



SOUTH SUDAN INTENTIONS STUDY: COUNTRY REPORT

SOUTH SUDAN

SUMMARY REPORT OF KEY FINDINGS

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About REACH

REACH is a joint initiative of two international non-governmental organizations - ACTED and IMPACT Initiatives - and the UN Operational Satellite Applications Programme (UNOSAT). REACH's mission is to strengthen evidence-based decision making by aid actors through efficient data collection, management and analysis before, during and after an emergency. By doing so, REACH contributes to ensuring that communities affected by emergencies receive the support they need. All REACH activities are conducted in support to and within the framework of inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms. For more information please visit our website: www.reach-initiative.org. You can contact us directly at: geneva@reach-initiative.org and follow us on Twitter @REACH_info.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Nearly three years after the outbreak of conflict in December 2013, an estimated **1.69 million people are internally displaced across South Sudan**, of which **over 200,000 are sheltering in Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites** on United Nations bases across the country. Most people in the PoCs have been displaced for over a year and half, and are completely dependent upon humanitarian assistance for service access. Continued humanitarian assistance for civilians living in PoC cannot be guaranteed in the longer term. However, with relatively few recorded returns to date, very little information exists on the main factors driving IDP displacement, as well as the conditions that would allow people to return. To help inform an eventual returns process, REACH partnered with the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster to conduct a nationwide assessment of the intentions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in displacement sites.

The assessment consisted of primary data collected in eight sites, including all the PoCs and Mingkaman spontaneous settlement. In total, 5,290 interviews were conducted between 27 August and 14 December 2015. Households were selected at random to provide a representative sample at the site level for each site. All the humanitarian clusters, in addition to UNMISS Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme (RRP), were consulted on the design of the survey tool and to provide input to shape the preliminary analysis. The findings of the assessment are intended to help inform the humanitarian community on the possibility of returns and the necessary conditions for people to willingly return to their homes. Findings are applicable to IDPs displaced between August and December 2015.

The below provides a brief summary of the key findings of the assessment; profile of those displaced, factors which influence willingness to return, and the necessary conditions for a successful returns process for IDPs.

Profile of those displaced:

- **Demographic composition:** In the assessed sites the IDP population is made up of a high proportion of youth and females. This has resulted in a reversal of typical gender roles in displaced sites, with a large proportion of female headed households.
- **Timeframe of displacement:** The majority (52%) of these households reported that they had been displaced for 6 months or over, although the length of displacement was found to vary considerably by site. This is likely to differ because of factors such as security and access to services in areas surrounding the displacement sites. Similarly, the proportion of households reporting multiple displacements varied considerably between IDP sites; multiple displacement was particularly common for households in Juba PoC3 (reported by 28%), Malakal (18%) and Mingkaman (17%), and only reported by smaller proportions of IDPs in other sites. Such differences demonstrate that displacement trends are likely to shift depending on the security and available resources of a local area.
- **Reasons for displacement:** An overwhelming majority (94%) of people reported leaving their homeland and choosing their current location because of a lack of security. Food and access to services (WASH, health etc) were secondary reasons, suggesting that although security is the main reason to flee, access to services influences where IDPs then chose to travel to.
- **Reasons for staying in their current location:** 83% of IDPs reported that security was the primary reason for them staying in their present location.

The predominance of security as the reason to leave a pre-displacement location, choose a new location and remain there emphasizes that without a cessation of fighting populations in South Sudan will remain displaced. Therefore without the pre-condition of security in their pre-displacement location it would be premature to expect large-scale returns of displaced populations.

Necessary conditions for a dignified return:

- **Security and justice:** Nearly all respondents reported that should peace come, they would leave and return home. However peace was not just conceived as the absence of fighting, most IDPs reported that some kind of monetary or in-kind compensation would be expected for lost assets and the deaths of loved ones. Over half of respondents reported that monetary compensation or in kind compensation would be necessary to return home, with only 20% reporting that an official ceremony would be enough. Large-scale returns should not be started without ensuring the necessary procedures to equitably transfer resources and ensure a perception of justice and reconciliation amongst the returning IDPs and host communities.
- **Awareness of political peace agreements:** Given the overwhelming condition for return is security, awareness of national peace agreements is an important proxy for the likelihood of returns should violence cease. Nearly three quarters (72%) of IDPs were aware of the peace agreement, 63% were aware of the Transitional Government of National Unity (TGoNU), and 59% were aware of the government's intended creation of 28 states. Respondents across all sites and ethnicities reported that the peace agreement and formation of the TGoNU made them want to leave for their preferred return locations, while only dinka respondents answered favourably to the creation of 28 states.
- **Access to services:** Most IDPs reported that, should peace come, they would expect NGOs to continue to support them in their preferred return locations outside of the PoCs. Currently, access to services, such as access to food, WASH, healthcare, and education, is perceived as poor across the country, though particularly bad in the Greater Upper Nile Region, where most IDPs originate from. Perceived lack of access to services, with an expectation of NGOs to fill this gap necessitates an up-scaling of humanitarian service delivery in areas of returning IDPs, with clear communication and expectation management of the extent and longevity of service delivery outside of PoC sites.
- **Access to livelihoods:** IDPs have high expectations of their ability to resume pre-crisis livelihoods upon their return home, often within a matter of months if not immediately. For example, a large proportion of IDPs reported that they would expect to return to their government jobs, which emphasizes the importance of ensuring a thought-through post-conflict political order with sufficient means to employ or engage with newly returned IDPs hopeful of the resumption of livelihoods.
- **Access to assets:** In conflict affected areas, such as the Greater Upper Nile region, over 50% of IDPs reported that cattle and fishing assets had been stolen, a trend observed in other REACH assessments.¹ Without provision of the necessary assets from either family, relatives or NGOs, it will be difficult for families to return to pre-displacement livelihoods. Of particular concern is the prevalence of stolen cattle, a cornerstone of South Sudan's political and social economy; a lack of cattle may incentivize communities to acquire more through cattle raids potentially instigating further violence.
- **Access to land:** Nearly all IDPs reported owning land (91%), with 85% owning a house within this land. However 54% IDPs reported having no documentation, which is likely to lead to land disputes in a context where much land in the Greater Upper Nile has changed hands several times.² Land disputes are likely to become contentious unless there is a systematised system for either the recovery or distribution of land.

Facilitation of returns:

- **Where do people intend to return?** The large majority of IDPs assessed intend to return to their ancestral homes (90%). For 95% of these IDPs, their ancestral home is the same as their pre-crisis home. However, 12% of assessed IDPs wish to go somewhere else, mainly to a location outside of the country. Given the long distances most IDPs have travelled from their pre-crisis to current location, on average 100km, the humanitarian community should decide, prior to the beginning of a large-scale returns process, to what extent transportation for returning IDPs is feasible and communicate clearly the extent of transportation services available.

¹ REACH (2015) [South Sudan Displacement Trends Analysis](#), April 2015.

² HSBA, The Conflict in Unity State, March 2016.

- ***How do IDPs get information on the conditions for return?*** IDPs will be unable to make an informed decision on returning to their pre-displacement location without sufficient information. Therefore it is of concern that 60% of IDPs reported that it was difficult or impossible to get information from their preferred return location. Despite these difficulties, three quarters of IDP households in assessed sites (77%) reported having received some information about their preferred return location in the past year. Most people received information either in person (42%) or via another person who went there and came back (41%). To improve the frequency and accuracy of the information IDPs receive about their area of origin, humanitarian agencies should seek to set up communication mechanisms to enable IDPs to keep in touch with relatives and friends remaining in their pre-displacement location.
- ***Who makes the decision?*** 73% of IDPs said that the decision to leave was a personal one, and no one else would have significant influence or bearing on their decision to leave their current location should peace come. A higher percentage of women (29%) reported being influenced by others than men (21%). Of those who were influenced, a clear majority (51%) reported family, followed by UN/NGOs (21%) and other community members (10%). Who influenced the decision varied considerably by displacement sites; family was reported to have a particularly important influence on decision-making in Bentiu, while NGOs and UN agencies appeared to be much more influential according to IDPs in Wau. To effectively disseminate information regarding the situation in pre-displacement locations, actors should seek to communicate through the most effective channels, family and NGOs and UN agencies.

Overall, this report highlights the challenges inherent within any returns process. For large-scale dignified return of IDPs the humanitarian community should engage in a coordinated and planned effort which includes a scale out of service provision to returned IDP locations; active information campaigns on the extent of support available and conditions in pre-crisis displacement locations; and engagement with local political actors to ensure a process of reconciliation and equitable distribution of available resources in intended return locations.

List of Acronyms

UNMISS	United Nations Mission in South Sudan
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
TGoNU	Transitional Government of National Unity
FDG	Focus Group Discussion
IDP	Internally Displaced Persons
KII	Key Informant Interview
ODK	Open Data Kit
NGO	Non-Governmental Agency

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INTRODUCTION

Since the outbreak of conflict in December 2013, an estimated 1.69 million people have been internally displaced in South Sudan³. Of these, approximately 193,800 are sheltering in Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites in United Nations bases across the country.⁴ The large majority of internally displaced persons in PoC sites have been displaced for over a year and are dependent on humanitarian assistance to meet their needs.

Following nearly two years of ongoing conflict and instability, August 2015 saw the signing of the *Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan*, by the South Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Air Force (SPLM/A-IO) and the President Salva Kiir. The possibility of an end to the conflict, although not an immediate prospect, raises important questions about the fate of the estimated 1.69 million people who remain internally displaced, and the possibility of large-scale returns. With relatively few returns recorded to date, little comprehensive information exists to understand the push and pull factors, barriers, and conditions that affect people's intentions to return home or move elsewhere. However given certain areas remain stable, and are anticipated to remain so, supporting returning displaced populations and finding durable solutions to the problems causing and caused by displacement continues to be an ongoing discussion. To support this process, more detailed information is required to help humanitarian actors plan for the longer term and support the development of durable solutions.

In partnership with the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, REACH conducted a nationwide assessment of the intentions of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in displacement sites. Primary data was collected from a total of 5,290 households, between 27 August and 14 December 2015, in order to better understand the intentions of IDPs and to provide an evidence-base to facilitate planning by humanitarian actors. Specifically, the study sought to provide more comprehensive and granular information about the profile of those intending to return; why they fled their homes and choose to stay in their current location; which factors affect their decision to move; and to where they would prefer to return. Findings in this report aim to **explain intentions of the displaced population displacement following fighting resuming in December 2013**.

Following a more detailed description of the context and methodology employed for the study, this report is split into five sections. Beginning with an overview of the profile of displaced households and the reasons for coming to their current location, the first section examines the barriers and pull factors that inhibit movement elsewhere. This is followed by a discussion of factors affecting intentions to return, including access to information about the return location and perceptions of access to basic services. A fourth section examines influences on decision-making; while the final section identifies reported locations of intended return, potential caseloads, and related trends.

CONTEXT

The current conflict in South Sudan began only two years after independence, when disputes within the government in Juba sparked violence that quickly spread across much of the country. The ensuing conflict caused mass displacement, with around one in ten of the 1.6 million IDPs residing in PoC sites at the time of writing. The majority of these IDPs fled as a direct result of the conflict, reporting that their homes or assets had been destroyed as a result of the violence.⁵ With little time to prepare for their displacement due to the rapid spread of conflict, households fled quickly by foot, taking little with them. With limited access to food, water and protection, they fled to formal displacement sites in search of humanitarian assistance and protection. In an assessment of ten major displacement sites in 2014-15, the majority of IDPs reported the provision of assistance as their primary reason for choosing their current location.⁶

³ OCHA (2016) [South Sudan Humanitarian Bulletin](#), 10 February 2016.

