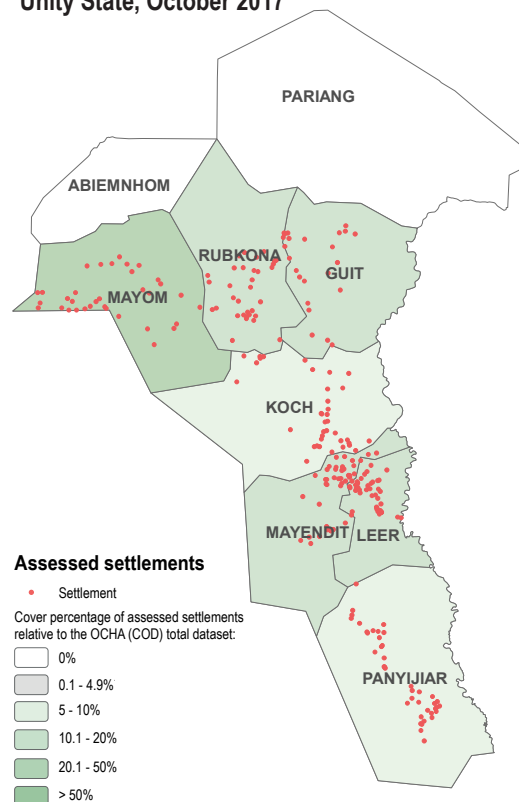
Displacement trends, population needs and humanitarian access have all been negatively affected by the insecurity resulting from the ongoing conflict in Unity State, which began in December 2013.

To inform humanitarian actors working outside formal settlement sites, REACH has conducted assessments of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since December 2015. The data is collected through interviews on a monthly basis from communities across the Greater Upper Nile region, Greater Equatoria region and Western Bahr el Ghazal.

Between 2 and 20 October, REACH interviewed a total of 384 Key Informants (KIs) in Bentiu PoC and Nyal. The KIs were from 264 settlements situated in 7 of the 9 counties in Unity State. The findings were triangulated through four focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in Bentiu PoC, secondary data and previous REACH assessments of hard-to-reach areas of Unity State.

In order to ensure an understanding of current displacement trends and humanitarian conditions in settlements from which displacement took place, new arrivals, representing 79% of KIs, were specifically targeted. The remainder of the KIs interviewed

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Unity State, October 2017



(21%) reported having been in the settlement or having had regular contact with someone from the settlement within the last month. This Situation Overview focuses on changes in humanitarian needs observed since September 2016. The first section analyses

displacement and population movement in Unity during October, and the second section evaluates access to food and basic services for both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and local communities.

Population Movement and Displacement

In October, 42% of assessed settlements across Unity reported presence of IDPs, which is similar to the 48% reported in September (Figure 1). As illustrated in Map 2 the largest proportion of IDP presence was reported by assessed settlements in Panyijiar (66%), Leer (64%) and Mayendit (55%).

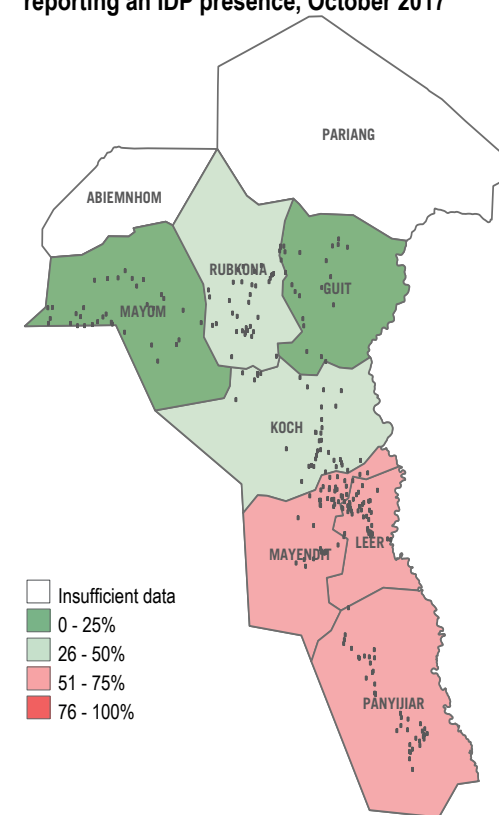
Among assessed settlements, those in Mayendit (27%) and Leer (25%) accounted for the vast majority of the increase in IDPs, followed by Koch (13%). This was consistent with reported armed clashes in Guit, Koch and southern Rubkona, which took place in October leading to the relocation of aid workers as well as pushing people to leave

