

Humanitarian Situation Monitoring, Lakes State

South Sudan October - December 2020

REACH Informing more effective humanitarian action

Overview

In the fourth quarter of 2020, flooding, economic instability and organised violence have likely been the primary drivers of humanitarian needs in Lakes. Though mitigated somewhat by the availability of harvested food stocks, there are signs that these stocks may be exhausted earlier than expected, while reported access to markets and cattle has seemingly worsened. Access to education remains reportedly very low across the state, while already fragile WASH and health infrastructures are likely to be vulnerable to shocks coming into the dry season. With limited humanitarian access in the region, information gaps exist on the severity of these needs and the locations of vulnerable populations.

To inform humanitarian actors, 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 with knowledge of a settlement and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This Situation Overview uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across Lakes State in the fourth quarter (October-December) of 2020.

Methodology

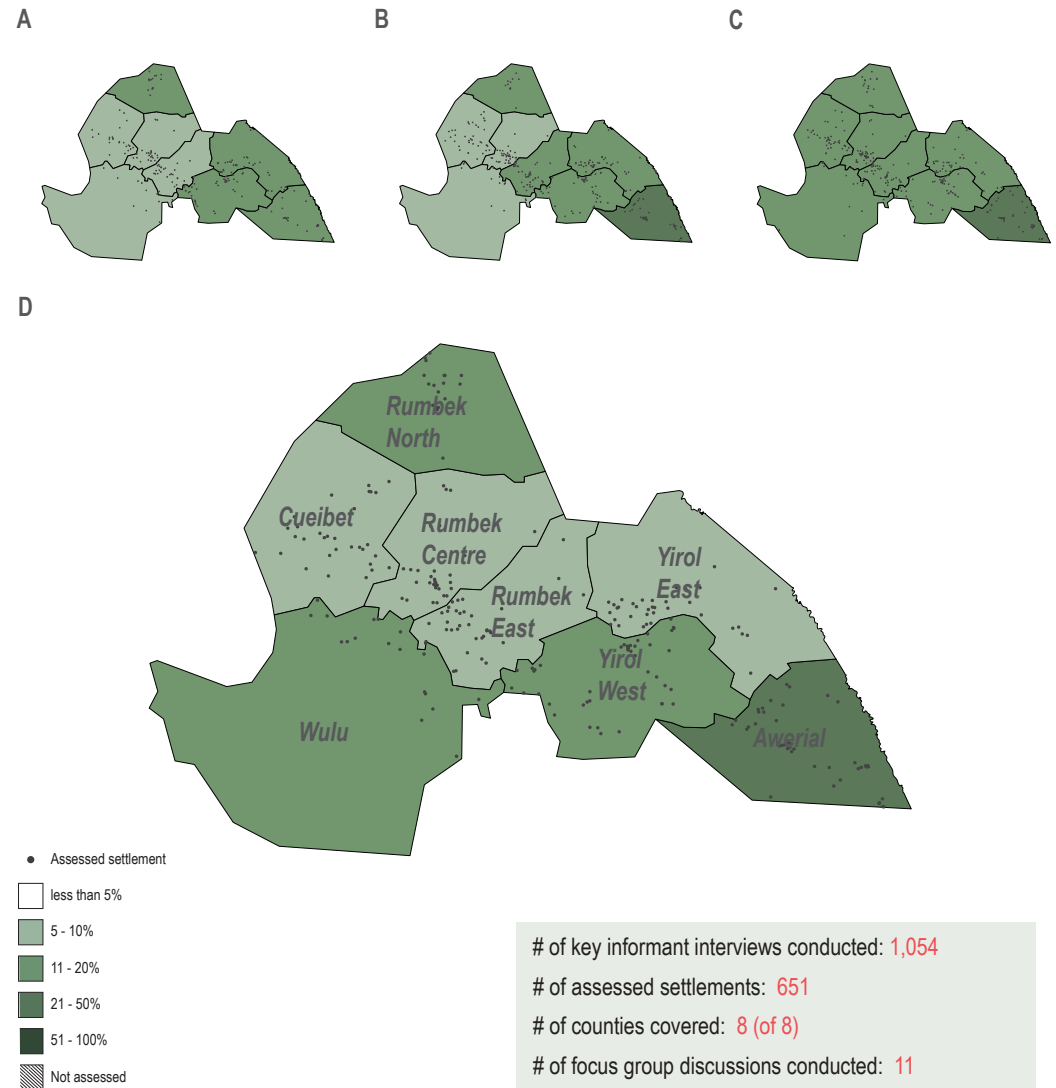
To provide an indicative overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Lakes State, REACH conducts interviews with key informants (KIs) who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK). These interviews were conducted in collective centres and through phone calling throughout the reporting period. 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 analysis. 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 Lakes State took place throughout October - December 2020.

More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Lakes State, September (A), October (B), November (C) and December (D) 2020.



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.

Key Findings



Displacement: Population movement and displacement in Lakes were reportedly increasingly driven by resource stress across the reporting period. This was perhaps related to the after-effects of severe flooding driving food insecurity during the wet season in Lakes. In those assessed settlements where the presence of IDPs had been reported (28%, unchanged since September), there was a 10 and 13 percentage point increase respectively in the lack of food and the lack of jobs or livelihoods as reported push factors for IDPs (24% and 13% respectively).



