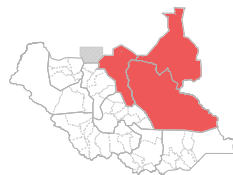


HUMANITARIAN SITUATION MONITORING

Greater Upper Nile

October 2022 - March 2023 | South Sudan



CONTEXT & RATIONALE

Between May and October 2022, communities in Greater Upper Nile faced various shocks and stressors, including recurring conflict, violence, climatic shocks, and limited public service infrastructure.¹

Notably during this period, two high-intensity conflict periods drove large-scale displacement, limited humanitarian access, and had repercussions for affected populations' food security and livelihoods, and access to services.² In northern Jonglei and Upper Nile states, conflict between armed groups – which began in August 2022 – continued through December 2022 along the White Nile.³ In Greater Pibor, mass violence in December 2022 and January 2023 sparked reprisal attacks in northern Jonglei in February and March 2023.⁴

Rainy season flooding in October 2022 also compounded needs in the region during the reporting period. **While flooding had affected 258,000 people in the region as of October 2022, marking a 33% decrease from the same period in 2021, floodwaters were still responsible for the displacement of tens of thousands of people.** Flooding-driven displacement was most notable in Leer and Mayendit counties (Unity State), where floods reportedly displaced more than 65,000 people, or 43% of the combined 148,000 people living in those counties.⁵

Such shocks and stressors occurred within a context of significant pre-existing vulnerability throughout the region. **For the April-July lean season period, people in 29 of 32 counties in the region were estimated to be facing emergency level (Phase 4) food insecurity as per the Integrated Phase Food Security Classification (IPC) analysis.**⁶ In 6 of these counties, Fangak, Canal/Pigi and Ayod (Jonglei State), Pibor (Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA)), and Leer and Mayendit (Unity State), IPC analysis estimated that 74,141 people would face catastrophic (Phase 5) food insecurity.⁷

Displaced populations – inherently vulnerable – make up a considerable proportion of Greater Upper Nile's population: in Jonglei and Upper Nile states, internally displaced people (IDPs) constitute approximately 15% of each state's population. In Unity State, home to South Sudan's largest IDP camp located in Bentiu, Rubkona County, IDPs constitute nearly 34% of the state's population.⁸

The combination of underlying vulnerability and acute shocks between October 2022 and March 2023 has seemingly resulted in the continuation of an extremely poor humanitarian situation in the region: of the 4.67 million people estimated to live in Greater Upper Nile, the 2023 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO) classified 3,775,097, or 80%, as people in need (PiN).⁹

To support humanitarian actors' understanding of the complex dynamics of vulnerability, shocks, needs, and coping capacities in Greater Upper Nile, REACH has been monitoring the humanitarian situation in hard-to-reach areas since 2015. This situation overview is built on an analysis of monthly data that was collected by REACH enumerators through structured key informant interviews conducted with key informants (KIs) knowledgeable about a hard-to-reach settlement throughout the Greater Upper Nile from October 2022 to March 2023. Where possible, findings were triangulated with secondary sources.

Map 1: Assessment coverage

● Assessed settlement

0 - 4.9%

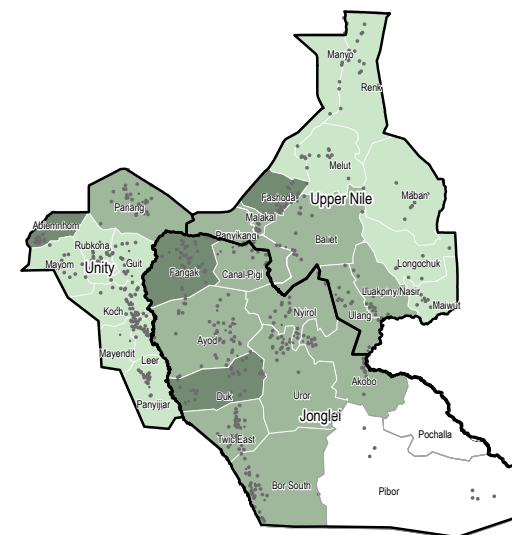
5 - 10%

11 - 20%

21 - 50%

51 - 100%

Not assessed



METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas, REACH uses primary data from key informants (KIs) who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK). Information for this report was collected from KIs interviewed throughout the country in October 2022-March 2023. In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted using a structured survey tool. After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal or most credible response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting. Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of all settlements in each assessed month were included in analysis.¹ Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month vary. To reduce the likelihood that variations in data are attributable to coverage differences, over time analyses were only conducted for counties with at least 70% consistent payam coverage throughout the period of analysis.² Findings are not generalisable and should be considered indicative of the situation in assessed hard-to-reach areas between May and October 2022, unless specified otherwise. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK Terms of Reference](#).

