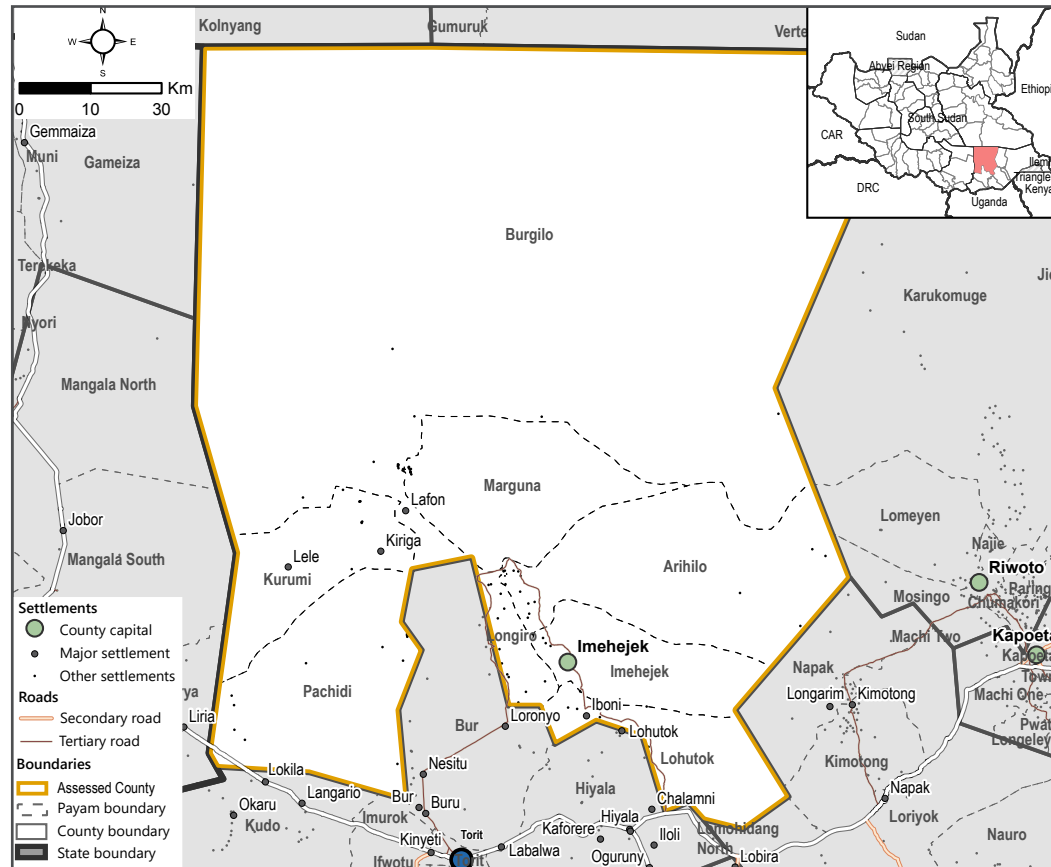


LAFON COUNTY - EASTERN EQUATORIA STATE

Map 0.1. Location of Lafon County within South Sudan indicating boundaries, settlements and roads¹



About REACH

REACH is a leading humanitarian initiative that collects primary data and produces in-depth analysis to help aid actors make evidence-based decisions in support of crisis-affected people. With this in mind, our flagship research programmes aim to inform the prioritisation of aid according to levels of need - both crisis-level planning and targeted rapid response - as well as decisions around appropriate modalities of aid. Through our team of assessment, data, geospatial, and thematic specialists, we promote the design of people-centred research and set standards for collecting and analysing rigorous, high quality data in complex environments. Visit www.reach-initiative.org and follow us [@REACH_info](https://twitter.com/REACH_info).

LAFON - KEY FACTS

- **2023 National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) population estimate: 85,210** (based on the 2008 census and the 2021 Population Estimation Survey)²
- **2024 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA) population estimate: 163,767** (based on the 2008 census, annual growth and attrition rates and displacement adjusted estimates)³
- **Area: 16,242 square kilometers**⁴
- **Population density: 10 persons per square kilometer**⁵
- **County capital: Imehejek**
- **Payams: Arihilo, Burgilo, Imehejek, Kurumi, Lohutok, Longiro, Marguna, Pachidi**⁵

Lafon is bordered to the north by Bor South and Pibor Counties in Jonglei State, to the west by Terekeka and Juba Counties in Central Equatoria State, to the south by Torit and Budi Counties and to the east by Kapoeta North County. **The County has gone through significant and divisive processes of administrative restructuring since 2005.** The County's name (Lafon or Lopa), its capital's location (Lafon or Imehejek) and how these issues affect access to resources and services have long been the subject of opposing views by different social groups inhabiting it.^{6,7} These processes culminated first in the 2012 creation of two administrative areas in the east (the 'Imehejek Corridor') and the west (the 'Lafon Corridor') of the County,⁸ and then in multiple efforts aimed at resolving the dispute. The latest of these saw the creation of the Imehejek Administrative Area in the eastern part of the County in July 2023.⁹

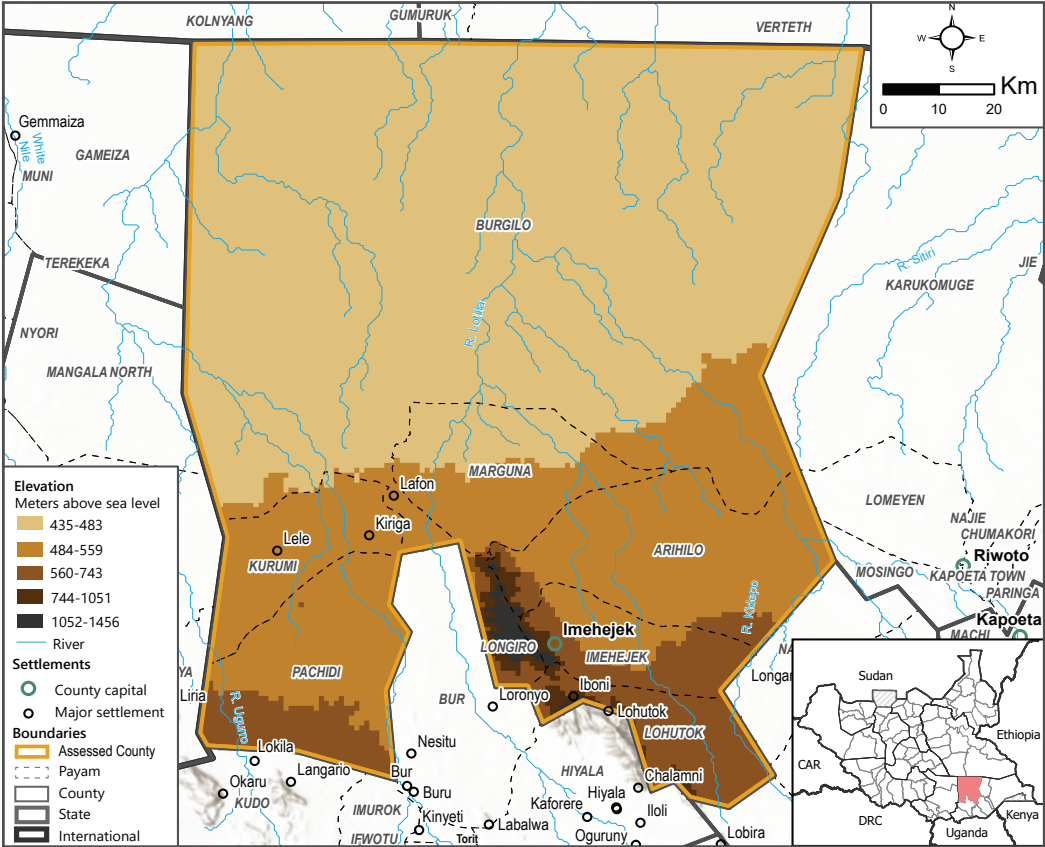
Lafon has long been grappling with nationwide tensions and localised conflict. During the second Sudanese civil war (1983-2005), opposing alliances at the national level fuelled intra-community divisions and intense fighting within the County.¹⁰ Despite the signing of the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Lafon remained a hotspot for localised inter-community disputes, while the subsequent South Sudanese conflict (2013-2018) exposed the County to both inflows of populations fleeing neighbouring conflict-affected areas and outflows of its residents due to insecurity.¹¹ Although the signing of the 2018 peace deal has been associated with a reduction in active fighting within the County in the short-term, volatility in its security environment has persisted in the following years, often disrupting livelihood activities.^{12,13} **Access to resources has constituted an important trigger of localised conflicts.** The County has experienced confrontations between sedentary groups and herders on the move, as well as competition between pastoralists over access to its flood plains during the dry season.¹⁴ However, **access to resources has also acted as a leverage for local peacebuilding**, as part of efforts aimed at promoting shared grazing areas and increased trade interactions, as was the case during the August 2021 inter-community dialogue.¹⁵ Overall, inter-community relations are best understood as part of complex systems of coexistence fostered by trade, mutual assistance in times of distress, and reconciliation efforts.¹⁶ Attempts at securing peace through local agreements have been documented since the early 1990s, although some of them were shattered by renewed instances of violence.^{17,18}

The compounded effects of insecurity and natural hazards (i.e., disruptive flood events and severe droughts) on livelihood activities **have consistently plunged Lafon in dire food security conditions.** Over the last four years, the County mostly faced acute food insecurity at the Crisis level (IPC level 3), while reaching the Emergency level (IPC Phase 4) between September and November 2023, following a severe drought in 2023.¹⁹ According to the 2025 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), **Lafon County was classified among the Counties showing severity of needs at level 4 out of 5.**²⁰

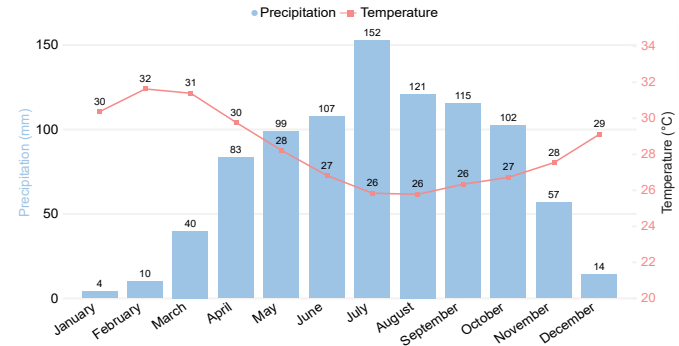
¹ Calculations using population figures in this County profile use the 2024 OCHA estimates.

1. CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

Map 1.1. Elevation in Lafon County²¹



Graph 1.1. Average monthly precipitation and temperature, Lafon County (1981-2024)^{22,23}



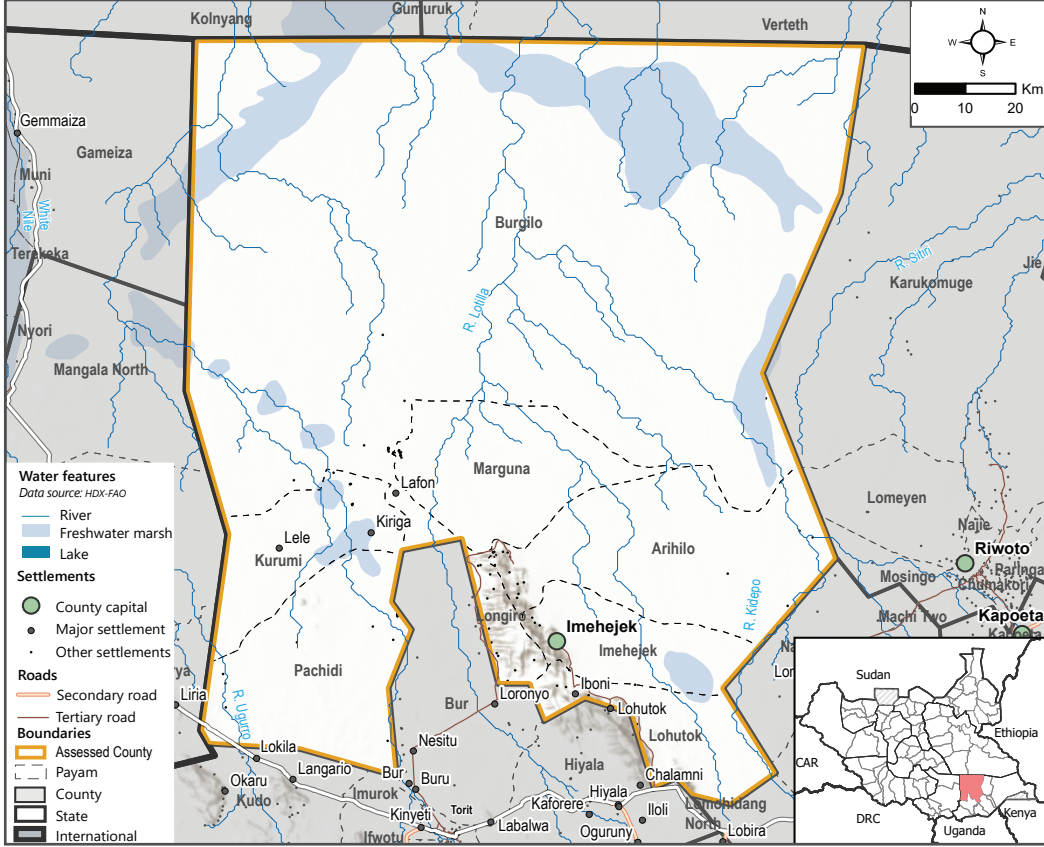
Highest point
1,456 m
Elevation range
1,021 m

Annual precipitation
904 mm/yr
Average temperature
28°C

Wettest month
July
Driest month
January

LAFON COUNTY

Map 1.2. Hydrological features including rivers, marshes and lakes in Lafon^{24,25}

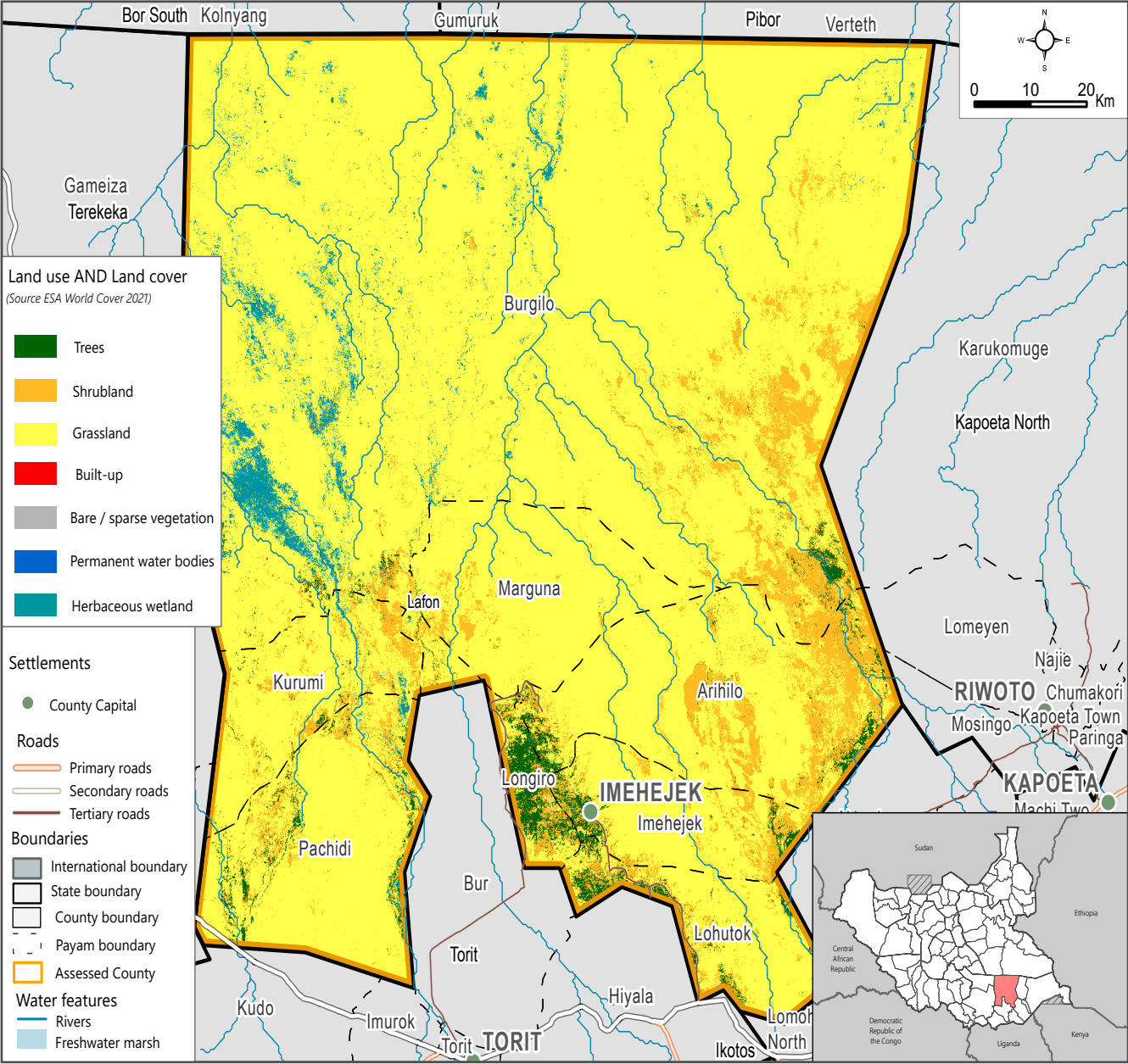


Lafon is characterised by variability in terms of topography (Map 1.1). Most of the County's territory features a predominantly flat topography and an average elevation of 459 meters above sea level. Moving southwards, elevation increases with a variation exceeding 1,000 metres above sea level in the transition from the lowest lying areas to the highest peaks. **An entangled maze of rivers flows through Lafon.** These include the Lotilla River – a tributary of the Pibor River – running through the centre of the County, as well as the Ugurro and the Kidepo rivers flowing respectively on its westernmost and easternmost flanks. Freshwater marshes cover parts of Burgilo payam and the County's eastern and western flanks. Part of the Badigeru Swamp situated between Terekeka and Lafon, the eastern swamps are fed by the Kinyeti River which flows northwards from the Imatong mountains in Torit County.

Rainfall data from 1981 to 2024 (Graph 1.1) shows that **Lafon has an annual average rainfall of approx. 904 mm.** Following a unimodal pattern, a peak in precipitation levels is typically registered during the month of July. The County's territory falls within various livelihood zones (Figure 5.1) which differ in the duration of the rainy season. Overall, as suggested by Graph 1.1, Lafon features a rainy season which is quite extensive in time (usually from April and November each year). The driest period spans from December to March, with January typically representing the driest month. The average annual temperature normally amounts to approx. 28°C, with a minimum temperature of 26°C during the wettest months (July, August and September) and a maximum temperature of 32°C during the dry month of February.

2. LAND USE AND LAND COVER

Map 2.1. Land use and land cover in Lafon County²⁶

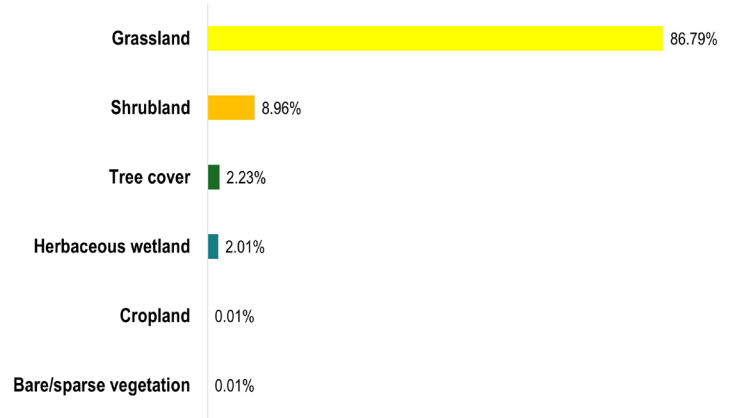


LAFON COUNTY

As shown in Map 2.1, **grassland represents the main type of Lafon’s landscape**, accounting for 86.79% of its total land cover and stretching across all its payams. As detailed in Graph 1.1, other important vegetation types include shrublands (about 9%) as well as trees and herbaceous wetlands (approx. 2% respectively). Minority land cover types include bare/ sparse vegetation and crop land, both covering 0.01% of Lafon’s landscape.

Amidst the sharp prevalence of grasslands, a closer look at how vegetation is geographically distributed within the County allows the identification of **three areas where additional land cover types are extensively concentrated and sustain the reproduction of different livelihood systems**. The first of these areas correspond to the eastern flank of Lafon, which sees the presence of an extensive network of shrublands. The area falls within the SSD05 livelihood zone characterised by semi-arid conditions, which limit crop production but are suitable for livestock rearing.²⁷ The second area covers most of Longiro payam as well as the westernmost areas of Arihilo, Imehejek and Lohutok payams, thus corresponding to the zone of Lafon where elevation reaches its peaks. This area is mostly defined by the presence of trees and shrublands, and is part of the SSD03 livelihood zone where soils are more fertile and suitable for crop production as compared to the neighbouring SSD05.²⁸ Additionally, many human settlements existing in the County converge in this area (Section 6). The third area develops around the herbaceous wetlands which are mostly located in the eastern part of Lafon. The area is classified as belonging to the SS06 livelihood zone, where floodplains and flat, fertile black cotton soils and sandy clay soils sustain the existence of agro-pastoral livelihood systems.²⁹

