

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

April - June 2019

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

In the second quarter of 2019, insecurity and food shortages due to poor previous harvests continued to drive large-scale humanitarian needs across the eastern Lakes region. Reflecting the severe humanitarian situation, Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties were projected to be facing emergency levels (IPC phase 4) of food security in June and July according to May's updated Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC).¹

To inform humanitarian actors working outside of formal settlement sites, REACH has conducted assessments of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since December 2015. Data is collected on a monthly basis through interviews with key informants (KIs) with knowledge of a settlement, and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This Situation Overview uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across Lakes State in the second quarter of 2019.

Key Findings

- **Movement** toward Awerial County and Mingkaman informal settlement site continued in June, driven by access to humanitarian services, perceptions of safety and presence of relatives.² Further, conflict at the border of Yirol West and Rumbek East counties in late May resulted in **displacement** toward

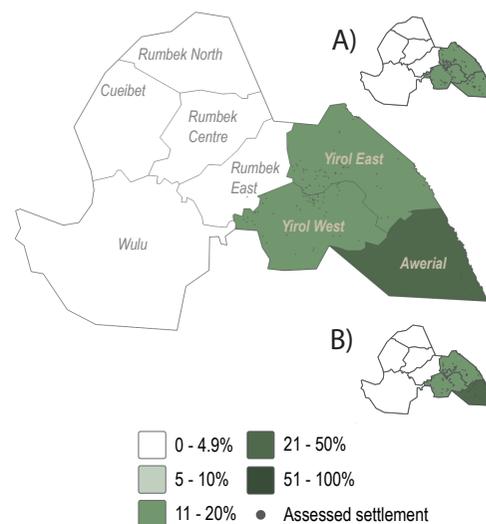
Mapourdit, Tali, Yirol Town and Mingkaman informal settlement site.

- Only 26% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reported that most people felt safe most of the time, far lower than the national total of 49%. **Protection** concerns were driven by reported fears of cattle raiding, inter-communal violence and looting in Yirol East and Yirol West Counties.
- Only 30% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reported having **adequate food access** and more than half of the assessed settlements reported eating only one meal a day. In June, poor harvests in 2018 caused by irregular rainfall and insecurity remained the primary reason for inadequate access to food.
- **Water, Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH)** indicators suggested limited access to improved water sources and problematic hygiene conditions. In Awerial County, only 62% of assessed settlements reported that boreholes were their main source of water in June, with an increased reliance on ponds and rivers the result of an insufficient number of boreholes in some settlements.³ Across eastern Lakes, only 20% of assessed settlements reported using latrines.
- Following the start of the rainy season, the prevalence of malaria being reported as the main health concern increased sharply

in June as 54% of assessed settlements reported the disease as the primary **health** problem compared to 35% in March.

- Access to **education** remained stable between March and June in eastern Lakes, with 65% of assessed settlements reporting adequate access. Cultural practices preventing girls from receiving education continued to be a primary barrier to access for

Map 1: Assessment coverage in Lakes State in April (A), May (B) and June 2019



of key informant interviews conducted: 543
of assessed settlements: 407
of counties covered: 3 (of 8)
of focus group discussions conducted: 8

METHODOLOGY

To provide an indicative 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).⁴ Information for this report was collected from KIs in Mingkaman informal settlement, Yirol Town and Nyang Town in Lakes State in April, May and June 2019 (See Map 3).

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 settlements⁵ 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 payam⁶ coverage over the period.

Quantitative findings were triangulated with FGDs⁷, and secondary sources.

More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

1. IPC, South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Analysis May 2019, 14th June 2019.

2. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 14th June 2019.

3. Mingkaman Informal Settlement Site IPD KI Interview, 8th June 2019.

4. Key informants are selected using purposive sampling, as such the results are indicative rather than representative.

5. 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.