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP presence, October 2017



42% of assessed settlements reported IDP presence

Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting an IDP presence, October 2017



their homes.¹

Reflective of deteriorating security conditions in parts of Unity between September and October, 45% of interviewed IDPs who were new arrivals to the Bentiu PoC site reported

¹ OCHA South Sudan, Humanitarian Bulletin 15, October 2017.



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METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas of Unity State, REACH uses primary data provided by key informants who have recently arrived, or receive regular information, from a location or “Area of Knowledge” (AoK).

Information for this report was collected from key informants in the Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site and Nyal in Unity State throughout October 2017.

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

After data collection was completed, all data was examined at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting. Data was analysed using descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis.

Please note that this represents a change in methodology as of December 2016. Data and collection methods have remained the same since September 2016, but modes of aggregation and inclusion have changed. Thus, this report is not directly comparable with Situation Overviews from before December 2016.

having left their previous location due to insecurity, being far from family (23%) and a lack of health services (18%).

Despite continued new arrivals into Bentiu PoC site predominantly from Rubkona, Koch and Guit during October, the IOM flow monitoring showed a higher net outflow of people. Joining family was the main reason provided by 81% of people leaving.² Overall, the Bentiu PoC site IOM population count recorded a slight decrease in population, from 115,020 in September to 112,140 in October.³

Similarly, a decrease in displacement from Central Unity State (Leer and Mayendit) to Nyal was observed in the October trend tracking. REACH Port Monitoring in Nyal recorded a sharp **decrease in IDPs arriving in Nyal by port, from 248 IDPs in September to 124 IDPs recorded in October.**⁴ This may be attributable to the increase in food drops in

Figure 2: Primary reported reasons that newly arrived IDPs in Bentiu PoC left their previous location, October 2017

1. Insecurity	45%
2. Far from family	23%
3. Lack of health services	18%



Figure 3: Primary reported reasons newly arrived IDPs in Bentiu PoC came to their current location, October 2017

1. Security	49%
2. Joining family	23%
3. Lack of health services	19%



Leer and Mayendit or changed displacement patterns, but a full explanation requires further examination. IDPs interviewed cited a lack of food and healthcare as primary push factors for leaving their previous location.⁵

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Demographic profile

Host population in assessed settlements

Overall, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting depopulation remained high, with 56% reporting that half or more of the local community had left, similar to 58% in September. Observed movements regarding depopulation in assessed settlements were consistent with displacement trends described above, suggesting that depopulation increased especially in parts of Northern Unity State such as Rubkona (86%) and Guit (76%) as well as Central Unity, Koch (92%) and to a lesser extent Leer and Mayendit.

Across the state in October, 11% of assessed settlements reported that no members of the local community remained in the settlement, which was almost the same as September (10%). Depopulation was most notable in assessed settlements in Mayendit, Leer and Guit where 20%, 18% and 14% of assessed settlements respectively reported that all of local community had left, which may be linked to general insecurity in those areas. In October, increased reports of local communities living far in the bush were observed (4% of

assessed settlements overall), especially in counties such as Mayendit (20%) and Leer (9%), which may reflect local communities perceiving some bush areas to be safer. FGD participants have also reported some local communities moving to remote locations after fighting in Nhialdiu during October and facing challenges in accessing food.

IDP population in assessed settlements

The majority (65%) of assessed settlements with IDP presence reported that most of the IDPs are living together with the host community, slightly decreasing from 82% reported in September. This was followed by 22% of assessed settlements reporting the majority is living in spontaneous settlements, as well as 9% reporting that IDPs were living in the bush. This was predominantly reported in conflict-affected Mayendit, Leer and Koch, which may have prevented the local communities from hosting IDPs.

