



MULTISECTOR CRISIS OVERVIEW

UNITY STATE

REPORT

MAY - AUGUST 2016

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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 of 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

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INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of humanitarian trends in Unity State from May to August 2016, based on findings from REACH data collection.

The vast majority of communities in Unity State reported that they had access to food, safe water, markets, casual job opportunities and primary education before the beginning of the crisis in 2013. However, the ongoing conflict has dramatically reduced the capacity of the population to meet their basic needs, as well as their access to basic services.

Now, Unity State reportedly hosts the largest IDP population in South Sudan, an estimated 534,689 as of August 2016.¹ Many of these IDPs are currently living in the only formal displacement site in Unity State, Bentiu PoC, the recorded population of which was 99,228 as of August 2016², or in Nyal, with an estimated IDP population of 15,500 as of August 2016.³

To understand the needs of the large conflict-affected population in Unity, REACH is conducting regular assessments on hard-to-reach areas of South Sudan in order to inform the response of humanitarian workers inside and outside formal displacement sites, and providing services to both IDPs and host communities. These assessments consist of regular data collection on displacement dynamics and humanitarian service access in communities across the Greater Upper Nile region, which is conducted on a monthly basis throughout the year.

This “crisis overview” compiles monthly data to provide a longer term trend analysis and to assess how humanitarian conditions have changed since the onset of fighting during the 2016 wet season. The findings presented in this report are based on monthly cycles of data collection from May through

to August, representing data from a total of 1,638 interviews. Please see below for more details on methodology and the dates of data collection.

OVERVIEW (MAY-AUGUST)

At the beginning of the 2016 wet season a positive trend of large-scale IDP returns emerged, reaching its peak in May-June. Encouraged by the progress of the peace agreement process and an improvement in security across the state, many IDPs left Bentiu PoC in order to return to their pre-crisis locations or to relocate to areas of the state that benefit from access to both land (for planting and rebuilding homes) and NGO services. Humanitarian efforts such as the “Beyond Bentiu Initiative” sought to meet the needs of these returning populations by delivering services to “catchment” areas, which are locations within easy access of both humanitarian organizations and large concentrations of IDP populations outside the PoC, as well as by expanding services in urban centres such as Nyal, Koch, Leer, and Bentiu Towns.

However, the **resurgence of conflict in much of southern Unity State following fighting in Juba on 8 July had a negative impact on these positive trends**, with many IDPs returning once again to the PoC and Nyal.⁴ Many humanitarian organisations have followed suit, redirecting much of their resources back to the PoC and other formal displacement sites across the country.⁵

In August, the security situation in much of Unity State began to improve, although clashes continued in the southern counties of Leer, Koch and Mayendit. These relative improvements were enough to encourage a partial return to pre-crisis displacement trends.

This quarterly report unpacks these trends, offers a comparative analysis across the onset of fighting during the 2016 wet season, and provides an update

¹ OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot, February 2016.

² IOM, South Sudan, Bentiu PoC Update – Displacement Tracking and Monitoring: Population Count – 28-31 August 2016.

³ RoSS registration figures, August 2016.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin: south Sudan Issue 11, August 2016.

on displacement dynamics and humanitarian conditions in assessed communities across Unity State.

METHODOLOGY

REACH collects data on hard-to-reach areas of South Sudan using its "Area of Origin" (AoO) methodology. Through AoO REACH collects real-time, up-to-date data on areas of the Greater Upper Nile region that are too difficult for humanitarians to access directly, but are still accessible by IDPs and host communities.

Primary data is collected from key informants (KIs) who have been identified by REACH as receiving regular, up-to-date information from a particular location in Unity State. KI interviews are conducted on a monthly basis using a standardized survey tool that comprises a range of questions about the current situation and needs of the remaining host community and any displaced persons residing in the KI's area of knowledge, in addition to sector-specific questions including WASH, Health, Shelter/NFI, Protection, Food Security and Livelihoods.

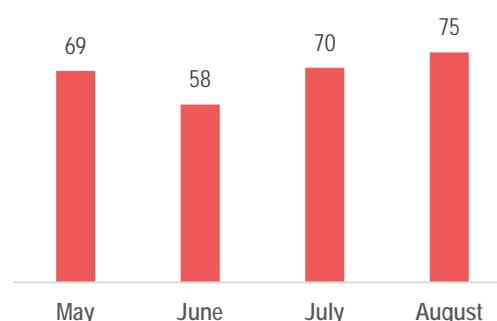
Once all the data has been collected, it is then cleaned and examined at the community level. For categorical questions, the most frequently cited answer is considered the representative response for a given community. For continuous numerical questions, the mean (average) response is used instead. When no consensus is found, that community is not included in the reporting. This, combined with the fact that sometimes only a subset of respondents are asked certain questions depending on their answer to a previous question, is why the total number of communities reported on may differ throughout this report. Where spatial analysis is relevant, findings are mapped on the basis of community boundaries identified through a participatory mapping exercise conducted in 2015 with community key informants.

The findings in this report are based on 1,638 interviews conducted over the May-August 2016 period, as well as on Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) that were held to clarify and cross-check preliminary findings.

Table 1: # of interviews conducted, by month and county of origin

County	May	June	July	August
Guit	31	21	26	23
Koch	45	35	45	41
Leer	138	73	116	73
Mayendit	125	35	104	78
Mayom	98	25	63	45
Panyijiar	110	22	98	53
Rubkona	40	14	37	24
TOTAL	587	225	489	337

Figure 1: # of communities assessed, by month



The findings presented should be understood as indicative only, with comparisons between months limited by security constraints and the extent to which REACH gained repeated access to information on the same geographical area.

