

# Situation Overview: Upper Nile State, South Sudan

January - March 2020

**REACH** An initiative of  
IMPACT Initiatives  
ACTED and UNOSAT

## Introduction

Cumulative years of conflict, associated displacement and heavy flooding during the third and fourth quarters of 2019 have resulted in high humanitarian needs in Upper Nile State (UNS). Information gaps on humanitarian needs in UNS exist due to different regional dynamics and access challenges throughout the state, resulting in barriers to humanitarian programming.

To inform humanitarian actors working outside formal settlement sites, REACH has conducted assessments of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since December 2015. Data is collected on a monthly basis through interviews with key informants (KIs) with knowledge of settlements and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This situation overview uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs between January and March 2020 across UNS.<sup>3</sup> In this reporting period REACH covered all counties in UNS with the exception of Longochock and Maiwut.<sup>4</sup>

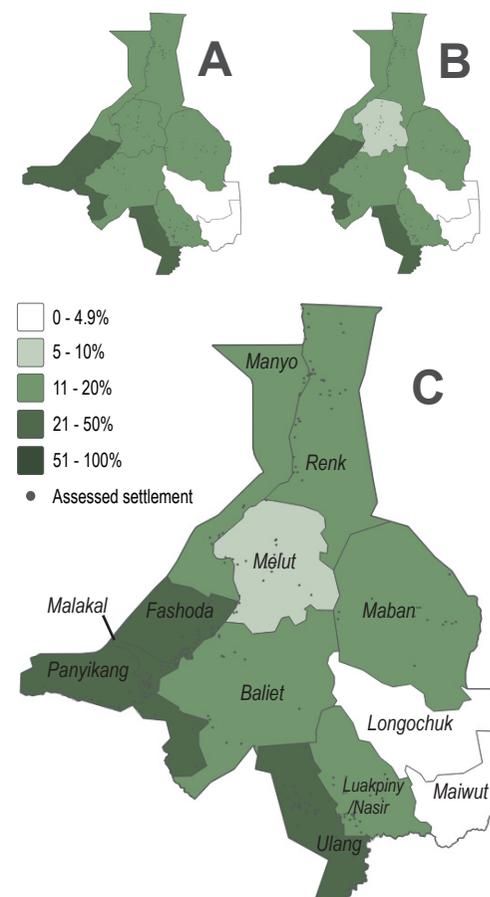
## Key Findings

- Whilst reported **access to food** remained relatively stable in March in central and northeastern UNS<sup>5</sup> with 59% of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food, food security in Ulang County reportedly deteriorated to the point where malnutrition was the most common reported cause of

death in March (47% of assessed settlements up from 29% in December).

- WASH<sup>6</sup> and health** needs remained high across UNS compared to the previous reporting period. In northeastern and central UNS 48% of assessed settlements reported not washing their hands at all in March, and 59% reported no functioning health facility within walking distance.
- This quarter, no large-scale displacement was recorded, while 84% of assessed settlements reported the presence of refugee returns, marking an increase compared to last quarter. Increases in the proportions of assessed settlements reporting internally displaced people (IDPs) across northeastern and central UNS may be a delayed consequence of the flooding in quarters three and four of 2019, while a decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDPs in Panyikang County was likely due to the improving food security situation.
- Reported **protection** concerns remained low in most of UNS, however, in southeastern UNS, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that most people did not feel safe most of the time was much higher, at 70%.
- In March only 19% of assessed settlements with a reported the presence of IDPs reported any IDPs living without a **shelter**, mainly in southeastern UNS.

Map 1: Assessment coverage in UNS in January (A), February (B) and March (C), 2020:



# of key informant interviews conducted: **735**  
# of assessed settlements: **386**  
# of counties covered consistently: **10 (of 12)**  
# of focus group discussions conducted: **10**

## METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Upper Nile State (UNS), REACH uses primary data from key informants who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or “Area of Knowledge” (AoK). Information for this report was collected from key informants in Malakal PoC site and Renk town in UNS in January, February and March 2020.

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted throughout the quarter 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 could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in the reporting.

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of all settlements<sup>1</sup> in a given month were included in analysis. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month 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 payam<sup>2</sup> 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 took place throughout January-March in Renk town and in the Malakal Protection of Civilians (PoC) site. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

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. Payams are the administrative unit at the sub-county level in South Sudan.