Shocks & stressors

In October 2022, an estimated 3.77 million of 4.67 million people in Greater Upper Nile were classified as people in need (PiN), with 1.12 million facing emergency-level (IPC Phase 4) or greater food insecurity, and more than 60,000 people facing catastrophe-level (IPC Phase 5) food insecurity.³ These numbers suggest that the seasonal, recurring, and unique shocks which occurred between October 2022 and March 2023 – flooding, conflict, rising prices and displacement – likely substantially increased needs in some areas of the region. This occurred as humanitarian assistance, which can be used to adapt to and cope with shocks, decreased, potentially compounding the ability of affected populations to mitigate existing and nascent vulnerabilities.⁴

Between October 2022 and March 2023, KIs in 53% of assessed settlements in Jonglei, 44% in Unity, and 42% in Upper Nile reported the occurrence of a negative event which impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods in the previous month. Out of the assessed settlements reporting such a shock across this period, the most commonly reported types of shock by proportion of assessed settlements were in Jonglei: persistent or flash flooding (42%), rising prices (16%), and conflict (9%); in Unity: persistent or flash flooding (75%); and in Upper Nile: flash or persistent flooding (35%) and conflict (34%). In Jonglei, across this period, in those assessed settlements

KEY MESSAGES

- **Conflict in Upper Nile and Jonglei states reportedly drove significant and multi-sectoral humanitarian needs between October 2022 and March 2023**, most notably in Panyikang and Fashoda counties (Upper Nile), and Fangak, Canal/Pigi, Pibor, Akobo, and Nyirol counties (Jonglei).
- These **conflicts reportedly resulted in the displacement of approximately 100,000 people throughout Greater Upper Nile during the October 2022-March 2023 period**, likely resulting in heightened vulnerability both for displaced populations and for host communities, for whom arrivals may act as a livelihoods-impacting shock.
- **Persistent flooding reportedly impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods for settlements in the region, including through the disruption of cultivation cycles and disruption to the provision of humanitarian aid.**⁵ Persistent flooding seemingly not only impacts current access to food sources and livelihoods, but also increases vulnerability to future flooding events. In these areas, already-saturated soil is unable to retain additional water, so small-scale rainfall which otherwise would not create serious flooding risks, may cause significant flash flooding.
- IPC outcome data indicates that food security outcomes in Greater Upper Nile remained poor between October 2022 and March 2023, with analysis suggesting that 34%, 31%, and 26% of the populations of Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile, would experience Phase 4 (emergency) food insecurity by July 2023.⁶ **In the October 2022 IPC analysis, Akobo, Canal/Pigi, Fangak, and Pibor counties (Jonglei State) were estimated to contain pockets of continued catastrophic (Phase 5) food insecurity comprising 61,000 people.**⁷ In the second projection period – estimating for April - July 2023 – IPC analysis assessed that this number would reduce to 36,000 people in Jonglei but include an additional 7,000 people in Leer and Mayendit counties (Unity State).⁸
- **Throughout the reporting period, at least some populations in Greater Upper Nile seemingly used displacement to cope with shocks** – like conflict or flooding – and longer-term stressors, like poor food availability or access. **Such displacement may itself compound stressors for already-vulnerable host communities, if they struggle to absorb arrivals without further spreading already scarce resources amongst a larger population.**

reporting the occurrence of such a shock, the most commonly reported types of shocks were persistent or flash flooding (42% of assessed settlements which reported the occurrence of a shock); rising prices (16%) and conflict (9%). During the same period in Unity the most commonly reported type of shock was persistent or flash flooding (75% of assessed settlements which reported a shock). In Upper Nile, in such settlements, the most commonly reported types of shock were conflict (34% of assessed settlements which reported a shock), and flash or persistent flooding (35%).

Conflict in Upper Nile and Jonglei

Between October 2022 and March 2023, conflict – both localized and large-scale – continued to drive needs in Greater Upper Nile, specifically in Upper Nile and Jonglei states.¹

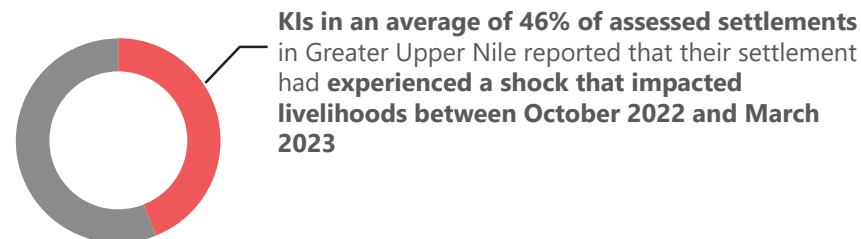
Beginning in August 2022, clashes between armed groups in Panyikang (Upper Nile) and Fangak (Jonglei) counties, had instigated the displacement of more than 40,000 people by December 2022.² Violence was characterized by the destruction of property and productive assets, attacks on humanitarian operations and displaced person sites, widespread displacement, and reports of family separation.³

In November and December 2022, the conflict – the geographical locus for which had been largely centred in Tonga, Atar, and New Fangak, in Panyikang, Canal/Pigi, and Fangak counties respectively – expanded, with widespread violence affecting communities and causing displacement throughout Panyikang and Fashoda counties (Upper Nile State).⁴

AoK data from this period reflects the impacts of violence on the lives and livelihoods of people living in Upper Nile. Data from October 2022, indicated that all or nearly all settlements in Panyikang County experienced a shock in the previous month which impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods. KIs in 100% of assessed settlements reported the occurrence of such a shock. KIs in 71% of those settlements reported shock as conflict. As fighting expanded to Fashoda County in November and December, KI reports of conflict shocks also increased. In December 2022, KIs in 88% of assessed settlements in Fashoda reported the occurrence of a shock which impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods; all of them reported the shock type as conflict.

