

# Situation Overview: Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties, Lakes, South Sudan

January - March 2019

**REACH** An initiative of  
IMPACT Initiatives  
ACTED and UNOSAT

## Introduction

In the past year, several episodes of inter-communal violence and unreliable rains have sustained large-scale humanitarian needs in Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties in the eastern Lakes region. Underscoring the scale of the humanitarian crisis in the region, the January 2019 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) projected that populations in these three counties would face emergency levels of food insecurity between February and April 2019 (IPC phase 4).<sup>1</sup>

To inform the response of humanitarian actors working outside of formal displacement sites, REACH has been conducting an assessment of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since 2015 across Greater Upper Nile, Greater Equatoria and Greater Bahr el Ghazal regions, collecting data on a monthly basis. Data collection for Lakes State was launched in eastern Lakes in June 2018, covering Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties.

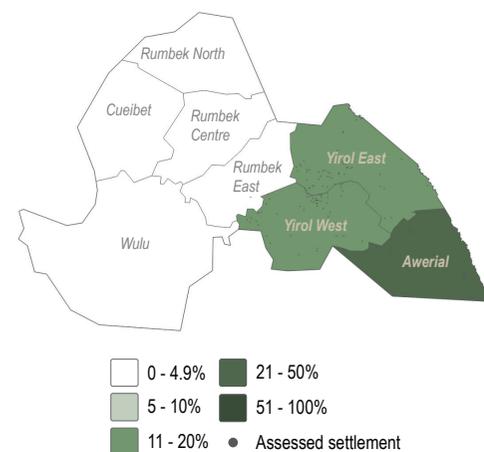
This Situation Overview outlines displacement and population movements, and access to basic services in eastern Lakes during the first

quarter of 2019 (January to March). The first section highlights key findings across different sectors followed by analysis of displacement trends and population movement in the region. The second section evaluates access to food and basic services for both displaced and non-displaced populations.

## Summary of Key Findings

Food insecurity and inter-communal conflict have continued to drive **population movements** into Yirol Town and Mingkaman. Whilst most of the internally displaced persons (IDPs) population from Jonglei remained concentrated in Mingkaman, in Awerial County, persistent insecurity in Yirol West County

**Map 1: Assessment coverage in Lakes State in March 2019**



# of key informant interviews conducted: **364**  
# of assessed settlements: **247**  
# of counties covered: **3 (of 8)**  
# of focus group discussions conducted: **3**

and deteriorating food security across the region have continued to drive a small-scale displacement toward Yirol Town as well as toward Mingkaman. Many of these IDPs were reportedly motivated by a desire for better livelihood opportunities, including access to basic services, humanitarian food assistance and security in both Yirol and Mingkaman<sup>2</sup>.

**Protection** concerns were driven by insecurity across the region. Nearly half (49%) of assessed settlements across eastern Lakes in March reported that most residents were feeling unsafe. In particular, fear of cattle raiding appear to have increased in Yirol East County, where the percentage of assessed settlements reporting cattle raiding as the main protection concern for men and boys rose from 8% in January to 37% in March.

Access to **food** was low across the region. There has been a deterioration in Yirol East County which saw a decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food from 52% in December 2018 to 22% in March 2019. The main contributing factors to limited access to food across the region were conflict and unreliable rainfall, which both resulted in a poor harvest in the fourth quarter of 2018.

**Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH)** continued to be limited by poor access to latrines and limited hygiene awareness

## Methodology

To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Lakes State, REACH uses primary data from key informants 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 Key Informants in Mingkaman, Lakes State in January, February and March 2019.

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted throughout the month using a structured survey tool. After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal or most credible response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting. Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of all settlements<sup>3</sup> in a given month were included in analysis. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month vary. In order to reduce the likelihood that variations in data are attributable to coverage differences, over time analyses were only conducted for counties with at least 70% consistent payam coverage over the period.

Quantitative findings were triangulated with FGDs and secondary sources. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

1. IPC, South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Situation January 2019 and Projections for February - April 2019 and May - July 2019.

2. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge Focus Group Discussion for Yirol West County, March 1, 2019.

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

across the region. Access to improved water sources remained relatively stable with 82% of assessed settlements reporting access to functional boreholes in March 2019. However, distance from water points remained a source of protection concerns for women and girls who often have to walk long distances to fetch water. Access to latrines remained a challenge with 83% of assessed settlements reporting that people were not using latrines.