3. Since coverage of Fashoda county in December did not reach the minimum 5% of all known settlements, comparisons with the last reporting period for this county refer to data collected in November 2019 unless otherwise specified.

4. REACH is not currently able to report on Longochock or Maiwut counties since not enough KIs with first-hand knowledge of these counties are present near the REACH bases in Akobo, Malakal and Renk

5. For the purposes of this report central and northeastern UNS is comprised of Baliet, Maban, Melut and Renk counties, western bank counties include Fashoda, Malakal, Manyo and Panyikang and southeastern UNS consists of Nasir and Ulang counties.

6. Water Sanitation and Hygiene

## Population Movement and Displacement

During this quarter, the majority of counties on the west bank reported an influx in refugee and IDP returns, while assessed settlements across northern and central UNS reported larger numbers of IDPs compared to December 2019.

### Internal Movements

In quarter one of 2020 there was an increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs across central and northeastern UNS, (excluding Melut County) from 32% in December to 56% March. This trend aligns with a decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting this in Baliet and Maban counties. Increased reports of IDPs in this area may be partly driven by the flooding which occurred during quarters three and four of 2019 and throughout January and February 2020.<sup>7</sup>

In Panyikang County, a slightly improved food security situation may have contributed to a decreased proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP presence (62% in March) as well as an increase in the proportion reporting IDP returns (100% in March). Similarly, while the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs remained stable in Malakal County, there was an increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP returns to 65% in March. This may be partly linked to the availability of food distributions in this county during the lean season and aligns with

IDP numbers noted in an assessment carried out by the protection cluster in February.<sup>8</sup>

In southeastern UNS, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP returns remained stable at 65%, while the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs decreased slightly in Ulang County (to 63%) while remaining stable in Nasir County (at 78%). The decrease reported in IDP presence in Ulang may be linked to the reported decrease in food security there (see FSL section) while some IDPs in Nasir County may have arrived recently from Maiwut County, where clashes in

January displaced several thousand.<sup>9</sup>

### Cross-border Movement

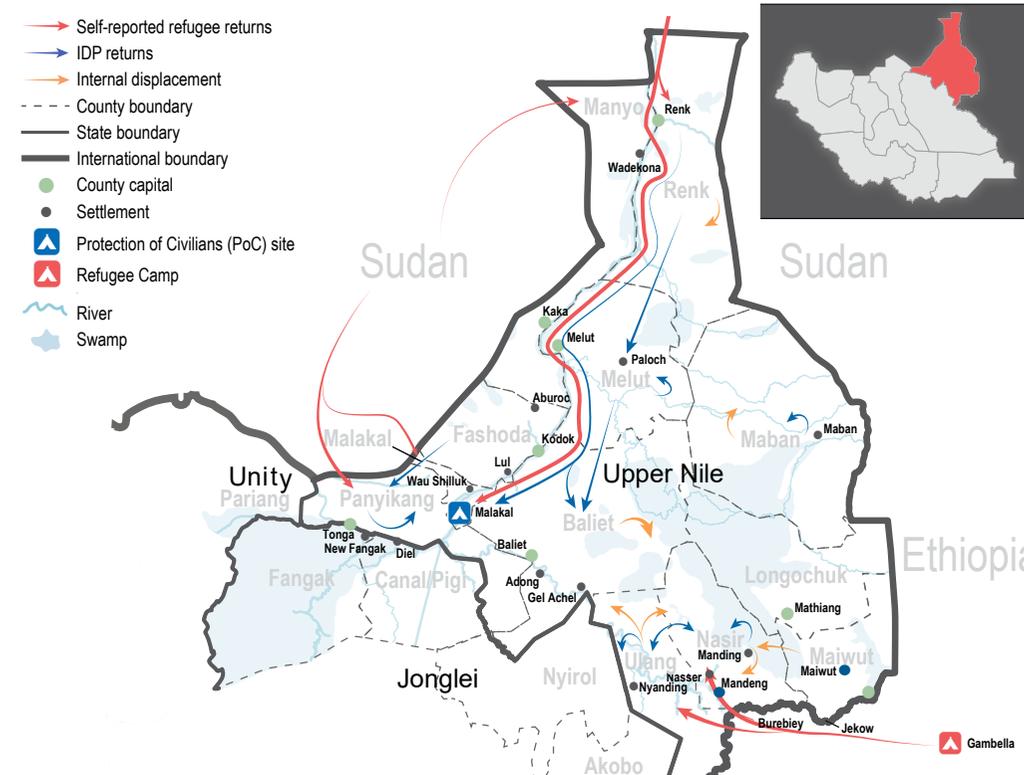
Reported refugee returns and host community movements across western bank counties may be linked to food security in this area. In Fashoda County, reports of refugee returns in the six months prior to data collection remained stable and high at 100% of assessed settlements in March, while across Panyikang, Malakal and Manyo counties, this proportion rose to 73% of assessed settlements in March compared to only 22% in December. In Panyikang and Malakal counties this coincided with increased

