

Situation Overview: Lakes State, South Sudan

October - December 2019

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

Years of insecurity and displacement have resulted in high humanitarian needs in Lakes State. With limited humanitarian access in the region, information gaps exist on the severity of these needs and the locations of vulnerable populations.

To inform humanitarian actors 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 with knowledge of a settlements and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This Situation Overview uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across Lakes State in the fourth quarter of 2019. In this quarter, REACH has extended its coverage into western Lakes to better inform humanitarian actors in the region.

Key Findings

- **Displacement** was commonly reported by assessed settlements in Lakes State. Ninety-percent (90%) of assessed settlements hosting IDPs reported that insecurity was the primary push factor in December.
- Insecurity and **protection** concerns were a driver of humanitarian needs in December. Across Lakes, only 38% of assessed settlements reported that most people were

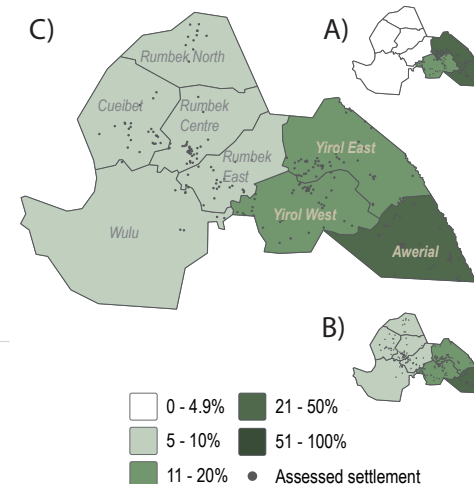
feeling safe most of the time. Counties in western Lakes¹ were more greatly affected by insecurity, with only 4% of assessed settlements in these counties reporting that they felt safe most of the time. This reflects the greater reported prevalence of conflict, looting and cattle raiding in the region.

- Inadequate **access to food** for a number of assessed settlements in Lakes State was driven by insecurity and climatic shocks. In December, climatic shocks² (35%) and conflict³ (16%) were reported as the primary drivers of food insecurity by assessed settlements.
- In December, **Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)** indicators suggested that a number of assessed settlements were vulnerable to adverse health conditions. Across Lakes, 20% of assessed settlements reported sourcing their water from unprotected sources and 22% reported access to latrines.
- Malaria was the highest reported **health** concern by 88% of assessed settlements. In western Lakes, 51% of assessed settlements reported that malaria had a large impact on their capacity to generate food and income, potentially due to more limited medical access in the region.
- **Education** was reported as accessible within walking distance by 62% of assessed

settlements in December. The primary barriers for attendance were work outside the settlement for boys, and school fees for girls.

- At least one **shelter** was reported as partially or fully destroyed because of fighting in 73% of assessed settlements in Rumbek North county and in 53% of assessed settlements in Rumbek East county, reflecting high levels of insecurity within western Lakes.

Map 1: Assessment coverage in Lakes State in October (A), November (B) and December (C) 2019



of key informant interviews conducted: **1085**
of assessed settlements: **761**
of counties covered: **8 (of 8)**
of focus group discussions conducted: **9**

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation hard-to-reach areas of Lakes State, REACH uses primary data from key informants who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or received regular information from a settlement or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK). Information for this report was collected from key informants in Rumbek Town and Mingkaman informal settlement site in Lakes State in October, November and December 2019.

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted throughout the month 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 reporting.

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of all settlements⁴ 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 payam⁵ coverage over the period. Quantitative findings were triangulated with FGDs and secondary sources. FGDs were collected throughout October, November and December by the REACH team in Rumbek Town and Mingkaman informal settlement site.

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

1. Occasionally, figures will be made that only refer to western Lakes or eastern Lakes due to alignments of responses in these regions. In these instances, counties from the opposing region will be filtered out from the calculation. Western Lakes encompasses Cueibet, Rumbek Centre, Rumbek North, Rumbek East, and Wulu Counties. Eastern Lakes encompasses Yiror East, Yiror West and Aweril Counties.

2. Climatic shocks are defined as the proportion of assessed settlements reporting floods, inadequate rain or a short growing season as the main reason for inadequate food access.

