

Situation Overview: Displacement and Intentions in Central Equatoria State

South Sudan, October 2016

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Introduction

Following the outbreak of violence in Juba on 8 July between the Government-led SPLA and former opposition SPLA-IO, fighting has spread to most of South Sudan's Greater Equatoria region. Most towns have been attacked by armed groups, and the majority of the population has sought refuge in the bush, or fled to Uganda, where 362,478 refugees had now fled as of 31 October.¹ The situation shows very few signs of abating, and refugees have continued to arrive at an average rate of 2,654 people per day as of early November.²

In response to the crisis, a series of assessments have been carried out across Greater Equatoria to build an understanding of conditions in a region that is difficult to access for humanitarian responders due to continuing insecurity.³

This report presents findings of an assessment conducted by REACH between 10-13 October in Juba UN House PoC 1 and PoC 3 on the situation in hard-to-reach or inaccessible areas, as well as displacement patterns, in Central Equatoria. Using and applying its "Area of Knowledge"⁴ methodology, information was gathered on the situation of people remaining in their areas of origin, including their access to basic services, and the likelihood of further displacement, both within South Sudan and cross-border to countries like Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

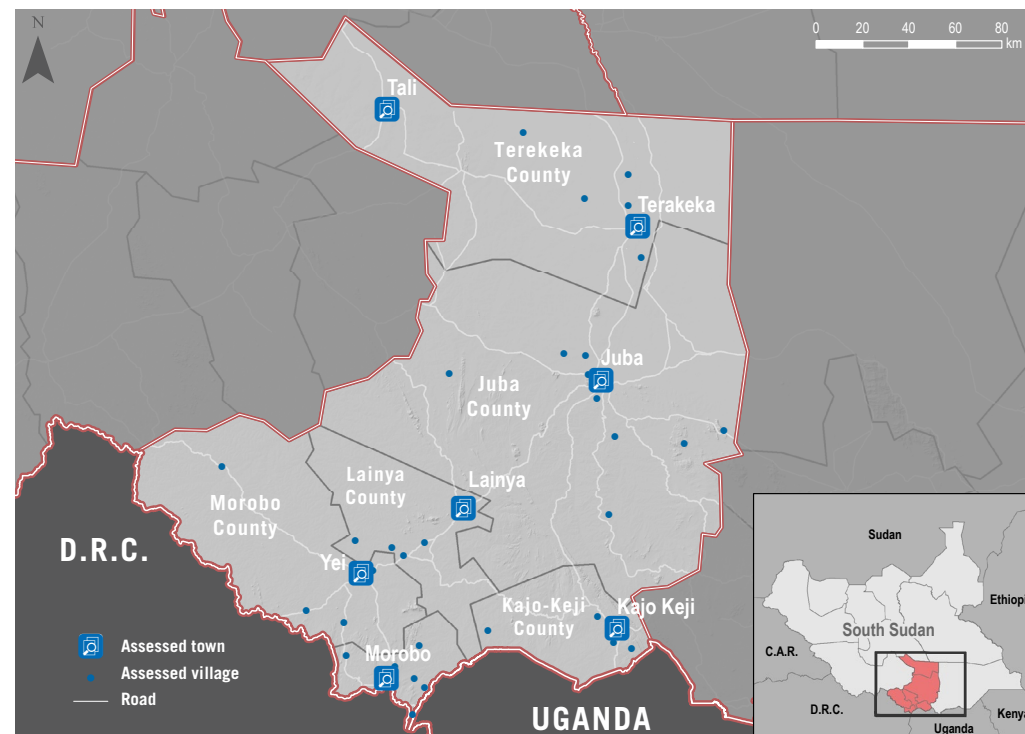
Information was collected through 68 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) covering 50 separate settlements across all of Central Equatoria's six counties: Terekeka, Juba, Lainya, Kajo-Keji, Morobo, and Yei. A focus group discussion (FGD) involving 11 participants from all six counties was held to provide contextual information on the information collected through the KIIs. Participants came from settlements across Central Equatoria State (see map 1), including all major towns and surrounding rural communities. Due to the purposive nature of the data collection, findings should be considered as indicative only.