Of the 42% of assessed settlements reporting an IDP presence, 74% also reported that the majority or all of the IDP population are female. Similar to previous months, this may be linked to ongoing conflict across the state, taking men away from the home. An exception is found in Panyijiar where more than half of assessed settlements (56%) reported equal gender representation amongst IDP populations.

Food Security and Livelihoods

Despite the harvest season, adequate access to food fell below 50% of assessed settlements in October, the lowest it has been

2 South Sudan, CCCM, Site Profile, Bentiu PoC, October 2017.

3 South Sudan, CCCM, Population Count, Bentiu PoC, October 2017.

4 REACH South Sudan, Nyal Port Monitoring Fact Sheet, October 2017. These are

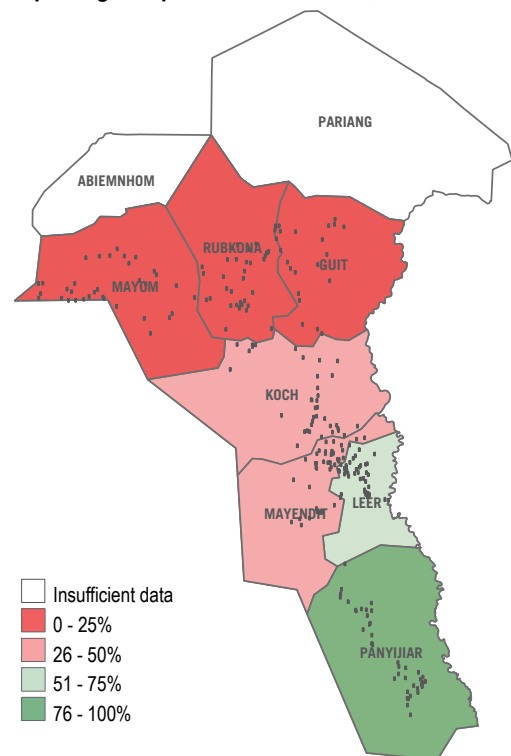
indicative trends; REACH does not record all arrivals and departures.

5 Ibid.

since March 2017.⁶ Only 48% of assessed settlements in October reported adequate access to food, decreasing substantially from the 78% reported in September. Access to food varied between counties (see Map 3) as steady access in Panyijiar contrasted with decreasing access reported in Northern Unity (Guit, Rubkona and Mayom).

As illustrated by Figure 4, the proportion of of settlements reporting adequate access to food is similar to the 40% recorded one year prior in October 2016. Improvements

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food, October 2017



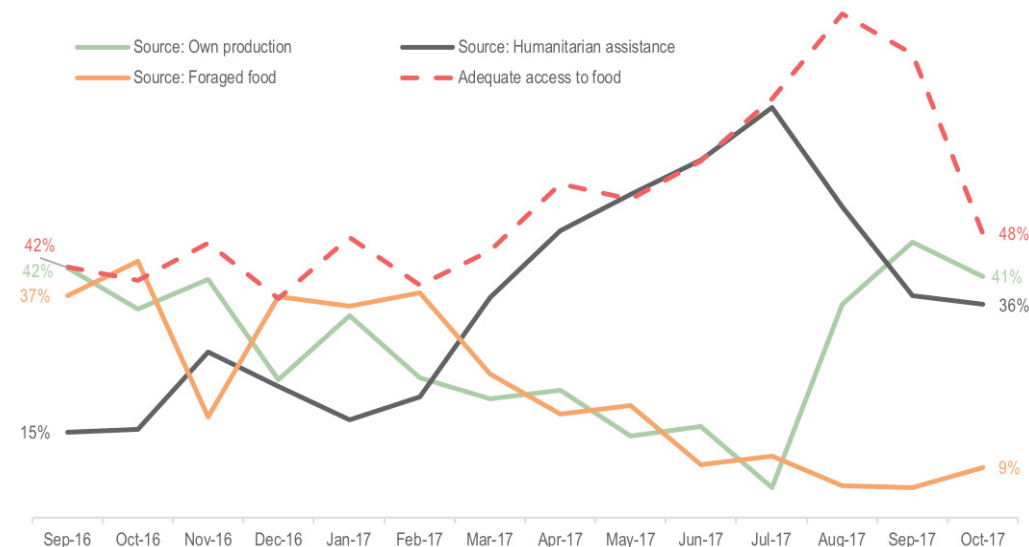
between February and August can likely be attributed to an upscale of humanitarian assistance in central Unity as well as the first crop harvest in August, which may have been a complimentary food source to the food received during distributions in parts of the state. In October, assessed settlements cited cultivation as a main food source (41%) across Unity. This trend was especially pronounced in Panyijiar (93%) and Guit Counties (78%). Additionally, 36% reported humanitarian assistance as their main food source, almost the same as September (37%), especially in Northern Unity.

