

Situation Overview: Lakes State, South Sudan

January - March 2020

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

Years of continued insecurity and displacement have resulted in high humanitarian needs in Lakes State. With limited humanitarian access in the region, information gaps exist on the severity of these needs and the locations of vulnerable populations.

To inform humanitarian actors working outside 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 with knowledge of a settlements 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 first quarter of 2020.

Key Findings

- **Displacement reportedly continued to be caused by insecurity across Lakes state.** Ninety-two percent (92%) of assessed settlements that reported the presence of IDPs in March reported that insecurity was the primary push factor.
- **Protection concerns were reportedly driven by insecurity during the reporting period.** Across Lakes State, there was a 21 percentage point decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements that reported that

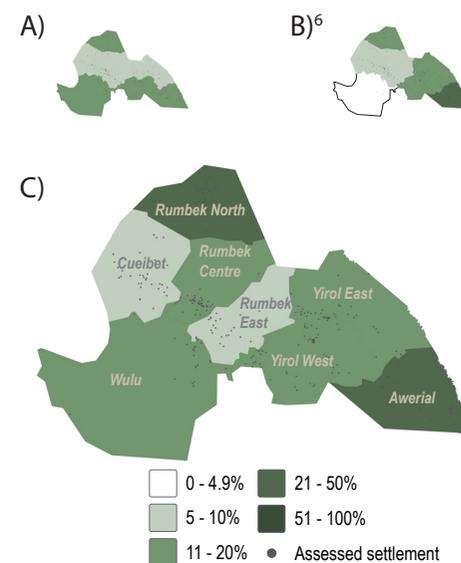
most people felt safe most of the time (17% in March). Insecurity also reportedly created gendered protection concerns across all counties in Lakes State.

- **The proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food across Lakes State decreased by 23 percentage points this quarter (22% in March).** This was reportedly driven primarily by insecurity and conflict¹ in western Lakes² (42%), and by climatic shocks³ in eastern Lakes (67%).
- **In March, only 24% of assessed settlements reported most people washed their hands with soap.** Furthermore, only 30% reported any member of the settlement having access to a latrine. This is indicative of the high number of assessed settlements reporting adverse health conditions.
- **Malaria remained the most commonly reported main health concern in March, reported by 58% of assessed settlements.** However, this was a 27 percentage points decrease from the previous reporting period likely due to reductions in stagnant water during the dry season.
- **Reported school attendance rates for both sexes increased across the reporting period, with 89% and 77% of assessed settlements reporting that more than half of boys and girls respectively in the settlement were attending school in March, a 33 and 35**

percentage point increase since the previous reporting period (December 2019).

- **Fifty percent (50%) of assessed settlements in Awerial County reported that IDPs were living in improvised shelters,** likely indicative of the recent reported influx of IDPs from Duk and Bor South counties.

Map 1: Assessment coverage in Lakes State in January (A), February (B) and March (C) 2020



of key informant interviews conducted: **773**
of assessed settlements: **497**
of counties covered: **8 (of 8)**
of focus group discussions conducted: **11**

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation hard-to-reach areas of Lakes State, REACH uses primary data from key informants who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or received regular information from a settlement or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK). Information for this report was collected from key informants in Rumbek Town and Mingkaman informal settlement site in Lakes State in January, February and March 2020.

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 settlements⁴ 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 payam⁵ coverage over the period. Quantitative findings were triangulated with FGDs and secondary sources. FGDs were collected throughout January and March by the REACH team in Rumbek Town and Mingkaman informal settlement site.

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

1. Conflict is defined as the proportion of assessed settlements reporting unsafe access to land or crops destroyed by conflict as the main reason for inadequate food access.

2. Occasionally, figures will be made that only refer to western Lakes or eastern Lakes due to alignments of responses in these regions. Western Lakes encompasses Cueibet, Rumbek Centre, Rumbek North, Rumbek East, and Wulu counties. Eastern Lakes encompasses Yriol East, Yriol West and Awerial counties.

3. Climatic shocks are defined as the proportion of assessed settlements reporting flooding, inadequate rain,

pests destroying crops or a short growing season as the main reason for inadequate access to food

4. 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.