Key findings are presented in this report under two main sections:

- Displacement dynamics of IDPs who have fled their homes in Central Equatoria following the renewal of violence on 8 July
- Intentions, conditions and access to services for remaining IDPs and non-displaced populations in Central Equatoria

Displacement

IDPs reported being displaced in three chronologically overlapping phases, based on geographic location: 1) Displacement from Juba following 8 July; 2) Displacement from Southern counties from 9 July; 3) Influx of IDPs to Terekeka County in Northern County in Northern Central Equatoria.




Map 1: Assessed settlements in Central Equatoria State, October 2016

Initial fighting in Juba (Phase 1):

Most respondents reported being displaced following the outbreak of conflict in Juba on 8 July. Those living on the outskirts of Juba fled south to Uganda along major roads; those on the north side fled to Terekeka. Residents who remained in the city either took refuge in their homes, or fled into the PoCs as fighting intensified.⁵ When the fighting ended, most returned to their homes, while a sizable minority joined the Ugandan Peoples Defence

1. UNHCR, South Sudan Situation: Regional Emergency Update, 16 - 31 October 2016
2. UNHCR, Uganda: South Sudan Refugee Situation (info-graphic), Biweekly update, 26 November 2016
3. Inter-Agency Needs Assessment, Mundri West, Mendri East, and Mvolo Counties, October 2016; CARE, Multi-Sector Rapid Needs Assessment Report, Imatong State, September 2016; OCHA, Inter-agency Needs Rapid Assessment Report.: Yei, Central Equatoria, 6-8 September 2016

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Force convoy heading south to Uganda, where they sought asylum.⁶

Fighting spreads to Southern Counties (Phase 2):

Conflict spread to Yei, Lainya, Morobo, and Kajo-Keji the 9 July. Displacement patterns varied between those with access to motor vehicles, who were quickly able to leave the country before the security situation deteriorated, and those who did not, and had to flee to the bush.⁷ Those who either owned a motor vehicle or could afford to pay for a ride were able to leave the country quickly, with those in Yei and Lainya often coming to Juba before joining the Ugandan convoy south. Most people with motorized transport in Kajo-Keji, Morobo, and others from Yei took the roads south to the Moyo and Kaya crossings to Uganda.

However, most people did not have access to motorized transport, and instead fled to nearby villages in the surrounding bush. Some returned to towns as the fighting subsided, but most stayed in hiding due to insecurity caused by the rapid proliferation of armed groups. Despite the general lack of services and dwindling food supplies in rural areas, all respondents reported insecurity to be the primary reason for their continued displacement.

Since late August, populations that have remained in hiding have begun to slowly leave for Uganda. The effective closure of roads by armed groups, which have set up

