

Situation Overview: Upper Nile State, South Sudan

September 2017

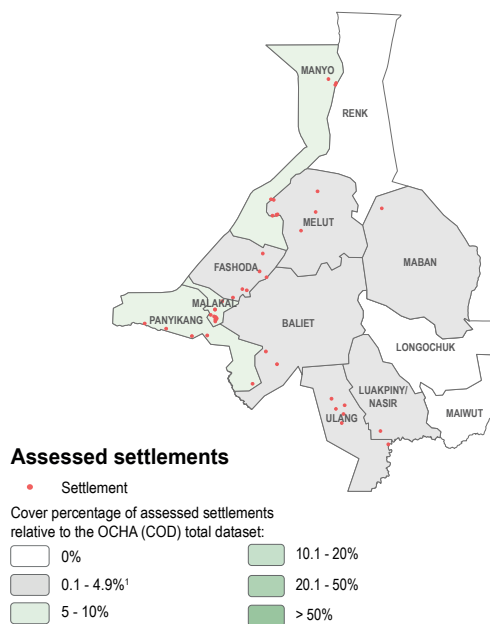
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Introduction

Assistance to populations in need was impeded in September due to continued insecurity in Upper Nile.¹ While the southeastern counties remained largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors following armed clashes in July and August, renewed insecurity in and around Aburoc led to the relocation of most humanitarian organizations and triggered further displacement among a population that was already displaced from previous armed clashes along the western bank of the Nile.²

To inform the response of humanitarian actors working outside of formal displacement sites, REACH has been conducting an assessment of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since 2015, for which data on settlements across Greater Upper Nile, Greater Equatoria and Western Bahr el Ghazal regions is collected on a monthly basis.

In September 2017, REACH interviewed 107 Key Informants (KIs) from 44 settlements in all counties in Upper Nile State except Renk, Maiwut and Longochuk. In order to ensure an accurate understanding of current displacement and population dynamics, all selected KIs had up-to-date information about the village from which they had been displaced, whether because they had reportedly visited the Area of Knowledge (AoK) within the last



Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Upper Nile State, September 2017.

month or had been in contact with someone living in the AoK within the last month. Findings have been triangulated using two Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), KIs with humanitarian actors, secondary data, and previous REACH assessments of hard-to-reach areas of Upper Nile State.

This Situation Overview outlines displacement and access to basic services in Upper Nile in September 2017. The first section analyses displacement trends in Upper Nile State.

The second section outlines the population dynamics in the assessed settlements, as well as access to food and services for both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and non-displaced persons.

The coverage of counties where REACH was able to assess over 5% of known settlements was limited to the western bank of the Nile in September (Map 1). The southeastern counties that had been assessed in multiple past situation overviews (Ulang, Nasir, Maiwut and Longochuk) did not meet sufficient settlement coverage in September. Although counties where the proportion of total settlements assessed is below 5% are not analysed at the county level, the settlement data is still included in the state-level analysis.

Population Movement and Displacement

In September, armed clashes in Upper Nile continued to result in primary or secondary displacement of populations in the western bank and southeastern counties. A large number of people who had previously been displaced internally within Upper Nile crossed into Ethiopia to seek refuge as a result of conflict in Maiwut and Longochuk. Moreover, clashes triggered displacement in Aburoc among a population that was already displaced from previous

clashes along the western bank.³ Reflective of this, the percentage of assessed settlements reporting presence of IDPs increased from 51% in August to 78% in September.

Displacement in and out of Upper Nile

Displacement in and around Aburoc

Clashes in and around the displacement site in Aburoc led to reduced access to humanitarian assistance and prompted many people to leave (Map 2).⁴ It was reported that most of those who fled went to the bush around the site and that some returned upon hearing that the situation was calm.⁵ As such, by the end of September the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster was still reporting a total population of 10,098 IDPs in Aburoc, similar to before the clashes.⁶

Displacement from Maiwut into Ethiopia

At the end of September, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that 30,000 new arrivals from South Sudan had crossed in the Gambella region of Ethiopia since mid-July.⁷ UNHCR estimates that around 85% of new arrivals to Gambella come from Maiwut and Longochuk.⁸ Ongoing clashes along the Mathiang-Pagak corridor have exacerbated this trend.