3. Conflict is defined as the proportion of assessed settlements reporting unsafe access to land or crops were destroyed by conflict as the main reason for inadequate food access.

4. 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.

5. A Payam is an administrative district at the sub-county level.



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Population Movement and Displacement

Insecurity was a common push factor throughout the state with 91% of assessed settlements with IDPs reporting it as the primary driver behind the displacement (see Figure 1). In December, a higher proportion of assessed settlements in western Lakes (59%) reported the presence of IDPs compared to eastern Lakes (6%).

Insecurity driven population movement in western Lakes

In western Lakes, this insecurity has resulted in a series of micro displacements, where assessed settlements with IDPs often reported that these populations came from another settlement in the same county. A REACH report from June 2019 suggests that these micro displacements result in shocks that increase the humanitarian needs of households over time by reducing capacity to plant and cultivate crops (a livelihood for 87% of assessed settlements in western Lakes) and engage in other important livelihood activities.⁶

As such, while these micro displacements are difficult to track and scale, it is likely that they are reducing the capacity of residents in affected settlements to engage in sustainable food and income generating activities. Furthermore, the continued insecurity in the area both causes displacement and results in dangerous travelling conditions. FGD participants highlighted the vulnerability of those displaced during their movement. This was reportedly due to the absence of men as they were either in the cattle camps or remained in the settlement

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements with reported presence of IDPs reporting that insecurity was the primary push factor.



to protect assets.⁷

Along with internal county displacement, displacement between counties was also noted in western Lakes. Assessed settlements in Rumbek Centre county reported the highest proportion of IDPs from another county, with 52% of the IDP population reportedly originating from Rumbek North county. FGD participants from Rumbek North reported considerable risks traveling from Maper to Rumbek town, with wild animals as well as local conflict between communities being some of the main reasons reported challenges. Further, children were reportedly separated from families during displacement, raising concerns of the risks households are taking to move to locations with perceived better security.⁸

Population movement in eastern Lakes

In eastern Lakes, patterns of displacement remained similar to previous quarters, with Mingkaman informal settlement site and its surrounding areas reporting the presence of IDPs. As in western Lakes, insecurity was the primary push factor reported by 86% of assessed settlements in December. In Yirol East and Yirol West counties, no assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs.

Situation in Assessed Settlements Protection

In December, 38% of assessed settlements in Lakes state reported that most people felt safe most of the time, though perceptions of safety varied across counties. In eastern Lakes, 61% of assessed settlements reported that most people felt safe most of the time, while only 4% reported the same in western Lakes (see Map 2). Insecurity in the region was driven by inter-communal violence (ICV), cattle raiding and domestic concerns as reported by assessed settlements.

Insecurity in western Lakes

In western Lakes, the low proportion of assessed settlements that reported most people feeling safe most of the time coincided with high reported rates of looting (50% of assessed settlements) and incidences of conflict that resulted in at least one casualty (46%) in December. Furthermore, ICV was the highest reported protection concern amongst men (80% of assessed settlements) and boys (70%). The reported prevalence of incidences of looting and fatal conflict could increase in the dry season due to competition for limited grazing land. This dynamic sometimes brings cattle camps closer together, resulting in easier access for cattle raiders.

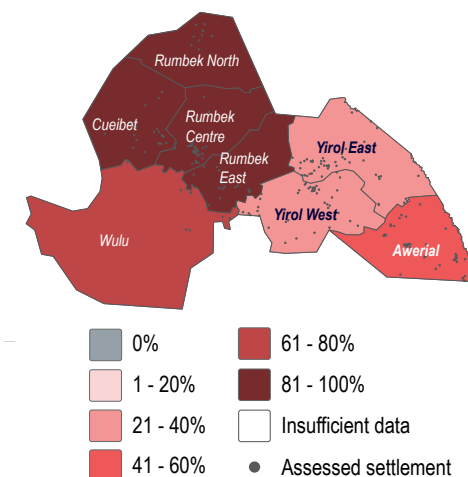
High reported prevalence of domestic and sexual assault also contributed to low perceptions of safety in assessed settlements in western Lakes (see Figure 2) in December.