Food Security and Livelihoods: In December, findings indicate that early harvest exhaustion, economic instability, and reduced cattle access were key drivers of food insecurity in Lakes. Though KIIs in the majority (60%) of assessed settlements in Lakes reported adequate access to food, the qualitative data indicates that some harvested food stocks across the state will perhaps already have been exhausted by December 2020, or earlier, particularly in areas severely affected by flooding.³ Of note, KIIs in all (100% in December) assessed settlements in Rumbek North continued to report inadequate access to food, the highest of any county in the state (see Map 2).

39% of assessed settlements in Rumbek North where KIIs reported that at least one person skipped entire days without eating.

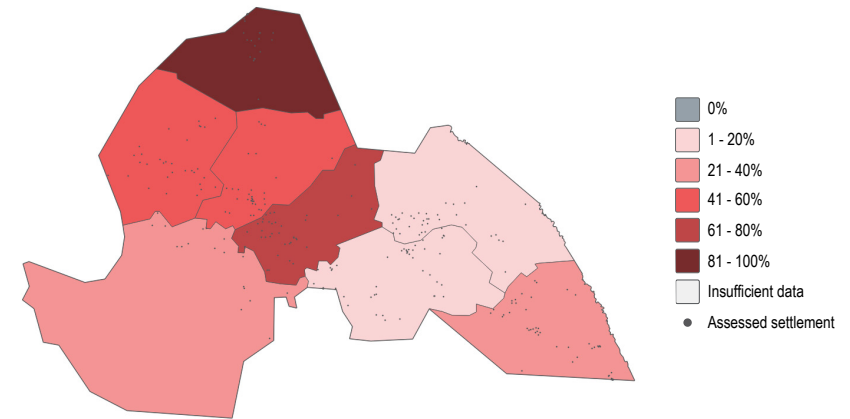


Protection: Findings indicate that reported protection concerns across the state were largely gendered, while they were particularly severe in Western Lakes.⁴ In 23% of assessed settlements, the primary reported protection concern for men was killing or injury by another tribe (unchanged since September), while in 22% of assessed settlements, the primary reported protection concerns for women was looting or criminality (12% in September). FDG participants from western Lakes reported severe and frequent protection concerns, with women as the primary targets of sexual violence and where men continued to be the primary targets of revenge killings.⁵



Health: Poorly stocked health facilities and the long time taken to access healthcare by foot, reportedly served as major barriers to accessing preferred healthcare facilities from assessed settlements. In December, KIIs in only 12% of assessed settlements reported that their preferred health facility was stocked with the medicine most people needed in the month prior to data collection (22% in September). While KIIs in only 39% of assessed settlements reported that it took less than one hour to access primary healthcare (unchanged since September).

Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements in Lakes where KIIs reported that most people did not have adequate access to food in December 2020.



Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH): Findings suggest that, in December, the WASH conditions in Awerial and Rumbek North were worse than in any other counties in Lakes. KIIs in only 61% of assessed settlements from both counties respectively reported the presence of at least one borehole. This was corroborated by the proportion of KIIs in assessed settlements in these two counties who reported that the main source of drinking water was from an unimproved water source* (34% respectively in December).



Shelter/ Non Food Items (NFI): Shelter conditions likely remained poor and NFI needs likely remained high for IDPs in assessed settlements in December, particularly in Awerial and Yiroi East. KIIs in 26% of assessed settlements with IDP presence (28%) reported that IDPs used rakoobas as their main shelter type (unchanged since September), while in 8% of settlements, KIIs reported improvised shelters as the main type for IDPs (unchanged). In assessed settlements where KIIs reported the presence of IDPs, plastic sheeting continued to be the main NFI reportedly needed by IDPs (26% in December, 42% in September).



Education: Findings indicate that school attendance is perhaps strongly gendered across the State. Though the majority of classes continued to be closed, there has been a 21 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements where at least one education service was reportedly accessible by foot (21% in December). KIIs in 43% of assessed settlements where educational services were available, reported that more than half of the boys were attending school, while only 9% reported the same for girls.

3. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.

4. Western Lakes constitutes: Cueibet, Wulu, Rumbek North, Rumbek Centre and Rumbek East; while Eastern Lakes constitutes: Awerial, Yiroi East and Yiroi West.

5. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.

*unimproved referring to a "dug well, unprotected spring, cart with small tank/drum, tanker truck, and surface water (river, dam, lake, pond, stream, canal, irrigation channels), bottled water", WHO.

Population Movement and Displacement

In December 2020, displacement in Lakes was perhaps primarily driven by resource stress and insecurity. In those assessed settlements where the presence of IDPs had been reported (28%, unchanged since September), KIs also reported insecurity (36%), lack of food (24%), and lack of jobs or livelihoods (13%) as the primary push factors driving internal displacement in Lakes. This constitutes a 10 and 13 percentage point increase respectively for the lack of food and the lack of jobs or livelihoods as reported push factors, and a 21 percentage point decrease in insecurity. This is likely indicative of increased resource stress following a wet season that saw very high levels of flooding that adversely affected the crop yield and ability to access livelihoods for many in Lakes and across South Sudan.⁶ Similarly, in December, resource stress appeared to be a major driver of returns among assessed settlements where the presence of IDP returnees had been reported, as the most commonly reported pull factors were security (36% in December), access to food (22%) and access to livelihoods (13%).