POPULATION MOVEMENT AND DISPLACEMENT

Displacement overview (May-August 2016)

Displacement in Unity State from May to August can be summarised as follows:

- **PHASE I:** Widespread returns across Unity State in May and June.
- **PHASE II:** Renewed displacement to sites such as the Bentiu PoC in response to the fighting in July.
- **PHASE III:** Temporary respite from the insecurity leading to a partial return to pre-crisis trends.

PHASE I: Displacement pre-crisis (May-June)

For most of the wet season, Unity State experienced an acceleration of positive trends that began during the late dry season, as improvements in security and a need to begin planting to provide more food for their families encouraged IDPs to leave the PoC and other displacement sites in order to return to their homes for the cultivation season.⁶

As a result, although the inflow of IDPs to the PoC remained stable, an emerging trend of IDPs filtering out of the PoC in order to return to their home communities took hold at the start of the wet season. In fact, **the number of departures from the PoC exceeded that of new arrivals in June**, and the population fell from 115,041 in April to 95,126 in May before rising slightly to 99,034 in June.⁷ It is worth noting, population increases in the POC are often at least partly attributable to the food distribution cycle, for which IDPs temporarily re-enter the PoC to acquire rations each month and then return home.⁸

FGDs conducted in Niemni, Nhialdu and Kuach found that in nearly every case, IDPs had returned to plant and support themselves outside of the PoC. REACH observed many rebuilt homes and the presence of small farms in Rubkona and Guit counties, indicating some evidence of a return to former livelihoods.

Furthermore, the suspension of IDP registration in Bentiu PoC during the wet season led many IDPs to settle in Bentiu Town and other places across Unity State such as Niemni, Nhialdu and Rubkona Town, where humanitarian support and services were routinely available.

However, despite the increasing numbers of IDP returns and departures from the PoC, many people remained dependent upon humanitarian support to meet their basic needs. IOM reported that over 5,000 IDPs who had previously been staying in the PoC

had permanently relocated to catchment areas outside the PoC (or near enough to be able to safely travel there to receive services).⁹ Humanitarian organizations established four such catchment areas around Rubkona and Guit counties that could be accessed from their bases in Bentiu PoC. 1,850 new households were registered in these locations during the wet season, the vast majority of whom were previously staying in the PoC.¹⁰

However, although there was little fighting in Unity State prior to July and the security situation was widely perceived to be improving, occasional insecurity and violence persisted even during the pre-crisis period. In June 2016, REACH conducted FGDs with IDPs who had fled to Nyal in 2015, and then returned to their homes in Koch, Mayendit and Leer during the 2016 wet season in response to the apparently improved security situation. According to the participants, upon returning home they found their homes occupied by armed forces who were moving outside of their lines of cantonment as designated by the peace process, and were forced to return to Nyal. Those who were caught were reportedly killed.

This may explain why security was already a foremost concern among IDPs and host communities alike prior to the violence in July. For example, in June, KIs in 43 of 54 communities reported that most non-IDPs were staying in their location due to security. Similarly, 43 of 54 communities reported that IDPs had primarily come to their current location because of security, and also reported access to food (32) as the second most common reason. This represents a marked shift in attitudes reported in May, when KIs were split between reporting security (23 of 47 communities) and wanting to return to their ancestral homeland (also 23 of 47) as the primary reason for IDPs coming there.

⁶ IOM, Greater Bentiu: Population Movement Trends, June 2016.

⁷ IOM registration figures, July 2016.

⁸ Radio Tamazuj, "Fighting breaks out in South Sudan's Leer", 13 July 2016.

⁹ IOM, Nhialdu, Rubkona County, Biometric registration update, September 2016.

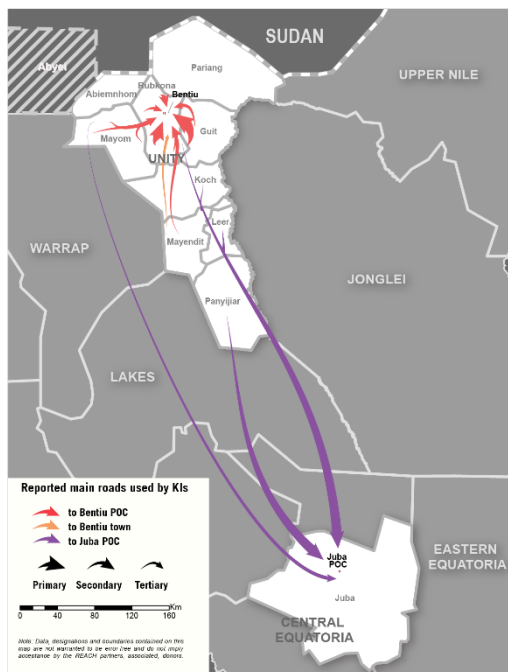
¹⁰ Ibid.

PHASE II: Displacement during crisis (July)

The fighting that broke out in Juba and southern Unity State in early July had an immediate adverse effect on May–June trends as it drove people from their homes once more, both in areas directly affected by the violence as well as in stable parts of Unity State due to fears that the fighting may spread.

