



Raja Market Assessment

Raja County, Western Bahr el Ghazal State, South Sudan, December 2020

Introduction

Cash is increasingly considered as a delivery modality in the South Sudan response, driving a growing need for humanitarian organisations and decision-makers to understand local market dynamics. In Raja County, dependency upon markets for basic needs, such as cereals, is reportedly high, but there are few marketplaces which can stock basic goods in quantities sufficient to carry all local households (see Map 1). Despite the importance of markets for communities in Raja County, little is known about market structures, supply routes, and the impact of shocks on the availability and accessibility of food and basic needs at local markets.

To fill this information gap and support the humanitarian response in Raja County, REACH carried out a rapid market assessment in Raja and Wau Counties, which consisted of 3 focus group discussion (FGDs) with trade unions, 5 FGDs with households, additional semi-structured key informant interviews with traders (5), local authorities (1) and humanitarian partners (1), as well as direct observation. Directly assessed marketplaces include Raja town Market, Deim Zubeir Market and several satellite marketplaces in surrounding areas (see map 1). These locations were chosen because of their importance to the overall market system in the region, geographical proximity to the primary trade routes within Raja County, and to adequately represent various sub-systems that exist within the region. Primary data collection took place from 7 December 2020 to 17 December 2020. Due to the purposive sampling and qualitative methodology, findings should be considered indicative, rather than representative, of the situation in assessed markets and communities in Raja County. For more information on Rapid Market Assessments, refer to the [terms of reference \(ToR\)](#).

Key Findings

- **Marketplaces in Raja County are supplied through either Wau or Sudan, with goods occasionally being received via Aweil.** All non-food items (NFIs) and most foods are reportedly imported through the aforementioned routes. However, most consumed cereals are produced domestically, meaning that poor harvest seasons are likely to lead to market shortages.
- **Findings suggest that poor road conditions in the wet season constitute the main challenge for traders in Raja County, with traders reportedly struggling to supply goods during this season, even in the largest marketplaces.**
- **Traders in Wau Town reportedly prefer to buy goods from Khartoum, which come at a higher cost as they are of a higher quality.** This has a knock on effect for traders in markets who restock via Wau Town, as it increases cost of purchased goods.

- Findings suggest that traders in smaller markets rely on the ability to pool capital in order to source goods from supply markers. However, population sizes and, accordingly, market sizes have reportedly shrunk since the beginning of the civil war in South Sudan. As a result, these traders now face difficulties obtaining goods to sell.
- **Prices in the region appear to be largely driven by transport and fuel costs.** Findings suggest that the depreciation of the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) in relation to the United States Dollar (USD) also drive price increases in Raja County.

1. Context and Background

Raja County is situated in the far northwest of South Sudan, bordering the Central African Republic (CAR) and Sudan. It is sparsely populated and covered in dense bush with numerous rivers. The region is connected to the rest of South Sudan by one major road between Wau and Raja towns, with smaller routes branching out to villages located beyond Raja to the east, west and north. A further route connects Aroyo in Aweil West (Northern Bahr el Ghazal State) to the town of Yabulu in eastern Raja County. Most communities and villages are located along the Wau to Raja road, due to the greater accessibility of markets, transportation, and other infrastructure, such as health services.

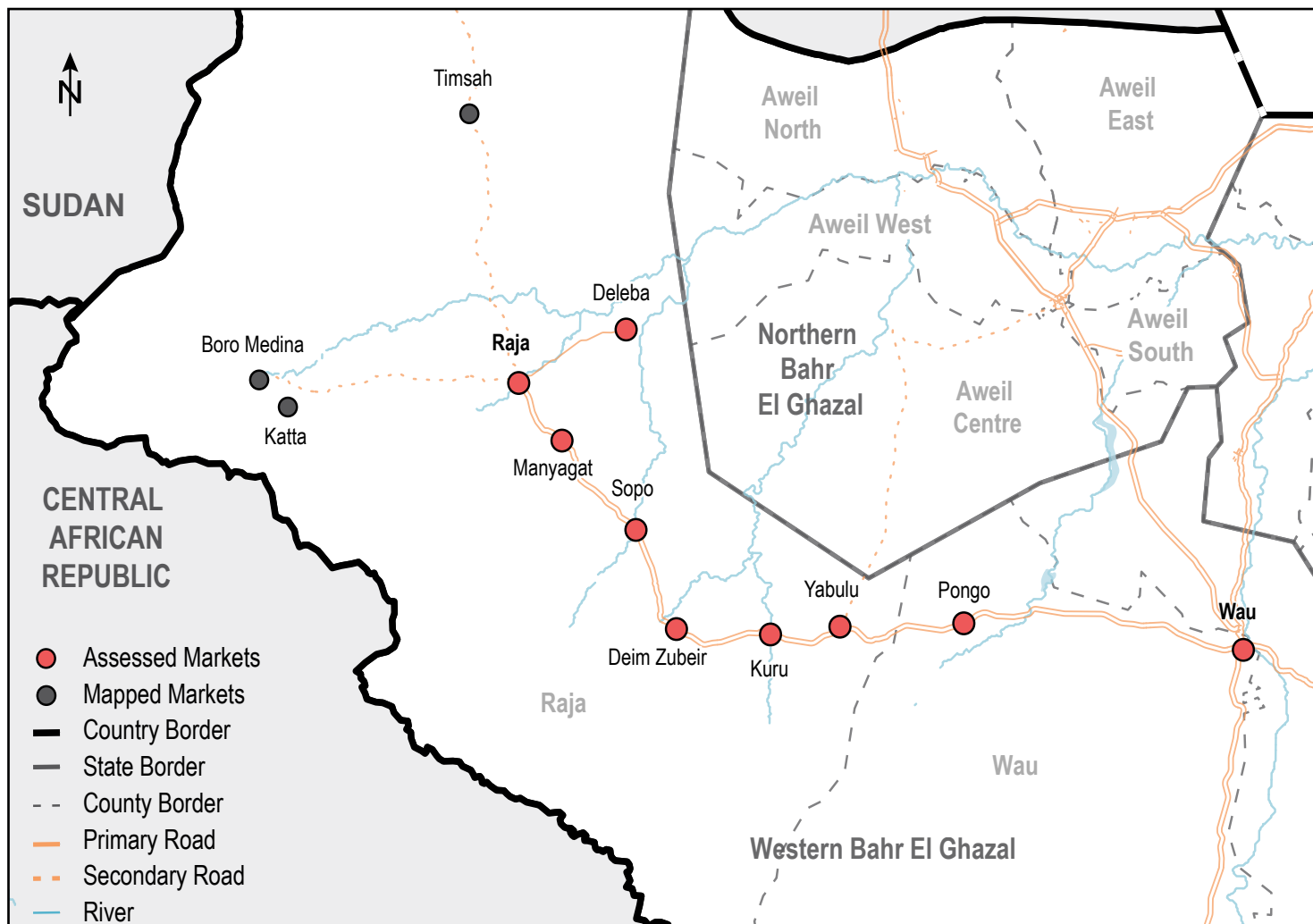
Primary livelihood activities include subsistence farming of sorghum, sesame, groundnuts and cassava. In the dry season, hunting and fishing are prevalent income generating activities, while a variety of wild foods also grows in the area, such as the endemic 'embece'¹, coconuts and mangoes. As is common in other areas of South Sudan, firewood and charcoal making are common livelihood activities along with the collection of grass bundles for sale, the area has abundant natural forest and firewood collection is particularly prevalent.²