Overall, 95% of assessed settlements reported access to **healthcare** services in March 2019. However, these facilities were likely not accessible to everyone because of distance. The proportion of assessed settlements in Awerial County reporting malaria as the main health problem has nearly doubled (from 37% in December 2018 to 60% in March 2019).

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to **education** services remained comparable to the fourth quarter of 2018. In March 2019, 71% of assessed settlements reported access to education services. However, 95% of assessed settlements without access to education reported lack of facilities.

**Shelter** conditions remained unchanged, with nearly all assessed settlements (99%) reporting tukuls as the main shelter type for the host community in March 2019. Improvised shelters were reported as the main shelter type for IDPs in 60% of assessed settlements with IDPs in Awerial County. Access to **Non-Food Item** (NFI) distributions remained limited across the region with only 8% of assessed settlements

reporting distribution in March 2019.

## Population Movement and Displacement

Inter-communal violence and food insecurity have continued to drive population movements in the first quarter of 2019. FGD participants reported a small-scale migration from Yirol West to Yirol Town, Aluak-Luak and Mingkaman between December 2018 and January 2019. Most of those who moved to Aluak-Luak reportedly originated from Machar, Mayom-Chuei, Pandit Makur-Agar and Palouch areas in Yirol West. According to FGD participants, the main pull factors to Aluak-Luak and Yirol Town were better security, access to basic services, business opportunities and presence of humanitarian food assistance.<sup>4</sup>

Most of the IDP population remained concentrated in Awerial County with 17% of assessed settlements reporting that IDPs were living in the settlement in March 2019. FGD participants reported that the presence of humanitarian assistance especially general food distribution was the main pull factor for IDPs who are currently in Mingkaman.

## Situation in Assessed Settlements

### Food Security and Livelihoods

The proportion of assessed settlements that reported adequate access to food in eastern Lakes region remained at 35% in March 2019, similar to 37% in December 2018.

However, there has been a deterioration in Yirol East where the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food declined from 52% in December to 22% in March 2019.

The proportion of assessed settlements that reported adequate access to food in Yirol West increased from 19% in December 2018 to 38% in March 2019. This slight improvement may be attributed to increased access to markets in the dry season. However, Yirol West County is still projected to face emergency-level (IPC phase 4) of food insecurity between February-April.

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in Awerial was 43% in March, comparable to 47% in December 2018. Food assistance appeared to have contributed to maintaining access to food in Awerial. In March, the proportion of assessed settlements that reported access to food assistance in Awerial was 80%, the highest in the region. Meanwhile in Yirol West and Yirol East Counties, the proportion of assessed settlements that reported receiving food assistance during the same period was low (4% and 11% respectively) in March 2019.

### Reasons for lack of food

Unreliable rainfall was the primary cause for lack of food, reported in 46% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food in March 2019 across eastern Lakes. Lack of rain was particularly disruptive because populations in this region are dependent on crops such as sorghum, millet and groundnuts which require seasonal rainfall.<sup>5</sup> For instance, in March, half

**Figure 1: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food, eastern Lakes, January - March 2019**

	Awerial	Yirol East	Yirol West
January	64%	64%	70%
February	68%	73%	65%
March	58%	78%	62%

(51%) of assessments in eastern Lakes reported cultivation as their main source of food with 93% of assessed settlements reporting having access to land. FGD participants reported that lack of rains and insecurity affected farming activities in Yirol East and Yirol West Counties, especially in areas neighbouring Panyijar and Rumbek East Counties.<sup>6</sup>

Continuing outbreaks of livestock diseases threatened the second most common source of food - livestock. As reported by FGD participants, cattle, sheep and goats provided food in the form of milk or meat and could be sold for cash to pay for other basic necessities such medical care, clothing and education.<sup>7</sup> However, in March, 78% of assessed settlements reported livestock diseases outbreaks in eastern Lakes, and 60% of assessed settlements reported that such outbreaks had at least a small impact on their access to food.

### Coping Strategies

Despite the moderate reduction in the adoption of extreme coping strategies, stressed

4. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol West County, March 1, 2019.

5.Ibid.