The population of Bentiu PoC increased rapidly as IDPs from Rubkona, Guit and Mayom returned to the site, peaking at 102,228 mid-July.¹¹ Furthermore, 32,723 individuals belonging to 12,592 households were registered in Bentiu Town in July, representing an increase from 29,911 in May and 31,692 in June.¹² Some IDPs left Unity State altogether for Juba, likely in search of economic opportunities, which are extremely limited in places such as Bentiu. As a result, a large proportion of residents in Juba PoCs 1 and 3 come from Unity State.¹³

Map 1: Reported main IDP displacement routes to Bentiu and Juba PoCs



¹¹ IOM, South Sudan: Bentiu PoC Update - Displacement Tracking and Monitoring: Population Count - 13 - 15 July 2016.

¹² IOM registration figures, July 2016.

¹³ IOM, Juba UN House PoC Sites: Biometric registration updated, October 2016.

FGDs conducted by REACH with new arrivals in Bentiu PoC in July found that many IDPs who had returned from more stable places like Mayom and Rubkona expressed concerns over recent clashes in Leer, Wau, and Juba, and were fleeing in anticipation of possible instability. Further south, in Koch, Leer, and Mayendit, most IDPs who had returned to their homes earlier in the wet season fled back to Nyal in response to the fighting in those counties.

PHASE III: Displacement post-crisis (August)

During FGDs conducted in Bentiu PoC in July, IDPs expressed a desire to return to their homes as soon as the security situation had stabilised in order to resume planting. This is likely to explain the increase in returns in August, when the security situation was appearing to improve. As a result, the month of August was characterised by a partial return to pre-July trends. By the end of July, the Bentiu PoC population was already in decline again, as exits started to outnumber entries once more. By the end of August, the population of the site had decreased to 99,228.¹⁴ Similarly, the rate of new arrivals in Bentiu Town slowed significantly in August, with only 645 new registrations taking place that month.¹⁵

Nevertheless, the population figure for Bentiu POC was still considerably higher than at the end of May (95,126), indicating that residents had yet to fully embrace the pre-crisis trend of large-scale returns.¹⁶

These trends likely reflect the relative stability that characterised the month of August, as the number and severity of clashes decreased markedly (though by no means ceased entirely). This temporary respite, and the consequent perceived improvement in the security situation, may have contributed to the tentative resumption of pre-crisis trends observed in KI responses.

¹⁴ IOM, South Sudan, Bentiu PoC Update – Displacement Tracking and Monitoring: Population Count – 28-31 August 2016.

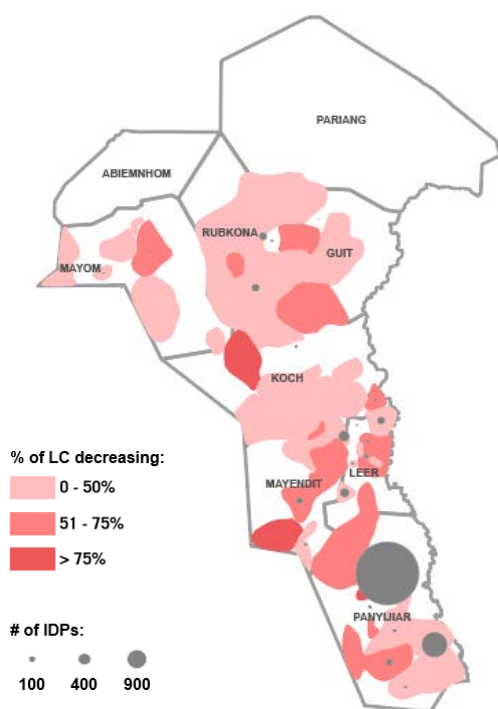
¹⁵ DTM, August 2016.

¹⁶ IOM, South Sudan: Bentiu PoC Update – Displacement Tracking and Monitoring: Population Count – 27-29 May 2016.

REACH will continue to monitor whether the observed IDP response during the wet season (to the initial stability, the July crisis and the tentative respite from violence in August) is representative of future displacement trends, whereby IDPs regularly enter and exit formal displacement sites in large numbers according to actual or perceived changes in the security context.

De-population of host communities in assessed villages

Map 2: Reported decline in local host community (LC) population and reported IDP settlements, August 2016



In the lead-up to the renewed fighting in July, the number of assessed villages reported as being completely de-populated (i.e. no remaining population) increased slightly throughout the course of the wet season, with none in May, 1 in June, and 2 in July. June and July were the first two months in which any assessed community was reported to have been completely de-populated since the beginning of REACH assessments in 2015. This may be a reflection of increasing insecurity, and thus increased displacement, in certain parts of the state during those months. However, it should be noted that REACH data collection does not always cover the same communities each month, and therefore it

cannot be confirmed that this de-population actually occurred during the months of June and July.

In those villages where at least some of the host community has remained, security was reportedly the primary reason for staying in their current location in July. This may suggest that even those communities remaining in their pre-crisis location had become increasingly sensitive to and cognisant of changes in the security context in the lead-up to and during the instability. This represents a large shift from May, when KIs reported that in 65 of 68 communities most people were staying there simply because it was their home, with security being cited as the primary reason for staying in only 3 communities.

However, as of August 2016, no KIs reported completely de-populated host communities, suggesting a possible recovery from the earlier insecurity. This would be reflective of the improved security and reduction in fighting that characterised the month of August in Unity. Overall, across Unity, KIs in 50 of 69 communities reported that the remaining population was staying in place simply because it was their home, and only 5 cited security as the primary pull factor. Again, this is likely reflective of the temporary improvement in stability in August.