6. A Payam is an administrative district at the sub-county level.

7. FGDs were comprised of IDPs and host community members from Awerial, Yirol East and Yirol West Counties..



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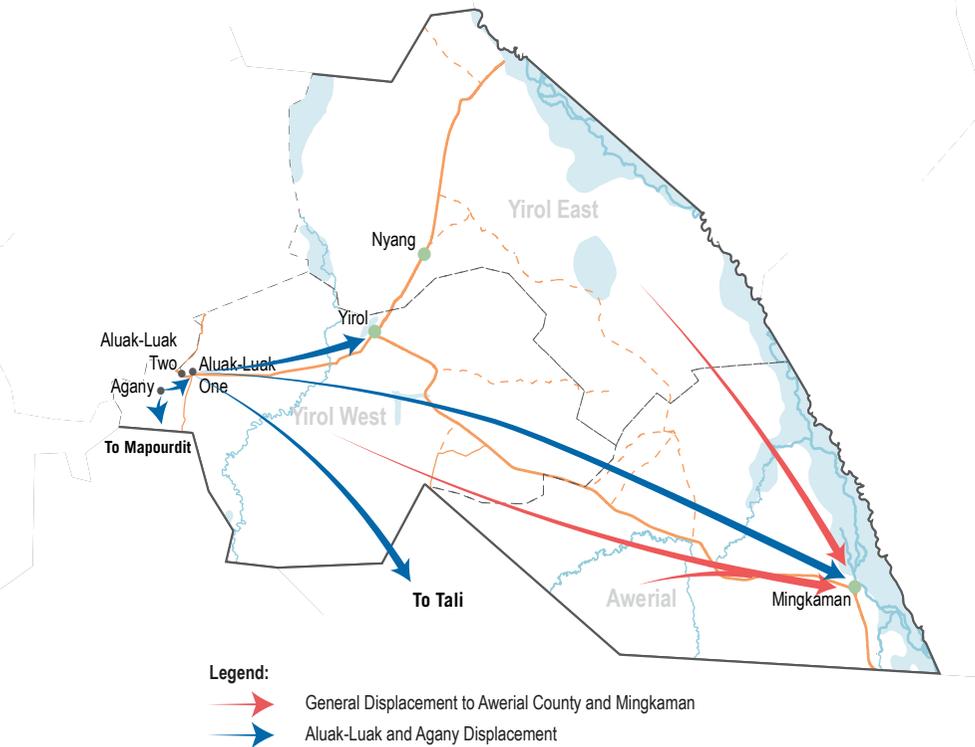


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girls between the ages of six and seventeen. For boys of the same age, assisting with work outside the home was the most commonly reported barrier to accessing education in eastern Lakes in June.

- In June, **Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)** indicators remained largely consistent. as Tukuls⁸ were reported as the most common type of shelter in 99% of assessed settlements. However, in assessed settlements that reported the presence of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs), improvised shelters⁹ remained the most commonly reported shelter for these residents, suggesting that IDPs often face worse shelter conditions.

Map 3: General displacement trends and Aluakluak and Agany displacement in the second quarter of 2019



Aluak-Luak and Agany displacement

In late May and June, cattle raiding and inter-communal violence along the border of Yiol West and Rumbek East Counties resulted in displacement towards Yiol Town, Mapourdit, Mingakaman informal settlement site, and Tali in Central Equatoria (see Map 3).

An assessment by REACH in Yiol Town found that IDPs from Aluak-Luak and Agany were reported as living with relatives and dispersed within the town, and the main reported pull factors to their chosen destinations were access to humanitarian assistance, safety and presence of relatives.¹¹

According to FGD participants more than half of the population of Agany and Aluak-Luak Two were forced out of their settlements, with only the men reportedly remaining behind for protection.¹² FGD participants displaced from Aluak-Luak and Agany stated their desire to return to their original settlements once security had improved, reporting that they would reassess the security situation in six months time.¹³

The numbers of the displaced remain unverified, but the displacement is reflective of the reported scale and impact of cattle raiding and inter-communal violence on the border between eastern and western Lakes.¹⁴

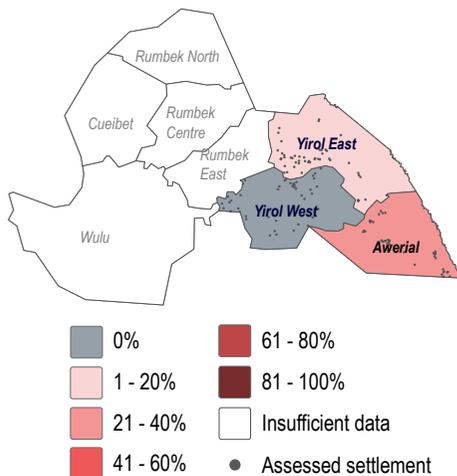
Situation in Assessed Settlements

Protection

Insecurity resulting from intercommunal

Population Movement and Displacement

Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reporting the presence of IDPs in June



Summary

Movement toward Awerial County, and particularly Mingkaman informal settlement site remained steady between March and June. In Awerial County, 21% of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs, compared to less than 5% in Yiol East and Yiol West Counties (see Map 2).

