

# Humanitarian Situation Monitoring, Unity State

South Sudan April - September 2020

**REACH** Informing more effective humanitarian action

## Introduction

Reported humanitarian needs increased across Unity State throughout the second and third quarters of 2020. Between April and June 2020, the onset of the annual lean season, continued insecurity and COVID-19 related restrictions drove humanitarian needs across Unity state. From July onwards, severe flooding and a growing economic crisis, compounded existing humanitarian needs as affected communities' access to services appeared highly limited.

Specific information about humanitarian needs in remote areas of the state remained scarce and difficult to obtain, creating barriers for humanitarian programming and targeting of assistance.

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 every month through interviews with key informants (KIs) with knowledge of a settlement and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This Situation Overview uses this data and secondary sources to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across Unity State from April to September 2020.

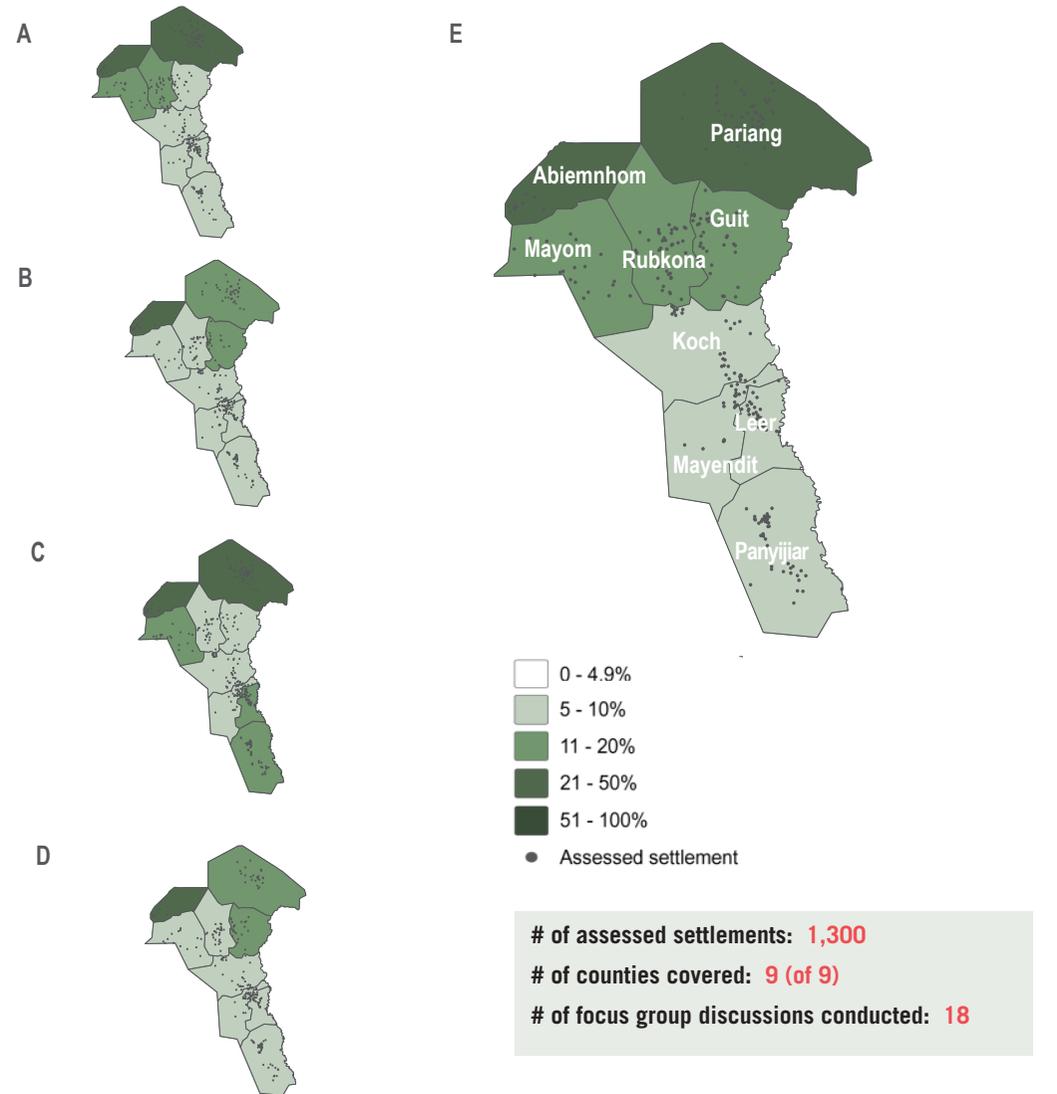
## Methodology

To provide an indicative overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Unity State, REACH uses primary data from key informants (KIs) who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement, or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK). Information for this report was collected from KIs in Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site, Nyal Town and Jamjang Town in Unity State in April, May, June, July, and September 2020.

In-depth interviews on humanitarian needs were conducted on a monthly basis using a structured survey tool. After data collection was completed, all data was aggregated at settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal, or most credible response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, that settlement was not included in reporting.