However, it should also be noted that in August the security situation varied across Unity; in counties directly affected by fighting, such as Leer, FGD participants in Bentiu PoC reported that the only reason some of the local population remains in their village is because those who are elderly or have very young children are unable to travel to a more secure location such as Bentiu PoC.

IDP population in assessed communities

Only 22 of 56 communities were reportedly hosting IDPs in July. This is a large decline from previous months: 50 of 68 communities were reportedly hosting them in May, and 49 of 68 were hosting them in June. This decrease may be due to a combination of factors, including IDPs returning to the PoC in the wake of the violence in southern Unity State in July, returning to their homes due to the perceived

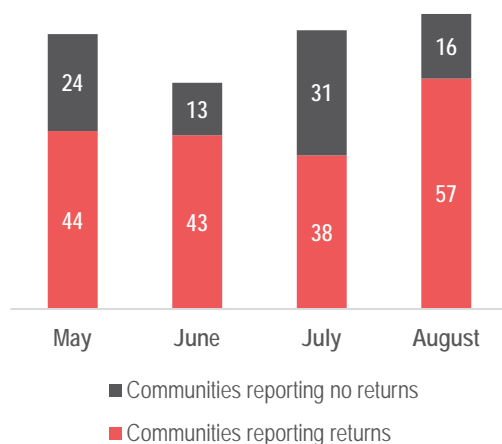
improved security situation in northern Unity State as compared to southern Unity, and/or concentrating in fewer locations than before, such as Nyal, Bentiu Town, or catchment areas that receive humanitarian assistance. Registration figures from IOM show that the vast majority of those settling in Bentiu Town and catchment areas are not originally from there but have relocated there in order to receive services that they otherwise would be unable to get.¹⁷

In August, although there was not an increase in communities reporting that they hosted IDPs, the reasons for IDPs to choose their location did shift as compared to July; 14 of 44 communities reported that wanting to be closer to family was the most important pull factor for IDPs to their chosen location, slightly edging out security (13 of 44). This represents a marked shift from July (when the vast majority of communities reported security as the most important pull factor), but is similar to May, when security and wanting to be close to home were reported as the primary pull factor in equal numbers. Again, this possibly suggests a perceived sense of improved security and thus a gradual return to pre-crisis trends.

Returned local community

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, fewer host community returns were reported in July compared to previous months, which can likely be attributed to the outbreak of fighting and resultant instability.

Figure 2: # of communities in which members of the host community have returned, May-August 2016



¹⁷ IOM, DTM: Greater Bentiu Population Movement Trends, June 2016.

Throughout the assessment period, safety was reported as the primary reason for returning, and aid (whether it was received in their location or in the PoC and brought to their location) was the main secondary reason.

Most July and August returns were reported in Mayom, Rubkona, and Guit, while further south in Leer and Mayendit, where the violence was reportedly most intense, far fewer returns were reported. This contrasts markedly with May and June, when the majority of returns were reported in southern counties, while returns to northern counties were much fewer in number. Again, these patterns appear to correlate strongly with changes in the security context over the May-August period.

SERVICES IN ASSESSED COMMUNITIES

Protection

Only 19 of 72 communities reported having access to some kind of protection service in August, which is comparable to July but down from 40 of 58 in pre-crisis June. This is likely reflective of the impact of the July crisis on the availability of protection services.

Echoing the expected impact of violence on protection, the foremost protection concerns for men and women respectively increased in July. Killing and injury was reported as men's most important protection concern by 42 of 55 communities in June, increasing to 56 of 67 in July and decreasing again to 48 of 68 in August. Similarly, sexual violence was reported as women's most important protection concern by 35 of 56 communities in June, increasing to 48 of 66 in July. However, this proportion did not change significantly in August (50 of 69 communities).

Serious protection concerns have been recorded across Unity State in 2016, including missing and separated children, forced recruitment and gender-based violence. Physical abuse and sexual violence,

particularly towards women, remains a widespread problem, as for other parts of South Sudan.

Food Security

Violence in Unity State was most severe during the 2015 wet season, which drove people from their homes in large numbers during the critical planting period. IDPs now returning to their homelands have had to start cultivation all over again. Even in places in the north of the state, where land is not occupied by armed groups, the missed planting season last year has meant that many do not have access to seed stock that they would have otherwise been able to plant, or food stores to feed themselves and their families during the lean season preceding the green harvest. As a result, Emergency (IPC¹⁸ Phase 4) food security conditions were found to be persistent in all of the assessed counties aside from Mayom, where agricultural activities have not been disrupted by the recent conflict, and Rubkona, both of which were classed as IPC Phase 3: Crisis for most of the wet season.

