

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

July - September 2018

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

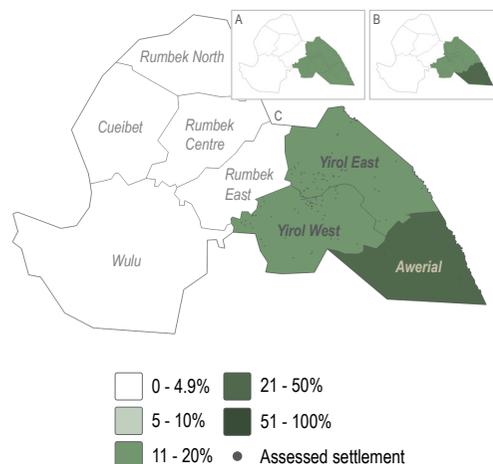
Eastern Lakes continued to be affected by inter-communal violence and cattle raids, particularly in areas near county borders. Throughout the third quarter of 2018, most indicators remained relatively low but stable, which suggests that critical barriers to access to food and basic services persisted in the region. Furthermore, food insecurity remained high, particularly in Yirol East and Yirol West Counties, as the lack of rain further added to the challenges in crop production between July and September 2018.

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, for which data on settlements across Greater Upper Nile, Greater Equatoria and Greater Bahr el Ghazal region is collected on a monthly basis. Data on Eastern Lakes has been collected since June 2018.

From July to September 2018, REACH interviewed 660 Key Informants (KIs) from 332 settlements in Awerial, Yirol East and

of key informant interviews conducted: 660
of assessed settlements: 332
of counties covered: 3 (of 8)
of focus group discussions conducted: 4

Map 1: Assessment coverage in Lakes State in July (A), August (B) and September 2018 (C)



Yirol West Counties in Lakes State. All the KIs were interviewed in Mingkaman. Findings have been triangulated using 4 Focus Group Discussion (FGDs) conducted in Mingkaman, as well as with interviews with humanitarian actors, secondary data, and previous REACH assessments of hard-to-reach areas of Lakes State.

This Situation Overview outlines displacement and access to basic services in Eastern Lakes from July to September 2018. The first section analyses displacement trends while the second evaluates access to food and basic services for both displaced and non-displaced communities.

Population Movement and Displacement

Migration to Mingkaman and Yirol Town

Eastern Lakes remained characterized by inter-communal violence, cattle raids, unusually low rainfalls and high levels of food insecurity. Since 2017 in particular, these challenges to the local population induced a migration flow in Eastern Lakes towards Mingkaman. Throughout the third quarter of 2018, migration towards the East has continued according to FGD participants.¹

Though there exists a substantial population of internally displaced people (IDPs) in the region, most IDPs are concentrated in urban areas, such as Yirol Town and Mingkaman, due to the presence of food assistance and economic opportunities. As such, the percentage of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs has remained very low in the third quarter (only 1% in September).

Awerial returnees

An inter-agency assessment conducted in late August determined the presence of thousands of returnees in Awerial County.² The report confirmed IOM DTM data from June 2018, as well as reports from FGDs conducted by REACH in August and September 2017, which had hinted at the presence of large pockets of

returnees in the area.^{3,4}

The returnees had originally left Lakes and Jonglei States in 2013 at the onset of the civil war, and fled to different regions within South Sudan as well as across the border to Uganda, where many stayed in refugee camps. Between 2016 and 2017, thousands of IDPs and refugees returned to Awerial County. Among the key push and pull factors in the decision to return were inadequate food assistance, as well as safety concerns in their location of displacement, and the wish to be reunited with families. The returnee population has reportedly been largely integrated in the host community.⁵

Pakam displacement

The large-scale displacement of the Pakam community from Rumbek North County to Eastern Lakes continued to create challenges for IDPs, host communities and humanitarian actors alike. Since their arrival in the areas around Pagarau and Nyang in Yirol East County in early May of 2018, thousands of IDPs have been in need of humanitarian assistance.⁶ Local authorities and the humanitarian community have continued working towards establishing continuous services to the displaced, as well as the surrounding host community as their return to Rumbek North County has become increasingly unlikely.⁷

1. FGDs in Mingkaman with participants from Eastern Lakes
2. Inter-agency Assessment, Returnees in Mingkaman, August 2018
3. IOM DTM, Awerial County - Round Two, June 2018
4. FGDs with returnees in Mingkaman, August & September 2017
5. Inter-agency Assessment, Returnees in Mingkaman, August 2018

6. DRC, Yirol East - Rapid Protection Assessment Factsheet, August 2018
7. INTERSOS, Protection Needs Assessment Report, September 2018

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Lakes State, REACH uses primary data provided by key informants who have recently arrived, or receive regular information, from their pre-displacement location or “Area of Knowledge”. Information for this overview was collected from key informants in Mingkaman, Lakes State.

