

Situation Overview: Western Equatoria, South Sudan

July - September 2018

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

Following the outbreak of violence in Juba in early 2016, the conflict in South Sudan and especially the Greater Equatoria region escalated (Western, Central and Eastern Equatoria states). Many areas of Western Equatoria State are largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors due to insecurity. As a result, only limited information is available on the humanitarian situation outside of a few large towns and displacement sites.

In order to fill these information gaps and facilitate humanitarian programming, REACH began collecting monthly data on hard-to-reach areas in Western Equatoria from June 2017 through interviews with Key Informants (KIs).

Between July and September 2018, data was collected through KI interviews, which were conducted in person in Yambio town

Map 1: Counties in Western Equatoria, Sept 2018.



and through phone calls out of Juba with KIs who had direct or remote knowledge of the situation in a hard-to-reach settlement of Western Equatoria. From July to September 2018, REACH interviewed 247 KIs who had knowledge about 184 settlements in all ten counties of Western Equatoria State (Map 1).

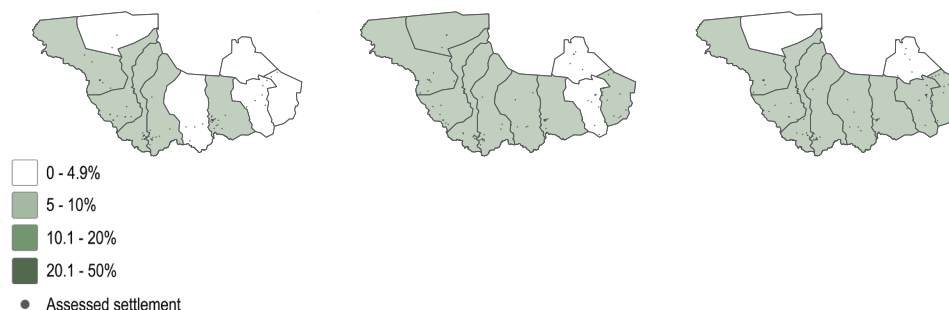
Findings were triangulated with 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) on displacement and food security and secondary data, including other assessments conducted by REACH in Western Equatoria State over the reporting period. Map 2 also highlights the assessment coverage attained for Western Equatoria during this quarter.

This Situation Overview provides a summary of displacement trends in addition to access to food and basic services for both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and host community members across Western Equatoria State from July to September 2018.

Population Movement and Displacement

During the third quarter of 2018, the security situation in most of Western Equatoria improved, with fewer incidents of insecurity enabling people and humanitarian actors greater freedom of movement, which could be in relation to the signing of the revitalised peace agreement in September.¹

Map 2: REACH assessment coverage of Western Equatoria, July (A), Aug (B) and Sept 2018 (C).



However, this has not been the case across the whole of Western Equatoria as insecurity has restricted movement in Tambura and Nagero due to insecurity.² Moreover, crime-related insecurity persisted. For instance, in August and September, there were fewer incidents of armed conflict but more crime-related insecurity.³ According to ACLED, most incidents of crime-related insecurity were reported in July and mainly on the main road within Western Equatoria in Mundri West and East, which restricted humanitarian access.⁴ Other constraints to humanitarian access included logistical factors, as the road between Maridi and Mundri was blocked due to poor conditions and broken down vehicles.

Ongoing and New Displacement

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs rose from 69% in August to 84% in September.⁵ The largest share of assessed settlements reported that

the most recent IDPs had arrived between 3 to 6 months ago (47% of assessed settlements that reported the presence of IDPs), which is relatively recent displacement. The most frequently reported origin of IDPs was Yambio County (21% of assessed settlements with presence of IDPs), Ezo County (15%) and Maridi County (14%), which implies that most of the displacement is internal within certain counties.

As can be seen in Map 3 below, the counties of Ezo (100%), Tambura (89%), Nzara (86%) and Yambio (83%) were the counties where the largest proportion of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs.