proportions of assessed settlements (96% and 70% in March respectively) reporting that “half” or “more than half” of the host community were present. This trend to more returns and increased proportions of host community members in Panyikang County may be related to the slightly improved food security situation (see FSL section).

Conversely, in Manyo County, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that “half” or “more than half” of the host community were present shrank slightly from 100% in March 2019 to 85% in March 2020.<sup>10</sup> This decrease may be linked to the food security situation which appeared increasingly poor in Manyo County and reportedly linked to new arrivals (see FSL section). In Malakal County, a similar trend of increased returns was reported last year,<sup>11</sup> and may be linked to the availability of general food distributions in the Malakal PoC during the lean season. This aligns with REACH port and road monitoring data which showed Malakal PoC as a popular intended destination for travelers passing through Renk town in March.<sup>12</sup>

Compared to December, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting refugee returns in Ulang County remained stable at 53% in March and decreased slightly to 42% in Nasir County. Refugee returnees to southeastern UNS most often came from Ethiopia (reported by 26% of assessed settlements that reported the presence of refugee returnees) and reportedly returned home because of insecurity (19%), a lack of access to land (7%) or due to the distance to family members (7%).

**Map 2: Movement into, out of, and within UNS, January - March 2020:**



7. ICCG meeting minutes, Malakal Humanitarian Hub, February 7th 2020

8. Protection Cluster Report on the mission to Wau Shilluk, February 12th 2020

9. Maiwut coordination meeting minutes, Juba, January 10th 2020

10. Because assessed Payams in Manyo County were not consistent between December 2019 and March 2020, comparisons cannot be drawn for this county between these two

months. Comparisons for Manyo County in this document are therefore drawn between March 2019 and March 2020.

11. [REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, January - March 2019](#)

12. [REACH Port and Road Monitoring Factsheet, Renk, March 2020](#)

## Situation in Assessed Settlements

### Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL)

Reported food security in most western bank counties and Ulang County deteriorated this quarter. Most of these counties were reclassified as Phase 4 (emergency) in the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) in the February-April projections. Conversely, after flooding endangered food security in much of central and northeastern UNS in quarters three and four of 2019, these counties have stabilised this quarter. Maban County was reclassified from Phase 4 in January to Phase 3 for the February-April projection.<sup>13</sup>

### Southeastern UNS (Nasir and Ulang counties)

The FSL situation in Nasir County remained stable this quarter while it deteriorated in Ulang County. Ownership of and access to cattle remained high at 100% and 79% of assessed settlements respectively across southeastern UNS in March. However, in parallel to this, assessed settlements reporting cattle disease also remained relatively high, at 64%. Similar to the last reporting period,<sup>14</sup> these reports align with the FAO's<sup>15</sup> Food Chain Crisis forecast, which warned of an outbreak of Rift Valley Fever (RVF) between January and March 2020.<sup>16</sup> Further, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to land in the region dropped drastically from 100% in December to 0% in March. FGD participants interviewed in January reported that people in southeastern UNS had to flee flooding,<sup>17</sup> leaving their livelihoods behind. In Ulang County, IDPs reportedly left their land

due to a fear of inter-communal violence.<sup>18</sup> Although it is unusual for this type of violence to occur this far north, INSO<sup>19</sup> documented an attack in Ulang County in mid-April, shortly after the FGD took place.<sup>20</sup>