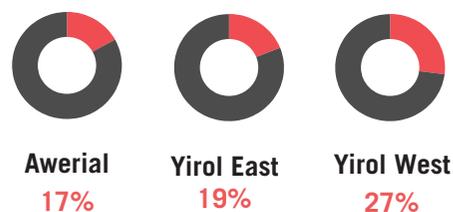
6. REACH, Notes on Area Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, February 25, 2019.

7. REACH, Notes on Area Knowledge FGD for Yirol East County, March 1, 2019.

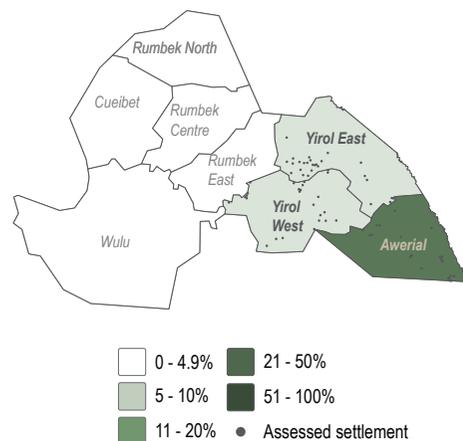
conditions remained widespread across the region. Reflective of the increased access to food in Yirol West, the proportion of assessed settlements that reported skipping meals for entire days declined from 61% in December 2018 to 27% in March in 2019. In Yirol East County, the proportion of assessed settlements that reported skipping meals for entire days declined from 43% in December 2019 to 19% in March 2019. Meanwhile, the proportions for assessed settlements that reported skipping meals for entire days in Awerial remained the same during the same period. In addition, the overall proportion of assessed settlements where adults did not eat so that children could have enough food to eat declined from 30% in December 2018 to just 1% in March 2019.

On the other hand, proportion of assessed settlements that reported that people had moved to cattle camps increased from 35% in December 2018 to 60% in March 2019. However, this movement may be attributed to the onset of the dry season, when people often move to cattle camps after seasonal harvest. Meanwhile, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting selling of livestock was

**Figure 2: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting people skip meals for entire days, eastern Lakes, March 2019**



**Map 2: Percentage of assessed settlements having received food assistance in the last 3 months, eastern Lakes, March 2019**



30% in March 2019, comparable to 38% in December 2018.

However, the proportion of assessed settlements that reported reducing number of meals remained high as reported in the last quarter – 61% in March 2019 compared to 70% in December 2018. The reported decline in extreme coping strategies and sustained reliance on various coping strategies suggests that extreme food insecurity may have reduced but overall food insecurity remained widespread.

### Protection

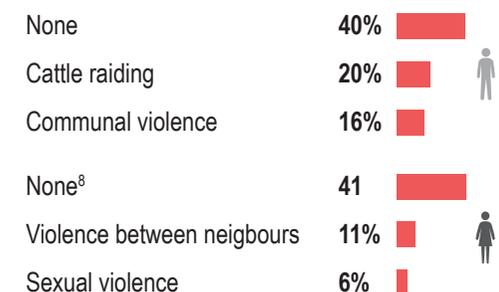
Insecurity and protection concerns persisted in the first quarter of 2019. Nearly half (49%) of assessed settlements in March reported that population were feeling unsafe in March, comparable to 53% in December 2018.

However, there was a decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting fatal incidents. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting incidents of fatal conflict involving death of at least one civilian decreased from 57% in December to 30% in March 2019 in Yirol East County, and in Yirol West County from 45% to 27% during the same period.

Across the eastern Lakes region, cattle raiding remained the main protection concern for men. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting cattle raiding as the main protection concern for men increased slightly from 10% in December 2018 to 20% in March 2019. This slight increase may be attributed to dry season cattle raiding which occurs when herds of cattle from different parts of the region congregate at the swamps or along the key rivers to access grazing pastures and water, leading to increased tensions among cattle keepers. Yirol East County saw an increase from 8% in January to 37% in March in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting cattle raiding as the main protection concern for men. Several fatal incidents involving killings and wounding civilians as a result of cattle raiding or retaliatory attacks were reported in the first quarter. Meanwhile, in Awerial County the proportion of assessed settlements reporting cattle raiding as protection concern for men was 7% in March 2019, comparable to 11% reported in December 2018.

As for women and girls, protection challenges often originated from within their communities. The most commonly reported main protection

**Figure 3: Most commonly reported protection concerns for men and women in assessed settlements, eastern Lakes, March 2019**



concern for girls was early marriage, reported in 29% of assessed settlements in March. For women, violence between neighbours was reported in 11% of assessed settlements as the main protection concern.