Movement toward Awerial County

Of assessed settlements in Awerial County that reported the presence of IDPs, 66% reported that IDPs constituted at least half or more of the

population of these settlements, consistent with the status of Mingkaman and the surrounding settlements as prominent IDP settlement sites.

Access to humanitarian assistance was a major driver of movement towards Mingkaman informal settlement site and Awerial County in June, where 81% of assessed settlements reported receiving food distribution in the last three months, compared to 12% and 17% in Yiol East and Yiol West Counties respectively. Safety and presence of relatives were other commonly reported pull factors.¹⁰

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

9. An improvised shelter is made of plastic sheetings and poles

10. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 14th June 2019.

11. REACH, Notes on Yiol West Border Population Displacement FGD (1), 18th June 2019.

12. REACH, Notes on Yiol West Border Population Displacement FGD (2), 4th July 2019

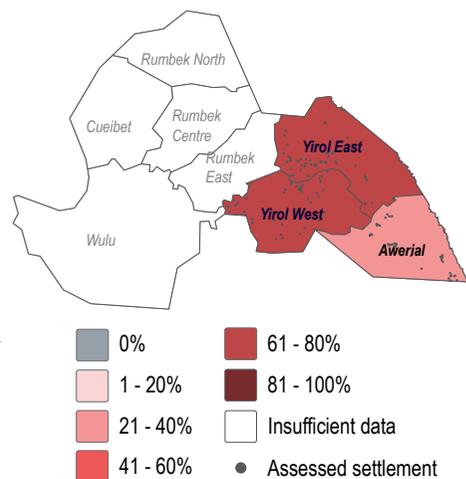
13. Ibid.

14. FSL Cluster, Mission Report: Cattle, Communities and Conflict in Lakes state, May 2019.

violence and cattle raiding were major drivers of protection concerns in June and throughout the second quarter of 2019. Only 26% of assessed settlements in June reported that most people felt safe most of the time, a drop of 14 percentage points from March and far lower than the countrywide total of 49%.

The reduction in perceived safety was particularly evident in Yirol West County, where the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that they felt safe most of the time fell from 38% in March to 17% in June (see Map 4), which may be due to the conflict in Agany and Aluak-Luak and subsequent displacement. There were large discrepancies in perceptions of safety across the other Counties in eastern Lakes. Yirol East County reported the lowest perception of safety in June, with only 10% of assessed settlements reporting that they

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reporting that most people felt unsafe most of the time in June 2019



felt safe most of the time. Conversely, Awerial County reported the highest perception of safety, with 55% of assessed settlements reporting that people felt safe most of the time. Perceived safety was higher in Awerial County where there were fewer reported incidents of cattle raiding.¹⁵

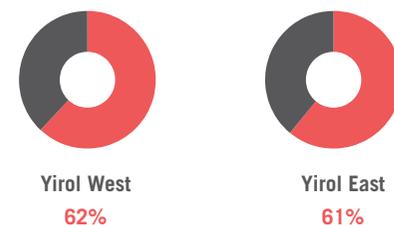
Over 20% of assessed settlements in Yirol West and Yirol East Counties reported incidents of conflict resulting in the death of a civilian in comparison to 5% in Awerial County. Looting was also a major protection concern within Yirol West and Yirol East Counties, with 58% and 67% of assessed settlements reporting incidents of looting in June. Of settlements in eastern Lakes that reported incidents of looting (48% of assessed settlements), 55% reported that looting had a large impact on the settlements' ability to access enough food, suggesting the potential negative influence of insecurity on food access.