Overall, as in the previous quarter, reported population movement in Lakes primarily took place on an intra-county level in December. KIs in most (80%) of the assessed settlements where IDPs were reportedly present, reported that the majority of IDPs had arrived from another settlement within the same county (66% in September). At the beginning of the reporting period, this population movement likely continued to be in part driven by flooding, whereby the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported over 1800 households displaced inland from settlements bordering the White Nile in Yirol East in October.⁷

However, with the end of the wet season, the after-effects of these shocks may be driving population movement in other ways. For instance, the increasingly resource-related push and pull factors for displacement outlined above are likely indicative of primary distress migration,* used particularly by households to access wider variety of resources in closer proximity with less time commitments.⁸ Consequently, qualitative FGD data from Yirol West and Rumbek Centre indicates that there may be pockets of more serious secondary distress migration,** where households relocate to urban centres until the next harvest season or livelihood cycle (or longer depending on severity of resource stress).⁹ In both Yirol West and Rumbek North, FGD participants reported that many displaced by severe flooding or insecurity, chose to go to Yirol town and Rumbek North respectively.¹⁰ That this was reportedly tied to the availability of stocked markets and income generating activities in these towns (related to casual labor), whereby this secondary distress migration is often tied to exhaustion of resources made available in micro-level primary distress migration (mainly cultivated food stocks in flood-affected areas).¹¹

Of note, in relation to the more severe secondary distress migration outlined above, Awerial likely continued to be another site of displacement for IDPs displaced from counties in western Jonglei

Figure 1: Reported drivers of displacement in assessed settlements in Lakes, September to December 2020.

	September 2020	October 2020	November 2020	December 2020
Insecurity	57%	50%	51%	36%
Flooding	26%	38%	31%	13%
Lack of food	14%	13%	14%	24%
Lack of job or livelihood	0%	0%	0%	13%

following high levels of flooding during the wet season earlier in the year. KIs in over half (60%) of assessed settlements in Awerial with reported IDP presence, reported that IDPs had come from Twic East (75% in September). However in December, of assessed settlements in Awerial where IDPs were reportedly present, there was a 43 percentage point decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported that half or more than half of the population were IDPs (57% in December). This is perhaps indicative of some movement back to areas of origin in Jonglei, but could also be indicative of IDP assimilation into the Mingkaman host community (HC). Indeed, FGD participants from Awerial have reported that the HC, mainly made up of former IDPs from western Jonglei, have hosted many IDPs (which could function as a form of assimilation into the HC) who do not have access to shelter or shelter materials, whereby the price of shelter materials is reportedly too high for many to easily purchase.¹² Moreover, IOM has reported that the movement intentions for other displaced populations from this part of Jonglei indicate that the majority of those displaced by the flooding in counties in western Jonglei intend to spend more than three months and up to six months in their areas of displacement.¹³ This could mean that many IDPs displaced to Awerial will perhaps remain in displacement sites such as Mingkaman during the first quarter of 2021.



Food Security and Livelihoods

The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has predicted that the food security situation in Lakes is expected to improve from December 2020 to March 2021, with all counties during this period classified as Crisis (IPC Phase 3) acute food insecurity, except for Wulu County which is classified in Stressed (IPC Phase 2) acute food insecurity.¹⁴ The AoK data for December

6. South Sudan's Devastating Floods. Sudd Institute, 23 November 2020.

7. Yirol East, Lakes State Event Tracking. IOM, 10 October 2020.

8. South Sudan Population Movement Baseline Report. REACH, September 2020.

9. FGD Rumbek Centre (females), FSL Shocks, November 2020; FGD Yirol West (females), FSL Shocks, November 2020.

10. Ibid.

*Primary Distress Migration: Relocation of community members during periods of food insecurity within a limited geographic area, such as to seasonal cattle and fishing camps or nearby forest and bush to improve food access. This movement of people, with or without livestock, may appear initially as movement related to typical livelihoods or as more general internal displacement, but is more specific to periods of food insecurity. Source: REACH, Now the forest is blocked: Shocks and access to food, 2018.

**Secondary Distress Migration: Relocation of individual, households, or entire communities to urban centres, IDP or Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites, or refugee camps as a result of coping strategy exhaustion during periods of food insecurity. This out-migration is usually longer distance and for longer periods of time. Source: REACH, Now the forest is blocked: Shocks and access to food, 2018.

11. South Sudan Population Movement Baseline Report. REACH, September 2020.

was likely indicative of the beginning of this trend, with KIs in the majority (60%) of assessed settlements in Lakes reporting adequate access to food, a 39 percentage point increase since September. According to the IPC, these predicted improvements to the food security situation will be primarily driven by seasonal factors such as the availability of harvests and better road conditions allowing increased access to markets.¹⁵ While AoK data largely reflects these predictions, findings indicate an early harvest exhaustion in some areas, which might hinder the expected food security improvements. Particularly in flood-affected areas, reduced market access and limited access to cattle due to both insecurity and remaining flood waters might impact migration patterns and negatively affect people's resilience to future shocks.

Food Security and Early Harvest Exhaustion

In December, it is likely that access to food improved for most assessed settlements. The proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported that most people consumed two meals a day rose to 61% in December (18% in September), while of those assessed settlements where KIs reported inadequate access to food (40%), 80% reported that most people's hunger was small and strategies were available to cope with the reduced access to food (65% in September). In combination with the broader increase in reports of adequate access to food in assessed settlements across Lakes outlined in the beginning of this section (60% of assessed settlements in December), these findings are perhaps indicative of the beginning of the improvement in food security that the IPC predicted from December to March, primarily attributed to the seasonal availability of harvests at this time of year.¹⁶ Indeed, in December, the proportion of assessed settlements with KIs reporting that in the month prior to data collection the primary food source was cultivated (own production) rose to 69% (59% in September), while the other main sources of food remained purchase (10%, unchanged) and livestock rearing (7%, unchanged), perhaps indicative of a higher availability of cultivated food stocks.