The market system in Raja County has been affected by the South Sudan civil war, which started in 2013. Traders reported that the worst years for trade were 2016 to 2018, due to insecurity. During this period, many traders and civilians reportedly left the area for Sudan, Wau or Juba, and security along the main road was worse than it is now, with far more formal and informal checkpoints. Since 2018, security has reportedly improved, although few of the displaced population have returned.³

Figure 1: Typical income generating activities (IGAs) in Raja County as reported by FGD participants

IGA	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Cultivation												
Charcoal making												
Grass bundles												
Gathering wild food												
Fishing												
Hunting												

Map 1: Assessed and mapped marketplaces in Wau and Raja County



2. Regional Market Structure

There are a few markets within Raja County, and most are located along the main road between Wau and Raja. Of the markets within Raja County, there are only 4 that contain more than 10 traders: Deim Zubeir, Bor Medina, Timsah and Raja. Of these marketplaces, Raja is the only market where any wholesalers are present (there are two), and that has over 50 traders.

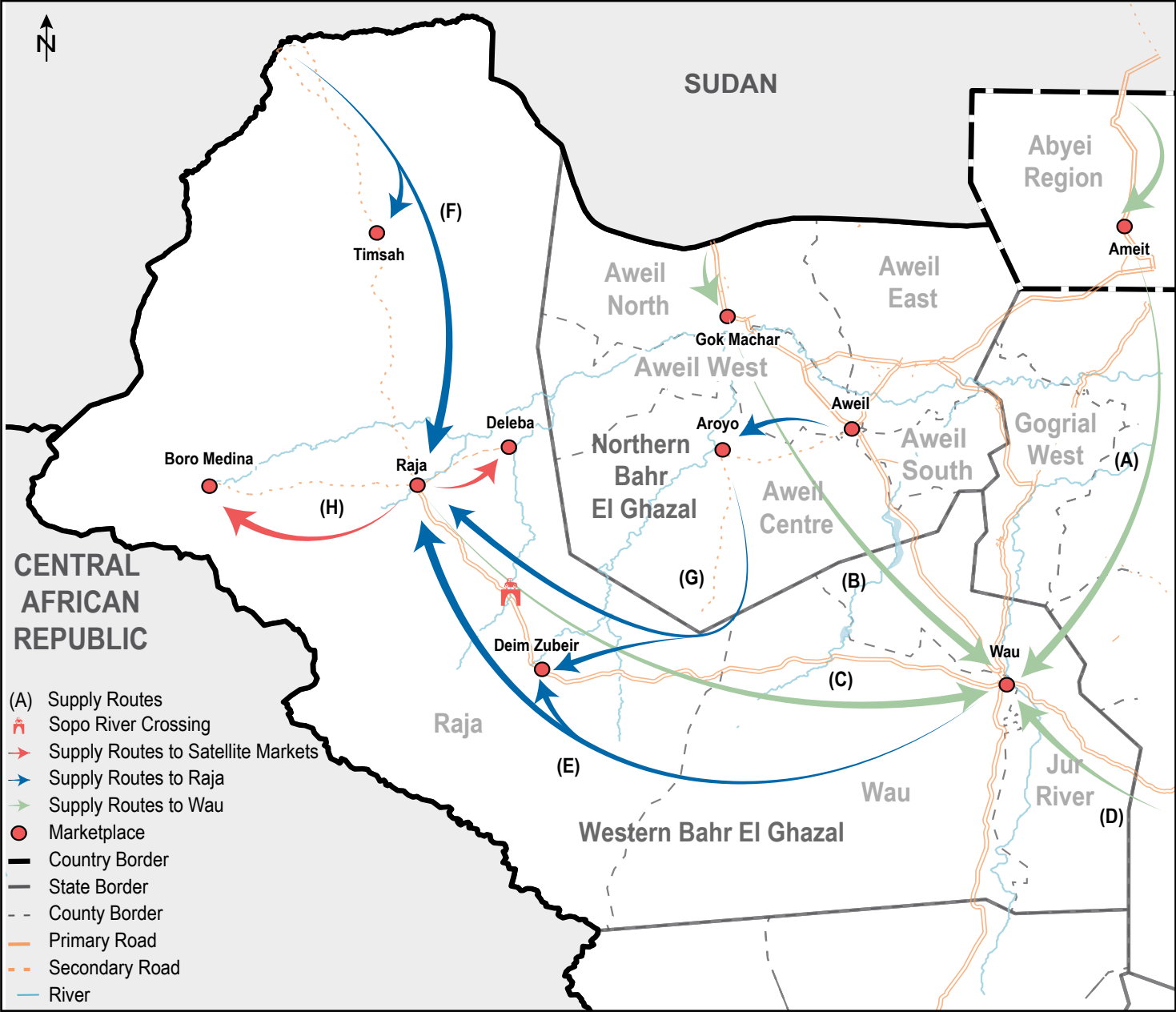
The low number and small size of the markets is likely a result of both the low population density within the county, and the limited flow of goods, which depends on the state of the main road. In the smaller markets, traders reported renting vehicles and typically group their capital in order to restock a higher quantity of goods. In Raja town, traders reportedly have sufficient capital to restock with, but only for small small quantities.