Although both IDPs and local communities face challenges due to insecurity and displacement, livelihood activities were relatively diverse. Across Unity, the majority of assessed settlements reported having access to land for cultivation (93%), however only 65% of settlements reported having agricultural inputs such as seeds and tools. Reflective of this, 65% of assessed settlements reported subsistence farming as the primary livelihood activity in October (Figure 5), similar to the 73% reported in September. Followed by livestock selling (54%) and fishing (53%) across the state.

Northern Unity (Guit, Rubkona and Mayom)

In October, adequate access to food was the lowest in Northern Unity (Guit, Rubkona and Mayom). Only 14% of assessed settlements in Guit, 15% in Rubkona and 21% in Mayom reported having adequate access to food. Similar access levels were seen in Guit during

Figure 4: Primary food source per proportion of assessed settlements vs. reported adequate access to food, September 2016-October 2017



September (25%), however, sharp decreases were reported in Rubkona (80% decrease) and Mayom (86% decrease).

All assessed settlements without adequate access to food in Rubkona and 73% in Guit cited unsafe access to land as the main reason preventing adequate access to food. Stopping of food distributions was also reported by 27% of assessed settlements in Guit and can be linked to insecurity. Clashes in Nimni during October led to the suspension of food distribution activities.⁷

The main source of food in Northern Unity reported by assessed settlements was cultivation (35%), predominantly reported in Guit County (78%). This was consistent

with 90% of assessed settlements in Guit reporting planting crops for sustenance. Unsafe access to land combined with a dryer climate, however, limits the population's ability to produce enough food through agricultural means. Among assessed settlements, an increased reliance on supplemental livelihood activities was also reported, including fishing (87%) and livestock selling (50%).

In contrast, assessed settlements in Rubkona reported humanitarian assistance as their primary food source (40%), followed by cultivation (33%) and borrowing from friends and family (17%). Planting crops for sustenance was also reported as a livelihood source by 93% of assessed settlements and livestock selling by 68%. Cultivation outputs

6 REACH South Sudan, Unity Situation Overview, March 2017.

7 OCHA South Sudan, Humanitarian Bulletin 17, South Sudan, November 2017.

may not have been sufficient to meet the population food needs, however, which would explain reported food consumption gaps and increasing reliance on humanitarian assistance.

Forty-five percent (45%) of assessed settlements reported having access to functioning markets across Northern Unity. Market access was reportedly the highest in Mayom with 79% of assessed settlements reporting access to a market, as compared to Rubkona (29%) and Guit (19%). Only four percent (4%) of total assessed settlements reported buying goods as the primary food source in October, all of which was in Mayom.

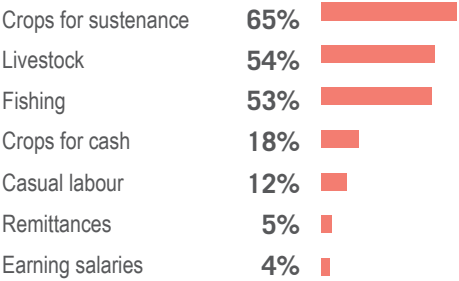
Low levels of market access and purchasing as the main source of food is likely due to disrupted supply routes as a result of insecurity. Nevertheless, with the progression of the dry season, traders in Mayom are expected to increase activities by road, facilitating further food access through market purchases.