1. OCHA. South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot. September 2017.
2. OCHA. Humanitarian bulletin. Issue 11. 15 September 2017.
3. OCHA. South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot. September 2017.
4. OCHA. Humanitarian bulletin. Issue 11. 15 September 2017.
5. Ibid.

6. CCCM Cluster. Bi-Weekly Situation Report. 16-30 September 2017.
7. UNHCR. Bi-Monthly Ethiopia Situational Report. 16-30 September 2016.
8. UNHCR. South Sudan Situation Information Sharing Portal, Ethiopia, Gambella, as of 28 September 2017.
9. UNHCR. Bi-Monthly Ethiopia Situational Report. 16-30 September 2016.

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas of Upper Nile State, REACH uses primary data provided by key informants who have recently arrived, or receive regular information, from their pre-displacement location or “Area of Knowledge”.

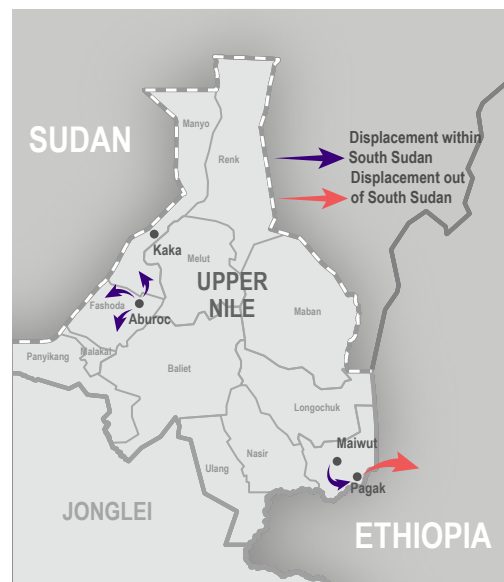
Information for this report was collected from key informants in Renk County, Upper Nile, and the Juba PoC site, Central Equatoria.

The first phase of the assessment methodology comprised a participatory mapping exercise to map the relevant settlements in Upper Nile State. In-depth interviews were then conducted with selected participants using a standardised survey tool comprising questions on displacement trends, humanitarian needs and access to basic services.

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

Please note that REACH is in the process of establishing sustained data collection in Upper Nile. As a result, the current coverage is limited. The conclusions drawn should therefore be considered as indicative only.

Map 2: Displacement within and outside of South Sudan. September 2017.



Situation in Assessed Settlements

Food security and livelihoods

In September, access to food remained stable compared to August, with 43% of assessed settlements across Upper Nile reporting adequate access. The lowest levels were recorded in counties along the western bank (Map 3). The vast majority of assessed settlements without adequate access to food reported that access was primarily disrupted by insecurity.

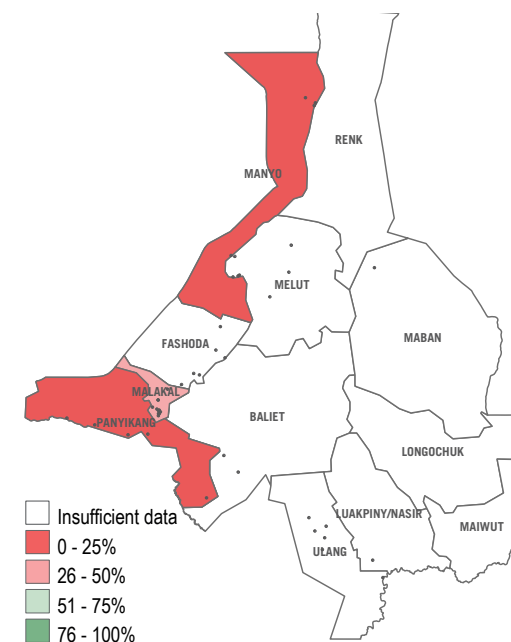
Renewed armed clashes disrupted key sources of livelihoods such as cultivation and livestock rearing, leaving communities to rely largely on

purchased food as a main source of food, as reported by 80% of assessed settlements.