The high proportion of assessed settlements hosting IDPs in these counties highlights that even though the security situation appears to be calmer than the previous reporting period, there are still incidents of insecurity and the impact of prolonged conflict has caused IDPs

1. Al Jazeera, South Sudan president signs peace deal with rebel leader [online], September 2018.

2. OCHA, Humanitarian Access Snapshot, July 2018.

3. The Armed Conflict Location and Events Data Project (ACLED). Data - South Sudan, September 2018.

4. Ibid.

5. For geographic comparisons, state trend analysis has only been conducted with the same group of counties. In this instance, all of the counties apart from Nagero, Mvolo and Mundri West have been compared for August and September due to assessment coverage.

METHODOLOGY

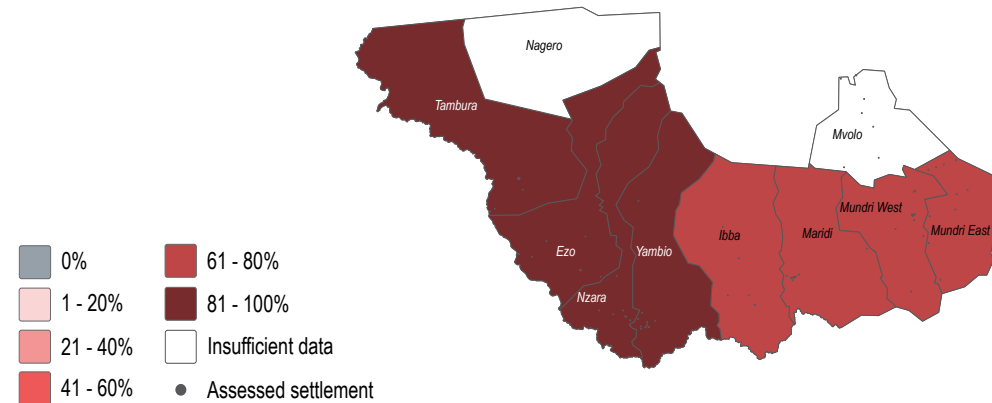
To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas of Western Equatoria, REACH uses primary data provided by KIs who are living in or have recently arrived from these areas, or “Areas of Knowledge” (AoK).

Information for this report was collected primarily through direct in-person interviews with KIs in Yambio town who had recent knowledge of the situation in a settlement of Western Equatoria, and supplemented with phone call interviews conducted out of Juba with KIs who were in a settlement of interest. The KIs contacted for the phone interviews were selected through a snowball sampling technique, where each KI was asked to name two additional people who could be interviewed.

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of settlements for a given month were included in the analysis. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month vary. State trend analysis between different months is conducted with the same group of counties to ensure more accurate comparisons.

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

Map 3: Percentage of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reporting IDP presence, September 2018.



to remain displaced.

As the security situation has improved in comparison to the previous reporting period (April - June 2018), 65% of assessed settlements from 5 counties (excluding Nagero, Ibba, Mundri West, Mundri East and Mvolo) in September reported that community members had returned after being displaced, which is an increase from July (44%) (only 5 counties assessed as can be seen in Map 2). In Ezo County, the proportion increased from 30% in July to 88% in September.

IDPs and Refugees in Tambura and Nagero

Displacement remained high in Tambura and surrounding area. It has been reported that there are 12,888 IDPs in Tambura and Mabilia, which has been verified by local authorities and humanitarian partners.⁶

Mabilia is an area 15 km south of Tambura town, where IDPs have been relocated to since mid-August (approximately 4,000 IDPs are reportedly in Mabilia). Services were

moved from Tambura town to Mabilia, which also has caused IDPs to relocate, due to political opposition of humanitarian activities being implemented in Tambura town, apart from nutrition services.⁷ Humanitarian partners have reported that the food security situation is deteriorating for IDPs in both Mabilia and Tambura town.⁸

Since the conflict started in Nagero County back in April 2018, the situation in the county has remained insecure. Reportedly, a small number of people have started returning to Nagero County from Tambura to check on their residential areas and to clear grass around their homes in case of an outbreak of wildfires.⁹

The major challenge for humanitarian assistance to these areas is insecurity along the road from Yambio to Tambura and Nagero, which requires an escort from the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS).