Only counties with interview coverage of at least 5% of all settlements<sup>1</sup> in a given month were included in analysis. Due to access and operational constraints, the specific settlements assessed within each county each month vary. In order to reduce the likelihood that variations in data are attributable to coverage differences, over time analyses were only conducted for counties with at least 70% consistent payam<sup>2</sup> coverage over the period. Quantitative findings were triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs) with people displaced from hard-to-reach areas, and secondary sources. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Unity State, April (A), May (B) and June (C) July (D) and September (E) 2020



1. 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.

2. Payam is the administrative unit below the county-level.

## Key Findings



**Displacement:** The proportion of assessed settlements that reported the presence of **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)** remained at a stable rate between April (48%) and September (51%). Reflective of the continued violence affecting Unity, insecurity remained the main reported push factor for IDPs in assessed settlements across Unity State from April (24% of assessed settlements). From July, findings indicated atypical seasonal flooding also resulted in widespread displacement. The northern and southern counties of Unity (Pariang, Panyijiar, Leer and Mayendit) were affected most severely, particularly towards the end of the reporting period, resulting in population movement to higher ground. Reportedly, COVID-19 also disrupted normal movement patterns during the reporting period, likely related to NGOs' awareness campaigns and the closure of international borders in the second quarter, and more relaxed measures in the third quarter.



**Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL):** Findings suggest that the **FSL** situation across Unity State deteriorated further throughout the reporting period. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting that most people had adequate access to food plummeted from 83% in April, to 63% in July and to just 39% in September. This was likely a consequence of COVID-19 related movement restrictions delaying humanitarian food assistance (HFA), soaring inflation<sup>3</sup> and severe flooding.<sup>4</sup> Of the 36% assessed settlements reporting that most people did not have adequate access to food, 20% reported that this was because crops were destroyed by flooding between April and September 2020.



**Protection:** Reflective of continued **protection** concerns, one-third of assessed settlements reported most people felt unsafe in September. Findings suggest that the main contributing factors to persistent feelings of insecurity were cattle raiding, with the majority of incidents reported in the northern and central regions. Between April and September, nearly forty percent of assessed settlements reported most people felt unsafe most of the time. Assessed settlements reported incidents of looting in which property was stolen from one or more households (36%), and incidents in which at least one civilian was killed (19%), as other factors to persistent feelings of insecurity during the reporting period.



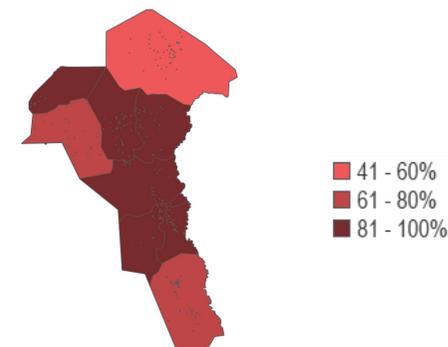
**Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH):** Despite multiple awareness campaigns following the declaration of the COVID-19 emergency, **water sanitation and hygiene (WASH)** conditions were reported to be inadequate during the reporting period. In September, 37% of assessed settlements reported that people used surface water sources for drinking water, while 77% reported people did not use latrines. Drinking from unimproved water sources can have serious health implications and cause a higher

disease prevalence. Indeed, if water is not treated with a residual disinfectant such as chlorine, there is a significant risk of source or post-delivery contamination.<sup>5</sup> The risk will be determined by population density, excreta disposal arrangements, hygiene practices and the prevalence of diarrhoeal disease.<sup>6</sup>



**Health and Nutrition:** During the reporting period, severe flooding has likely further affected access to healthcare due to poor road conditions limiting supply. Malaria was the most commonly reported **health** problem across all assessed settlements in Unity State, with three-quarters (76%) of assessed settlements reporting malaria as the main perceived health problem in September 2020. The main reported barrier to accessing health in September 2020 was a lack of medication (20% of assessed settlements across Unity). However, notably feeding programmes that provided Plumpy Sup, CSB++ or other **nutrition** items were seemingly widely provided (90% of assessed settlements in September 2020).

**Map 2: Assessed settlements reporting malaria as the main perceived health problem in September in Unity, 2020:**



**Shelter/ Non Food Items (NFI): Shelter** destruction due to flooding reportedly affected 53% of assessed settlements state-wide. By September, the proportion of assessed settlements that reported flooding made them leave their homes or sleep somewhere else was particularly high in Panyijiar (93%), Mayendit (78%), Leer (77%) and Koch (77%).



**Education:** Schools across South Sudan have been closed from March 2020 as a COVID-19 preventive measure. Consequently, there was a drastic drop in access to **education** during the reporting period, with 94% of assessed settlements reporting that education services were not available within walking distance in September, against 27% in March 2020.

3. REACH. South Sudan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative. October 2020.

4. FEWSNET key message update, September 2020.

5. Sphere Association. Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability. 2018.

6. *ibid.*

## Population Movement and Displacement

During the reporting period, the proportion of assessed settlements where KIs reported the presence of IDPs remained high between April (48%) and September (51%). Findings indicate that population movement and displacement across Unity State were mainly driven by localised conflict, flooding, and COVID-19 related movement restrictions.