In Jonglei State, December 2022 and January 2023 saw a renewal of violence in the GPAA at levels not recorded since December 2020.⁵ Violence reportedly targeted WASH and health facilities, humanitarian operations, markets and schools, and displaced approximately 32,000 people.⁶

Following attacks in the GPAA, fighting in northern Jonglei in late January through March – in Akobo and Nyirol counties in particular – reportedly displaced another



30,000 people. This violence seemingly compounded ongoing displacement from the area, reportedly driven by severe food insecurity.⁷

As in Upper Nile, AoK data reflects the impact of conflict on communities in Jonglei. In February 2022, in Pibor County, GPAA, KIs in 95% of assessed settlements reported the occurrence of a shock in the previous month which impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods; 78% of those reported the shock type as conflict.

Throughout the region, conflict events appear to have continued unimpeded throughout the October 2022 - March 2023 reporting period, with indications that they may re-start with little warning during the next six-month period.⁸ If conflict in Greater Upper Nile were to resume – particularly in Upper Nile and Jonglei states – the humanitarian situation would likely deteriorate exponentially, as new conflict shocks compound old ones, and vulnerable populations are left with few options for coping, having already displaced.

Displacement and arrivals

These conflicts – in Upper Nile amongst the largest-scale since the end of the civil war period (2013-2018) and in Jonglei the largest-scale since 2020 – have seemingly driven displacement and displacement-related needs for both directly and indirectly impacted populations.⁹ By October 2022, the conflict in Upper Nile displaced more than 25,000 people from areas affected by conflict to informal IDP sites in Old Fangak, Fangak County, and 18,000 people to Malakal Protection of Civilians site (PoC) in Malakal County.¹⁰ By March 2023, an estimated 30,000 people had been displaced by violence in Pibor, GPAA, and another 30,000 were displaced by violence in northern Jonglei.¹¹ In Upper Nile, according to key informants working in the state, people who were displaced as a result of fighting in August through November 2022 largely remained displaced in March 2023.¹²

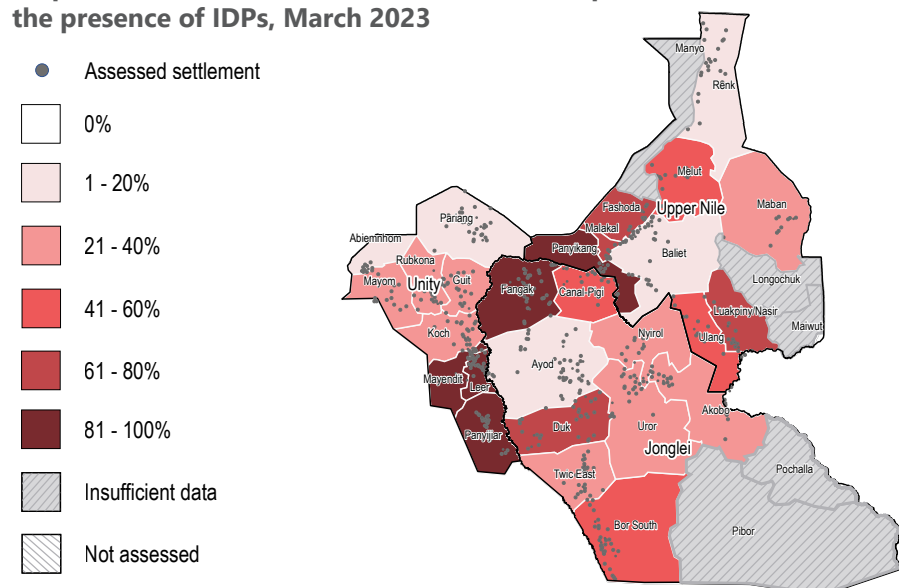
Such displacement reportedly had ramifications not only for IDPs – for whom displacement can be modeled as a reduction of resilience and an increase of

vulnerability – but for the communities in which such IDPs arrive, for whom the arrival of IDPs itself functions as a shock.¹

In Greater Upper Nile between October 2022 and March 2023, AoK data has reflected IDP arrivals, and the proportion of IDPs in assessed settlements, following shocks throughout the region. In Fangak (Jonglei) in particular, which reportedly saw the arrival of more than 25,000 people following the conflict in Upper Nile, the proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported the presence of IDPs increased markedly between October and March, as did the proportion of the settlement KIs reported IDPs as making up. In October 2022, KIs in 62% of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs. In those settlements, KIs in 26% reported that IDPs made up more than half the population of the settlement. By March 2023, KIs in 98% of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs. In those settlements, KIs in 67% reported that IDPs made up more than half the population of the settlement.