In addition to high rates of internal displacement

in the counties, there were unconfirmed reports in September of refugees arriving from Central African Republic (CAR) through Source Yubu, a border town in Tambura State, due to insecurity and a deteriorating situation in CAR as a result of conflict.¹⁰

IDPs in Yambio County

IDPs have been displaced from the surrounding payams of Yambio town to the town itself as a result of conflict and insecurity in May 2018. However, in Yambio town and the surrounding areas, such as Ikpiro and Tindoka, there were a number of IDPs that are reportedly in need of assistance and have not yet been reached.¹¹

In Yambio town, it was reported that there were 4,437 IDPs, with many IDPs staying at the Timbiri Episcopal Church of South Sudan (ECSS) Church, according to local authorities.¹² According to the same report, the living conditions for the IDPs were poor, with many people leaving their villages with little or no resources and now living in Yambio town in structures without proper roofing.

It has also been reported that approximately 500 refugees from the Makpandu refugee camp went to Yambio town and some went further to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) due to insecurity around Makpandu in July 2018.¹³

During August, REACH conducted FGDs in Nadiangere, Yambio County, following reports of humanitarian needs in an area that had received limited assistance. Displacement had been caused within Nadiangere back in May 2018 by insecurity and conflict.¹⁴ It was reported that an additional 350 IDPs had been

6. Joint Humanitarian Mission Report for Tambura and Nagero, 24-28 September 2018.

7. IOM South Sudan, WASH EPnR Assessment Report, 1-8 August 2018. 8. IOM South Sudan, WASH EPnR Assessment Report, 1-8 August 2018.

8. Joint Humanitarian Mission Report for Tambura and Nagero, 24-28 September 2018.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Inter Cluster Working Group (ICWG), Meeting in Yambio

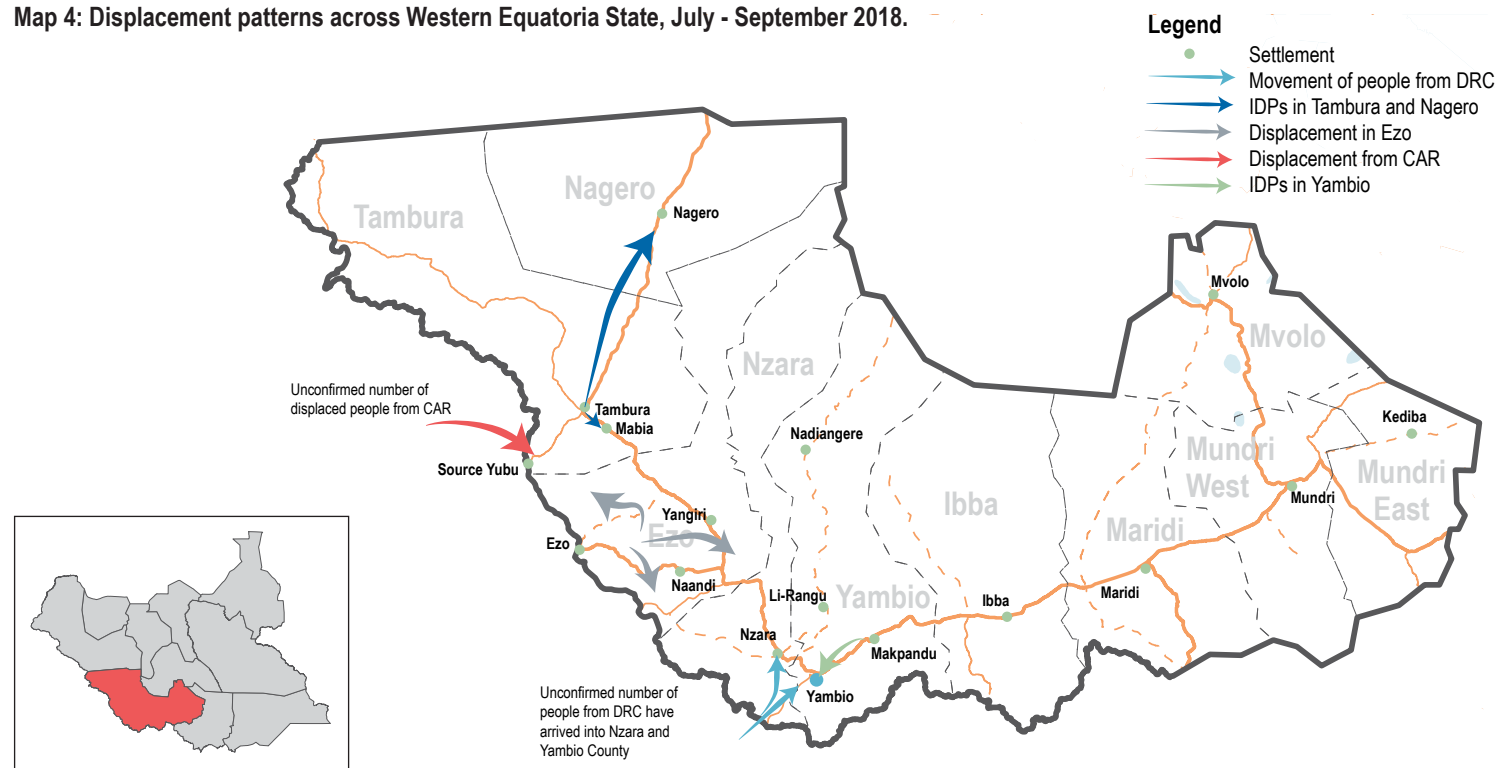
town, 14 September 2018.

