

Humanitarian Situation Monitoring, Upper Nile State

South Sudan Quarter Two and Three, April - September 2020

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

Humanitarian needs generally seem to have increased across Upper Nile State (UNS) over the reporting period. Ongoing inter-communal violence in Ulang and Nasir in south-eastern UNS led to displacement, food insecurity and protection concerns. Elsewhere within UNS flooding, economic instability and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic have caused a broad increase in humanitarian needs across the state.

To inform humanitarian actors working outside formal settlement sites, REACH has conducted assessments of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since December 2015. Data is collected on a monthly basis through interviews with key informants (KIs) with knowledge of a settlement and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This situation overview uses data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across UNS between April and September 2020.

Methodology

To provide an indicative overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Upper Nile State, REACH conducts interviews with key informants (KIs) who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or “Area of Knowledge” (AoK). These interviews were conducted in the Malakal Protection of Civilians (PoC) site and Renk town in UNS throughout the reporting period of April to September 2020. Findings should be considered indicative only of the situation in assessed settlements.

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted on a monthly basis using a structured survey tool. After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal or most credible response. When no consensus was found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting.

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of all settlements in a given month were included in the analysis¹. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month may vary. In order to reduce the likelihood that variations in data are attributable to coverage differences, over time analyses were only conducted for counties with at least 70% consistent payam² coverage over the period. Quantitative findings were triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs) and secondary sources. FGDs with people displaced from hard-to-reach areas in Upper Nile State were suspended in March due to the COVID-19 pandemic and resumed in September 2020. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToR](#).

Figure 1: REACH Area of Knowledge (AoK) Settlement Coverage in April (A), July (B) & September (C)



of key informant interviews conducted: **1,811**

of assessed settlements: **1,076**

of counties covered: **10 (of 12)**

of focus group discussions conducted: **4**

1. To calculate the percentage of AoK coverage, the total number of settlements per county is based on OCHA settlement lists in addition to new settlements mapped by KIs reached each month.

2. Payam is the administrative unit below the county-level.



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Key Findings



Displacement: KIs from a consistent majority 74% from assessed settlements across UNS reported the presence of internally displaced people (IDPs) in their settlements throughout the reporting period. The findings show that this was mainly due to flooding and the continuation of inter-communal violence. KIs from assessed settlements in south-eastern counties of Ulang and Luakpiny/Nasir reported IDPs arriving at their settlement within the 6 months prior to data collection amid ongoing security concerns. Meanwhile, KIs from assessed settlements from Panyikang also reported new IDP arrivals due to food insecurity.



Food Security and Livelihoods: Food security seemingly remained a major issue across UNS in the reporting period. In particular, the data highlights challenging conditions in Ulang and Panyikang both of which are classified as having emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity. Food insecurity in Ulang correlates with ongoing inter-communal violence highlighted in the protection section of this report. Such violence restricted humanitarian activity in Ulang earlier in February³ and by September, KIs from 58% of the assessed settlements that reported insufficient access to food reported fewer food distributions as the main reason. Reported food insecurity in Panyikang correlates with external reports of deteriorating economic conditions⁴ and flooding⁵.



Protection: Over the reporting period, security concerns have generally been low and stable for all counties across UNS with the exception of Ulang and Luakpiny/Nasir in the south-eastern region, where security concerns have been reported to be high. Inter-communal violence was reported as the main security concern for men in Ulang (in 35% of assessed settlements) and Luakpiny/Nasir (57%) and KIs from an additional 30% from assessed settlements in Ulang reported cattle raiding suggesting a continuation of ongoing violence in the area⁶.

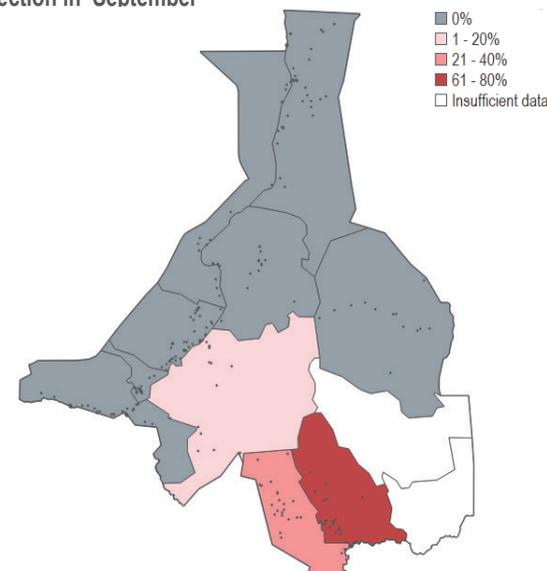


Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH): Reportedly, access to clean water and latrines remain prevalent humanitarian needs across UNS. In September, KIs from 59% of assessed settlements across UNS reported that nobody in their settlement was using latrines while 23% of assessed settlements reported using latrines less than half of the time. Meanwhile, KIs from 45% of assessed settlements across UNS reported that the primary source of drinking water was directly from a river.