5. A payam is an administrative district at the sub-county level.

6. Coverage was not achieved in Wulu in February 2020.



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Population Movement and Displacement

Insecurity and conflict continued to drive population movement in Lakes State in the first quarter of 2020. In March, 92% of assessed settlements that reported the presence of IDPs reported insecurity as the primary push factor.

In March, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs continued to be higher in western Lakes (46%) than in eastern Lakes (5%). Whilst the proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDPs in western Lakes decreased from 59% in December 2019, there was an increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that IDPs constituted half or more of the settlements population (79% in March), a 22 percentage point increase from the previous reporting period. This could suggest a greater concentration of displaced individuals in a smaller number of settlements, resulting in greater pressure on host community resources. This is of concern given that food and seed stocks are generally at their lowest at this stage of the season.

In March, 75% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs reported that the majority of these IDPs had arrived from another settlement within the same county (60% in December 2019). These internal county-level displacements could reduce IDP populations' access to land for cultivation and may result in shocks that reduce their capacity to plant and cultivate crops, as reported in 2019.⁷

In eastern Lakes, there was no reported IDP presence in assessed settlements in Yirol East and Yirol West counties during the reporting period. However, of assessed settlements in Awerial County which reported the presence of IDPs (15%), there was an increase in the proportion reporting that more than half of the population were IDPs, from 38% in December to 50% in March. Similar to state-level trends, insecurity was the most commonly reported push factor, with 100% of assessed settlements hosting IDPs in Awerial County reporting this as the main motivation to leave their former settlement (an increase from 75% in December). According to FGD participants in Mingkaman Town (Awerial County), violence in Greater Bor South reportedly provoked movement of up to 5,000 households from Duk County (Jonglei State) to Awerial County, due to perceived fears of Murle revenge killings.⁸

This atypical displacement pattern from Greater Bor South to Awerial County was supported by AoK findings from the first two months of this quarter (January and February). The majority of assessed settlements in Awerial County (70% in January and 67% in February) reported IDPs arriving from Bor South County, Jonglei State (25% in December). Bor Town in Bor South County is a key transit location for IDPs from Jonglei State to Mingkaman Town, via boat. This large scale arrival could result in additional pressure on host community resources, due to the reportedly low levels of access to food and non-food items (NFIs) for newly-arrived IDPs.

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Protection

In March, there was a 21 percentage point decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements in Lakes State that reported that most people felt safe most of the time (17% in March). Assessed settlements in western Lakes continued to report the lowest levels of perceived security (4%) with particularly low proportions of assessed settlements reporting this in Greater Rumbek (0%). The biggest decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting perceived safety was in eastern Lakes; here, there was a 32 percentage point decrease from the previous reporting period (29% in March). Reductions in perceived security were reportedly due to inter-communal violence (ICV), cattle raiding and domestic violence. As reported by assessed settlements, insecurity remained the highest reported driver of humanitarian needs across Lakes State, and will most likely continue to do so throughout the coming quarter.

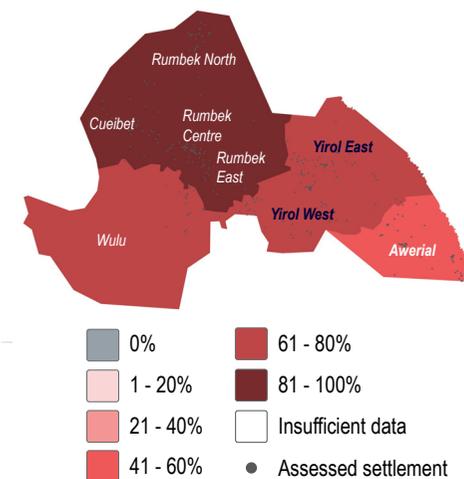
Western Lakes

In western Lakes, of assessed settlements that reported that most people did not feel safe most of the time (95% in March), 83% reported that the main protection concern for men was killing or injury by another tribe (unchanged since the last reporting period), while 57% reported the same for boys (decreased from 70% in December). Moreover, unchanged from the previous reporting period, there continued to be high reported incidences of conflict that

resorted in the killing of at least one civilian (41% in March). This is indicative of the severity of the ongoing violence in the region, and the reported impact that insecurity had on the protection concerns of populations in assessed settlements.