12. RRC, Yambio Town IDP Verification, 21 September 2018.

13. Partners' Forum Meeting, Yambio Town, 16 August 2018.

14. Displacement FGD conducted with participants from Yambio and Nagero County in Nadiangere, August 2018.

Map 4: Displacement patterns across Western Equatoria State, July - September 2018.



displaced from Nagero County and travelled to Nadiangere due to conflict, which affected Nagero in April 2018. There were numerous urgent needs, such as protection, food, medical supplies and shelter materials.

Road Monitoring in Yambio

Between July and September 2018, data collected by REACH road monitoring teams in Yambio followed similar trends from the previous quarter, whereby the majority of departures and arrivals were households travelling to and from neighbouring Nzara County.¹⁵

Households have also been recorded moving

within Yambio County and further afield to counties such as Maridi, Ezo and Tambura, but these could be considered exceptions rather than the normality. Even though there is insecurity on the main road from Yambio to Tambura, people are still using the road for purposes such as business, which suggests a degree of freedom of movement.¹⁶

During this quarter, most people were mostly moving to reunite with their families, access to healthcare services and seeking work opportunities.¹⁷ The presence of the Nzara Hospital appeared to be an important pull factor as it was reported that most people departing from Yambio to Nzara were vulnerable or ill

and in need of treatment.

IDPs in Ezo County

In July there have been new sites of displacement, such as in Ezo County, where 7,000 people were internally displaced within the county due to insecurity.¹⁸

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Food security and Livelihoods

During the period from August to September, the reporting of adequate access to food declined from 74% of assessed settlements in August (out of 7 counties excluding Nagero,

Mundri West and Mvolo) to 46% in September (same geographic comparison). The areas of most concern were Mundri West County (15%) and Ezo County (13%) as assessed settlements reported the lowest levels of adequate access to food in Western Equatoria in September.

Whilst most counties of Western Equatoria reported lower IPC phases than some of the most food insecure areas such as Unity, Warrap and Lakes, there were areas of key concern in Western Equatoria such as Nagero and Mvolo, which have been classified as Phase 4 (Emergency). Whilst Mundri West was classified as Phase 3 (Crisis), which was only the case with the presence of humanitarian assistance.¹⁹

The increasing levels of food insecurity are reportedly linked to low levels of rainfall. In September, 21% of assessed settlements without adequate access to food reported that the lack of rain was the primary reason. Rainfall across Western Equatoria was below average, especially from the first dekad of July to the second dekad of August.²⁰

The effect of low rainfall on access to food was most prominently reported in Mundri West (where 33% of assessed settlements

Figure 1: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food, September 2018.²¹