⁴ OCHA (2015) [South Sudan Humanitarian Dashboard](#), 31 December 2015.

⁵ REACH (2015) [South Sudan Displacement Trends Analysis](#), April 2015.

⁶ REACH (2015) [South Sudan Displacement Trends Analysis](#), April 2015

Figure 1 Map of location of assessed IDP sites



In addition to ongoing conflict between the South Sudanese Army (SPLA) and opposing SPLA-IO, the situation has been complicated by the emergence of other armed groups, as well as violent cattle raiding, which has caused further displacement. An analysis of displacement trends conducted in 2014/15 found that lasting peace, or an end of the war, is a key factor for many IDPs in their decision to leave their current location, with significant proportions reporting that they would not return home or move elsewhere, even if the site became insecure, or if aid was stopped.

Following months of discussions brokered by the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), the peace agreement signed by both parties to the conflict in August 2015 marked an important step forward. However, the agreement was not welcomed unanimously, in particular attracting criticism from military leaders on both sides.⁷ Despite these criticisms, the possibility of an end to the conflict raises important questions about the fate of the estimated 1.69 million people who are internally displaced, and the possibility of large-scale returns.⁸ With relatively few returns recorded to date, little comprehensive information exists to understand the push and pull factors, barriers, and conditions that affect intentions to return home or move elsewhere. Given the ongoing pressure to move displaced households from informal sites in Mingkaman, continued discussions of re-locating IDPs residing in UN bases, and the need for sustainable long term funding for the humanitarian response as a whole, more detailed information is required to help humanitarian actors plan for the longer term and support the development of durable solutions.

⁷ IPA Global Observatory (2015) [Can South Sudan's Fragile Peace Deal Endure?](#) September 2015; Al Jazeera (2015) [South Sudan president signs peace deal with rebels](#), 27 August 2015

⁸ Estimates of IDPs come from the IOM Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM) which has not been updated since December 2015.

METHODOLOGY

With the objective of informing planning by humanitarian actors in South Sudan related to assistance, return, and durable solutions, the study sought to provide comprehensive information about the intentions of internally displaced persons in formal sites across the country. In particular, the study sought to answer the following questions:

- What are the *push and pull factors that influence intentions to return*, including conditions in the intended return location, access to land, property, and assistance?
- What are the *conditions required to enable or facilitate* return, and how do people access information about current conditions?
- *Who are the most likely to return* and what are their demographic characteristics?
- *Where might people return* and what are the potential caseloads in these locations?

Sampling strategy

Taking a quantitative approach, the study was based on primary data collected from a statistically representative random sample of households in nine displacement sites across South Sudan. The table below shows the sample size, confidence and margin of error for each of the sites assessed. All sites were sampled so as to be representative at the first administrative level below the site (either a sector, block, or zone). Exceptions to this were Wau PoC and Melut PoC, which were small enough for every household to be assessed, and Bentiu PoC, where security issues forced the assessment to end before each sector could be fully assessed. Findings can be compared between the sites with a minimum confidence of 95% and margin of error of 2%.

Note: Findings are **not generalizable to displaced populations living outside of formal displacement sites**, and should be considered indicative for these populations.

Table 1: Assessed sample size, confidence level and margin of error, by site

Site name	Sample size	Confidence	Margin of error	Data collection
Juba PoC 1 (UN House)	506	95%	4%	27 Aug – 7 Sept 2015
Juba PoC 3 (UN House)	833	95%	3%	27 Aug – 4 Sept 2015
Mingkaman Spontaneous Site	461	95%	4%	9-16 Sept 2015
Bor PoC	284	95%	5%	30 Oct – 5 Nov 2015
Wau PoC	89	<i>Household census</i>		16-18 Nov 2015
Melut PoC	88	<i>Household census</i>		22-23 Nov 2015
Malakal PoC	1,700	95%	2%	1-14 Dec 2015
Bentiu PoC	1,329	95%	3%	3-7 Dec 2015
TOTAL POC IDP	5290	98%	2%	27th Aug – 7th Dec 2015

Findings presented at **country level** have been weighted to account for the different site populations, and can be generalised across the displaced population in all nine sites with a confidence of 98% and a margin of error of 2%.

Data collection

Data was collected over a period of four months, using a survey form designed in collaboration with the CCCM and Protection clusters, with significant input from UN Recovery and Rehabilitation Programme (RRP), UNHCR and UN OCHA. Following a pilot in UN House PoC 1 and PoC 3 (Juba), in August and September 2015, the tool was modified based on field testing and discussions with partners. This included improvements to some questions, and the addition of several questions to account for changes to the political situation. At each site, a team of data collectors was recruited and trained on the use of the survey form and the random selection of households.

Throughout the process, data collection was supervised by field coordinators, who ensured that the methodology was being followed correctly, checked forms, and provided advice when needed. Data collection was conducted using a smartphone-based survey form, which included constraints to limit error by the data collection team and allowed data to be uploaded quickly to a central server. Throughout the data collection period, data checks were conducted on a regular basis by trained staff to ensure the quality of data collected, while daily briefings and debriefings ensured that data collection staff could provide feedback on any difficulties they faced and seek clarification.

Limitations

Due to the methodology and timeframe selected, and the influence of several external factors and limitations should be taken into account while interpreting the data in this report. These include the following:

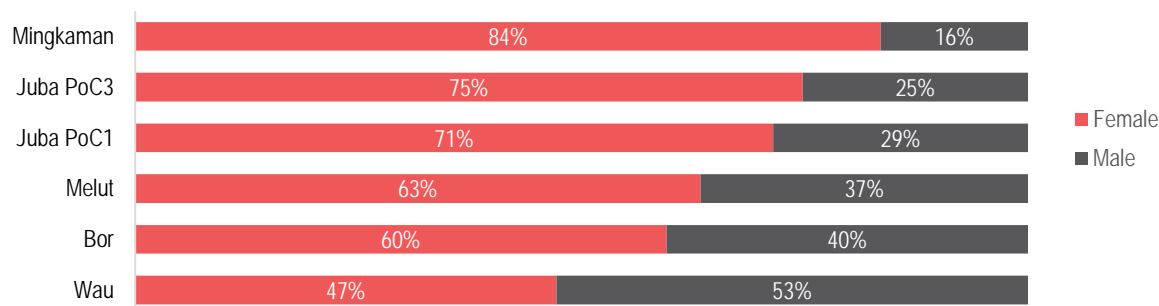
- Given the large sample size and a wide geographic area covered, data collection was conducted over several months. Since the completion of data collection in some sites, political developments, conflict events and new displacement has occurred, which are obviously not accounted for in the data presented here.
- During the data collection period, several changes were made to the questionnaire, which mean that not all indicators can be compared across all displacement sites. Throughout this report, only identical indicators are compared, resulting in comparison between IDPs from a smaller number of sites in some cases.
- Due to security concerns which caused data collection to be suspended before completion, Bentiu PoC could only be sampled at the site level, rather than sector or block like other locations. This resulted in a lower confidence and margin of error than for other sites, which should be taken into account when making comparisons. However, the impact of this on the overall confidence level and margin of error for national level results is limited.
- In several sites, it was difficult to find suitably qualified staff to conduct the assessment, particularly female enumerators. As a result, more male than female data collection staff were hired to conduct the assessment. To mitigate bias, all enumerators were fully trained on how to administer the questionnaire and to ensure a random sample of households was interviewed in accordance with the methodology
- Finally, data collection efforts were focussed on established sites, primarily PoCs, rather than all displacement sites. While findings can be generalised to all those residing in the assessed sites, data can only be indicative of the experience, needs and intentions of displaced households residing elsewhere.

KEY FINDINGS

PROFILE OF DISPLACED HOUSEHOLDS

Demographic composition

Displaced people in the assessed sites make up a population that is predominantly young, with a high proportion of females. As a result of the larger proportion of females than males, traditional gender roles in formal IDP sites have been reversed in many cases, leaving a large proportion of female headed households living in displacement sites. Overall, 75% of households in assessed sites were headed by females, with female-headed households making up to 84% of those in Mingkaman, as shown in the figure below.

Figure 2: Sex of heads of household in assessed displacement sites⁹

Socioeconomic background

Prior to the crisis, the largest proportion of IDPs at assessed sites (34%) worked in agriculture. A study conducted by the World Food Programme immediately prior to the conflict reports that over two thirds of South Sudan was dependent on household agricultural production for survival, supplemented by fishing and trading when possible.¹⁰ While this figure is much higher than that reported by all assessed IDPs, it is likely because most IDPs practiced a variety of livelihoods activities, and because subsistence farming is practiced by the vast majority of people in South Sudan, it is not considered as a primary livelihood. In addition, much of the assessed population in Malakal and Juba PoCs, who account for the majority of the weighted sample, were from urban backgrounds, which may have skewed the data towards those with less traditionally rural livelihoods. More rural livelihoods can be seen in the Mingkaman data. Even before the crisis, the food security in much of South Sudan's Greater Upper Nile Region was precarious, and many people supplemented household agricultural production with food bought and traded for at the market.¹¹

Salaried and skilled jobs were more commonly reported in urban areas like Juba, Bor, Malakal and Wau, while Mingkaman and Bentiu, with more rural populations, reported a higher instance of herding and farming. IDPs in Bentiu reported a very high number of chiefs and former government officials, likely because at the time of data collection, the PoC served as a home for as much as one fifth of Unity State's pre-crisis population.¹²

Table 2 Primary livelihood of heads of household, by site (%)

	Bentiu	Malakal	Melut	Wau	Bor	Mingkaman	Juba POC1	Juba PoC3	Total
Agriculture	35%	13%	22%	22%	13%	66%	3%	13%	34%
Government	24%	13%	11%	11%	21%	0%	0%	0%	14%
Livestock	12%	5%	12%	12%	1%	16%	2%	7%	11%
Trade/Business	11%	26%	13%	13%	21%	5%	22%	22%	14%
Student	5%	6%	0%	0%	5%	1%	4%	5%	4%
Unemployed	5%	13%	10%	10%	12%	1%	10%	9%	6%
Salaried/Skilled	5%	18%	26%	26%	24%	6%	46%	39%	12%
Other	2%	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	11%	4%	2%
Fishing	1%	3%	3%	3%	0%	3%	0%	0%	2%
Services	1%	2%	0%	0%	2%	2%	1%	1%	1%

DISPLACEMENT HISTORY

The outbreak of violence in South Sudan in December 2013 caused large scale displacement in a matter of weeks. Displacement trends were complex and chaotic as people across the country fled conflict in their communities, or left in the anticipation of fighting. Since the initial waves of displacement in December 2013 and January 2014, the

⁹ Information about the gender of respondents was not asked to participants in Malakal and Bentiu PoCs.

¹⁰ WFP, Annual Needs and Livelihoods Analysis 2012/2013.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² IOM, Displacement Tracking Matrix, January 2016

overall population in displacement sites has continued to grow, largely in response to localised violence as a result of continuing conflict. While the majority of people fled to the nearest safe location, many ended up travelling vast distances in search of protection and assistance.