Thirty-four percent (34%) of assessed settlements in western Lakes reported that sexual violence was a common concern for girls under the age of 18, and 28% reported the same for women. This raises concerns for the safety of women and girls when engaging with livelihoods and activities typically assigned to them in the household.

Insecurity in eastern Lakes

Perceptions of safety improved in eastern Lakes during the reporting period, with 61% of assessed settlements reporting feeling safe most of the time in December. This was a 21 percentage point increase from September, most likely related to fewer incidences of reported ICV and cattle raiding at the start of the 2019 dry season. However, FGD participants from Yirol West county and Yirol East county

Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements in Lakes reporting that most people feeling unsafe most of the time in December.



6. REACH, "Western Lakes Population Movement, Food Security and Livelihoods Profile", July 2019.

7. REACH, "Western Lakes Population Movement, Food Security and Livelihoods Profile", July 2019, REACH, Notes on the Population Movement FGD for Yirol West County, 18 June 2019; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek North County, 6 January 2020.

8. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek North County, 6 January 2020.

Figure 2: Main protection concerns for key demographics in western Lakes according to assessed settlements in December.

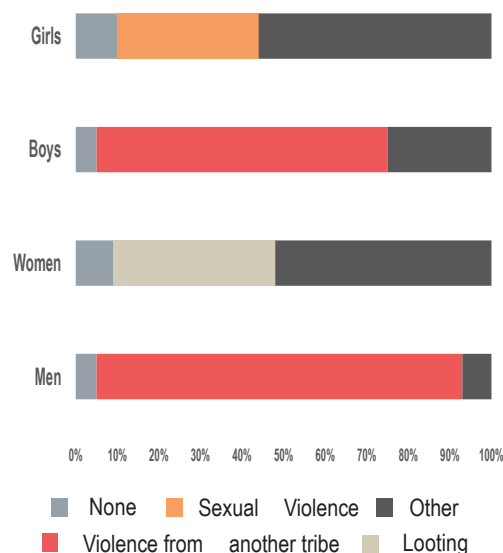
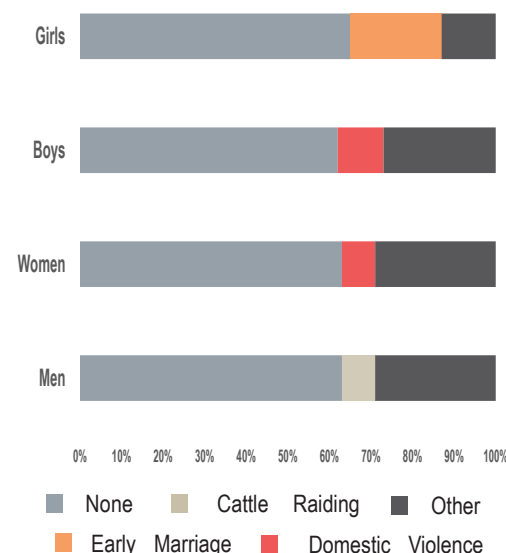


Figure 3: Main protection concerns for key demographics in eastern Lakes according to assessed settlements in December.



reported that insecurity was still a concern in the border areas between eastern Lakes and western Lakes, as well as the Yirol East county border with Unity State.⁹

In eastern Lakes, the majority of assessed settlements reported that there were no main protection concerns (see Figure 3). When protection concerns were raised, they were domestic in nature. In December, assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reported domestic violence as the primary protection concern for both boys (11%) and women (8%), while the primary protection concern for girls was reported as early marriage (22% of assessed settlements).

The disparity in perceptions of safety between

eastern and western Lakes could be attributed to different systems of governance. For example, in eastern lakes, there are reportedly more influential systems to better mitigate violence associated with cattle ownership.¹⁰

Across the region, and particularly in western Lakes, it has been reported that security is also impacting access to other services and is exacerbating humanitarian needs, as will be outlined by subsequent findings in this report.

Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL)

In December, 45% of assessed settlements in Lakes reported adequate access to food. The severity of reported food insecurity varied

between assessed settlements in eastern and western Lakes, and was dependent upon climatic and security shocks.