While some markets reportedly have market days, when traders and local producers from other towns and supply markets visit to sell their wares, this does not appear to be a common practice across the entire county. Deim Zubeir (Sunday), Bor Medina (Monday) and Deleba (Sunday) all have market days. Traders from

Box 1: Trading without network connection

At the time of assessment, Raja town was the only location within Raja County that had a network connection (Zain - mobile network). As a result, traders in smaller markets along the Wau to Raja road generally wait in anticipation for the arrival of the pick-up trucks along this road to resupply, or reportedly combine resources and send one designated trader to Raja. Due to the poor road conditions within the county, FGD participants commonly mentioned it being very difficult to estimate when these trucks will arrive. Traders in Deim Zubeir reported that, when trucks do arrive, they will send one trader along with the transport in order to buy goods for all traders within the market. This reportedly comes with numerous challenges, with the trader having to pay for accommodation in Wau town and to find transport for the return trip, which can take multiple days. This can lead to substantial delays in restocking markets, which are further aggravated in the wet season. Deim Zubeir will reportedly be connected to the Zain network in January 2021, but did not have a connection at the time of the assessment.

Map 2: Supply routes to Wau Town and Raja County



Aweil and Raja reportedly visit these areas on these respective days to sell their goods, particularly in the dry season when the markets are more accessible. According to FGD participants, Timsah is the only seasonal market, and is only open in the dry season when the road to Sudan is accessible.

3. Supply Routes

3.1 Supply Routes to Wau

To understand the supply routes around Raja County, it is essential to understand the flow of goods to Wau Town, the main redistribution centre for goods in Western Bahr el Ghazal.

FGD findings suggest that the two most important import supply

routes to Wau are via Khartoum and Uganda. Goods from Khartoum are generally more expensive, as they are considered to be of higher quality, and because traders often have to use informal border crossings and pay additional taxes inside South Sudan. However, traders reported that people in Wau town generally have the disposable income to buy the higher quality goods. As a result, traders in Wau are willing to pay the higher prices and face the increased risks associated with importing goods from Sudan. This has a knock on impact on prices within Raja county, as Wau town is pivotal to the supply of goods within Raja county. The three main routes (labelled A, B and C) from Khartoum to Wau are displayed on Map 2.

Traders reported that it was even possible to fly goods from

Khartoum to Wau. However, the plane is required to stop in Juba on the way, which reportedly slows down the delivery of goods by a day. Though expensive, this option enables traders to avoid poor road conditions during the wet season.

In order to use the informal routes, traders commonly reported paying clearance fees to cross the border. The quantity of these clearance fees and subsequent taxation within South Sudan reportedly depend on the size of the truck (typically 25 tons) and the amount of goods being imported, with the type of good being irrelevant. Traders commonly reported considering taxation in South Sudan to be one of the main challenges, one that poses a higher barrier to trade than payments due in Sudan. On the informal routes, robberies are common on both the South Sudanese and Sudanese sides, adding substantial risk. However, traders noted that security has improved over the previous years.

The total cost of transportation along the Sudanese routes comes to around 10,000 USD, roughly 3,000 USD (1.5 million SSP at time of the assessment) of which are the taxes due for a 25-ton truck. Payments at checkpoints total around 200 USD.

The two main routes from Uganda are displayed on Map 2 (labelled D). Taxes along the Ugandan route total 1,000 USD for a 25-ton truck.

3.2 Wau to Raja County Route

The reliance of a local market on a particular supply route through Wau depends on the market’s location in relation to the Sopo river, as the river reportedly forms the most challenging hurdle on the road from Wau to Raja town (see map 2). As such, traders situated north of the river commonly reported preferring to purchase their goods directly from Sudan, while traders located south of the river reportedly prefer the Wau trade route. In the dry season, the trip from Wau to Raja town takes 2 to 3 days, but it is much longer in the

Box 2: Impact of COVID-19 on trade in Raja county

There was a wide range of reported responses from traders regarding the impacts of COVID-19 on market systems within Western Bahr el Ghazal. In Raja County, most traders reported that there was little direct impact to prices or supply. Traders commonly reported that the most significant limitation was that only one trader was allowed inside a vehicle, but this did not greatly affect the supply of goods. However, traders in Wau town reported that COVID-19 had a large impact on supply chains, particularly over the period between July and November 2020 as the Khartoum lockdown impacted movement and the flow of goods from Sudan.