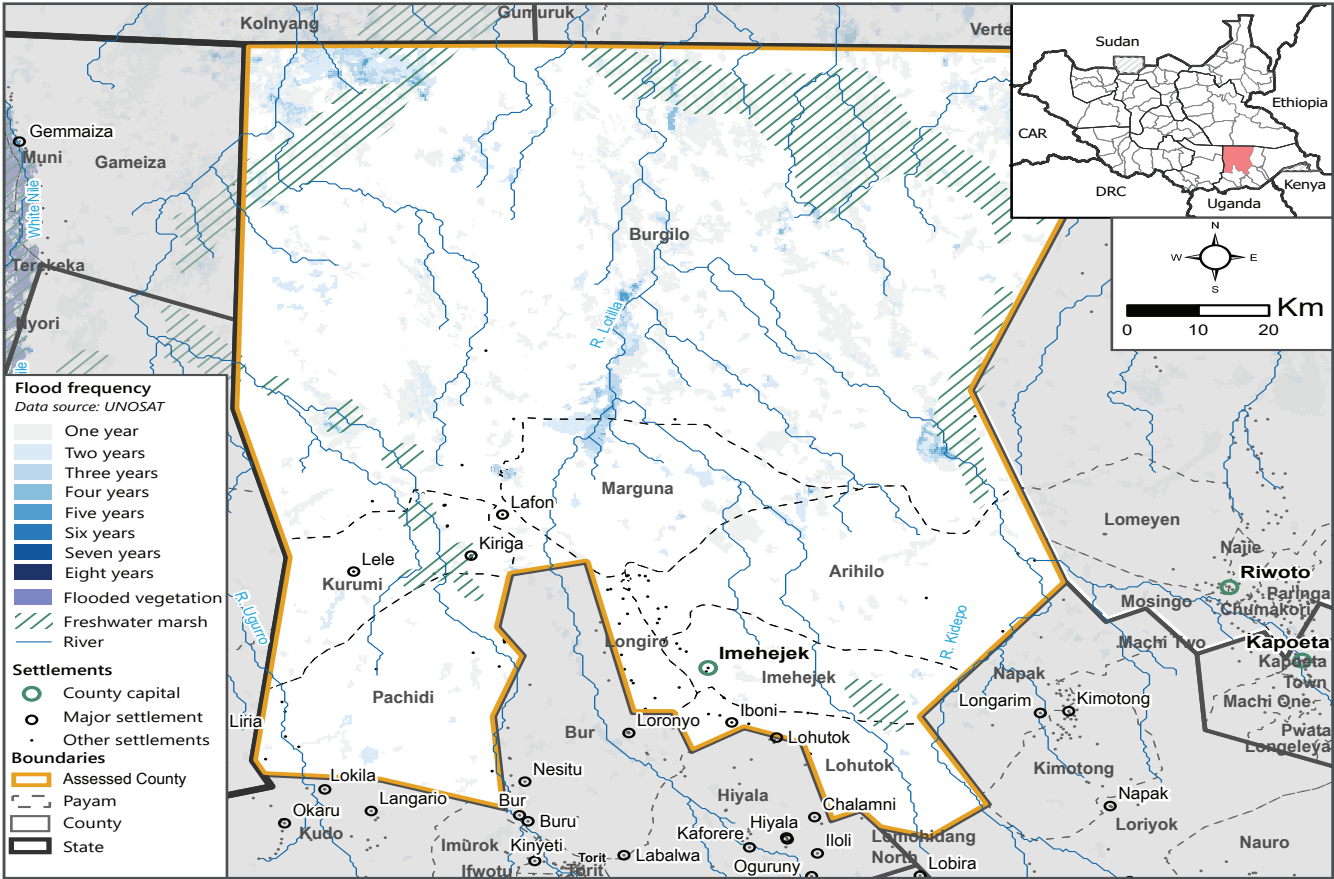
Graph 2.1. Main land cover features as proportions of Lafon County area³⁰



3. HYDROMETEOROLOGICAL HAZARDS - FLOODING

LAFON COUNTY

Map 3.1. Est. max. annual flood extent (2017-2024)ⁱ



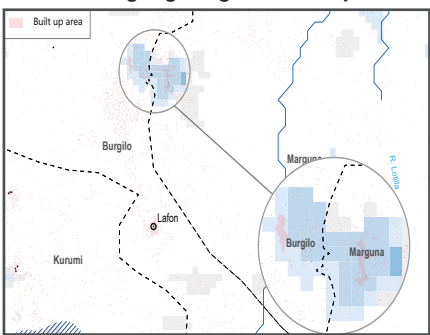
Disruptive flood events occurred in Lafon between 2019 and 2024, prompted by the combination of heavy rainfall, river overflows and the prevailing flat topography. As highlighted in Map 3.1, areas having shown susceptibility to flooding over the last eight years are located in the northern and central parts of the County – where elevation is at the lowest levels – as well as in proximity of rivers and marshes. Flood-prone areas are particularly concentrated around the Lotilla River, along the freshwater swamps in the eastern and northwestern parts of Burgilo payam, as well as along the border between Burgilo and Marguna payams to the north of Lafon town (Map 3.2).

Data on monthly rainfall levels between 2020 and 2024 (Graph 3.1) depict a considerable record of precipitation above the 1981-2024 average (Graph 1.1), in the context of a prevailingly erratic pattern marked by sudden swings from low to extreme rainfall. High levels of precipitation occurred in 2020 (1072 mm), followed by a substantial decrease in 2021 (767 mm) and then a new increase in the following years up to 2024, when annual rainfall reached 934 mm. The rise in precipitation levels in 2024 is consistent with the extent of the flooded area documented in the same year – which was wider than the one registered in previous years (Graph 3.2) – and can partly explain the surge in the number of flood-affected people in 2024 as compared to the 2022 (see text below).

Flood events occurred in Lafon over the last six years frequently had disruptive effects on agricultural and livestock activities. As with other parts of South Sudan, in 2019 Lafon was affected by floods unleashed by atypically heavy rainfall,³² which reportedly caused crop destruction and negatively impacted the livelihoods of a few farmers along the Kinyeti River.^{33,34} In 2020, heavy rain caused crop damage in multiple Counties within Eastern Equatoria, including Lafon.³⁵ In 2021, the County experienced both dry spells in June and early July (see Section 4), and floods from August to October which affected 1,400 heads of cattle while having moderate effects on agricultural production.³⁶ From August to November 2022, heavy rainfall on the Imatong mountains in the neighbouring Torit County resulted in the overflow of the Kinyeti and Lyodo rivers and caused flash floods in low-lying areas within Lafon.³⁷ The 2022 floods affected 2,951 people within the County,³⁸ while causing crop destruction.³⁹ As of December 2024, floods had affected 18,178 individuals.⁴⁰ The 2024 floods saw farms submerged across multiple payams in the east (Burgilo and Marguna), and in the west (Kurumi) of the County,⁴¹ as well as access to essential services and markets severely hampered.⁴²

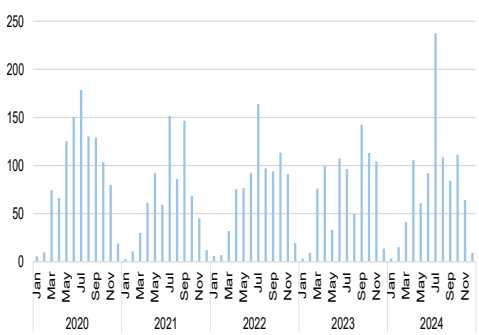
Flooding also occurred within the Badingilo National Park (spatially represented in Map 5.2) and pushed wildlife to move closer to human settlements. In addition to exposing wildlife to the risks of increased, uncontrolled interactions with humans, this migration of wild animals had serious implications on livelihood activities, as damage to crop production and livestock losses were reported in 2024.⁴³

Map 3.2. Zoom-in on Lafon town and its environs, highlighting the built-up areaⁱ

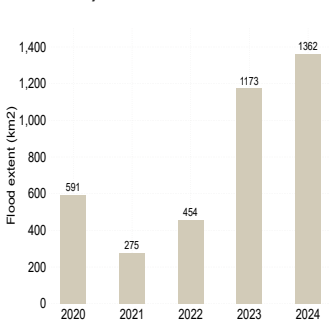


ⁱ Estimated flood extent calculated based on analysis of UNOSAT, NOAA-20/VIRS. Data is indicative only and has not been validated in the field.

Graph 3.1. Rainfall (2020-2024)³¹



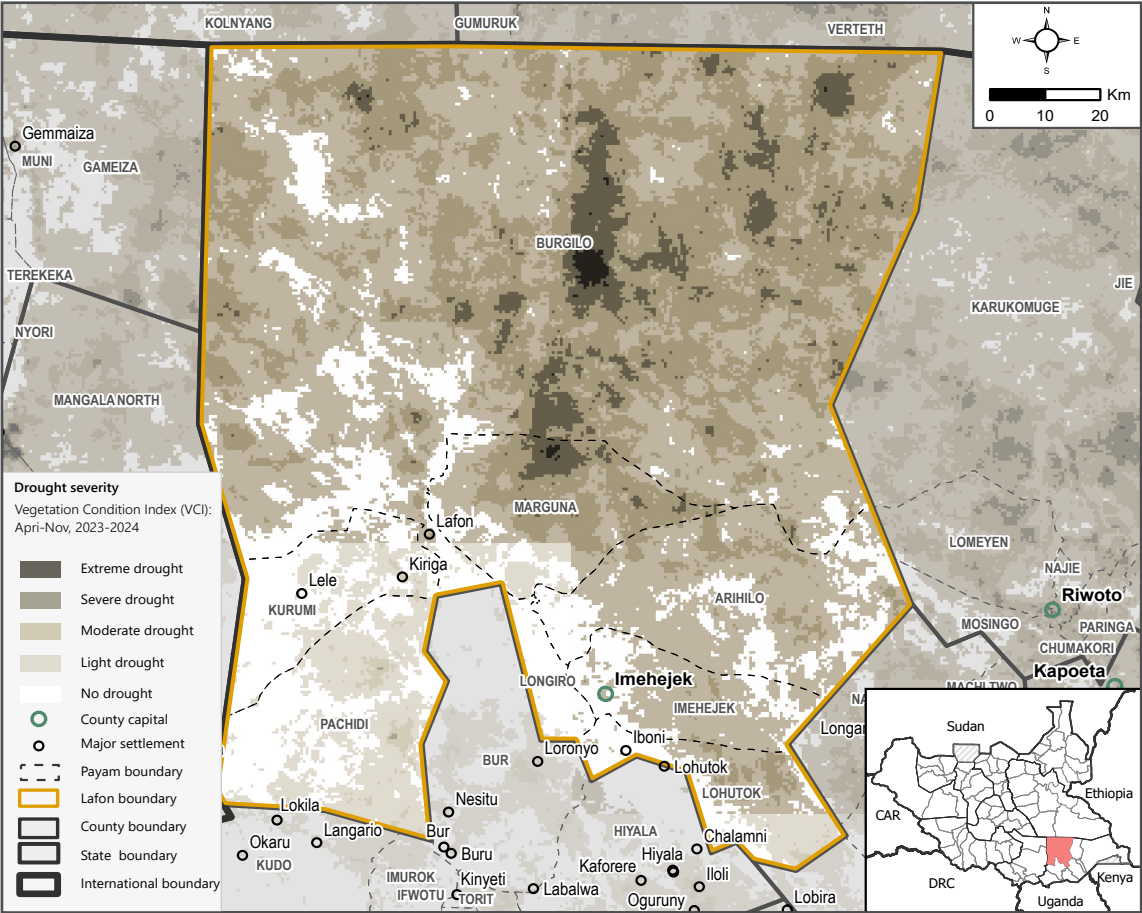
Graph 3.2. Maximum Flood extent (2020-2024)ⁱ



4. HYDROMETEOROLOGICAL HAZARDS - DROUGHT AND DRY SPELLS

LAFON COUNTY

Map 4.1. Vegetation Condition Index (VCI), an indicator of drought severity, in Lafon (2023-2024)ⁱ

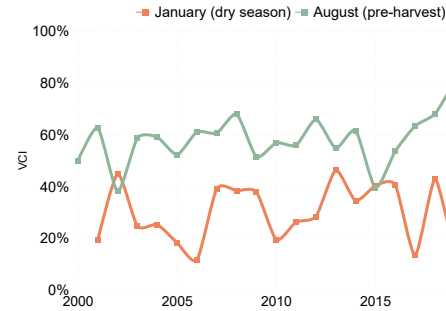


Lafon is typically exposed to droughts and dry spells, due to rainfall deficits and increasing temperatures. Rainfall deficits fall within a longstanding erratic pattern in precipitation levels within Lafon (Graph 4.3). Extremely poor rainfall occurred in 1984, 2005, 2009, consistently with large scale drought events documented in the wider East Africa region (1984, 2005, 2008 onwards)^{44,45} as well as at the State/County level within South Sudan (2009).⁴⁶ As depicted in Graph 4.1, lower-than-usual rainfall was recorded in June 2021 (- 45% with respect to the 1981-2024 average) – amidst a rainfall deficit that affected most of the year – as well as in May 2023 (- 66%) and July-August 2023 (- 37% and - 59%, respectively).⁴⁷ On the contrary, temperatures maintained an increasing trend, moving from 27.5°C in 1981 to 29.8°C in 2024. In general, the comparison between future climate projections with the 1981-2024 average monthly rainfall and temperature suggests that, by 2060, precipitation in the wettest month (July) will increase by 9.7%, while average maximum temperature in the warmest month (February) will surge by +7.4°C.