### Water, Hygiene and Sanitation

Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH) continued to be limited by lack of infrastructure (especially latrines) and poor hygiene awareness across the region.

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting having functional boreholes increased from 67% in December 2018 to 82% in March 2019 in eastern Lakes region. In March, boreholes were reported as the main sources of drinking water in 78% of assessed settlements across the region.

Despite the high proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to boreholes, data suggest that some sections of the population have continued to rely on unimproved water sources. For instance, in March, 11% of

8. Note: To ensure data quality, "harassment for information" was removed from the analysis after consultation with field team as this variable was often misunderstood by Key Informants.

assessed settlements reported pond as their source of drinking water. Yirol West County had the highest proportion (15%) of assessed settlements reporting pond as their main source of drinking water. Continued reliance on unimproved water sources may expose populations to water-borne diseases (see health section below).

Distance from water points remained a source of protection concerns for women and girls who often have to walk long distances to fetch water. Across the region, 65% of assessed settlements reported accessing water within an hour walking distance, and 27% of assessed settlements reported that water points were half a day away in March. The proportion of assessed settlements that reported that some residents were unable to access their preferred water sources due to safety reasons was 12% in March. These access problems may explain why some assessed settlements may continue to report relying on unimproved sources of water. Consumption of unsafe water may expose populations to risks of both waterborne and water-washed diseases.<sup>9</sup>

Lack of latrines and poor hygiene practices continued to persist across the region. In March, only 17% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reported using latrines. The vast majority of assessed settlements (91%) without latrines in March reported that latrines were not being used because such facilities were unavailable. The reported lack of latrines suggests that populations are practising open defecation, which could result in contamination of unprotected water sources such as rivers

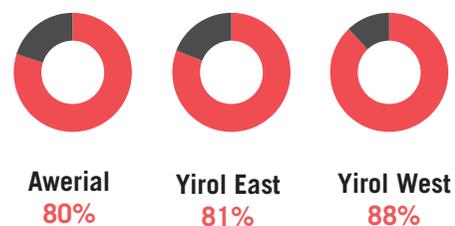
and ponds. The sanitation problems are further compounded by limited use of hygiene practices like hand washing with soap. For instance, only 4% of assessed settlements reported washing hands using soap in March 2019.

### Health

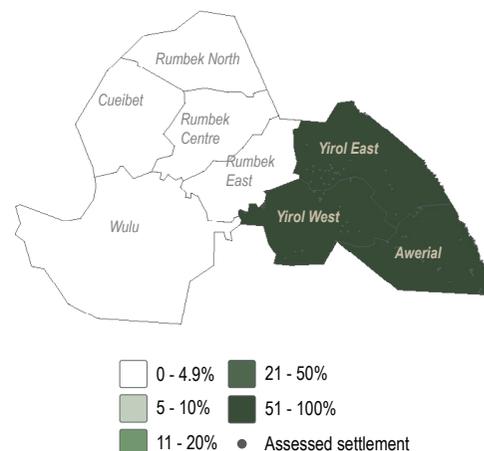
The overall proportion of assessed settlements that reported access to healthcare services remained high at 95% in March 2019. However, health services may not be available to everyone due to an inaccessibility of health facilities to populations in remote areas. In March, only 14% of assessed settlements with access to health services reported having such facilities within an hour-walking distance and 32% reported that people walked for a full day to access healthcare services. In Yirol East County, health centres were reported to be furthest away, with 46% of assessed settlements reporting that most people had to walk for a full day to access health services.

The region remained prone to malaria, diarrhoea and typhoid which were the most commonly reported primary health problems in

**Figure 4: Percentage of assessed settlements without latrine usage, eastern Lakes, March 2019**



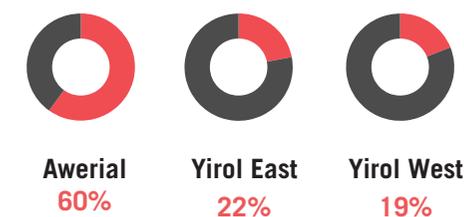
**Map 3: physical access to healthcare in assessed settlements, eastern lakes, March 2019**



the first quarter of 2019. While the proportion of assessed settlements that reported diarrhoea as the main health problem has decreased slightly between December 2018 and March 2019, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting malaria cases remained high. Overall, 35% of assessed settlements reported malaria as the leading health problem in March 2019. Awerial county appears to be the most affected when compared to the two counties of Yirol East and Yirol West. In March, the proportion of assessed settlements that reported malaria as the main health problem in Awerial County increased from 37% in December 2018 to 60% in March 2019.