The situation deteriorated specifically in Manyo County, where none of the assessed settlements reported adequate access to food, compared to 25% in August. Adequate access to food remained stable in Panyikang County, reported by 20% of assessed settlements. Conversely, Malakal County was found to be comparatively better off with 40% of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in September, likely attributable to higher humanitarian presence in and around the Malakal PoC site.

With a tense security situation in September, almost none of the settlements assessed in Manyo, Panyikang or Malakal reported cultivation to take place despite the ongoing harvest season. According to a humanitarian partner KI, the population of many settlements in the western bank would be ready to cultivate small plots of land around their households in spite of persisting insecurity, but lack the seeds and tools to do so: 96% of assessed settlements reported that there was not enough access to agricultural inputs (seeds and tools) in September.

In addition to low cultivation, only 21% of assessed settlements reported livestock rearing as a source of income. Along the western bank of the Nile, insecurity, displacement, cattle raids and livestock disease outbreaks have all precipitated a shift of livelihood from livestock to fishing in recent years.¹¹ Indeed, fishing was the source of livelihood that was found to be taking



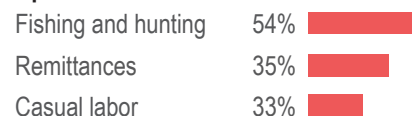
Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food, September 2017

place the most in September, as reported by 54% of assessed settlements.

With the disruption of agriculture and livestock activities, assessed settlements relied largely on remittances and casual labour, reported by 35% and 33% in September, respectively (Figure 1). Further, KIs and FGD participants emphasized that HHs in Manyo were turning to other income-generating sources of livelihoods such as brewing alcohol and collecting charcoal in the woods. These activities in turn allowed HHs to purchase food from the market.

Reliance on income-generating livelihoods as

Figure 1: Top 3 main reported sources of livelihood in the assessed settlements, September 2017



opposed to production of food for sustenance creates vulnerability to the continued market price increases reported in Upper Nile.¹² In September, an increase in the price of sorghum as well as both sugar and oil was reported in 100% and 90% of assessed settlements with access to a functioning market, respectively.

Due to continued insecurity across most of the western bank, humanitarian access remained limited in September. Only 17% of assessed settlements reported a food distribution in the previous three months.

Coping strategies

Various strategies were reported in assessed settlements to cope with a lack of food. The most frequently cited consumption-based coping strategy was limiting the size of meals, reported by 44% of assessed settlements in September compared to 29% in August.

Additionally, the most frequently cited livelihood coping strategy was borrowing food, reported by 30% of assessed settlements. Some FGD participants also reported that people in Panyikang were resorting to selling clothes and personal possessions in exchange for food from the market.

Protection

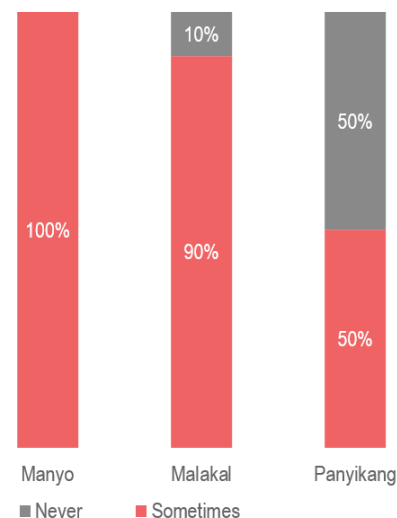
Perception of insecurity remained high in September (Figure 2). Only 3% of assessed settlements across Upper Nile reported that most of the population of the settlement always feel safe while 26% reported that the population never feel safe. Perception of insecurity reportedly stemmed primarily from incidents of conflict in 46% of all assessed settlements.

The settlements reporting people feeling unsafe were mostly concentrated in the southeastern counties of Upper Nile, which are located in the periphery of recent armed clashes around Pagak (Nasir and Ulang). Along the western bank of the Nile, reports of looting in over 73% of assessed settlements on average in Manyo, Panyikang and Malakal also contributed to perceptions of insecurity.

