

Situation Overview: Unity State, South Sudan

November 2017

Introduction

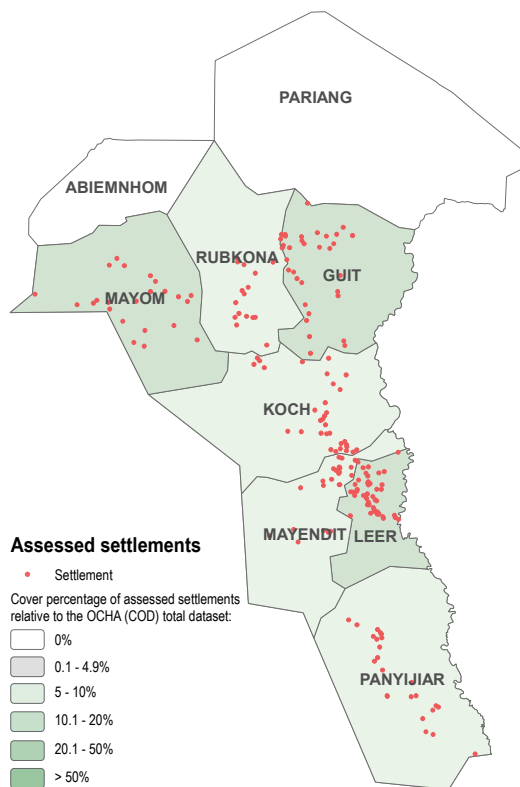
Displacement trends, population needs and humanitarian access have all been negatively affected by insecurity resulting from the ongoing conflict in Unity State, which began in December 2013.

To inform humanitarian actors working outside formal settlement sites, REACH has conducted assessments of hard-to-reach areas in South Sudan since December 2015. The data is collected through interviews on a monthly basis from settlements across the Greater Upper Nile region, Greater Equatoria region and Western Bahr el Ghaza region.

Between 3 and 21 November, REACH interviewed a total of 337 Key Informants (KIs) in the Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site and Nyal. The KIs were from 209 settlements situated in 7 of the 9 counties in Unity State. The findings were triangulated through three focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted in the Bentiu PoC site and Nyal, secondary data and previous REACH assessments of hard-to-reach areas of Unity State.

In order to ensure an understanding of current displacement trends and humanitarian conditions in settlements from which displacement took place, new arrivals, representing 91% of KIs, were specifically

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Unity State



targeted. The remainder of the KIs interviewed (9%) reported having been in the settlement or having had regular contact with someone from the settlement within the previous month. This Situation Overview focuses on changes in humanitarian needs observed since

September 2016.¹ The first section analyses displacement and population movement in Unity during November, and the second section evaluates access to food and basic services for both internally displaced persons (IDPs) and local communities.

Population Movement and Displacement

Displacement Trends within Unity

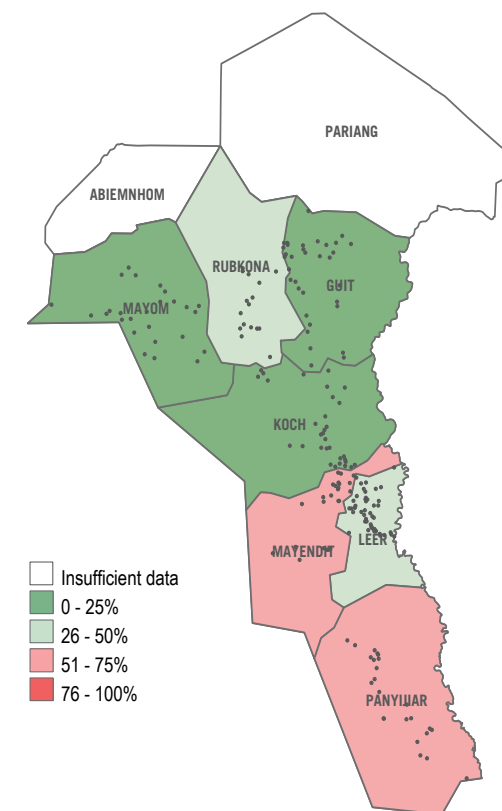
Displacement in Unity continued to happen throughout November, as 34% of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs, which is comparable to the 42% reported in October. The percentage of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs was particularly high in Mayendit (65%) and Panyijiar (61%), as seen on Map 2.