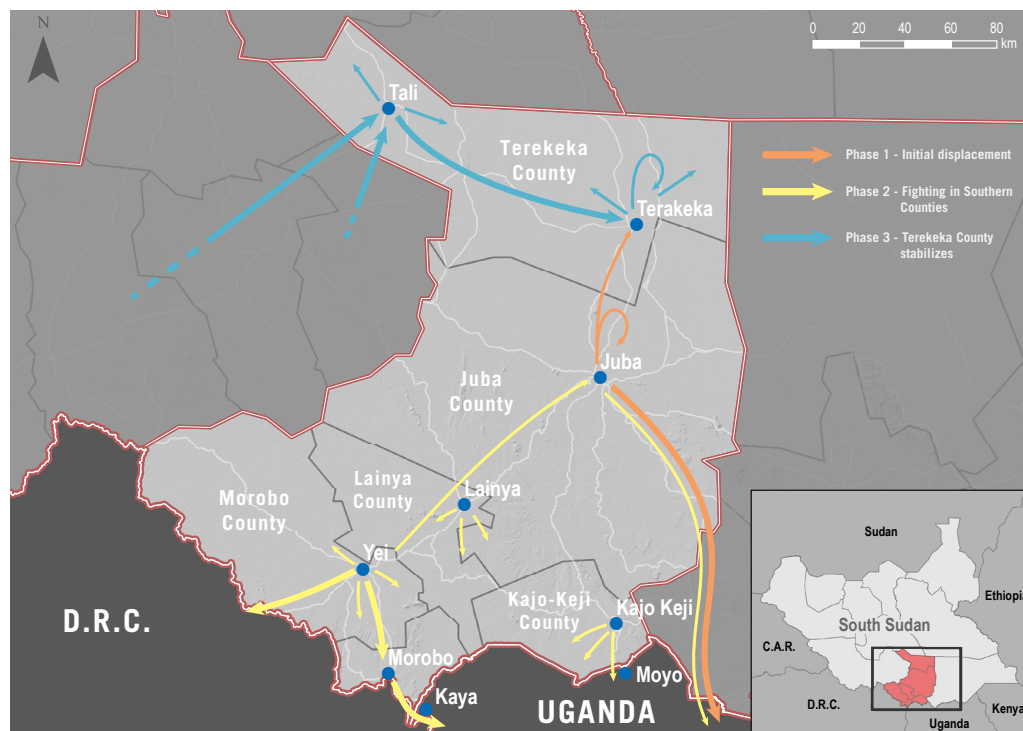
check points along all major roads in Central Equatoria State, forced most to travel through unmarked bush routes. These routes pass into Uganda via informal borders crossings, or by first crossing to the reception centre in Mbazi, DRC, before being transported by UNHCR shuttle to Uganda.

Terekeka County stabilizes (Phase 3):

Despite the turmoil in southern Central Equatoria, most of Northern Terekeka County has remained relatively peaceful. IDPs began to arrive in the western Tali area following the spread of fighting in Western Equatoria in early 2016, and were integrated with the local community. Along with Southern Central Equatoria, fighting spread to Tali in July, forcing most of the population to flee. Most fled to sanctuaries in the bush that have traditionally been used by the local community in times of crisis. Though none of these places have reportedly been attacked, limited access to food and other services eventually forced many to leave the area, either traveling south through the bush to Yei, Morobo, and eventually DRC and Uganda, or east to Terekeka.

Many in Terekeka reportedly fled the town during the crisis in anticipation of a possible attack, but returned when no violence occurred. Since August, the town has reportedly become crowded with IDPs from Tali and Juba, who fled there due to the prospect of security. As of October, the Juba-Terekeka road is reportedly secure, allowing some to return to Juba, though the majority have chosen to stay for security reasons.

Map 2: Displacement in Central Equatoria, July - October 2016



Situation in Areas of Knowledge

Remaining population

Key informants from 33 of 50 (66%) of settlements reported that a majority of the local community had not left the area. Most of this remaining population is reportedly hiding from armed groups in villages deep in the bush, where security is better but essential services are limited or non-existent. Movement remains difficult due to the presence of armed groups on roads and in towns. It is likely to become

problematic for people's well-being, as food and other essential items run out, and services become overstretched.

Most people living in towns near the border have fled the country to Uganda or DRC. Those remaining in towns are mostly the elderly and those who have not been able to acquire motorized transport. Services are available, though increasingly strained, and most reportedly would leave if they had the means.

4. Formerly known as "Area of Origin."

5. CIVIC, The July 2016 Violence in Juba and the UN response, October 2016

6. In mid-July, a UPDF military convoy was sent to evacuate 3,000 Uganda nationals from Juba. On the convoy's return from Juba, thousands of South Sudanese asylum-seekers traveled

alongside the convoy in order to leave the country safely. Many were concerned that they would not be able to leave if they traveled by themselves (UNHCR, 60,000 flee South Sudan's recent violence to neighbouring countries, 2 August 2016).

In terms of security, Terekeka remains the only exception, with most respondents reporting the town and surrounding villages to be safe. Most of the population had not left the area and has no intention of leaving. The roads are reportedly safe, and people make routine trips there to purchase food and other supplies. Terekeka County is also the only area to report hosting IDPs from outside the area, with approximately 1,500 IDPs from Juba living in and around Terekeka Town and an unknown number from Western Equatoria in Tali.

