

# Situation Overview: Western Bahr el Ghazal, South Sudan

July and August 2017

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IMPACT Initiatives  
ACTED and UNOSAT

## Introduction

Episodes of violence that occurred in Wau Town and Raga Town in June 2016 and April 2017 negatively affected displacement trends, population needs and humanitarian access in the Western Bahr el Ghazal (WBeG) region. Despite a stabilisation of the security situation since April 2017, the context remained quite volatile in July and August, limiting humanitarian operations and putting livelihoods at risk.

To inform humanitarian actors working outside formal settlement sites, REACH has conducted an assessment of hard-to-reach areas in WBeG since April 2016. This settlement data is collected across the counties of Raga, Wau and Jur River in WBeG on a monthly basis. Between 4 July and 25 August 2017 REACH interviewed 597 Key Informants (KIs) with knowledge of humanitarian needs in 197 settlements across the three counties of WBeG.

In order to ensure a good understanding of current displacement trends and humanitarian conditions in settlements from which displacement took place, new arrivals, representing 69% of KIs, were specifically targeted. The remainder of the KIs interviewed (31%) reported having been in the settlement or having had regular contact with someone from the settlement within the last month.

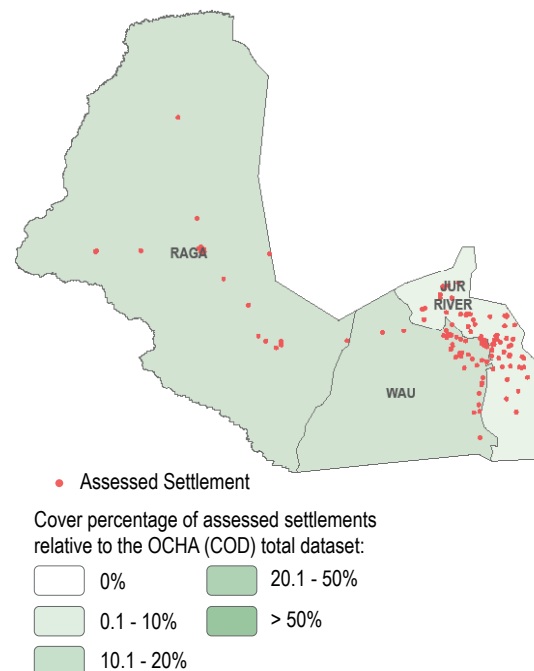
Furthermore, 8 food security and livelihoods (FSL) focus group discussions (FGDs) and participatory mapping exercises were conducted throughout July and August, mostly with newly arrived KIs. Findings were then triangulated with secondary data collected by humanitarian partners.

The first section of this report analyses displacement trends between July and August and the second section evaluates the population dynamics in the assessed settlements, as well as access to food and basic services for both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and local communities.

## Population Movement and Displacement

The episodes of violence of June 2016 and April 2017 led to the displacement of approximately 100,000 people in Wau, Raga and Jur River Counties. While most IDPs sought refuge in Wau town, an unreported number fled to other settlements in the region or into the bush. Thousands of people did furthermore flee to Sudan and Northern Bahr el Ghazal. In July and August 2017, displacement continued but in smaller numbers. Although the security situation in Wau and Raga towns stabilised, perceived insecurity persisted in the areas around the towns, reportedly forcing thousands of people to continue hiding in the

**Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Western Bahr el Ghazal. August 2017**



remote areas outside of the settlements.<sup>1</sup>

### Displacement within Wau

In July and August, isolated episodes of displacement took place within Wau County, namely the arrival of approximately 600 IDPs coming from Wau countryside to Hai Masna IDP camp<sup>2</sup> as well as the arrival of over 300 IDPs to Agok, a settlement 10km south of Wau.<sup>3</sup>

A REACH rapid assessment conducted in areas

## METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Western Bahr el Ghazal, REACH uses primary data provided by key informants who have recently arrived or received regular information, from their pre-displacement location or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK).

Information for this report was collected from key informants in the Wau Protection of Civilians Area Adjacent (PoCAA) site and in the IDP sites of Hai Masna, Cathedral, and Lokoloko in Wau Town, as well as in Deim Zubier in Raga county, throughout July and August 2017.