Findings indicate that protection concerns within the home continued to contribute towards low perceptions of safety in assessed settlements across western Lakes in March. Twenty-seven percent (27%) of assessed settlements that reported protection concerns, reported that domestic abuse was the main safety concern for girls. Furthermore, 22% of assessed settlements that reported protection concerns also reported early marriage as an issue for girls; suggestive of the use of bride price amongst food insecure communities to

Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements in Lakes reporting that most people feeling unsafe most of the time in March.



7. REACH, "Western Lakes Population Movement, Food Security and Livelihoods Profile", July 2019.

8. REACH, "Sudden-onset participatory population movement mapping FGD Awerial", March 2020

acquire cattle. For women, indicative of the increased levels of conflict often reported during the dry season, 47% of assessed settlements, reported looting as the main protection concern for women in March.

Continued high levels of ICV, domestic violence and looting, reported across first quarter of 2020, has resulted in exposure to sustained levels of violence for assessed settlements in western Lakes. These indicators are perhaps contributing to long-term food insecurity, barriers to livelihoods, as well as deteriorating individual mental health.

Eastern Lakes

In March, the proportion of assessed settlements in eastern Lakes that reported that most people felt safe most of the time decreased by 32 percentage points between December and March (29% in March). This was primarily seen in assessed settlements in Yirol East and Yirol West counties; with 20% of assessed settlements in both counties reporting that they felt safe most of the time in March, a 53 and 48 percentage point decrease from December 2019. There was no reported change in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the same finding in Awerial County (47% in March).

Of the assessed settlements in Yirol East County which reported that most people did not feel safe most of the time, there was a 36 percentage point increase in cattle raiding as the highest reported protection concern for men (48% in March) and boys (38%). This was corroborated by FGD participants from Yirol

East County, who reported that Nuer and Agaar cattle keepers were crossing from neighbouring Panyijjar, and Rumbek East and Centre. This reportedly led to cattle herders selling cattle as a coping strategy.⁹

Similarly, in Yirol West County, increased levels of ICV and cattle raiding seemingly impacted reported protection concerns in March. Twenty-six percent (26%) of assessed settlements reported that cattle raiding was the main protection concern for men in March (a 21 percentage point increase from December), and 24% of assessed settlements reported this for boys (an increase from 0% in December). This reported trend could be attributed to increased levels of cattle raiding throughout the dry season. In line with annual trends, these patterns of violence will likely be reduced during the next reporting period due to the onset of the rainy season.

Across the reporting period, women's protection concerns were reportedly characterised by violence between neighbours. In March, 26% of assessed settlements reported that this was the main protection concern for women, a 19 percentage point increase from the previous reporting period. This is perhaps linked to the absence of male figures in the home during dry season as they are in the cattle camps. Furthermore, likely as a consequence of the decrease in household assets due to the reported prevalence of cattle raiding, there was a 13 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting early marriage as the main protection concern for girls (33% in March). Such domestic

protection concerns are likely to increase in the coming months across Lakes if lockdown measures are implemented in South Sudan in response to a significant COVID-19 outbreak in the country.

Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL)

Adequate access to food in assessed settlements across Lakes reportedly decreased by 23 percentage points from the previous reporting period (22% in March). This decrease was reportedly driven by insecurity and conflict in western Lakes, and by climatic shocks in eastern Lakes. In March 2020, the World Food Programme (WFP) reported that existing vulnerabilities related to food insecurity across the country could be exacerbated should COVID-19 spread.¹⁰ Given the pre-existing vulnerabilities in Lakes State at the peak of the lean season, this could impact access to livelihoods and adequate access to food, already exacerbated by years of conflict.