The Vegetation Condition Index (VCI)-based comparison between vegetation conditions in the pre-harvest phase (August) and the dry season peak (January) from 2000 to 2023 (Graph 4.1) shows **an increasing pattern in vegetation health in August and a record of poor vegetation health in January**, given the prevalence of annual values below 40% (drought threshold). However, in 2002 and 2015, VCI values for the pre-harvest phase were considerably low and close to the drought condition threshold. On the other hand, in 2020 and 2021, VCI values during the dry season peak were significantly higher than those registered in the pre-harvest phase. For the former cases, significant rainfall deficits in May 2002 (- 55%) and in most of 2015 (with - 47% in August that year) may have played a significant role.⁴⁸ For the latter, above average annual rainfall occurred in 2019 (1077 mm) and in 2020 (1072 mm) and the accumulation of moisture may have contributed to better-than-expected vegetation conditions during the 2020 and 2021 dry seasons.⁴⁹

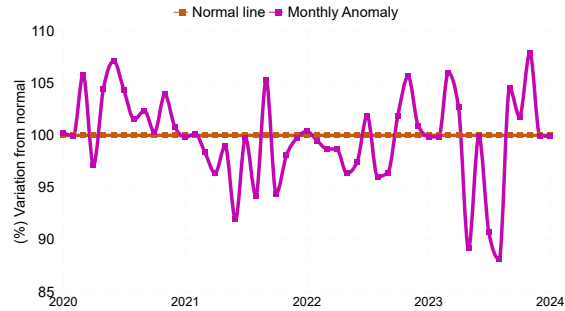
Dry spells were documented in Lafon in 2018, and from 2021 to 2023.⁵⁰ REACH's drought severity map for January 2022 showed that 28% of the County's territory was affected by severe or extreme drought.⁵¹ As shown in Map 4.1, in both 2023 and 2024, most of the County experienced light-to-moderate drought conditions from April to November of each year, when vegetation is supposed to be in good condition and favourable for cultivation. During the same periods, severe-to-extreme drought conditions were documented in scattered areas in Burgilo and Marguna payams. In 2023, in particular, drought and subsequent poor harvests pushed local authorities to warn of dire food security conditions, especially for the residents of Imehejek and Arihilo payams.^{52,53}

Graph 4.1. VCI (2000-2023) - drought indexⁱ



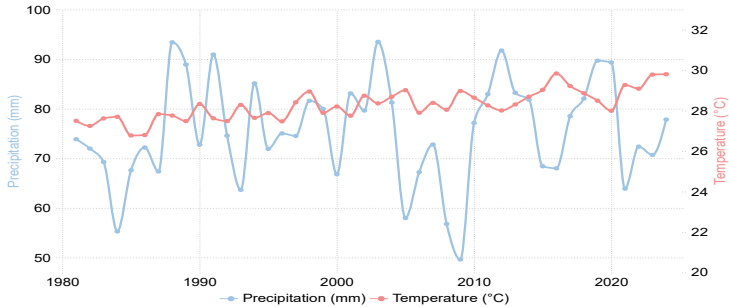
i. Vegetation condition index calculated in Google Earth Engine based on MODIS Terra Daily EVI data

Graph 4.2. Percentage rainfall anomaly (2020-2024)^{ii,54}



ii. 100% is defined as the average value for the same month between 1981 and 2024

Graph 4.3. Long-term climatic trends (1981-2024)^{55,56}



Projected climatic trends by 2060 based on SSP3-7.0 scenario,ⁱⁱⁱ Lafon County

Projected change in precipitation in wettest month by 2060	Projected change in max temperature in warmest month by 2060
+14.7mm	+7.4°C

iii. 2060 projected climatic trends from 1985 - 2014 baseline with high green house gas emissions scenario based on Share Socio-economic Pathways (SSP) 3-7.0

Map 5.1. Livelihood zones in Lafon County⁵⁷

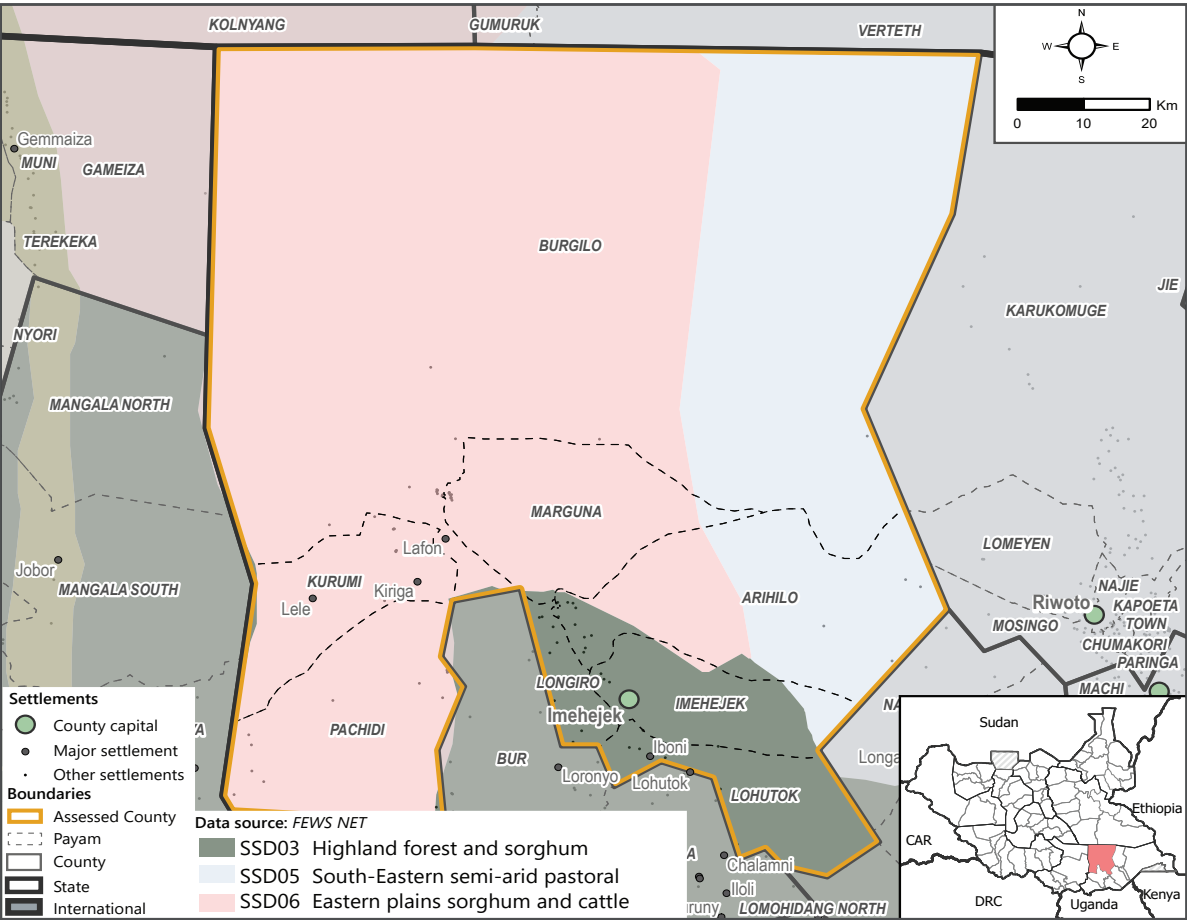
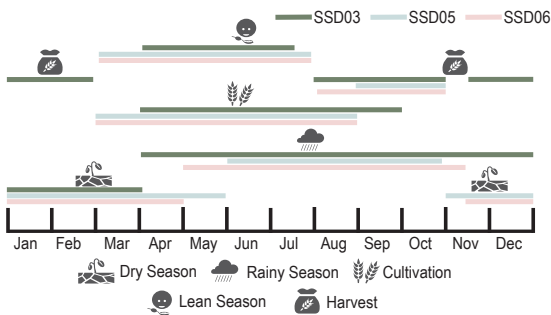
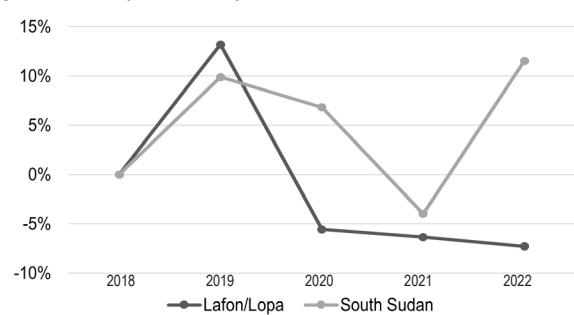


Figure 5.1. Cultivation calendar for livelihood zone SSD03, SSD05 and SSD06⁶⁹



Graph 5.1. Relative yearly change in net cereal production (2018-2022)⁶⁸



Lafon’s central and western parts fall within the “Eastern plains sorghum and cat-tle” livelihood zone (SSD06), while its eastern and south-eastern flanks are classified as belonging to the “South-Eastern semi-arid pastoral” (SSD05) and the “Highland forest and sorghum” (SSD03) zones, respectively. Agriculture and livestock rearing constitute key sources of food and income within the County, although with important differences across the various livelihood zones. Both farming and livestock rearing constitute the main pillars of the local productive system in SSD06. Conversely, SSD03 and SSD05 are characterised by the prevalence of one sector. Indeed, agriculture is the main productive activity in SSD03. SSD05 is a predominantly semi-arid, drought prone pastoralist area where, partly due to the limited crop production, all households depend on market purchases to meet their food needs.⁶⁸ Different livelihood zones benefit from the existence of **mutual economic ties between communities nurtured by livelihood-based patterns of interdependence**. In this sense, barter of livestock for grain produced in SSD03 constitutes a source of food for households in SSD05.⁶⁹ Overall, the size of the land owned as well as the number and the type of livestock reared are essential determinants of wealth and economic differences among households. Across all livelihood zones, owning on average fewer livestock and hectares of land increases poorer households’ reliance on market purchases of food, as well as on agricultural labour, brewing and the sale of natural products and livestock, particularly during the lean season (March to July). In both SSD03 and SSD05, gold mining activities are also practiced by poorer households for income generating purposes. In the pastoralist SSD05 zone, poorer households equally supply labour force to better-off households for herding activities. On the other hand, better-off households typically generate income through surpluses in crop cultivation, cattle rearing and milk production or, as is the case in SSD03, through timber sales or retail trade.⁶⁰