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

REACH's AoK methodology displays county level data when at least 5% of the total number of settlements in a county were assessed. In September, the coverage of assessed settlements was above 5% in all counties of Western Bahr el Ghazal.

<sup>1</sup> According to interviewees in Greater Bagarri, Wau County.

<sup>2</sup> According to initial figures provided by CCCM Cluster in August.

<sup>3</sup> According to Wau Catholic Church communication in August.

outside of Wau Town found that there was a large IDP community in areas outside of Wau Town in August, predominantly hiding in the bush. Many of these IDPs indicated their intention to come to Wau town but were not able to do so because of insecurity around Wau town.<sup>4</sup>

### Displacement out of and within Raga

Since April 2017, the security situation in Raga town has reportedly been stable. A one week REACH assessment within Raga town conducted in August found that there was an unreported number of IDPs who were returning to Raga town after having fled to the bush, following episodes of violence in April. However, despite recent returns, most displaced people had not yet returned.<sup>5</sup> One of the main locations to where IDPs from Raga County were displaced to is Deim Zubier, a settlement southeast of Raga Town.

### Displacement into Jur River

There has been no further displacement in Jur River since episodes of inter-communal violence in April 2017. Many IDPs have returned to their previous settlements and resumed their traditional livelihood activities.<sup>6</sup> However, the northern and eastern areas of Jur River received an influx of an unreported number of IDPs in July and August, reportedly fleeing inter-communal conflict in Gogrial state.<sup>7</sup>

**Figure 1: Most often reported primary and secondary reason why new arrivals left their settlements in WBeG, August 2017**

1. Insecurity 56%
  2. Lack of food 52%
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### Deim Zubier and Raga Town

Deim Zubier is a medium sized settlement in Raga County located 100km from Raga Town, on the road to Wau.

From April 2017 throughout July and August 2017, Deim Zubier has hosted around 3,000-4,000 IDPs from Raga town and its surrounding settlements.<sup>8</sup> As of August 2017, IDPs in Deim Zubier were living in an IDP camp, a temporary settlement with only limited and sporadic humanitarian assistance. The IDPs mentioned no intention to return to their previous locations and reported the stable security situation in Deim Zubier as the main pull factor for remaining in the camp.

REACH assessed Deim Zubier from 23-25 August 2017 and found that there were several gaps in terms of food, shelter, non-food items (NFI), education and Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), with only eight latrines and one handpump available for the entire camp. It was also found that only limited camp management and coordination mechanisms were in place.

As of August, Deim Zubier was at a distance of a two-day drive from Wau Town.

From 17-23 August, REACH conducted a multisector rapid assessment in Raga town. The total local population of Raga town was estimated at 8,000 people and had reportedly decreased exponentially due to conflict in April. The assessment found that the market in Raga town was functioning only to a limited extent and that the prices were extraordinarily high. It was furthermore assessed that the remaining local population had very low adequate access to food.



**Map 2: Displacement overview Western Bahr el Ghazal, July and August 2017**

## Situation in Assessed Settlements

### Demographic Profile

#### Remaining population in assessed settlements

Assessed settlements in WBeG reportedly witnessed a gradual repopulation. In both July and August, 96% of assessed

settlements were inhabited by local community members, compared to 78% in June. This increase is likely attributable to the stabilising security situation, which allowed populations who had left to return to their areas of origin. Nevertheless, 43% of assessed settlements in Wau County reported that the largest proportion of the local population was living in the bushes in August. This is indicative of persisting insecurity in some parts of Wau county, due

4 Findings from a REACH rapid assessment in Marial Bai and Thar Kueng in Jur River County in August 2017.

5 According to FGD participants in Raga town interviewed by REACH in August 2017.

6 According to FGD participants from Jur River.

7 Assessed by REACH on an inter-agency rapid assessment to Marial Bai and Thar Kueng in Jur River on the 10 August 2017.

8 Estimated number resulting from direct assessment of Deim Zubier in August

to which large parts of the population did not feel safe in the villages and consequently hid in remote areas of their settlements.

