

Situation Overview: Western Equatoria State, South Sudan

January - March 2020

REACH An initiative of
IMPACT Initiatives
ACTED and UNOSAT

Introduction

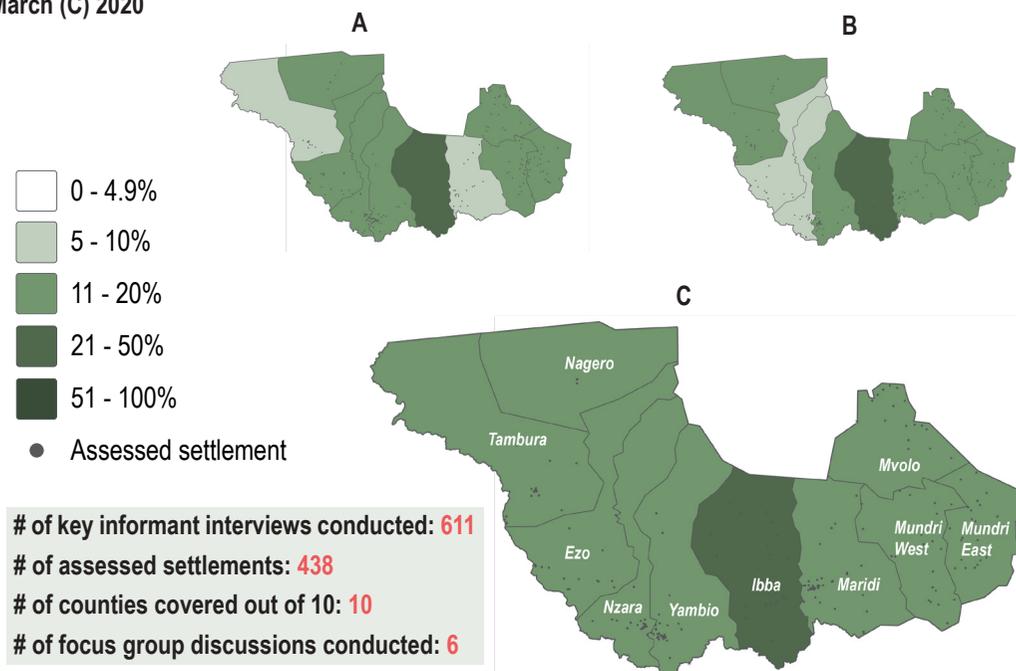
Through the first quarter of 2020, humanitarian needs in Western Equatoria State (WES) were impacted by displacement, insecurity, bush fires and emerging COVID-19 restrictions. Information remains critical for an informed response, yet movement restrictions due to the COVID-19 measures have limited humanitarian access to many areas across the region.

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 (KIs) with knowledge of a settlement and triangulated with focus group discussions (FGDs). This Situation Overview analyses changes in observed humanitarian needs in Western Equatoria in the first quarter of 2020.

Key Findings

- In the first quarter of 2020, new **displacement** occurred in Maridi and Mvolo counties, reportedly mainly due to insecurity, while assessed settlements in WES as a whole continued to report a mixture of internal returns, refugee returns, and protracted displacement from past incidents of insecurity and hunger.
- Food security** reportedly continued to improve in most of the state, and only 4% of

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of Western Equatoria state, January (A), February (B) and March (C) 2020



assessed settlements reported inadequate access to food in March; however, assessed settlements in Nagero, Maridi and Yambio counties reported access to food below the WES average.

- Protection** concerns were most commonly reported in the eastern counties¹ in Q1; civilian deaths, looting, abduction and forced recruitment in Maridi County, and cattle raids and killing/injury in Mvolo County. For women, domestic violence was reportedly the main concern in WES in Q1.

- Access to reliable **shelter** varied by county; while the majority of assessed settlements reported most host communities and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) were living in solid shelters (98% and 84% of assessed settlements respectively), in Maridi, Mvolo and Nagero counties, IDP living conditions were reportedly much less stable.

- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)** and **health** needs were reportedly particularly high in Greater Mundri,⁴ where rivers were the most commonly reported source of drinking

METHODOLOGY

To provide an overview of the situation in hard-to-reach areas of Western Equatoria, REACH uses primary data from key informants who have recently arrived from, recently visited, or receive regular information from a settlement or "Area of Knowledge" (AoK). Information for this report was collected from key informants in Yambio and Maridi towns in Western Equatoria 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 settlements² 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 payam³ coverage over the period.