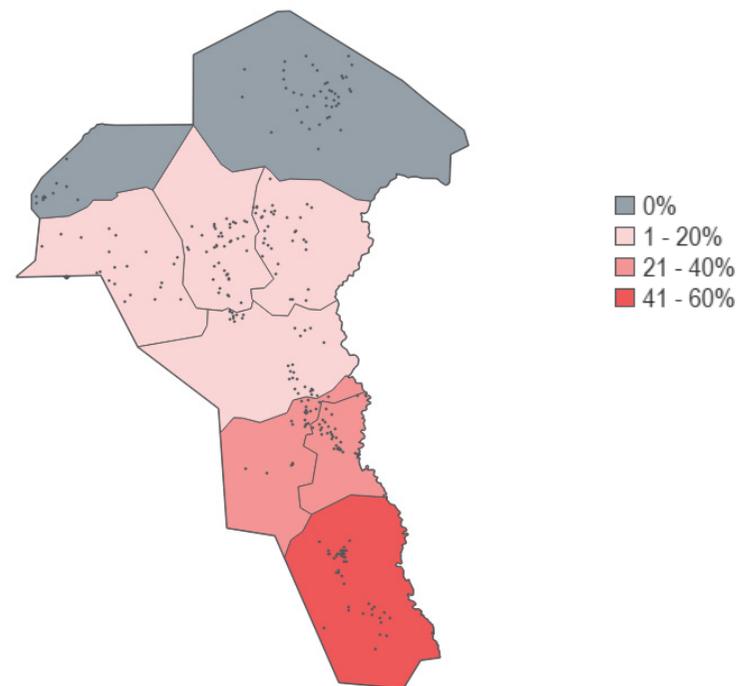
Reflective of the continued violence affecting Unity,<sup>7</sup> insecurity remained the main reported push factor for IDPs in assessed settlements across Unity State in April, with 24% of assessed settlements reporting insecurity (which includes cattle-raiding, killing, fighting and looting) as the main push factor for IDP movement. According to KIs, in assessed settlements, the majority of recently displaced IDPs travelled within their counties, possibly due to the localised nature of the violence and insecurities affecting Unity State. FGD participants from northern and central Unity reported large-scale displacements due to continued insecurity (cattle-raiding) in May and June 2020 in Mayom and Rubkona counties.<sup>8</sup> Reportedly, armed clashes and sub-national violence was reported to have intensified during the month of August, causing considerable displacement with some 5,000 people displaced following sub-national violence in Pariang County.<sup>9</sup>

Findings suggest that, starting in July, atypical seasonal flooding also resulted in widespread displacement, particularly towards the end of the reporting period, with flooding being reported as the main IDP push factor in 18% of assessed settlements in September. Reporting was especially high in assessed settlements in Panyijiar (62%), Mayendit (39%) and Leer (20%) counties. The Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment conducted in July found that the flood situation in Panyijiar affected more than five thousand households (mostly in Nyal and Ganyliel) of the entire County. Local people reportedly abandoned their houses in the flood waters and farmlands were completely submerged by water. Furthermore, pastoralists were forced to move to higher grounds to Pali village and West of Kanhial, and were exposed to increased risk of cattle raiding.<sup>10</sup>

In addition, continued heavy rain in September has caused rivers to flood across northern Unity, damaging roads, crops and settlements and forcing people to move to higher land.<sup>5</sup> The International Organisation for Migration (IOM)'s Displacement Tracking Matrix from September 2020 identified more than five thousand new IDPs in Pariang County. Displaced communities were located in Chede, Luchuk, Akotweng, Migak and Manjaba, which are boma<sup>11</sup> in Pariang County. IDPs have reportedly found refuge among the host communities in Kumagon village in Nyiel Payam. According to statements shared by affected communities, households intend to return to their habitual residence within three months should the water levels recede.<sup>12</sup>

During the reporting period, findings also indicate that population movement and displacement across Unity State was driven by COVID-19 related movement restrictions. Towards the beginning of April, local authorities, health agencies and the wider humanitarian community in Unity State introduced contingency for the spread of COVID-19. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting movement due to COVID-19 increased from 11% in April to 41% in July.

Map 3: Assessed settlements reporting IDPs arriving in the last 3 months prior to data collection, in Unity State:



From July to September that proportion decreased to fourteen percent (14%). Furthermore, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting they postponed their plans to move abroad also increased from April (13%) to July (44%) and decreased in September (27%). This is likely related to NGOs' awareness campaigns and the closure of international borders following national government directives in the second quarter, and more relaxed measures in the third quarter.

Consistent with the previous reporting period, there were also frequent population movements for family visits and reunification from April to September 2020. Movement due to family reasons was observed in the central and southern areas of Unity State through REACH Port and Road monitoring. In April, 77% of outbound households and 16% inbound households reported family visits as the main reason for travel between Nyal and central Unity, with some movements occasionally as far as the Bentiu Protection of Civilians (PoC) site.<sup>13</sup> In September, 62% of outbound households and 18% inbound households reported family visits as the main reason for travel between Nyal and central Unity.<sup>14</sup>

7. REACH. Situation Overview. Unity State. January-March 2020.

8. OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot (August 2020).

9. OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot (May 2020).

10. Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment, Panyijiar, July 2020.