These factors likely contributed to a strain on the food security situation in Ulang County. Adequate access to food was reported by only 33% of assessed settlements in March, compared to 61% in December. The most frequently reported reasons for this drop in access to food were less distributions (47% of assessed settlements), lack of land (7%) and a short growing period (7%). These may all be linked to flooding, which limited cultivation and humanitarian activity in the county in quarter four of 2019.<sup>21</sup> Humanitarian activity in Ulang County was also temporarily restricted in February due to heightened inter-communal tensions.<sup>22</sup> Food insecurity was further signaled by the increases in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the use of extreme coping strategies such as having only children eat (67%) and skipping entire days (47%). Food insecurity may continue to worsen in Ulang County entering the lean season (which

typically starts in May), particularly if supply chains continue to be interrupted.

In contrast, 78% of assessed settlements in Nasir County reported adequate access to food in March. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting that two meals were eaten daily rose from 48% in December to 70% in March. This reported improvement was likely due to humanitarian food distributions, with 89% of assessed settlements reporting accessing a food distribution in the three months prior to March data collection. This indicates a dependency on food distributions which may lead to rapidly worsening food security if humanitarian movement is further restricted due to COVID-19. Finally, of the 22% of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food in March, 15% reported that hunger was "severe" indicating an underlying vulnerability to food insecurity in Nasir County, despite ongoing food distributions.

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

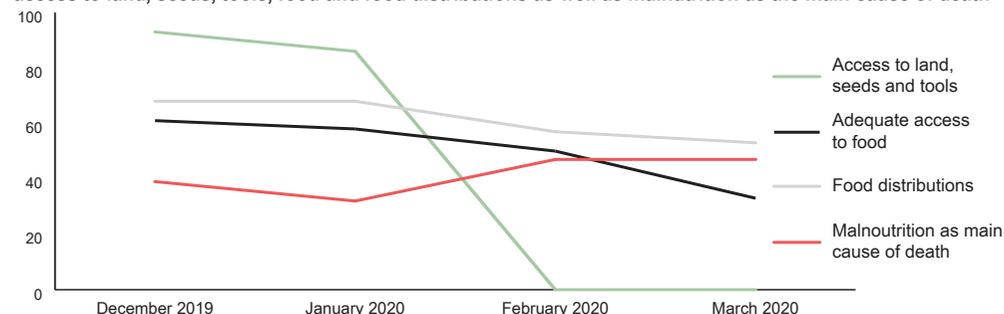
Findings indicate that food security deteriorated across western bank counties in March 2020.

As is usual in the run-up to the lean season, the proportion of assessed settlements across the western bank reporting that wild foods were eaten as part of a main meal increased from 69% in December to 89% in March.<sup>23</sup> Similarly, compared to December, higher proportions of assessed settlements reported relying on meat (83%), pulses (80%) and dairy products (50%) as opposed to main staples. This aligns with the 71% of assessed settlements in the region reporting disruptions in crop growth in the month prior to data collection.

Perhaps as a result, reported access to food in Fashoda County deteriorated (from 83% in November to 67% in December) and remained low but stable in Manyo County (46% in March). Having to share food with new arrivals was one of the most frequently reported reasons for a decrease in access to food by assessed settlements in both counties in March (20%).<sup>24</sup> The highest proportion of assessed settlements reporting refugee returns to Manyo County since quarter one 2019, and the stable but high reports of refugee returns in Fashoda County (see population movement section), seem to corroborate this.

Assessed settlements in Fashoda County also reported the stopping of food distributions and high market prices as reasons for the inadequate access to food. This aligns with JMMI data, which showed reduced market functionality in Fashoda County in March. This is of concern to future food insecurity, since 25% of assessed settlements in the county reported relying on bought food in March.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, all assessed settlements which reported not having adequate access to food

**Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements in Ulang County, December 2019 - March 2020 reporting adequate access to land, seeds, tools, food and food distributions as well as malnutrition as the main cause of death**



13. IPC snapshot, January - July 2020

14. [REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, October - December 2019](#)