Push and pull factors influencing displacement

The overwhelming majority of IDPs, 94% of respondents, reported that they had left their pre-crisis homes primarily as a result of a lack of security. Along the same lines, the protection offered by a secure location was the most important factor for IDPs in choosing a displacement site, although the availability of assistance and services—primarily food—was also commonly reported, particularly as the second or third reason for choosing a specific displacement site. This suggests IDPs will select sites perceived as stable and with access to food, health and education services.

Figure 3 Top reported reasons for choosing current displacement site

	First reason	Second reason	Third reason
Security	68%	8%	6%
Food	15%	39%	24%
Healthcare	9%	25%	23%
Education	3%	10%	9%
Aid	1%	6%	19%
Other	4%	12%	19%

At the time of data collection, just over half of households (52%) had been displaced for 6 months or over, although the length of displacement was found to vary considerably by site. As shown in the figure below, Mingkaman spontaneous settlement contained a particularly large proportion of IDPs that had arrived more recently, while IDPs in other sites, had generally been displaced for longer.

Figure 4 How recently household arrived at current location, by site

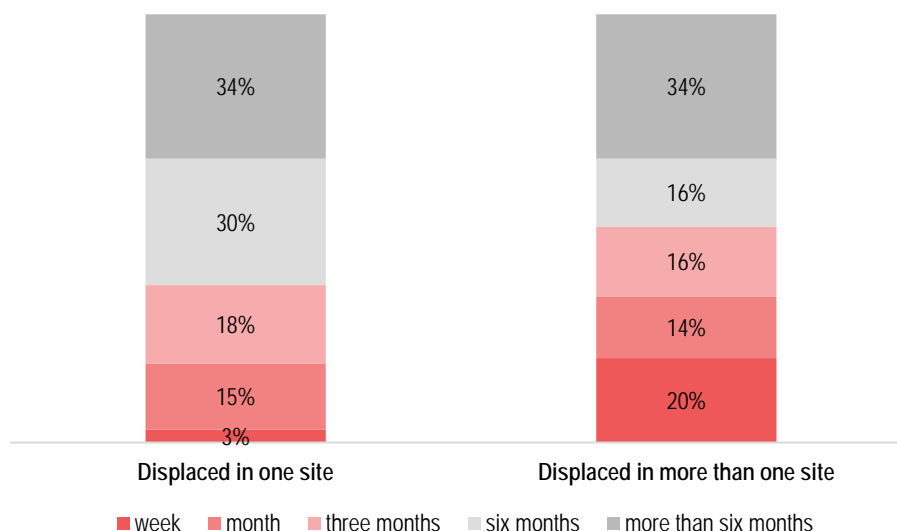
	Less than a week	1 week to 1 month	1 to 3 months	3 – 6 months	More than 6 months	No answer
Bentiu	5%	3%	5%	15%	72%	0%
Bor	0%	6%	2%	0%	92%	0%
Malakal	5%	0%	1%	19%	75%	0%
Melut	1%	0%	2%	15%	81%	0%
Mingkaman	15%	9%	6%	9%	57%	4%
Juba POC1	11%	3%	5%	4%	68%	9%
Juba POC3	3%	3%	8%	10%	71%	5%
Wau	0%	3%	1%	0%	96%	0%
Total	7%	4%	5%	14%	70%	1%

A small proportion of internally displaced households experienced secondary or multiple displacements, with 12% of IDP households reporting to have been displaced more than once before arriving in their current location. Multiple displacement was particularly common for households in Juba PoC3 (reported by 28%), Malakal (18%) and Mingkaman (17%), and only reported by smaller proportions of IDPs in other sites.

Of those displaced multiple times, a third had been displaced for more than six months, a similar proportion to those who had reported only one displacement. However, as can be seen in figure 4, a higher proportion of the population who reported more than one displaced, had only been displaced for one week to a month, 34% compared to 18% of those reporting only one displacement location. Multiple displacements within the first month of relocating from an IDPs home potentially suggest that in the first phase of displacement populations are highly mobile. Alternatively this trend could be explained by a delay in reporting time, those most recently displaced are likely to regard the

multiple stops they made on their journey, whereas IDPs who have remained in one location for six months are less likely to report on locations they passed through to travel to their current displacement site.

Figure 5 Multiple displacement by length of time displaced



Although the vast majority of IDPs reported security as their main reason for leaving their pre-displacement site, IDPs displaced for less than six months were most likely to report security as a factor for leaving their pre-displacement location; 91% compared to 86% who had been displaced for six months or more. However the reverse was true for why IDPs had selected their current location and chosen to stay there. Those displaced for more than six months were more cognisant of security as a pull factor to choose their current location; 77% of IDPs displaced for six months or more reported security as the main reason to choose their current location, compared to 74% of IDPs displaced for less than six months. This perhaps suggests that after immediate displacement, having left an area to flee insecurity without many resources, newly displaced IDPs, whilst also seeking security, are likely to immediately prioritize service delivery. For example, 21% of those displaced for less than six months reported food distributions as the main reason why they intended to stay in the same place, whereas 13% of IDPs displaced for six months or more reported the same. Those displaced for a longer period of time presumably have more secure access to services and therefore prioritize security as the main reason why they remain in their current location.

It is important to note that a confluence of factors motivates displacement. Security is consistently the primary motivation, with food, and the need for health services as primary, secondary, or tertiary reasons for coming to their current displacement location, and each factor rose or fell in importance depending on the time or circumstance.¹³ This makes sense, especially in the context of Bentiu, where many people were displaced after the initial fighting in 2014 did not have to flee again until widespread fighting in 2015 forced them to relocate. Other studies support this, finding that most people who initially fled to the PoC were from nearby areas, and were aware of the UNMISS base as a refuge, while those from further away did not learn about UNMISS until later.¹⁴ Focus group discussions reveal that many of these people, living close to the PoC, likely had the food, water, and other services that they needed in the location, but the spreading conflict had forced them to move again.¹⁵

Areas of origin and ancestral homes

Map 1 shows the pre-crisis locations of displaced households in the sites assessed. The large majority reported travelling from Unity State to their current location, mostly by foot.¹⁶

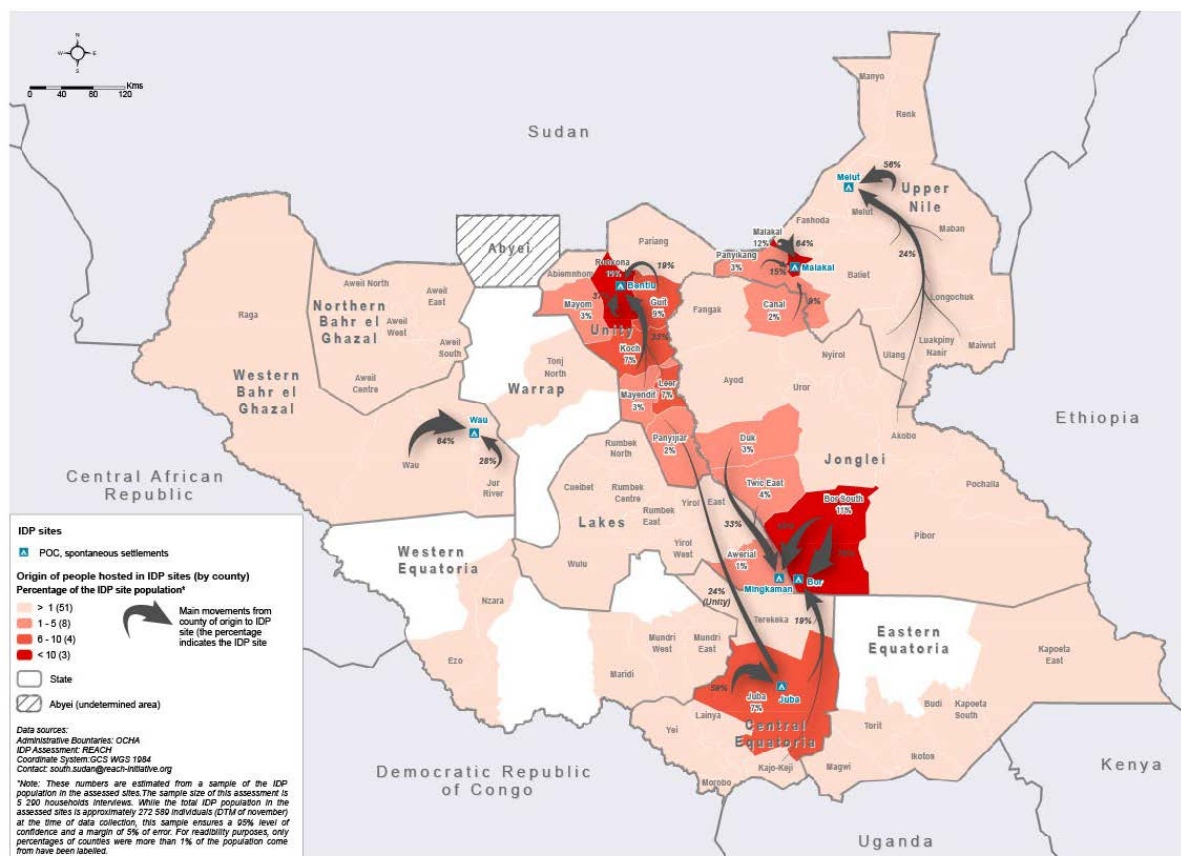
¹³ The correlation coefficient was 0.0493. P-values were 0.162 for the logit and linear regression, so these results may lack robustness.

¹⁴ Cathy Huser, Displacement: An Auto-protection strategy in Unity State, August 2015.

¹⁵ HSBA, The Conflict in Unity State, March 2016.

¹⁶ REACH (2015) [South Sudan Displacement Trends Analysis](#), April 2015.

Figure 6 Map of pre-crisis location of displaced people in assessed sites, by county



Most IDPs travelled over 100 kilometres to get to their current location. The majority of IDPs in each location came from fairly close by, although a small number of IDPs reported travelling very long distances to get there. IDPs seeking refuge in nearby locations were particularly prevalent in Malakal and PoC1, where most of the population came from nearby urban centres. Even in large sites like Bentiu and Mingkaman, where people fled from locations across Unity state and western Jonglei state respectively, a majority of respondents reported coming from adjacent counties. Only in Melut and PoC3, did most people travel much longer distances, as shown in Map 2. In the case of Melut this is perhaps because no alternative locations were available, with fighting occurring within central Jonglei, and so the only safe location was to flee north into Upper Nile. Whereas those fleeing to PoC3, based in Juba, is likely because they had connections and family already residing in Juba who had fled to the PoC and they had been told this was a safe location with access to resources.

In general, the distances between pre-crisis homes and current displacement sites are shorter than those reported in the REACH displacement survey in 2014/15, suggesting that overall displacement figures have been affected by large-scale recent displacement from nearby areas, particularly in Bentiu and Malakal. This is mainly due to the influx of IDPs coming into Bentiu from Nearby Guit, Rubkona, and Koch counties, and Malakal following the displacement of the majority of the Wau Shilluk population to Malakal PoC due to a lack of food during mid-2015. Both of these sites make up the vast majority of the weighted sample.