Food Security and Livelihoods

Thirty-seven of 50 (74%) settlements reported that they do not have adequate access to food. Most communities were able to cultivate before the crisis, but in Terekeka a lack of

rain stunted crop yields, making most people dependent upon markets for food. Counties south of Juba reported a successful growing season and good harvest. However, the conflict forced most people to abandon their crops in fields and granaries, where they then were looted by armed groups or spoiled. In some places, such as Kajo-Keji and Morobo, some crops remain in the fields, but people are unable to access them due to the presence of armed groups.

Most respondents reported eating only one meal a day, usually cassava, though many settlements have supplemented this with wild food such as mangos. Settlements reported on average having only 4 weeks until their remaining food stocks ran out. A food

distribution in by WFP was reported in Lainya in October, but lack of humanitarian access due to the security situation has meant that only those near the main roads and Lainya Town were reached, a very small number of people.

Thirty-two of 50 (64%) settlements reported access to a functioning market. In Juba, Yei, Lainya, Terekeka, and Kajo-Keji, markets are open, but prices are extremely high – often too high for most people to afford. The markets in smaller towns like Morobo and Tali have reportedly been abandoned. Most people are reported to still possess most of their livestock, including goats, cattle, and sheep, which are hidden with them in the bush. In areas with access to markets, most people have resorted to selling off their livestock to be able to purchase increasingly expensive food.

Figure 1: Estimated population in Central Equatoria State, October 2016

County	Affected by conflict	Pre-crisis county population ⁸	Reported percentage of local community remaining	Estimated remaining local community ⁹
Juba	Moderate	492,966	76% - 90%	409,162
Kajo-Keji	Moderate	265,385	51% - 75%	167,193
Lainya	Severe	143,181	51% - 75%	90,204
Morobo	Severe	188,324	51% - 75%	118,644
Terekeka	Minimal	176,029	91% - 100%	167,226
Yei	Severe	260,723	51% - 75%	164,225
Total	Severe	1,526,608	51% - 75%	1,116,683

Figure 1: Food and market access:

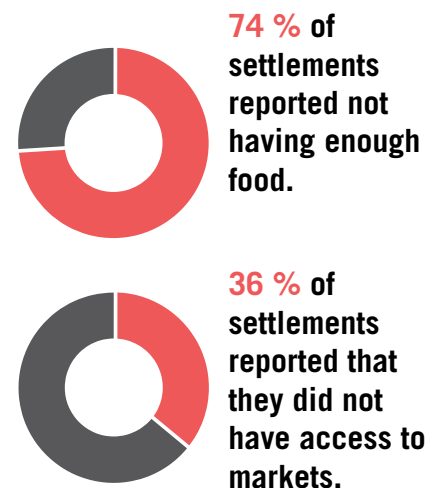
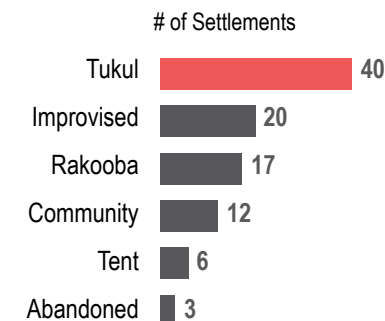


Figure 2: Most reported shelter types:

Participants could choose multiple responses



Shelter & NFIs

Forty-two of 50 (84%) settlements reported that at least some of their shelters had been burned during the conflict, mostly in villages and near major roads in Lainya, Yei, and Morobo. Many of the shelters in Morobo and Lainya towns have reportedly been burned as well. Kajo-Keji town is unharmed, though many remote villages are reported to have been destroyed. Terekeka and Tali towns are reportedly untouched, though many houses abandoned by displaced people have begun to collapse due to termites and a lack of maintenance. Due to the overall lack of shelter, most people sleep outside, tough families must crowd into the remaining tukuls when it rains.