In Upper Nile State, the arrival of IDPs to the Malakal PoC also reportedly created demand for increased space for IDPs in the camp, and put further pressure on an already overcrowded site.² As of mid-October 2022, prior to much of the displacement to the PoC, the South Sudan camp coordination and camp management cluster (CCCM) estimated that each person in the camp had access to 3.38 sqm of land space, just under the Sphere standard minimum of 3.5 sqm of land space.³ With the arrival of at least 18,000 additional IDPs by the end of that month, and a further 4,000 to Malakal

Map 2: % of assessed settlements where KIs reported the presence of IDPs, March 2023



Town in March 2023, it is likely that arrivals have contributed significantly to increased overcrowding in the camp – along with the health and access to service challenges which accompany overcrowding.⁴

Further displacement and arrivals to host communities already experiencing underlying vulnerability, beyond the end of the reporting period in March 2023, may result in severely negative outcomes both for displaced people and the communities in which they arrive. As South Sudan enters the lean season (April-July), increasing populations in areas of IDP arrivals may exacerbate competition for already-scarce food sources and access to humanitarian services.⁵

Persistent flooding

Throughout Greater Upper Nile between October 2022 and March 2023, a combination of sitting floodwater and flash floods reportedly contributed to a fourth year of atypically severe flooding in the region.⁶ According to the Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWS NET), in Fangak and Canal/Pigi counties (Jonglei), Melut (Upper Nile), and Rubkona, Guit, Mayendit, and Panyijiar (Unity), flooding from 2021 persisted through the 2022 dry season. Flood-affected populations in these areas during the 2022 rainy season likely experienced compounded flooding-shocks as a result, with both persistent and flash flooding potentially disrupting their ability to engage in livelihoods activities and access services.⁷ In Rubkona County, year-on-end flooding resulted in dyke breaches at the Bentiu IDP camp – the largest such site in the country housing more than 110,000 IDPs – which, throughout the reporting period was completely surrounded by sitting floodwater.⁸

AoK data reflects the impacts flooding has had on lives and livelihoods in Greater Upper Nile through the October 2022 - March 2023 reporting period; through the dry season. In October 2022, at the end of the rainy season (April-November), in assessed settlements where KIs reported the occurrence of a shock, the most commonly reported type of shock was flooding. In Jonglei, KIs in 56% of assessed settlements reported the occurrence of a shock which impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods. Of those, KIs in 66% reported that the type of shock was persistent or flash flooding. In Unity, that number was 86% (of the 65% reporting the occurrence of a shock). In Upper Nile, that number was 34% (of the 60% reporting the occurrence of a shock).

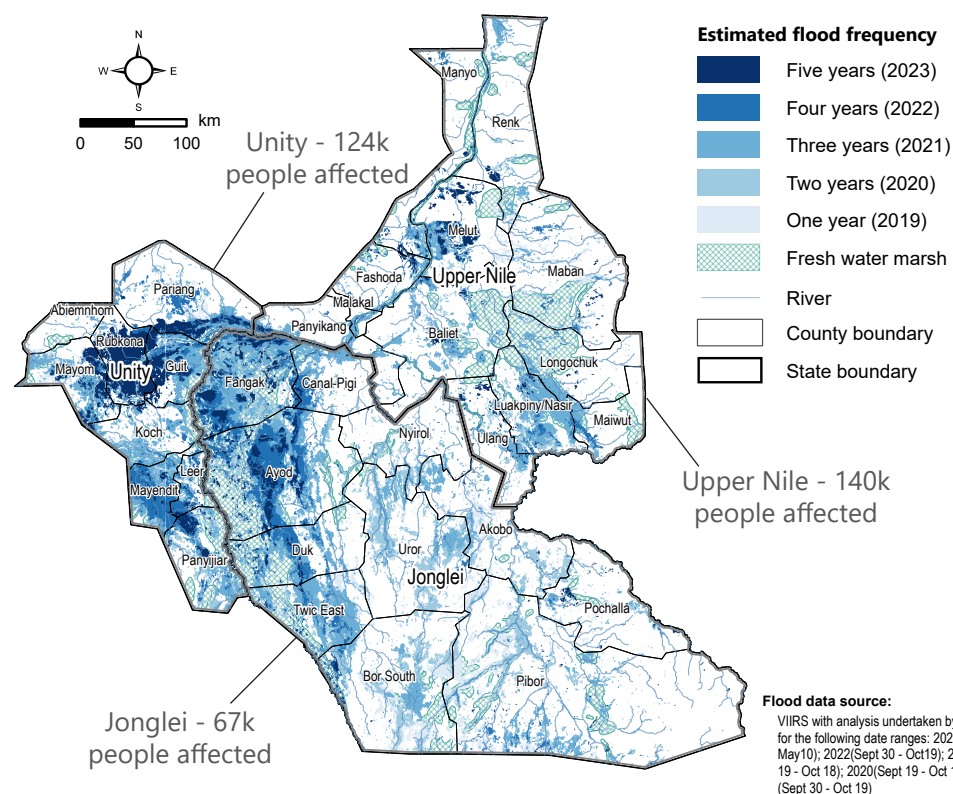
Notably, in some counties in Unity and Upper Nile states, AoK data continued to reflect the impact of flooding on livelihoods in assessed settlements in March 2023, at the height of the dry season – indicating the disruption persistent flooding can cause. In March in Rubkona County, Unity State, KIs in 36% of assessed settlements reported the occurrence of a shock which impacted or led to a loss of livelihoods. Of those, KIs in 100% of the settlements reported the type of shock was persistent flooding. In March in Renk County (Upper Nile) State, KIs in 40% of assessed settlements reported the