The majority of assessed settlements reported that the local community still living in the settlement was mainly, if not only, composed of women, with 54% of assessed settlement in July and August reporting that there were more women or only women in the settlements. This may be related to a larger proportion of men that are directly engaged in conflicts and potentially face a higher risk of conflict-related mortality.

### IDP population in assessed settlements

The proportion of assessed settlements in WBeG that reported the presence of IDPs remained similar between July and August, at 22% and 17%, respectively.

Indicative of good relations between local communities and IDPs in WBeG, the largest proportion of IDPs was reportedly living together with the local community in 56% of the assessed settlements in July and 58% in August.

In July, 80% of assessed settlements hosted IDP populations that were composed by a more-than-half majority or entirety of women. In August however, the IDP gender ratio was reportedly more balanced, with only 47% of assessed settlements reporting a majority of female IDPs. This may indicate that across WBeG many women had returned to their areas of origin.

## Food Security and Livelihoods

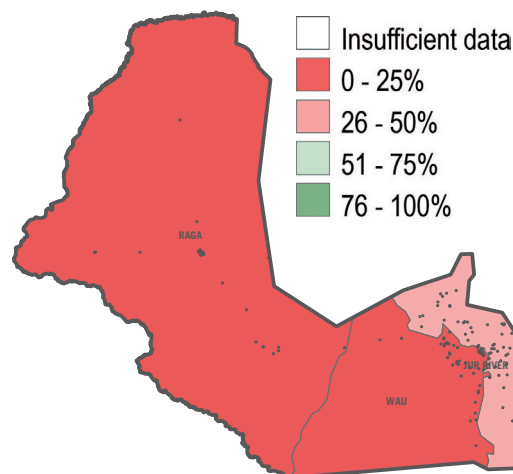
### Access to food

WBeG continued to experience low levels of access to food, a trend that has not seen major changes over the months. In August, 21% of the assessed settlements in WBeG reported having adequate access to food, similar to 18% in July.

Wau County continued to be the most affected by low levels of access to food, as only 6% of assessed settlements in July and 4% in August reported adequate access to food. Reflective of persisting security challenges in Wau County, the primary reason for a lack of access to food was the destruction of crops by fighting, as reported by 38% and 49% of assessed settlements without adequate access to food in July and August, respectively. The second most often reported reason for no access to food was that cultivation was perceived as unsafe, reported by 20% and 29% of assessed settlements without adequate access to food in July and August, respectively.

Although the WBeG's main market is situated in Wau town, many of the settlements in Wau County are not able to access it, due to insecurity on the routes to town. Many of these settlements are located in the Greater Bagarri region (see box on page 4). The severely low levels of access to food in Greater Bagarri are generally the reason why Wau County has the lowest reported proportion of settlements with

**Map 3: Assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in August 2017**



adequate access to food, although the county hosts the state's main market.

Raga County, on the other hand, witnessed an increase in adequate access to food, as 23% and 17% of assessed settlements reported adequate access in August and July respectively, compared to only 5% in June. This improvement in access to food is likely attributable to the stabilised security situation in and around Raga town during cultivation season which allowed communities to again engage in agriculture.

In comparison to Wau and Raja Counties, Jur River County appears to have experienced overall higher levels of cultivation leading to

a greater harvest. In August, 36% of assessed settlements in Jur River County reported adequate access to food. Although close to Wau town, Jur River has not experienced any major insecurity since April 2017 and its population was able to cultivate and access markets in Wau.

### Coping Strategies

In order to cope with the low levels of access to food, assessed settlements across WBeG resorted to a range of food consumption coping strategies. The most often reported food consumption strategies were the limiting of meal sizes, as reported by 31% and 35% of assessed settlements in July and August respectively, as well as reducing the number of meals consumed in a day, reported by 19% of the assessed settlements in July and 25% in August.

In addition, many assessed settlements without adequate access to food reported the use of livelihood coping strategies. The most commonly cited was the gathering of wild food, as reported by 46% of assessed settlements without adequate access to food in August compared to 27% in July. According to FGD participants, the majority of the consumed wild foods were cassava leaves and roots. These reported food consumption and livelihood coping strategies are unsustainable on the long term and suggest that food insecurity across the state can easily deteriorate due to the lack of alternative sources of food.