Insecurity and clashes in Leer² appear to have contributed to shifting displacement patterns within the state. In Leer, the percentage of assessed settlements reporting the presence

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP presence



Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting an IDP presence



of IDPs decreased from 64% in October to 42% in November. Conversely, in neighbouring Mayendit, the percentage increased from 55% to 65%. Across Unity State, Leer was the most frequently cited county for previous location,

¹ Data collection methodology was modified in September 2016 therefore Area of Knowledge (AoK) data collected before September will therefore not be taken into consideration for comparative referencing.

² The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Data, <https://www.acleddata.com/data/>, November 2017.



METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in largely inaccessible areas of Unity State, REACH uses primary data provided by key informants who have recently arrived, or receive regular information, from a location or “Area of Knowledge” (AoK).

Information for this report was collected from key informants in the Bentiu PoC site and Nyal in Unity State throughout November 2017.

The first phase of the assessment methodology comprised a participatory mapping exercise to map the relevant settlements in Unity State. In-depth interviews were then conducted with selected participants using a standardised survey tool comprising questions on displacement trends, population needs, and access to basic services.

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.

This represents a change in data aggregation as of December 2016, as REACH previously analysed data at the community level. This means that although the data and data collection methods have remained the same since September 2016, this report is not directly comparable with Situation Overviews from before December 2016.

which was reported by 37% of newly arrived IDPs. Figures 2 and 3 also demonstrate that, across the state, insecurity was the main factor cited by newly arrived IDPs for leaving their previous location.

Overall, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting depopulation remained high, with 61% reporting that half or more of the local community had left, similar to 56% in October. In Leer and Mayendit, this was most notable as 17% and 13% of assessed settlements had reported that all local community members had left, respectively. This could be attributable to the security conditions.

Displacement trends in Nyal were noticeable, as a considerable increase in the number of people arriving to Nyal by port increased **from 124 IDPs in October to 447 in November**.³ This recent displacement trend may be

Figure 2: Primary reported reasons newly arrived IDPs came to their current location

1. Security	43%	
2. Access to healthcare	20%	
3. Joining family	19%	

Figure 3: Primary reported reasons newly arrived IDPs left their previous location

1. Insecurity	45%	
2. Far from family	18%	
3. Lack of health services	17%	

attributable to the deteriorating security conditions in Central Unity, such as Mayendit and Leer, as the majority of IDPs cited security as the primary reason for coming to Nyal.⁴

Inversely, in northern Unity, the International Organization for Migration Daily Tracking Matrix (IOM DTM) reported that the number of people exiting the Bentiu PoC site exceeded that of new arrivals. During the last week of November, 470 people left the Bentiu PoC site while only 158 moved in. The main reason for leaving was to join the rest of the family, which was reported by 40%.⁵ According to the same report, the previous week, a total of 1,269 individuals were recorded moving in (247) and out (1,022) of the site.⁶ A more complete understanding of displacement - or returning - of those leaving the PoC site requires further investigation.

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Food Security and Livelihoods

In November, 65% of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food, representing an improvement since October when 48% reported the same. As illustrated in Map 3, however, access to food varied between counties. A steady proportion of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food in Panyijiar, Leer and Mayendit, whilst counties in Northern Unity, especially Guit and Mayom, assessed settlements reported lower levels of adequate access to food.

In November, 52% of assessed settlements reported humanitarian assistance as their main food source, which is a considerable increase from October (36%). This was followed by 38% of assessed settlements who reported cultivation as their main source of food in November (see Figure 4). The patterns of food security, food sources, and coping strategies, however, differed significantly across the state.

Northern Unity (Guit, Rubkona and Mayom)

Adequate access to food was reportedly the lowest in Northern Unity, especially in Guit and Mayom. Only 24% of assessed settlements in Guit and 8% in Mayom reported adequate access to food in November. In Mayom, this represented a sharp decreasing trend over the last two months; 86% of settlements had reported adequate access to food in September, and 21% in October.