Figure 2: Seasonal Calendar of Supply Routes to Wau Town reported by FGD participants

Supply route from	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Khartoum												
Uganda												

wet season. In September 2020, traders from Raja town reportedly had to transport their goods across the river on boats made of jerry cans, and hire separate 4-wheel drive vehicles on the Raja side of the river, adding significant time and cost to the journey. Traders in Raja town estimated that, during the wet season, transporting goods on the Wau supply route can take over a week from when the order is placed, and the duration is generally dictated by the height of the Sopo river. The preferred vehicle is a pick-up truck, due to its larger size, but occasionally a 4-wheel drive is required in the wet season, due to its greater maneuverability. However, according to the interviewed traders, the Wau route is still the most important supply route in the wet season, when the Sudanese route becomes largely inaccessible.

In Deim Zubeir, traders reported that the Wau route is by far the most important trade route due to the year-round availability and diversity of goods present at Wau market. In the dry season, transportation for a 25-ton pick-up truck from Wau to Deim Zubeir typically costs between 100,000 SSP and 120,000 SSP (one way), increasing to between 150,000 SSP and 200,000 SSP (one way) in the wet season. However, these prices are heavily dependent upon fuel costs and can therefore vary considerably. The time it reportedly takes to resupply also varies considerably between seasons: from two days in the dry season to seven or more in the wet season (both ways). These times may increase if the traders have trouble finding a pick-up truck for the return journey, which can take multiple days. One trader reported that drivers sometimes refuse to rent their vehicles to traders from Deim Zubeir due to the poor road conditions, and out of fear of their trucks getting stuck.

Due to the aforementioned difficulties, reported transport costs for the route between Wau and Deim Zubeir are much more of a financial burden than taxation at checkpoints. For instance, traders in Deim Zubeir were reportedly buying 50 kg of sugar at a price of 23,000 SSP from wholesalers in Wau and selling at a rate of 27,000 SSP, with the return trip to Wau costing around 250,000 SSP for a pick-up truck, plus an additional 7,000 SSP for taxation in Wau. Across the five checkpoints, traders reportedly have to pay around 20,000 SSP.

3.3 Sudan to Raja County Route

When it is functioning, the Sudanese route is the most important

route to Raja town, as it enables traders and wholesalers in town to buy their goods directly from importers instead of from wholesalers in Wau, which reduces their cost. However, it is only operational between December and May. Goods along this route originate in Khartoum, and are transported internally to Nyala, South Darfur, before crossing into South Sudan via two informal border points north of Timsah (see Map 1). Once trucks enter South Sudan, they travel south on a road that connects Raja to Sudan via Timsah. Using this road, trucks arrive in Raja town roughly four to five days from when the order was placed by the local wholesalers and larger traders. In Raja Town, the goods are placed on 25-ton trucks registered in South Sudan and begin the journey towards Wau.

These trucks drive the route to Wau, selling their goods at markets along the way. One importer key informant reported usually making this trip repeatedly during the dry season, selling all their goods and then buying goods in Wau to take back to Sudan. The key informant reported that he mainly imports sugar, soap, onions, and oil. When in Wau, he buys honey and firewood to sell in Nyala. Wholesaler key informants in Raja town reported that, along this route, a 50kg bag of sugar will be bought for 22,000 SSP in Sudan and sold for 27,000 SSP in Raja town, with each bag accruing 4000 SSP of transport costs, resulting in roughly 1,000 SSP of profit per bag. While the Sudan to Raja route is not preferred by traders south of the Sopo river, its functionality is critical to all markets in Raja county as it reduces traders' reliance on the market in Wau, and increases the frequency at which trucks come and provide stock at all markets.

3.4 Aweil to Raja County Route

The third trade route to Raja county comes via Aweil and Northern Bahr el Ghazal. This route is most important for locally produced goods. At the time of the assessment, all sorghum sold in assessed marketplaces reportedly came from Aroyo. Traders coming from Aweil reportedly usually go east through Aroyo and then south to the town of Yabulu, Raja County, from where the road connects to the main road between Wau and Raja. The route can also be used to supply imported food and NFIs. However, it is not preferred for imported goods as Aweil has a smaller market than Wau town, meaning that the diversity and availability of goods are more limited. Additionally, the Aweil to Raja route is susceptible to the same challenging road conditions as the Wau route. To Deim Zubeir and back, the route reportedly takes three days in the dry season and five days in the wet season, with similar costs to the Wau route.

3.5 Other Supply Routes

For markets not located along major supply routes, such as Bor Medina and Deleba (see Map 1), traders reported having to either resupply themselves or wait for market day, when traders travel from larger marketplaces such as Raja town or Aweil. In Deleba, traders cycle to either Raja town or Marial Baai to restock their

Figure 3: Seasonal Calendar of Supply Routes to Raja County reported by FGDs

Supply route from	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Wau												
Raja												
Aweil												

goods. The trip to Raja reportedly takes three days return in the dry season and up to seven in the wet season. Due to the practicalities of restocking by bike, these traders restock in very small quantities and only the most basic goods. Due to the practicalities of restocking by bike, these traders restock in very small quantities, and only stock the most basic goods; to access other goods, it reportedly falls upon residents themselves to travel to Raja town, which is closer by than Marial Baai.