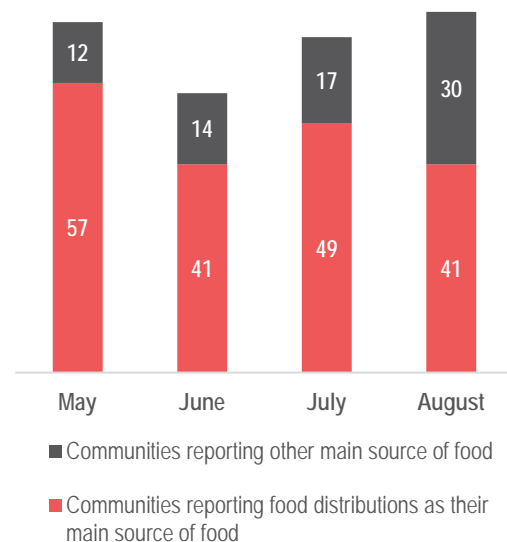
The food security situation reached its lowest point in July amid conflict, market shocks, and restricted movement on the part of both IDPs and humanitarian organizations.¹⁹ Only 18 of 58 communities reported having access to adequate amounts of food in July, whereas 29 of 67 communities in May and 24 of 55 communities in June had reported sufficient food supplies. This suggests that food security has worsened since the onset of fighting, despite the concerted efforts of the World Food Programme (WFP) and its partners to reach populations in need. In August there was a return to pre-crisis trends, with roughly half of assessed communities (32 of 70) reporting adequate access to food. This is likely a reflection of the positive impact of improved security on access to food.

Indeed, **conflict is the main reason for food security gaps across Unity State.** In July, 31 of the 36 communities reporting inadequate access to food

reported that they were unable to access enough food because it was unsafe to plant, while 25 communities reported that all of their crops had been destroyed in the fighting. Similar reasons were reported throughout the wet season, including August.

Market access has also steadily declined over the wet season, from 22 of 57 communities in May, to 15 of 57 communities in June, to 12 of 58 communities in July, to 10 of 75 in August. This is likely due to the wet season itself, which makes many of the usual transport routes in Unity State impassable. As a result, food prices have risen to record levels, making most goods unaffordable. In fact, in July inflation was so severe that the prices of most goods were 630% higher than the five-year average.²⁰ With the security situation deteriorating across the country, the population in Unity State will likely be unable to provide for themselves without additional humanitarian assistance.

Figure 3: # of communities reporting food distribution as their main source of food, May-August 2016



KIs in 49 of 66 communities in July, and 41 of 71 in August, reported that they obtained most of their food from food distributions by WFP and its

¹⁸ Integrated Food Security Phase Classification.

¹⁹ FEWSNET, Worsening food insecurity in Juba as renewed conflict disrupts trade flows, July 2016.

²⁰ WFP, South Sudan Market Price Bulletin, August 2016.

partners, representing a decrease from May. In July, nearly all assessed communities (56 of 58) reported having received a food distribution in the last month, with northern Koch being the only exception. Furthermore, 44 of 55 communities expected to receive another distribution in the next month, although this had decreased to 36 of 62 in August. The decrease on both counts from July to August is likely a consequence of the impact of the crisis on humanitarian access, as many agencies were forced to evacuate their staff from crisis-affected areas and delivery of services by road became increasingly unfeasible due to poor road conditions and insecurity.

Due to the lack of food, most communities reported employing a variety of coping strategies in order to stretch their limited resources. **In both July and August, approximately half of all assessed communities reported selling livestock, skipping meals, limiting portion sizes, or, most worryingly, skipping entire days.**

Although famine has not been declared, the most recent IPC analysis indicates a looming risk of famine in Leer, Mayendit, and Koch counties.²¹ **NGO assistance in the food security sector is therefore critical, as without humanitarian intervention it is likely that the situation will continue to deteriorate.**

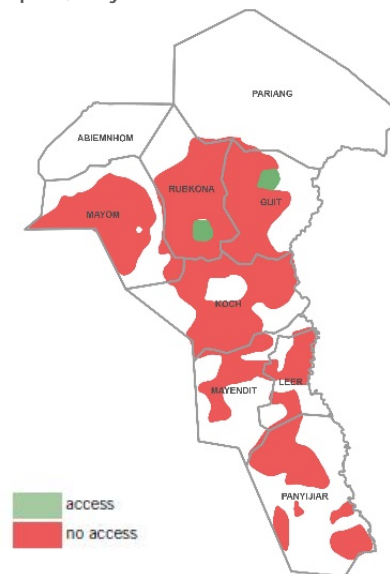
Livelihoods

Other than the southern counties that were directly affected by the July crisis, namely Leer, Koch and Mayendit, where IDPs attempting to return often found their land occupied by armed forces and therefore inaccessible, land has generally been reported to be accessible for cultivation in Unity State throughout the wet season.²² However, **only 2 of 58 communities reported having access to any agricultural inputs in July**, such as seeds and tools, in order to make the land productive (see Map 3).

Lack of agricultural inputs has been a continual concern throughout the wet season, particularly during the critical planting period of May-June. Although land is available and accessible for farming, many returning host communities have lacked the tools needed to take advantage of the fragile peace and therefore continue to require humanitarian support.

Fortunately, by August, likely because of the improved security situation, many more communities (39 of 73) were reporting access to agricultural inputs. Many of the communities reporting this were in Rubkona, so this improvement may be partly attributable to the distributions of seeds and agricultural tools conducted by DRC in the Nhialdu area from June to August.

Map 3: Communities reporting access to agricultural inputs, July 2016



Most of the assessed communities (54 of 58 communities in June, 55 of 57 in July and 73 of 75 in August) reported that there were **no opportunities for non-agricultural casual labour jobs**. Furthermore, in most communities, for the entire assessment period, **all remaining assets have been reported as stolen, greatly limiting the potential to restart livelihoods**. This is a large drop from May, when only 16 of 66 communities reported a lack of jobs. This is likely due to the increase in

²¹ IPC ALERT, SOUTH SUDAN: Rising Food Insecurity and Critical Malnutrition, June 2016.