Across Unity State, 59% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food reported that lack of rain was the primary reason as it disrupted people’s agricultural activities. This was especially the case in Mayom and Rubkona, where it was reported by 100% of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food in Mayom and 60% in Rubkona cited lack of rains as the primary reason preventing adequate access to food. Security was also a main factor. Fifty percent (50%) of assessed settlements in Guit that reported inadequate access to food reported that it was due to the unsafe environment. Twenty percent (20%) of assessed settlements in Rubkona reporting inadequate access to food also reported crops

3 REACH South Sudan, Nyal Port Monitoring Factsheet, November 2017. These are indicative trends; REACH does not record all arrivals and departures.

4 Ibid.

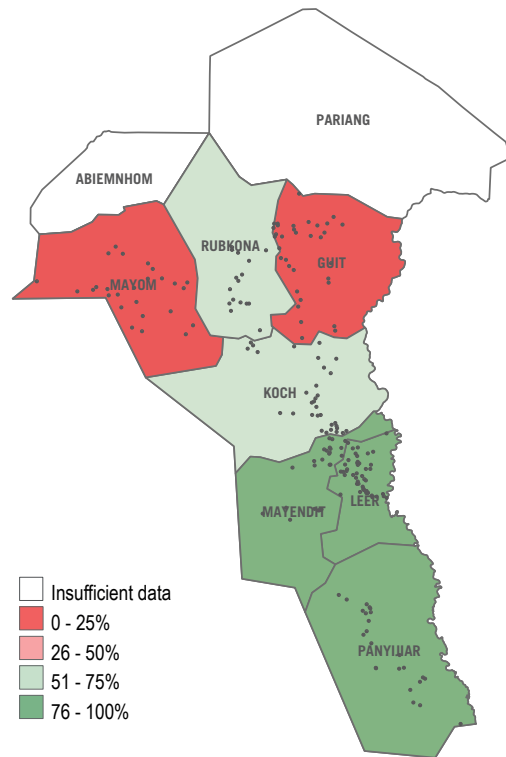
5 IOM South Sudan Flow Monitoring Weekly Report, 24-30 November, 2017.

6 Ibid.

being destroyed as a result of fighting.

These detrimental factors can be verified by the Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) South Sudan Crop Watch from March-July 2017, which reported prolonged dry spells in June across Guit, Mayom and Rubkona. Moreover, due to insecurity, the area planted across the counties had decreased considerably, in comparison to prior the conflict.⁷ Therefore, although agriculture is one of the main source of livelihoods and most assessed settlements have access to land for

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food



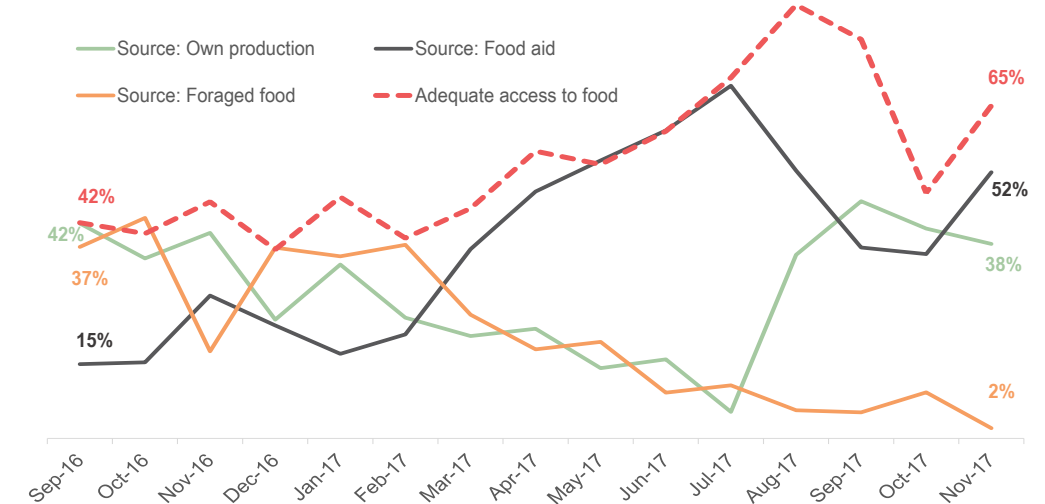
cultivation, insecurity and lack of rains appear to have limited crop yields and subsequent access to food. The impact is especially noticeable in parts of Northern Unity that receive less humanitarian assistance, such as in Mayom and Guit Counties.