For smaller markets located along the Wau to Raja road, such as Sopo, Kuru or Mangalla, traders either have to wait for the arrival of a truck from either Aweil, Wau, or Raja town, or collect goods from the markets themselves using a bike or motorbike. According to traders in Raja town, it is more common for traders from these markets to collect goods themselves during the wet season than in the dry season due to the limited frequency of trucks arriving from the major supply points.

3.6 Main reported challenges

The most commonly reported challenge across all routes is bad road conditions, with routes typically becoming impassable in the wet season. Other commonly reported challenges include the informal nature of the trade route, resulting in clearances fees on the Sudanese side and taxation on the South Sudanese side. According to traders in Raja town, the clearance fees at the border make it difficult to import more goods as it could potentially result in greatly increased prices as trucks are cleared according to tonnage.

4. Availability

Due to the limited supply routes and supply constraints, the diversity and availability of goods are low in almost all markets in Raja county. Availability is heavily dependent on the season. In the wet season, when road conditions are poor, there can be shortages of basic goods. In the smallest marketplaces, traders reportedly only stock a limited variety of goods, regardless of the season. As such, in Sopo, Kuru and Mangalla, only sugar, soap, matches and dried fish were available at the time of assessment. Across all markets in Raja county, traders reported that the most commonly available items were soap and sugar. In markets with market days, the availability of items reportedly increases with the influx of traders from Aweil or Raja.

In larger marketplaces such as Deim Zubeir and Raja town, findings suggest that there is greater, year-round availability. In both marketplaces, staple cereals were reportedly available at the time of assessment, though in limited quantities. However, traders in both locations reported that cereals could be difficult to stock in the wet season and that there are times when cereals are completely unavailable. Raja has by far the greatest reported diversity and availability of food items in the county, with items such as cassava flour, okra, sugar, tea, wild fruits, and vegetables available at the time of assessment and reportedly available in limited quantities in the wet season (see figure 4). Raja also appears to have the greatest diversity of available NFIs, with soap, charcoal, building materials, mosquito nets, clothes and cooking equipment all available at the time of assessment. Similar to food items, these items are reportedly less available in the wet season due to supply constraints.

5. Prices

5.1 Drivers of Retail Prices

In all assessed marketplaces, traders reported that they were free in setting prices. Retail prices in the area are driven by prices in supply markets as well as transport costs, which largely depend on the type of transportation and on fuel prices, due to the large distances required to travel within Raja county. At the time of assessment, [the depreciation of the SSP](#)⁴ reportedly had a large impact on prices in supply markets (particularly Wau), which in turn caused traders in Raja County to raise their prices to still be able

Box 3: Impact of 'The Crisis' upon trade in Raja county

The period from 2016-2018 is known as 'The Crisis' in Raja county and demarcates when insecurity resulting from the civil conflict was reportedly at its peak. Traders reported that there were many more checkpoints and travel restrictions along the main road in Raja county during this period, which posed security challenges. As such, many residents of Raja county reportedly left for either Sudan, Wau or Juba. Traders also left, and many abandoned stalls remain in most marketplaces. In locations such as Raja town, this has resulted in a loss of income and capital for remaining traders, but the impact on the market is offset in relation to the high proportion of consumers who also departed. However, in Deim Zubeir, where fewer conflict-related incidents reportedly took place, the population that left included a comparatively high proportion of traders, since they had the means to finance their journeys. This has reportedly resulted in worse market functionality in Deim Zubeir, as the remaining traders collectively have less capital to pool together to restock at higher quantities.

to make a profit.

Traders in multiple locations noted that this was the most pressing issue affecting prices at the time of assessment. In addition, transport continued to be a significant burden. For instance, transport costs form an estimated 15% of the total cost of selling one 50kg bag of sugar in Raja Town (4,000 SSP of 26,000 SSP).

Across the county, prices for goods tend to be similar, regardless of distance from the source from the source market, which is likely because transportation to all markets is subject to the same overhead costs. As no supply vehicles travel to Deim Zubeir from Wau without making their way to Raja town, the cost of fuel and transport is shared between traders in each marketplace. Therefore, the price paid by traders in each market remains similar, which is reflected in the selling price in each assessed location; the price of sugar, for instance, did not appear to change considerably (see Map 3). There is little local taxation and few checkpoints compared to other locations in South Sudan, so little cost is accumulated on the drive itself or in the marketplaces.

Figure 4: Availability of key items in Raja County*

	Raja	Deim Zubeir
Urban / rural	urban	rural
Reported number of traders	50	20
Staple cereals	✓	(✓)
Pulses	(✓)	(✓)
Sugar	✓	(✓)
Cooking oil	✓	(✓)
Vegetables	✓	(✓)
Fruit	✓	(✓)
Meat	✓	(✓)
Fish	✓	✓
Milk	✓	(✓)
Wild foods	✓	(✓)
WASH items	✓	(✓)
Cooking equipment	✓	✗
Firewood	✓	✓
Agricultural tools	✗	✓
Seeds	✗	✗
Livestock	✗	✗
Building materials	✓	(✓)
Clothing	✓	(✓)
Fuel	(✓)	✗
Medicine	✓	✗
Phone credit	✓	✗

✓ : available (✓) : limited ✗ : unavailable

* The data was obtained through FGDs with trade unions in the respective locations as well as direct observation.

6. Demand Side

6.1 Market Dependence

According to FGD participants, markets are critical to households in Raja county for income generation and buying of both food and NFIs. According to these participants, dependency typically increases in the wet season due to depletion of harvested foods. However, this is also the period when consumers and traders reported that the availability of goods in markets in Raja county is at its lowest.