occurrence of a shock. Of those, KIs in 90% of the settlements reported that the type of shock was persistent flooding.

Such flooding can have both direct and indirect impacts on affected populations. According to FEWS NET in October 2022, atypical flooding in northern Jonglei prevented or disrupted cultivation in 2021, leading to a decline in cereal production for 2022. This dynamic is likely to have repeated in 2022, given the similar levels of atypical flooding, resulting in reduced cereal production for 2023.¹

In Rubkona County in October 2022, FEWS NET reported that standing floodwater had not receded since the previous rainy season.² This reportedly limited households' access to food and livelihoods engagement, disrupted trade and market functioning, and the delivery of humanitarian assistance.³

Map 3: Estimated flooding extent in Greater Upper Nile, 2019-2023 and people affected per state as of 31 October 2022⁴



In places like Rubkona, Guit, Mayendit, and Panyijar (Unity), Fangak and Canal/Pigi (Jonglei), and Melut and Renk (Upper Nile), recorded to have high levels of standing floodwater, flooding not only impacts current access to food sources and livelihoods, but also increases vulnerability to future flooding events. In these areas, already-saturated soil is unable to retain additional water, so small-scale rainfall which otherwise would not create serious flooding risks, may cause significant flash flooding. In March 2023, at the end of the reporting period and end of the dry season, the risk of renewed flooding continued to pose a threat to affected populations, threatening to force displacement, compound the effects of other shocks, and interrupt already fragile engagement in livelihoods.

ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS & SERVICES

Continued pockets of catastrophic food insecurity

IPC outcome data indicate that food security outcomes in Greater Upper Nile remained poor between October 2022 and March 2023, despite the September - October harvest season when food needs are traditionally mitigated through harvests of sorghum and other cereals.⁵ In the October 2022 IPC analysis, Akobo, Canal/Pigi, Fangak, and Pibor counties (Jonglei) were estimated to contain pockets of continued catastrophic (Phase 5) food insecurity comprising 61,000 people.⁶ In the second projection period – estimating for April - July 2023 – the IPC analysis assessed that this number would reduce to 36,000 people in Jonglei, but include an additional 7,000 people in Leer and Mayendit counties in Unity State.⁷

These numbers represent a decrease in IPC estimates for Phase 5 populations in Jonglei, but a reintroduction of Phase 5 populations in Unity. In March 2022, the IPC estimated the presence of 7,000 people facing catastrophic conditions for the February - July 2022 period. However, in October 2022, despite a complete reduction in the number of people in Phase 5 in Unity for the October 2022 - March 2023 period, the IPC also estimated that 7,000 people would again face Phase 5 food insecurity for the April-July 2023 period, suggesting that drivers are going unaddressed.

Beyond populations experiencing catastrophic food insecurity, the overall food security situation in Greater Upper Nile was also extremely poor during the October 2022 - March 2023 reporting period. In Jonglei in October, more than 600,000 people out of the state's total 2 million were estimated to be experiencing emergency (Phase 4) food insecurity; 30% of the state's population.⁸ In the first projection period – December 2022 - March 2023 – that number was estimated to drop to 27% before rising to 34% in the second projection period, April - July 2023.⁹ In Unity, 24%, or nearly 400,000 of the state's 1.1 million people were estimated to be in Phase 4 in October 2022.¹⁰ As in Jonglei, this number was projected to decrease by 2% during the first projection period before increasing to 31% during the second period.¹¹ In Upper Nile, 17%, or 252,000 of

1.5 million people were estimated to be in Phase 4 in October 2022.¹ As in the rest of the region, this number was projected to decrease to 16% in the first projection period before increasing to 26% in the second projection period.²