Sorghum - the main staple crop in SSD06 - is cultivated across the different livelihood zones in the County, followed by maize, cassava, and groundnuts (in SSD03), sesame (in SSD03 and SSD06) and vegetables (in SSD05 and SSD06). Agricultural work is mainly conducted throughout a single rain-fed growing season (March to August), although SSD03 also has a second cultivation season after the first harvest in August for groundnuts, sesame and cowpeas.⁶¹ **In 2022, the agricultural sector employed 85% of the households in Lafon, and this percentage remained stable between 2018 and 2022.** In contrast, **net cereal production varied significantly over the same period**, with a positive, above national average outcome in 2019 (+ 13%), followed by **increasingly negative results between 2020 and 2022** (Graph 5.1).⁶² **Natural hazards played a major role in shaping the negative performance in agricultural production.** Section 3 provided a brief overview of crop damage or destruction caused by floods in the last years, including over the period between 2020 and 2022. Besides that, the County’s large dependence on one rain-fed cultivation season, combined with the effects of multiple, consecutive rainfall deficits, high temperatures and subsequently dry spells (Section 4), heavily contributed to the negative outcomes in agricultural production between 2021 and 2022. Droughts negatively affected sorghum production in 2021 and 2022, as well as maize and vegetables cultivation in 2022, prompting farmers to opt for replanting.⁶³ **Agricultural production was also disrupted by insecurity.** Following the spillover into Lafon of the fighting in Juba in July 2016, instances of looted farming tools were reported,⁶⁴ alongside the insecurity-driven constraints that farmers faced in harvesting their crops.⁶⁵ In 2021 and 2022, tensions and land disputes between farmers and herders negatively affected farmers’ ability to cultivate.^{66,67}



99% of households declared having access to land.

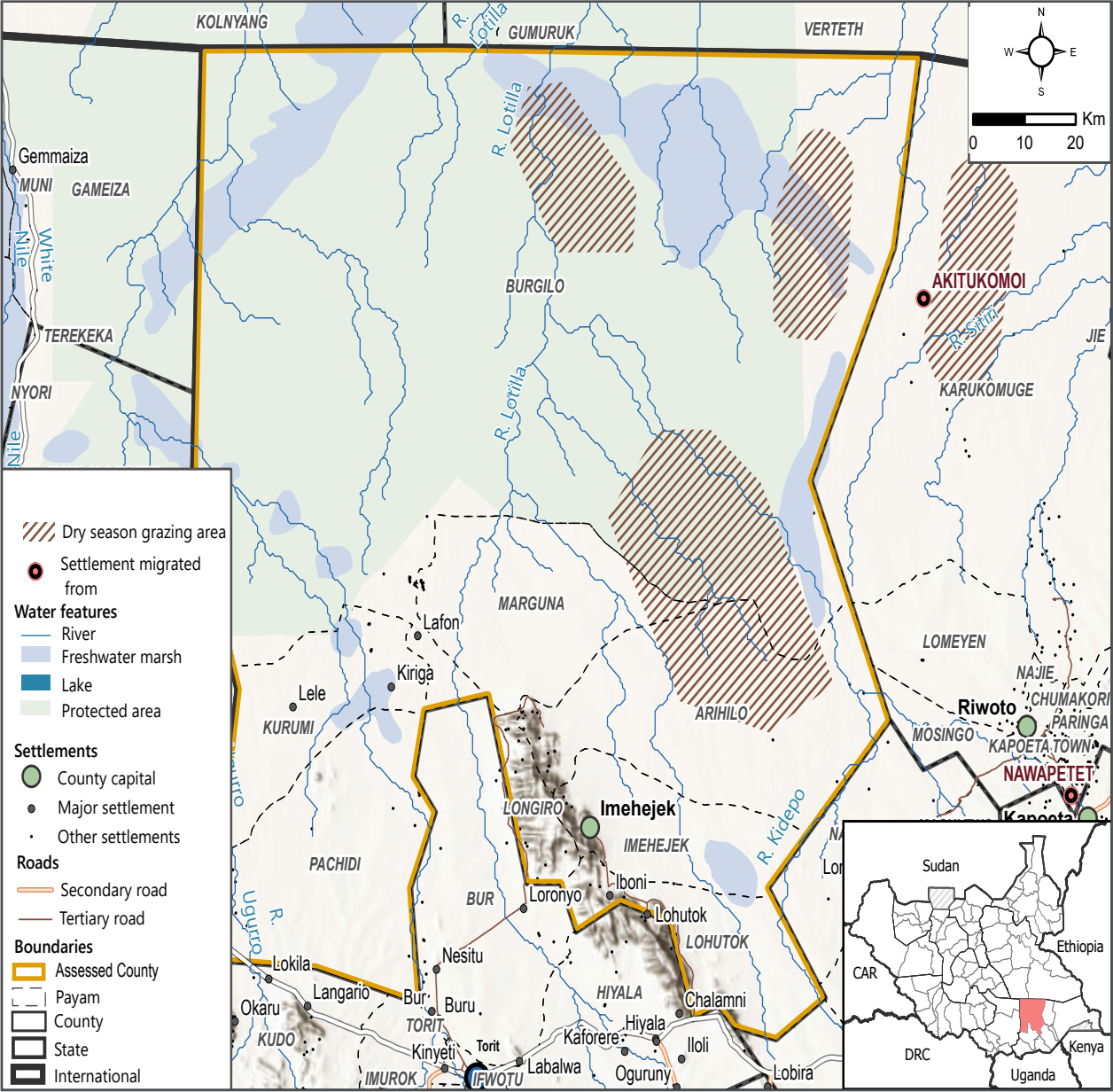
Among those, 91% reported owning land or property used for livelihood activities without any official documentation.

¹ All statistics from the IOM 2024 ISNA are representative at County level for the overall population and are drawn on a sampling frame based on the DTM R14 Mobility Tracking, Event Tracking for IDPs and returnees, and WorldPop gridded population estimates.

5B. LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIOECONOMIC CONDITIONS

LAFON COUNTY

Map 5.2. Dry season grazing areas in Lafon County^{71,72}




In Lafon, **goats, sheep, cattle and poultry** are among the main livestock kept for both consumption and sale by all households, although cattle are mostly reared and sold by better-off households who also constitute the primary sellers of dairy products in SS05. The latter zone is primarily defined by **pastoralists' seasonal migration movements during the dry season** (November to April) across its shrubland landscape and towards major grazing areas developing around rivers and marshes mostly located in the eastern part of the County as well as in the western side of the neighbouring Kapoeta North County (Map 5.2). Seasonal livestock migration during the dry season also constitutes an important component in SS06's livelihoods.⁷³ However, **disruptive effects were unleashed on livestock activities due to both natural hazards and instances of violence**. Flood events were frequently associated with the displacement of people with their own livestock.⁷⁴ Additionally, cattle theft and raids involving communities within the Lafon and neighbouring Counties are common drivers of localised tensions. In this regard, the bordering areas between Lafon and its western (Terakeka County) and eastern (Kapoeta North) neighbours were considered hotspots of livestock-related conflicts in August 2022.⁷⁵ As per the 2024 Data in Emergencies Monitoring (DIEM), **Lafon was among the Counties identified as a cattle raiding hotspot**.⁷⁶ Moreover, erratic patterns of precipitation and recurrent drought conditions represent key constraints to livestock activities, which are likely to play a role in exacerbating preexisting competition and conflicts around water resources and pasturelands.

Alongside fishing, **wild food consumption and sale constitute important livelihood strategies for all households in Lafon**. Badingilo National Park provides for a significant amount of wild foods and bush products, among others. Reli-ance on wild food acts as a **complementary source of food and income in normal times**, whilst constituting **an essential coping mechanism in times of distress**. In this sense, the dire food security situation induced by the 2023 drought and continued throughout the 2024 lean season led many people in the County to increase their reliance on wild food consumption to deal with food shortages.^{77,78} However, rainfall deficits are associated with increased constraints to households' access and availability of wild foods and fish.⁷⁹

As of November 2024, Lafon experienced acute food insecurity at the Crisis level (IPC Phase 3) and was predicted to reach the Emergency level (IPC Phase 4) throughout the period between December 2024 to July 2025.⁸⁰ As of the same period, the County faced acute malnutrition at the Critical level (IPC Phase 4).⁸¹ The 2024 DIEM included Lafon among the Counties in which over 50% of households had a poor food consumption score as of late 2023, and where a similar proportion adopted emergency livelihood coping strategies to access food or money to buy food as of the same period.^{82,83}

IPC Scores - 2024/2025⁸⁴

 **Acute malnutrition**
Jul. 2024 - Sep. 2024
PHASE 4 - CRITICAL

Oct. 2024 - Mar. 2025 (Projected)
PHASE 4 - CRITICAL

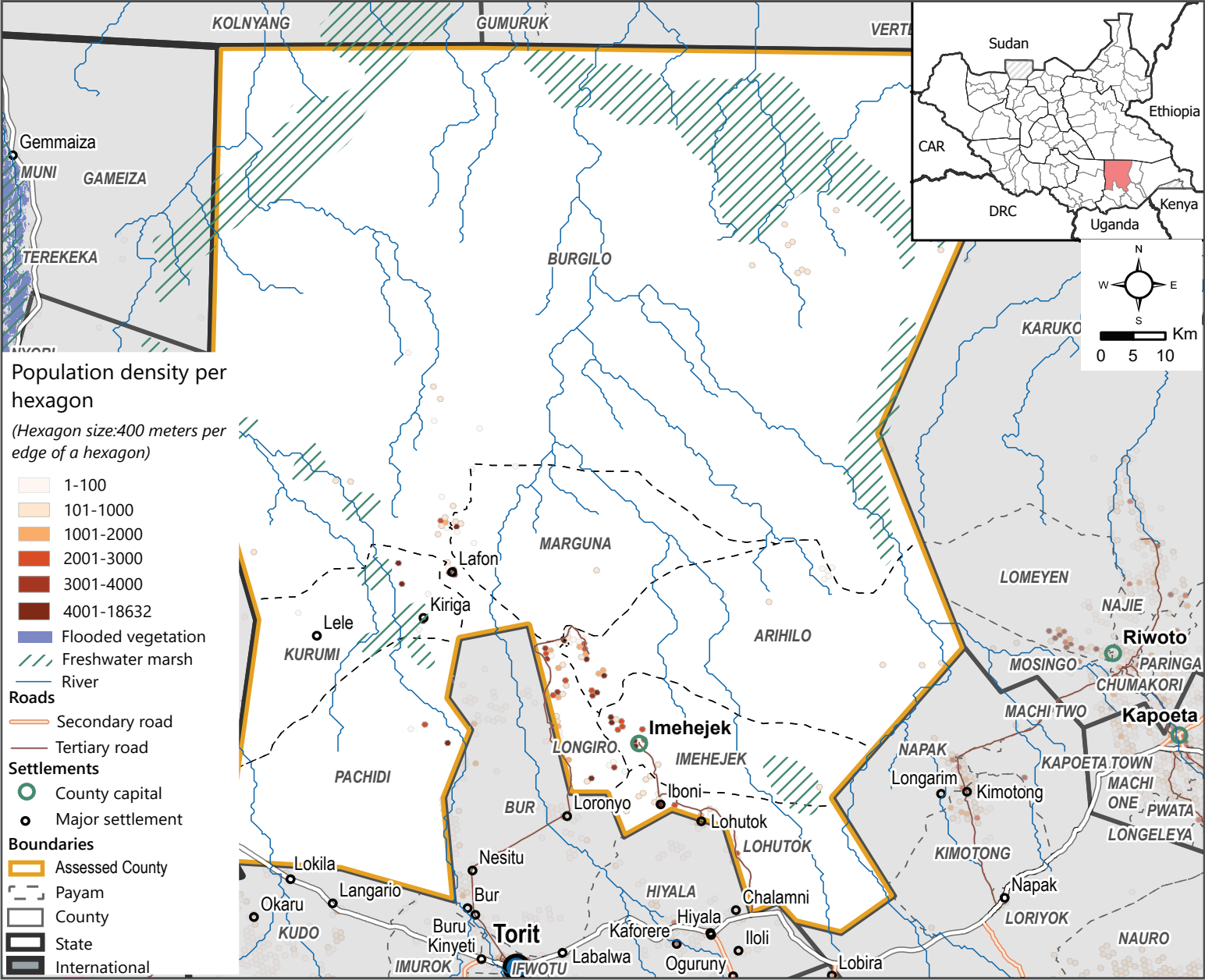
 **Acute food insecurity**
Sep. 2024 - Nov. 2024
PHASE 3 - CRISIS

Dec. 2024 - Mar. 2025 (Projected)
PHASE 4 - EMERGENCY

¹ Protected areas boundaries based on [Protected Planet](#).