6.2 Access to cash

Households reportedly engage in a variety of livelihood activities to generate cash income. Most of these activities are accessible in the dry season, with the period from November to February typically being the most productive. This is when cultivated crops become available for both consumption and sale. Cultivation is the most productive income generating activity in terms of profit, but it depends on access to excess agricultural products. In Raja town, FGD participants reported that, even if they had not harvested enough sorghum, they would sometimes be forced to sell small amounts in order to ensure a balanced diet for their children.

Other common IGAs include the preparation and sale of wild foods. In Raja town and Debela, embece was reported as the most common wild food collected and sold, while in Deim Zubeir and Sopo the local communities collect mangoes to sell to traders

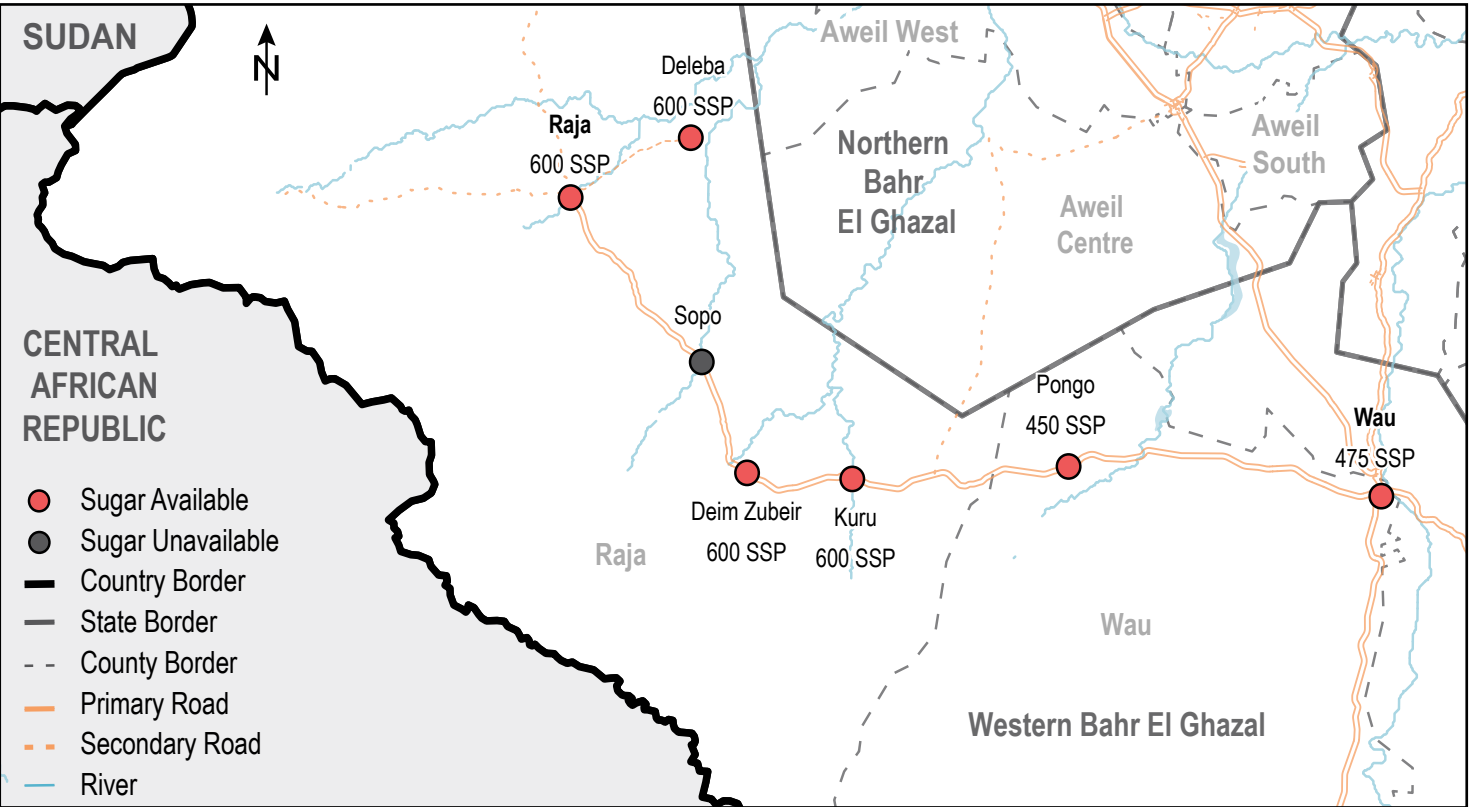
from Aweil. Honey making, hunting and fishing are also common activities engaged in by men for income generation in the dry season, although fishing was reportedly considered a specialised activity in the area and was not available to all households.

Collection of firewood and making charcoal, along with compiling grass bundles, are the most commonly employed income generating strategies according to FGD participants. Only firewood is reportedly available all year round, although the dense foliage created by the rains in the wet season reportedly makes collection both more difficult and more dangerous due to the diminished visibility in the surrounding forests.