These numbers are indicative of a sustained context of extremely poor, and in certain locations, catastrophically poor, food insecurity. Such food insecurity is characterized by very inadequate to extremely inadequate food consumption and extreme depletion of assets and livelihoods strategies to near livelihoods collapse.³ This means that, amongst Phase 4 populations, households either have large food consumption gaps which are reflected in very high acute malnutrition and excess mortality; or that households are only able to mitigate these gaps by employing emergency livelihoods strategies and asset liquidation.⁴ For Phase 5 populations this means that “households have an extreme lack of food and/or other basic needs even after full employment of coping strategies. Starvation, death destitution and extremely critical acute malnutrition levels are evident.”⁵

AoK data reflects the critical food security situation indicated by IPC analysis across the region. Across the October 2022 – March 2023 reporting period, KIs in an average of 77% of assessed settlements in Jonglei, 55% in Unity and 80% in Upper Nile reported that people were not able to access enough food in their settlement in the month prior to data collection.

In the coming months, food security is likely to continue to remain poor, and potentially deteriorate in Greater Upper Nile. With the onset of the rainy season and concurrent lean season, food availability and access are likely to decrease as areas experience the expected drop in food availability which accompanies the lean season, and market supply routes are impeded by flooding-related access constraints. Given food security trends in the region, the continuation of extremely poor food security is likely, and the continuation of catastrophic food security plausible.

Market access

Throughout the October 2022 - March 2023 reporting period, AoK data suggests that cash purchases were a primary mode for obtaining food throughout Greater Upper Nile. In Jonglei, cash-purchased food was the most commonly reported mode for obtaining food in every month but December, with KIs in an average of 61% of assessed settlements reporting such purchases across the reporting period. In Upper Nile, KIs in an average of 63% of assessed settlements reported cash-purchases as a primary mode for obtaining food. In Unity, where cash purchases were a less frequently reported modality for obtaining food, KIs in an average of 37% of assessed settlements reported most people in their settlement had purchased food with cash.

Between October 2022 and March 2023, KIs in a large majority of assessed settlements

across the region reported there were functional marketplaces which they could access. In October 2022, KIs in an average of 90% of assessed settlements across Greater Upper Nile reported that there was at least one functional marketplace people could access from their settlement. In November and December 2022, KIs in 84% of assessed settlements reported such access. In January 2023, this figure increased to 86%, in February 2023 to 89% and in March 2023 decreased to 87%.

Despite high levels of reported market access, KIs in a large majority of assessed settlements also reported the existence of significant barriers to market usage – largely in the form of challenges faced at the marketplace. Aggregated across the reporting period, KIs in assessed settlements in Jonglei (87%), Unity (82%), and Upper Nile (74%) reported that items were too expensive at the marketplace – a challenge which likely posed a barrier to market usage.

Macroeconomic factors between October 2022 and March 2023 likely informed item expense, at least in part, and are likely to worsen in the coming months. From October 2022 to March 2023, the South Sudanese Pound (SSP) continued to lose value against the United States Dollar (USD), depreciating by 25% from 625.4 SSP to 1 USD in October, to 787.5 SSP to 1 USD in March.⁶

In the coming months, the onset of the rainy season and consequent disruptions to market supply routes will likely further contribute to price increases. Such increases may be further exacerbated should trends toward the depreciation of the SSP continue. In turn, market access may continue to deteriorate across the next reporting period, even as communities must increasingly rely on markets to meet food needs as the lean season begins.⁷

Access and barriers to protection

Reflecting the significant conflict shocks which occurred in Greater Upper Nile during the October 2022 - March 2023 reporting period, AoK data suggests that people in assessed settlements in affected counties experienced significant protection concerns. In Jonglei in November 2022, in Fangak – one of the geographical focus points of fighting the previous month – KIs in 100% of assessed settlements reported that most people did not feel safe most of the time the previous month. Similarly, in Upper Nile

100%

Proportion of assessed settlements in Fangak and Fashoda counties where KIs reported that most people did not feel safe most of the time following conflict events in November 2022 and December 2022 respectively.

in December 2022, in Fashoda – the epicenter of large-scale conflict in November – KIs in 100% of assessed settlements reported that most people did not feel safe most of the time.

This data suggests that the conflict shocks which occurred throughout the reporting period in Greater Upper Nile likely have had repercussions not only for access to livelihoods, but for communities' safety and protection needs. Analysis indicates that the underlying drivers of these conflicts are, as of March 2023, largely unaddressed, meaning that future conflict is possible and even likely.¹ Should this be the case, continued protection and safety concerns – potentially at a similarly large scale – can be expected in the coming months.

COPING & ADAPTATION

Resulting from the interplay between shocks which occurred during the October 2022 - March 2023 reporting period, and existing underlying vulnerability in Greater Upper Nile, findings suggest that many communities in the region relied on negative and in some cases harmful strategies to cope and adapt.