²² REACH, Nyal Focus Group Discussions, September 2016.

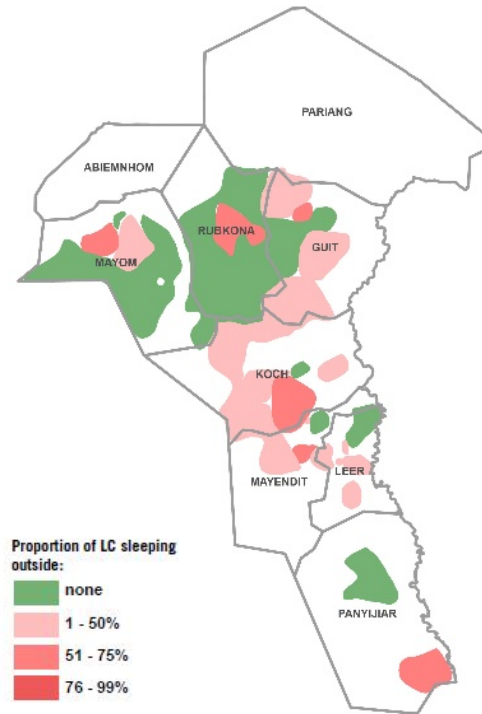
tensions leading up to the conflict in July, as most of the livelihoods losses were reported in Leer, Koch, and Mayendit counties. The few communities reporting job opportunities are located in areas where there is a strong NGO presence, suggesting that remote areas have not received much support in improving livelihoods. Further humanitarian support is clearly required to help rebuild livelihoods in Unity State.

The poor state of the current livelihoods situation can likely be attributed in large part to cattle raids that took place earlier this year. In July, **36 of 58 assessed communities reportedly experienced a cattle raid in the last 6 months**. Twenty-six of those communities reported that most personal property had been destroyed, and 17 of 33 reported that public infrastructure had been destroyed. Twenty-seven of fifty-six communities reported that most of their cattle had been stolen, which is a higher proportion than any month prior, before decreasing slightly to 29 of 70 in August. Furthermore, many people are likely to have to sell off their cattle and other livestock in order to trade for food if the food insecurity deepens.²³

Shelter

The primary shelter reported in most communities in June, July and August was the rakooba, followed by the tukul. This can be evidence of a population that has recently arrived in their current location, or of a highly unstable context in which the community does not feel safe inhabiting or rebuilding their tukuls, because rakoobas are typically more temporary structures that can be both constructed and taken down in a short period of time.

However, despite large-scale displacement, few KIs reported that most people were sleeping outside throughout the 2016 wet season. As illustrated in Map 4, in July, while the south was experiencing increased violence, the north remained stable, which likely explains why most communities reporting that no one in the community was sleeping outside without shelter were in the northern counties.



Map 4: Reported local community (LC) sleeping with no shelter, July 2016

The ongoing violence appears to have destroyed a large number of shelters. 50 of 58 communities in July and 60 of 71 communities in August reported that at least some shelters in their village had been attacked or destroyed during the fighting since the conflict began. In August, 8 of 63 communities reported that a majority of shelters had been destroyed, and 51 of 63 reported that at least 10% of shelters in the community had been damaged or destroyed. Given how few communities reported a majority of people sleeping outside, this strongly suggests that the majority of damaged shelters have been rebuilt. Most communities reported having grass, mud, and wood available for construction. However, very few reported having access to rope or plastic sheeting necessary for temporary shelter, which suggests **if displacement continues, lack of materials for re-building necessitates distribution of shelter NFIs.**

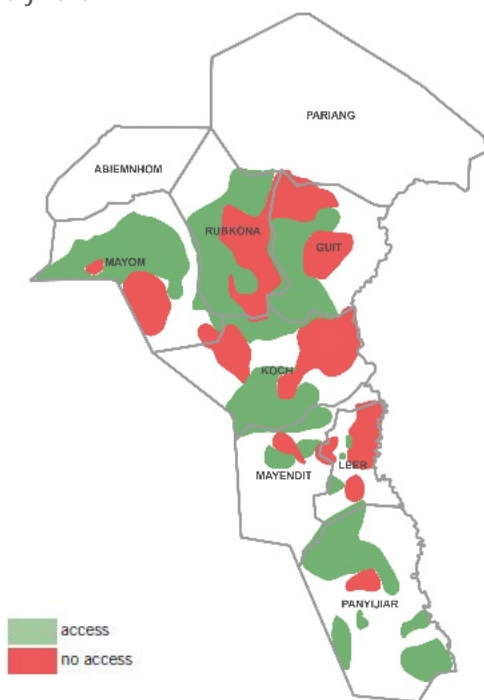
In July, 30 of 41 communities reported that less than half of the community were using mosquito nets. Furthermore, not all communities reported using mosquito nets for their intended purpose, with

²³ Ibid.

14 reporting that mosquito nets were being used as rope, and 17 reporting that they were being used as other building materials. An inadequate quantity and inappropriate usage of mosquito nets suggests further NGO intervention is required to prevent malaria in Unity state. Similar dynamics were reported in August. The Shelter Cluster has noted that while NFI goals for NFI loose items have been met in Rubkona, Leer, and Mayendit, they are lacking in Mayom and Koch.²⁴

Water and Sanitation

Map 5: Communities reporting access to clean water, July 2016



Approximately the same proportion of communities were reporting access to clean water over the course of the wet season; in July 32 of 57 communities reported access to clean water. In August, some improvement was observed, with 52 of 73 reporting that clean water was available. This may be attributable to improvements in the security situation in August, but is likely to decrease as water shortages become more frequent during the course of the dry season in late 2016.