11. Here boma refers to a community enclosure.

12. IOM Displacement Tracking matrix, September 2020.

13. REACH. "Nyal Ports and Roads Monitoring Factsheet". September 2020.

14. REACH. "Nyal Ports and Roads Monitoring Factsheet". April 2020.

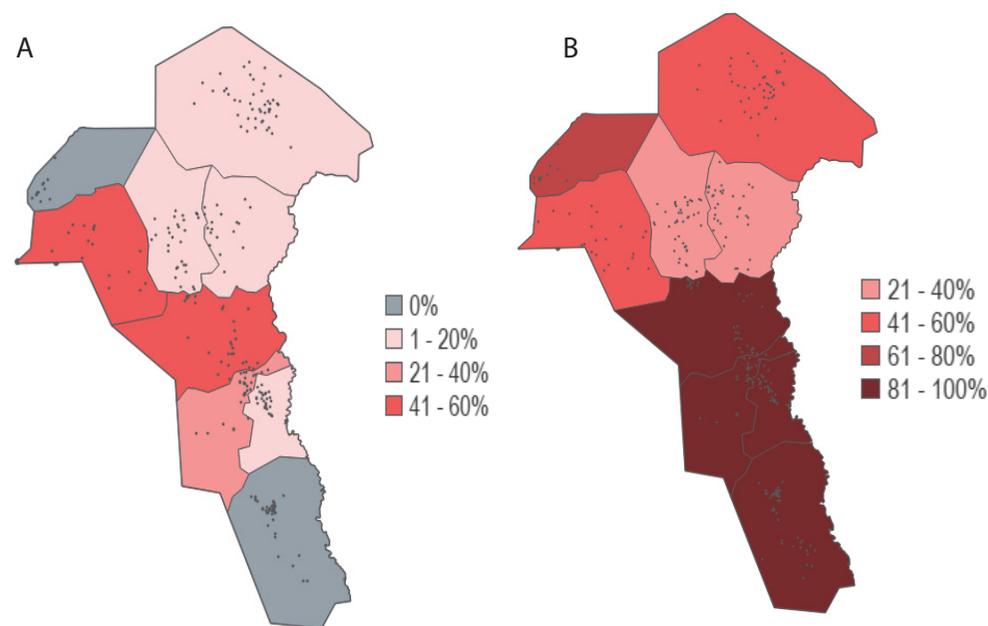
## Food Security and Livelihoods

Findings suggest that the Food Security and Livelihoods (FSL) situation across Unity State deteriorated further throughout the reporting period. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting that most people had adequate access to food plummeted from 83% in April, to 63% in July, to just 39% in September. This was likely a consequence of COVID-19 related movement restrictions, severe flooding, and soaring inflation.<sup>15</sup> As the most flood-affected area, Panyijiar County was particularly impacted, with a drastic drop in assessed settlements reporting access to food, from 100% in April, to 23% in July, and to 4% in September. The overall drop in food access is reflected by FEWS NET key message update from September 2020, where Emergency (IPC phase 4) outcomes are projected in most of Unity State, with areas of greatest concern concentrated in Panyijiar, Mayendit, Leer, Koch, Guit and Pariang counties.<sup>16</sup> Between May and July, the peak of the lean season resulted in the lowest levels of food security as households have a high reliance on markets at a time when cereal prices are at their seasonal highest, and wild foods and fish are no longer readily available. In addition, COVID-19 related movement restrictions likely further reduced access to food, exacerbating both the breadth and depth of acute food insecurity, worsening the situation for already vulnerable populations across the State. In September, a larger proportion of the population in Unity faced large food consumption gaps and used extreme livelihoods coping strategies to mitigate them. In September, assessed settlements reported using extreme coping strategies, such as skipping days (15%) and letting only children eat (26%), when none reported engaging in these in April.

### Reduced harvest yields

The severe impact of flooding on harvest yields continued to be felt throughout the reporting period. Of the assessed settlements (36%) reporting that most people did not have adequate access to food, 20% reported that this was because crops were destroyed by flooding (between April and September 2020). That proportion of assessed settlements reporting that crops were destroyed by flooding increased from 12% in April to 51% in September. According to FGD participants from Abiemnhom County and Pariang County, the cultivation of crops including sorghum and maize would, in a normal year, provide farmers with sufficient food to survive until the following harvest.<sup>17</sup> However, FGD participants displaced across Northern and Southern Unity consistently reported that flooding either severely limited harvest yields in their settlements, or prevented any harvest from taking place altogether. FGD participants displaced from Panyijiar, Leer and Mayendit reported that, while some farmers were able to harvest some crops, limited food stocks (mostly maize) were fully exhausted by August.<sup>18</sup> Findings from the Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment conducted in Panyijiar in July, highlighted that the floods had damaged farmlands and submerged the main staple crops grown for food.<sup>19</sup> Reflective of this, 77% of the assessed settlements in Panyijiar reported that most people did not have adequate access to food in July, and from that proportion, 40% reported that this was because crops were destroyed by flooding. This urged the affected populations from Panyijiar to rely on less than one meal or less per day (77% in July).