15. REACH, Yambio Town Road Monitoring, September 2018.

16. Joint Humanitarian Mission Report for Tambura and Nagero, 24-28 September 2018.

17. REACH, Yambio Town Road Monitoring, September 2018.

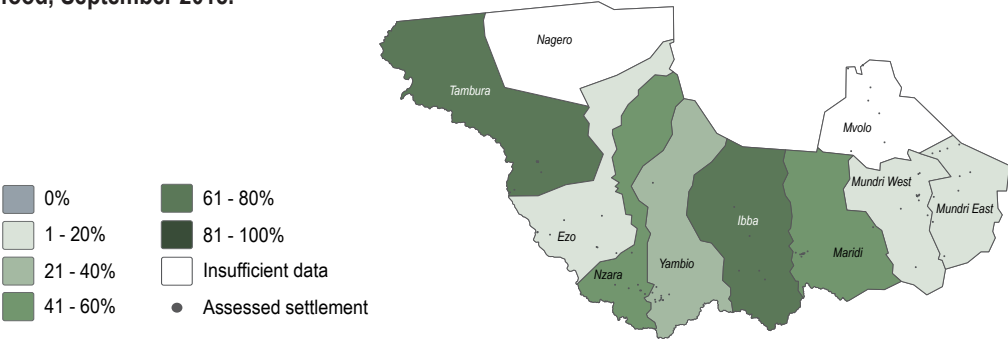
18. OCHA, South Sudan, Humanitarian Snapshot, July 2018.

19. IPC, The Republic of South Sudan, Key IPC Findings: September 2018 - March 2019.

20. World Food Programme (WFP), Vulnerability Analysis and Mapping (VAM) Food Security Analysis, Seasonal Explorer: Rainfall and Vegetation [online], September 2018.

21. Includes all counties captured in the assessment coverage for September.

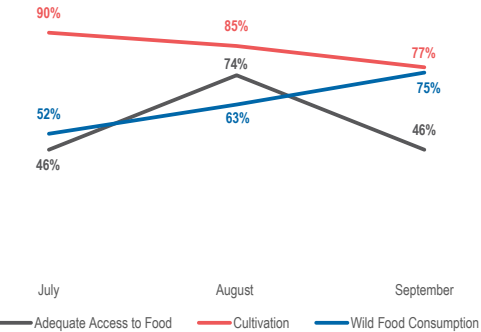
Map 5: Percentage of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reporting adequate access to food, September 2018.



with inadequate access to food reported low rainfall as the main reason). This supports the findings of a recent Oxfam and Non Violence Peaceforce humanitarian needs assessment, which reported that drought in the Mundris will likely worsen food insecurity.²²

Reports of shortages of rain in some areas likely diminished the ability of communities in the assessed settlements to rely primarily on their own cultivation. For example, 90% of assessed settlements reported cultivation as their main source of food in July (excluding

Figure 2: Graph of adequate access to food, cultivation as the primary source of food, and proportion of assessed settlements eating wild food as part of their meals, September 2018.²³



22. Oxfam and Non Violence Peaceforce, Dari and Lessi Payams Rapid Needs Assessment Report, 25 August 2018.
23. For comparison, Nagero, Ibba, Mundri West, Mundri East and Mvolo have been excluded due to July's assessment coverage. Therefore, each month can be compared for state trend analysis.

Nagero, Ibba, Mundri West, Mundri East and Mvolo) but in September it had decreased to 77% of assessed settlements (same geographic coverage). The first harvest season is from June and August, which also coincides with the lean season (May to August). This is a period of heightened food insecurity, which has been exacerbated by the aforementioned challenges. Furthermore, the shortage of rains in Western Equatoria is especially concerning because it affects multiple livelihoods, such as livestock, fishing and hunting due to streams, rivers, crops and pasture drying up.

The shock of low rainfall occurred at a time when conflict had already disrupted cultivation, and continued to do so throughout the third quarter of 2018. In September, 14% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food reported that the primary reason was that the area was unsafe. The prolonged insecurity over the previous months, especially between April and June had prevented people from tending to their farms and crops, which has had a negative impact on the harvest yields.