Forty-four of 50 (88%) assessed settlements reported that less than half of people are sleeping under mosquito nets. Prior to the crisis, mosquito nets were common in towns, along with other NFIs like blankets and cookware, but they were reportedly stolen

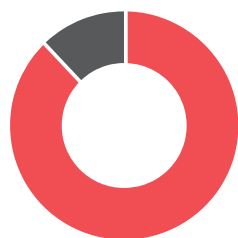
7. REACH, Situation Overview: Displacement and Intentions in Greater Equatoria, September 2016

8. United Nations, South Sudan Population Estimates, 2014

9. Population estimates were calculated by multiplying the modal response for the reported range

of how many local community were reported to be remaining at the county level, and multiplying the median percentage of each range by the estimates pre-crisis population.

Figure 3: Education access:



12 % of settlements reported that educational services were not available

during the ensuing conflict. Because Central Equatoria was not directly impacted by the conflict prior to July 2016, the Shelter/NFI cluster has not led a response in the area yet, and, most rural areas do not have adequate mosquito nets or NFIs.

Education

Forty-four of 50 (88%) settlements reported that educational services are available in the area. However, most KIs reported that the majority of students and teachers have fled, causing a decline in attendance and quality of education. In addition, most of the schools have reportedly been looted, leaving the remaining local community and IDPs with little or no educational supplies. In Terekeka County, where school supplies have not been looted and teachers have not fled, the influx of IDPs has caused classroom sizes to increase, straining available resources.

Health

Forty-five of 50 (90%) settlements reported that they were unable to access healthcare. Only in Juba, Yei, Terekeka and their surrounding settlements were health centres

said to be functioning, though all of those interviewed noted a lack of adequate drugs and other health supplies. FGD respondents stated that in Morobo, drugs were provided by a local church. In all other major towns and villages, healthcare is reported to be absent. Malaria was identified as the greatest health concern, though malnutrition, fever, and diarrhoea were cited as being prevalent as well.

Water and Sanitation

Thirty-nine of 50 (78%) settlements reported having insufficient access to safe drinking water. Most large towns still have functioning clean water sources, which are accessible by the population. Most areas were serviced by boreholes, though Yei also has an extensive tap-stand system. An exception to this is Terekeka and Tali, where there are too few boreholes to provide enough water for the community. As a result, most people there were reported to be getting their water from

Figure 4: Most reported health issues:

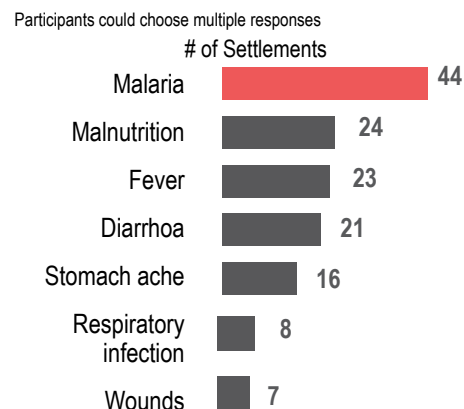


Figure 5: Clean water and sanitation access:



78 % of settlements reported that they did not have access to clean water



22 % of settlements reported that most people were defecating in the bush

nearby rivers. Most villages across the state are reported to have boreholes, though they were often not enough to service the population. The presence of armed groups has made it dangerous for many hiding around rural villages to access boreholes, forcing most people to get unprotected water from rivers and streams.

Unlike many other parts of the country, most people in Central Equatoria used latrines before the crisis, and continue to do so; only 22% of communities reported that most people were defecating in the bush. However, many FGD respondents reported that latrine usage has declined due to the presence of armed groups; in many villages, it is often too dangerous to access latrines without being discovered.

Protection

In contrast to the last REACH report in September, aggressive patrols by armed groups were reported to have declined significantly, and villages are now reported to be relatively safe.¹⁰ However, continued fears of insecurity and the presence of armed groups make protection an ongoing concern for most settlements; of 50 settlements, only 2 (4%) reported that they felt safe at all times outside of their homes. Sexual violence, looting/criminality, and being killed or injured remain concerns for the vast majority of assessed settlements.

However, according to most respondents, movement between settlements remains dangerous. The vast majority of settlements reported armed attacks against civilians, inter-communal violence, and general, unspecified violence as major concerns. South of Juba, checkpoints manned by armed groups are reportedly active along all major roads, and many FGD participants reported that people have been robbed or killed after being stopped along roads. FGD participants from Yei reported not being allowed to leave town by armed groups. An exception to this were respondents from settlements in the Terekeka area, which was reported to be secure.