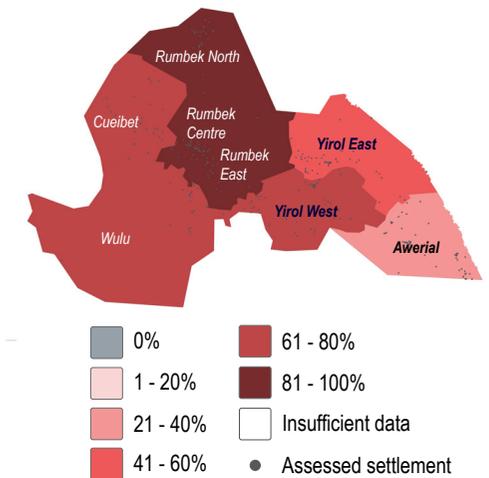
Western Lakes

Only 8% of assessed settlements in western Lakes reported adequate access to food in March, unchanged from the previous reporting period, suggesting sustained levels of food insecurity. Whilst cultivation was reportedly the main source of food for 50% of assessed settlements in March (unchanged from the previous reporting period), there was a 10 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements relying on bought foods as their main source (38% in March). Market

reliance was especially high in assessed settlements in Rumbek Centre (51% in March), likely in part due to the accessibility of the market in Rumbek Town (reportedly used by 74% of assessed settlements in Rumbek Centre to buy food in March). The reported increase in bought food across assessed settlements in western Lakes during this quarter is indicative of low levels of cultivated foods stocks commonly seen at this stage of the dry season. Following trade restrictions induced by the COVID-19 contingency measures, as well as the usual disturbances to road infrastructures during the rainy season, this market dependency could indicate an increased vulnerability to future food insecurity and shocks in communities in Western Lakes.

Insecurity reportedly impacted access to food. Of assessed settlements in western Lakes reporting inadequate access to food

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements in Lakes reporting most people feeling unsafe most of the time AND inadequate access to food in March.



9. REACH, "Area of knowledge food security and livelihoods focus group discussion Yirol East", March 2020.

10. WFP, "COVID19 OUTBREAK LIKELY IMPACT ON MARKETS and FOOD SECURITY IN SOUTH SUDAN", March 2020.

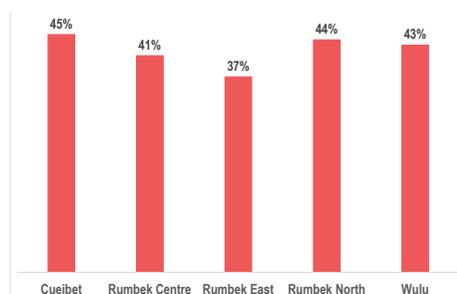
in March (92%), unsafe access to land (26%) and conflict destroying crops (17%) were the two main reasons reported for inadequate food access (unchanged since the last reporting period). FGDs conducted in January in western Lakes corroborated this and highlighted that cattle raiding, targeted killing, and insecurity all contributed towards inadequate food access.¹¹

The proportion of assessed settlements in western Lakes that reported that most people consumed only one meal per day remained high in the first quarter of 2020 (90% in March), with particularly high proportions of assessed settlements reporting this in Rumbek North (100%), Rumbek East (96%) and Rumbek Centre (95%) counties. Critically, of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food, 55% reported hunger to be severe (unchanged since the last reporting period).

Cultivation and livestock rearing remained the two highest reported livelihood activities during the reporting period in western Lakes (83% and 51% of assessed settlements respectively). Of concern, there was a 22 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements in western Lakes reporting casual labour as a main livelihood activity between December (46%) and February (68%), returning to 53% reporting in March. Increased reporting of casual labour as the main livelihood source indicates limited access to typical livelihoods, as well as unpredictable access to income amongst a population with increased reliance on bought market goods as the main source of food.

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting consumption coping strategies increased across western Lakes, perhaps in response to decreased access to food and indicative of growing food insecurity. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting limiting meal sizes and consuming less preferred and less expensive foods increased by 22 and 28 percentage points respectively across the reporting period (90% and 81% of assessed settlements respectively in March). Furthermore, there was a 33 percentage point increase in assessed settlements in western Lakes reporting that at least one person in their settlement was resorting to consuming seeds when there was not enough food. FGD participants from Cueibet and Rumbek North counties reported that because of the flooding late last year, seed stocks were already reportedly low.¹² Consuming seeds just before planting begins could lead to less crops cultivated later in the year. Which, in turn, could increase vulnerability to shocks amongst assessed settlements in western Lakes.