Protection concerns for men and boys

Low perceptions of safety in Yirol West and Yirol East Counties were reportedly driven by endemic inter-communal violence and cattle raiding, particularly along border areas.¹⁶ As such, over 30% of assessed settlements in these counties reported that cattle raiding was the main protection concern for men, with intercommunal violence coming second (see Figure 1).

This trend was similar for boys under the age of eighteen, where cattle raiding was most commonly reported by assessed settlements as the main protection concern in Yirol West

Figure 1: Proportion assessed settlements in Yirol West and Yirol East reporting cattle raiding and inter-communal violence as the main protection concern for men in June



and Yirol East Counties at 19% and 22% respectively.

Protection concerns for women and girls

While cattle raiding was reported as a protection concern among all assessed demographics, priority of protection concerns were different for women and girls than for men and boys. Assessed settlements in eastern Lakes most commonly reported that there were no main protection concerns for women (31%) and girls under the age of eighteen (35%).

However, in assessed settlements that did report priority protection concerns for women and girls, these concerns originated more frequently within their own settlements, and mostly concerned violence between neighbours (11%), and domestic (10%) and sexual (10%) violence. These concerns remained consistent between March and June.

For girls under the age of eighteen, early and forced marriage was the main protection concern in 26% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes. Early marriage was particularly

common in Yirol West where it was reported as the primary protection concern for girls in 38% of assessed settlements.

Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL)

In eastern Lakes, access to food remained low but stable, with 70% of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food in June, similar to March (65%) (see Map 5). Over half of assessed settlements reported eating only one meal a day.

Inadequate food access can be attributed to a number of factors, with the main reported reason in June being irregular rainfall reducing harvest yields. In June, 34% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food reported that irregular rainfall in the previous harvest season was the main reason. Supporting these findings, FGD participants from Yirol East County reported that due to unpredictable weather in 2018, crops stores of staples such as maize and sorghum, the foods most regularly eaten in June (96%) were smaller than usual.¹⁷ Crops were reported as being planted early due to the start of rain in March and April, however the rain did not continue as expected and killed many crops, resulting in a smaller harvest.¹⁸

As cultivation was most commonly reported as the primary source of food by assessed settlements in eastern Lakes (48% of assessed settlements) and 67% of assessed settlements reported growing crops for sustenance as a livelihood activity, lack of rain can be considered a major driver of food insecurity in the eastern Lakes region.

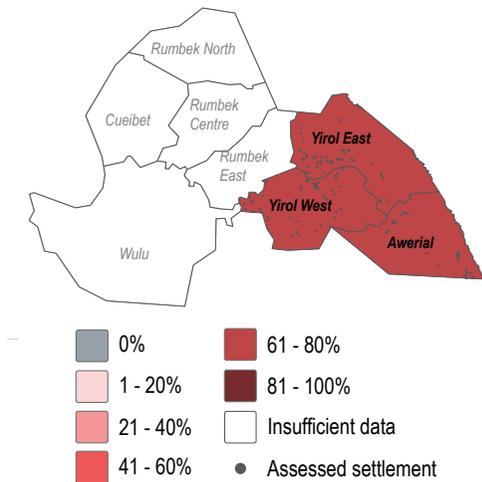
15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

17. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol East County, 26th June 2019.

18. Mingkaman Informal Settlement Site IPD KI Interview, 8th June 2019.

Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food in June



Livestock and cattle

Along with crops for sustenance, the most common reported livelihood activity in assessed settlements was livestock rearing, which was reported as a livelihood activity in 94% of settlements.

Reflective of the pastoral nature of settlements in eastern Lakes, 96% of assessed settlements reported that most people in their settlement owned cattle (see Figure 2). Assessed settlements reported that access to cattle increased by 19 percentage points between March and June to 92% as the result of seasonal migration towards population centers due to improved water access and limited grazing opportunities along the Nile caused by seasonal flooding.¹⁹

Reflective of the key role played by cattle in livelihoods, cattle were reportedly an important

source of food. Regular consumption of milk and dairy was reported in 57% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes in June, and 39% of assessed settlements reported most residents regularly ate meat.