Quantitative findings were triangulated with focused group discussions (FGDs) with male and female local community members from Yambio, Maridi, Nzara, and Tambura counties and secondary sources. More details of the methodology can be found in the [AoK ToRs](#).

1 Eastern counties refer to the eastern side of WES, including Ibba, Maridi, Mundri West, Mundri East and Mvolo counties. Western counties include Yambio, Nzara, Ezo, Tambura and Nagero counties.

2 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.

3 "Payam" refers to the administrative unit below the county level.

4 Greater Mundri includes Mundri West, Mundri East, and Mvolo counties.

water, and a high prevalence of waterborne diseases and parasites and was reported in March.

- While nearly all settlements assessed in the western counties⁵ reportedly had access to **education** within walking distance in March, half of assessed settlements in the eastern counties reportedly lacked access due to lack of facilities.

Population Movement and Displacement

During the first quarter of 2020, WES saw a mixture of refugee and IDP returns, likely due to increased perceived stability,⁶ challenging living conditions in the areas of displacement and the onset of the planting season, whilst new displacement took place in Maridi and Mvolo counties likely due to increased insecurity.

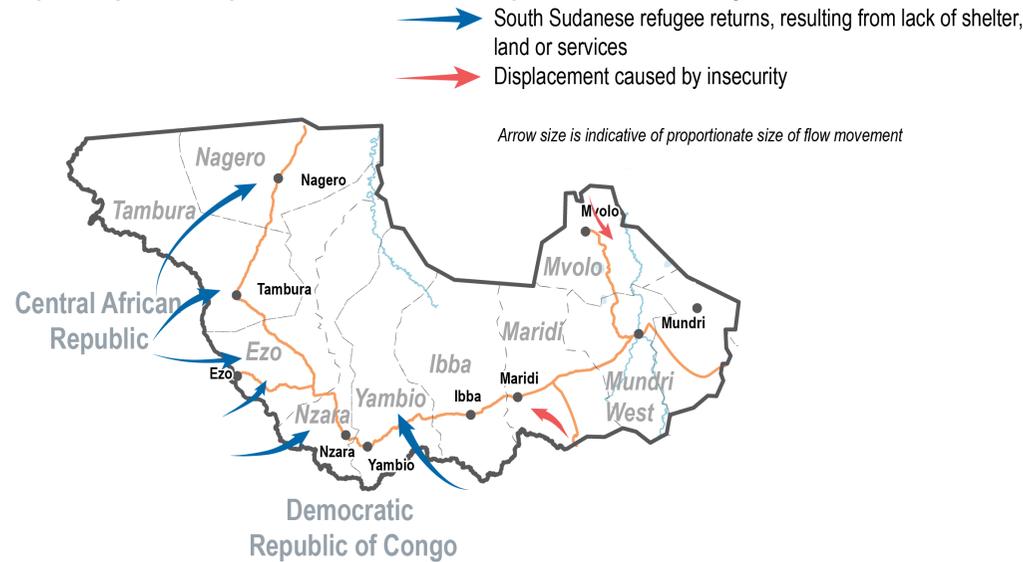
IDPs and new displacement

According to the March OCHA Humanitarian Snapshot, 64,027 IDPs were estimated to be living in Western Equatoria in March 2020.⁷ The proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs across WES was stable, with 86% reporting this in March.⁸

Among settlements that reported the presence of IDPs in March, the majority reported that the most recent IDPs had arrived 6 or more months ago (76%), similar to last quarter. However, some newer displacement caused by insecurity was reported in Maridi and Mvolo counties.

In **Maridi County** in March, 19% of assessed

Map 2: Displacement patterns across Western Equatoria State, January - March 2020



settlements reported that IDPs arrived in the 3 months prior to data collection, likely due to clashes at the end of January in Landilili Payam, and 2,965 individuals reportedly fled on foot to Lalama, Maridi County and to DRC from the Ras-Olo area due to repeated attacks at the end of January.^{9,10} FGD participants from the area, many of whom experienced repeated displacement in 2019, reported looting, the destruction of shelters, and abduction in their areas of origin as reasons for their displacement.¹¹ Participants expressed fear of returning due to ongoing hostilities, and also reported good relationships with the host community, potentially indicating protracted displacement. While across WES most assessed settlements reported in March that the host community shared resources with displaced populations (92% in WES, and 85% in Maridi County), the additional

pressures on already scarce resources such as food and water sources, as well as health and education facilities indicates the need for continued support to both IDPs and the host community in order to maintain peaceful co-existence.¹²