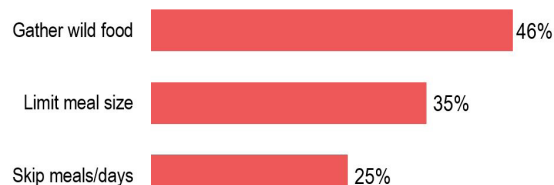
## Greater Bagarri

The area 20-30km southwest of Wau town known as Greater Bagarri is one of the most food insecure parts of Wau County.<sup>9</sup> As of August 2017, populations within Bagarri remained cut-off from the main market in Wau town and were unable to cultivate due to the persisting insecurity in the area. Furthermore, Bagarri has received a constant influx of IDPs since 2016, coming from areas south, southwest and west outside of Wau town. This led to a congestion within Greater Bagarri and increased stress on the already limited food resources. Due to access restrictions, Bagarri had received only limited and sporadic humanitarian assistance in August and preceding months.<sup>10</sup>

Between 11-12 August 2017, REACH participated in an inter-agency assessment of Ngisa, Ngovendego, Mboro and Farajallah in Greater Bagarri, during which high levels of malnutrition were observed and low levels of adequate access to food were reported. Interviewed IDPs reported that for several months they had been surviving on wild foods such as cassava leaves, which they would only eat once a day because of lack of food.

As a result of the findings of the rapid assessment, humanitarian aid deliveries took place in August after access was successfully negotiated. Future aid deliveries will depend on access for humanitarian actors to Bagarri.

**Figure 2: Most commonly reported coping strategies in assessed settlements with inadequate access to food in August 2017**



## Livelihoods

Traditionally, the primary livelihood activity in WBeG consisted of farming for subsistence or cash while only a small part of the population engaged in casual labor.<sup>11</sup> However, in July and August the most often reported livelihood activity was casual labor, as reported by 63% of the settlements assessed in July and 67% in August. Farming for sustenance was reported as a livelihood activity by only 57% of assessed settlements in July and 56% in August while farming with the intention to sell the cultivated produce was only reported by 14% of assessed settlements in July and 12% in August. This suggests that traditional livelihood activities were interrupted and is indicative of a low surplus of agricultural output as well as the inaccessibility to markets.

The decrease of agriculture as a livelihood activity was evident especially in Wau County, where only 43% of assessed settlements in July and 38% in August reported farming for

sustenance as a common livelihood activity in their communities. This deterioration in traditional livelihood activities and the absence of sustainable livelihood coping strategies is in line with the severe levels of food insecurity that Wau County continued to face throughout July and August.

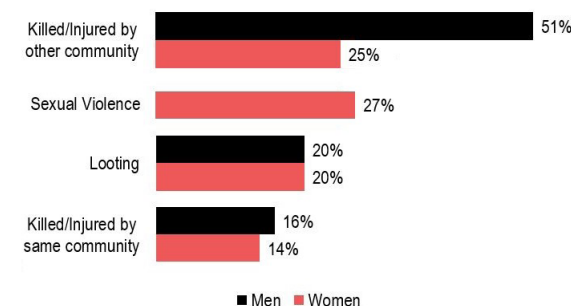
## Protection

Although insecurity in WBeG persisted in July and August, perceived safety slightly increased for both men and women as compared to June. Only 5% of assessed settlements in July and 7% in August reported that women were unsafe both during day and night time, compared to 22% in June. Similarly, 13% of assessed settlements in July and 9% in August reported the same for men, compared to 30% in June. Across all counties of WBeG, the main protection concerns reported in August remain the risk of being killed or injured by people from other communities, as reported by 49% of assessed settlements in Jur River, 44% in Raga County and 57% in Wau County. This indicated that men in Wau County may generally face a higher risk of conflict related death as compared to other regions in WBeG, which is in line with the general security situation reported across the state.