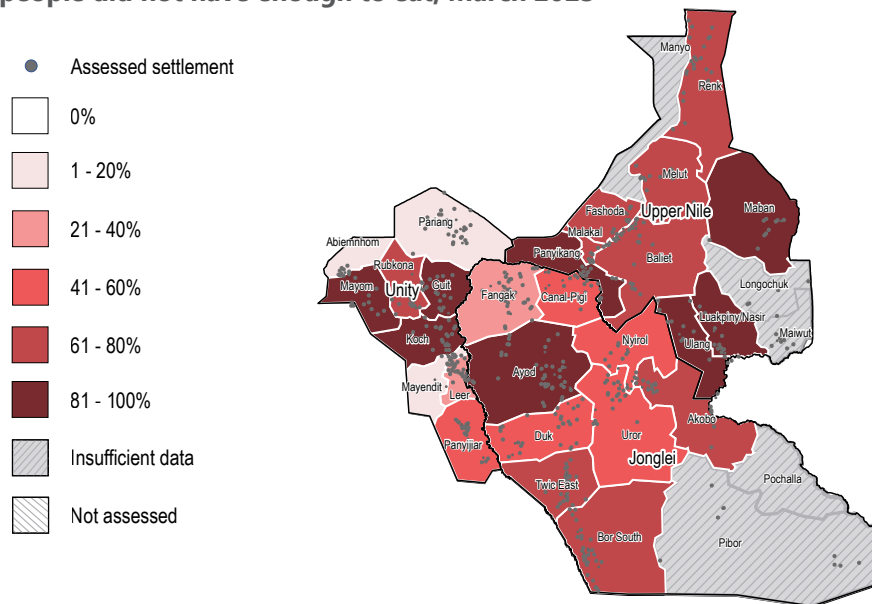
Food consumption coping

Across the reporting period, the IPC analysis estimated that settlements throughout Greater Upper Nile faced extreme and, in some cases catastrophic, food insecurity; an analysis which is supported by AoK outcome indicator data for the same period.² Across the October 2022 - March 2023 reporting period, AoK KIs in Jonglei (in an average of 77% of assessed settlements), in Unity (55%), and Upper Nile (80%) reported that in the previous month, most people were not able to access enough food in their settlement.

Data aggregated from across the October 2022 - March 2023 period also suggests that a significant portion of settlements across the region engaged in harmful consumption coping strategies to mitigate consumption gaps during this time. In Jonglei, across the reporting period, when there was not enough food to eat in the previous month (reported by KIs in an average of 77% of assessed settlements across the period), KIs in an average of 41% of those assessed settlements reported that adults would not eat so children could eat; KIs in an average of 61% reported reducing the number of meals eaten per day.

In Unity across the reporting period, when there was not enough food to eat in the previous month (reported by KIs in an average of 55% of assessed settlements across the period), KIs in an average of 53% of those assessed settlements reported collecting wild food; KIs in an average of 48% reported limiting portion size at mealtimes.

Map 4: % of assessed settlements where KIs reported that most people did not have enough to eat, March 2023



In Upper Nile across the reporting period, when there was not enough food to eat in the previous month (reported by KIs in an average of 80% of assessed settlements), KIs in an average of 38% of those assessed settlements reported reducing the number of meals eaten in a day; KIs in an average of 61% reported limiting portion sizes at mealtimes.

Taken together with IPC analysis, indicative AoK data on consumption coping suggest that during the October 2022 - March 2023 period, significant proportions of the population were undertaking serious, if not extreme consumption coping strategies for prolonged periods of time. As such, consumption coping itself may have acted as a stressor for vulnerable populations in Greater Upper Nile, serving to increase underlying vulnerability and susceptibility to further shocks which may disrupt livelihoods or access to food.

The consistent use of such consumption coping strategies – as reported across the reporting period – suggests a trend which does not appear to be changing positively. Should the continued emergency and catastrophe levels of food insecurity persist in the coming months, as is likely with the onset of the lean season and as was projected during October 2022 IPC analysis, people will very likely continue to employ consumption coping strategies which act not only to potentially cause them harm, but to actually increase susceptibility to future shocks.

Displacement as a coping mechanism

During the October 2022 - March 2023 period, various shocks and stressors drove large-scale displacement in locations throughout Greater Upper Nile. At the beginning of the reporting period in October 2022, KIs in Jonglei (in 56% of assessed settlements), Unity (57%), and Upper Nile (58%) reported the presence of IDPs in their settlement. While this aggregated number actually decreased by the end of the reporting period in March 2023 – with KIs in 48%, 46%, and 47% of assessed settlements in Jonglei, Unity, and Upper Nile reporting the presence of IDPs in their settlement – data indicates that IDP populations increased significantly in locations nearby to locations in the region which experienced shocks, suggesting that displacement was used as a coping mechanism by at least some people in Greater Upper Nile during this period.