Central Unity (Koch, Mayendit and Leer)

Central Unity experienced a decrease in access to food, likely attributable to increased conflict in the area. Three quarters (76%) of assessed settlements in September reported adequate access to food, whereas 54% reported adequate access to food in October.

Due to the continued volatility of the security situation in central Unity, 55% of assessed settlements reported inadequate access to food, further reporting unsafe planting conditions as the primary reason for this.

Figure 5: Proportion of assessed settlements across Unity reporting that at least some members of the community engage in livelihood sources, October 2017



Furthermore, 14% of assessed settlements located in Leer and Koch reported the halting of food distributions as the primary reason for a lack of adequate access to food.

Southern Unity (Panyijiar)

In contrast to Northern and Central Unity, adequate access to food remained constant in Panyijiar. Ninety-three percent (93%) of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food in October (Map 3), similar to 100% of assessed settlements reporting the same during September. In contrast to other counties in the state, assessed settlements in Panyijiar reported a more diversified livelihood profile, include selling livestock (95%), growing crops for sustenance (93%), growing crops for selling (63%), and fishing (56%). According to KIs, fishing becomes more prevalent and viable as the water levels decrease in the dry season, potentially further bolstering livelihoods in Panyijiar.

Coping Strategies

Reflective of low levels of adequate access to food in Unity, assessed settlements frequently reported moderate to severe use of consumption and livelihoods-based coping strategies.

Indicative of food shortages, consumption-based coping strategies were common. Fifty percent (50%) of assessed settlements reported limiting the size of their meals, while 30% reported buying less expensive food, and a further 26% reported reducing the number of meals eaten in a day. In Mayendit and Rubkona counties, severe coping strategies were reported. Nearly a quarter of assessed settlements (23% and 21% respectively) reported skipping meals for entire days, a practice that is often ranked by focus group participants as one of the most severe consumption-based coping strategies.

In response to a deterioration of normal livelihoods, the coping strategies aimed at improving resource capacity reported by assessed settlements, included abnormal levels of fishing or hunting (52%), borrowing food (42%) and gathering wild food (38%). The sale of cattle to meet immediate household (HH) needs was reported by 36% of assessed settlements in October, with a similar proportion reported in September. Selling cattle is typically considered a more severe livelihood-based coping strategy as it reduces HHs' assets, thus, limiting the HHs ability to mitigate negative shocks in the long run.

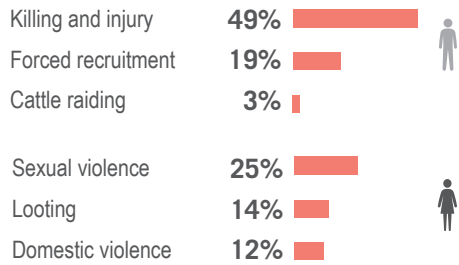
Despite the harvest season, the reliance on coping strategies throughout Unity suggests that food insecurity remains a pressing issue, particularly in areas affected by conflict. Further, the prevalence of severe and moderately severe strategies suggests that food insecurity is unlikely to improve in the future, as households prioritize short-term food consumption over long-term livelihoods.

Protection

Likely a result of continued conflict among armed actors, only 17% of assessed settlements reported that residents felt safe in October. Furthermore, 36% of assessed settlements reported incidents during which civilians were killed or property was damaged, similar to the 41% reported in September.⁸ These incidents were particularly reported in conflict-affected Mayendit (69%) and Leer (59%), which also had high incidences of looting reported by assessed settlements, 74% and 63% respectively.