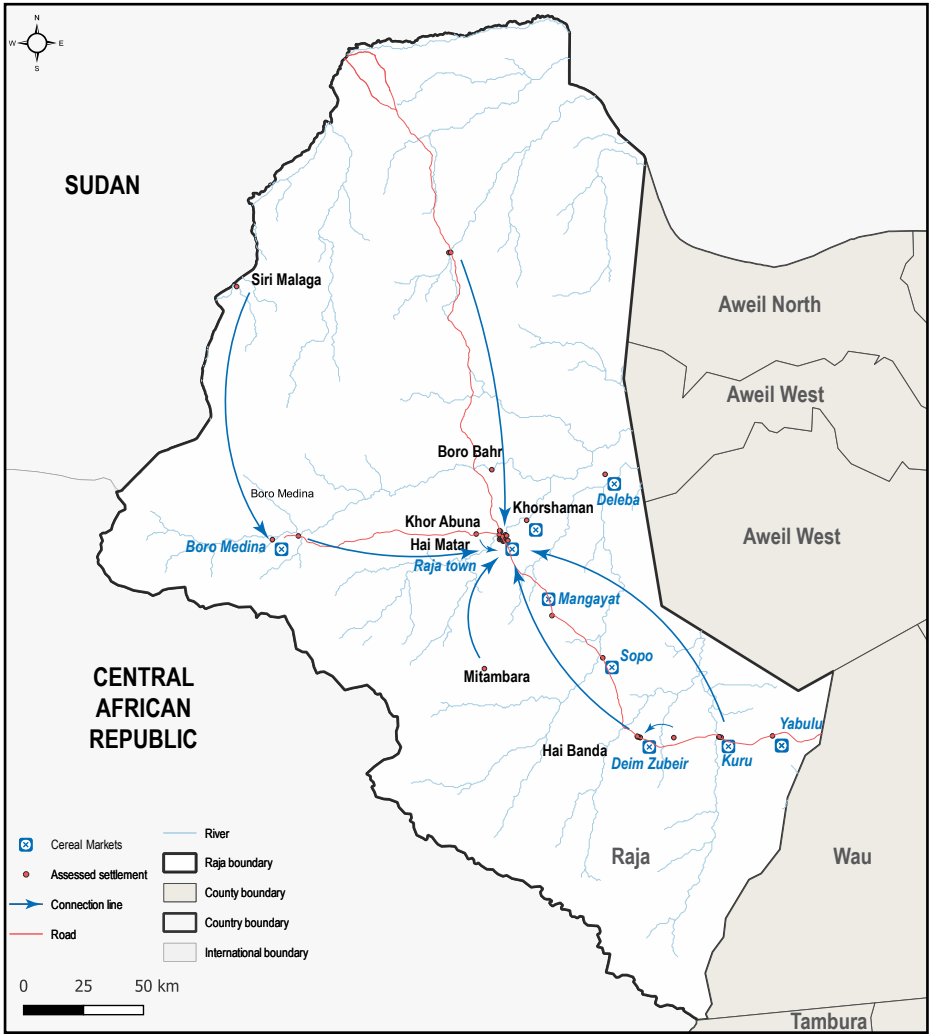
Although IGAs are available, rising prices resulting from the depreciation of SSP and transport costs have resulted in some households reportedly being unable to buy goods in the quantities they need when goods are available. According to Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) Crop and Livestock Market Information System (CLIMIS) data, sugar has increased in price from 350 SSP for 1 kg in December 2019 to 600 SSP per kg in December 2020, an increase of 171%.⁵ In most assessed locations (except Deim Zubeir), households reportedly did not have the capacity to generate enough additional income to match these rising prices. FGD participants reported that households had to accept lower quantities and worse terms of trade unless more members of the family could engage in IGAs.

Traders also reported being aware of this disparity between market

Map 3: Prices of 1kg of sugar across assessed marketplaces in Wau and Raja counties, as reported by FGDs



Map 4: Marketplace connections (cereals) reported by households during FGDs



Box 4: The time burdern of income generating activities

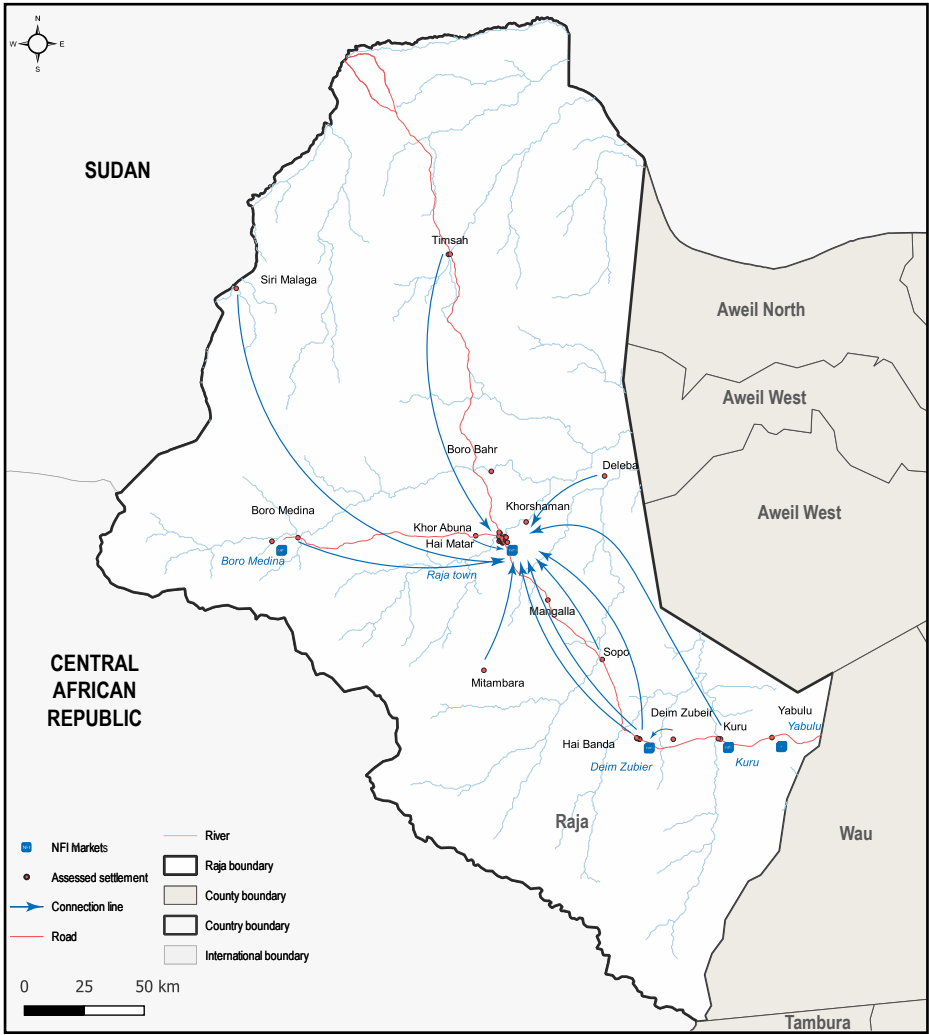
The time dedicated to IGAs can be a significant burden to households in Raja County. FGD participants in Deim Zubeir reported that a typical day would include the following: engaging in IGAs (in this instance collecting grass) until 1pm, domestic duties until 4pm, and then going to the marketplace to sell the bundles and buy goods. In the wet season, women may sometimes take casual labour roles on farms outside of Raja, and will need to bring their children as assistance to reduce the time required to complete a day's work. As a result, less time can be dedicated to other important tasks, such as child rearing, water collection, or accessing education. According to FGD participants, the time-burden is mostly felt by women, who are commonly more heavily engaged in such activities.