Though these findings are largely indicative of a general improvement in food security perhaps linked to the availability of harvested food stocks; the qualitative data for the fourth quarter of 2020 indicates that these harvested food stocks may not last as long as they normally would. According to FGD participants across the State, this is predominantly because of shocks (mainly flooding) affecting access to or destroying crops during the crop cycle prior to the harvest period.¹⁷ Previous studies have shown that counties in western Lakes in particular have a high reliance on harvested food stocks throughout the dry season (usually between November and March), with stocks being expected to last at least until March in a normal year.¹⁸ However, FGD participants from across Lakes highlighted that harvested food stocks will likely already be exhausted by December, or earlier, particularly in areas severely affected by flooding.¹⁹ This may be mitigated somewhat by the availability of certain staples like long sorghum (which have a reportedly higher resilience than other crops to flood-waters because of their larger stature) that will not be harvested until December

or January. FGD participants from across the state reported that the harvest will not last as long as it normally would, meaning that the lean season (when harvested food stocks are at their lowest) may come earlier than expected.²⁰

Of note, AoK findings from Rumbek North in December continued to be indicative of severe food insecurity, with all KIs in all assessed settlements (100%) reporting that most people did not have adequate access to food, a figure that remained the highest in the State and unchanged since September. Overall, findings suggest the use of severe coping strategies (CCS) remained low across Lakes, with KIs in 7% of assessed settlements reporting that at least one person skipped entire days without eating, and only in 6% of assessed settlements it was reported that adults do not eat so that children can eat. However, in Rumbek North, findings are indicative of more severe food insecurity, with KIs in all assessed settlements (100%) reporting that most people did not have adequate access to food, further reflected in common reporting of at least one person skipping entire days without eating (39%) and adults not eating so that children could (29% and 35% respectively in September). Additionally, in December there was a reported increase in the proportion of assessed settlements in Rumbek North with KIs reporting that when there was not enough food, people gathered wild food (72%, 35% in September) and engaged in fishing more than was normal for that time of year (56%, 6% in September). This apparent increase in severe CCSs and large increases in reported livelihood coping strategies (LCSs) such as fishing and wild food gathering are perhaps indicative of early exhaustion of harvested food stocks. Indeed, FGD participants from Rumbek North reported that their primary sources of food were from humanitarian food assistance (HFA), purchased food from the market or from wild food collection, but that they experienced significant barriers when purchasing food, primarily related to high market prices.²¹ All the while, some wild fruits and tubers that were increasingly being relied upon were themselves becoming exhausted, perhaps raising concerns about the severity of food security in Rumbek North.²²

Markets

Inadequate access to markets was likely primarily driven by insecurity and the after-effects of flooding in assessed settlements across Lakes in December. Reported access to any functional market across the State decreased to 86% (98% in September [see figure 2]), a decrease that was perhaps most evident in Cueibet and Rumbek North where only 48% and 67% of KIs respectively reported access to a functional market (100% and 88% in September). It is likely that in Cueibet, this reportedly poor market access was driven by insecurity, where KIs in 48% of assessed settlements reported that at least one person had not been able to access their preferred market place in the month prior to data collection because they feared for their safety (35% in September). While in Rumbek North, reportedly poor market access was perhaps driven by flooding, as KIs in 89% of assessed settlements reported flooding as the primary barrier preventing people from accessing their preferred market place (76% in September).

12. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.

13. Mangala Rapid Flow Monitoring. IOM, Reporting period: 01 November - 31 December 2020

14. IPC Acute Food Insecurity & Acute Malnutrition Analysis, October 2020 - July 2021. IPC, 18 December 2020.

15. IPC Acute Food Insecurity & Acute Malnutrition Analysis, October 2020 - July 2021. IPC, 18 December 2020.

16. IPC Acute Food Insecurity & Acute Malnutrition Analysis, October 2020 - July 2021. IPC, 18 December 2020.

17. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.

18. [Western Lakes Population Movement, Food Security and Livelihoods Profile. REACH, July 2019.](#)

19. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.

20. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.

21. FGD Rumbek North (females), FSL Shocks, November 2020.

22. FGD Rumbek North (females), FSL Shocks, November 2020.

23. South Sudan Flood Risk Map. OCHA, July 2020.

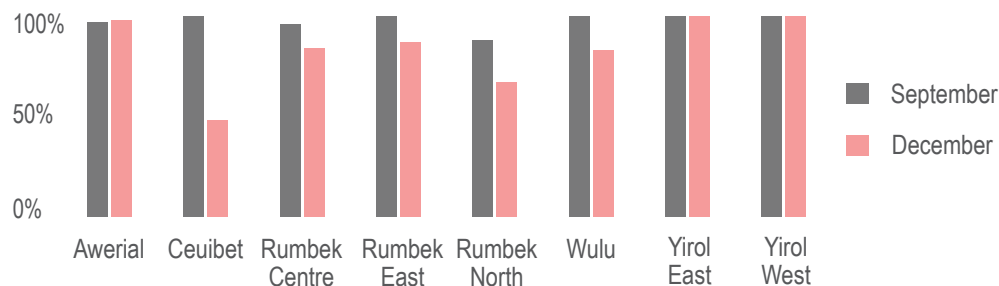
Situation Overview: Lakes State October - December 2020