In **Mvolo County** in March, 6% of assessed settlements reported that IDPs arrived in the 3 months prior to data collection, and the majority of these reported cattle raiding as the main reason for their displacement (53%). While cattle raiding has a long-standing history in South Sudan, due to years of conflict and illicit proliferation of small arms, these recurring instances of intercommunal violence increasingly militarised.¹³

Returnees

Considering **IDP returnees**, 30% of assessed settlements across WES reported arrivals in

March, most frequently in Nagero County (60%) and the eastern counties (27%). In Nagero County, access to food and land played a key role in reported returns (both 40% in March) with the planting season approaching. In the eastern counties a combination of pull factors were observed, with proximity to home (19%) and access to health care (17%) being the most commonly reported in March. However, in Maridi County, insecurity in the area of displacement was the main reason to return, reported by 36% of assessed settlements in March.

The proportion of settlements in the western counties (which share a border with the Central African Republic (CAR) or the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)) reporting the presence of **returning South Sudanese refugees** increased from 37% in October 2019 to 53% in March 2020. A quarter of assessed settlements (25%) in this part of WES, reported refugees returning in Q1, likely partly due to

Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP presence, March 2020



Figure 2: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting IDP returnee presence, March 2020



5 Western counties include Yambio, Nzara, Ezo, Tambura and Nagero counties.

6 Al Jazeera. South Sudan's rival leaders form coalition government. 22 February 2020.

7 OCHA. Humanitarian Snapshot. March 2020.

8 In September 2019, 89% of assessed settlements reported the presence of

IDPs, and in December 85%.

9 International Organization for Migration Displacement Tracking Matrix (IOM-DTM); Western Equatoria Event Tracking, Maridi County. February 2020.

10 Sant'Egidio. South Sudan: All political parties sign a peace agreement in Sant'Egidio. 13 January 2020.

11 REACH. Displacement Focus Group Discussion, Maridi town, Maridi

County. 26 February 2020.

12 IRNA Report. Maridi, WES. 17-18 February, 2020.

13 UNMISS Human Rights Division. Quarterly brief on violence affecting civilians. January-March 2020 edition.

the perceived stability with the formation of the new coalition government in February. With the planting season approaching, returns were reportedly driven by the need to access land, reported by 33% of assessed settlements as a push factor and 56% as a pull factor (of assessed settlements which reported refugee returns in March).

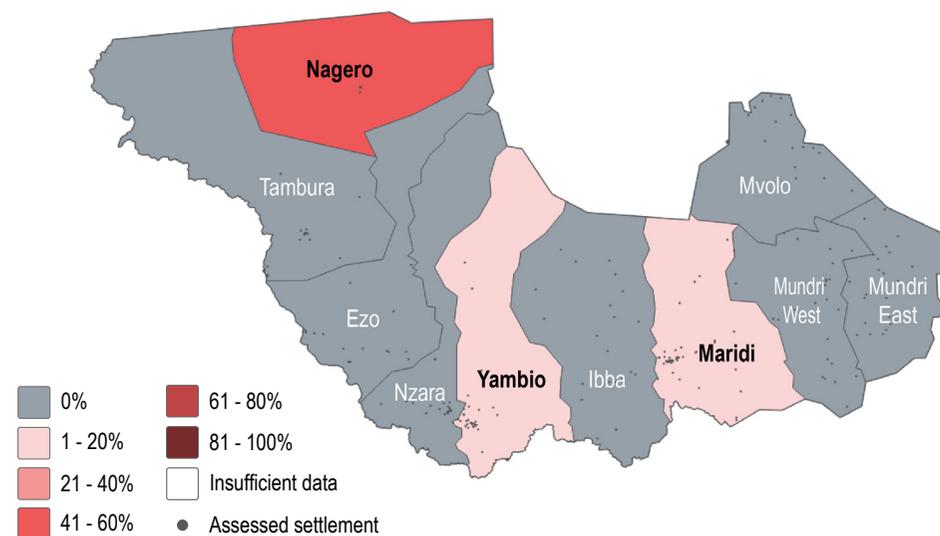
As of the 23rd of March, 2020, South Sudan closed the international airport and borders to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in the country,¹⁴ likely halting most returns and cross-border movements. However, borders are porous and challenging to monitor in WES, and unofficial border crossings will likely continue.