As cattle and livestock were important food sources, livestock disease and cattle raiding reportedly further reduced access to food following the poor harvest in June. In eastern Lakes, 70% of assessed settlements reported disease outbreaks within their livestock in the last month. Of these settlements, 36% reported that livestock diseases had a small impact upon their capacity to access enough food. Furthermore, FGD participants reported that cattle raiding and intercommunal violence contributed to inadequate food access by reducing safe access to livestock and crops.²⁰

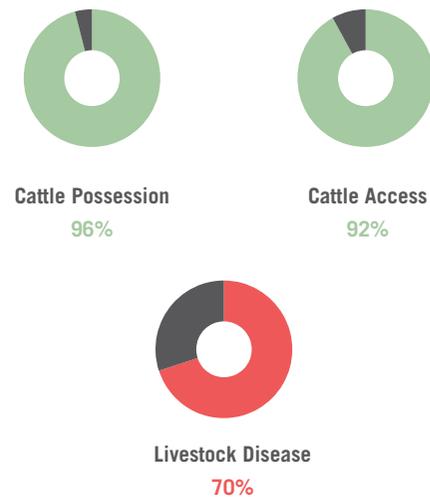
Market access

Livestock not only provided a direct source of food, but also served as a valuable source for bartering and generating income according to FGD participants.²¹ In eastern Lakes in June, 16% of assessed settlements reported that most residents bartered for food, while 9% of assessed settlements reporting that most residents bought food with cash.

While only 25% of assessed settlements reported most residents employed trade (bartering and buying) as a source of food, markets were still an important source of livelihoods and food access in June. Over 90% of assessed settlements across eastern Lakes reported that they had access to a market, either in their own or another settlement, and over 80%

of assessed settlements reported that residents bought some staple cereals from a market. In June, 93% of assessed settlements reported that cereal prices had increased, which can be attributed to a combination of a weak national currency, road closures limiting movement of goods and delayed rain affecting quantity of market supplies.²² Of settlements who reported increased cereal prices, 61% reported that these increases had a large impact on their ability to access enough food. As staple cereals were reported by 96% of assessed settlements as the most regularly consumed food in June, price increases could be considered a considerable driver of inadequate food access in eastern Lakes.

Figure 2: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting cattle possession, access and livestock disease in June



source of food. Of the settlements that reported access to a market, only 4% reported travelling less than 30 minutes to reach it. Given that FGD participants in Awerial County reported the cost of transportation between settlements to be prohibitively expensive for many households, the long distances to reach markets may limit access for vulnerable populations.²³ Another barrier, likely associated with disrupted trade routes and the poor harvest in 2018, was the limited supply within the markets reported by 56% of assessed settlements.

Food assistance

In Awerial County, 81% of assessed settlements reported they had accessed food assistance in the last three months, though only 12% of assessed settlement reported that this is where most people in the settlement sourced their food (as opposed to 43% in June 2018). Across Yiro East and Yiro West Counties, fewer assessed settlements reported receiving distribution in the same time period, at 12% and 17% respectively.

Coping strategies

Likely as a result of persistent food insecurity, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting severe food coping strategies has remained consistently high from March to June. Reducing the amount of meals a day (66%), reducing the size of meals (54%) and eating less expensive foods (46%) were reported as the most common coping strategies across assessed settlements in June.

The extreme coping mechanism of skipping eating for entire days was reported in 20% of

19. REACH, Yiro West Food Security and Livelihoods Brief, January 2018

20. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yiro West County, 4th July 2019.

21. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yiro East County, 3rd July 2019.

22. Awerial County ICWG, Meeting Minutes, 13th June 2019; WFP, South Sudan: Monthly Market Price Monitoring Bulletin, May 2019;

REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yiro West County, 5th July 2019.

23. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 14th June 2019.

assessed settlements. Skipping entire days was particularly common in Yirol East County (25% of assessed settlements) in June, though this was a slight decrease from 37% in May.

Reflective of the disruption to livelihoods a majority of assessed settlements reported that they borrow food (74%), or borrow money (54%) as a livelihood coping strategy when there was no food available. In June, 59% of assessed settlements reported migrating to a cattle camp as a livelihood coping strategy, placing individuals at increased risk of exposure to conflict from cattle raiding and inter communal violence.

