



# Warrap and Lakes States Displacement and Service Access Brief

## Tonj South County, Warrap State, South Sudan, November 2017

### Background

Between December 2016 and September 2017, thousands of people were displaced by inter-communal fighting in Lakes and Warrap States. However, very little is known about the needs of the affected population. Following reports of widespread displacement in Warrap and Lakes States, REACH conducted a rapid assessment in Tonj Town to understand displacement patterns and access to services for newly arrived internally displaced person (IDP) communities. Between 9-10 November, 3 focus group discussions (FGDs) with IDPs totalling 27 participants, 2 site visits to IDP communities in villages, and 2 Key Informant (KI) interviews with humanitarian staff and local authorities were conducted. Although all data was collected in Tonj Town, all respondents were asked broadly about conditions in rural and urban areas across the greater Tonj (Tonj East, North and South), Greater Rumbek (Rumbek Centre and East) and Cueibet Counties in Lakes and Warrap States. Findings should be considered as indicative only, and further verification of each site should occur where possible.

### Population Movement and Displacement

FGD participants linked displacement patterns in Greater Tonj, Greater Rumbek and Cueibet to inter-communal conflict that began in 2008. Initially, the conflict was localized, involving sporadic violence from seasonal cattle raiding and accompanying revenge killings that drew in only a few villages at a time. However, fighting intensified in mid to late 2016 into widespread, sustained violence that razed villages, destroyed livestock and displaced most of the rural population of Greater Tonj and Western Lakes States.<sup>1</sup>

#### Displacement from Greater Tonj

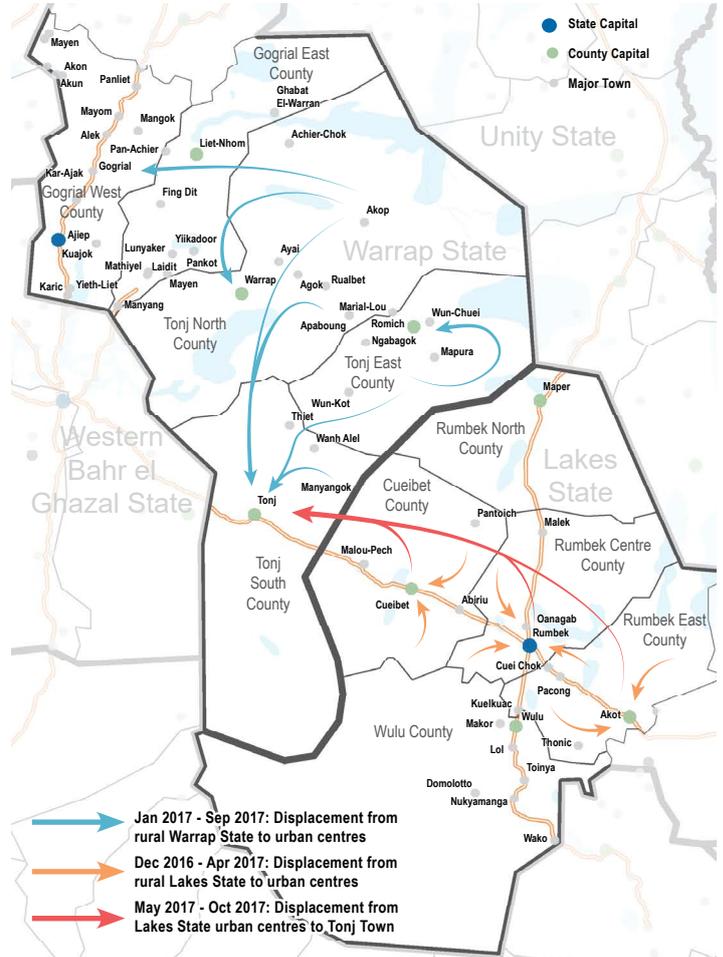
Prior to 2016, displacement followed seasonal conflict patterns; people living in conflict-affected villages would flee to neighbouring villages or the county capitals of Romich (Tonj East), Warrap (Tonj North), and Tonj (Tonj South), which were considered to be safe. They would return after violence receded. Over the years, many households settled permanently in towns, providing a support network for relatives displaced by subsequent cattle raids. However, fragmentation of armed groups into smaller and smaller units in 2016 caused the conflict to spread to most of Tonj East and Tonj North Counties, overwhelming the capacity of other villages to absorb IDPs and forcing most of the population to flee to Romich and Warrap Towns. Services in both towns were severely restricted, forcing many to later leave for Tonj Town in search of food and other services.