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements in western Lakes reporting that conflict was the primary cause of inadequate food in March



Eastern Lakes

In eastern Lakes, there was a 31 percentage point decrease in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food in March (35%). Similar to western Lakes, cultivation remained the primary source of food for 76% of assessed settlements in March (unchanged from the previous reporting period).

Climatic shocks reportedly impacted assessed settlements' access to food during the reporting period. Of assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food (65%), the lack of rain (18% in March), short growing season (18%), presence of pests destroying crops (17%), and flooding (13%) all reportedly contributed to insufficient access to food. Insufficient rains and flooding are indicative of the varied climatic conditions for cultivation across eastern Lakes in the last quarter of 2019.

Inadequate access to food likely resulted in the adoption of coping strategies such as reducing the number of meals per day. Fifty-six percent (56%) of assessed settlements in March reported consuming only one meal per day in eastern Lakes, a 25 percentage point increase from the previous reporting period. This is perhaps indicative of coping strategies adopted during the lean season as food stocks deplete. Findings indicate that consumption coping strategies continued to be adopted in response to food insecurity in the first quarter of 2020. Fifty-six percent (56%) of assessed settlements reported limiting portion sizes at meal times, 51% reported reducing the number of meals eaten in a day and 42% reported relying on less preferred and less expensive

food (all unchanged from the previous reporting period).

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting consuming wild leaves or fruits in response to food insecurity in eastern Lakes increased in the first quarter of 2020, where there was a 20 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that most people were eating wild leaves or fruits as part of their main meal (28% in March). Within this group, there was a 78 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that wild foods constituted half or more than half of their main meals (78% in March). In March, FGD participants in eastern Lakes highlighted that the availability of wild foods decreased this year, meaning that women and girls (who most commonly collect wild foods) were forced to travel further to do so, which increased protection concerns.¹³

There was an increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the adoption of livelihood coping strategies such as gathering firewood (63% in March from 32% in December) and charcoal making (73% in March from 42% in December). FGDs conducted in eastern Lakes in March highlighted charcoal making and firewood gathering as common livelihoods used to generate extra income for food, perhaps indicative of the lower amounts of cultivated food stocks left at this time of year.¹⁴

11. REACH, Gap analysis FGD Wulu, 8 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Cueibet, 21 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek East, 14 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek North, 6 January 2020.

12. REACH, Gap analysis FGD Cueibet, 21 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek North, 6 January 2020.

13. REACH, Area of Knowledge Food Security and Livelihoods Focus Group Discussion Awerial, 25 March 2020; REACH, Area of Knowledge Food Security and Livelihoods Focus Group Discussion Yiroi East, 26 March 2020; REACH, Area of Knowledge Food Security and Livelihoods Focus Group Discussion Yiroi West, 19 March 2020.

14. REACH, Area of Knowledge Food Security and Livelihoods Focus Group Discussion Awerial, 25 March 2020; REACH, Area of Knowledge Food Security and Livelihoods Focus Group Discussion Yiroi East, 26 March 2020; REACH, Area of Knowledge Food Security and Livelihoods Focus Group Discussion Yiroi West, 19 March 2020.

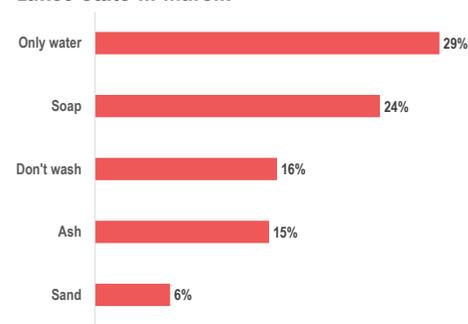
Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

WASH indicators in March continued to suggest vulnerability to poor health outcomes for many assessed settlements in Lakes. In March, only 24% of assessed settlements reported most people washing their hands with soap. Furthermore, only 30% reported any member of the settlement having access to a latrine. Existing WASH conditions could exacerbate the potential spread of COVID-19.

Access to Water Sources

In western Lakes, there was a 17 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting using boreholes as their main source of drinking water (94% in March). Similarly, in eastern Lakes, boreholes reportedly continued to be the main source of water for 78% of assessed settlements in March (unchanged from the previous reporting period). In the same month, 99% of assessed settlements in Lakes that reported the presence of a borehole reported that it was functional (not broken).