Table 3 Mean and Range of distance travelled to reach current displacement site

	Mean distance (km)	Median distance (km)	Minimum distance (km)	Maximum distance (km)
Bentiu	76	32	2	369
Bor	141	54	5	380
Malakal	61	11	1	390
Melut	156	108	4	398
Mingkaman	118	66	3	379
POC1	126	13	1	65
POC3	311	233	1	377
Wau	65	35	4	69
Weighted sample	108	54	1	398

Over two thirds of IDPs (69%) travelled directly from their ancestral homes, rather from than other locations in South Sudan. This was particularly notable in Juba PoC, where many IDPs have transferred in order to join their families since the beginning of the crisis, Mingkaman, which continues to experience significant boat traffic across the Nile as people move back and forth between their ancestral homelands and displacement site, and Bentiu, which tripled in size following extensive fighting in Unity State in 2015¹⁷ The high number of IDPs coming from their ancestral homes is consistent with other studies that report that a majority of IDPs, particularly new arrivals, came from nearby, urban locations, and were averse to hiding in the bush.¹⁸

For the 31% of IDPs living away from their “ancestral homelands” at the onset of the crisis, many saw their area of origins as a safe location to which to flee. While it is important to note that ancestral homelands were better known to some IDPs than others, with some people reporting never to have visited these areas before, many IDPs did travel towards ancestral homelands or to other areas perceived as safe to their community following the escalation of conflict in December 2013. Research conducted in Unity State in 2014 - 2015 suggests that IDPs from rural areas were more likely to flee towards their ancestral homes, than those living in urban centres – the latter group preferring to travel directly to Bentiu PoC.¹⁹

Figure 7 Correlation between pre-crisis location and ancestral homeland, by site

Site	Ancestral homeland	Other location
Bentiu	73%	27%
Bor	16%	84%
Malakal	51%	49%
Melut	46%	54%
Mingkaman	69%	31%
POC1	89%	11%
POC3	85%	15%
Wau	3%	97%
Weighted sample	69%	31%

Interestingly, the proportion of IDPs coming from their ancestral homelands were slightly higher overall than figures obtained in the previous study conducted by REACH in 2015.²⁰ Correlation tests find a significant, slightly negative correlation between the length of time displaced and the likelihood that a person came from their ancestral homelands, showing some evidence that those displaced multiple times and were not living in their ancestral homes

¹⁷ IOM, Humanitarian Update #52, July 2015

¹⁸ REACH (2015) Displacement Trends Analysis, April 2015

¹⁹ Cathy Huser, Displacement: An Auto-protection strategy in Unity State, August 2015.

²⁰ Ibid.

were more likely to have to spend a longer time displaced before coming to the PoC.²¹ This may be due in part to increased awareness among IDPs of the existence of PoCs and the presence of assistance and services at these sites. It is possible that people who initially chose to hide in the bush, later fled to the PoCs after the rise in conflict in Unity State and Upper Nile again forced them to flee.

WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS PREVENTING INTENDED MOVEMENT?

Following prolonged displacement, most IDPs have limited resources and few savings, and the prospect of return is considered fraught with risk. While some fled initially to ancestral homelands at the onset of the crisis, focus group discussions conducted by REACH in Unity State shows how the rapid increase in the scope of fighting in Unity and Upper Nile States in 2015 again forced them to flee. In addition, other studies have noted that IDPs displaced in the bush who are not facing security threats must still contend with asset depletion, decreasing households' ability to cope with further shocks or future displacement, which pushes IDPs to travel towards major sites where the likelihood of assistance was higher.²²

Figure 8 Top three reported barriers in preferred area of return that prevent IDPs from leaving

	First Reason	Second Reason	Third Reason
Lack of Security	83%	5%	4%
Lack of Food	7%	42%	22%
Lack of Healthcare	3%	20%	21%
Lack of Housing	2%	6%	11%
Lack of Education	1%	9%	8%
Lack of Aid	1%	9%	20%
Lack of Water	1%	4%	8%
Other	1%	4%	7%

Figure 6 clearly shows that vast majority of IDPs consider a lack of safety as the first reason for staying in their current location, reported as the primary reason by 83% overall. Examination of the second and third reported reasons shows that beyond security, IDPs are also concerned about a lack of access to food and other basic services, particularly healthcare.

It is important to note that the barriers above are all based on *perceptions* of the situation in IDPs' preferred return locations. Given that many IDPs travelled a considerable distance to their current displacement site, and that communication with people remaining in these areas is often non-existent or sporadic, perceived access to security, food and services may differ quite significantly from actual access. This difference is discussed further in the following chapter.

Activities to bring about peace

When asked about the activities that would help to ensure peace in their preferred return location, IDPs commonly reported that they perceived ceremonies or compensation for loss of property and assets as factors that could help to bring about peace.

Of these, the provision of monetary compensation was the most commonly reported activity (by 36% overall), followed by in-kind compensation (29%) and an official ceremony (20%).

²¹ The correlation coefficient was -0.1558 and single-variable linear and logit regressions show a P value of close to 0 and coefficients of =0.5 and -0.259 respectively.

²² REACH (2016) [Unity State Situation Overview](#), January 2016.

Figure 9 Reported activities that to help bring about peace in preferred return location, by ethnicity

	Dinka	Nuer	Shilluk	Overall
Monetary compensation	37%	37%	32%	36%
In-kind compensation	6%	33%	21%	29%
Official ceremony	30%	21%	15%	20%
Traditional ceremony	19%	8%	11%	9%
None	4%	1%	13%	3%
Other	5%	0%	8%	2%

When disaggregated by ethnicity, some variation can be observed between the reported preferences for different types of compensation. Although the provision of monetary compensation remained the most favoured option overall, official or traditional ceremonies were considered more popular among Dinka than other ethnic groups. In contrast, in-kind compensation appeared particularly popular among Nuer (reported by one third of respondents), while Shilluk were much more likely to demand no compensation at all.

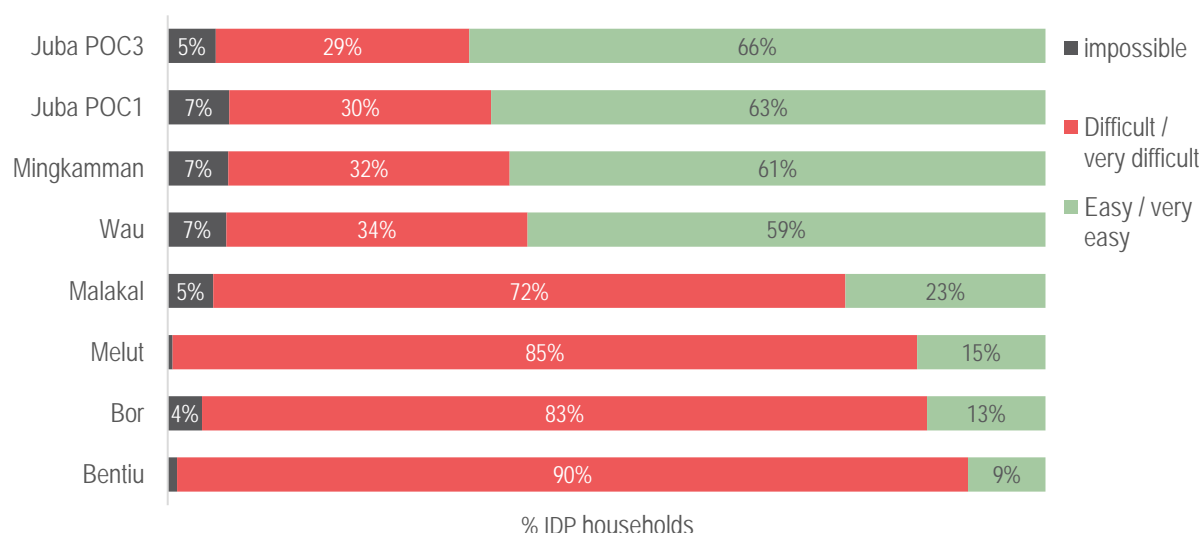
WHAT ARE THE FACTORS INFLUENCING INTENDED RETURN?

With a high proportion of IDPs perceiving that their intended location of return is unsafe and lacks sufficient access to food and basic services, it is important to understand how perceptions are constructed, and what other factors may influence decision-making.

Access to information

When asked about the ease of accessing information about their preferred return location, over half (60%) reported that it was impossible, very difficult or difficult, compared to 40%, who reported that it was easy or very easy to access information. Overall, one in twenty IDPs (5%) reported that it was impossible to access information about their preferred return location.

Figure 10 Reported ease of access to information about preferred return location, by current site



When examined by site, it is clear that IDPs in different displacement sites have varying levels of access to information. Access to information appeared most difficult in Bentiu, Bor, Melut and Malakal, in which over 75% of households reported difficulties accessing information. In contrast, IDPs in Juba PoCs, Mingkaman and Wau reported enjoying considerably better access to information, as shown in figure 9.

Despite difficulties accessing information, three quarters of IDP households in assessed sites (77%) reported having received some information about their preferred return location in the past year. The largest proportion of IDPs reported last receiving news in the past week (51%), or the past month (12%), although almost one quarter of IDPs (23%) reported having never received news since arrival in their current displacement site. There was no statistically significant difference between the frequency male and female headed households accessed information.

Figure 11 Most recent access to news from preferred return location, by current site ²³

	Bentiu	Malakal	Melut	Wau	Bor	Overall
Past week	60%	30%	15%	8%	23%	51%
Past month	11%	16%	9%	2%	9%	12%
Past three months	5%	10%	7%	18%	10%	7%
Past six months	2%	4%	2%	12%	13%	2%
Over six months ago	4%	3%	11%	20%	6%	4%
Never	18%	36%	45%	39%	39%	23%
No answer	0%	1%	11%	0%	0%	0%

Consistent with reported difficulties to accessing information, findings on the frequency of access vary considerably by site. The proportion of IDPs reporting never to have received news from their preferred return location is much higher in all assessed sites apart from Bentiu, with up to 45% of IDPs in Melut reporting never to have received news. IDPs in Bor, Wau and Melut, appear to have considerably less access to up to date news from their preferred return location than those in Bentiu and Malakal, with only 10% of those in Wau reporting to have received news in the past week or month.