Conclusion

Since the escalation of conflict in South Sudan three months ago, Central Equatoria remains in a state of crisis. Active fighting has mostly subsided since September, though

armed groups have entrenched themselves around towns and along major roads. A recent UNHCR report that armed groups are active along the Congo and Uganda borders, preventing potential refugees from leaving the country safely.¹¹

The Terekeka Town area remains largely untouched by conflict, though a lack of rainfall that has lowered crop yields and influx of IDPs from Juba and Western Equatoria have severely stressed resources among the local community.¹² Shelters are overcrowded, and all remaining resources are shared with a growing number of IDPs. Safe drinking water was scarce in rural areas before the crisis, and remain so now. Health and education services are overstretched and lack sufficient resources. The opening of the road to Juba has allowed many to supplement their incomes by trading in markets there, though the economic crisis has made prices prohibitively expensive.

Figure 6: Top reported protection concerns when traveling between settlements:

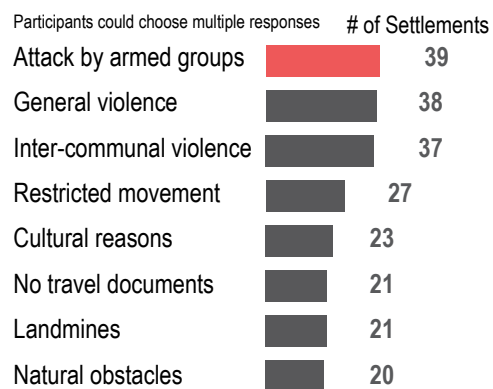















































Table 2: Level of service access in Central Equatoria, by Town and surrounding area

Assessment Area	Access to Protection	Access to FSL	Access to WASH	Access to Health	Access to Education	Access to Shelter
Juba						
Kajo-Keji						
Lainya						
Morobo						
Tali						
Terekeka						
Yei						

While protection concerns in most of Terekeka County are minimal, further west, near Tali, spill-over from conflict in Western Equatoria has led to many conflict-related concerns.

South of Juba, most people remain trapped in villages, unable to leave due to fears of being attacked by armed groups. Food stocks have shrunk due to lower than expected rainfall or conflict, and the population is increasingly dependent upon wild foods foraged in the bush. Unable to leave, they have suffered from an absence of clean water, health, or education services, and face physical harm by armed groups if discovered. Increasing numbers of people have been willing to risk travel; UNCHR reported that 5,892 refugees arrived in Uganda on 1 November, bringing the total number of new arrivals since 7 July to over 267,480.¹³

Though levels of violence have lessened, areas of Central Equatoria most impacted by conflict remain difficult for humanitarians to access, and will likely remain so for the foreseeable future due to blocked roads and ongoing active conflict. The coming dry season is normally a time when food security improves and hunger is not a problem for most people. However, because most food stocks have been destroyed or stolen, and the economic crisis has made markets unaffordable, unless food aid can be sufficiently distributed to communities in need before the height of the dry season and beginning of the yearly “hunger gap,” people in hiding will likely continue to risk the dangerous journey through the bush to the DRC or Uganda, currently the only areas where many in Central Equatoria can access life-sustaining services. Should the humanitarian situation in Central

-  Minimal or no access
-  Restricted or limited access
-  Sufficient or minimally restricted access

Equatoria continue to decline, new efforts by humanitarian actors will be required to provide basic services for the affected population, and the exodus of refugees into Uganda and DRC is likely to continue.

About REACH Initiative

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Visit www.reach-initiative.org and follow us @REACH_info.

11. UNHCR, South Sudan Operational Update 18/2016, 16-30 September 2016

12. South Sudan Humanitarian Project, Terekeka Country, 2016

13. UNHCR, Uganda: Emergency Update on the South Sudan Refugee Situation, Inter-agency daily #55, 26 October - 1 November 2016; UNHCR, Flash Statistical Update on South Sudanese