Central Unity (Koch, Mayendit and Leer)

Improvements in food access were observed in Central Unity where the proportion of assessed settlements with adequate access to food increased from 54% in October to 82% in November. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food was highest in Leer (90%) and Mayendit (88%). In Koch, reported access to food increased from 49% of assessed settlements in October to 69% in November.

The improved access to food could be due to sustained humanitarian assistance, after the risk of famine was declared in Leer and Mayendit in February 2017.⁸ The majority of assessed settlements in Leer and Mayendit (88% and 77%, respectively) reported humanitarian assistance as their main source of food. Inversely, disruptions of humanitarian assistance for reasons of insecurity also appeared to have imperiled access to food. In Mayendit, the primary reason for assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food was due to the unsafe environment (50%). Insecurity not only prevents successful cultivation but often results in the relocation of aid workers. Such relocations occurred in both Leer and Mayendit,⁹ which suggests that the improvements in food access reported in

Figure 4: Primary food source per proportion of assessed settlements vs. reported adequate access to food, September 2016-November 2017



these two counties may be short-lived, given that they are closely associated with the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

In contrast, only 17% of assessed settlements in Koch reported humanitarian assistance as their primary source of food. Rather, the majority of assessed settlements in Koch reported cultivation as the main source of food (80%), which could be due to a slightly more stable and secure environment. Twenty-one percent (21%) of assessed settlements in Koch reported feeling safe nearly all of the time in November. In comparison, none of the assessed settlements in Leer and Mayendit reported feeling safe nearly all of the time.

In Leer, 25% of the settlements reporting

inadequate access to food indicated that the primary reason was due to a lack of livestock. Among those who did own cattle in Unity State, assessed settlements in Leer reported the lowest physical access to their cattle; more than half (59%) were not able to access their livestock. Indeed, engaging in livestock rearing as a livelihood source was reported by only 24% of assessed settlements in Leer.

This suggests that insecurity and possible cattle raiding have disrupted and prevented livestock rearing as a food and livelihood source. Additionally, within the last month, 33% of assessed settlements in Leer reported the outbreak of disease amongst livestock, which indicates that livestock ownership may decline further in the future.

7 Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MAFS), National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) and FAO, South Sudan Crop Watch, March-July 2017.

8 Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC), The Republic of South Sudan Key IPC Findings: January - July 2017

9 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), South Sudan: Humanitarian Access Snapshot, November 2017.

Southern Unity (Panyijiar)

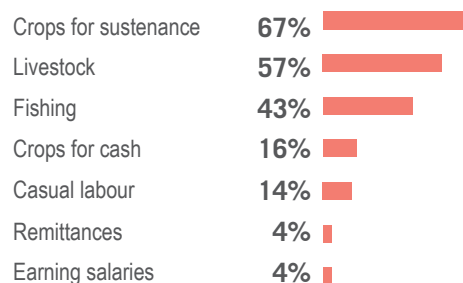
Panyijiar, which had limited incidents of insecurity or conflict during the harvest season, has the highest proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in Unity state. Ninety-six percent (96%) of assessed settlement reported adequate access to food in November. Reflective of successful harvests, all assessed settlements in Panyijiar reported crops for sustenance as a livelihood source and 78% reported cultivation as the primary source of food. Further, 67% of assessed settlements used crops for cash as one of their livelihood sources, which indicates a crop surplus.

Unlike counties in Central Unity, the proportion of assessed settlements in Panyijiar reported a high level of access to livestock (92% of assessed settlements with access to cattle), which is an important alternative food source in times of hunger. Additionally, more than half of assessed settlements (54%) reported access to markets. Collectively, these trends reflect a more secure environment and suggest greater diversity in available livelihood sources and coping strategies in the county.