In July 2020 the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) highlighted Rumbek North as a county in Lakes with a relatively high flood-risk compared to the rest of Lakes, which may explain the continuation of flooding as a reported barrier to market access even into the beginning of the dry season.²³ This has reportedly been seen elsewhere in other regions of South Sudan that have experienced particularly high levels of flooding, where flood-waters have remained for a long time without receding and have continued to act as an access barrier until the end of 2020.²³

While in Cueibet, local- and grassroots-level conflict seems to have continued to have a negative impact on market accessibility, with instances of cattle raiding and revenge killings having led to dozens of reported fatalities throughout the reporting period and into the dry season.²⁴²⁵ Indeed, in 42% of assessed settlements in Cueibet, KIs reported that conflict or communal violence was a barrier to accessing markets from assessed settlements, the highest of any county in Lakes (14% across Lakes overall). This was corroborated by FGD participants across western Lakes, who highlighted that insecurity along the roads acted as a major barrier to market access. That this was mainly in relation to traders, and that in some cases (particularly in Rumbek Centre), the threat of insecurity was leading to less traders in markets. Consequently, participants reported that this allowed these few remaining traders to set higher prices as they had fewer competitors.²⁶

However, the strongest themes that emerged in the qualitative data on markets and market access in the fourth quarter of 2020, were that high prices, particularly in relation to NFIs, were preventing people across the state from purchasing goods that they needed.²⁷ Indeed, this was also seen in the AoK data for December, with KIs in 73% of assessed settlements reporting that some items were too expensive or that most people could not afford them. This is likely related to the continued poor economic situation across the country that has seen a continued large increase in the difference between the parallel market and central bank exchange rates of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) to the US Dollar (USD), leading to economic instability and inflation of the SSP.²⁸ FGD participants from across the state highlighted that many were unable to access lines of credit in their preferred market due to this economic uncertainty. Perhaps meaning that those who need to borrow money to purchase food or other goods most (often the most vulnerable), will have a decreased capacity to

Figure 2: Reported access to any functional market in Lakes, September and December 2020.



do so, making them increasingly vulnerable to additional shocks during the dry season if economic instability persists.²⁹

Pastoralism

Cattle are traditionally very important across Lakes as they are a major commodity that serve not only as a livelihood, but also as a determinate factor in marriage (bride price), a major form of investment, and can (often as a last resort) serve as a coping mechanism in times of need by being sold as a liquidatable asset or eaten.³⁰ In December, KIs in over half (52%) of assessed settlements reported that livestock keeping and rearing was a livelihood that most people in assessed settlements had engaged in in the month prior to data collection (70% in September). Changes in cattle (camp) movement, cattle ownership, and access to cattle are therefore key determinants in understanding severity of needs in pastoralist societies found across Lakes.

In only 16% of assessed settlements in September, KIs reported the sale of more livestock than is normal for this time of year (41% in September). This is perhaps indicative of a reduction in the need to sell cattle as a coping mechanism, however FGD participants in western Lakes highlighted that many people were choosing not to sell cattle (even if they needed to) as they feared that the cattle will be stolen while moving it to the cattle market, so a reduction in the sale of cattle may be because people could not sell them even if they wanted to.³¹ Indeed in December, reported cattle access remained unchanged across assessed settlements in Lakes (41%), while reported cattle ownership (61%) only saw a slight decrease (73% in September). However, of note, there was a large reduction in reported cattle ownership in Cueibet where KIs in only 10% of assessed settlements reported cattle access (50% in September). Perhaps indicative of the effects cattle raiding (as outlined in the previous markets section) hindering cattle access across the county.

Another important factor in using livestock to analyse the severity of food insecurity, is in relation to cattle (camp) migration. In Lakes, the end of the calendar year normally sees increased movement of cattle from *rup* (slightly higher woode areas) to *toc* (seasonally flooded grazing land) as the floodwaters begin to recede and preparations for the dry season begin.³² In Awerial, KIs in only 27% of assessed settlements reported that normal livelihood migrations were ongoing (unchanged), while 27% reported that livelihood migrations had changed (3% in September). These changes in migration patterns are perhaps related to increased instances of cattle raiding in Awerial during the reporting period.³³ Indeed, FGD participants from Awerial reported that increased insecurity has meant that cattle are perhaps further away than normal using migration routes that would not normally be used at this time of year.³⁴ This could mean that cattle camps may not be as easily accessible as a livelihood or coping mechanism, while the use of different migration routes may lead to conflict over grazing land during the dry season.

Overall, the factors expected to mitigate food insecurity that were highlighted in the IPC for Lakes,

23. South Sudan floods displace a million as hunger and diseases loom. Aljazeera. 1 January, 2021.
 24. Global Overview. International Crisis Group, December 2020.
 25. 17 die in Cueilbet cattle raid. Eye Radio, 11 March 2021.
 26. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.
 27. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.
 28. South Sudan to change currency due to economic crisis. AA, 9 October 2020.

29. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.
 30. The Impact of Conflict on the Livestock Sector in South Sudan. FAO, 2016.
 31. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.
 32. Peace is the Name of Our Cattle-Camp. The Rift Valley Institute and the South Sudan Customary Authorities Project, 2018.