Livelihoods and food security vulnerabilities in Lakes

Eighty-nine percent (89%) of assessed settlements reported cultivating sustenance crops as a main livelihood and 80% of assessed settlements reported that cereal grains were regularly eaten in December. Furthermore, 75% of assessed settlements reported cattle rearing as the main livelihood activity. Of livestock, cattle holdings are particularly important for food, income and cultural reasons, and as such 79% of assessed settlements in December reported that most people owned cattle, with Wulu county the only exception (0% of assessed settlements reporting owning any cattle).

Across Lakes, markets are an important food source to either replace or supplement food resources as stocks become depleted between the dry and wet seasons, particularly in Rumbek Centre and Rumbek East counties which are reportedly more reliant upon markets. In these counties 48% and 53% of assessed settlements respectively reported buying all their cereals from a market in December, reflecting the access to large markets in Aduel and Rumbek Town.¹¹ In Rumbek Centre and Rumbek East counties, where markets are an important source of food, safety was identified as a barrier for 34% and 71% of assessed settlements respectively in December. In Lakes, dependence on cereal production, livestock and markets for food and income has reportedly made some assessed settlements vulnerable to a number of shocks,

such as insecurity, climate and crop pests.

Food access in Western Lakes

Only 15% of assessed settlements in western Lakes reported adequate access to food in December, reflecting the influence of insecurity and climatic shocks upon food access. Forty-percent (40%) of assessed settlements reported either conflict destroying crops or unsafe access to land as the main reason for inadequate access to food. FGD participants from counties in western Lakes supported AoK data on the negative influence of insecurity upon adequate food access in Lakes (see Figure 4). Participants reported that insecurity limited safe access to cultivation sites, reduced livestock holdings, and limited access to bush areas to collect wild foods and wood for charcoal making.¹² Despite the dangers associated with these livelihoods, a high proportion of assessed settlements in western lakes still reported foraging for wild foods (52%) and collecting firewood (55%) as livelihood coping strategies. It is of concern that risky coping strategies remain to be adopted by assessed settlements to mitigate food gaps.

Climatic shocks were also reported as limiting food access. In Rumbek North county, where flood waters destroying crops was reported as the main reason for inadequate food access in 73% of assessed settlements respectively in December. FGD participants from Rumbek North reported that flood waters had destroyed almost all sorghum crops, and residents were consuming a high proportion of wild foods.¹³ This was supported by AoK data, as 82% of assessed settlements in Rumbek North county

9. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol West County, 22 January 2020; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol East County, 29 November 2019.

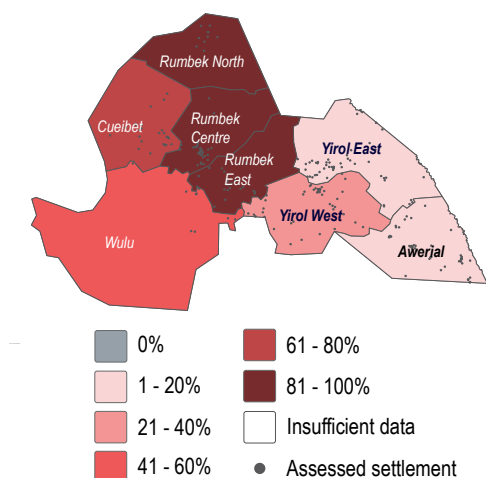
10. John Ryle & Machot Amuom, 'Peace is the Name of our Cattle Camp', 2018.

11. FEWSNET 'Livelihoods Zones Map and Descriptions for the Republic of South Sudan', August 2018.

12. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek North County, 6 January 2020; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek East County, 14 January 2020; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek Centre County, 3 December 2019, REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Cuiet County, 3 December 2019, REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Wulu County, 8 January 2020.

13. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek North County, 6 January 2020.

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements in Lakes reporting most people feeling unsafe most of the time AND inadequate access to food in December.



reported eating wild foods, with 44% of these settlements reporting that more than half of their meals consisted of wild foods.