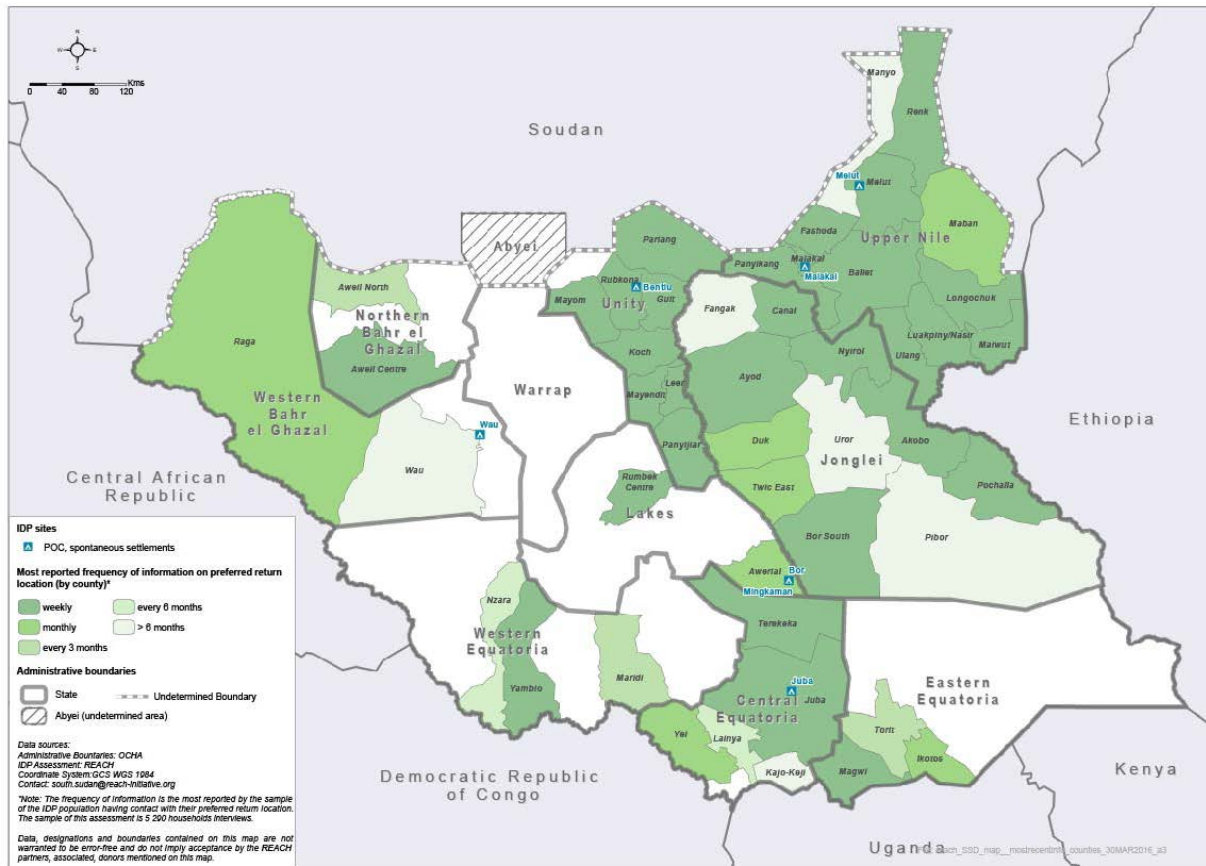
Despite this variation, it is important to note that most IDPs receive regular updates from their preferred areas of return, as shown in Map 3, overleaf. This is particularly true for IDPs intending to return to areas across the Greater Upper Nile region, where the humanitarian community often has very limited information about the conditions faced.

Figure 12 Map of most recent access to news from preferred return location, by county ^{24,25}

²³ This information was not collected from Juba PoCs 1 & 2 and Mingkaman.

²⁴ This information was not collected from Juba PoCs 1 & 2 and Mingkaman.

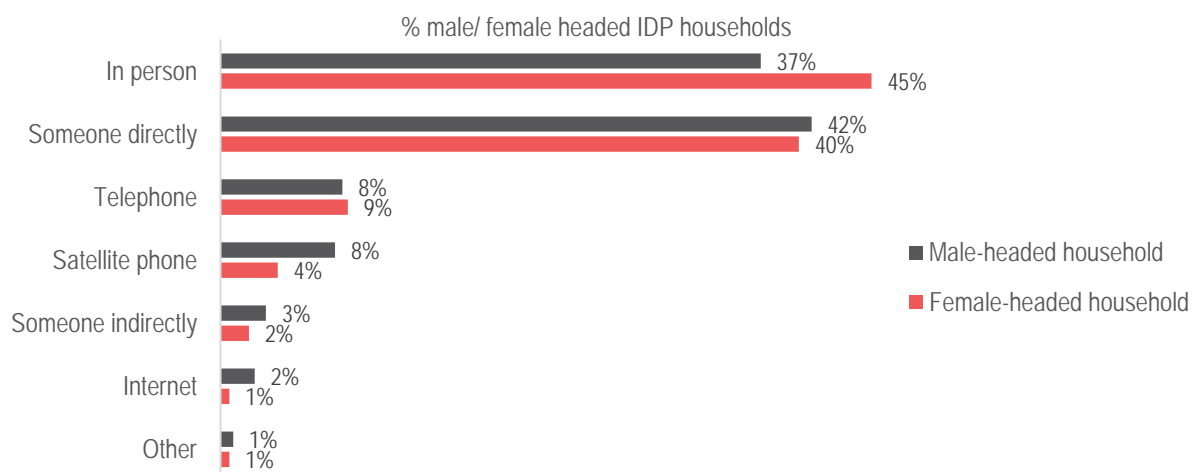
²⁵ All county values are denoted by the modal response. No county reported “never” as a majority answer, showing that a majority of IDPs in each county had at least some contact with their preferred return location. All blank spaces on the map denote a county for which no data was collected.



Communication channels

When asked about the primary means of accessing information about preferred return locations, this was most commonly through visits in-person (reported by 42% of all households), followed by news directly from another person (reported by 41%). Other means of communication, such as telephone, internet, satellite phone, or indirect news from other people were relied upon much less frequently and together accounted for the primary information source of only 18% of households.

Figure 13 Primary means of accessing information about preferred return location, by sex of household head



When examined in more detail, female and male-headed households reported slightly different channels of communication: of those receiving information, female-headed households were more likely to rely on in-person visits for information about their referred return location, and less likely to rely on satellite phone, internet, or indirect news from others, as shown in figure 9.

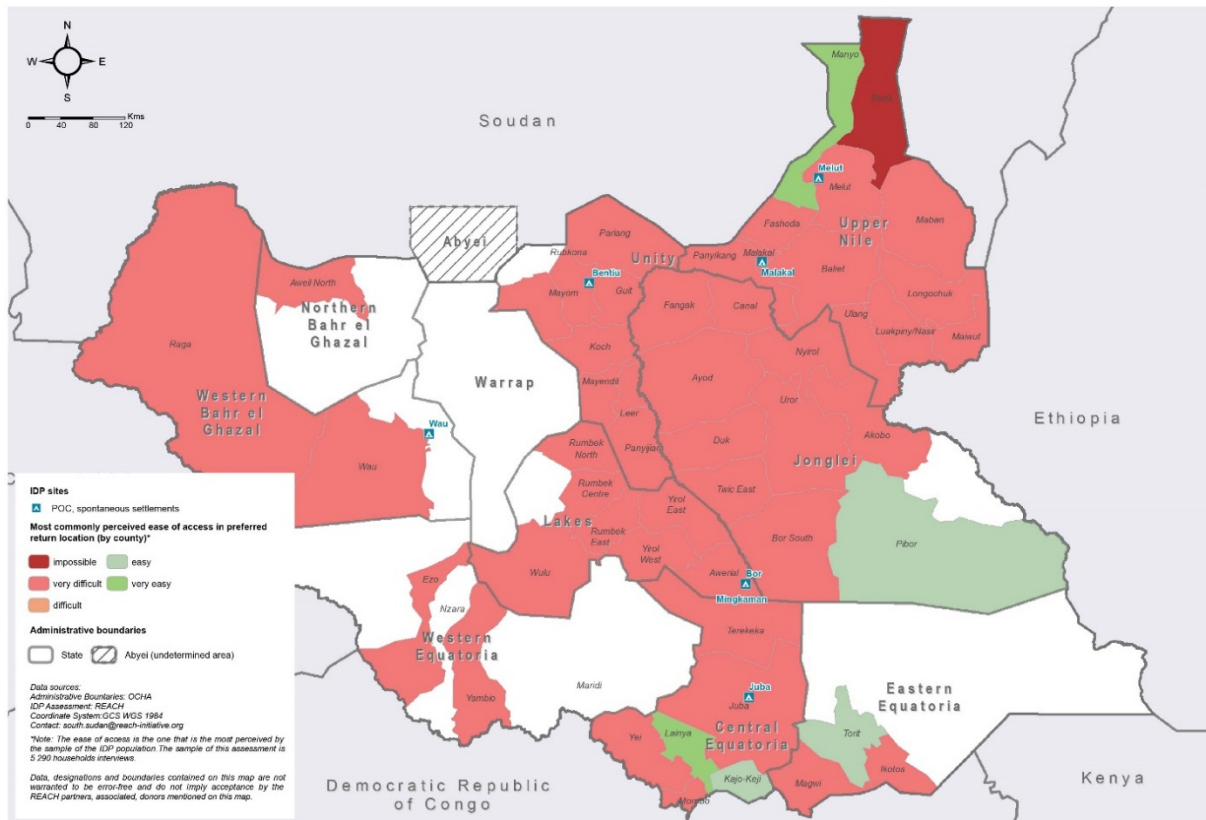
Perceived access to services

As demonstrated by the large proportion of IDPs reporting a lack of access to services as a barrier to leaving, perceptions of access make an important contribution to people's decision to move or stay. Given the findings on access to information presented above, it appears that communication channels which deliver information about conditions in areas of preferred return are open and functioning.

The presence of formal and informal networks means that up-to-date information about the situation in areas of potential resettlement or return is reaching the ears of those who are seeking it. Based on this information, the maps on the following pages outline the perceived access to basic needs (food, safe water and livelihoods) and critical services (healthcare and education) in areas of preferred return.

As the maps and figures below show, with few exceptions, most IDPs view service access as poor to non-existent. Examination of only the Greater Upper Nile Region—the origin of the large majority of IDPs—shows service access is perceived as the least accessible across the assessed areas of the country. Given the increasing tendency for IDPs to travel to PoCs to access basic services following multiple displacement, the lack of service provision in rural communities around South Sudan is likely to encourage most IDPs to stay in their location of displacement, rather than return.

Figure 14 Map of most commonly perceived access to food, by preferred return location



The only exception to this trend is livelihoods, about which many IDPs are cautiously optimistic. As shown in Figure 12 below, with the exception of herding and services, the majority of IDPs believe that they would be able to get jobs similar to those that they practiced before the crisis if they were to go to their pre-crisis locations. These findings, particularly the large proportion of IDPs reporting they would be able to return to government positions, also show that most IDPs believe that there will be a place for them in the post-conflict political order.