Map 4: Assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food in April (A) and September (B) in Unity, 2020:



The flooding of 2020 reportedly destroyed most crops in Pariang County. Findings from the Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment conducted in Pariang in September, demonstrated that half of assessed farmlands were submerged in water with looming crop damage.<sup>20</sup> This will likely affect crop yield and will not last until the next harvest season in November.

In September, 12% of assessed settlements in Unity reported that the arrival of IDPs had a large impact on the ability to access enough food, with a majority in Mayendit County (35%), Panyijiar County (31%), and Leer County (20%). As mentioned in the Population Movement and Displacement section, the inability to access sufficient food due to the presence of IDPs was likely due to the severe flooding driven by heavy rains in the region. FGD participants from Leer and Mayendit reported that very few settlements were able to harvest crops, and that these were not enough to support newly arrived IDPs, even though they were friends or relatives.<sup>21</sup>

15. REACH. South Sudan Joint Market Monitoring Initiative. October 2020.  
 16. FEWSNET key message update, September 2020.  
 17. FGD Jamjang town. Shocks. July 2020.  
 18. FGD Nyal town. Shocks. July 2020.  
 19. Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment, Panyijiar, July 2020.  
 20. Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment, Pariang, September 2020.

21. FGD Nyal town. Impact of flooding. September 2020

## Access to livestock

Findings indicate that flooding, which severely limited the availability of grazing pastures, resulted in widespread livestock malnutrition, disease, and death, and continued to limit access to cattle throughout the reporting period. In September, over-half (54%) of assessed settlements across Unity reported the occurrence of a disease outbreak that resulted in livestock death. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting this was particularly high in Guit (74%), Rubkona (68%), Koch (67%), Mayom (64%) and Panyijiar (56%) counties in September. The effect of flooding on livestock disease was further reflected by FGD participants displaced from across Unity State. According to FGD participants displaced from Panyijiar, Leer and Mayendit counties, much of the cattle in the settlements of Tiam, Kok, Jiech, Gandor, Nyadoang, Thokuok and Letwich, died because of disease.<sup>14</sup> Most of the remaining cattle reportedly suffered from malnutrition, as flooding limited the availability of grazing pastures. This reportedly resulted in the inability of cows to produce milk, compromising the market for cattle.

## Humanitarian assistance

HFA has been found to be critical to preventing large food consumption gaps across Unity State. Between April and September, 80% of assessed settlements across Unity State reported that people in the settlement received food assistance. While the assessed settlements in Abiemnhom and Pariang reported cultivation as their main food source (100% and 99% respectively) during the reporting period, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting humanitarian assistance as the main source of food for most people remained particularly high in the other counties of Unity: 95% in Guit, 92% in Rubkona, 82% in Mayendit, 76% in Leer, 68% in Koch, 67% in Panyijiar and 53% in Mayom.

The severe flooding in southern Unity likely affected access to humanitarian food assistance in July. In Panyijiar, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting humanitarian assistance as the main source of food for most people decreased from 100% in April to just 28% in July and increased again to 47% in September. Floods likely delayed food assistance deliveries and made it difficult for affected populations to access food assistance distribution points. As such, 67% of assessed settlements in Panyijiar had recourse to buying food with cash to mitigate large food consumption gaps in July.

Although significant food assistance is supporting Crisis! (IPC Phase 3!) outcomes in most areas of Unity State, acute food insecurity could quickly deteriorate if flooding or insecurity significantly delay deliveries. As recommended by FEWS NET key messages update from September 2020, a scale-up in food assistance beyond planned levels, as well as unimpeded access for delivery, is required to save lives and protect livelihoods throughout 2020.<sup>22</sup>

## Coping Strategies

Corresponding with the observed high levels of food insecurity, people across Unity State continued to adopt a range of coping strategies. During the reporting period, all assessed settlements reported

using livelihood or food consumption coping strategies. In June, the most frequently reported food consumption coping strategies were limiting portion sizes (76% of assessed settlements), and consuming less expensive food (80%). This may be a consequence of a high reliance on markets at a time when cereal prices are at their seasonal highest, as wild foods and fish are no longer readily available.

Food consumption coping strategies were often reportedly implemented in conjunction with livelihood coping strategies, to help mitigate the effects of the lean season. In June, the most frequently reported livelihood coping strategies were borrowing food (81% of assessed settlements), and borrowing money (44%).

Between June and September, there was an increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting extreme food consumption coping strategies, indicative of increasingly severe food insecurity. During this period, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that some residents did not eat for entire days increased sharply in Panyijiar County (20% in June to 58% in September) and Leer County (0% in June to 20% in September). Furthermore, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting that only children ate also increased sharply in Panyijiar County (20% in June to 96% in September), Mayendit County (20% in June to 65% in September) and Leer County (7% in June to 47% in September).