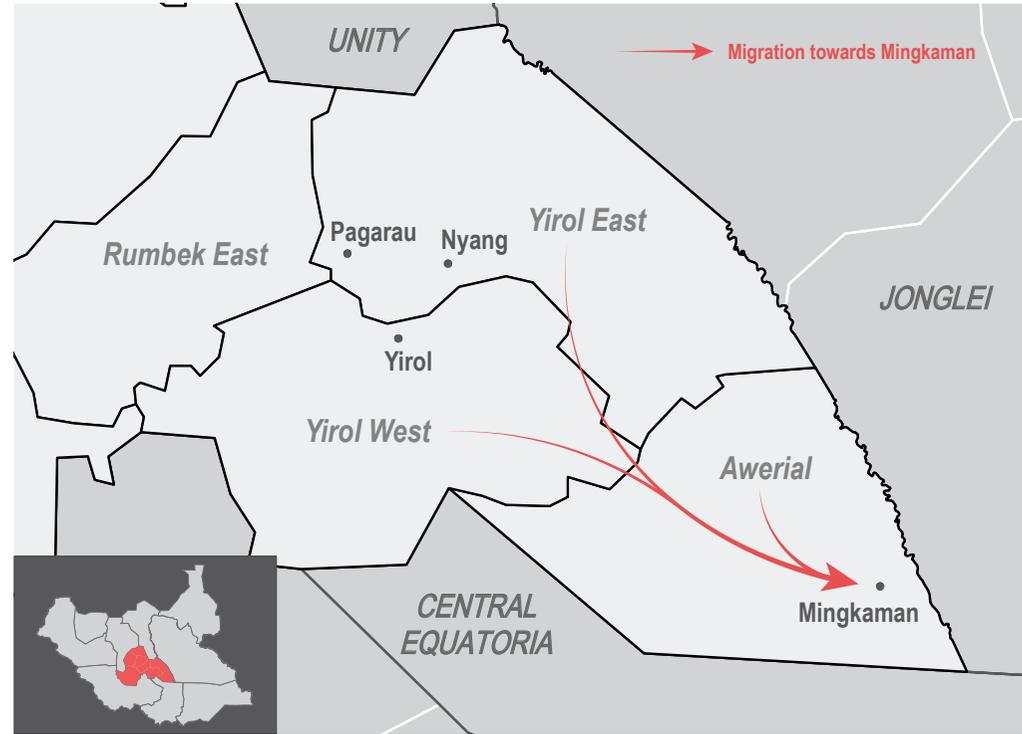
After data collection was completed, all data was examined at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting. Descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis were then used to analyse the data.

The data analysis was disaggregated at the county level when at least 5.0% of the settlements of a county were assessed. From July to September 2018, this threshold was attained for Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties.

Due to access constraints, which may impact coverage each month, some changes over time reported in this situation overview might be due to variations in coverage.

The conclusions drawn are indicative of likely trends in Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties and may not capture the humanitarian situation in some of the settlements worst affected by episodes of violence.

Map 2: Migration movements in Eastern Lakes, July-September 2018



Situation in Assessed Settlements

Protection

Eastern Lakes continued to be substantially impacted by violence between communities. The areas bordering Rumbek East and Panyijjar Counties remained particularly tense. In the last 3 months alone, dozens of security incidents were reported throughout the region, many of which were related to cattle thefts.⁸ Inter-communal strife has been driving protection concerns, which remained particularly high in Yirol East and West Counties in the third

quarter of 2018.