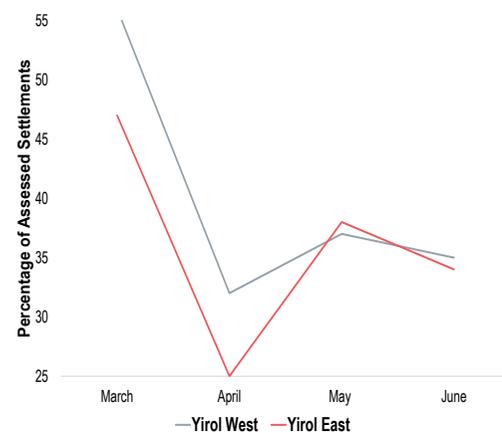
There were also reported changes in infant feeding habits within assessed settlements in eastern Lakes. Between March and June, a greater proportion (17 percentage points) of assessed settlements reported that animal milk was supplementing breast milk during infant feeding. This is likely due to cattle migration to the population centers in the wet season making cow milk more accessible.

Insecurity affecting coping strategies

In some cases, insecurity reportedly inhibited key coping strategies. According to FGD participants, hunting was restricted by insecurity, dropping as a reported livelihood coping strategy by 29 percentage points between March and June. Seasonal variations also reportedly contributed to the decrease in hunting.²⁴

Insecurity across Yirol West and Yirol East Counties also resulted in an overall decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements

Figure 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting including wild foods as part of a main meal in March through June 2019



reporting the inclusion of wild foods as part of the main meal (see Figure 3). As the wild foods nearer to the settlements became exhausted in the late dry season, people reportedly had to venture further into the bush to procure wild food items. This increases their vulnerability to security threats and results in fewer settlements gathering wild foods.²⁵

In circumstances of inadequate food access, cattle raiding itself has been reported as an extreme coping strategy in eastern Lakes, further compounding protection and food security concerns.²⁶

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

In June, assessed settlements in eastern Lakes continued to show high needs on a number of key WASH indicators. Only 20% of assessed settlements reported use of latrines, with Yirol East County reporting the lowest percentage

of latrine usage at 12%. Of settlements that reported that latrines were not used, 97% reported that this was due to lack of facilities. Further, only 5% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reported that most residents wash their hands with soap, while the most prominent methods for washing hands were with water (40%) and ash (22%).

Water access

Conversely, 81% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reported access to a borehole, and 97% of these settlements reported that the borehole was functional. However, only 62% of assessed settlements in Awerial County responded that boreholes were their main source of water, which may be due to an inadequate number of boreholes in relation to population size in these settlements (see Figure 4).²⁷ Instead of boreholes, 34% of assessed settlements in Awerial County in June reported using rivers or ponds as their main source of water, an increase in 14 percentage points from March.

Figure 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting that boreholes were the main source of water

	Awerial	Yirol East	Yirol West
April	79%	73%	88%
May	81%	69%	76%
June	62%	79%	81%

surface water in the rainy season and the reduced reliance on boreholes. The proportion of assessed settlements in Awerial County reporting that it took over 30 minutes to reach their preferred water source decreased by 27 percentage points between March (87%) and June (60%). This may result in less vulnerability for women and girls seeking safe water sources far from their settlements as noted in March. Only assessed settlements in Yirol East County noted safety as a considerable barrier to accessing their preferred water source in June (24% of assessed settlements).

Health

In June, over 95% of assessed settlements across eastern Lakes reported being within walking distance of a healthcare facility. However, only 12% of these settlements reported that travelling by foot to the nearest health facility would take under one hour, and over 30% reported that it would take an entire day, suggesting that healthcare infrastructure was inadequate for a majority of settlements. Further, the long distance to health facilities reportedly increased vulnerability to security threats associated with travel by foot, such as inter communal violence and wild animals.²⁸

Likely explaining the long distance travelled to the nearest health facility, FGD participants reported that most facilities were located in County capitals and larger settlements. Yirol State hospital was reported as the primary source of healthcare for Yirol West and Yirol East Counties, and Bunagok PHCC and Mingkaman PHCC were reported to be the principal

24. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol East County, 26th June 2019.