For women, safety concerns mainly revolved around sexual violence, with 67% of all assessed settlements reporting it. Additionally, only 3% of assessed settlements reported women to have no safety concern in September compared to 21% in August. This sharp change in women safety is likely attributable to the resurgence of armed clashes along the West Bank.¹³

The primary safety concern for men in September was the fear of being killed or injured by someone from a different community, reported by 69% of assessed settlements. The fear of looting was also reported by 14% of assessed settlements.

Figure 2: Proportion of assessed settlements in Manyo, Malakal and Panyikang where most people reportedly felt safe, September 2017



Shelter

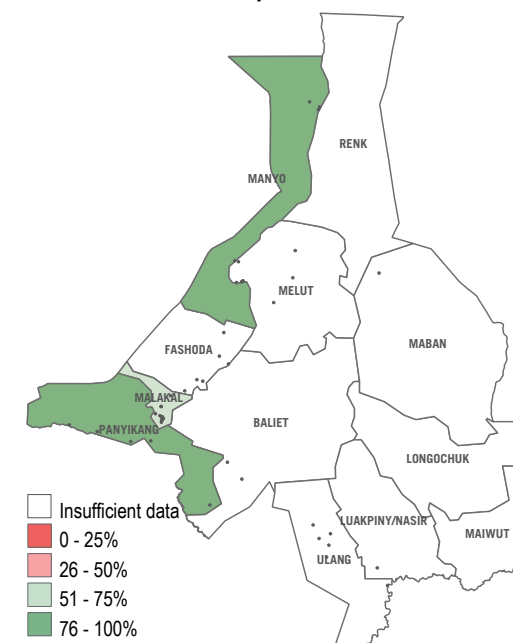
Shelter destruction due to fighting remained high in September, reported by 23% of assessed settlements, similar to August. Most of the destruction was reported in the counties of Manyo and Malakal, reported by 75% and 33% of assessed settlements, respectively. The two areas likely felt the effect of spillover from armed clashes taking place in neighbouring Fashoda.

Sixty seven percent of settlements assessed in September reported tukuls to be the main shelter type of host communities (Map 4). This was followed by rakoobas, reported as the main shelter type in 28% of assessed settlements. Hence, a low proportion of members of host

communities in assessed settlements were living in precarious shelters in September.

While IDPs were also reported to be staying primarily in tukuls (52%) and in rakoobas (20%), 8% of assessed settlements reported that IDPs were living in improvised shelters and 16% in abandoned structures or no shelter at all. The latter were mostly reported in Nasir and Ulang, two counties presently hosting newly arrived IDPs from Maiwut and Longochuk who may not yet have access to permanent shelter solutions.

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting tukuls to be the main shelter type of host communities, September 2017



12. WFP. South Sudan Monthly Market Price Monitoring Bulletin. August 2017.

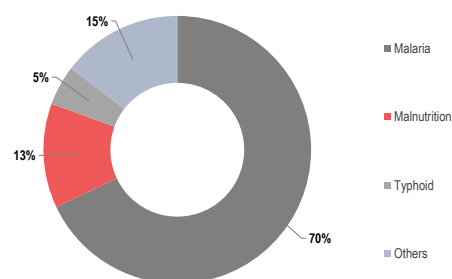
13. OCHA. Humanitarian bulletin. Issue 11. 15 September 2017.

Health and WASH

In September, only 38% of assessed settlements reported access to health facilities. Most were located in Maban, Melut, Nasir and Ulang, the areas of Upper Nile less affected by armed clashes. Conversely, levels of access were particularly low in counties of the western bank. Although REACH did not collect any data for Longochuk and Maiwut in September, some of the first assessments conducted in October in the wake of the armed clashes in those counties revealed that access to healthcare was particularly low in that area.¹⁴

At the state level, the reasons most frequently cited by assessed settlements without access to healthcare to explain the lack of services were that the facilities were never there to begin with, that facilities were destroyed by violence and that the staff were absent from the existing Primary Health Care Units (PHCUs), Primary Health Care Centers (PHCCs) and Hospitals, reported by 45%, 27% and 23% of assessed settlements respectively. Destruction