In October, protection concerns for both men and women remained similar to preceding

Figure 6: Most commonly cited protection concerns for men and women, October 2017



8. These two indicators has been newly added to the AoK tool, therefore no comparative data for previous months available.

months with 25% of assessed settlements reporting sexual violence being the primary protection concern for women (see Figure 6). The primary protection concern for men across the state continued to be killing and injury, reported by 49% of assessed settlements, and especially reported in Mayendit (78%) and Leer (63%). As seen in Figure 6, it was followed by concerns about forced recruitment, predominantly reported by assessed settlements in Guit (86%) and Rubkona (30%) counties.

Shelter

Amidst continued insecurity in Unity, assessed communities reported an uptick in shelter destruction and an increasing reliance on less permanent structures, especially among IDPs.

Local community shelter conditions

Consistent with previous months, 64% of assessed settlements in Unity reported that tukuls were the primary shelter structures for the local community, followed by rakoobas (32%). The proportion of assessed

Figure 7: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting tukul as primary local community shelter type vs. reported shelter damage

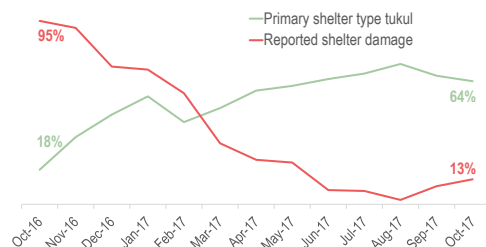
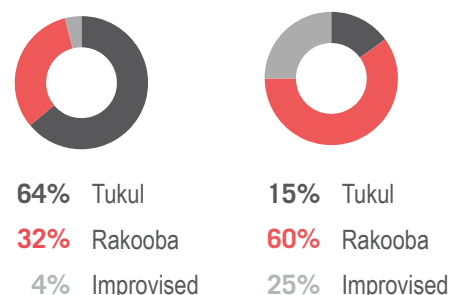


Figure 8: Primary shelter type of local community (left) and IDP community (right), October 2017



settlements reporting that local communities lived in improvised shelters remained almost negligible (4%), but it may still be reflective of the shelter destruction due to fighting during October (13%) and a lack of reconstruction of shelters.

As had been reported in previous months, Leer and Mayendit continued to experience the worst shelter conditions for local communities, with 34% and 28% of assessed settlements respectively reporting the destruction of shelters during October. Overall, as illustrated by Figure 7, since August 2017, there has been a slight increase in reported shelter destruction, reverting positive trends of a decline in shelter reversing since October 2016. This is likely attributable to the clashes reported in Koch, Mayendit, southern Rubkona and Guit in September and October 2017.

IDP shelter condition

Assessed settlements have reported worsened IDP shelter conditions in October.

Reports of IDPs living in improvised shelter increased from 7% of assessed settlements in September to 25% in October. This trend is also reflected in the decrease in the reported use of rakoobas by IDPs from 74% of assessed settlements in September to 60% in October. Tukuls as a primary shelter type was only reported by 15% of assessed settlements.

The increase in the use of improvised shelter was predominantly cited by assessed settlements in Mayendit (48%) and Leer (33%) Counties, which have a high IDP presence coupled with increased shelter destruction. This suggests both that IDPs were likely displaced more than once and that the local community's ability to absorb IDP shelter needs remained very low. In order to meet IDP shelter needs assessed settlements identified plastic sheets (33%) and mosquito nets (26%) as the two main non-food items necessary, especially in northern and central Unity.

WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)

Access to improved water remains minimal across Unity State. Just under half (49%) of assessed settlements in October reported the presence of boreholes, similar to the 55% reported in September. Presence of boreholes was especially low in Guit (27%), Mayendit