Health: The proportion of KIs from assessed settlements reporting access to functioning healthcare facilities began to decrease in June. By September, KIs from assessed settlements in Renk (35%), Manyo (27%, Baliet (14%) and Maban (8%) reported not

Figure 2: Assessed settlements where KIs reported incidences of violent conflict resulting in death in the month prior to data collection in September



having access to a functioning healthcare facility within walking distance of their settlements. KIs from assessed settlements also reported far lower access to functioning primary healthcare facilities in each of these counties apart from Maban.

COVID-19: In September, KIs from 100% of assessed settlements across UNS reported having now heard of COVID-19, with 87% having heard how to protect themselves and prevent the spread of the virus. KIs from 69% of assessed settlements reported most people in their community to have made some kind of behavioural change, most commonly washing hands more regularly (69%), washing with soap (54%) and social distancing (45%).



Shelter/ Non Food Items (NFI): The shelter situation across UNS seemingly remained stable through the reporting period. KIs from 93% of assessed settlements across UNS reported tukul as the main most prevalent shelter in their settlements. Meanwhile the vast majority of KIs from assessed settlements (81%) reported that IDPs within settlements mainly live in rakoobas in all counties apart from Ulang and Naser in south-eastern UNS where IDPs mainly live in improvised shelters⁷.

In September, the most commonly reported most needed NFIs in assessed settlements in UNS were mosquito nets (42%), which was particularly commonly reported in Fashoda (70%). Other commonly reported needed NFIs were plastic sheets, which was commonly reported in Manyo (44%), Maban (43%), and Panyikang (39%).

3. INSO bi-weekly report, February 16-29th 2020

4. FEWS NET, South Sudan Price Bulletin, September 2020

5. OCHA, Flooding Snapshot, September 2020

6. CSRF South Sudan, Ulang County

7. Tukuls and rakoobas are both categorised as semi-permanent shelters, tukuls are shelters constructed with mud bricks and a grass thatch roof while rakoobas are made from poles and plastic tarpaulin so are therefore considered more permanent shelter.

Population Movement and Displacement

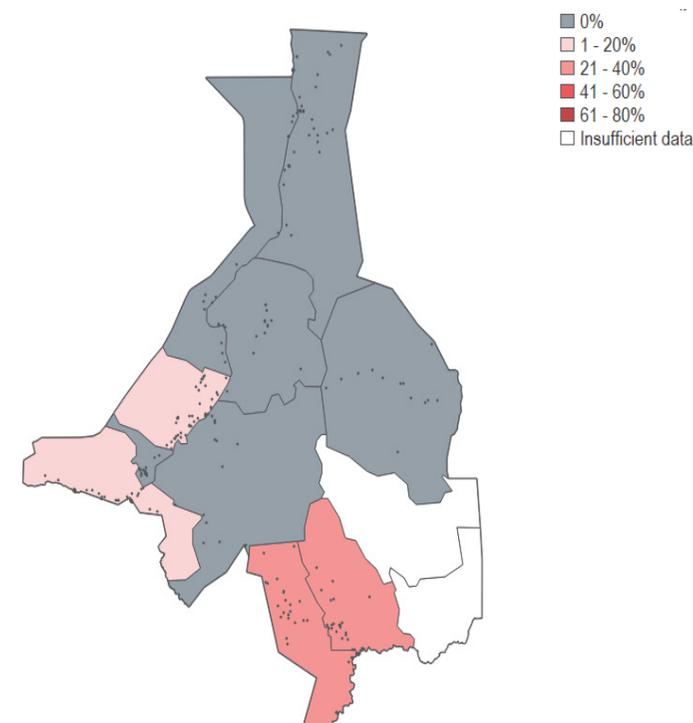
Population movement and displacement appear to have remained high across UNS through the reporting period. This is possibly due to flooding and the continuation of inter-communal violence. KIs from assessed settlements in south-eastern counties of Ulang (42%) and Luakpiny/Nasir (54%) reported IDPs arriving at their settlement within 6 months of the time they were surveyed amid ongoing security concerns highlighted in the protection section of this situation overview. Meanwhile, KIs from 33% of assessed settlements in Panyikang also reported new IDP arrivals amid high levels of food insecurity highlighted in the FSL section of this situation overview.