Figure 15 Most commonly perceived ability to restart livelihoods, by pre-crisis livelihood

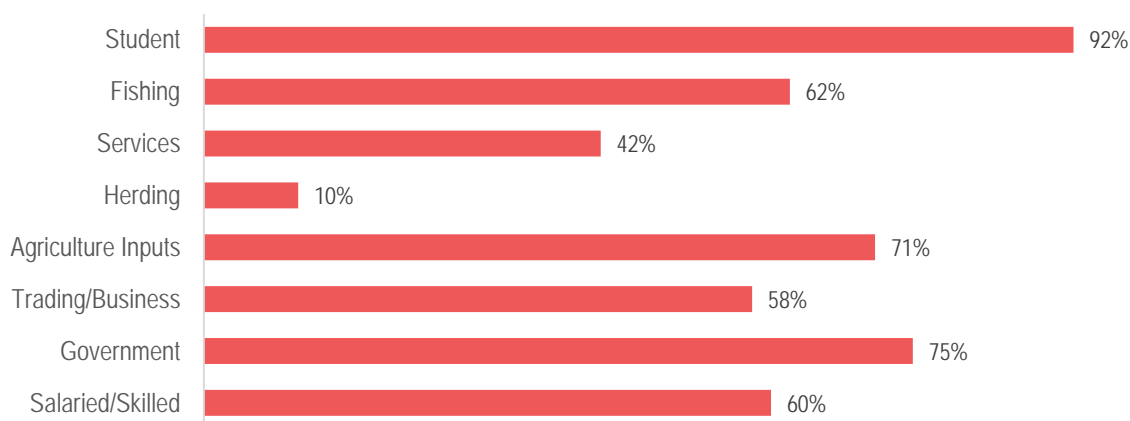


Figure 16 Map of most commonly perceived access to water, by preferred return location

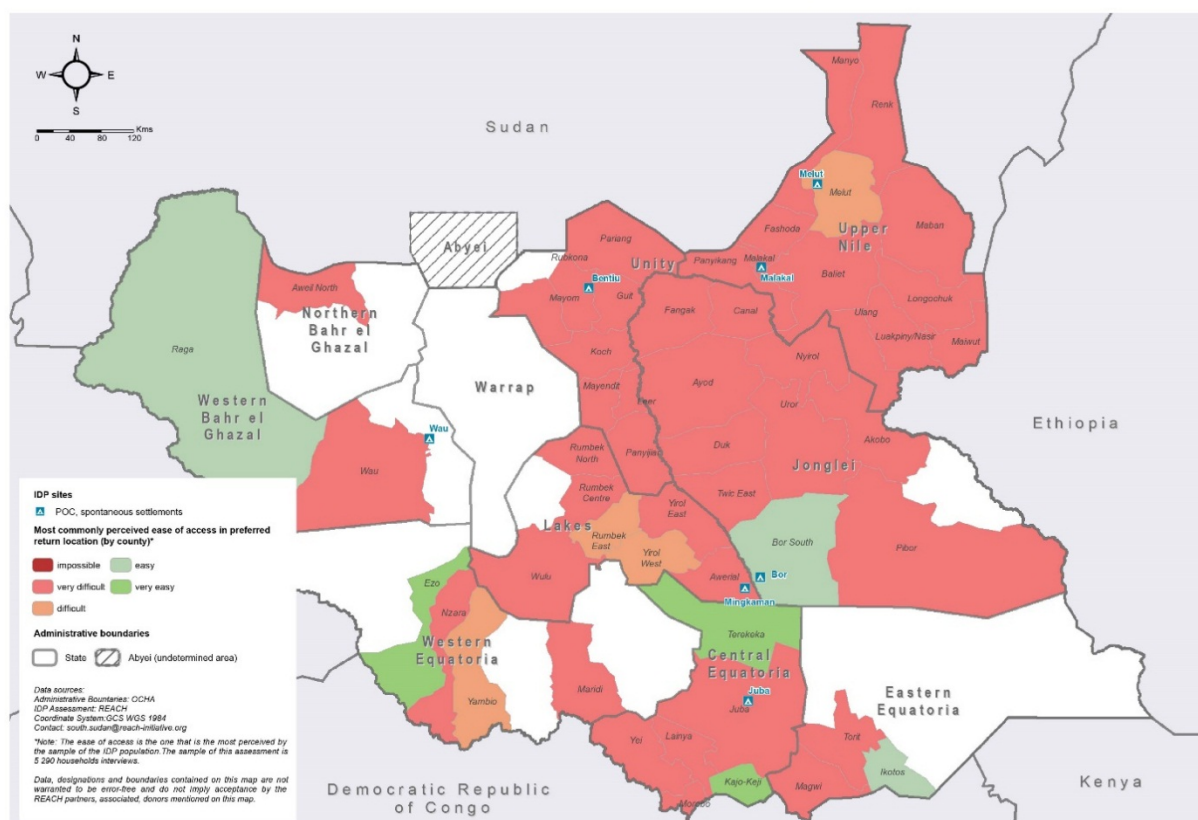


Figure 17 Map of most commonly perceived access to healthcare services, by preferred return location

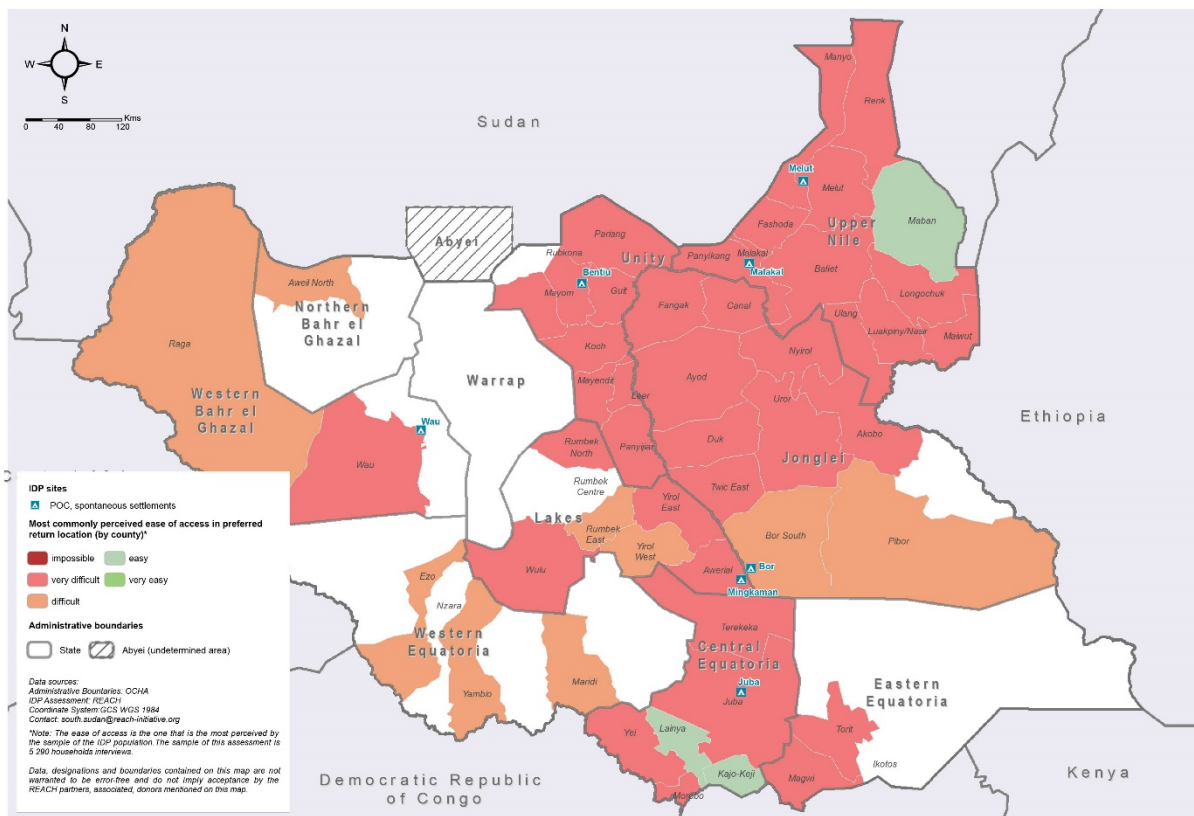
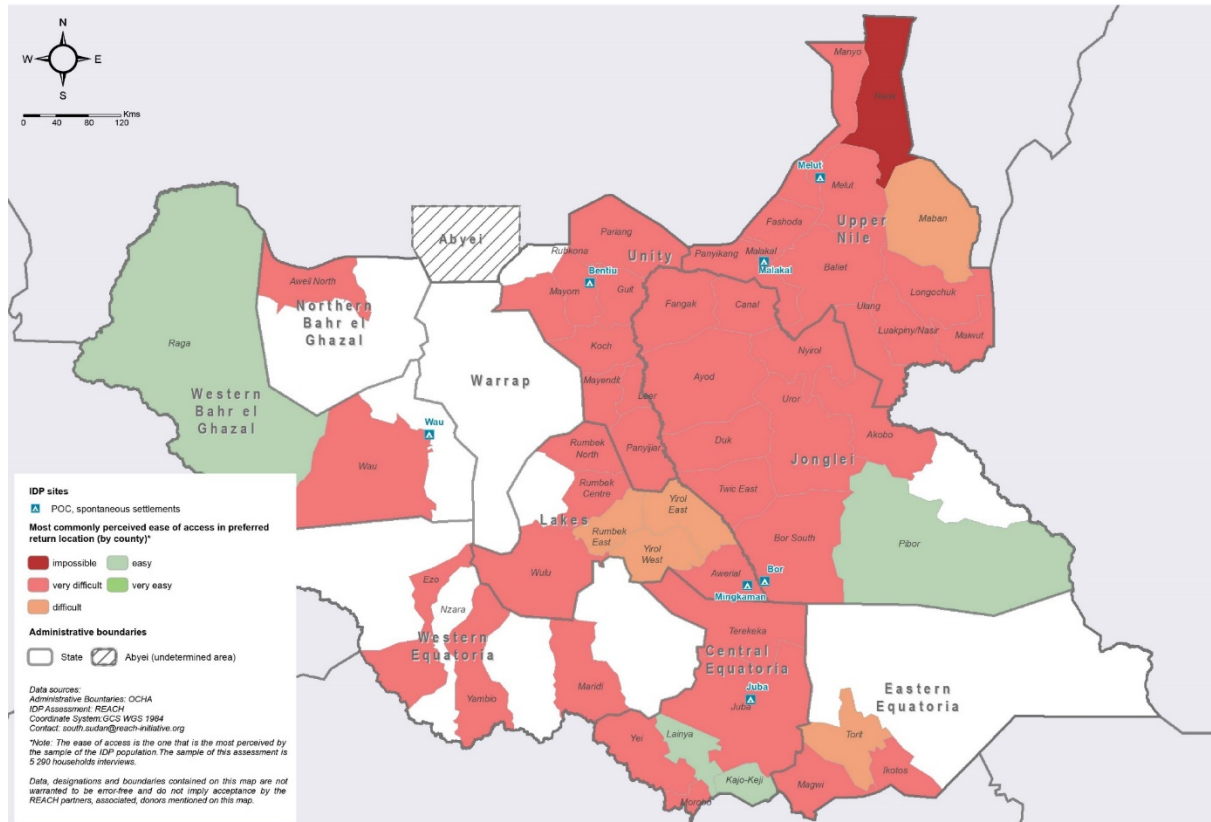


Figure 18 Map of most commonly perceived access to education services, by preferred return location



Herding and services constitute notable exceptions to this general trend. Cattle remain the foundation of the South Sudanese livelihood strategies, both as a source of wealth and of status.²⁶ Rising prices of wedding dowries and other goods prior to the conflict had already led to increased cattle raiding, which has only worsened with the conflict, as many armed groups take cattle when they attack civilian areas. Most IDPs had to leave their cattle behind when they fled, along with other assets, which they believe to have been stolen, as shown in Figure 19 below.

The data on livelihoods highlights a key issue regarding displaced people's perceptions about the availability of services and assistance. In many areas, particularly conflict affected areas like Unity State, most people's assets have been stolen or destroyed, leaving them unable to restart their lives without assistance. Many IDPs explained that what little they had left behind had wither been stolen or hidden away, and they were unsure if they would be able to provide for themselves without NGO assistance. However, although most IDPs perceived there to be limited access to services in the Greater Upper Nile region at the time of assessment, most believe that, in the event of large scale movement away from the PoCs, NGOs will follow people to their preferred areas of return and immediately begin setting up similar services to those they receive now. Many also expected to be transported there by UN or NGO vehicles. In the event of a lasting peace agreement, NGOs will need to make extensive efforts to temper IDP expectations regarding service provision outside of formal displacement sites.