33. One killed, 5 wounded in Awerial County cattle raid. Radio Tamazuj, 19 November 2020.
 34. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.

outlined at the beginning of this section, will not perhaps be as effective as originally predicted. Shocks during the previous wet season may have contributed to early harvest exhaustion (particularly in flood-affected regions such as Rumbek North); economic instability and insecurity are perhaps negatively affecting market access; while reported access to cattle is reduced and abnormal cattle camp movements are likely affected by shocks. These factors may further drive food insecurity for already vulnerable populations across Lakes in the first quarter of 2021.

Health

In the fourth quarter of 2020, though the availability of healthcare reportedly improved somewhat across the state, major barriers likely remained, primarily in relation to poorly stocked facilities and the long time it reportedly took to access healthcare facilities from assessed settlements. In December, in 84% of assessed settlements across Lakes, KIs reported that primary healthcare centres (PHCCs) continued to be the nearest functional primary healthcare facilities that people could walk to from their settlements, while 13% reported the same for hospitals (both unchanged since September). KIs in 78% of assessed settlements where PHCCs were reported as the nearest functional healthcare facility (84%) reported that the centers were available every day in the month prior to data collection (67% in September). This increase in reports of availability of healthcare services is perhaps linked to the improved road conditions normally seen at the beginning of the dry season.

However, though the availability of healthcare services seems to have improved across the state, major reported barriers remained. Firstly, KIs in most (88%) assessed settlements reported that their preferred health facility was not stocked with the medicine most people needed in the month prior to data collection (78% in December). The primary reported barrier to accessing healthcare at the nearest functional healthcare facility for KIs in over three quarters (77%) of assessed settlements across Lakes was reportedly that there were no medicines available (74% in September, unchanged). The second reported major barrier to accessing healthcare in lakes was related to distance. KIs in only 39% of assessed settlements reported that it took less than one hour to access primary healthcare (unchanged since September), a figure that is 41 percentage

Figure 3: Proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported that their preferred health facility was not stocked with medicine.

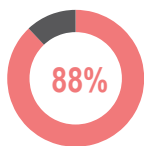
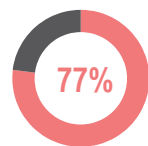


Figure 4: Proportion of assessed settlements where the main reported barrier to healthcare was that there was no medicines available.



points below the recommended Sphere standard.* Indeed, KIs in 19% of assessed settlements reported their nearest functional healthcare facility being too far as their main barrier to accessing healthcare (unchanged since September), the second most commonly reported barrier across the state in September.

This combination of reported barriers relating to time taken to access healthcare and poor access to medicine at healthcare facilities, perhaps indicates that people with health needs in assessed settlements may be exposing themselves to long and potentially hazardous journeys to access healthcare facilities that may not even stock the necessary medicine to support their health needs. This is particularly of note in counties with already high reported protection needs such as Cueibet. Moreover, the Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) for 2021 reported that health was among the second-most identified needs for women and children after food assistance in 2020; which, when combined with broadly gendered protection concerns across the state, makes women and children particularly vulnerable if they need to make such long journeys to access healthcare.³⁵ The HNO also highlights that, though Malaria remains the main cause of both mortality and morbidity across the country, inadequate WASH facilities contribute to poor health conditions and the increased risk of water-borne diseases such as diarrheal diseases and cholera.³⁶ Indeed, this trend was reflected in the AoK data for December, with KIs in 51% of assessed settlements reporting perceiving that Malaria was the most common health problem (65% in September), followed by diarrheal diseases (19% in December, 6% in September). This is perhaps indicative of poor WASH conditions across the state, which will be explored in further detail in the subsequent section.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Access to Water

In December, boreholes reportedly remained the main source of drinking water for 85% of assessed settlements across the state (unchanged since September), with KIs in 86% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of at least one functional borehole (unchanged). Prominent exemptions to this were seen in Awerial and Rumbek North, where KIs in only 61% of assessed settlements from both counties respectively reported the presence of at least one borehole. This was corroborated by the proportion of KIs in assessed settlements in these two counties who reported that the main source of drinking water was from an unimproved water source* (34% respectively in September). As highlighted in the previous quarter, this is perhaps particularly worrying considering the high numbers of IDPs displaced from Jonglei to Mingkaman.³⁷ Indeed, FGD participants from Mingkaman have reported increased competition for access to boreholes due to the arrival of IDPs from Jonglei during the wet season, while multiple boreholes being non-functional had reportedly led to waiting times of over 6 hours at boreholes, meaning that already vulnerable IDP populations in Mingkaman are likely facing limited access to drinking water.³⁸

*>=80% of population that can access primary healthcare within one hour's walk from dwellings.

35. Humanitarian Needs Overview. OCHA, 2021.

36. Humanitarian Needs Overview. OCHA, 2021.

37. [Humanitarian Situation Monitoring, Lakes State South Sudan, April - September 2020, REACH, January 2021.](#)

38. FGD Awerial (females), FSL Shocks, November 2020; FGD Awerial (mixed), FSL Shocks, November 2020.

*unimproved referring to a "dug well, unprotected spring, cart with small tank/drum, tanker truck, and surface water (river, dam, lake, pond, stream, canal, irrigation channels), bottled water", WHO.