15. Food and Agricultural Organization

16. FAO, Food Chain Crisis Early Warning Bulletin, January - March 2020

17. Reported by FGD participants interviewed in Malakal PoC, January 2020

18. Reported by FGD participants interviewed in Akobo, March 2020

19. The International NGO Safety Organisation

20. INSO weekly incident list, April 17-23rd 2020

21. UNICEF report on flood response mission to Ulang and Nasir, November 2019

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

23. FEWSNET Livelihoods Zone Maps and Descriptions for the Republic of South Sudan, August 2018

24. Reported by FGD participants interviewed in Malakal PoC, February 2020

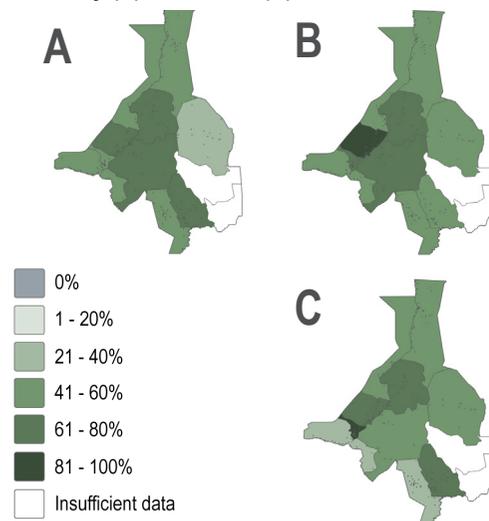
25. [REACH Join Market Monitoring Factsheet, March 2020](#)

in March, reported that hunger was “small” as opposed to “severe” or “worst” indicating that food security in Fashoda County, although deteriorating, was not as poor as it could be.

In Manyo County, although 15% of assessed settlements reported having accessed food distributions in March (up from 0% in March 2019), this was accompanied by a stable but high proportion of assessed settlements reporting that wild foods were eaten as part of a main meal (77%). Although it is typical for people to consume wild foods at this time of year, the increased and high proportion of assessed settlements reporting wild foods made people sick (from 0% in March 2019 to 54% in March 2020) is indicative of stress consumption, further indicating the serious food insecurity situation in Manyo County this quarter.<sup>26</sup>

In Panyikang County, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food fell from 75% in December to 29% in March. Although relatively low, this proportion is not unusual compared to previous reporting periods.<sup>27</sup> In March this was regularly attributed to a lack of safety when accessing land for cultivation (29% of assessed settlements), new arrivals (19%) and high market prices (19%). The latter reasons align with the increases in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting returns in March (see displacement section). Population movements within the county were likely linked to the deterioration and subsequent improvement in food security in quarter four of 2019 and were perhaps encouraged by the start of the planting season.<sup>28, 29</sup> Similar to Fashoda County, rising

**Map 3: % of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in: January (A), February (B) and March (C), 2020**



market prices were concerning for future food security considering that, in March, 100% of assessed settlements in Panyikang County reported their main source of food was the market. If settlements in this county continue to rely on bought food, movement restrictions could increase vulnerability to food insecurity, particularly as 72% of assessed settlements reported that the nearest market was over 30 minutes away on foot.

In contrast to all other western bank counties, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in Malakal County increased from 50% in December to 85% in March. FGD participants corroborated that the FSL situation in Malakal County improved during quarter one of 2020, mainly due to the increased availability of fish and wild foods and the successful formation of a unity government

on the 22nd of February, which reportedly brought stability.<sup>30</sup> However, 50% of assessed settlements in Malakal County reported buying their food from markets in March which, similar to Panyikang County, may increase vulnerability to food insecurity were movement restrictions to increase.

### Northeastern and Central UNS (Baliet, Maban, Melut and Renk counties)

In northeastern and central UNS, access to food reportedly either remained stable or increased. However, 38% of assessed settlements in this area reported disruptions in crop growth and there was an increase in the consumption of wild foods from 64% of assessed settlements in December to 85% in March.