However, **only 6 of 32 responding communities reported that their primary safe water source was within half an hour's distance in July.** Focus group discussions conducted by REACH in catchment areas around Unity State found that if a water source is over 20 minutes away, people are unlikely to use it. Similarly, FGD participants in Bentiu PoC often reported that their village has access to safe water, but upon further probing it is revealed that only those living closest to the water pump actually use it. For most of the village population, the pump is too far away to be realistically accessed on a regular basis, and therefore the majority of inhabitants collect water directly from the swamp or river. Furthermore, on average only half of existing boreholes were reported to be functional, with many having been destroyed by fighting in the course of the ongoing crisis. All of this suggests that genuine access to safe water is lower than reported by KIs.

Open defecation is practiced in virtually all of the assessed communities, with only one community of 58 in July and 2 of 75 in August reporting that most of the host community and IDPs living there were using latrines (slightly down from 3 of 58 in both May and June). Sanitation infrastructure is largely absent in Unity State, and the swampy environment and heavy rains are often perceived as a disincentive in the construction and maintenance of permanent latrines. This has severe implications for people's health, especially in swampy areas such as those found in southern Leer, Mayendit and Panyijar counties, where many defecate in the swamp and therefore directly contaminate the drinking supply.²⁵ Sanitation infrastructure and training is therefore one of the foremost priority needs in Unity State.

Health

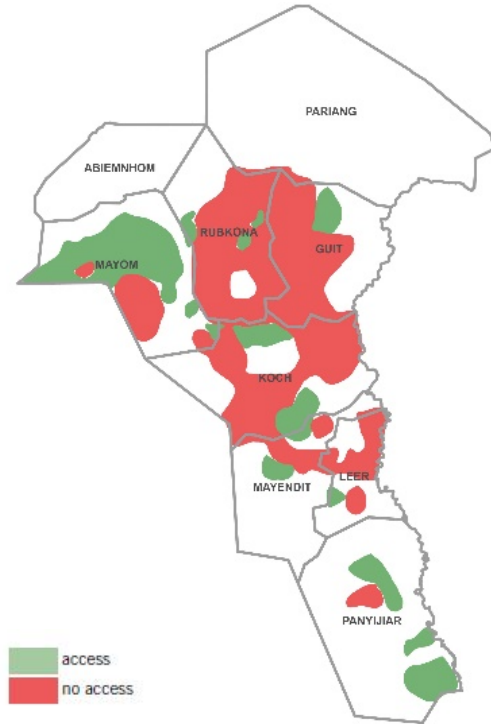
Health services were reportedly available in 19 of 54 communities in July and 19 of 73 August, which represents a decline compared to previous months, when nearly half of all assessed communities reported access to healthcare. This is consistent with FGD reports of functioning health centres being abandoned by staff in July, thereby adding to the

²⁴ Shelter Cluster, South Sudan Response – NFI distribution coverage, July 2016.

²⁵ REACH, Greater Nyal East Situation Overview, December 2015.

number of health centres that have been forced to close down since the beginning of the South Sudan crisis in 2013. As a result, 25 of 30 communities reported in July that their nearest health facility had been destroyed, and 11 of 30 reported that there were no longer any staff there.

Map 6: Communities reporting access to healthcare, July 2016



In May and June, KIs in nearly all communities reported health centres being within an hour's walk. However, in July, 3 communities reported that the nearest health centre was at least 2 hours away, and another 10 of 19 reported that it was more than an hour away. As Map 6 illustrates, healthcare is mostly only accessible in a few locations, including Mayom, Panyijar, and the Bentiu Town area, as well as northern Koch. It should be noted that access to healthcare is likely higher than reported, though limited, in some areas of Rubkona, Guit and Koch Counties, thanks to humanitarian activities such as IRC's mobile outreach in Rubkona. Other parts of the state continue to lack key healthcare services.

In July, 43 of 54 communities reported inadequate access to drugs, particularly malaria treatment and paracetamol. Similar trends were reported in May and June, suggesting that there has been poor access to healthcare in most parts of Unity State. These problems have almost certainly been exacerbated by the evacuation of many health partners due to insecurity since July, as well as by the looting of medical NGO compounds in Mayendit and Leer by armed combatants.²⁶

Malaria was reported to be the most important health problem in July and August, followed by malnutrition and diarrhoea. This is consistent with previous months, and corresponds with other assessments conducted by the Health Cluster.²⁷

Education

Access to education has remained low but stable across Unity State for the duration of the wet season. Only 11 of 58 communities in July and 14 of 74 in August reported that there was adequate access to education services in the community. In over 90% of those communities, primary education was available, while half reported some kind of pre-primary service. However, education infrastructure has collapsed in most places since the initial crisis in 2013, and furthermore enrolment in school has dropped from 38,524 pupils in 2015 to 9,756 in 2016. The average teacher to pupil ratio in the Greater Upper Nile Region is 1 to 55.²⁸