6A. POPULATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Map 6.1. Population density across Lafon County (2023) with water sources^{85,86}



LAFON COUNTY

Map 6.1 indicates the zones with the highest population density on Lafon's territory. **Two major hubs situated near major urban centres within the Southern part of the County** stand out as key areas of convergence of human settlements: first, the town of Lafon and its environs; second, the County's south-eastern flank developing around the capital, Imehejek, and in proximity to the border with Torit County. Beyond these high-density areas, **large parts of the County's territory are scarcely inhabited or completely uninhabited.**

Some factors seem to emerge as both determinants and outcomes of this pattern of population distribution. On the one hand, the interdependence between infrastructural coverage and population density implies the concentration of human settlements around key infrastructure (Map 7.1) and major roads – namely, the roads connecting southern Lafon to neighbouring Torit County – and vice versa. On the other hand, the proximity of the high-density areas of Lafon to the main settlements in the neighbouring counties of Torit, Bidi and Kapoeta North seems to reflect the existence of close cross-county socio-economic relations.



Estimated population in high-density settlements (2023)⁸⁷

Lafon Town	
38,244 individuals	
Imehejek Town	Lohutok Town
14,569 individuals	14,342 individuals

6B. POPULATION AND DISPLACEMENT

Map 6.2. Key insecurity-driven population movements in Lafon County (2017-2023)⁸⁸

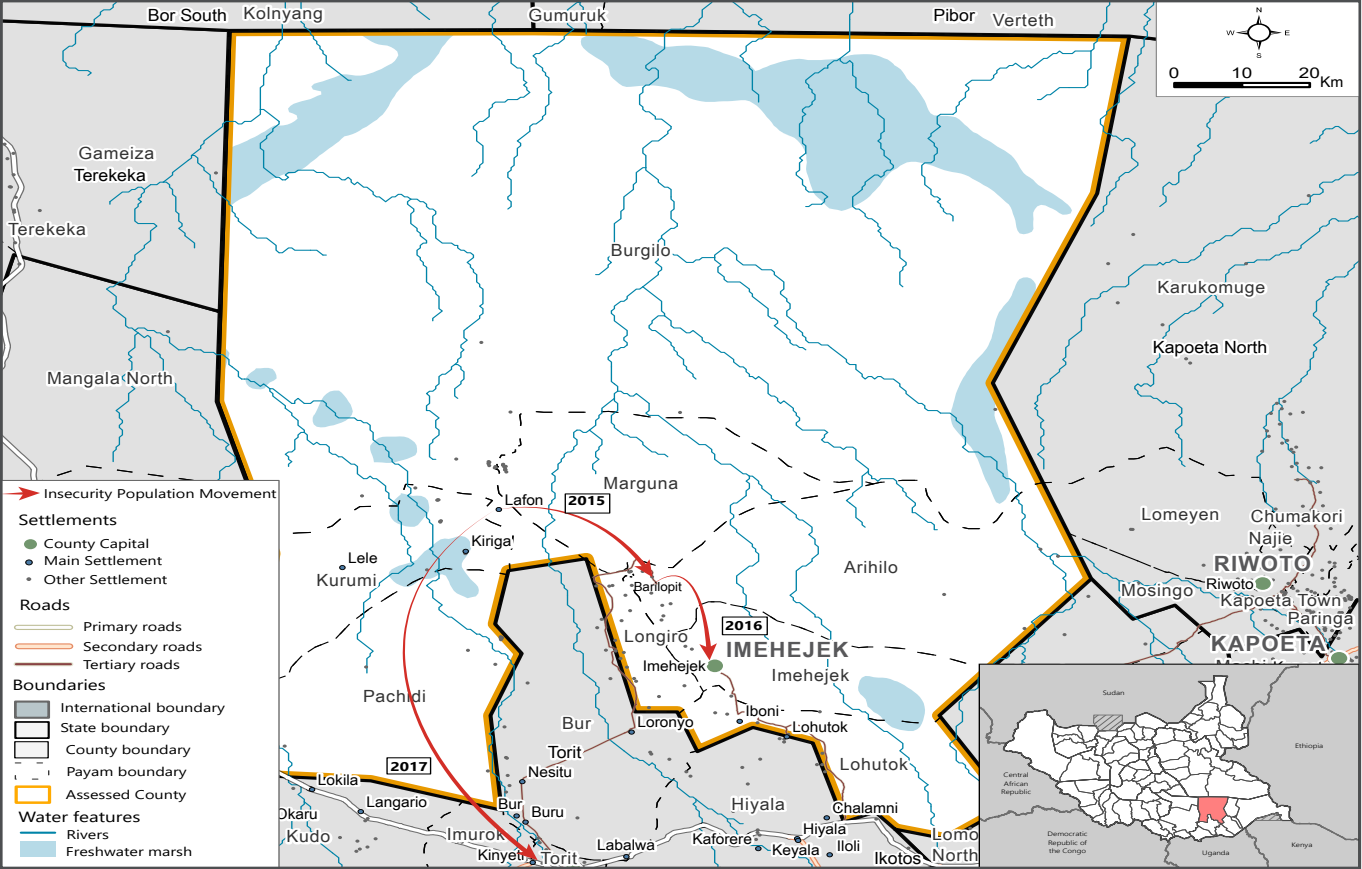


Table 6.1. Est. number of displaced persons by location (2024)⁸⁹

Location	IDPs		Returnees		Relocated		Total	
	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%	n.	%
Heju - Hiteng	194	3%	504	5%	18	9%	716	4%
Imehejek	324	4%	930	10%	54	28%	1308	8%
Lohutok	155	2%	486	5%	0	0%	641	4%
Longiro	504	7%	372	4%	120	63%	996	6%
Marguna	4340	57%	4473	47%	0	0%	8813	51%
Pacidi	2081	27%	2716	29%	0	0%	4797	28%
Total	7598	100%	9481	100%	192	100%	17271	100%

Figure 6.1. Main Counties of habitual residence by IDPs not previously abroad (2024)⁹⁹

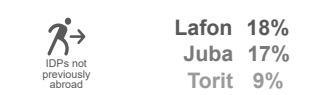
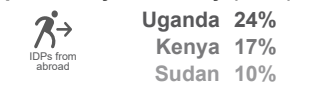
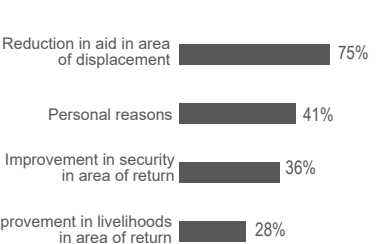


Figure 6.2. Main Countries of habitual residence by IDPs previously abroad by (2024)¹⁰⁰



Graph 6.1. Main factors shaping households' decision of returning to Lafon (Oct. 2024)¹⁰¹



LAFON COUNTY

As of September 2024, Lafon was home to 7,598 IDPs, 9,481 returnees and 192 relocated people (Table 6.1). These figures mark a substantial decrease in the number of displaced people within the County as compared to the previous year, given that, in 2023, IDPs, returnees and relocated individuals accounted for 21,207, 23,152 and 1,870 people, respectively.⁹⁰

Among the IDPs identified in 2024, 60% displaced only within South Sudan and, of these, many did so in Lafon or from the neighbouring Juba and Torit Counties (Figure 6.1). On the other hand, 40% of the IDPs were previously displaced abroad, the most frequently reported countries being Uganda Kenya and Sudan (Figure 6.2).

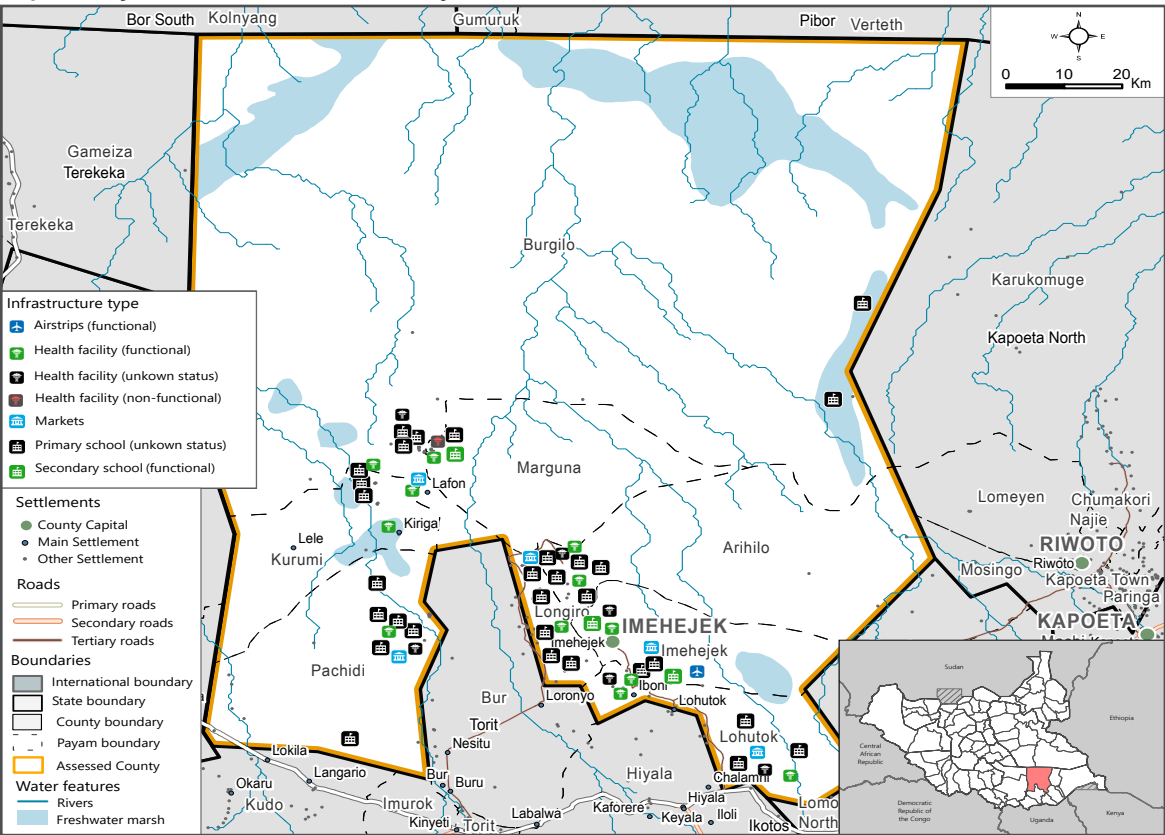
As for the returnees, 54% arrived from abroad into Lafon and, among them, a considerable proportion (25%) returned from Uganda. Out of the total proportion of internal returnees (46%), 20% were from Torit County.⁹¹ As per the 2024 IOM ISNA, the reduction in aid in the area of displacement and security improvements in the area of return were the most frequently reported factors in shaping return intentions, alongside personal reasons (Graph 6.1).