Figure 2: Most common methods for washing hands as reported by assessed settlements in Lakes State in March.



In March, the reported distance to access preferred water sources in Lakes State remained consistent with the previous reporting period, with 58% of assessed settlements in the state reporting that it took less than an hour to make a return trip to their preferred water source. However, the reported distance to water sources remained high in Cuiabet County, with 39% of assessed settlements reporting a return trip to their preferred water source taking between one hour and half a day. Relatively high proportions of assessed settlements in Wulu (33% in March) and Yiol West (38%) counties also reported the same. As insecurity and patterns of violence were reported across Lakes State in the first quarter, long journeys to collect water were likely exposing populations to protection concerns related to ongoing insecurity. Moreover, movement restrictions may impact access to water sources that are further from settlements, limiting household access to water for regular consumption, as well as additional amounts recommended for COVID-19 contingency measures.

Sanitation

The reported use of latrines remained low across Lakes State in the first quarter of 2020 (only 30% of assessed settlements reported that at least one person in the settlement was using latrines). Of assessed settlements that reported no latrine access (70%), the most commonly reported reason was that there were none available, as reported by 84% of assessed settlements in March. FGD participants from across western Lakes highlighted that the main reasons for this was that people did not have the

materials or the expertise to construct them.¹⁵ Particularly, of assessed settlements in Wulu County reporting latrine use by any members of the settlement (47% in March), 80% reported that the estimated proportion using them was less than half (57% across Lakes State). This raises health concerns associated with open defecation.

Across Lakes State the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that most people washed their hands with soap remained low (24% in March). Moreover, the proportion of assessed settlements reportedly using less effective handwashing methods, such as only using water (29%), ash (15%), or sand (6%) remained high. Particularly, 16% of assessed settlements in Lakes State reported that people did not wash their hands at all in March. These low reported levels of sanitation in assessed settlements raise concerns of settlements' ability to adopt vital COVID-19 preventative measures.

Health

Access to Health Services

In Lakes State, Primary Health Care (PHC) centres or units were the most commonly reported healthcare facility in 46% of assessed settlements in March (34% in December). Additionally, access to healthcare increased by 19 percentage points this quarter, with only 16% of assessed settlements in western Lakes reporting that they had no access to any medical centre within walking distance in March (35% in December). In eastern Lakes only 1% of assessed settlements reported this. However, FGD participants in Greater Rumbek

and Cuiabet County highlighted that access to healthcare facilities was regularly hindered by insecurity on the roads. Additionally, reportedly most healthcare facilities did not stock drugs for treatment. Participants reported that this often resulted in the adoption of coping strategies, such as selling cattle to finance medical bills.¹⁶

Primary health concerns

In March, the most commonly reported health concern across Lakes State was malaria, as reported by 58% of assessed settlements (85% in December). This reduction in reporting is likely due to seasonal declines in reported cases of malaria, due to reductions of stagnant water bodies where mosquitos breed.¹⁷

Particularly, there was an increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of water-borne diseases in assessed settlements in Yiol East County (24% in March from 8% in December) and Yiol West County (26% in March from 2% in December). This trend was not reported in other assessed settlements in Lakes State. The reported increase in water-borne diseases for assessed settlements in Yiol East and West counties could be linked to the 20 percentage point increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting diarrheal diseases as the main perceived cause of death (20% in March). FGD participants from several regions of western Lakes also confirmed the symptoms of diarrhoea after using unprotected water sources.¹⁸

15. REACH, Gap analysis FGD Wulu, 8 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Cuiabet, 21 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek East, 14 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek North, 6 January 2020.

16. REACH, Gap analysis FGD Cuiabet, 21 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek East, 14 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek North, 6 January 2020.

17. CDC, 'Malaria's Impact Worldwide', 4 January 2019.

18. REACH, Gap analysis FGD Wulu, 8 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Cuiabet, 21 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek East, 14 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek North, 6 January 2020.

Shelter and Non-Food Items (NFIs)

Shelter damage across Lakes State remained reportedly low in March, with only 8% of assessed settlements reporting that at least one shelter had been partially or fully destroyed because of fighting (unchanged since the previous reporting period). However, should damage occur as a reported consequence of conflict, 0% of assessed settlements reported that there were materials available for shelter construction in March.