In Baliet, Renk and Melut counties, the proportions of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food remained stable at 50%, 59% and 68% respectively. However, as the consumption of wild foods increased across these counties, so did the proportions of assessed settlements reporting the consumption of wild food linked to sickness in Renk (44%) and Melut counties (42%). In addition, a decreased proportion of assessed settlements in Melut County reported relying on cultivation as their main source of food (83% in December and 68% in March). This is in line with the above-mentioned disruptions in crop growth compounded by flooding, which was reportedly still ongoing in Melut County in March. Conversely, in Baliet County, cultivation (86%) and fishing (14%) were reported as the main food sources. This aligns with reports of flood waters receding and fish returning to less swampy areas allowing fishing to resume.<sup>31</sup>

In Maban County, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food increased to 57%, in March compared to 31% in December. Despite this improvement, an increased proportion of assessed settlements (100% in March and to 62% in December) reported that wild foods were eaten as part of a main meal, and 43% reported people getting sick after eating wild food. This may be linked to the decreased proportion of assessed settlements (43% in March and to 77% in December) reporting cultivation as the main food source, likely as a result of disruptions to crop growth. Therefore, despite an overall improvement in food security in Maban County, findings also indicate signs of vulnerability to future food insecurity.

### Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Health

WASH needs remained high in UNS,<sup>32</sup> particularly on the western bank and in northeastern and central counties. Regarding health, high proportions of assessed settlements in central and northeastern UNS as well as Manyo and Ulang counties reported a lack of health services within walking distance.

### Northeastern and Central UNS

Across northeastern and central UNS, WASH needs remained high. Only 32% of assessed settlements in this area reported the use of latrines. Of those which reported low or no use of latrines, the most commonly reported primary reason was a lack of facilities (78% of assessed settlements). A further indicator of high WASH needs in the area was the high proportion of assessed settlements (48% in March) reporting that no handwashing was

26. Reported by FGD participants interviewed in Renk town, March 2020

27. [REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, July - September 2019](#)

28. [REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, October - December 2019](#)

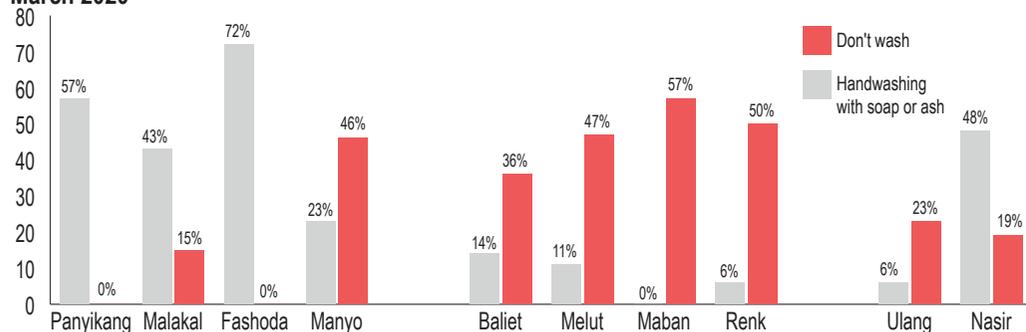
29. FEWSNET Livelihoods Zone Maps and Descriptions for the Republic of South Sudan, August 2018

30. Reported by FGD participants interviewed in Malakal PoC, March 2020

31. Reported by FGD participants interviewed in Malakal PoC, March 2020

32. [REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, October - December 2019](#)

**Figure 2: % of assessed settlements in each county reporting on typical handwashing practices, March 2020**



taking place, while the proportion reporting handwashing with soap or ash remained low at 7% in March, similar to December (figure 2), signaling a high vulnerability to the spread of COVID-19 in this part of UNS.

Access to safe water appeared to remain relatively high in most of central and northeastern UNS. In Maban, Melut and Renk counties reported access to improved water sources was at 43%, 58% and 30% of assessed settlements respectively in March. Further, 87% of assessed settlements in these counties reported only a 30-minute walk or less to the preferred water source. However, in Baliet County, 0% of assessed settlements reported an improved water source as their main source of drinking water in March and 57% (compared to 25% in December) reported that people had perceivably gotten sick from the water they drank.<sup>33</sup> This was likely linked to the increased proportion of assessed settlements that reported livestock drank from the same water source (71%).