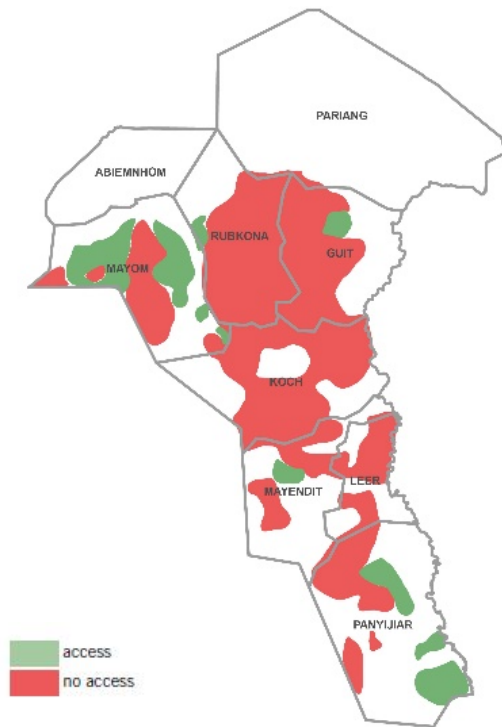
In most communities that reported having access to education in July (8 of 11), over half of all boys of school age were attending school. However, only 4 of 11 communities reported that over half of girls were attending school. Reports by the education cluster support many of these findings.²⁹

²⁶ Health Cluster, Health Cluster Bulletin 02, August 2016.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ South Sudan Education Cluster, Secondary data on the first quarter of the 2016 school year, May 2016.

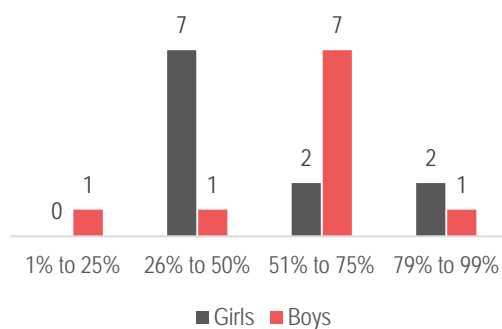
²⁹ Ibid.



Map 7: Communities reporting access to education, July 2016

FGDs conducted by REACH in catchment sites suggest that the gender disparity in school attendance rates illustrated in Figure 4 is linked to traditional gender roles, which is supported by the fact that in previous months a large number of KIs reported that girls should not be allowed to attend schools. Across both genders, respondents did not give clear answers as to why so few children were attending school, with most attributing it to insecurity or insufficient supplies.

Figure 4: Percentage of children attending primary school (where education is reported as available), by community, July 2016



³⁰ South Sudan Education Cluster, Mayom County Initial Rapid Needs Assessment, May 2016.

As in previous months, education access in July was mostly reported in Mayom, Rubkona, Guit, and Panyijar, with some functional services also present in the Niemni (northern Guit) area, as well as northern Mayendit. This distribution reflects the areas in which NGOs are supporting schools in Unity. As Mayom has largely been spared from armed conflict in 2016, there has been an opportunity for NGOs to maintain a presence and provide continuous support there, and as a result it now has the most functional schools in the country.³⁰ However, the majority of these schools are still community supported, and lack books and other necessary learning materials. **Urgent assistance from humanitarian actors is required in order for Unity State's few functioning schools to become viable education institutions.**

CONCLUSION

Humanitarian organizations have mainly responded to the July crisis by withdrawing to formal displacement sites and catchment areas in order to serve the growing number of people there. This is likely to strain the already tenuous provision of services elsewhere in the state, which has reportedly deteriorated throughout the wet season. Nevertheless, humanitarian intervention is essential to the process of resilience and recovery from the ongoing conflict and the most recent crisis. **REACH has identified the following needs that should be prioritized by the humanitarian effort in Unity State.**



PROTECTION

Protection has long been a priority concern in South Sudan, and the protection context in Unity State severely deteriorated during the month of July, with reports of major violence committed against civilians in the southern counties. Protection therefore remains a priority humanitarian concern.



FOOD SECURITY & LIVELIHOODS

Although land is reportedly available for cultivation in nearly all communities, and the number of communities reporting land disputes has fallen to their lowest numbers since the beginning of this ongoing assessment in 2015, most people still do not have the seeds or tools necessary to support their own cultivation, although this has improved significantly from July to August. Given that many communities will not harvest crops this season, support through general food distributions (GFDs) or cash-based transfers (CBTs) will likely be required across the state through the end of the 2017 lean season.



SHELTER

Shelter trends have improved over the course of the wet season, but most communities lack key items like rope to build new shelters.



WASH

WASH needs remain pronounced. Approximately half of Unity State's boreholes are in dire need of repair, and functioning boreholes are too far for most

people to use on a regular basis. Sanitation infrastructure such as latrines remains a priority need.



HEALTH

Health services have improved since July, but are still less widely available than what was reported in May. A lack of staff, supplies and facilities are likely to continue to limit services in more remote areas of the country.



EDUCATION

Access to education has always been extremely low in Unity State. Infrastructure, amenities (such as latrines and water points), school supplies and staff capacity are all seriously lacking, and should be prioritised by humanitarian agencies seeking to improve access to education.

FORECAST

As the dry season approaches, roads will become navigable and hard-to-reach populations will become more accessible to both humanitarians and armed groups. As such, the reach and scale of humanitarian services is set to expand with a renewed Beyond Bentiu effort, but increased displacement due to intensified fighting and instability is also expected. The resultant impact on the population of Unity State is likely to be complex and unpredictable. These trends will be closely monitored in future months.