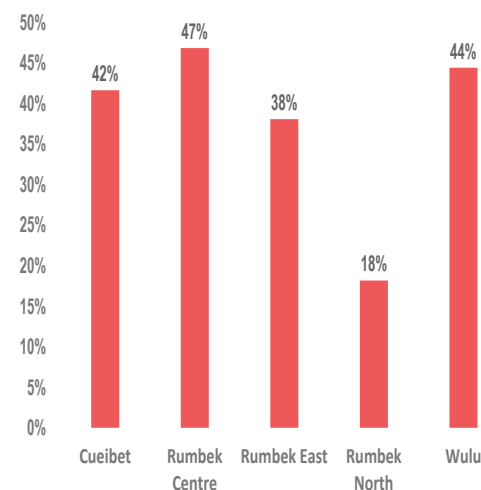
In western Lakes, extreme coping strategies to mitigate consumption gaps were commonly reported, particularly in Rumbek North county. Throughout western Lakes, 24% of assessed settlements reporting going entire days without food and in Rumbek North county 82% of assessed settlements reporting that only children ate on certain days in December. It is of concern that these assessed settlements reported the adoption of such extreme coping strategies as this could make them more vulnerable to poor nutrition outcomes and limited productivity of adult household members. As such, inadequate access to food can result in greater humanitarian needs across

other sectors as residents lose capacity to complete necessary daily tasks such as water collection, attending school and accessing medical services.

Food access in eastern Lakes

Alternatively, 66% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reported adequate food access in December, unchanged from the previous reporting period (63%). The higher proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food compared to western Lakes is likely due to a sufficient harvest, aided by fewer protection concerns, with 59% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes in December reporting that this year's harvest was equivalent to or better than the previous harvest, compared to 26% in western Lakes.

Figure 4: Proportion of assessed settlements in western Lakes reporting that conflict was the primary cause of inadequate food access in December.



harvest or inadequate food access in eastern Lakes, flooding and crop pests were the primary causes. Assessed settlements in Awerjal county reported the highest proportion of harvest disruption, with 22% of assessed settlements in December reporting that this year's harvest was worse than the previous year, and 82% of these settlements reported that this was due to flooding. Crops being destroyed by pests was the highest reported reason for inadequate food access in December for 24% of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food, a marginal increase from the 13% reported in September. Crop pests were of particular concern in Yirol east and Yirol west counties reported by 27% and 50% of assessed settlements respectively in December. As such, though 26% of assessed settlements in Yirol East county and 32% of assessed settlements in Yirol West county reported in December that this season's harvest was better than the last, crop pests still impacted harvest yields for some assessed settlements, having a potential negative effect on stock levels later in the dry season.

When there was inadequate food access in the region, a variety of food coping strategies were enacted, though they were often less extreme than those reported in western Lakes. Similar to September, limiting meal size (64% of assessed settlements), eating less expensive foods (47%) and reducing the number of meals a day (46%) were commonly reported coping strategies in eastern Lakes in December.

Humanitarian Food Assistance (HFA) mitigating food gaps in Lakes

While humanitarian assistance was not commonly reported as a source of food (1% of assessed settlements), 34% of assessed settlements across Lakes reported that they received HFA in the last month. Assessed settlements in Awerjal county and Cueibet county reported the highest coverage of HFA, with 68% and 44% reporting access to HFA respectively in December. As such, the relatively high proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to HFA suggests that at least some residents have been able to reduce food consumption gaps through humanitarian assistance.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Water and Access to Water Sources

WASH indicators in December suggested vulnerability to poor health outcomes for a number of assessed settlements in Lakes. Across the state, 77% of assessed settlements reported boreholes as the main source of water for residents, while 20% reported an unimproved water sources¹⁵ as their main water source in December 2019. While only 4% of assessed settlements in Lakes reported waterborne diseases as the primary health concern, FGD participants from Wulu, Rumbek East and Rumbek Centre counties reported noticing symptoms of diarrhea after using unimproved water sources.¹⁶

Although there was a dependence on unimproved water sources, distance was not a limiting factor to accessing water, with 62% of assessed settlements reporting that it

¹⁵ According to the GWC, 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. All all other water sources are considered unimproved.