Similar to the previous reporting period, access to healthcare continued to be restricted in

northeastern and central UNS (Figure 3).<sup>34</sup> Natural death was the most frequently reported main cause of death (68%) across the region in March and malaria was the most frequently reported health problem (84% of assessed settlements). This may be linked to reports of a lack of mosquito nets in the aftermath of flooding in Melut and Maban counties.<sup>35</sup>

### Western Bank

WASH needs also remained high in most western bank counties. Access to safe water sources across Fashoda, Manyo and Panyikang counties stood at only 11% compared to 73% in Malakal County. This was similar to the much higher proportion of assessed settlements in Malakal County (54%) reporting the use of latrines in March compared to the rest of the western bank (18%). Across all four western bank counties, the most frequently reported reason for not using latrines was the lack of facilities (89%). The lower overall reported WASH needs in Malakal County as compared to the rest of the western bank may be linked to a higher number of humanitarian partners active in this county.<sup>36</sup>

In contrast, WASH needs were particularly high in Manyo County, where a high proportion of assessed settlements reported that most people were not washing their hands at all (figure 2). High WASH needs in this county were also indicated by the proportion of assessed settlements (54%) reporting sharing their water source with livestock in March. Across the rest of the western bank, 55% of assessed settlements reported the use of soap or ash for handwashing in March.

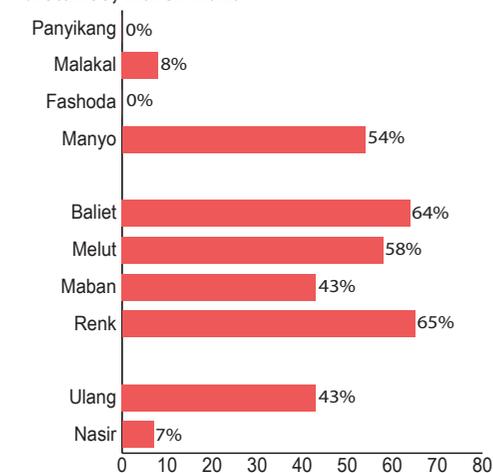
Reported access to health facilities remained stable across western bank counties. However, in Manyo County, 54% of assessed settlements reported that there was no health facility within walking distance in March. The most common health problem, as reported by 53% of assessed settlements in Fashoda, Manyo and Panyikang counties, was malaria. In Malakal, despite the low reported WASH needs, 85% of assessed settlements reported waterborne diseases as the most important health problem in March. This may be linked to a spike in cases of acute watery diarrhoea, most often caused by viruses, which could be mistakenly attributed to a waterborne infection.<sup>37, 38</sup> This would align with diarrhoeal disease being reported as the most common perceived cause of death (81%) in March. Finally, there were slight spikes in the proportions of assessed settlements reporting lung disease as the main health problem in both Fashoda County from 3% in November to 17% in March and in Panyikang County from 13% in December to 24% in March, which is concerning in the context of COVID-19.

### Southeastern UNS

WASH needs in southeastern UNS were

comparatively low, as only 28% of assessed settlements reported using an unprotected water source and 88% reported being able to reach water in under an hour. However, similar to previous reporting periods, a comparatively high proportion of assessed settlements (44%) reported not being able to access their preferred water source due to safety concerns.<sup>39</sup> This may be linked to protection concerns, including inter-communal violence and cattle raids, reports of which have been relatively frequent in this area over the past three reporting periods (see protection section). Latrine use in this area also continued to be relatively widespread, with 53% of assessed settlements reporting this in March. While 48% of assessed settlements in Nasir County reported the use of soap or ash for handwashing, only 6% in Ulang County did so, which, in combination with the deteriorating food security situation, further indicates

**Figure 3: % of assessed settlements per county reporting no health facility within walking distance, March 2020**



33. An improved water source is protected from contamination. Improved water sources include piped household water connections, public standpipes, boreholes, protected dug wells, protected springs, and rainwater collection.

34. REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, October - December 2019

35. Rapid inter-agency flood assessment report, Melut County, January 24th 2020

36. According to WASH cluster meeting minutes, there is a WASH partern on the ground in all but two payams of Malakal county

37. REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, October - December 2019

38. WHO Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) Epidemiological Bulletin, March 2020

39. REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, October - December 2019

vulnerability to COVID-19 (figure 2).

Finally, while the main reported health problem in Nasir County remained Malaria, assessed settlements in Ulang County most frequently reported the main health problem and perceived cause of death to be malnutrition (47% for both), aligning with the increasingly severe food insecurity in the county (see FSL section). Moreover, increased proportions of assessed settlements in Ulang County reported that “half” or “more than half” of children (47% in March up from 25% in December) and elderly (27% in March up from 7% in December) were malnourished. This is worrying considering that 43% of assessed settlements in Ulang County reported that there was no health facility within walking distance and highlights the deterioration of the FSL situation in Ulang County (figure 3).