Internal Movements

The period of April to September 2020 saw KIs from a consistent majority of assessed settlements across UNS report the presence of IDPs in their settlements. In September, KIs from 68% of assessed settlements across UNS reported the presence of IDPs in their settlement, in comparison to 75% in June and 70% in March. In 72% of those assessed settlements where IDP presence had been reported, IDPs reportedly made up less than half of the total population and 66% reported the IDPs have been living in the settlement for over 6 months.

KIs from assessed settlements in Ulang (42%) and Luakpiny/Nasir (54%) in southeastern UNS and Panyikang (33%) in southwestern UNS reported new IDP arrivals within 6 months of the time they were surveyed. In 29% of assessed settlements in Ulang and Luakpiny/Nasir where KIs had reported IDP presence, the most commonly reported push factor for IDP movement to their settlement was a lack of jobs, followed by insecurity/killing (24%), and distance from family (18%). KIs from assessed settlements in Panyikang reported lack of food (40%), lack of jobs (40%) and local tensions (20%). Reports of insecurity and killings in Ulang are consistent with reports of protracted and ongoing inter-communal violence in the county⁷. These reports of insecurity in Luakpiny/Nasir, along with lack of food in Panyikang, align with respective protection and FSL trends highlighted later in this situation overview.

Figure 3: Proportion of assessed settlements where IDPs had reportedly arrived within the three months prior to data collection in September



Cross-border Movements

The proportion of assessed settlements with KIs reporting refugees returning to their settlement across UNS remained stable throughout the Q2-3 period. In September, the highest proportions of assessed settlements with KIs reporting refugee returns were found in Fashoda (98%) and Panyikang (86%), in south-western UNS bordering Sudan and in Luakpiny/Nasir (67%) and Ulang (65%) in south-eastern UNS bordering Ethiopia. The proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported refugee returns remained reasonably constant in most counties apart from Manyo, where the proportion of assessed settlements with reported refugee returns had decreased considerably. In March, KIs from 92% of assessed settlements in Manyo reported refugee returns in their settlement, however this number fell to 58% in June and 33% in September. This decrease in reports of refugees returning to Manyo correlates with external reports that the area was affected by flooding after heavy and persistent rain throughout August and September^{8&9}, which likely prevented people from returning to these areas during the second and third quarter of 2020.

7. CSRF South Sudan 2020, Ulang County

8. IOM, Upper Nile State Event Tracking Report, September

9. OCHA, Flooding Snapshot, September 2020



Food Security and Livelihoods

Flooding, inter-communal violence and economic conditions¹⁰ have contributed to high levels of food insecurity across UNS over the reporting period. Emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity were reported in Manyo, Panyikang, Malakal, Baliet, Maban, Ulang and Luakpiny/Nasir in September¹¹. This meant that most households faced large consumption gaps and used extreme coping strategies such as skipping food for entire days or only having children eat to mitigate them.

South-eastern Upper Nile State (Nasir and Ulang counties)

The proportion of KIs from assessed settlements in Nasir and Ulang in south-eastern UNS that reported most people having access to enough food in their settlement was fairly inconsistent through the reporting period. In March, only KIs from 22% of assessed settlements in Nasir reported that most people in their settlements did not have enough food, however this number increased to 57% in June but rebounded to 33% in September. When food insecurity reportedly increased in June, use of extreme coping mechanisms became more prevalent; KIs from 44% of assessed settlements reported people in their settlement having to skip food for entire days, whilst 57% reported that only children ate within their household. KIs from assessed settlements that reported the use of these extreme coping mechanisms did fall when food security improved again in September; skipping food for entire days was not reported in September (0%), yet KIs from 29% of assessed settlements still reported that only children were able to eat within their household. Across the reporting period, humanitarian food distributions were reported to be the main source of food by KIs from 64% of assessed settlements in Nasir.