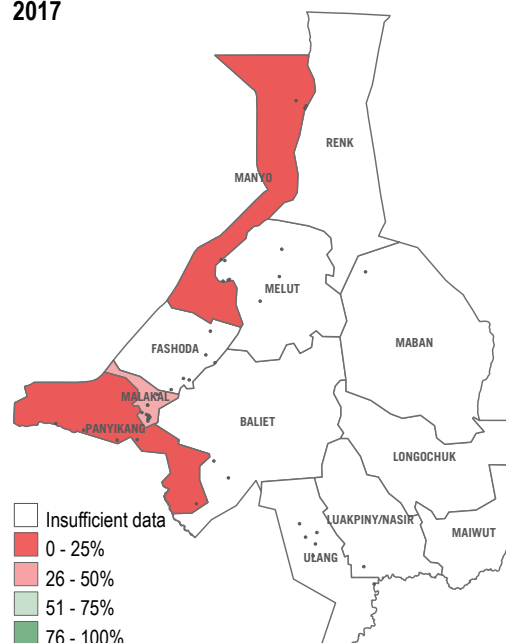
Figure 3: Primary reported health concerns in the assessed settlements, September 2017.



by violence was mostly cited by assessed settlements without access to healthcare in Manyo (50%), Panyikang (33%) and Fashoda (33%), three areas that have been heavily affected by armed clashes since the beginning of 2017.

In continuity with August, malaria was the most frequently cited primary health problem among assessed settlements (70%), followed by malnutrition (13%) (Figure 3). Moreover, 25% of assessed settlements in Manyo County reported wounds as the main health issue, suggesting that healthcare service provision is crucial to mitigate the health-related impacts of the spillovers from the clashes along the

Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to health facilities, September 2017



western bank.

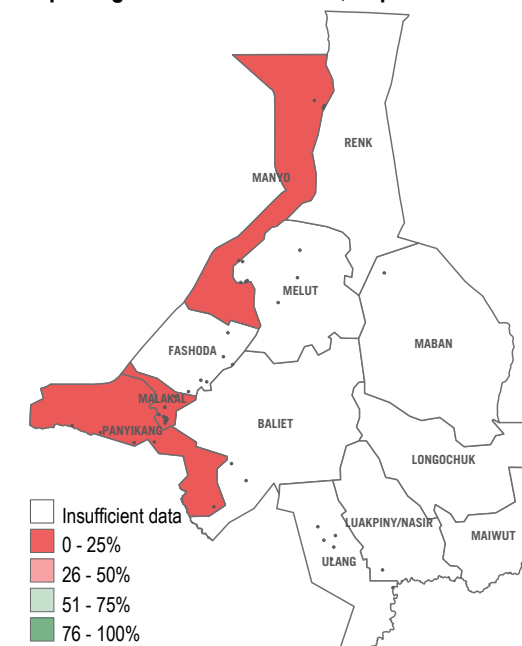
As outlined in past Situation Overviews, open defecation has been widespread in the western bank of the Nile for many months.¹⁵ While the end of the rainy season should help to mitigate some of the risks associated to the cholera outbreak that has been ongoing in South Sudan since July 2016, the continued practice of open defecation keeps the western bank of the Nile highly vulnerable to new cases.¹⁸ Displacement into the bushes in and around Aburoc following a resurgence of armed clashes could also make populations vulnerable to waterborne diseases in Fashoda, especially since the Aburoc site and its surroundings are located in an area prone to flooding. Active transmission of cholera was reported in Aburoc until last July.¹⁶

Access to safe drinking water was inadequate in the assessed settlements of Upper Nile in September, with only 17% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of a borehole in their area. No assessed settlements reported access to a borehole in the West Bank. In locations where boreholes were reportedly not present, most assessed settlements relied on donkey carts (43%) and water yard (40%), which suggests unreliable access to safe drinking water (Figure 4).