Situation in Assessed Settlements

Food Security and Livelihoods

Reported access to food in WES consistently improved throughout 2019,¹⁵ and remained relatively high in the first quarter of 2020, with 96% of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food. This is consistent with the January 2020 Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) analysis, in which Western Equatoria had the lowest population (15%) projected to be in Phase 3 (Crisis) or above, out of all states in South Sudan.¹⁶ With 93% of assessed settlements reporting that most people obtained food from their own cultivation, low dependency on food distributions,¹⁷ and generally more stable security and climatic conditions, WES is generally considered to be the breadbasket of South Sudan.¹⁸

Map 3: Proportion of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria State reporting inadequate access to food, March 2020



While most counties in WES were projected to be in IPC Phase 2 (Stressed) according to the IPC projections, Nagero, Mundri East and Yambio counties were projected to be in Phase 3 (Crisis), due to higher food prices and the presence of IDPs and returnees. This is consistent with the slightly lower proportions of assessed settlements in Nagero, Yambio and Maridi counties reporting adequate access to food compared to the WES average in March (40%, 90% and 90%, respectively, see Map 3). However, these proportions were still relatively high compared to other states in South Sudan.

In **Nagero County** 60% of assessed settlements reported inadequate access to food in March, likely due to the presence of armed groups, crops being destroyed by pests, new arrivals who were unable to cultivate in

the previous planting season, and livestock disease.^{19, 20} These factors likely contributed to the above-average market dependency of assessed settlements in Nagero County; 20% reported in March that most people bought their food, compared to the 3% in average in WES. However, in March 20% of assessed settlements also reported that accessing markets was unsafe, highlighting protection concerns. To cope with the lack of food, one in five assessed settlements reported that sometimes only children ate or people went entire days without food (both 20% in March).

In **Yambio County**, 10% of assessed settlements reported inadequate access to food and severe hunger in March, likely partly due to cultivation being halted in the areas where armed groups were present. Additionally, crops destroyed by pests, and

lack of agricultural inputs were reportedly the main causes of lack of food in March (39% and 32%, respectively). Livestock diseases, fairly typical at this time of year, were reported in 77% of assessed settlements in March, and FGD participants similarly reported a recent poultry disease.²¹ Yambio County was reportedly also the second most market dependent in WES, potentially increasing the vulnerability of the population with COVID-19 movement and trade restrictions in place.

In **Maridi County**, 10% of assessed settlements reported inadequate access to food, partially due to crops destroyed by fighting (10% in March), as well as the January displacement, when IDPs reportedly left their area of origin without food, livestock, agricultural tools and seeds (see Population Movement section). This could potentially have a long term effect on these IDPs ability to plant and secure food for the year ahead, as well as on the host community's capacity to manage their resources while hosting the displaced. Potentially related to this, begging as a coping strategy was reported in 21% of assessed settlements in Maridi County in March, and 40% reported selling assets, most commonly mobile phones, bikes, and, in the worst cases, land.

Figure 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food, March 2020



14 Radio Tamazuj. South Sudan closes airports and borders over coronavirus fears. 23 March 2020.

15 In March 2019 60%, in June 66%, in September 77%, and in December 95% of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food.

16 IPC. South Sudan IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, January 2020 - July 2020. Issued February 2020.

17 4% of assessed settlements reported in March that a food distribution took place in the previous 3 months.

18 FEWS NET. Livelihoods Zone Map and Descriptions for the Republic of South Sudan (updated). August 2018.

19 Crops being destroyed by pests (38%) and new arrivals (25%) were the most commonly reported reason for lack of food in Q1.

20 Livestock disease was fairly common in the western counties, with 66% of assessed settlements reporting it in Q1.

21 REACH. Food Security FGD Yambio Town, Yambio County. 19 February 2020.

Livelihoods and market access

In WES in March, 77% of assessed settlements reported that most people engaged in livestock rearing, 72% in hunting (100% in Ezo), and 53% in trading. Following COVID-19 restrictions, disruptions in travel and market activity are expected, possibly impacting these activities and reducing future food security.

Accessing markets was generally reported to be a safe activity,²² and, in the western counties, the majority of assessed settlements (87%) reported in March 2020 that accessing markets took less than one hour.²³ However, the majority of assessed settlements in the eastern counties (55%) reported accessing markets took two to four hours.²⁴ The most commonly reported barriers to access markets in the eastern counties were lack of roads (92%) and distance to markets (87%) in March, which will likely be aggravated with the onset of the rainy season, typically in April. An additional 13% of assessed settlements reported robbery as one of the main barriers to accessing markets in Maridi County and Greater Mundri, likely due to the presence of armed groups along the roads.