Sanitation

In assessed settlements across Lakes, latrine usage remained reportedly low, with KIs in 62% of assessed settlements reporting that no one had access to any latrines in December (unchanged since September). KIs in 61% of assessed settlements with low or no access to latrines reported that this was because there were none available (75% in September), perhaps indicative of long-term limited physical infrastructure made worse by shocks related to localised and sub-national violence and recurring flooding.³⁹ Moreover, it is likely that handwashing practices continued to be largely ineffective across the state, with KIs in only 21% of assessed settlements reporting that people wash their hands with both soap and water (unchanged since September). These already reportedly poor WASH conditions in assessed settlements may be exacerbated by additional shocks related to flooding in the coming wet season.

Protection

In the HNO for 2021, OCHA reported that Lakes was one of three states (the other two being Jonglei and Warrap) that were the primary sites of increased sub-national violence in the first 6 months of 2020 (compared to 2019).⁴⁰ This prevalence of organised violence within Lakes has seemingly continued into the fourth quarter of 2020, with the proportion of KIs in assessed settlements reporting that most people did not feel safe most of the time remaining high (69% in December). Moreover, in late 2020, Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRf) reported heightened protection concerns in Ceuibet and Rumbek Centre that were particularly high when compared to other counties in South Sudan, trends which have perhaps continued into the fourth quarter of 2020.⁴¹ Multiple incidents of grassroots and localised violence have been recorded in Cueibet (particularly related to cattle raiding and revenge killings), while there have been reports of armed clashes, targeted killings, and sexual violence against women and girls in Rumbek Centre.^{42 43}

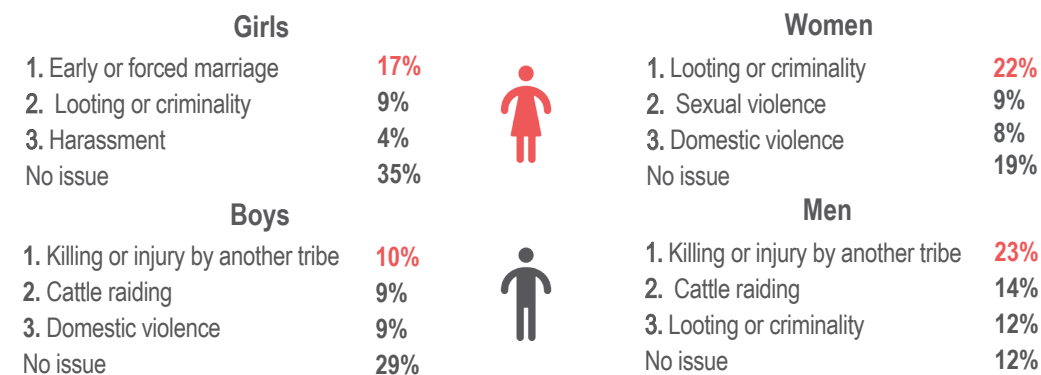
In Cueibet, KIs in 48% of assessed settlements in December reported that there had been at least one conflict incident in which a civilian had been killed in the month prior to data collection (unchanged since September); while KIs in 48% of assessed settlements reported at least one incident of property looting in the month prior to data collection (29% in September). These two figures constituted the highest proportions of assessed settlements reporting this for any county in Lakes in December. This insecurity was corroborated by FGD participants from Cueibet, where both men and women reported concerns in relation to crop cultivation and other livelihoods that require travelling from the household as they perceive themselves to be more vulnerable to attacks.⁴⁴ This is perhaps indicative of rising protection concerns in Cueibet, which might be further reflected in the establishment of a temporary operating base of the United Nations Mission in

South Sudan (UNMISS) in November 2020 in response to the threat of violence, to build confidence among local communities, and to deter potential skirmishes.⁴⁵

A rapid protection assessment conducted by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in Rumbek Centre found that, particularly in Jir Payam, there were increased incidents of sub-national violence and that safety and security concerns were strongly gendered; with multiple and consistent reports of frequent rape and violent sexual assault against women and girls, while men and boys were the primary targets during armed attacks.⁴⁶ This gendered dimension to protection concerns was also seen in the AoK data for December across the state; where in 23% of assessed settlements, the primary reported protection concern for men was killing or injury by another tribe (unchanged), while in 22% of assessed settlements, the primary reported protection concerns for women was looting or criminality (12% in September [see figure 5]). However, there was a difference in reported protection concerns between assessed settlements in eastern Lakes compared to western Lakes; in assessed settlements in eastern Lakes, the primary reported protection concern for men was killing or injury by another tribe (39%, unchanged), while in eastern Lakes it was looting or criminality (15% in December, 3% in September). This is perhaps indicative of more long-term trends where seemingly intractable cycles of cattle raiding, counter raiding and revenge killing among communities in western Lakes have persisted since South Sudanese independence in 2011.⁴⁷

This difference between reported protection concerns in eastern Lakes compared to western Lakes was also seen in the qualitative data for the fourth quarter of 2020. FGD participants from eastern Lakes overall reported fewer and less severe protection concerns than participants from western Lakes. The main theme being that insecurity (or the fear of insecurity) could at times prevent people

Figure 5: Top-three most commonly reported protection concerns in Lakes according to KIs in assessed settlements in December.