In some cases, the previous exhaustion of coping strategies may have negatively affected people's ability to resort to typical coping strategies. In northern and southern Unity, severe flooding reportedly prevented most people from selling cattle to purchase food through markets, a common coping strategy across Unity State, because either all cattle had died, meaning there was none to sell, or because widespread livestock disease severely contracted the demand for cattle as less people were willing to purchase unhealthy cows. This reported inability to employ extreme asset depleting coping strategies, often a last resort, will likely have serious implications for future acute food insecurity in the region.

## Health

During the reporting period, severe floods affected access to healthcare likely due to poor road conditions limiting supply. Between April and September, malaria remained the most commonly reported health problem across all assessed settlements in Unity State. In September, 76% of assessed settlements reported malaria as the main perceived health problem, followed by lung-related conditions (13%). FGD participants reported that flooding in Panyijiar, Leer and Mayendit counties, destroyed or restricted access to boreholes, which led some people to drink surface water sources.<sup>23</sup> This is supported by the KI data that reveals an increase in assessed settlements using swamps as a main source of water from 5% in April 2020, prior to flooding, to 20% in September.

22. FEWSNET key message update, September 2020.

23. FGD Nyal town, Impact of flooding, September 2020. Here surface water refers to river, lake, pond, or stream.

In addition, a large proportion of assessed settlements reportedly remained unable to access some essential health services. Sixty-five percent (65%) of assessed settlements in September reportedly had access to primary health care centres (PHCCs), 20% had access to a hospital, and only 3% to NGO clinics.

Furthermore, of assessed settlements across Unity, the main reported barrier to accessing health in September 2020 was a lack of medication (20%). Panyijiar (67%), Leer (33%), Mayendit (26%), Abiemnhom (18%) and Pariang (14%) are the counties with the highest reports of a lack of medication as the main barrier to accessing health, likely because they are the counties that were the most affected by floods during the reporting period.

### COVID-19

Towards the beginning of April, local authorities, health agencies and the wider humanitarian community in Unity introduced contingency for the spread of COVID-19. NGOs launched awareness campaigns to promote handwashing and social distancing. At the same time, local authorities introduced curfews and closure of international borders following national government directives with mixed levels of compliance and success. Between July and September, the number of COVID-19 cases seemed to stabilise in Unity and nationwide.<sup>24</sup> By the end of the reporting period, humanitarian agencies continue to mainstream COVID prevention in their interventions but local authorities started to lift the restrictions put in place in April 2020.

## Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

### Water

During the reporting period, assessed settlements in Unity State reported barriers to accessing safe drinking water connected to inadequate infrastructure. In September 2020, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting no access to any borehole was 44%. This proportion has increased from April 2020 when the proportion of assessed settlements that reported no access to any borehole was 18%. This might be due to severe flooding during the reporting period. FGD participants from Southern Unity reported that flooding submerged most boreholes in the region forcing affected population to mainly rely on surface water sources (swamps and pond water).<sup>25</sup> In September 2020, 37% of assessed settlements reported that surface water was the main source of drinking water.

### Sanitation

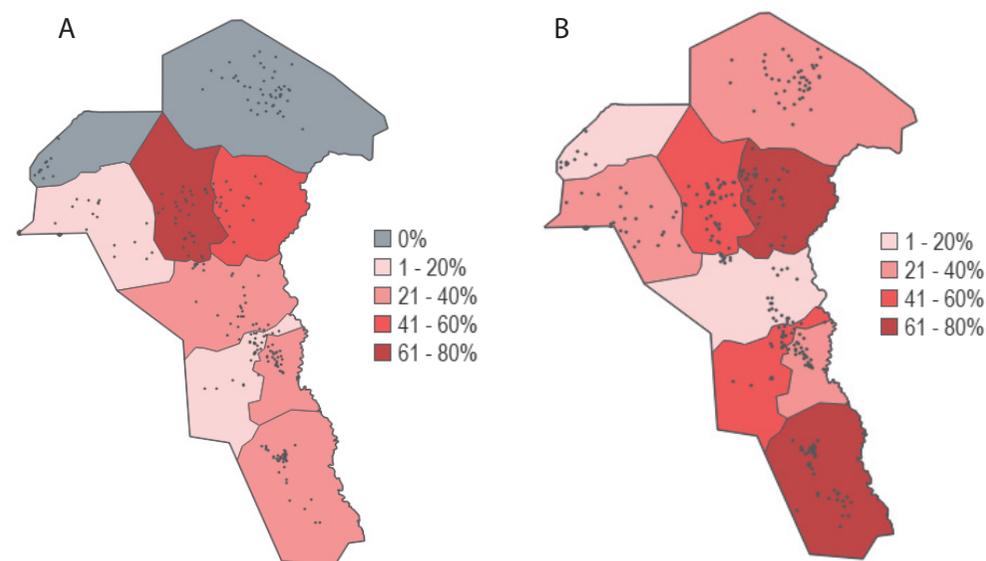
In the second and third quarters of 2020, open defecation seemingly remained a common practice. In September, 77% of assessed settlements reported no latrine usage in Unity. Low latrine usage is reportedly related to gaps in sanitation infrastructure in Unity State, and nationwide. In September, 77% of assessed settlements reported the main reason people were not using latrines was that

there were none available. Lack of latrines was particularly evident in flood-affected areas and rural settings, where communities were unable to access tools, materials or technical advice for the construction and maintenance of latrines. Indeed, all of the assessed settlements in Abiemnhom and Pariang reported that there were no latrines in September 2020.