Coping Strategies

The prevalence and scale of food coping strategies also varied throughout Unity State in November. A high proportion of assessed settlements (46%) reported that they did not use any food consumption strategies, while similar proportions (47%) reported limiting meal sizes. The divergence is likely explained

Figure 5: Percentage of assessed settlements reporting engagement in livelihood sources



by recent improvements in adequate access to food in Central and Southern Unity, which is in contrast to the severe situation in Mayom. Eighty-one percent (81%) of assessed settlements in Mayom reported reducing the number of meals they consumed (a moderate coping strategy) and more than half (58%) reported skipping meals for entire days (a severe strategy). This likely indicates large food consumption gaps of populations living in Mayom.

Throughout the state, assessed settlements reported diverse livelihood coping strategies in order to cope with inadequate access to food or money to buy food. The most predominant strategy was fishing and hunting (39%), selling of cattle (39%), and borrowing food (38%). Borrowing of food suggests that the agricultural harvest or humanitarian assistance in some areas were not sufficient enough to meet food consumption needs. The selling of cattle indicates a more severe livelihood coping strategy as it also reduces household assets. Therefore, households are at risk of reducing

their potential ability to mitigate future negative shocks.

Protection

Assessed settlements reporting whether there had been security incidents decreased marginally in November, although general insecurity persisted in Unity. Twenty-three percent (23%) of assessed settlements reported incidents during which civilians were killed or property was damaged (Figure 6) in November, which is a decline from the 36% who reported the same in October.¹⁰ Nevertheless, only 8% of assessed settlements reported that residents felt safe all the time in November. Indeed, nearly a third of assessed settlements in Leer (31%) and 44% in Rubkona reported never feeling safe.

Conflict-related incidents were predominantly reported by assessed settlements in Rubkona (69%) and Mayendit (43%), which also had incidents of looting reported by assessed settlements (56% and 50%, respectively). These results are supported by outside reporting of clashes in Rubchai, Mayendit and in Rubkona.¹¹ Also, assessed settlements in Leer reported incidents of looting (55%) and conflict (27%).

Figure 6: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting incidents during which civilians were killed or property damaged



Figure 7: Most commonly cited primary protection concerns for men and women



Generally, protection concerns for both men and women remained similar to preceding months with sexual violence the primary protection concern for women reported by 21% of assessed settlements. The primary protection concern for men across the state continued to be killing and injury, reported by 41% of assessed settlements. This was especially reported in Mayendit (75%) and Leer (60%). As seen in Figure 7, it was followed by concerns about forced recruitment, which was predominantly reported by assessed settlements in Guit (91%) and Leer (24%). During the end of October, there was heavy fighting between armed groups in Nimni, Guit County¹², which could help explain the concerns about forced recruitment. In general, the reported concerns reflect security incidents reported in these four counties in late October and throughout November.

Shelter

Insecurity in Unity State, especially in Central and Northern Unity, has continued to force households to flee suddenly, potentially resulting in the displacement of people without

¹⁰ These two indicators have been newly added to the AoK questionnaire, therefore no comparative data for previous months are available.

¹² OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 17, South Sudan, November 2017.

¹¹ ACLED, Conflict Trends (no. 63), Real-Time Analysis of African Political Violence, November 2017.

adequate shelter or essential non-food items (NFIs).