39. Humanitarian Needs Overview. OCHA, 2021.

40. Humanitarian Needs Overview. OCHA, 2021.

41. [Context Analysis Factsheet, CSRf, July-September 2020.](#)

42. Global Overview. International Crisis Group, December 2020.

43. Rapid Protection Assessment, Abinajok Boma, Jir Payam, Rumbek Centre County. DRC, January 2021.

44. FGD Cueibet (mixed), FSL Shocks, November 2020.

45. UNMISS peacekeepers in Cueibet continue to mitigate conflict and build confidence. UNMISS, 23 January 2021.

46. Rapid Protection Assessment, Abinajok Boma, Jir Payam, Rumbek Centre County. DRC, January 2021.

47. Peace is the Name of Our Cattle-Camp. The Rift Valley Institute and the South Sudan Customary Authorities Project, 2018.

from accessing livelihoods, though that this was usually only for short periods of time and more generally applied to livelihoods that required travel far from the household such as crop cultivation, pole cutting or charcoal making. While in western Lakes, though similar dynamics in relation to livelihood barriers were reported, participants reported much more severe and frequent protection concerns with women as the primary targets of sexual violence and with men continuing to be the primary targets of revenge killings. Dynamics that were not prevalent in the qualitative data for eastern Lakes. This is perhaps indicative of the severity and intensity of organised violence in western Lakes, though the frequency of insecurity acting as a barrier to livelihood access across the state is particularly of note when taken in relation to the previously highlighted early exhaustion of harvested food stocks, a factor that may further expose vulnerable populations to food security related shocks in the coming quarter.⁴⁸

Education

In early October 2020, senior four and primary eight classes resumed following a year where schools had been closed across South Sudan since March because of COVID-19.⁴⁹ This return to school for some age grades was reflected in the AoK data for December, which showed a 21 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements where at least one education service was reportedly accessible by foot in the month prior to data collection (21%). However, barriers perhaps remain in relation to increased cases of COVID-19 across the country, shocks (related to flooding and insecurity) leading to displacement and food insecurity, and a fragile educational infrastructure.

Indeed, the education system in South Sudan was already fragile prior to the shocks outlined in the previous sections of this report, with years of conflict, displacement, insecurity and economic challenges having exacerbated the education needs across the country.⁵⁰ In Lakes, KIs in 71% of those assessed settlements where no access to education services was reported in December (74%, 100% in September) reported that this was because there were never education facilities nearby or they were always too far to access (unchanged). This is perhaps indicative of preexisting vulnerabilities in the educational system in Lakes; the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported that even before the pandemic, approximately 2.2 million children were out of school across the country before the pandemic hit South Sudan.⁵¹ Moreover, continued reported poor school attendance was perhaps also compounded by gendered preferences. In December, KIs in 43% of assessed settlements where educational services were available, reported that more than half of the boys were attending school, while the same was reported for girls in only 9% of assessed settlements. These gendered dynamics and low attendance may continue to be exacerbated by the continued prevalence of COVID-19, with confirmed cases having risen at the beginning of 2021.⁵²

Shelter & NFIs

In December, findings indicate that shelter conditions have remained relatively unchanged from the previous quarter, while reported shelter and NFI needs for IDPs in particular counties remained high. In almost all (99%) assessed settlements across Lakes, the main reported shelter type used by local communities continued to be predominantly tukuls* (unchanged since September). Comparatively, KIs in 26% of assessed settlements that reported the presence of IDPs, also reported that IDPs in these settlements used rakoobas** as their main shelter type (unchanged), while use of improvised shelters was reported in 8% of assessed settlements (unchanged).

Indeed, these comparatively less secure shelter conditions were corroborated by increased reported NFI needs. In assessed settlements where KIs reported the presence of IDPs, plastic sheeting continued to be the main NFI reportedly needed by IDPs (26% in December, 42% in September). These shelter needs were perhaps particularly high in counties with large IDP populations or recent displacements, such as Awerial and Yirol East, where KIs in 43% and 63% of assessed settlements with IDP presence, respectively, reported plastic sheeting as the main NFI need for IDPs.⁵³ However, KIs in 50% of assessed settlements in Awerial reported that there had been an NFI distribution in the three months prior to data collection, perhaps indicative of humanitarian interventions in the area following calls for scale-up in September 2020.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The end of the wet season and the availability of the harvest perhaps reduced severe humanitarian needs and improved access to services in most counties in Lakes in the fourth quarter of 2020. However, there are indications of early harvest exhaustion in flood-affected areas such as Rumbek North, while localised and grassroots violence seems to drive severe and gendered protection concerns in Ceuibet, and access to efficient healthcare appears consistently low across the state. These existing vulnerabilities will likely be further exacerbated in the coming quarters following reports that the upcoming lean season from May to July is expected to be the most severe on record.⁵⁵

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).

48. Lakes State Qualitative Saturation Grid, Quarter 4. October - December 2020.

49. UNICEF and UNESCO welcome the decision to reopen schools in South Sudan. UNICEF, 21 September 2020.

50. When girls get educated they can do everything boys do, Abuk* 13, says. Save the Children, 8 February 2021.

51. UNICEF and UNESCO welcome the decision to reopen schools in South Sudan. UNICEF, 21 September 2020.

52. South Sudan Bi-Weekly COVID-19 Situation Report. IOM, 08-21 February, 2021.

53. Yirol East, Lakes State Event Tracking. IOM, 10 October 2020.

*Tukul refers to a cone-shaped mud hut with a thatched roof.

**Racooba here refers to a shelter built using plastic sheeting (as a roof) and either reeds or mud (as walls). It is commonly used as a temporary shelter in the event of displacement or partial settlement.

54. IRNA Report: Mingkaman, Awerial County, Lakes State. 7 September 2020.

55. Urgent funding needed to address the humanitarian needs of 6.6 million people in South Sudan in 2021. OCHA, March 2021.