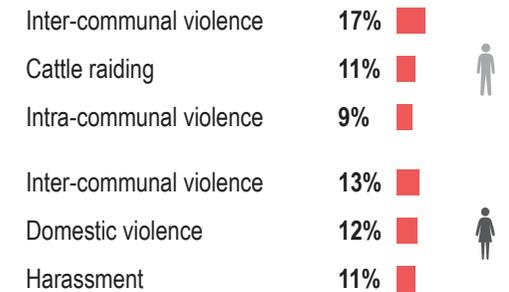
At the regional level, the proportion of assessed settlements with reported incidents of violence or looting was relatively constant over the third quarter. At the county-level, however, incidents were less frequently reported from June to September in Awerial County (22% of assessed settlements in September), while the levels remained relatively high in Yirol East (35%) and West Counties (42%) compared to South Sudan at large (17%).

Reflective of the nature of conflict in Eastern Lakes, inter-communal violence remained

the most frequently named primary protection concern for men and women in the assessed settlements (see Figure 1). Over the course of the third quarter, the percentage of assessed settlements reporting such in Awerial County gradually decreased: By September, inter-communal violence was not reported to be the main protection concern for men nor women in any of the assessed settlements in Awerial County. In the Yirols, however, the levels remained roughly the same throughout the third quarter (21% in Yirol East County and 25% in Yirol West County in September).

The frequent reports of cattle theft-related incidents throughout the region were underpinned by an 11% of assessed settlement reporting cattle raids to be the main protection concern for men in September, a rate evenly distributed among counties. The figure further underlines the risks associated with cattle-keeping: a livelihood source which remained high in Eastern Lakes due to the considerable cultural and economic value of cows.

Figure 1: Most common primary protection concerns for men and women in assessed settlements, Eastern Lakes, September 2018



8. KI interviews in Mingkaman, July to September 2018; NGO Forum Security Reports, June to September 2018

Episodes of inter-communal violence and security incidents continued to affect people's perceived safety. Only 21% of assessed settlements in Eastern Lakes reported that most people felt safe most of the time in July — a figure that stayed stable over time throughout the third quarter (20% in September) and across counties.

The relatively high but stable figures of protection-related indicators is indicative of the nature of violence in the region. The inter-communal strife is characterized by many smaller, but regularly occurring, episodes of violence rather than a few isolated, large-scale fights. Fear of violence is a constant backdrop to everyday life, particularly in county border areas. The low levels of perceived safety, coupled with the food security concerns outlined

Figure 2: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food, Eastern Lakes, June - September 2018



in the next section, remained a major driver of displacement in Eastern Lakes.

Food security and livelihoods

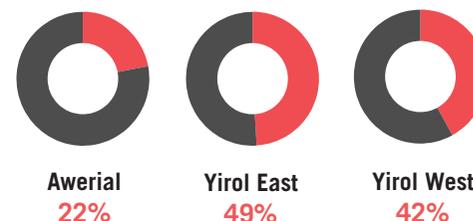
Food security levels in Eastern Lakes did not measurably improve in the third quarter of 2018. The insecurity in county-border areas, in combination with abnormally low rainfall kept negatively impacting food security in the region. Due to the ongoing food distribution in Mingkaman, food security appeared to be highest in Awerial County in the third quarter, based upon a variety of FSL indicators.

Severe food insecurity in Yirol East and West Counties

Most food security indicators have not markedly changed since June. Adequate access to food was reported in 36% of assessed settlements in September — only a slight improvement compared to the 24% in June. On the county-level, Yirol West County saw an increase from 14% to 30% over the same period. The disparity between Awerial County (65% in September) and Yirol East (25%) and West Counties (30%) persisted.

Eating less than two meals per day, as well as including wild food in the meals, was commonly reported among the communities in the region, particularly in the Yirols. The percentage of assessed settlements where eating less than two meals per day is commonplace has fallen across the region from June (72%) to September (57%). Including wild foods in the main meals was reported by 74% of assessed settlements in July and remained stable during

Figure 3: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting people skip meals for entire days, Eastern Lakes, September 2018



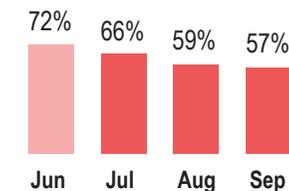
the third quarter.

Extreme coping strategies, such as skipping meals for entire days, were likewise much more frequently reported in Yirol East County (49% of assessed settlements in September) and West (42%) than in Awerial County (22%). These proportions are comparable to those of June.