prices and incomes earned from common livelihood activities. In Raja town, traders cited this as the reason they chose not to import staple cereals from Sudan, as the price would not be affordable to the local community. At the time of assessment, this had resulted in a dependence upon locally supplied cereals. However, these were reportedly in low supply after a poor harvest season following a short but intense rainy season.

6.3 Access to Markets

Findings from REACH's monthly Area of Knowledge (AoK) assessment of the humanitarian situation in hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan indicate that residents in 100% of assessed settlements within Raja County reportedly had access to a market in December 2020.⁶ However, this does not always necessarily mean that accessible markets have all goods available. As most markets are small with limited availability, households needing particular, less commonly available goods are reportedly often forced to wait for for their local market to be resupplied or have to arrange transportation to larger markets themselves. The latter

Map 5: Marketplace Connections (NFIs) reported by households during FGDs



option is reportedly costly and difficult to access due to the lack of telephone network connection, as a result of which residents reportedly avoid traveling to markets as much as possible to prevent making unnecessary costs. However, according to key informants in Sopo and Deleba, if goods are unavailable at the closest marketplace and households in the area can pool enough funds, they will usually allocate a man from the community to collect goods from Raja. He will typically use a bike or motorbike and spend the night with relatives in Raja town, and return to the village the next day.

Map 4 shows the marketplace connections for cereals as of December 2020, according to FGD participants. The map depicts that most communities needed to source their staple cereals from Raja, as they are typically not available in their local marketplaces. As can be seen, traders and households may have to travel long

distances to reach a market with an ample supply of a variety of goods. While travelling is reportedly safe for most men, it can take a significant amount time, depending on the mode of transport and season, and it can be costly as mentioned above.

Map 5 shows the marketplace connections for basic NFIs in December 2020, as reported by FGD participants. The map depicts that most communities needed to source their NFIs from Raja, as NFIs are typically not available in their local marketplaces. There are more settlement connections between settlements and marketplaces for NFIs than on the cereals map, which suggests, that some communities did not rely on markets for their cereals in early December.

Conclusion

Findings from this assessment indicate that markets are highly important to residents in Raja County, with many communities relying on markets to supplement their agricultural production and access NFIs. The supply of goods within the county is constrained by limited supply routes and depends on the main road that connects Wau to the border with Sudan through Raja. As such, and due to the relatively low population density, markets are small and traders can only pool together small amounts of capital to restock, resulting in a low diversity and availability of goods in the county.

Ever since the end of a period locally referred to as “The Crisis” between 2016 and 2018, demarcating the peak of insecurity, when many people displaced from the region, the region has reportedly become safer. However, traders commonly reported perceiving that the trading environment has not dramatically improved, due to an increase of prices in supply markets and transportation costs, which, in turn, carries through to increased product prices, making it difficult for local households to afford basic goods, even when they are available in markets.

Findings indicate a fragile market system in Raja County, due to persisting supply constraints, particularly limited road access during the wet season, and limited telecommunications infrastructure. Considering the seminal importance of markets to local communities in the region, further research into how the existing supply and infrastructure challenges could best be addressed to increase market functionality and market resilience in Raja County could support a contextually relevant humanitarian response.

End Notes

1. An acidic wild food that has to be prepared so that it is safe to eat. If eaten raw it causes illness. Once prepared it is ground into a flour and used to supplement cereals. It is also sold at the market. A malwa (a volume of measurement typically between two to four litres) of Embece was 700 SSP in Raja Town at the time of assessment.
2. Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET), [South Sudan Livelihood Zone Map 2018](#)
3. [Population movement baseline report, September 2020](#)
4. South Sudan Inter Agency Cash Working Group (IACWG) Joint Market Monitoring Initiative, [Dashboard](#)
5. Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), [CLIMIS Dashboard](#)
6. REACH, [Area of Knowledge \(AoK\) Situation Overview Western and Northern Bahr el Ghazal states, December 2021](#)