Recent displacement in Awerial County raised concerns of sufficient shelter access, with 50% of assessed settlements in the county reporting that IDPs were housed in improvised shelters; reflecting the status of Mingkaman and surrounding areas as informal settlement sites, but likely also indicative of the recent reported influx of IDPs from Duk and Bor South counties in Jonglei State. In March, 100% of assessed settlements in Awerial County that reported the presence of IDPs also reported that IDPs were integrated into

the host community, or were hosted by relatives, which is common across the state (99% of assessed settlements across Lakes State). This could suggest that host communities are sharing their resources with IDPs which could be an additional pressure on scarce resources, and there may be additional shelter needs in the future.

In March, cooking pots (23% of assessed settlements, unchanged from the last reporting period) and jerry cans (26% in March and 9% in December) were the most commonly reported NFI needs for IDPs. FGD participants in western Lakes reported that NFIs were primarily sourced in markets, and recent insecurity hindered access.¹⁹ Additionally, access to markets may be reduced in the consecutive reporting period, as the wet season hinders road access. Furthermore, should trade routes from Uganda and Sudan face further restrictions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, this will limit already affected access to markets and NFIs. Which, in turn, could increase the vulnerability of IDP populations across Lakes State.

Education

In March, unchanged from the previous reporting period, 71% of assessed settlements in Lakes State reported that they had access to education facilities within walking distance. For the 27% of assessed settlements without reported access to education, the lack of educational facilities was the most commonly reported reason (80% of assessed settlements).

Attendance rates for both genders increased across the reporting period, with 89% and

77% of assessed settlements reporting that more than half of boys and girls respectively were attending school in March, a 33 and 35 percentage point increase since the previous reporting period (December 2019). This might be partially attributable to improved road access to facilities during the dry season.

While rates of attendance for both genders were similar across Lakes State, reasons for low attendance varied. In March, of assessed settlements that reported half or less than half of boys were attending school, 58% reported that boys did not attend as they were required to work outside of the home. FGD participants in Cueibet, Rumbek North, and Rumbek East counties corroborated this, reporting that boys were required to work in cattle camps. It was also reported that in some cases, boys were targets of ICV and therefore remained at home due to perceived fears, preventing them from accessing education.²⁰

In March, girls' non-attendance was predominately due to high fees. Of assessed settlements in Lakes State that reported that half or less than half of girls attended school, 26% reported that this was mainly due to high fees (unchanged since the last reporting period). The proportion of assessed settlements reporting this issue was much higher in western Lakes (43% of assessed settlements) than eastern Lakes (2%). In eastern Lakes, 32% of assessed settlements in March reported that early marriage was the main barrier for girls in settlements with no reported access to education (unchanged since the last reporting period). Bride price is often used as a coping

strategy during periods of extreme food insecurity, and should be monitored into the next reporting period.

Conclusion

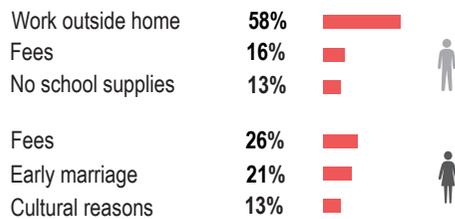
Findings indicate that, in Lakes State, high humanitarian needs continued to be driven by considerable protection concerns, with large reported displacements from Jonglei State to Awerial County, and continued poor food security in western Lakes being driven primarily by conflict in the first quarter of 2020. Moreover, the potential spread of COVID-19 across Lakes State posed an increased threat to already vulnerable populations that continued to report health concerns and low levels of sufficient sanitary conditions to prevent the potential spread of the virus.

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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Figure 3: Primary reported reasons in Lakes State for lack of school attendance for girls and boys in assessed settlements in March.



19. REACH, Gap analysis FGD Wulu, 8 January 2020; REACH, REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek East, 14 January 2020; Notes on the Area of Knowledge FGD for Rumbek Centre County, 3 December 2019.

20. REACH, Gap analysis FGD Cueibet, 21 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek East, 14 January 2020; REACH, Gap analysis FGD Rumbek North, 6 January 2020;