The data suggests more challenging food security conditions in Ulang. In March, KIs from 67% of assessed settlements in Ulang reported most people not having access to enough food, this then decreased to 53% in June and remained similar at 58% in September. In September, in 58% of those settlements in Ulang where KIs had reported that most people did not have sufficient access to food, the most commonly reported reason for insufficient access was that there had been fewer food distributions. By September, KIs from 58% of assessed settlements in Ulang report that nobody in their settlement received any humanitarian food assistance within the last 3 months prior to data collection. Humanitarian food distributions were reported to be the main source of food for most people in their settlement by KIs from 49% of assessed settlements in Ulang across the reporting period, followed by livestock (20%) and foraging (15%). Ongoing conflict is also reported to have had a small impact by KIs from 38% of assessed settlements in Ulang in September, this remained reasonably constant throughout the reporting period. Ultimately, KIs from 35% of assessed settlements in Ulang reported that most people face severe hunger during the month prior to data collection and resorting to extreme coping strategies such as only having children eat (49%) or skipping entire days (33%). This data aligns with Ulang being classified as having “emergency” levels of food insecurity (phase 4) as per the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC)¹².

Access to markets consistently improved in Nasir throughout the reporting period. In March, KIs from 41% of assessed settlements in Nasir reported having a functioning market within walking distance from their settlement. This increased to 61% in June and then 83% in September. Meanwhile KIs from 58% of assessed settlements in Ulang reported access to a functioning market within walking distance of their settlement in September, which remained reasonably stable throughout the reporting period, however, is lower than most other counties in UNS.

Western Bank (Fashoda, Malakal, Manyo and Panyikang counties)

The proportion of assessed settlements in western bank counties where KIs reported that most people in their settlement did not have enough food to eat increased sharply in July and again in September. From April to June, less than 30% of KIs from assessed settlements in western bank counties reported that most people did not have enough food. This number increased dramatically to 50% in July and then 59% in September. In particular, KIs from 100% of assessed settlements in Panyikang reported that most people in their settlement did not have enough food in September. The proportion of assessed settlements across western bank counties where KIs reported mild hunger increased from 22% in June to 46% in September whilst those where severe hunger was reported increased from 1% to 10%. In particular the proportion of assessed settlements in Panyikang where KIs reported severe hunger increased from 0% in June to 24% in September. In September, KIs from assessed settlements in western bank counties reported high food prices (30%) and increased population due to IDPs, returnees or refugees (17%) as the main reasons for the lack of food in their settlement in. Data suggests that the population of Panyikang in particular may be vulnerable to price increases given that in September KIs from 100% of assessed settlements reported buying the majority of their food and in 29%, high prices were the most commonly reported main reason for not having enough food. In September, KIs from assessed settlements reported the arrival of IDPs or returnees as having a small impact on the ability to access food in Panyikang (86%), Fashoda (78%) and Malakal (68%). Prices across South Sudan have risen over the reporting period due to the depreciating exchange rate of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP)¹³. FGD participants also highlighted that heavy rainfall and flooding had negatively impacted the availability of food in Panyikang markets¹⁴.

North-eastern and Central UNS (Maban, Melut & Renk counties)

Data suggests that food security in north-eastern and central UNS has generally improved between June and September. The proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported that most people in their settlement did not have access to enough food decreased from 37% in June to 26% in September which is well ahead of other regions in UNS. KIs from assessed settlements across the region reported crop cultivation (62%) as the main source of food in September. This is supplemented by humanitarian food distributions (15%), buying food (8%) and livestock (5%).

10. ReliefWeb, Severe flooding in South Sudan and Ethiopia leaving people without adequate food, water or shelter, October 2020

11. FEWS NET, Key Message Update, September 2020

12. World Food Programme, Emergency Dashboard, September 2020

13. FEWS NET, South Sudan Price Bulletin, September 2020

14. Focus Group Discussion, Malakal PoC, October 2020

Health

The proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported having access to some form of functioning healthcare facility within walking distance of their settlement fell over the course of the reporting period. In April, only KIs from assessed settlements in Manyo (13%) reported not having access to a functioning healthcare facility within walking distance of their settlement whilst assessed settlements in all other counties reported having access to some form of health facility. Reported access to functioning healthcare facilities began to decrease in June, and by September KIs from assessed settlements reported people in their settlement not having access to a functioning healthcare facility within walking distance of their settlements in Renk (35%), Manyo (27%), Baliet (14%) and Maban (8%). In each of these counties apart from Maban, access to functioning primary healthcare facilities was also not commonly reported.