Local community shelter condition

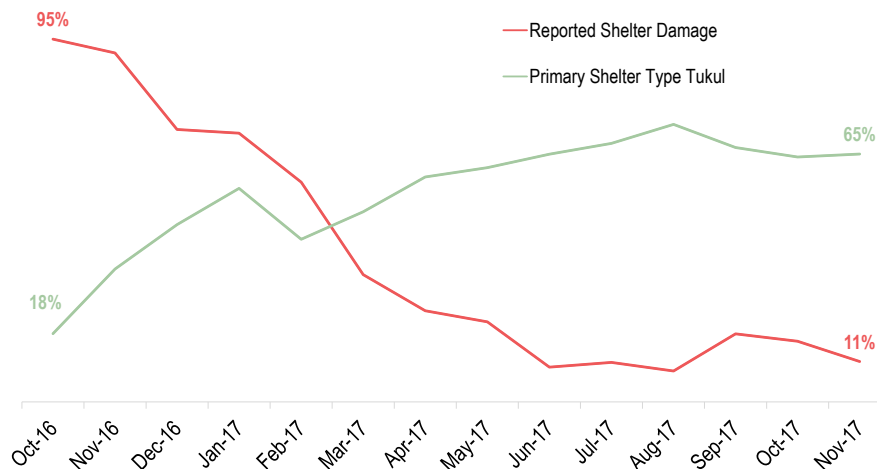
Consistent with previous months, 65% of assessed settlements in Unity reported that tukuls were the primary shelter structures, followed by rakooba (33%) for the local community. The remaining percentage of assessed settlements reported improvised shelters (1%), permanent structures (1%) or community building (1%) as the primary structures of households.¹³ As Figure 8 illustrates, local communities appear to have rebuilt more permanent structures, as the security situation improved.

IDP shelter condition

In comparison to local community shelter conditions, rakoobas continued to be the primary shelter type for IDPs, reported by 66% of assessed settlements where IDPs are present. This is similar to the 60% reporting the same in October. Reporting that IDPs lived primarily in improvised shelter decreased from 25% of assessed settlements with IDP populations in October to 17% in November. Tukuls were only reported by 15% of assessed settlements with IDP populations and no shelter was reported by 2%. This is likely the result of destruction of shelters because of conflict and indicates that IDPs have either insufficient resources to build their homes or the environment is not safe enough.

Counties with the highest proportion of settlements reporting IDPs, Leer (42%) and

Figure 8: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting tukul as primary local community shelter type vs. proportion of assessed settlements reporting shelter damage, October 2016 - November 2017



Mayendit (65%), also reported the highest proportion of IDPs living in improvised shelters. This was reported by 50% of settlements with IPD populations in Mayendit and 21% of the same in Leer. This suggests that the local community's ability to absorb IDP shelter needs remained very low (48% for Mayendit in October), but it has improved in Leer (33% in October). In order to meet IDP shelter needs assessed settlements in Unity State identified mosquito nets (35%) and plastic sheets (25%) as the two main essential NFI needs.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The reported presence of boreholes remained low across Unity in November. Just under half (47%) of assessed settlements reported the presence of boreholes (as seen in Figure 9), similar to the 49% reported in October. The presence of boreholes was particularly

pronounced in Northern Unity as only 26% of assessed settlements in Mayom reported the presence of boreholes, followed by 31% in Rubkona and 32% in Guit. Across Unity State, 81% of assessed settlements with boreholes reported that those boreholes were functional. However, the lack of functional boreholes in assessed settlements with boreholes was mostly prevalent in the counties of Mayom (57%), Guit (56%), and Rubkona (40%).

The lack of functional boreholes and safe drinking water appears to be forcing

Figure 9: Proportion of assessed settlements with access to boreholes



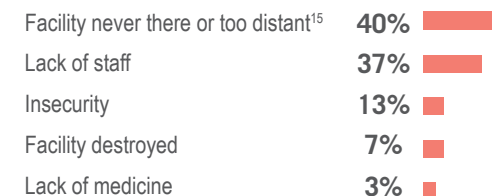
populations to rely on unimproved water sources. Swamps were reported as the main water source in nearly half (49%) of assessed settlements. Further, 92% of assessed settlements reported that they did not use latrines. The high proportion of the population likely practicing open defecation coupled with the reliance on unimproved water sources expose the population to a high risk of water-borne diseases.

Concern Worldwide conducted a rapid assessment in Dandok, Guit, which corroborates with the aforementioned findings. They concluded that 45% of the population (approx. 3,870 individuals) were using a functional borehole, whilst the other 55% collected water from unimproved sources.¹⁴

Health

Statewide, reported access to health care facilities in Unity state continued to steadily increase; 69% of assessed settlements reported access to health services in November 2017, compared to 44% in January 2017. Within the state, however, reported access varied considerably by county. At the

Figure 10: Primary reason for proportion of assessed settlements that health services are not available