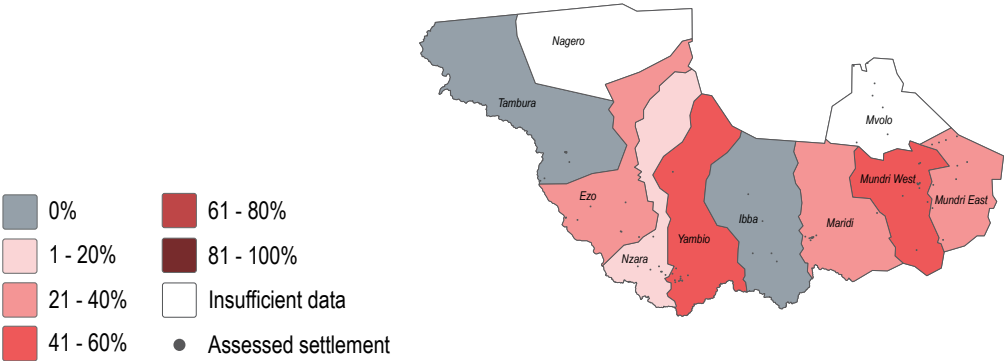
24. Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) FGD conducted with participants from Yambio County in Gangura Emilia, Yambio County, September 2018.

According to FGD participants in Gangura Emilia in Yambio County, insecurity has been a major challenge as people's farms are usually not situated near their homes. One participant shared that they can plant in another area, such as Saura in Yambio County but then conflict could erupt, which prevents people from reaching their farmlands.²⁴

Moreover, there has been an increased dependency on markets as the primary source of food as a result of these challenges. In July, 8% of assessed settlements relied on markets as their main source of food but in September, it had increased to 19% of assessed settlements.

Therefore, as agricultural activities have been disrupted, households are having to rely on markets, which makes households vulnerable to economic shocks, such as price volatility. For instance, in September, 58% of assessed settlements reported that cereal prices had increased within the last month, which is an increase from 47% in July. Out of the assessed settlements that reported increased cereal

Map 6: Percentage of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reporting eating fewer than 2 meals a day, September 2018.



prices in September, 23% reported that the increase in cereal prices had a large impact on people's ability to access enough food.

The high levels of conflict and displacement since 2016 have thus eroded the resilience of households with regard to producing their own food. In this context, many households struggled to adapt to the shock of low rain fall. The convergence of conflict and climate factors has depleted the harvest and driven food insecurity in the state.

Coping strategies

The multitude of factors, such as low rainfall and insecurity has caused people to rely on wild food as part of their meals. which can be seen in Figure 2. In July, 52% of assessed settlements reported that most of the people ate wild foods as part of their meals. In September, this had increased to 75% of assessed settlements. In July, 13% of assessed settlements reported that for most people, more than half of meals contained wild foods but this has had reduced to 3% of

assessed settlements in September.

The gathering of wild foods was a highly reported coping strategy during times of a shortage of food, which was reported by 63% of assessed settlements in September. In July, the same coping strategy was reported by 44% of assessed settlements, which emphasises that households are relying less on cultivation as their main source of food. The most frequent coping strategy was borrowing food from family, friends and neighbours, which was reported by 73% of assessed settlements, in September.

An additional 73% also reported the selling of household assets in September. This is an increase from 59% of assessed settlements, which was reported in July. The selling of household assets is often an example of a severe coping strategy as it reduces the resilience of households to future shocks, by reducing assets which could be beneficial for generating a long term source of income.

Households are also using consumption coping strategies to bridge the hunger gap. People are eating fewer meals in order to make their food last longer. The percentage of assessed settlements that reported that the majority of people ate at least 2 meals a day decreased from 75% in August (excluding Mvolo, Mundri West and Nagero) to 46% in September (same geographic coverage).

In September, 90% of assessed settlements reported limiting meal sizes as a food consumption coping strategy, which is an increase from 59% in July. For September, this was followed by buying less expensive

food (75%) and reducing the number of meals (67%).

More severe coping strategies such as adults not eating so that their children can eat (37% of assessed settlements) and skipping entire days without eating a meal (14% of assessed settlements) were also reported. In September, the strategy of skipping entire days was only reported in Yambio County (42% of assessed settlements), Ezo County (25%), Mundri West (23%) and Mundri East (10%).

This suggests that the harvest yields from the months of June and July were insufficient to meet food consumption needs throughout the third quarter, which eventually led to restrictions on household consumption.

Protection

Perceptions of safety have improved since the last reporting period (21% of assessed settlements in June) as in September, 54% of assessed settlements reported that most people felt safe.