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting diarrhoea as the main health problem has declined minimally from 18% in December 2018 to 7% in March 2019. This decline coincided with the onset of dry season

**Figure 5: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting that malaria was main health concern, eastern Lakes, March 2019**

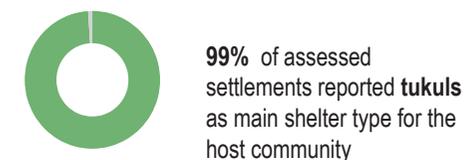


(from December through May), a period where diarrhoea diseases become less common.

### Shelter and NFIs

Shelter conditions remained unchanged, with nearly all assessed settlements (99%) reporting tukul as the main shelter type for the host community in March 2019.<sup>10</sup> Moreover 99% of assessed settlements reported that the majority of the host community lived in their own homes in March 2019. As compared to both Yirol West and Yirol East counties, improvised shelter was reported in 60% of assessed settlements in Awerial county as the main shelter type for IDPs.<sup>11</sup> A decline in the proportion of IDP populations reportedly using improvised or

**Figure 6: Tukuls as main shelter type of host communities in assessed settlements, eastern Lakes, March 2019**



9. WHO, "Water-borne diseases: infections spread through contaminated drinking water; Water-washed diseases: diseases due to the lack of proper sanitation and hygiene".

10. A tukul is grass-thatched roofed shelter commonly found in South Sudan.

11. A temporary shelter is made of plastic sheetings and poles.

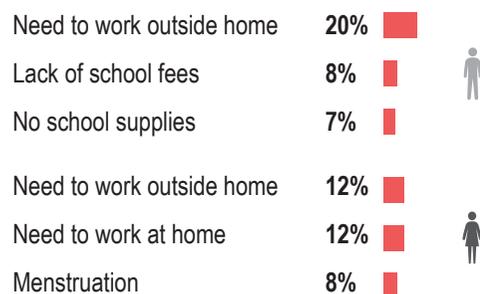
temporary shelters may indicate that IDPs have built tukuls which are made using local materials. The most commonly available building materials in assessed settlements were poles (100%), mud (95%) and grass (100%) in March. Access to NFI distributions remained limited across the region with only 8% of assessed settlements reporting accessing a distribution in March 2019. At the county level, Awerial County had a high proportion of assessed settlements reporting having access to a distribution in the last 3 months (20%) as compared to Yirol East (4%) and Yirol West (0%) Counties.

### Education

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to education services remained comparable to the fourth quarter of 2018. In March 2019, 71% of assessed settlements reported access to education services. Indicative of infrastructure challenges, lack of facilities was reported as the main reason for unavailability of education services in all (100%) assessed settlements without access.

Gender disparities in school attendance between girls and boys continued to persist across the region. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting that at least half of the girls attended school was 44% in March 2019 as compared to 64% for boys. The most commonly reported reason for school non-attendance for both boys and girls was the need to work, either at home or outside home. Across the region, the need to work outside home was reported as the main

**Figure 7: Primary reason reported for lack of school attendance for girls and boys in assessed settlements, eastern Lakes, March 2019**



reason for boys not attending school in March. While the need to work in the household was the most frequently reported reason for girls not attending school.

### Conclusion

Overall, needs remained high but stable in assessed settlements across the region. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food has remained low in most of the region and deteriorated in Yirol East County. The high food security and livelihoods needs are largely attributable to persistent insecurity and low rainfall in the past year, which resulted in a poor harvest.

WASH condition are particularly concerning with a high proportion of assessed settlements reporting lacking latrines. Lack of latrines infrastructure combined with inaccessibility of improved water sources may put populations at risk of waterborne diseases. As for health, the prevalence of malaria, diarrhoea and typhoid across the region combined with inaccessibility

of health facilities because of being far away, means that populations in remote areas are at risk of dying of these preventable diseases. Access to services such as education continued to be limited by lack of infrastructure and inaccessibility in some parts of the region.

#### About REACH

REACH 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. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

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