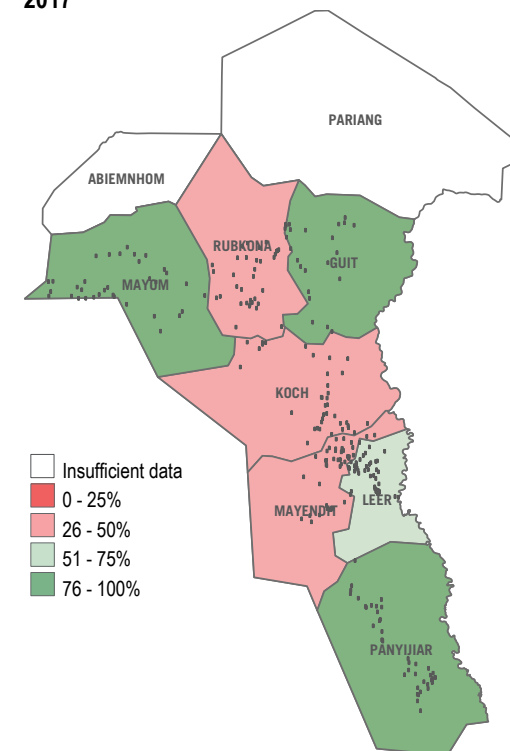
Figure 9: Access to boreholes, October 2017



(34%) and Rubkona (39%). Of the 39% of assessed settlements in Rubkona reporting the presence of boreholes, only 33% indicated that these boreholes were functional, much lower than the average of 85% across the state. This may also be linked to the suspension of water, sanitation and hygiene activities in Bentiu and Rubkona Towns due to humanitarian access constraints.⁹

Contributing to poor hygiene and sanitation condition in the state and consistent

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to health services, October 2017



9. OCHA, Humanitarian Access Snapshot, South Sudan, October 2017

Figure 10: Main reasons that health care is not available, October 2017



with previous months, 93% of assessed settlements across Unity reported that open defecation remained a common practice within settlements in October. Comparatively, it was far above the countrywide AOK average of 63% of assessed settlements reporting open defecation in October.

The combination of minimal access to improved water sources and open defecation is a cause for concern. Increased case-loads of cholera and acute diarrhoea are often caused by poor WASH conditions; a serious issue that affected Unity State in previous years.

Health

Over the past year, access to health services has increased from 24% of assessed settlements reporting access in October 2016 to 64% in October 2017. This could be attributed to the increased health interventions in Guit, Koch, Rubkona and Mayom and rapid response missions in Leer and Mayendit. The proximity of accessible health services, however, is reportedly decreasing. Of the assessed settlements reporting access to health services, only 35% reported that the services could be reached by walking for

one hour or less, decreasing from the 58% reported in September. This is likely caused by the destruction of health facilities, as well as the inability to access nearby health services because of insecurity along the route, especially reported in Guit County.

Similar to September, assessed settlements in Rubkona (31%) and Koch (43%) continued to report the lowest access to health services as seen in Map 4. This is likely attributable to the continued clashes in both counties during October, which led to service delivery interruptions as well as the relocation of aid workers. In addition, concerns of health access deterioration can be expected in Guit following clashes in Nimni where good health facilities were reportedly vandalised and looted.¹⁰

Several health challenges appear to have predated the conflict. Half of the assessed settlements without access to healthcare (49%) reported that facilities were never there or too distant, which suggests that access to healthcare in remote settlements was low even prior to the start of the conflict. This dynamic is exacerbated, however, by reports from assessed settlements of a lack of healthcare workers in the area (17%) and that facilities having been destroyed due to violence (15%) (see Figure 10).

Similarly, malaria continued to be the main health concern reported by 76% of assessed settlements across Unity. In addition, 10 children have reportedly died from Measles and over 100 have been admitted for treatment of this disease to health facilities in Panyijiar

County during October.¹¹

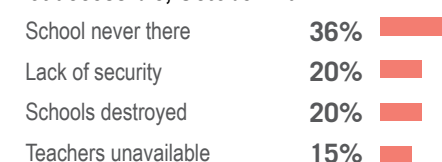
Education

In October access to educational services remained especially low in conflict-affected regions within Unity. Forty-five percent (45%) of assessed settlements reported that education services were accessible, and reported accessibility varied considerably across counties. Ninety percent (90%) or more of assessed settlements in Panyijiar County continued to report access to educational services, while assessed settlements in Koch, Rubkona and Mayendit (some of the most conflict-affected counties in Unity) reported the lowest access at 32%, 32% and 33% respectively.