Figure 19 Reported location of livelihood-related assets

	Don't know	Hidden	Looked after by community	Looked after by family	Stolen
Cattle	15%	5%	9%	18%	53%
Fishing assets	1%	0%	6%	6%	87%
Service assets ²⁷	9%	1%	2%	26%	42%

As shown in figure 19 above, most IDP households reporter that their cattle, tools, and other livelihood related assets have been stolen. Apart from agriculture, cattle herding, fishing, and the provision of services (transporting goods, driving cars/motorcycles, cleaning) are the most common livelihoods practiced by people in South Sudan. With many of these related assets reportedly lost as a result of the conflict, IDPs will clearly need substantial support in replacing these in order to restart their lives. The issue of stolen cattle is particularly critical, if nothing is done to help families acquire new cows, they may be incentivized to acquire more of them through violence, reigniting the conflict in many parts of the county.

Most IDPs also reported concerns related to the prospect of land access. Over 91% of IDPs reported owning land in their preferred return location, over 85% owned a house there, and a further 16% reportedly owned land in another part of South Sudan as well. However, only 54% reported having documentation to prove their ownership. For those without documentation, only a little over half (53%) said that they knew someone else who could back their claim to the land, primarily friends or family members. In only 37% of cases was this person was an authority or someone affiliated with the government. Since much of the land in the Greater Upper Nile Region has changed hands several times since the beginning of the crisis, recovery and resettlement of land, as for cattle and other assets, is likely to be a contentious process.²⁸

²⁶ NPR, "In South Sudan, Cows are Cash and a Source of Friction," August 2012.

²⁷ Service assets include assets needed for simple jobs such as trucks, motorcycles, and phones.

²⁸ HSBA, The Conflict in Unity State, March 2016.

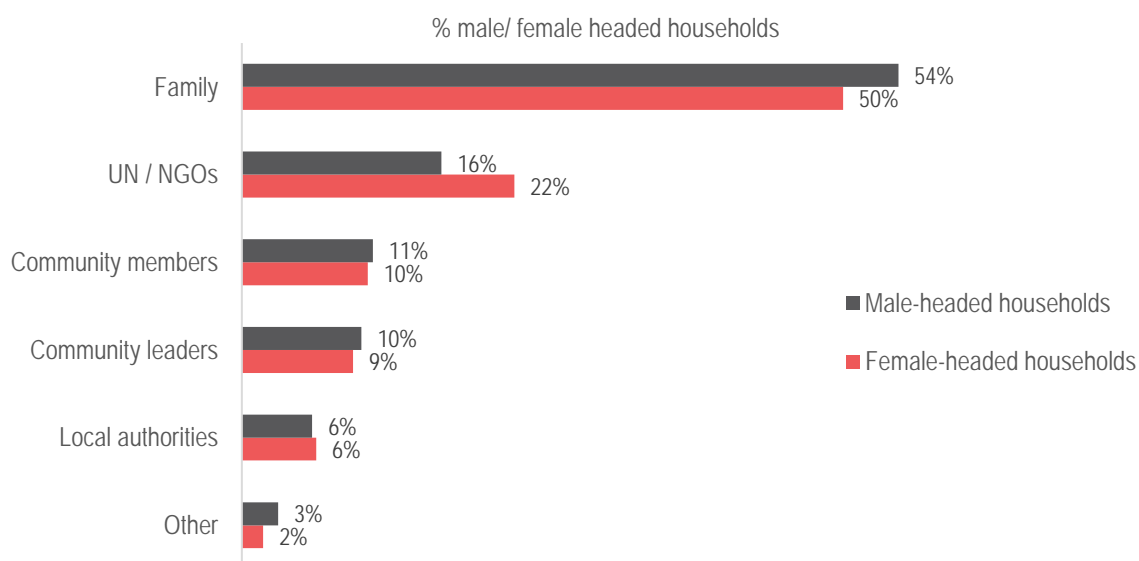
WHAT INFLUENCES DECISION-MAKING?

With limited direct access to information about their preferred return location, many IDPs are reliant on news and advice provided by others. This section explores the extent to which IDPs are influenced by a range of actors, and their understanding of the wider political situation.

Influential groups

When asked if anyone other than themselves affected their decision to leave their current location, the large majority, 73%, reported that nobody else influenced their decision. However, when disaggregated by sex, a larger proportion of female heads of household reported being influenced by others (29%) than their male counterparts (21%).

Figure 20 Most influential group affecting IDPs' decision to leave, by sex of household head



For the 27% of all households that reported their decision was affected by others, family was reported to be the most influential factor (reported by 51% of this group) followed by UN/NGOs (21%) and other community members (10%). Again, female and male headed households reported slightly different influences, with female heads of household more likely to be influenced by UN agencies or NGOs, and males slightly more likely to report being influenced by family.

When compared by site, primary reported influences on the decision to leave can be seen to vary significantly. Family was reported to have a particularly important influence on decision-making in Bentiu, while NGOs and UN agencies appeared to be much more influential according to IDPs in Wau. Actors wishing to disseminate information about the current situation in locations across South Sudan should take into account these reported differences, in order to ensure that information reaches its target audience via a trusted source.

Figure 21 Most influential group affecting IDPs' decision to leave, by current site

	Bentiu	Malakal	Melut	Wau	Bor	Juba PoC1	Juba PoC3	Mingkaman
Family	79%	52%	33%	24%	42%	50%	49%	36%
UN / NGOs	1%	19%	11%	71%	16%	33%	40%	24%
Community members	12%	11%	33%	5%	12%	4%	5%	13%
Community leaders	5%	6%	22%	0%	18%	8%	4%	15%
Local authorities	2%	9%	0%	0%	11%	2%	2%	9%
Other group	1%	3%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	4%

Understanding of the political situation

At the time of data collection, the political situation in South Sudan was relatively stable. To understand how relations between the belligerent parties in the conflict affects people's willingness to leave or remain in displacement sites, REACH asked IDPs about their knowledge of three major political issues in South Sudan, and how each of these issues affected their desire to leave or stay in their current location.²⁹ The three questions were as follows:

- Are you aware of the peace agreement signed between the SPLM and SPLM-IO?
- Are you aware of the next formation of the transitional government in South Sudan between the SPLM and the SPLM-IO?
- Are you aware of the possible creation of 28 States in South Sudan?

On aggregate, 72% of IDP households reported that they were aware of the peace agreement between the SPLM and SPLM -IO, while 63% were aware of next formation of the transitional government between the SPLM and -IO. Only 59% were aware of the possible creation of 28 states.

In the case of the peace agreement and transitional government, 73% stated that they were more encouraged to leave the PoC, although focus groups suggest that they are waiting for signs that peace has fully taken hold to return to their homes. Two thirds (66%) stated that the formation of the transitional government made them more likely to leave, though this response was only given by a majority for Dinka and Nuer, with less than a third of Shilluk respondents expressing that this would increase their desire to leave. When asked about the possible creation of 28 states, only Dinka respondents expressed a desire to leave, while the majority of Nuer and Shilluk respondents stated that this would make them more likely to stay in their current location. While humanitarian actors have very little control over political decisions made by armed actors in the country, such information is important in order to understand how some developments may facilitate the exodus of one population from a displacement site while entrenching another.

WHERE DO PEOPLE INTEND TO RETURN?

In the event of a peaceful resolution to the conflict that would allow them to leave their present locations permanently, almost 90% of IDPs in the major displacement sites indicated they would return to their ancestral home. For 95% of households, this is the same as their pre-crisis home, although a remaining 5% reported they would travel there from their pre-crisis locations, primarily Bor, Wau, and Melut. The remaining 12% of respondents reported they would go elsewhere, mainly outside the country. The desire to move from mixed, urban areas to ethnically homogenous rural villages was expressed by IDPs across all assessed sites, particularly by those currently living in places such as Bor, Wau and Melut, where the immediate surrounding area belongs to a different ethnic group.

The desire to return to areas belonging to their own tribe where there are family and relatives who can help protect them and allow returning IDPs to help rebuild their lives is consistent across ethnic groups; a majority of Dinka, Nuer, and Shilluk all expressed a desire to return to their ancestral homelands. Focus group discussion participants made it clear that they did not want to return to their pre-crisis locations until they had the opportunity to establish themselves in their tribal homelands where they would be safe. As most Shilluk were already living in their perceived ancestral homelands before the crisis, little difference was observed as to where most of them want to go.³⁰

However, among Dinka and Nuer, there has been a substantial shift, with most of the Dinka in Malakal, and Nuer in Bor, Wau, and Melut reporting they want to move from their pre-crisis locations to their ancestral homelands. Should these sites close, departures from these four sites are likely to cause a large influx of newly-settling IDPs.

No substantial difference was found between the intended return location and gender or age of the head of household. Instead, differing intentions appear to be more closely related to site and ethnicity.

²⁹ Political issues in war-affected countries can be controversial. To guard against upsetting respondents, the REACH team kept the questions as general as possible, asking only if the IDP had heard of the issue, and whether it affected their desire to stay or leave the location.

³⁰ HSBA, The Conflict in Upper Nile State, March 2016.

Figure 22 Intended areas of return, by pre-crisis and ancestral homelands, by ethnicity

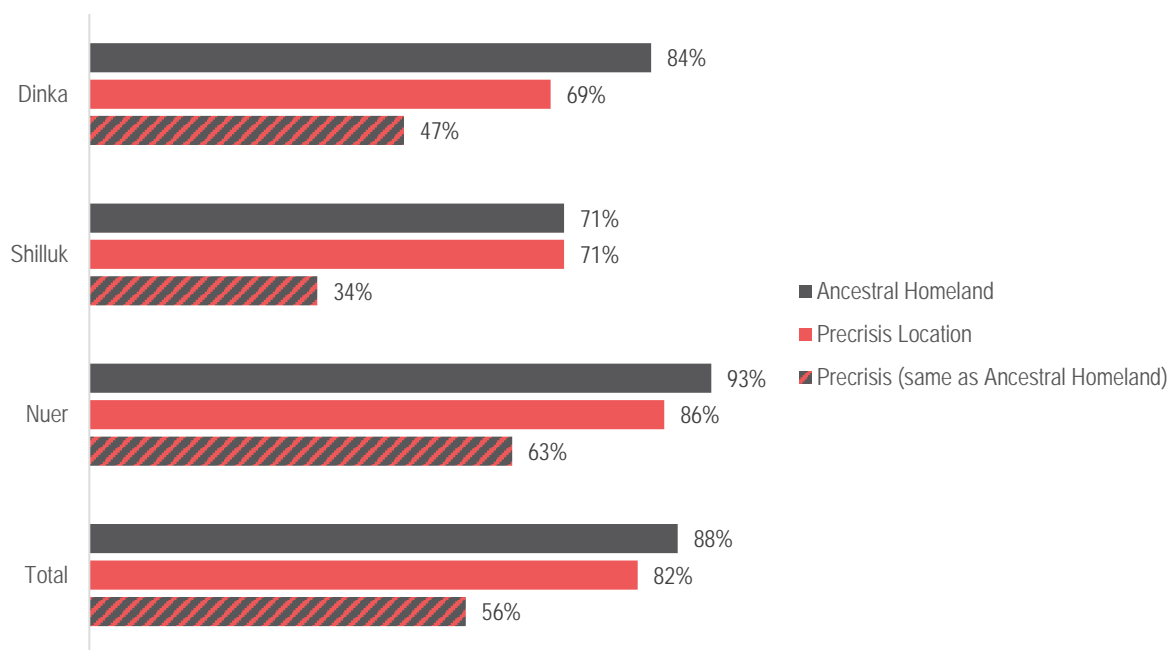


Figure 23 Intended areas of return, by pre-crisis and ancestral homelands, by site