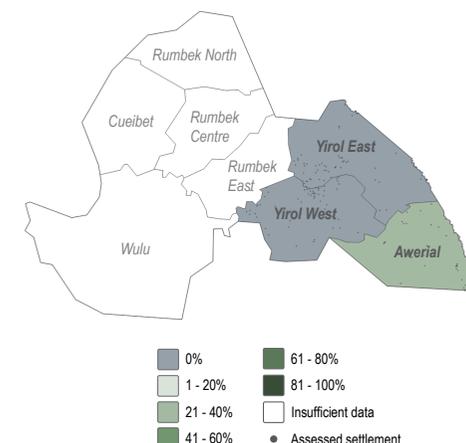
The challenges to food security, in combination with the previously outlined protection concerns, remained the main cause of migration towards Mingkaman, where food assistance continued to be provided. Moving to the displacement camp in Mingkaman was a common coping strategy in the third quarter, as reported by 23% of assessed settlements in September.

Ongoing food assistance in Mingkaman continued to be the key driver of the disparities in food security levels across counties. Throughout the third quarter, none of the assessed settlements in Yirol East and West Counties reportedly received food assistance in the last 3 months. In contrast, 32% of assessed settlements in Awerial County reported having received food aid in September. This figure,

Figure 4: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting that most people eat less than 2 meals per day, Eastern Lakes, Jun-Sep 2018

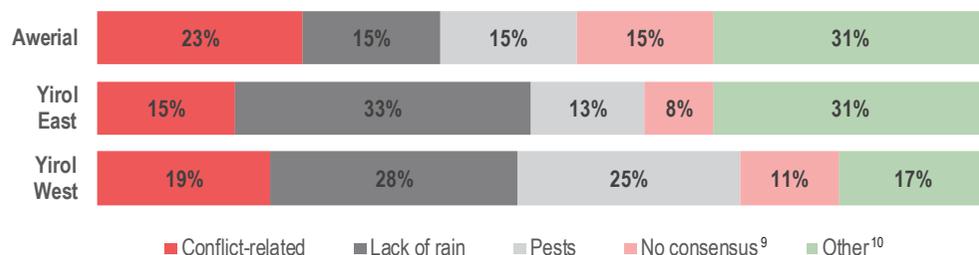


Map 3: Percentage of assessed settlements having received food assistance in the last 3 months, Eastern Lakes, September 2018



however, is down from 57% in June, which is likely linked to the temporary halt of the General Food Distribution (GFD) in Mingkaman in July and August. The momentary interruption in food aid was also reflected in reported levels of adequate access to food in Awerial County, which dropped from June to July, and rebounded from August to September (see Figure 2).

Figure 5: Reported primary reason for inadequate access to food in assessed settlements without adequate access to food, Eastern Lakes, September 2018



Key drivers of food insecurity: Inter-communal violence and lack of rain

A lack of rain was the most common reported barrier to adequate food followed by insecurity (see Figure 5). This highlights how inter-communal violence eroded resilience by disrupting agriculture and market access, making populations vulnerable to the shock of low rainfall.

Inter-communal violence presented a major impediment to food security in all three counties, despite different levels in access to food. Among the assessed settlements in Eastern Lakes without adequate access to food, 18% reported that conflict-related issues were the main reason in September, which is a decrease compared to June (29%).

The differences between the counties in regard to conflict-related barriers to adequate access to food remained minimal (see Figure 5). However, it is likely that areas in proximity to county borders were to a larger degree affected by inter-communal violence. Due to

the elevated protection concerns, residents of those areas tended to be constrained in their freedom of movement, which may have created a barrier to cultivation activities and market access. In an area such as Eastern Lakes, where the population to a large degree depends on subsistence farming (61% of assessed settlements in September), any impediment to crop production translates to low food security levels.

The long-term disruption to agriculture and market access caused by insecurity left populations vulnerable to further shocks, in particular a lack of rainfall. According to WFP VAM data, rainfall levels continued to be below long-term averages throughout the third quarter.¹¹ The lack of rain created a serious challenge as many communities delayed planting of the crops in an effort to mitigate the risk of seeds drying out. This subsequently delayed the harvest in some communities. Additionally, in some areas crop yields were severely diminished since the lack of rainwater led to substantial crop destruction.