In April, KIs from assessed settlements in south-western counties, Fashoda (78%) and Panyikang (86%) reported NGO clinics as functional healthcare facilities within walking distance from their settlement, whilst those in Malakal (52%) reported a hospital. Across the rest of the state, KIs from assessed settlements in Melut (84%), Baliet (71%), Renk (62%), Ulang (54%), Manyo (50%) and Maban (36%) reported access to functioning primary healthcare facilities within walking distance again in April. In September, the proportion of assessed settlements where access to primary healthcare facilities was reported decreased in Melut (65%), Baliet (36%), Renk (45%), Ulang (42%), Manyo (27%) however did increase in Maban (54%). In September, KIs from 18% of assessed settlements reported that long distance between their settlement and the healthcare facility was the main barrier to accessing healthcare across UNS; while in 40% of assessed settlements journeys reportedly took longer than one hour by foot. Insecurity was also reported as a barrier to accessing healthcare facilities in Ulang (31%) and Luakpiny/Nasir (33%) in September.

Across UNS, KIs from 86% of assessed settlements reported malaria as the perceived main health problem for people in their settlement in September, followed by malnutrition (10%). Reports of malnutrition as the perceived main health problem come from Ulang (58%) and Luakpiny/Nasir (25%). In the same period, KIs from 50% of assessed settlements in Ulang and 25% of those from Luakpiny/Nasir reported cases of severe malnutrition in up to half of the children in the settlement.

COVID-19

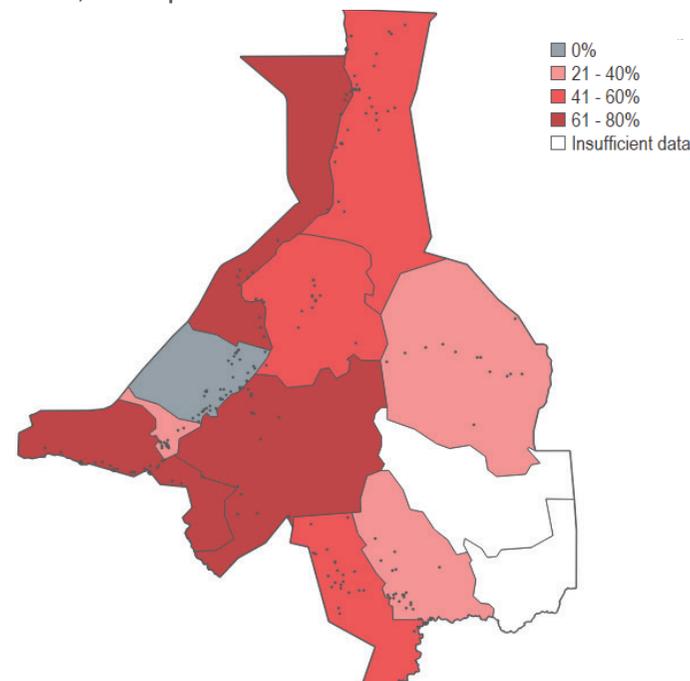
In September, KIs from 100% of assessed settlements across UNS reported having heard of COVID-19, with 87% having heard how to protect themselves and prevent the spread of the virus. KIs from 69% of assessed settlements reported that most people in their community have made some kind of behavioural change, the most common behavioural changes being washing hands more regularly (69%), washing with soap (54%) and social distancing (45%).

Accountability to Affected Population

Food assistance was reported as the most prevalent humanitarian need by KIs from 28% of assessed settlements across UNS in September. In particular, KIs from 67% of assessed settlements in Panyikang and 58% from Ulang reported food assistance as the main humanitarian need, which is consistent with reports of food insecurity resulting from flooding in Panyikang and violent conflict in Ulang, highlighted elsewhere in this situation overview.

Access to humanitarian aid varies between different counties across UNS. In September, KIs from 59% of assessed settlements across UNS reported that people in their settlement accessed humanitarian aid within the last 6 months prior to data collection, leaving 41% reporting that people in their settlement had been unable to access humanitarian aid during this time. In particular, KIs from assessed settlements in Manyo (73%), Baliet (71%), Panyikang (67%) and Ulang (48%) reported people in their settlement were unable to access humanitarian aid. In September, KIs from 82% of those assessed settlements that had received humanitarian aid in the 6 months prior, reported that the assistance received was the type of assistance that people had needed the most.