In Fashoda County (Upper Nile State), for instance, KIs in 85% of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs in their settlement in October 2022. While this number does not change significantly in December 2022 – following conflict in the county during the previous month – the proportion of the population made up of IDPs changed notably. In October 2022, in assessed settlements where KIs reported the presence of IDPs (85%), the vast majority of these KIs (75%) reported these IDPs made up less than half of the population. By December 2022, following large-scale conflict in Fashoda, KIs in a similar number of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs (88%). However, in December, only 29% of these KIs reported that IDPs made up less than half the population. KIs in a plurality of assessed settlements, 43%, reported that IDPs made up half the total population, compared to 25% in October. An additional 29% reported that IDPs made up more than half the total population, compared to 0% in October.

While it is not reflected clearly in AoK data, REACH also reported that a significant population was displaced from settlements in northern Jonglei in January and February 2022, motivated by conflict-related concerns, compounded by an underlying stressor of poor food availability.¹

Throughout the October 2022 - March 2023 reporting period, at least some populations in Greater Upper Nile seemingly used displacement to cope with shocks – like conflict or flooding – and longer-term stressors, like poor food availability or access. While displacement can be a critical coping mechanism, with settlements which are denied access to it seemingly experiencing a severe increase in underlying vulnerability, the arrival of large groups of IDPs can itself act as a shock on host communities.² In the coming months, as the rainy season brings with it an increased likelihood of flooding-related shocks, and the lean season brings with it decreased food access for some communities, populations are likely to continue to displace to cope with nascent shocks and stressors. In turn, such displacement may itself

compound stressors for already-vulnerable host communities, if they struggle to absorb arrivals without further spreading already scarce resources amongst a larger population.

CONCLUSION

Findings suggest that large-scale conflict events, the subsequent displacement and consequent arrival shocks, and persistent flooding continued to drive humanitarian needs in Greater Upper Nile during the October 2022 - March 2023 period. These drivers interacted to spur needs throughout the region, but conflict seemed to most impact Upper Nile and Jonglei states, while flooding, Unity State.

Findings indicate that **conflict, displacement, and persistent flooding acted not only as exigent shocks, affecting vulnerable populations momentarily, but served as factors affecting long-term stressors as well, likely increasing underlying vulnerability for affected areas. Such underlying vulnerability was evidenced by the continuation of emergency- and catastrophe-level food insecurity in areas throughout the region**, most notably in Akobo, Fangak, and Canal/Pigi in Jonglei State, Pibor in the Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA), and Leer and Mayendit in Unity State, where the IPC analysis suggested that pockets of Phase 5 food insecurity were present both at the beginning and end of the reporting period.³ Food insecurity, which was seemingly not effectively mitigated through the dry season, when communities have historically been able to rely on harvested food-stock, is unlikely to improve in the coming lean season.

Reported coping and adaptation strategies – primarily erosive food consumption coping, like skipping meals, or reducing intake and displacement as a coping strategy – may further compound stressors, in turn increasing the underlying vulnerability affected populations turn to coping strategies to adapt to. **With the onset of the rainy season and lean season, and the flooding and increased food insecurity which will accompany this period, it is likely that affected populations will continue to engage in negative coping strategies which further will increase vulnerability.**

Altogether, findings from the October 2022 - March 2023 period suggest that Greater Upper Nile faced persistent shocks, the effects of which went largely unmitigated, and that many communities had very little opportunity, if any, to successfully cope or adapt. As the rainy, and concurrent lean season begins, needs are likely to increase, and opportunities for non-harmful coping, likely to decrease.

ENDNOTES

PAGE 1

¹ OCHA. [“Humanitarian Needs Overview South Sudan: 2022.”](#) February 2022; OCHA. [“Humanitarian Needs Overview South Sudan: 2023.”](#) November 2022.

² Joshua Craze. [“The Periphery Cannot Hold: Upper Nile Since the Signing of the R-ARCSS.”](#) November 2022. 46; United States State Department. [“Joint Statement on Violence in Upper Nile and Jonglei States, South Sudan.”](#) 16 December 2022.

³ Ibid.

⁴ OCHA. [“Violent clashes in South Sudan intensify the humanitarian situation.”](#) 29 December 2022; REACH. [“Akobo West and Waat Rapid Assessment.”](#) March 2023.

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⁷ Ibid.

⁸ IOM DTM. “South Sudan Baseline Round 12.”; total population using IPC findings.

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¹ To calculate the percentage of AoK coverage, the total number of settlements per county is based on OCHA settlement lists in addition to new settlements mapped by KIs each month.

² Payam is the administrative unit below the county level.

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³ Ibid; UNMISS. [“UNMISS condemns fresh attack on site for internally displaced persons in Adidiang, Upper Nile State.”](#) 9 September 2022.

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⁶ Protection Cluster South Sudan. [“Jonglei/Greater Pibor Administrative Area Protection Response.”](#) January 2023.

⁷ REACH. [“Akobo West and Waat Rapid Assessment.”](#) March 2023.

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⁹ MSF. [“Conflict in Greater Upper Nile impedes assistance to people already devastated by flooding.”](#) 21 October 2022; discussions with a KI.

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¹² Discussions with a KI.

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ABOUT REACH

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

ENDNOTES (CONTINUED)

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