### Protection and Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

Similar to previous reporting periods,<sup>40</sup> comparatively high proportions of assessed settlements in southeastern UNS reported that most people did not feel safe most of the time (70%). In March, the most frequently reported protection concern in this area continued to be killing or injury by other tribes for men (46% of assessed settlements) and early marriage for both girls (33%) and boys (26%), while 21% of assessed settlements reported no protection concerns for women. Relatively prevalent protection concerns in this area align with the 16% of assessed settlements reporting that protection was the most needed type of assistance. A further 26% reported that food was the most needed type of assistance, aligning with the high FSL needs mentioned in

the FSL section above.

Across northeastern and central UNS, 100% of assessed settlements reported that most people felt safe most of the time, whilst 88% of assessed settlements on the western bank reported this. In northeastern and central UNS, the most frequently reported protection concern in March 2020 for both women and girls remained consistent with December 2019: domestic violence for women (58% of assessed settlements) and early marriage for girls (65%). This may be linked to reports of inadequate housing or the increased numbers of IDPs in this area, likely due to recent flooding. Unchanged from the previous quarter, the highest proportion of assessed settlements in northeastern and central UNS reported no protection concerns for men (80% of assessed settlements) and boys (75%). Similarly, the majority of assessed settlements in western bank counties reported no protection concerns for women, men, girls or boys.

Aligning with the relatively poor access to healthcare in northeastern and central UNS as well as western bank counties (see WASH and health section), 22% of assessed settlements in northeastern and central UNS and 13% of those on the western bank reported that health assistance was their primary need.

### Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

The shelter situation for IDPs in western bank, northeastern and central counties remained stable. A high proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IPDs across these areas reported that IDPs mainly lived in rakoobas (68%) in March.<sup>41</sup> In

Panyikang County, a drop in the proportion of assessed settlements with a reported IDP presence reporting IDPs living in the open (0% in March down from 63% in December) was in line with the decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs. Further, in Maban County, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting shelter damage due to flooding decreased from 77% in December to 36% in March, aligning with the improved food security situation and indicating ongoing recovery from the impact of flooding.

In southeastern UNS, access to shelter amongst the IDP population continued to be less widespread. Of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs, 19% reported they were mainly living in rakoobas and community buildings respectively while 16% reported abandoned buildings as the main shelter type for IDPs, which raises concerns for the safety and security of IDPs in these counties. In addition, reports of IDPs living in the open in this area remained consistent with previous reports, at 53% of assessed settlements in March 2020.

### Education

In March, the proportion of assessed settlements across UNS reporting that girls and boys between the ages of 6 and 17 were attending school remained stable at 22% and 60% respectively. However, compared to last quarter, a decreased proportion of assessed settlements in Malakal (69%), Manyo (31%) and Ulang (43%) counties reported that there were functioning educational facilities within walking distance. In Malakal County the most frequently named reason for this was a lack of

teachers whilst in Manyo and Ulang counties, the lack of facilities was the most frequently named barrier to education, perhaps as they were damaged or re-purposed due to flooding.

## Conclusion

Although overall needs in UNS remained low and stable, counties on the western bank experienced decreased food security this quarter and the effects of flooding compounded by the forthcoming lean season put serious strain on food security in Ulang County. Moreover, poor access to clean water and low prevalence of ash or soap for handwashing, particularly in western bank, central and northeastern UNS, indicated high vulnerabilities particularly considering the expected increase of COVID-19 cases in South Sudan.<sup>42</sup>

### About REACH Initiative

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. 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). Visit [www.reach-initiative.org](http://www.reach-initiative.org) and follow us @REACH\_info.

40. [REACH Situation Overview, Upper Nile, October - December 2019](#)

41. Although tukuls and rakoobas are both categorised as semi-permanent shelters, tukuls are shelters constructed with mud bricks and a grass thatch roof while rakoobas are made from poles and plastic tarpaulin and are therefore considered to be the more permanent type of shelter.

42. The High-Level Task Force on the COVID-19 Pandemic continues to report increases in COVID-19 cases in South Sudan.