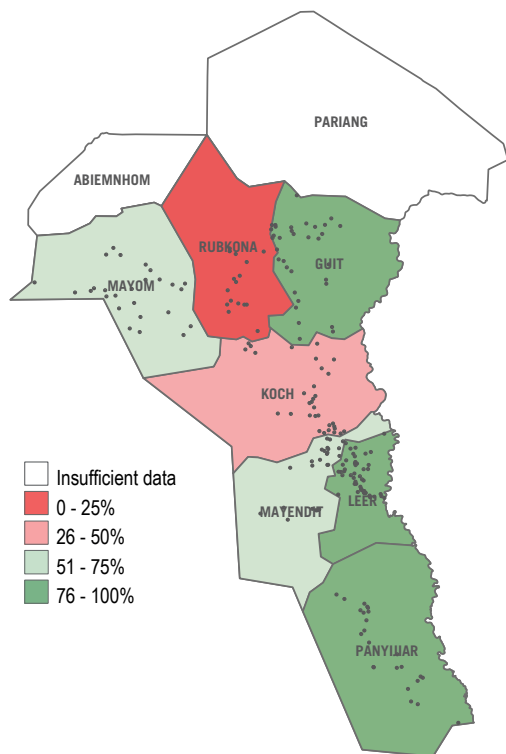


¹³ The total does equate to 100% but not all of the percentages were integers and have been rounded up.

¹⁴ Concern Worldwide, Dandok (Kilo Khamsin) Rapid Assessment: WASH, Nutrition and Shelter/NFI, 30 November 2017.

¹⁵ These were given as two separate answers but combined for data presentation. In the data, 23% of assessed settlements reported that health services were never available and 17% reported that health services were too far away.

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to healthcare facilities



extremes, nearly all of assessed settlements in Guit (94%) and Panyijiar (92%) reported access to health services, while the majority of assessed settlements in Rubkona (88%) and Koch (69%) reported that healthcare facilities were not accessible (see Map 4).

Among settlements reporting no access to healthcare facilities, explanations also differed by county. In Northern Unity, conflict appeared to be a driving factor. Insecurity was reported as the primary reason preventing healthcare access by assessed settlements in Rubkona

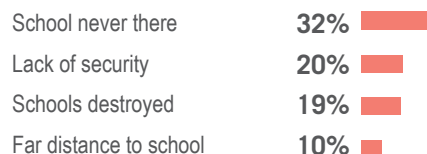
(36%); and, a lack of staff was commonly reported by Koch settlements (80%) and Rubkona (21%). Both reasons are consistent with reports of clashes in the area, which disrupt the delivery of healthcare services. Conversely, the primary reported reason for a lack of healthcare facilities by assessed settlements in Mayendit was that the facilities were never there in the first place (50%). Similarly, assessed settlements in Mayom equally reported that facilities were never there (44%) or too distant (44%). These responses suggest a more long-term infrastructural obstacle to the provision of healthcare in remote areas.

Malaria continued to be the main health concern throughout the state, reported by 75% of assessed settlements, which is similar to October (76%). Another pressing health concern was the outbreak of measles in Panyijiar, which has been ongoing since July with at least 158 confirmed cases.¹⁶

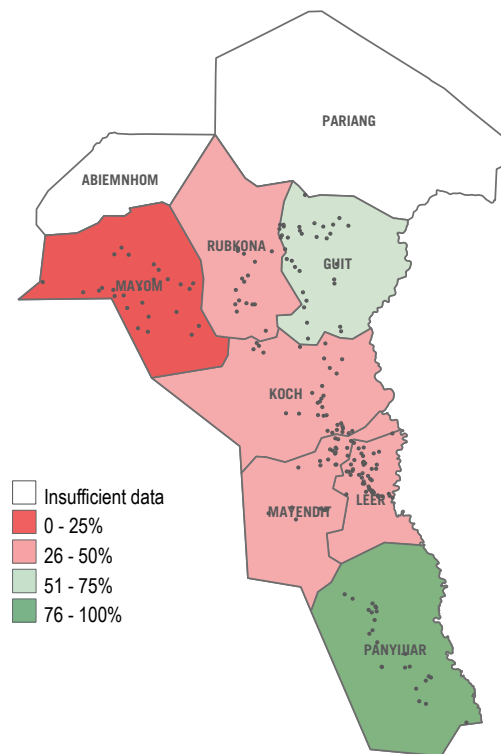
Education

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to education was 48% in November, which is similar to the 46%