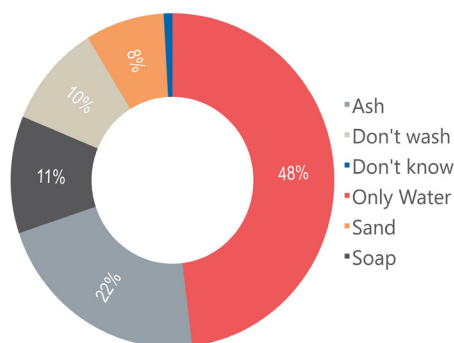
¹⁶ REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Wulu County, 8 January 2020; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek East County, 14 January 2020; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek Centre County, 3 December 2019.

took less than an hour for a return trip to their preferred water source. Assessed settlements in Cueibet county reported the longest time for a return trip, with 50% of these settlements reporting that it could take up to half a day. As insecurity in the area has been highlighted as a considerable concern in previous sections, this may put residents' at risk of protection concerns and limit access to preferred water sources. Furthermore, the long travel time may decrease time for other daily tasks such as food preparation.

Latrine access and use

Access to and use of latrines remained low in the majority of counties, with only 22% of assessed settlements within Lakes reporting access to latrines in December. Across Lakes, the most common reason latrines were not used was that there were none available, as reported by 91% of assessed settlements. In December, Rumbek Centre county reported the highest latrine access, with 50% of assessed

Figure 5: Most common methods for washing hands as reported by assessed settlements in Lakes State in December.



settlements reporting the availability of latrines. However, 63% of these settlements in Rumbek Centre county reported that they were used by less than half of residents.

Sanitation

Washing hands with soap was only reported by 11% of assessed settlements in Lakes (see Figure 5), with only 2% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reporting usage of soap in December, a similar figure to the 7% reported in September. As such, WASH indicators suggest that assessed settlements across Lakes state are susceptible to adverse health conditions.

Health

Access to Health Services

In Lakes, the most common medical center available to residents in December were Primary Health Care (PHC) centres for 34% of assessed settlements. However, access to healthcare varied across the state. In Western Lakes, 35% of assessed settlements reported that they had no access to a medical center within walking distance, while this was not reported by assessed settlements in eastern Lakes in December. FGD participants in western Lakes reported that medical facilities existed in county capitals, however there were minimal services outside of these areas.¹⁷ As such, residents in more remote settlements would likely have limited access to medical facilities due to travel time and insecurity in the area.

Primary health concerns

In December, health concerns were consistent across the state, with 88% of assessed

settlements reporting malaria as the primary health concern. Fifty-one (51%) of assessed settlements in western Lakes reported that malaria had a large impact on resident's capacity to access food in December, compared to 9% in eastern Lakes, potentially related to the lower reported access to healthcare within western Lakes.

The impacts of malarial disease upon food security are varied. Malaria prevalence can decrease household productivity through limiting capacity of adults, time spent visiting medical facilities, and the burden of caring for a sick child. Last, it can affect nutritional outcomes through reducing appetite for those who have contracted the illness.¹⁸

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

In Lakes, 90% of assessed settlements reported tukuls as the main shelter type, with grass (99% of assessed settlements), mud (95%) and rope (55%) reported as the most commonly accessible shelter building materials in December.

Shelter conditions in western Lakes

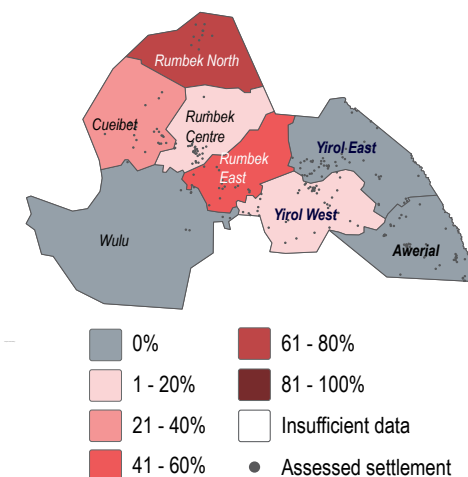
A high proportion of assessed settlements in Rumbek East county (52% of assessed settlements in December) and Rumbek North county (73%) reported that at least one shelter had either been partially or fully destroyed by conflict, suggesting that shelter construction and materials were a high humanitarian need in these settlements (see Map 4). In Rumbek North county, the high proportion of assessed

settlements reporting shelter damage may be the result of wide scale conflict that has been reported in the early dry season.¹⁹ Households impacted by shelter damage may be prone to further protection concerns as the household may be forced to relocate or stay in a compromised shelter.