Though mostly removed from the conflict, parts of Tonj South County were drawn in by the violence in Lakes State when cattle raids from Cueibet County spilled over the Warrap State border into Manyangok Payam. Violence culminated in July 2017, when most of the payam's

**Table 1: Estimated Population of Tonj Town, November 2017**

Population Group	Size
Host Community	25,594 <sup>4</sup>
IDP	20,000 - 30,000 <sup>5</sup>

**Map 1: Displacement to Tonj Town, May - November 2017**



population was displaced into Tonj and Manyangok Towns. As of November 2017, sporadic violence along arterial roads linking Manyangok and Tonj continues to displace people into Tonj Town.<sup>2</sup>

#### Displacement from Western Lakes State

FGD participants reported that seasonal fighting has been common across Lakes State since the start of the conflict. Conflict patterns were similar to Warrap, though their scope and intensity were reportedly much greater. Most years, IDPs fled to large towns, such as Cueibet, Rumbek and Akot, where they waited safely for a peace agreement to be negotiated before returning to their villages for the wet season. However, respondents reported that after the current fighting began in December 2016, the usual negotiations did not occur, and no peace settlement was reached. Instead, conflict escalated in May 2017, as armed groups destroyed entire villages, food sources and livelihoods, ultimately displacing most of the rural population towards their respective county capitals. Unlike previous years, where towns acted as safe zones from which IDPs could wait out the conflict, revenge killings followed the IDPs, pushing many to seek alternative places to flee. Insecurity in Lakes State peaked in August when fighting broke out in Cueibet Town, after which civilians were evacuated from urban centres across Lakes State to Tonj Town.<sup>3</sup>

# Warrap and Lakes States Displacement and Service Access Brief

## Current Displaced Population

Much of the rural population of Greater Rumbek, Cueibet, Tonj East and Tonj North Counties is reported to have fled, either to nearby county capitals or to large regional towns like Tonj and Wau Towns. REACH estimates that there are approximately 20,000 - 30,000 IDPs currently living in Tonj Town, integrated with a host community population of approximate size.

Urban centres in both states are reported to be overcrowded due to the influx of IDPs that continue to arrive from conflict-affected areas. Tonj Town in particular was cited as both being safe and having a large and supportive host community with few familial ties to any armed groups in the region, minimizing the chance of the host community being drawn into the ongoing conflict. However, most IDPs expressed concerns that the lack of direct relation to the host community also minimizes the host community's obligation to support them, and if assistance is not provided to help them support themselves, they may be forced to leave. Though IDPs from Lakes state and Manyangok Payam have not yet returned, those from Tonj East and North reportedly continue to go back and forth to check on their property.

## Access to Food and Humanitarian Services in Greater Tonj and Western Lakes

### Food Security and Livelihoods

Widespread conflict has damaged the ability of communities in Warrap and Lakes States to feed themselves. FGD participants reported being forced to abandon their fields when they fled their homes and the remaining food stolen by armed groups. Even in areas less affected by violence, including Tonj South and western parts of Tonj North counties, a lack of rainfall in preceding years due to shifts in weather patterns stunted harvests of host communities.

In addition, constant cattle raiding has deprived most communities of their livestock and other assets. Most cattle in Tonj East, Tonj North, and Manyangok Payam in Tonj South has been stolen. In Lakes State, most cattle is now concentrated in the hands of a few armed groups; a few small communities in Lakes State are reported to still have cattle and other livestock, though they must resort to the use of arms to protect their cattle from continued raids.