Correspondingly, the extent of security across Western Equatoria appeared to be improving as the reporting of conflict-related incidents decreased across the reporting period, as 9% of assessed settlements in July reported an incident of conflict, while no assessed settlements reported any conflict-related incidents in September. However, incidents of looting were reported by 19% of assessed settlements in September, which shows crime remains an issue even as conflict is decreasing.

For women, the primary protection concerns

most frequently reported in September across assessed settlements in Western Equatoria was domestic violence (33% of assessed settlement), followed by sexual violence (26%). Among men, the most commonly reported protection concern was being killed or injured (25%). This was followed by conflict with neighbours (18%) and harassment (7%).

The primary protection concerns for girls was reportedly early marriage, which was reported by 45% of assessed settlements. This could be a sign of economic stress or traditional practices. For boys, the main protection concern was being separated from the family, which was reported by 11% of assessed settlements. Separation from the family could be in relation to conflict and sudden displacement. For women, men and children, the protection concerns are severe and also demonstrate the consequences of conflict on civilians.

Shelter

The majority of assessed settlements reported that in September, host community members were primarily staying in tukuls (90%). In comparison, IDPs were having to rely on less secure shelters as 20% of assessed settlements with IDPs reported that IDPs were using rakoobas and 14% were using abandoned buildings as their primary shelter. The highest proportion of assessed settlements with IDPs reporting that those IDPs lived in abandoned buildings was in Ibba County (60%).

IDPs often do not have the time and resources to construct tukuls. This is similar to the

situation in Yambio town where people have sought refuge in poor quality shelter, as previously discussed in the Situation Overview for Western Equatoria (April-June 2018).²⁵

In September, none of the assessed settlements reported that shelters had been destroyed or partially destroyed in the month prior to data collection, which is a slight decrease from July (3%). As stated previously, the signing of the revitalised peace agreement in September likely had an impact on reducing insecurity and conflict in Western Equatoria.

The most essential non-food item (NFI) needed by IDPs were mosquito nets, which was reported by 25% of assessed settlements where IDPs were reported to be present. Therefore, mosquito nets are likely needed due to the rainy season and poor shelter conditions of many IDPs. This was followed by cooking pots (17%) and blankets (13%).

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Access to at least one functioning borehole appeared to be high across Western Equatoria in September, with 86% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of one or more boreholes, and 90% of these settlements reporting that at least one of the boreholes was functional.

Figure 3: Access to a functioning borehole, September 2018.²⁶



25. REACH, Situation Overview: Western Equatoria, April-June 2018.

26. Includes all counties captured in the assessment coverage for September.

However, it was reported by some KIs that even though there might be at least one functioning borehole in the settlement, it does not serve the majority of the population, so people rely on other sources of water, such as unprotected wells.

Correspondingly, while boreholes remained the most commonly reported primary source of water, reported by 34% of assessed settlements, unprotected wells were second (20% of assessed settlements). The highest proportion of assessed settlements using unprotected wells are in Nzara County (43% of assessed settlements) and Ezo County (38%).

In September, 30% of assessed settlements reported that they had not been able to collect water from their preferred point due to safety concerns, which is a decrease from the 49% reported in August). This further demonstrates the improved security situation in Western Equatoria in the third quarter.

Specific IDP sites such as Tambura town are as of August having to address the issue of open defecation as due to maintenance issues, the latrines and hand washing stations are not operational.²⁷

Health

Access to healthcare declined across Western Equatoria over the assessment period, as 84% of assessed settlements reported that healthcare services were accessible from their settlement in July, but in September, only 67% of assessed settlements reported that healthcare services were available.

In September, reported reasons for lack of

access to healthcare included services not being available (33% of assessed settlements without access to healthcare services), the distance being too far (29%) and no staff being available (13%).