Shelter conditions for IDPs

Of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs in December, 40% were living in Rakoobas, 31% were living in Tukuls and 9% in improvised shelters in December. Fifty-five (55%) of assessed settlements in Awerjal county reported that IDPs were housed in improvised shelters, reflecting the status of Mingkaman and surrounding areas as informal settlement sites. In the state in December, 87% of assessed settlements reported that

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements in Lakes reporting that any shelters were fully or partially destroyed in December



17. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Wulu County, 8 January 2020; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek North County, 6 January 2020; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek Centre County, 3 December 2019; REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek East County, 14 January 2020.

18. CDC, 'Malaria's Impact Worldwide', 4 January 2019.

19. Rumbek Center ICWG Meeting Minutes, 18 December 2019.

IDPs were integrated into the host community, or were hosted by relatives, which is common across the state.

NFI Needs for IDP communities

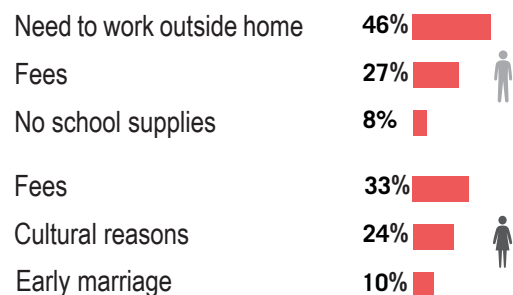
In December, assessed settlements in Lakes reported that plastic sheets (27% of assessed settlements) and cooking pots (18%) were the most commonly needed NFIs for IDPs. In Rumbek Centre county, 43% of assessed settlements reported cooking pots as the most needed NFI for IDP populations. This suggests that food preparation may have been impacted by a lack of NFIs for these populations in December.

Education

Access to Education

In Lakes in December, 62% of assessed settlements reported that they had access to education facilities within walking distance, with reported access similar across all counties. For the 38% of assessed settlements without reported access to education, the lack of

Figure 6: Primary reported reasons in Lakes for lack of school attendance for girls and boys in assessed settlements in December



educational facilities was the most commonly reported reason for 93% of these settlements. However, in Rumbek Centre county, two assessed settlements reported that educational facilities were unavailable as they had been destroyed by conflict, indicative of conflict in the region limiting access to education services. Rates of attendance for boys and girls were reportedly similar across the state, with 56% of assessed settlements reporting that half or more boys attended school, and 42% of assessed settlements reporting that the same proportion of girls were attending in December.

Barriers to Education

While rates of attendance were similar, reasons for low attendance varied by gender. In December, of assessed settlements that reported half or less of the population of boys attended school, 46% of these settlements reported that boys did not attend as they were required to work outside of the home (see Figure 6). This was supported by FGD participants in numerous counties who reported that boys were working in the cattle camps,²⁰ suggesting that food security needs were considered more immediate than education. Furthermore, these needs likely compounded protection concerns as cattle camps are typically areas of conflict in the dry season, with 31% of assessed settlements reporting that violence from another tribe was the highest protection concern for boys in the state in December.

In assessed settlements that reported half or less of the population of girls attended school in December, 33% reported that this was due to high fees, and 23% reported that cultural

traditions were prohibitive. As such, these figures suggest that girls attending school are limited by resources and traditional value systems that prioritise education for boys over girls.

Conclusion

Humanitarian needs in Lakes in December were driven by considerable protection concerns, with reported insecurity and climatic shocks resulting in poorer food security outcomes than would otherwise have been expected in the middle of the harvest season. Furthermore, needs were reported in other areas, with inadequate food access resulting in lower education access for boys, and insecurity limiting all livelihood activities outside of the settlement.

About REACH Initiative

REACH Initiative facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and all activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. REACH is a joint initiative of IMPACT Initiatives, ACTED and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research - Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNITAR-UNOSAT).

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