Insecurity consistently constituted a major push factor for population movements. Indeed, conflict and communal clashes were indicated as reasons of displacement respectively by 25% and 13% of all the IDPs identified as of September 2024, as well as by 24% and 20% of the internal returnees tracked by the same period. As for the returnees from abroad, 22% of them reported conflict as the reason for displacement.⁹² As shown in Map 6.2, significant insecurity-driven population movements within and from Lafon occurred over the period between 2015 and 2017. Clashes in 2016 reportedly displaced about 4,200 residents of the town of Lafon, a figure that reportedly corresponded to the whole population of the town. At the same time, approx. 2,700 IDPs fled insecurity in the neighbouring Juba and Torit Counties and reached Burgilo payam in Lafon.⁹³

Lafon has a long record of massive displacements caused by food shortages, often as direct consequences of drought conditions and subsequently crop failures. Approximately 18,000 people reportedly displaced to Torit County in search of food in June 1992, following bad harvests.⁹⁴ During the second half of 2023, dire food security conditions caused by a prolonged drought led to multiple waves of population outflows from eastern Lafon to Juba and Torit Counties, as well as cross-border movements towards Kenya and Uganda.^{95,96} In other cases, food shortages resulted from the negative effects of flood events on crop production. In this regard, the 2019 flooding left several farmlands submerged, thus prompting crop destruction and population displacement to Juba County.⁹⁷ More generally, as of the first half of November 2024, flooding in Lafon had caused the displacement of 9,298 people.⁹⁸

7. COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

Map 7.1. Key infrastructure in Lafon County as of 2024^{102,103}



WASH indicators¹¹³

28% of households taking between 30 minutes to < 1 hour (23%) or 1 hour to < half a day (5%) to **fetch drinking water**

18% of households felt **unsafe while collecting water** in the 2 weeks preceding data collection

70% of households **practice open defecation**

88% of households (with children < 5 y.o.) reported **open defecation as a sanitation strategy for their children < 5 y.o.**

Education indicators¹¹⁴

43% of children in Lafon experienced **disruptions in their education** during the 2023-2024 school year

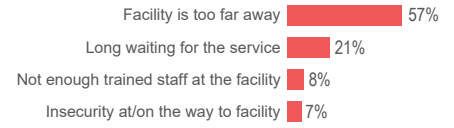
Graph 7.1. Main disruptive events in children's education during the 2023-2024 school year (among the 43% of children affected)



Health indicators¹¹⁵

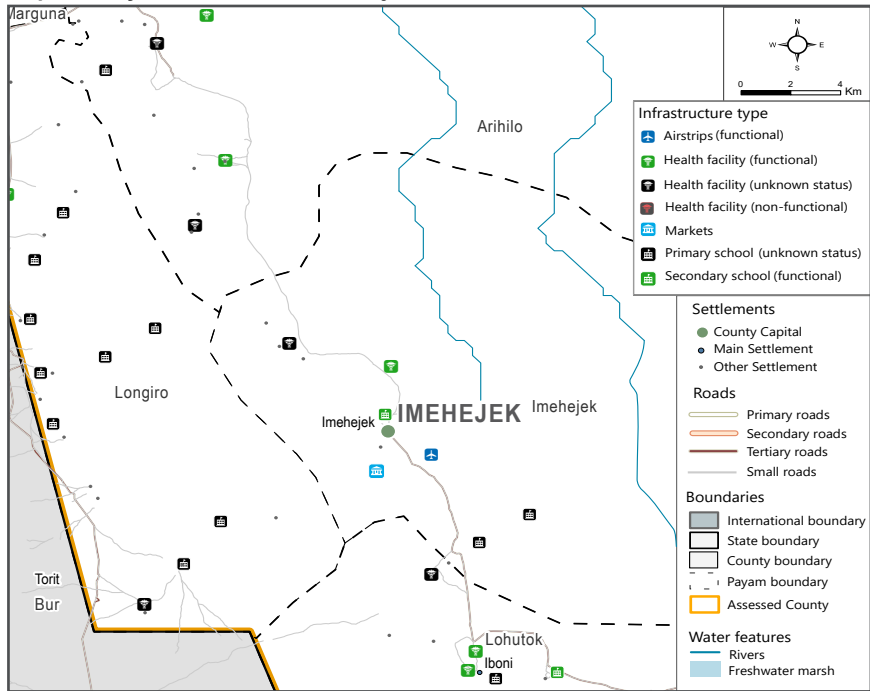
82% of households reported **barriers to healthcare** in the 3 months prior to the ISNA data collection

Graph 7.2. Main barriers to health care reported (among the 82% of households affected)



LAFON COUNTY

Map 7.2. Key infrastructure in Imehejek and its environs as of 2024^{111,112}



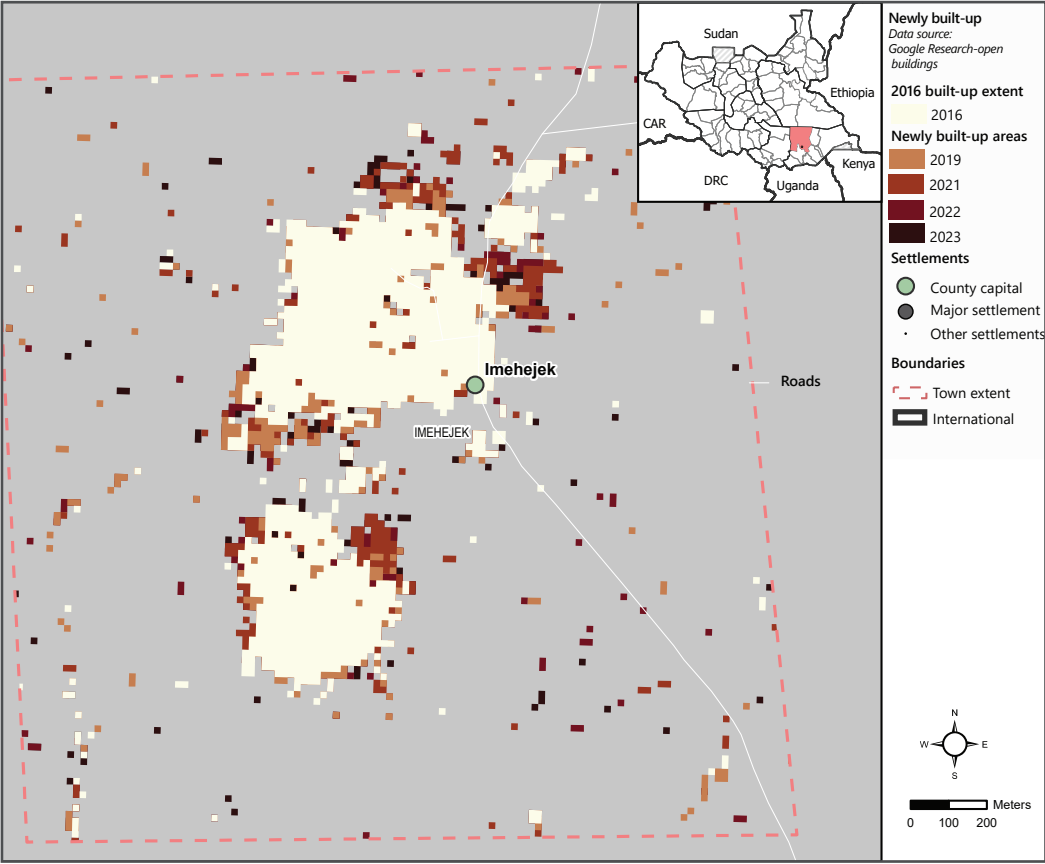
Mirroring the pattern of population distribution outlined in Section 6, **infrastructure coverage in Lafon mostly develops around the towns of Imehejek and Lafon, as well as along the border with Torit County.**

The County has 33 schools, including 3 secondary schools, that are reportedly functional.¹⁰⁴ Existing data show that **the functionality of educational facilities within Lafon was negatively affected by flooding.** As of September 2024, 8 schools were submerged, while 3 were severely damaged as a result of floods.^{105,106} According to the 2024 ISNA, **51% of school-aged children did not attend formal school during the 2023-2024 school year**, mostly because of the non-priorisation of education by the child or the household (51% among the 51% of children that did not attend formal school), child's work at home or at the household's own farm (24%), or financial inaccessibility of education (23%).¹⁰⁷

Lafon comprises 19 health facilities. These include 1 main hospital, 6 Primary Health Care Centres (PHCCs), among which 2 were reportedly functional and 4 in an unknown status, and 12 Primary Health Care Units (PHCUs), including 1 that was non-functional and 11 with unknown status.¹⁰⁸ As with the educational facilities, **the 2024 floods negatively impacted on existing health services**, leaving at least 8 of them damaged, out of which 7 were reportedly forced to close as of September 2024.¹⁰⁹ As per the 2024 ISNA, **more than half of the surveyed households reported excessive distance to health facility as a barrier to accessing healthcare.** Indeed, 69% of households declared walking 30 minutes or more to reach the nearest functional health facility, including 18% and 33% that declared walking between one or two hours or more than two hours, respectively.¹¹⁰