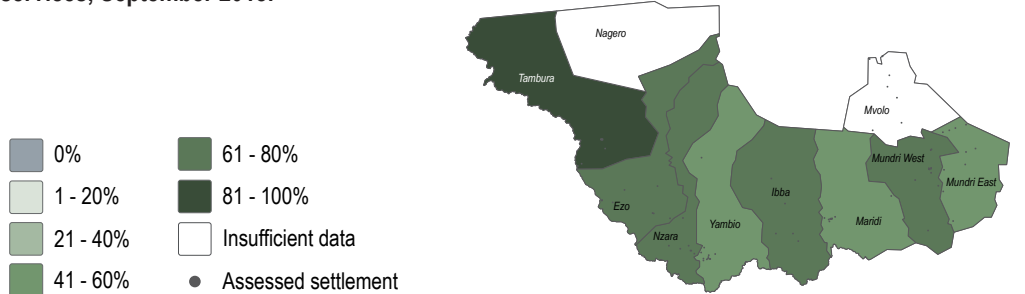
The main health problem in assessed settlements during September was reported to be malaria (40%), which appeared to be the main health concern throughout the reporting period (reported by 24% of assessed settlements in July). This was followed by skin disease (16%) and diarrhoea (14%).

This is similar to the previous reporting period and could also be attributed to the lack of mosquito nets and appropriate shelter, which creates a higher risk of being affected by malaria. The rainy season could have been a detrimental factor too as mosquito numbers increase during this time.

The majority of assessed settlements (84%) reported that no specific increase in mortality had taken place in September across Western Equatoria, but some exceptions were noted at the county level. For instance, 30% of assessed settlements reported an increase in mortality in Mundri East County, which is possibly driven by hunger, as 25% of assessed settlements reported hunger and malnutrition as the main cause of mortality.

In recent months, there has been a greater focus on Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) due to the outbreak in North Kivu Province, DRC since 01 August 2018.²⁸ As a result, there has been increased monitoring on cross-border movements along the Western Equatoria border with DRC.²⁹

Map 7: Percentage of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reporting access to healthcare services, September 2018.

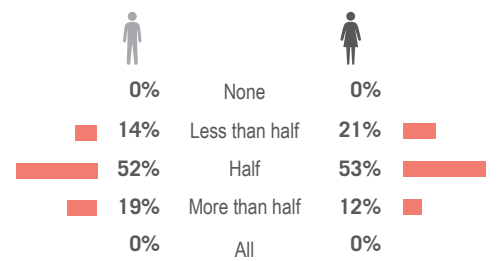


Education

Ninety-two percent (92%) of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria reported that education services were available in September, which was similar throughout the reporting period (89% in July and 96% in August). The reason for this improvement from the previous reporting period was likely to be attributed to greater security, which enabled people to access the education services.

Among assessed settlements that reported that education services were not available in September, Yambio the county with the lowest proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to education services: 75% in September. This is likely due to the lack of

Figure 4: Reported proportion of 6-17 year old girls and 6-17 year old boys attending school in assessed settlements, September 2018.



infrastructure as 33% of assessed settlements in Yambio reported that the facilities were never there in the first place.

In September, it was reported that the proportion of boys from assessed settlements attending school was higher than the proportion of girls (as can be seen in Figure 4). The main reason that girls could not attend school in September was due to school fees, which was reported by 42% of assessed settlements that reported not all girls attended school.

For boys, the reason most cited to explain low enrolment rates within the settlements was also schools fees (reported by 27% of assessed settlements). The second reason was that boys were needed to work on the farm (23%). This also shows that when financial resources are limited, households often prioritise boys' education over girls'.

Conclusion

To conclude, security seems to have overall improved in Western Equatoria during this reporting period. However, there have been localised incidents of insecurity, which continue to undermine perceptions of safety.

27. IOM South Sudan, WASH EPnR Assessment Report, 1-8 August 2018.
 28. World Health Organization (WHO), Ebola situation reports: Democratic Republic of the Congo [online], August 2018.
 29. ICWG, Meeting in Yambio town, 14 September 2018.

This is evident by incidents of insecurity which have caused new displacement in areas such as Ezo County. Previous incidents of insecurity and conflict, such as in Nagero County in April 2018, had also caused large numbers of people to be displaced from Tambura town to Mabia, Tambura County.

Access to food has declined during this quarter with the shock of low rainfall adding to the stress of conflict in previous months. The lack of rain was the most reported reason for inadequate access to food by assessed settlements.

Access to services over this quarter has improved, especially for education services and access to boreholes. This could be attributed to the safer and more secure environment, which increased freedom of movement, thereby enabling people to access these services. However, access to healthcare services did not improve and there are a number of health concerns, such as EVD, that need to be closely monitored.

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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