In both Tonj and other towns, IDPs were reported to primarily be dependent upon the host community for assistance. A minority who still have livestock reported selling it in markets in exchange for food, albeit at increasingly unfavourable rates; one cow is reported to be worth a single bag of sorghum in many towns. The majority, however, were unable to flee with any assets and have few options other than working as casual labour, either in restaurants or on farms on the outskirts of towns. In the bush, the only coping strategies reported by IDPs involved gathering wild foods and fishing.

### Health, Water Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) and Education

Services in both Lakes and Warrap States have been limited since the start of the crisis in December 2013, when most humanitarian services in the Greater Tonj, Greater Rumbek and Cueibet were curtailed in favour of other parts of the country that were more directly affected by

**Table 2: Service Access by County, November 2017**

County	Access to FSL	Access to WASH	Access to Health	Access to Education
Cueibet	Minimal or no access	Minimal or no access	Minimal or no access	Minimal or no access
Rumbek Centre & East	Minimal or no access	Restricted or limited access	Restricted or limited access	Minimal or no access
Tonj North & East	Minimal or no access	Minimal or no access	Minimal or no access	Minimal or no access
Tonj South	Sufficient or minimally restricted access	Restricted or limited access	Restricted or limited access	Restricted or limited access

● Minimal or no access     ● Restricted or limited access  
● Sufficient or minimally restricted access

the political crisis. Most remaining services across both states were community based, with support from a small number of NGOs.

Fighting over the last year has restricted most of the remaining services. Most humanitarian services in both Lakes State and Greater Tonj are reported to only be available in county capitals due to insecurity. In rural areas, humanitarian access has been disrupted; FGD participants described networks of schools, health centres and boreholes that were abandoned or have ceased to function. In Lakes State towns, the IDP influx has overburdened existing services, while in towns in Warrap, many services have also stopped; respondents from Romich and Warrap Towns reported that insecurity forced many qualified teachers and health workers to flee, in addition to preventing the delivery of new drugs. Many of the boreholes in Romich and Warrap Towns are also reported to have broken down due to a lack of maintenance, overcrowding remaining clean water sources and forcing many people to get water from unprotected sources like uncovered wells or rivers. This left both towns without adequate health or education services.

In Tonj South a stable security situation has allowed a network of health services to function normally. The only exception to this is Manyangok Payam, where insecurity continues to prevent free movement and access to basic services. Water services are also still functional in all urban centres of Tonj South County except for Manyangok, where the only borehole was reported to have been destroyed in the fighting. FGD participants highlighted the consequences; for example, after hunger and conflict, which account for most reported deaths in Lakes and Warrap states, waterborne illnesses, such as cholera and typhoid were reported as the major causes for morbidity.<sup>6</sup>

#### Endnotes

1. Participants clarified that although widespread violence is a common part of cattle raiding, the size and scope of the 2016-2017 fighting is much worse than in previous years.
2. WHO, South Sudan Cholera Situation and Response Update, 01 September 2017.
3. Voice of America, 42 Civilians Killed in Clashes in South Sudan's Gok Community, 8 August 2017.
4. South Sudan National Bureau of Statistics, Population Predictions for South Sudan by County, 2015 - 2020, 2015, statistical Yearbook for South Sudan, 2010. A growth rate for Tonj South County was created using 2010 and 2017 data, and multiplied by the reported 2010 population of Tonj Town.
5. Estimates based on interviews with RRC, ACTED Outreach Staff, and site visits. There are no accurate records of the number of IDPs in Tonj since the influx began in 2016, but all sources described the IDPs as being "half, or more than half of the population." Reported numbers of IDPs ranged from 20,000 to 400,000; only conservative estimates have been provided.
6. UNICEF, South Sudan Situation Report #112, 31 August 2017.