25. NGO KI Interview, 20th July 2019.

26. REACH, Yirol West Food Security and Livelihoods Brief, January 2018.

27. Mingkaman Informal Settlement Site IPD KI Interview, 8th June 2019.

28. REACH, Notes on Yirol West Border Population Displacement FGD (1), 18th June 2019.

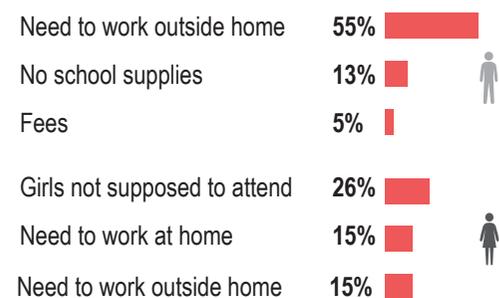
healthcare centers for Awerial County.²⁹

Malaria was a major health concern across eastern Lakes, with the proportion of assessed settlements reporting malaria as the primary health problem increasing from 35% in March to 54% in June. The increase in proportion of assessed settlements reporting malaria as the main health problem is consistent with the beginning of the rainy season and may be of particular concern for some IDP populations, with only 64% of assessed settlements with presence of IDPs reporting that these IDPs had access to mosquito nets in June.

Education

In June, 65% of assessed settlements reported that they had access to education across eastern Lakes, similar to the 71% reported in March. Assessed settlements in Awerial County reported the lowest access to education, with 43% reporting access to any educational services. A lack of educational facilities was reported as the main reason among settlements that reported limited access to education in June (91%). There were also reports in Yirol

Figure 5: Primary reported reasons in eastern lakes for lack of school attendance for girls and boys in assessed settlements in June



West County of teachers leaving their positions due to long term-delays in payment.³⁰

Both boys and girls were reportedly able to access education, with 43% of assessed settlements reporting that half or more girls between the ages of seven and sixteen attended school, and 86% for boys.

The main reported reasons for girls not attending school were reportedly cultural, with boys being given preference for education, this was especially common in Yirol West (27% of assessed settlements) and Yirol East (30%) Counties (See Figure 5).

The main reported reason for boys not attending school was that they were required to work outside the home, which was reported across 55% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes that reported having educational access, suggesting that the persistent food insecurity across eastern Lakes region may have been a barrier to education for boys as they needed to assist with cultivation or work in the cattle camps.

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

Shelter and NFI indicators remained largely consistent between the March and June of 2019. Tukul²⁷ remained the most prominent type of shelter (99% of assessed settlements) across eastern Lakes as reported by assessed settlements. Additionally, shelter materials also remained consistent with the most commonly available materials across eastern Lakes being grass (99%), poles (99%) and mud (97%). Only 2% of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes reported shelters being entirely

or partially destroyed due to fighting. Of assessed settlements that reported presence of IDPs, 36% reported that IDPs were housed in temporary shelters, highlighting that shelter conditions were often worse for IDPs than for host community residents.

NFI Distribution

Between March and June, the percentage of assessed settlements that reported accessing an NFI distribution in the last three months increased by 23 percentage points, from 8% in March to 31% in June, in which an increase of at least 10 percentage points was reported across every county in eastern Lakes.

Conclusion

FSL and protection continued to be key concerns within eastern Lakes across the second quarter, with most needs remaining high but stable between March and June. In June, eastern Lakes remained in the Emergency phase (4) according to IPC classifications, highlighting the scale of ongoing needs.³¹

AoK data and findings from FGDs across the second quarter suggest interplay between insecurity and access to food within the region. Inadequate access to food can result in extreme coping strategies such as cattle raiding and looting, which in turn impacts resilience to food security related shocks in affected communities.

Further, FSL and protection concerns have driven needs in other sectors. Food security may be a barrier to boys accessing education as they need to cultivate and work in cattle

camps, and risks reportedly associated with long distance travel may discourage vulnerable populations from travelling to the nearest health facility.

About REACH Initiative

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).

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29. REACH, Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Awerial County, 14th June 2019.

30. REACH, Notes on Area of Knowledge FGD for Yirol West County, 5th July 2019.

31. IPC, South Sudan: Acute Food Insecurity and Malnutrition Analysis May 2019, 14th June 2019.