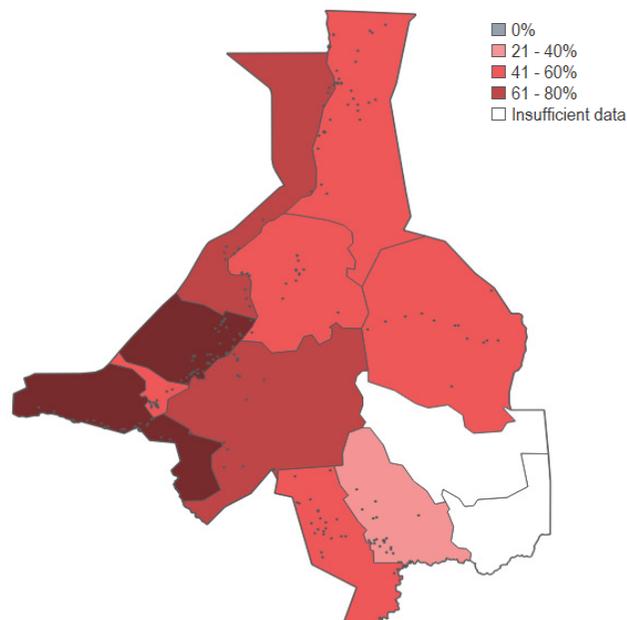
Figure 4: Proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported no access to humanitarian aid in the six months prior to data collection, as of September 2020



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

The proportion of assessed settlements across UNS where KIs reported nobody in their settlement was using latrines remained consistently high throughout the reporting period. In September, KIs from 59% of assessed settlements reported that nobody was using latrines, while in 23% of assessed settlements people reportedly used latrines less than half of the time and only in 1%, KIs reported that people used latrines most of the time.

Figure 5: Proportion of assessed settlements where it was reported that nobody uses latrines in September



In September, counties with the highest proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported nobody in their settlement using latrines were Panyikang (95%), Fashoda (80%) and Baliet (79%), however, in the majority of assessed settlements across all counties, KIs reported that fewer than half of the people were using latrines. KIs from the majority of assessed settlements in all states across Upper Nile, aside from Ulang and Nasir, reported the main reason for not using latrines is that none are available (84%). In Ulang and Nasir, KIs from assessed settlements report that latrines are overcrowded (28%), dirty (22%), unsafe (18%) or unavailable (16%). This trend aligns with needs reported in a FGD on accountability to affected populations which took place in Malakal PoC in September, in which female participants from Malakal county reported functioning latrines as their most pressing humanitarian need¹⁵.

Access to clean water is another prominent humanitarian need across UNS. In September, in the majority of assessed settlements across UNS, KIs reported no presence of boreholes (81%). The only counties where KIs from assessed settlements reported having any boreholes were Nasir (71%), Ulang (54%), Maban (31%) and Fashoda (10%) which collectively make up only 18% of assessed settlements across Upper Nile State, otherwise KIs from 0% of assessed settlements across all remaining counties reported having boreholes in their settlement. As a result, KIs from 45% of assessed settlements across UNS reported that the most common source of drinking water is directly from a river. Panyikang (93%), Fashoda (78%), Manyo (68%) and Baliet (63%) had the highest proportion of assessed settlements report rivers as the main source of drinking water.

Protection

Over the reporting period, reporting on security concerns has generally been low and stable for all counties across UNS with the exception of Ulang and Nasir in the south-eastern region where security concerns have been high and also increasing between April and September. In April, KIs from 57% of assessed settlements in Ulang reported feeling unsafe for most of the time in their settlement, however, by September, that figure had increased to 85%. Similarly in Luakpiny/Nasir, KIs from 76% of assessed settlements reported most people felt unsafe most of the time in April, which reached 79% in September. In Ulang and Luakpiny/Nasir, the most commonly reported the main safety concerns for women (18 years and older) were domestic violence (26% of assessed settlements), family separation (24%) and abduction (18%). The most commonly reported protection concern for men (18 and older) was inter-communal violence (67%) in Ulang and cattle raiding (38%) in Luakpiny/Nasir. This is consistent with reports of protracted inter-communal violence in the county¹⁶.