Abnormal weather patterns had already been a primary reason for inadequate access to food earlier in the year. AoK data suggests that the lack of rain has further impacted crop production and hence food security. By June, the lack of rain was reportedly the main reason for inadequate access to food in 14% of assessed settlements in the region. During the third quarter, the lack of rain substantially gained relevance relative to other barriers to food security, such as inter-communal violence. By September, 28% of assessed settlements without adequate access to food reported the lack of rain to be the primary reason for food insecurity, making it the most frequently named barrier to food security overall in the third quarter.

Adding to the previously named challenges to crop production, pests (such as the fall armyworm) have continued to contribute to inadequate food levels. In September, pests were reported to be the key driver for food insecurity in 18% of assessed settlements in Eastern Lakes.

Shelter & NFIs

Shelter conditions in Eastern Lakes did not markedly change from July to September. The residents of Eastern Lakes predominantly lived in non-permanent structures. In September, tukuls were reportedly the main shelter type in almost all (98%) assessed settlements.

The ongoing inter-communal violence, which was particularly rampant in border areas in the Yirols towards Rumbek East County, was

Figure 6: Tukuls as main shelter type of host communities in assessed settlements, Eastern Lakes, September 2018

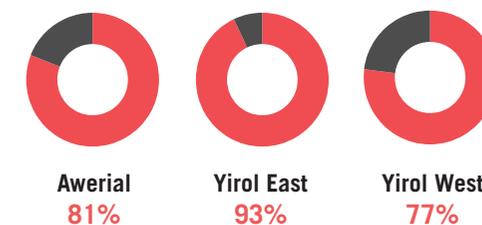


reflected in the relatively low and decreasing rate of reported shelter damage in the third quarter. In Yiro East County, where a considerable 17% of assessed settlements reported shelter damage in June, the percentage dropped to a mere 2% in September. In Awerial County, conflict-related shelter damage, which had already been a rare occurrence in June, remained the exception in the third quarter.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

WASH conditions in Eastern Lakes remained poor. Reported access to improved water sources continued to be low, which, combined with the widespread practice of open defecation, further increased the risk of water-borne

Figure 7: Percentage of assessed settlements without latrine usage, Eastern Lakes, September 2018



9. 'No consensus' stands for settlements on which multiple key informants were surveyed but there is no modal answer for the respective indicator.

10. 'Other' is the aggregate of all other answer options in the questionnaire.

11. WFP-VAM, CHIRPS/UCSB

diseases. Safety concerns related to water fetching have decreased since June.

From July to September, access to protected water sources (e.g. borehole, water yard, tap stand) was stable in settlements assessed across Eastern Lakes — 70% of assessed settlements reported access to improved water sources in July, and 66% in August and September. As in previous months, drinking water was primarily acquired from boreholes, but also from swamps, ponds and rivers.

Open defecation remains widespread. In September, 81% of assessed settlements in Eastern Lakes reported no usage of latrines. In September, the percentage in Yirol East County (93%) was among the highest reported in the country. By far the most widely reported reason for not using latrines in Eastern Lakes was the lack of facilities, as reported by 54% of assessed settlements in September.

Open defecation represents a considerable health risk, given that large parts of the population in Eastern Lakes reside near water sources (such as rivers and swamps), which may be contaminated as a result. As the wet season is coming to an end in late October, many swamps and small rivers — common sources of drinking water — are expected to dry out, which may lower the prevalence of waterborne diseases over the fourth quarter.

Safety concerns related to the gathering of drinking water decreased in the third quarter. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting that people were not able to access

their preferred waterpoints because they feared for their safety was down to 26% in September from 45% in June. In Awerial County, this decrease was even more pronounced as the percentage halved over the same reference period — from 54% in June to 27% in September — which is consistent with the general reduction in protection concerns in Awerial County discussed earlier.

Map 4: Physical access to healthcare in assessed settlements, Eastern Lakes, June 2018

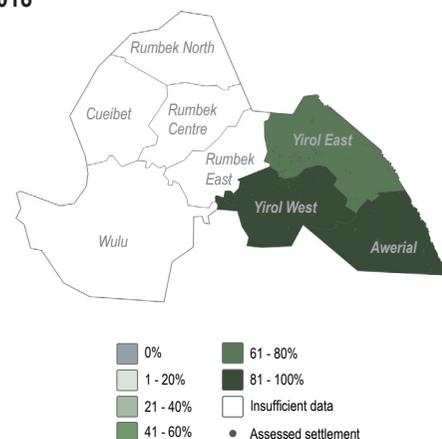
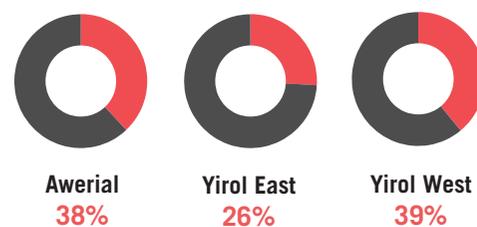