Figure 11: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting the primary reason why education is not accessible



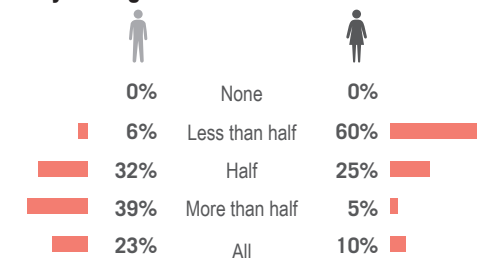
Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to education



reported in October. In contrast to assessed settlements in Panyijiar County that continued to report access to educational services at 88% or more, the proportion of assessed settlements in Mayom and Koch reported the lowest access at 22% and 31% respectively.

Where no access to education was reported, 32% of assessed settlements reported that facilities were never available as the main barrier to education, as seen in Figure 11. This suggests that even prior to the conflict,

Figure 12: Reported proportion of settlements with access to education where 6-17 years old boys and girls attend school



education was difficult to access for remote settlements. However, additional factors for inaccessibility related more closely to the conflict, including insecurity (20%) and the destruction of education facilities (19%). Therefore, it is likely that the lack of access to education services can also be attributed to insecurity as education services are typically very sensitive to the consequences of conflict.

Similar to previous months, reported attendance rates indicated that far more boys attended school than girls, as illustrated by Figure 12. Where children were unable to attend school, working outside the home was a primary reason reported by assessed settlements, preventing both boys (30%) and girls (26%) from attending school. In addition, boys were prevented from attending school as they had no school supplies, as reported by 31% of assessed settlements, which was also a primary factor for girls (19%). As had been described in the May REACH Situation Overview, contributing factors to less girls attending school are the cultural perceptions that school could have a detrimental influence

¹⁶ OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 17, South Sudan, November 2017.

on girls, including early marriage and early pregnancy.¹⁷

Conclusion

Conflict in Northern and Central Unity between September and November 2017 has had a negative effect on many of the assessed settlements, especially in regards to health, education and WASH.

However, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food improved as it increased from 48% in October to 65% in November. With 52% reporting humanitarian assistance as the main food source, this suggests that improvements in food access are likely attributable to sustained humanitarian assistance as well as own production, in areas where populations were able to harvest. In Northern Unity, Mayom and Guit have experienced a combination of prolonged dry spells and insecurity, which has led to worsening access to food and likely reduced harvests.

WASH indicators did not show any notable improvements between October and November. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting the availability of boreholes remained low (47%), whilst 19% of assessed settlements reported that the boreholes were not functional. This was particularly prevalent in Mayom (57%), Guit (56%), and to a lesser extent, Rubkona (40%).

Access to health services remained similar, as it was reported by 64% of assessed

settlements in October and 69% in November. Inaccessibility of healthcare services remained the most cited reason for assessed settlements not accessing health services, especially in Rubkona and Koch. However, fighting in Nimni, Guit, where health and nutrition facilities were looted and vandalised, could have had an impact, as it is one of the most important hubs for service delivery to other hard-to-reach areas in Northern Unity, as reported by OCHA.¹⁸

Displacement and movement of people is most likely set to continue due to insecurity and protection concerns, which suggests that there will be a high demand for NFIs, such as plastic sheets, blankets, mosquito nets and cooking equipment, especially at locations with a high number of IDPs.

Similar to the trends of October, the situation in Northern Unity remains severe, especially regarding the need for food assistance. The impact of humanitarian assistance can be seen in Leer and Mayendit as adequate access to food was reported by a significant proportion of assessed settlements in those locations. Therefore, sustained humanitarian assistance in the immediate future would be required in order to address the negative trends in counties such as Mayom and Guit.

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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¹⁷ REACH, Situation Overview: Unity State, May 2017.

¹⁸ See in previously mentioned reference from OCHA, Humanitarian Bulletin Issue 17, South Sudan, November 2017.