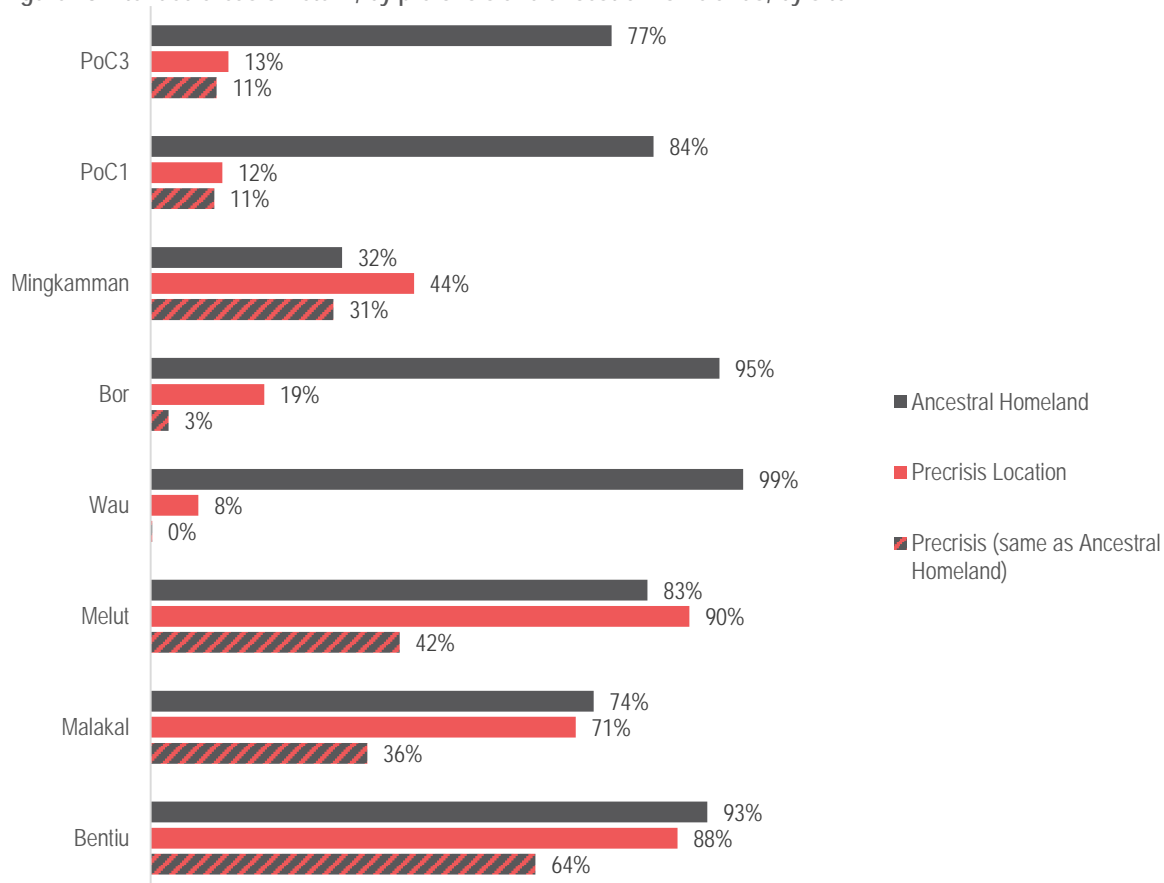
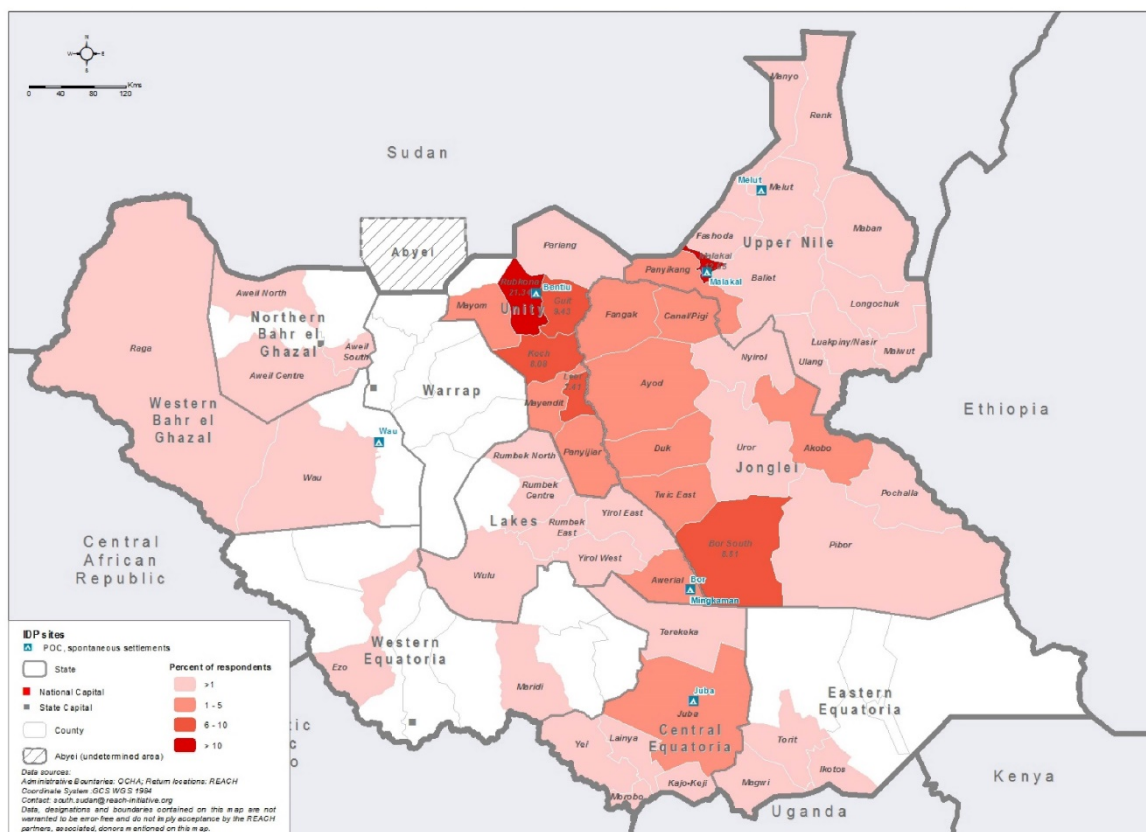


Figure 24 Map of intended return location by IDPs in assessed displacement sites, by county



As shown in Map 9, the highest concentrations of intended return locations are in Rubkona and Malakal Counties, where the two largest IDP sites are currently located. Substantial numbers, primarily Nuer, also wish to return to Unity state and Northern Jonglei state, while many Dinka wish to return to eastern Jonglei, Southern Upper Nile, Awerial county, and Juba. Shilluk primarily reported wishing to return to Malakal.

When compared with Map 2 showing the initial displacement routes from IDPs' pre-crisis locations, a number of patterns become clear: Most of the IDPs in Bentiu wish to return to their ancestral homelands located around the state, where most of them were living before the crisis. This is the same case with the Shilluk in Malakal, who wish to return to their city and the surrounding areas. However, Most of those in Juba, Bor, and Wau do not want to return to their pre-crisis locations, and instead intend to go to ancestral homelands in Unity State. Many displaced Dinka, particularly those in Mingkaman, do not intend to return to their pre-crisis locations, but rather would prefer to go to other cities like Bor and Juba, while some even plan to stay in Awerial County, perhaps due to the relative feeling of safety that many Dinka feel there.

While most people are likely to return to their pre-crisis locations, humanitarians will need to be prepared for large numbers of people travelling from other parts of the country to their ancestral homelands. Of these, 31% of IDPs were not living in these areas before the crisis and some may never have visited at all. In both cases, limited existing services are likely to be stretched considerably, causing challenges for non-displaced and returning populations alike.

CONCLUSION

Nearly all IDPs reported security as their primary reason for coming to their current location. Should the security situation improve and people are able to leave the PoCs and other displacement sites, humanitarian actors should expect a caseload of over 160,000 IDPs to travel to other parts of the country.³¹ The vast majority of these—over 110,000 individuals—are likely to settle in rural areas across Unity State, while over 30,000 are likely to resettle in southern Upper Nile, near Malakal. Most of the remainder are returnees from Mingkaman, who plan to go back to their homes or the Bor Town area in south-western Jonglei State.

However, without substantial humanitarian assistance, returning IDPs will find it difficult to live in their preferred locations of return. Most IDPs, many of whom get news from their preferred return location on a monthly, if not weekly basis, reported services to be either limited or entirely non-existent. Government, humanitarian and development actors need to be prepared to provide food, clean water, healthcare, and education, in addition to other services if they want to avoid IDPs returning to the PoCs in search of aid. As the case of many recent returnees from Bentiu PoC shows, nearly all continue to return on a regular basis to receive healthcare, food, and other necessary services.³²

To date, primarily because of continuing insecurity in areas of potential return, humanitarian actors have been largely unable to begin large-scale activities to support such an influx. In order to help improve conditions in potential areas of return, NGOs should work on providing agricultural inputs to returning IDPs to help them re-establish their livelihoods. Providing the necessary seeds and tools to returning IDPs would be the first step in eventually removing dependence on large scale distributions.

Moving forward, greater focus needs to be placed on understanding how returning populations will integrate with the existing host community. Indeed, very little has been done to prepare host communities for large-scale returns. If they were to leave their current displacement site, 18% of IDPs reported intending to go to a place other than their pre-crisis location. It is unclear whether the host communities in these locations are prepared for this next step, and whether they will accept and be able to support the influx of new people who may arrive. Future research should focus on how local communities intend to handle the large influx of returnees, and what humanitarian organizations can do to facilitate successful integration between former IDPs and members of the non-displaced community.

For the 82% returning to their pre-crisis locations, it is unclear how well they will be able to reintegrate with the community that has remained there, particularly in multi-ethnic areas. Many IDPs expressed expectations that their property, most of which has been destroyed or stolen in the conflict, would be restored to them following a peace agreement. However, the nature of the peace agreement remains unclear. Over half (51%) reported that it would involve some kind of in-kind monetary payment, while another 24% reported that an official ceremony would be enough to ensure that peace had come to the country. Focus groups suggest that most IDPs have unrealistic expectations of how quickly they would be able to re-integrate with those communities perceived as having wronged or been wronged, especially given the frequent expectation of monetary compensation for lost property and violence.

This is particularly problematic in urban, multi-ethnic areas like Juba, Bor, and Malakal, where property and large assets like houses and cars are now occupied and/ or possessed by others. It is unclear what processes are in place, if any, to equitably restore these to their original owners. Returns are likely to be the most complicated in these areas, where often members of one ethnic group have taken the property of another. Future research needs to focus on community integration and conflict resolution in order to determine how humanitarian actors can best facilitate the reception of new arrivals in areas of potential return or relocation.

³¹ Estimate based on the percentage of respondents reporting security as the primary reason for going to their current location and estimated number of people currently inhabiting all of the assessed sites.

³² REACH, Overview of Communities in Nhialdu Area, Rubkona County, March 2016