### Hygiene

During the reporting period, hand-washing practices seemingly remained relatively low across Unity State. In September, 14% of assessed settlements reported most people did not wash their hands and 51% that most people used water only for hand-washing. Reports of the use of soap for hand-washing remained low and stable throughout the reporting period, despite multiple awareness campaigns in February and March following the declaration of the COVID-19 emergency. Indeed, in the second and third quarters of 2020, there was no increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting most people used soap for hand-washing, which remained stable from 18% in April to 19% in September.

Map 5: Assessed settlements reporting most people using an unimproved water source in April (A) and September (B) in Unity, 2020:



24. World Health Organisation (WHO) Health Emergency Dashboard. <https://covid19.who.int/region/afro/country/ss>.

25. FGD Nyal town, Impact of flooding. September 2020. Here surface water refers to river, lake, pond, or stream.

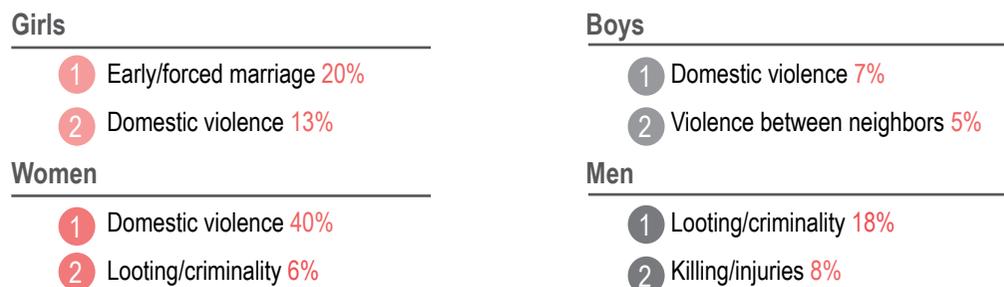
## Protection

Reflective of continued protection concerns, 30% of assessed settlements in September reported most people felt unsafe most of the time. Between April and September, assessed settlements in Unity State reported insecurity and multiple protection concerns, with the majority of incidents in northern regions compared to more stable conditions in central and southern counties. Between April and September, 36% of assessed settlements reported that most people felt unsafe most of the time, while 36% reported incidents of looting in which property was stolen from one or more households in the 30 days prior to data collection. Furthermore, 19% of assessed settlements reported incidents of conflict in which at least one civilian was killed in the 30 days prior to data collection, with the majority of reports as in Guit County (38%) and Koch County (36%), and the least in Panyijiar (3%) and Mayendit (7%).

Between May and June 2020, findings suggest that there was a peak of insecurity in Unity. In May, violence and insecurity persisted and drove humanitarian needs, alongside the onset of the annual lean season, and increasing rains. In June, 49% of assessed settlements reported most people felt unsafe most of the time, and 32% of assessed settlements reported incidents of conflict in which at least one civilian was killed, with the majority of reports as in Abiemnhom County (73%) and Guit County (58%). FGD participants across the State reported cattle raiding as the main protection concern during the second quarter.<sup>26</sup>

Violence persisted in many parts of the country in June with seasonal flooding compounding existing humanitarian needs. The Inter-Agency Needs Assessment conducted in Panyijiar in July 2020 reported that women and children were killed in the attacks by youth from neighboring communities in June 2020. Furthermore, there has been a reported increase in cases of sexual assault on women, who typically go out to collect firewood and wild foods.<sup>27</sup>

Figure 1: Top 2 most commonly reported protection concerns in assessed settlements in September in Unity, 2020:



Overall, this was reflective of persistent insecurity and protection issues in most of the state. The majority of these incidents were reported to be related to cattle raiding between communities with historical grievances and revenge. Furthermore, the ongoing discussion of the withdrawal of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) troops from the Bentiu PoC might increase insecurity in the following months.<sup>28</sup> Violence combined with severe flooding will likely compound existing humanitarian needs.

## Shelter/ NFI

During the reporting period, the type of shelter for host communities remained relatively unchanged compared to the previous reporting period, between January and March 2020. In September, 92% of assessed settlements reported the main shelter type for the host community was tukuls,<sup>29</sup> while 9% reported rakoobas.<sup>30</sup> The high proportion of host communities living in tukuls was likely due to the reduction in conflict-related shelter damage, which was reported by no assessed settlements in the six months prior to data collection.

Between April and September, there was a large increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting flooding making people leave their homes, from 4% in April, to 19% in July, to 53% in September. In September, the most affected counties were Panyijiar with 93% of assessed settlements reporting flooding making people leave their home, followed by Mayendit (78%) and Leer (77%). Mayendit and Leer counties had the highest proportion of assessed settlements reporting that host communities lived in rakoobas at 43% and 37% respectively. Likely due to persistent uncertainty about long-term peace and stability in central Unity, host communities in both counties have seemingly not yet fully rebuild tukuls that were lost during the periods of violence in mid-2018.