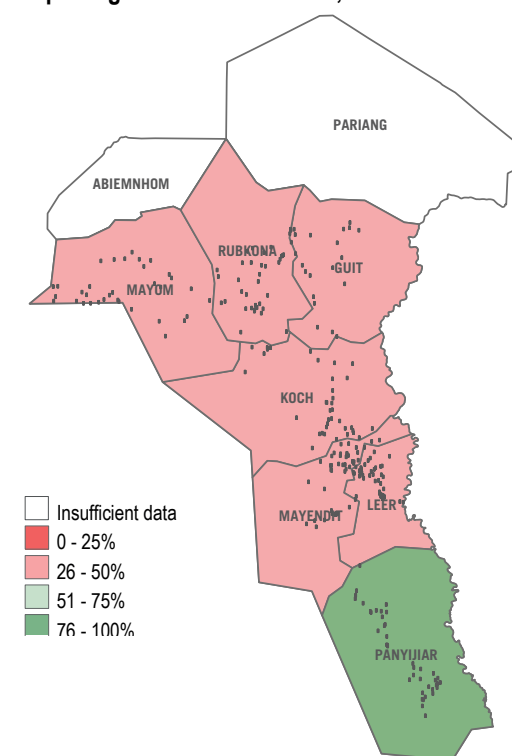
Where education was inaccessible in October, 36% of assessed settlements reported that the main reason for no education services was because facilities were never available (see Figure 11). This was followed by conflict-related reasons such as insecurity (20%), destruction of education facilities during conflict (20%) and teachers being displaced or feeling unsafe to work (15%).

Similar to previous months, reported attendance rates indicated that far more

Figure 11: Four main reasons that education is not accessible, October 2017



Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to education, October 2017



boys attended school than girls. While only 10% of settlements with access to education reported that more than half or all of the girls attend school, 54% reported the same for boys. Where children were unable to access educational services, high school fees was a common reason preventing both boys (21%) and girls (17%) from attending school. In addition, the lack of school supplies (23%) and the need to work in the home (22%) were reported as separate inhibiting factors for boys and girls, respectively.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ South Sudan Tribune, Measles kill 10, more admitted in S.Sudan's Payijiar County.

Conclusion

Following a few months of stable improvements across displacement and access to service indicators between September 2016 and July/August 2017, renewed conflict in Northern and Central Unity during September and October 2017 has negatively affected displacement trends and humanitarian needs in October. The relocation of aid workers for reasons of insecurity further undermined humanitarian services.

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in October has considerably reduced from 78% in September to 48% in October. Previously improved levels of food access were likely due to the food distributions in response to localized famine declaration in February coupled with first harvests in August. Food stocks are expected to seasonally decline as the dry season progresses, however, and an increase reliance on food assistance is likely. In the absence of continued food assistance, a more accelerated decline in food security is possible.

Even though access to health services improved over the course of the year from 24% one year ago to 64% in October, likely due to increased health interventions, fighting during October 2017 limited implementation of activities due to access constraints. This especially affected Rubkona and Koch counties that already experience the lowest access to healthcare. Inaccessibility of and

distance to healthcare services, as well as a lack of staff, remained the most cited reasons for assessed settlements not accessing health services.

Similarly, WASH indicators did not show any notable improvements between September and October. The presence of boreholes remained low, with 49% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of boreholes, comparative to the country-wide average of 73%.

Shelter indicators are reportedly worsening, with the majority of IPDs among assessed communities primarily living in less permanent structures - rakooba (60%) and improvised shelter (25%). Assessed settlements identified plastic sheets and mosquito nets as two main non-food items necessary to meet IDP shelter needs. The need for portable NFIs will likely increase, given the probability of continued population movements due to insecurity.

Humanitarian needs seem to be most severe in conflict-affected northern and central Unity, where communities report a reliance on humanitarian food assistance yet continued insecurity constrains humanitarian activities. The recent reversing of previously positive trends in reported access to food and services further highlights the need for continued humanitarian assistance to meet growing needs in Unity.

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 or to our global office: geneva@reach-initiative.org.

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