The proportion of assessed settlements across UNS where KIs reported any protection concern for women (51%) and girls (54%) remained consistently higher than for men (37%) and boys (37%) throughout the reporting period. Domestic violence remained a widespread problem throughout the reporting period, reported as the primary security concern for women by KIs from assessed settlements in Renk (43%), Melut (39%), Maban (34%), Luakpiny/Nasir (25%), Manyo (25%), Baliet (23%) and Panyikang (23%). Early marriage presents a similarly widespread issue, reported as the main security concern for girls by KIs from assessed settlements in Maban (55%), Melut (55%), Renk (40%), Ulang (38%), Manyo (32%), Baliet (31%) and Nasir (28%) throughout the reporting period.

15. Focus Group Discussion, Malakal PoC, October 2020

16. REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, January - March 2020

Education

Schools in South Sudan closed in March following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic¹⁹. Reported access to education services fell dramatically in Malakal over the course of the reporting period. In April, KIs from assessed settlements in Malakal reported that 61% of settlements had access to education services within walking distance, roughly on par with UNS on the whole. By June, KIs from almost all assessed settlements (97%) reported that there was no access to education services and has since remained high. In 92% of assessed settlements where KIs reported that there was no access to education services, the displacement of teaching staff was the most commonly reported reason. This may have been linked to teachers leaving when the schools shut due to COVID or to low and irregular salary payments. This has an effect on access to education for both girls and boys. Neighbouring Fashoda also saw a similar decrease in the number of assessed settlements where KIs reported access to education services.

Shelter/ NFI

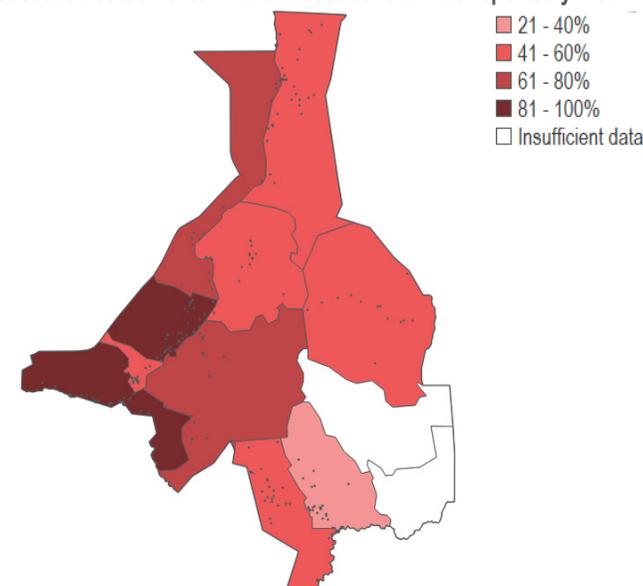
Findings suggest that access to shelter remained stable across UNS. Throughout the reporting period, KIs from assessed settlements across UNS reported tukul as the main type of shelter in 93% of settlements. Meanwhile, KIs from the vast majority of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs report that IDPs mainly live in rakoobas in all counties apart from Ulang and Luakpiny/Nasir in south-eastern UNS where IDPs live in abandoned buildings (11%), improvised shelters (10%) or community buildings (9%).

In September, KIs from 65% of assessed settlements across UNS reported that there had been no distribution of NFIs to their settlements within the last 3 months prior to data collection. At the same time, mosquito nests were the most commonly reported main NFI needed in September (42%); this was particularly commonly reported in Fashoda (70%). In Manyo, Maban, and Panyikang. The correlates with the widespread prevalence of malaria reported in the health section of this report. KIs also commonly reported plastic sheets as the main needed NFI (reported in 44%, 43%, and 39% of assessed settlements, respectively).

Conclusion

The humanitarian situation across UNS appears to have deteriorated over the reporting period. Findings suggest that the combined impacts of inter-communal violence, flooding, economic instability and the COVID-19 pandemic have caused displacement, food insecurity and protection concerns. Data suggests that inter-communal violence in Ulang in may have contributed to displacement, protection concerns and deteriorating food security²¹. Elsewhere, flooding and deteriorating economic conditions may also have contributed to displacement and emergency (IPC Phase 4) levels of food insecurity²² in Panyikang.

Figure 6: Proportion of assessed settlements where access to food was reportedly insufficient in September



About REACH Initiative

REACH Initiative 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. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).

19. ReliefWeb, 1.9 million South Sudanese children despair over closure of schools due to COVID-19; mothers worried of the future, April 2020.

20. Rakoobas are shelters constructed from poles and plastic tarpaulin.

21. World Food Programme, Emergency Dashboard, September 2020

22. World Food Programme, Emergency Dashboard, September 2020