Shelter conditions in flood-affected counties Panyijiar, Leer, Mayendit and Pariang remained particularly poor. FGD participants from Southern Unity interviewed in September reported that some families were awaiting support to repair their shelter damaged by the water, especially plastic sheeting.<sup>31</sup> The Inter-Agency Needs Assessment conducted in Pariang in September, found damaged and flooded houses in Panyang. Urgent distribution of NFI kits mainly tarpaulins, mosquito nets, blankets, cooking sets and other essential basic household items was recommended.<sup>32</sup>

26. All FGDs conducted from April to July had participants reporting cattle raiding as a protection concern.

27. Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment, Panyijiar, July 2020.

28. CSRF South Sudan. "Back on their feet: the role of PoCs in South Sudan," October 2020.

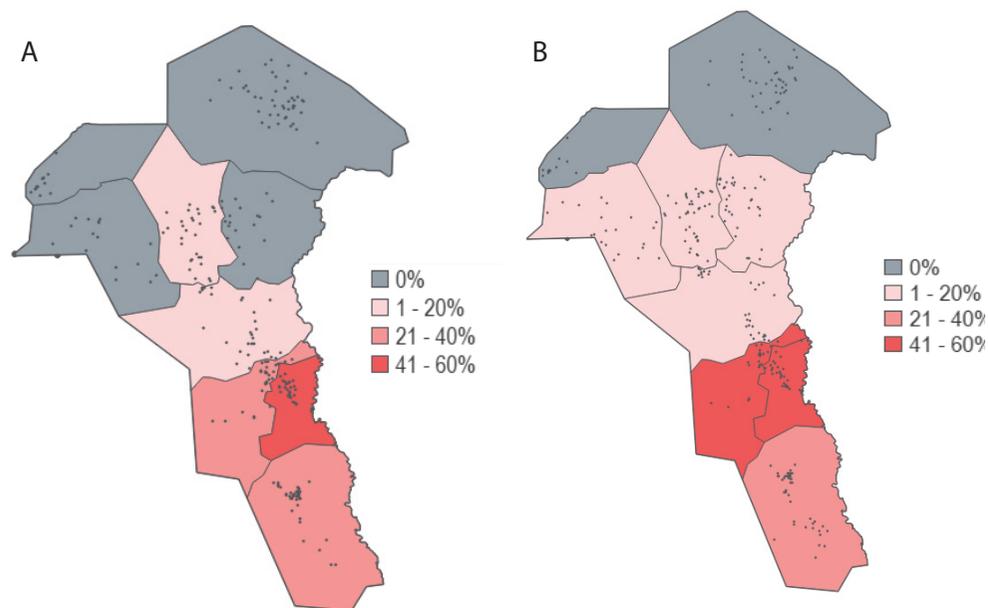
29. Here tukul refers to a cone-shaped mud hut with a thatched roof.

30. Here rakooba refers to a boat made from a tree.

31. FGD, Nyal town. Impact of flooding. September 2020.

32. Inter-Agency Rapid Needs Assessment, Pariang, September 2020.

Map 6: Assessed settlements reporting plastic sheet as the primary NFI need in April (A) and September (B), in Unity, 2020:



## Conclusion

Findings suggest that needs have increased across all sectors in assessed settlements in Unity State during the second and third quarter of 2020. The COVID-19 related measures and travel restrictions affected the movement of people and their access to services, and impacted humanitarian operations with a temporary suspension of activities and some delays in supply movement. Simultaneously, due to the in-country and cross-border restrictions, basic commodity prices began to rise, placing markets under stress. The impact of severe flooding are expected to worsen humanitarian needs in the country over the coming months, particularly in southern Unity where the 2020 harvest is unlikely to result in any substantial improvement in the food security situation.<sup>35</sup> Humanitarian food assistance will likely be essential to close large food consumption gaps.

## Education

All schools have been closed since March 2020 due to COVID-19, keeping millions of children out of school nationwide.<sup>33</sup> Reflective of this, 94% of assessed settlements across Unity reported that education services were not available within walking distance in September. Of the assessed settlements reporting that no education services were available within walking distance, the primary reported reason was that there were no available facilities (71% of assessed settlements).

Being out of school likely has severe negative effects on children, as it, among others, increases their vulnerability to child labour, sexual exploitation, and abuse, including child marriage.<sup>34</sup> While the schools were closed, the most commonly cited reason why girls were not in school in September was that they needed to work at home (81%) and because of early marriage (13%). For boys, 100% of assessed settlements reported that the main reason was that they needed to work outside of home. This likely indicates that school enrollment might not necessarily rise again when schools reopen, considering the factors driving non-enrollment during the reporting period.

### 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).

33. UNESCO, UNICEF. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/unicef-and-unesco-welcome-decision-reopen-schools-south-sudan>, September 2020.

34. UNESCO, <https://en.unesco.org/news/time-has-come-reopen-schools-south-sudan-children-are-better-protected-school>.

35. FEWSNET key message update, September 2020.