Figure 8: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting that malaria was main health concern, Eastern Lakes, September 2018



Health

Geographical disparities in access to healthcare across counties persisted, but slightly reduced in the third quarter. In September, 92% of assessed settlements in Awerial County reported access, 79% in Yirol East County and 84% in Yirol West County (up from 68% in June).

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), malaria trends have been exceeding expected levels this year in Eastern Lakes (and throughout South Sudan).¹² Area of Knowledge (AoK) data supports this concern, as malaria continues to be the primary health concern in the region. The percentage of assessed settlements reporting it to be the main health concern remained stable on the regional level (34% in September). In Yirol East County, the rate dropped from June (50%) to September (26%). Cases of malaria and other waterborne diseases may reduce across the region in the coming months as the dry season approaches.

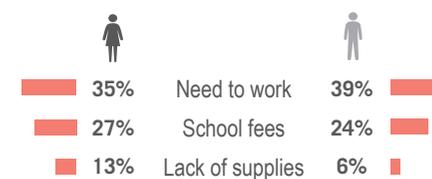
In the third quarter, Eastern Lakes remained affected by livestock diseases to a relatively high degree when compared to other regions in the country. In 82% of assessed settlements, livestock diseases were reported in September, a figure that had remained stable in previous months. Such high levels may be linked to the reported outbreak of rift valley fever (RVF) earlier this year. Though the disease mostly affects animals, cows in particular, it may also spread to humans. However, from July to September, no new human suspect cases were detected.¹³

Education

Access to education services, as reported by 70% of assessed settlements in September, remained stable in Eastern Lakes in the third quarter of 2018. From June to July, there was an increase (from 58%), which may be due to the end of school holidays in Eastern Lakes. The lack of facilities remained the main barrier to education in the region as reported by 70% of assessed settlements without access in September.

Gender disparities in school attendance persisted, though the gap narrowed slightly. AoK data indicates that school attendance in assessed settlements across all counties generally increased for girls, but remained the same for boys. The share of assessed settlements, where education services were available and at least half of the girls were in school increased from 32% in June to 68% in July, and 51% in September. The same was the case for boys in 93% of assessed settlements with access to education in June and 92% in September.

Figure 9: Primary reason reported for lack of school attendance for girls and boys in assessed settlements, Eastern Lakes, September 2018



12. WHO, Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) - Malaria Trends by County, Week 37, September 2018

13. WHO, Integrated Disease Surveillance and Response (IDSR) - Epidemiological Update, Week 26-39, July-September 2018

Wherever education was available but not all children attended school, the main reasons throughout the third quarter and across counties were the need to work and the high cost of school fees. The need to work outside the home was increasingly given as the main reason for not attending school for both boys and girls from June to September, which was most likely linked to the annual crop harvest.

Conclusion

The data collected from July to September provides further evidence for the dynamics outlined in the Eastern Lakes AoK baseline report from June. Most indicators remained relatively constant over the third quarter of 2018, which is reflective of the stable but consistently tense context of the region.

The level of inter-communal violence, which kept driving food insecurity in the region, has remained relatively constant. The border areas towards Rumbek East and Panyijiar Counties were continuously tense while the data suggests that violence in Awerial County slightly decreased since June. While in the second quarter, conflict was the primary barrier to food security, the lack of rain gradually took over as the main reason for inadequate access to food in the third quarter.

Food insecurity remained particularly concerning in Yirol East and West Counties as opposed to Awerial County, where ongoing food assistance resulted in lower levels of food insecurity. In the coming months, food security levels may

improve as the crop harvest is expected to take place towards the end of the rainy season in October/November. However, given the disruption to agriculture from insecurity and low rainfall, it is not certain whether the yields will be sufficient to meet the severe food needs.

Besides the low levels of food security, Eastern Lakes remains plagued by poor WASH conditions and high levels of malaria. As a result of the outlined challenges, the migration towards Mingkaman and the dependence on food aid has continued throughout the third quarter of 2018.

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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