Figure 4: Top 3 reported sources of drinking water in the assessed settlements, September 2017



Map 6: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to boreholes, September 2017



Education

In September, only 16% of assessed settlements reported that education facilities were accessible in their area, most of which were located in Melut and Ulang. In counties of the western bank, no assessed settlements reported access, which can be attributable to the schools tending to close in the northern part of Upper Nile at this time of the year as many households are involved in the “simsim” harvest. In assessed settlements with access to education, a discrepancy was revealed between levels of attendance of boys and girls.

In assessed settlements with access to

14. Nile Hope. Situational Update on Greater Maiwut and Greater Longochuk. October 2017.

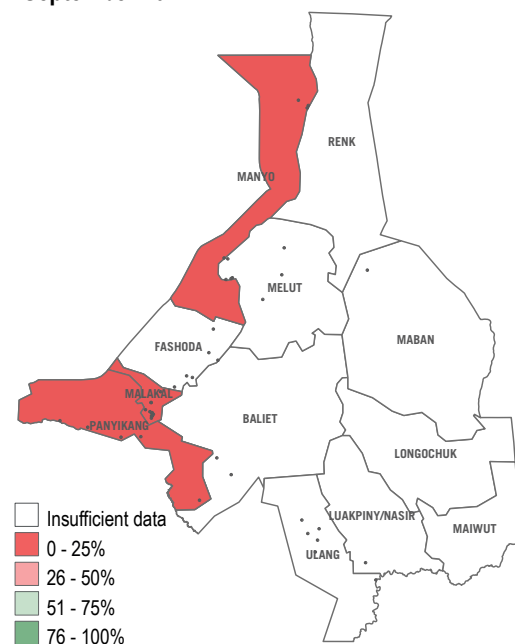
15. See REACH. Upper Nile Situation Overview. July-August 2017.

16. UN Agency Scales Up Cholera Response With 500,000 Doses of Oral Vaccine. 20 July 2017.

education, more than 50% of boys were reportedly attending school in September. The main reasons cited for lack of attendance of boys in settlements with access to education were hunger (29%) and insecurity (29%).

Among girls, reported attendance was comparatively much lower, with all assessed settlements reporting that less than 50% of girls were attending school. The most frequently cited reason why girls were not attending school in September was menstruation, reported by 29% of assessed settlements with access to education. This suggests that lower attendance among girls is largely caused by structural

Map 7: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to education facilities, September 2017



obstacles such as the lack of adapted and accessible WASH facilities. This obstacle was followed by fees, hunger, household chores, lack of school supplies and beliefs that girls are not supposed to attend school, each reason reported by 14% of assessed settlements with access to education.

Conclusion

The month of September was characterized by a resurgence of insecurity in the western bank of the Nile. Moreover, continued uncertainty regarding humanitarian access to the areas of southeastern Upper Nile where armed clashes took place in July further impeded access to basic services for the affected populations.

Displacement overview

Armed clashes took place in mid-September in the Aburoc displacement site, driving an unknown proportion of the IDP population into the bushes around the site. The magnitude of the displacement is still unknown. Meanwhile, the region of Gambella continued to receive South Sudanese asylum seekers crossing from Maiwut and Longochuk to escape the armed clashes.¹⁷ Due to low humanitarian access in the area, many crossed into Ethiopia because of the lack of key services in southeastern Upper Nile.

Priority needs and targeting of response

Access to food in Upper Nile remained low, and the western bank of the Nile displayed especially worrying signs, with little cultivation reported to be taking place. Low cultivation suggests

that crop reserves accumulated following the harvest will only sustain HHs for a short period. It also indicates that assessed settlements will be highly reliant on markets and therefore, vulnerable to any disruptions that could hinder market access and functionality.

Access to basic services such as education and health remains low in the assessed settlements due to limited humanitarian presence, insecurity and displacement of skilled education and health workers. While active transmission of cholera has not been reported in Upper Nile in September, continued displacement following armed clashes has multiplied potential drivers of waterborne diseases.

Declining access to food, basic services and humanitarian assistance suggests that vast areas of Upper Nile are facing multiple obstacles toward recovery.

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. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information, you can write to our in-country office: southsudan@reach-initiative.org or to our global office: geneva@reach-initiative.org.

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17. UNHCR. Bi-Monthly Ethiopia Situational Report. 16-30 September 2016.