Across WBeG, women faced a more diverse risk spectrum, the main security concern was to being exposed to sexual violence (reported by 28% of settlements assessed in July and 27% of those in August). The risk

of becoming a victim of looting (reported by 28% of settlements assessed in July and 20% of those in August), or getting killed or injured by aggressors from outside of the community (reported by 18% of settlements assessed in July and 25% of those in August) were further perceived risks for women.

**Figure 3: Most commonly reported protection concerns by gender in assessed settlements in August 2017**



## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Between July and August, reported access to safe drinking water across WBeG decreased. In July, 98% of assessed settlements reported to have access to safe water, compared to only 76% in August. The most common source of water remained the borehole but the proportion of assessed settlements that reported accessing safe drinking water from boreholes slightly decreased from 76% in July to 65% in August, especially in Raga County where it decreased from 96% to 63%. The travel distance to the sources of safe water did not change throughout the months from July to August, with 74% and 79% of assessed settlements reporting a travel

<sup>9</sup> According initial food security and nutrition assessments in August conducted during the inter-agency assessment to Greater Bagarri

<sup>10</sup> Reported by authorities in Mboro, Farajallah, Ngisa and Ngovendego

<sup>11</sup> IOM, Village Assessment Survey, 2013

distance of less than one hour, respectively. Reasons for the decrease in access to safe drinking water due to the slight reduction of assessed settlements reporting functional boreholes remained unreported in August.

Open defecation in WBeG decreased in August, as only 16% of assessed settlements reported that half or more of their residents was practicing open defecation as compared to 39% in July and 47% in June. This marks a decrease of open defecation across WBeG marked an important step in reducing the risk of water-borne diseases.

### Health

Across WBeG, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to healthcare slightly decreased from 73% in July to 60% in August. However, a closer look at the county level shows that access decreased only in Wau County, from 74% of assessed settlements in July to 40% in August, while it remained similar in Raga (75% in July and 85% in August).

The most commonly reported reason for a lack of access to health facilities was insecurity, which is in line with the general security situation, which continues to be worse in Wau County as compared to Raga and Jur River Counties. and therefore suggests the reason why healthcare decreased in Wau County as opposed to the rest of WBeG.

Reflective of the rainy season, when malaria cases typically spike, the primary reported health health concern continued to be malaria,

reported by 67% of assessed settlements in July and 62% in August. Wau County, however, saw an increase in settlements reporting malnutrition as the primary health concern, reported by 21% of assessed settlements in August compared to 9% in July and 5% in June. This may be indicative of the continuously deteriorating levels of access to food in the county.

### Shelter

The most common shelter type in assessed settlements in WBeG remained the tukul, as reported by 51% of the assessed settlements in July and 73% in August. This increase is indicative of a stabilising security situation where people can return to their settlements of origin or rebuild damaged shelters.

### Education

Access to education in WBeG deteriorated, since 71% of assessed settlements reported access in July compared to 36% in August.

Overall, the most commonly reported reason for no access to education was that facilities were destroyed (as reported by 48% of assessed settlements in July and 24% of those assessed in August) and because of insecurity (reported by 33% of assessed settlements in July and 37% of those assessed in August). The destruction of facilities continued to be reported as the primary reason for no access to education in 47% of assessed settlements without access to education in Wau, compared to 5% in Raga and 12% in Jur River Counties.

This indicates that independent of the improved security situation across WBeG in August, in Wau County, damages to education facilities are likely to continue to affect access to education in the following months.

Of the 36% of assessed settlements with access to education in August, 7% reported that not all of the children were attending school. In these settlements, 78% of assessed settlements said this was due to high school fees and may indicate a decrease of financial resources due to the lack in cash generating livelihood activities.

## Conclusion

In July and August, the overall humanitarian situation in the three counties of WBeG developed differently. While the humanitarian situation in assessed settlements reportedly improved in Raga and Jur River Counties, it deteriorated in Wau County.

In Wau County large parts of the population were unable to cultivate and therefore did not harvest, leading to a further deterioration of access to food. Greater Bagarri, to the southwest of Wau town experienced the most serious levels of food insecurity due to persisting insecurity affecting both local and displaced communities in the county. Therefore, food security in Wau County is expected to deteriorate in the coming months for populations that were unable to cultivate in the planting season.

### 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.

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