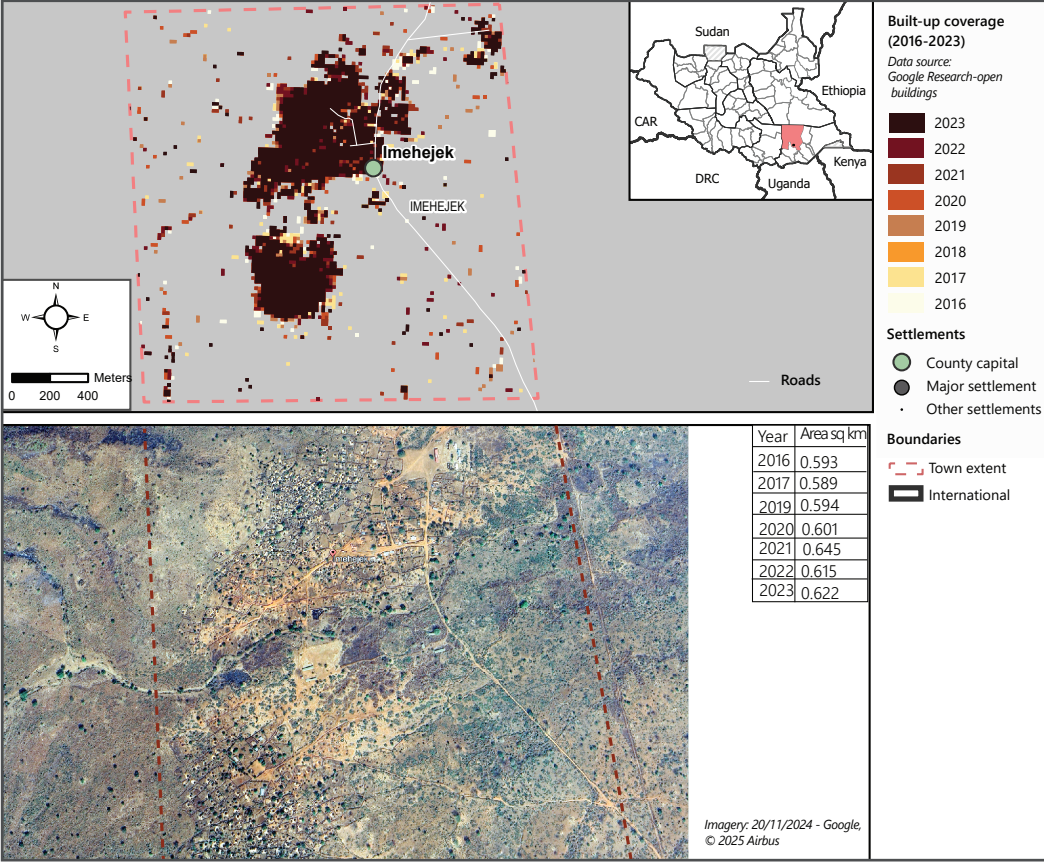
8. SETTLEMENT

Map 8.1. Built-up extent in 2016 and newly built-up areas in Imehejek (2017-2023)¹¹⁷



LAFON COUNTY

Map 8.2. Built-up coverage in Imehejek (2016-2023)¹¹⁶



SHELTER

According to the 2024 ISNA, **89% of households reported the tukul as the type of shelter they were living in**. Most of the shelters had either minor damage (63%) or were destroyed (4%). Out of the total of households living in damaged shelters (67%), **the majority (81%) stated that the damage was the result of the occurrence of natural climate events including floods, landslides and storms**, while 22% ascribed it to the inability to provide for its general maintenance.¹¹⁸ Zooming-in on the impact of natural hazards, **the 2024 floods reportedly left 2,864 shelters destroyed and approx. 18,000 individuals displaced** who sought refuge mostly with relatives living in higher-lying areas.¹¹⁹ The occurrence of man-made disasters has put further stress on housing conditions in Lafon. A fire in early 2023 in Longiro payam resulted in the destruction of at least 213 houses, alongside granaries and food stocks, and the displacement of about 1,000 people who found shelter in schools and health facilities.¹²⁰

SETTLEMENT CHANGE: IMEHEJEK

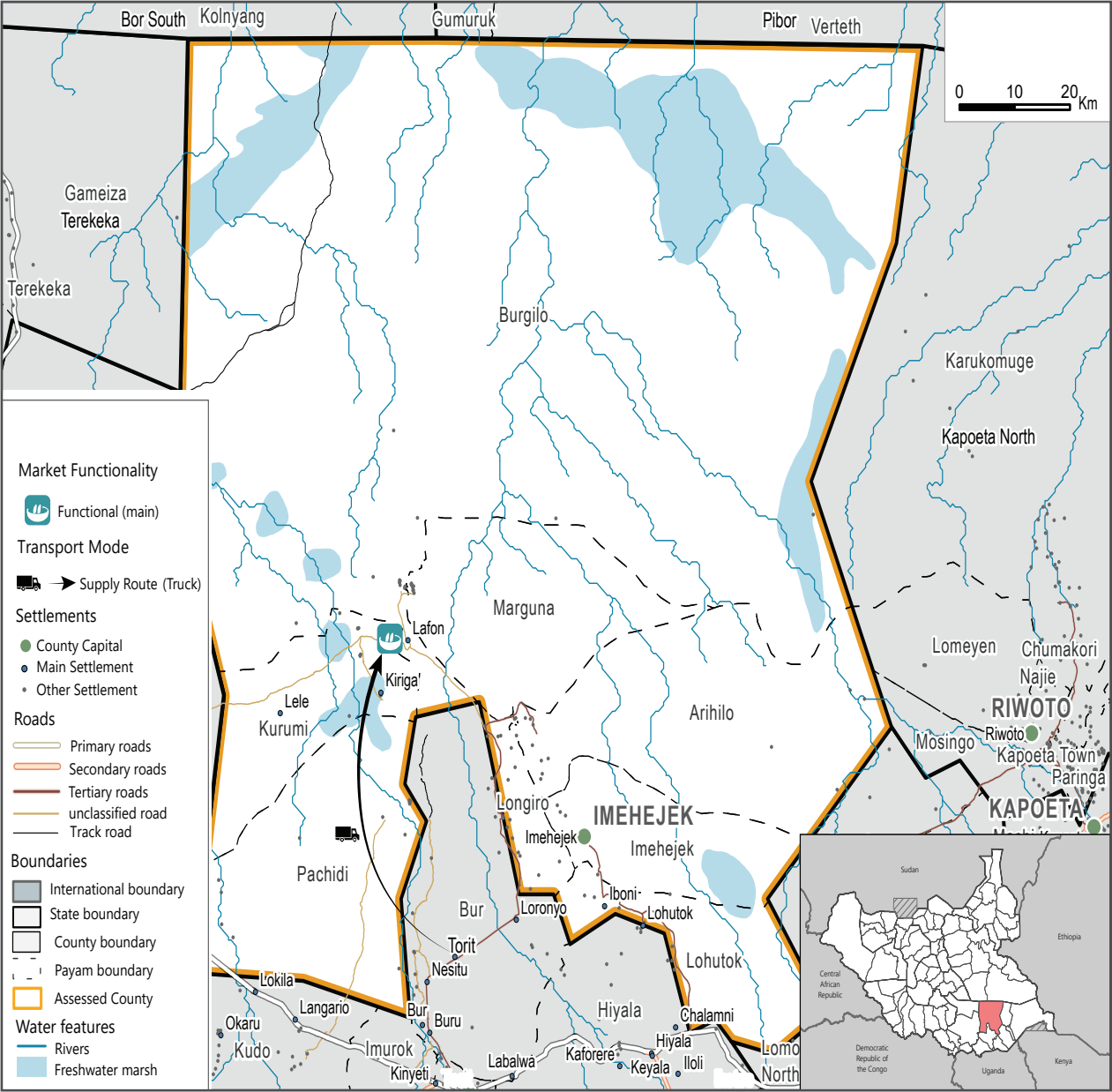
The town of Imehejek is situated in proximity to the border with Torit County and at the foothills of the highest

elevation area in all Lafon. The town houses the County's headquarters and, with its high density of population and key infrastructures, the largest built-up area in the entire County.

Maps 8.1 and 8.2 zoom in on Imehejek to display the evolution of its built-up area over time, highlighting its development around two main areas within the northern and southern parts of the town. Map 8.1 shows the extent of the building footprint in 2016 (lighter colour) and the progressive incorporation of newly built-up areas in the following years up to 2023 (darker colours), mostly along the two core areas' peripheral outskirts with scattered pockets of increased building footprint in satellite areas. Map 8.2 highlights the last year buildings were seen in Imehejek on satellite imagery. This shows that **urban expansion in the town has followed a mostly erratic pattern, with an overall moderate increase in the building footprint** from 0.593 km2 in 2016 – following the signing of the Agreement on Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan (ARCSS) – to 0.622 km2 in 2023. As synthesized in the table included in Map 8.2, **Imehejek's built-up area went through reductions in 2017 and 2022**, the former coinciding with the resumption of clashes within the nationwide conflict, the latter possibly related with the effects of the 2022 floods. In spatial terms, while the core of the two main built-up areas mostly remained unaffected, scattered pockets of buildings in peripheral and satellite zones suffered destruction.

9. MARKETS, TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY

Map 9.1 Primary markets in Lafon County, indicating key supply routes and major roads¹²¹



LAFON COUNTY

Located in the south-west of Lafon, Lafon Town is home to one of the major markets in the County. Other important markets include those located in Imehejek town and in Longiro payam. As with other infrastructures, these trading hubs – and an additional estimated number of 3 satellite markets – are situated in the south of the County (Map 9.1).

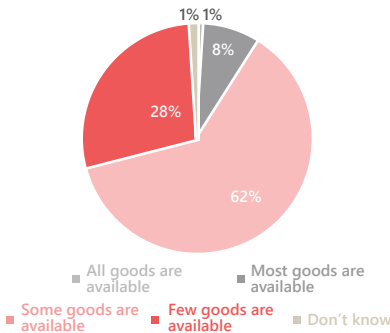
Due to accessibility constraints (see the next paragraph), no up-to-date data from REACH's Joint Market Monitoring Initiative (JMMI) are available for Lafon. However, in relation to their functionality, **90% of the households surveyed during the 2024 ISNA reported gaps in availability of some or many food and non-food items at local markets** (Graph 9.1). In times of dire food security conditions – as in the case of the drought-driven food shortages in 2023 – unavailability of basic food items on local markets pushed households to cross the County's borders to reach marketplaces in Juba and Torit towns.¹²²

Volatility of the security environment and poor conditions of existing supply routes likely play a major role in diminishing goods availability. In general, Lafon town's market, as well as all other markets in the County, are highly dependent on road infrastructures connecting the County to Torit town, to the south, and Juba town, to the west. While attacks on traders were reported in May 2024 along the Lafon-Juba road axis,¹²³ generally precarious conditions of existing roads – and their inaccessibility during the rainy season^{124,125} – were documented as constituting key disruptive factors of commercial supplies, as well as humanitarian aid provision.^{126,127} Moreover, as of January 2025, the 98-kilometre road linking the towns of Lafon and Torit was under repair.¹²⁸

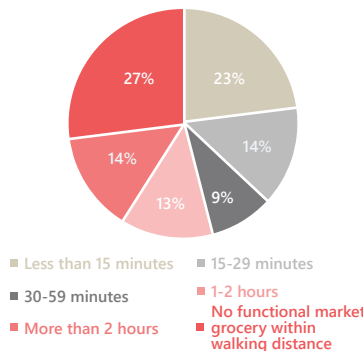
At the household level, market accessibility appears to be limited by long distances. More than one third of households surveyed during the 2024 ISNA reported walking for 30 minutes or more to reach the nearest functional marketplace, whilst more than a quarter of households declared the absence of any functional marketplace within walking distance (Graph 9.2).

 **Sorghum price (Kg) - Mar. 2025¹²⁹**
52% lower than the national median

Graph 9.1. Households by reported availability of food and non-food items at functional market/grocery¹³⁰



Graph 9.2. Households by reported distance from the nearest functional market/grocery¹³¹



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PROJECT BACKGROUND

Building on outreach of previously realized County Profiles,¹ IMPACT produced three area-based outputs focusing on Luakpiny/Nasir, Akobo and Lafon Counties, based on pre-identified information gaps and humanitarian partners' needs, as well as return patterns and exposure to natural hazards. By means of secondary data review, the outputs highlight key features of the targeted areas, namely their climatic conditions, hydro-meteorological hazards, population and displacement patterns, existing infrastructures and services, as well as key socio-economic characteristics supported by IMPACT's JMMI in South Sudan.

¹In 2022 and 2024, IMPACT produced ten County Profiles in South Sudan. You can refer for example to [Aweil South County Profile \(March 2024\)](#).