Protection

Perceptions of safety appeared to be relatively stable in WES in the first quarter of 2020, with 89% of assessed settlements reporting that most people felt safe most of the time in March (compared to 85% in December). However, in Nagero, Maridi and Mvolo counties, perceptions of security were below average (40%, 79%, 82% respectively in March), likely due to a combination of conflict related

incidents and cattle raiding in these counties.²⁵

The proportion of assessed settlements reporting an incident of conflict that resulted in the death of a civilian (5%) or looting (3%) was low across Western Equatoria in Q1, and these reports were mostly concentrated in **Maridi County**, where 12% of assessed settlements reported an incident of conflict with civilian casualties in the 30 days prior to data collection in Q1, and 16% reported looting. Moreover, some of the most commonly reported protection concerns for boys and men in Maridi County in March were related to conflict; harassment (28% for men), abduction (13% for men and 8% for boys), and forced recruitment (2% for men and 6% for boys). Furthermore, likely due to the previous conflict and ongoing security incidents in the area, a high proportion of settlements in Maridi County reported the presence of children with no caretaker or relative looking after them (24% in March).

In **Mvolo County**, 6% of assessed settlements reported incidents of conflict that resulted in civilian casualties in Q1. Furthermore, assessed settlements in Mvolo County relatively commonly reported killing/injury within their tribe as the main protection concern for men (47% in March), and 24% for boys, probably due to recurring cattle raids in this part of WES.

Consistent with previous quarters, the main protection concerns for women in WES were domestic violence (46%) and sexual and gender-based violence (19%). For women, similar to December, domestic

violence was most commonly reported in the eastern counties (65% in December, and 71% in March). Early marriage was the most commonly reported protection concern for girls (51% in December and 57% in March). This was also one of the reported main barriers for girls to access education in WES in March, as 34% of assessed settlements reported early marriage/pregnancy to be one of the main reasons girls were not attending school.²⁶ With additional stresses on the households due to the COVID-19 movement and trade restrictions,²⁷ these protection concerns for women and girls might increase as household resources are depleted.

For men, assessed settlements continued to report that fighting between neighbors was the main protection concern in Q1 (41%), followed by harassment (15%). The latter seemed to be the most prevalent in Mundri West and Mundri East counties (38% for both in March), likely due to the ongoing presence of armed groups in the area. For boys, looting and early marriage were the major concerns in March, (18% and 14%, respectively). Early marriage was also reportedly one of the main barriers to boys' education in WES (24% in March).²⁸

Shelter and NFIs

During the first quarter of 2020, 98% of assessed settlements in WES reported that **host communities** lived in tukuls²⁹ or other permanent shelters. However, the shelter situation for **IDPs and IDP returnees** in general was less secure, and assessed settlements in Maridi, Mvolo and Nzara counties reported shelters belonging to all

population groups were destroyed in Q1 due to conflict and natural disasters.

Overall, the vast majority of assessed settlements in WES reported that **IDPs and IDP returnees** lived in the host community in March (92%). Among the assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs in March, 85% reported that IDPs lived in tukuls and 12% reported IDPs lived in rakoobas.^{29, 30} The shelter conditions seemed to be less favorable in **Nagero County**, where 33% of assessed settlements reported improvised shelters of plastic sheeting and scavenged materials serving as the most common shelter for IDPs in Q1, likely due to the bush fires in 2019, and the ongoing destruction of shelters by armed groups. Similarly, improvised shelters serving as the main shelter type for IDP returnees was reported by 40% of assessed settlements in Nagero County in March.

Across WES, almost no assessed settlements reported shelter destruction due to fighting (2% of assessed settlements), with Maridi and Mvolo counties being the exception, where 6-7% of assessed settlements reported shelters were completely or partially destroyed by conflict, respectively. In the conflict affected areas of **Maridi County**, the destruction appeared to be widespread, with many settlements reporting half of the shelters having been destroyed. FGD participants reported similarly that their shelters had been burned and looted during the January attacks in the Rasolo area.³¹ Lack of shelter was reported as a push factor in Maridi County, and FGD participants reported that some of these IDPs were therefore residing

22 95% of assessed settlements reported in March that they did not have security concerns when accessing their preferred marketplace.

23 For more details on the markets of Yambio, Nzara and Ezo, see the [REACH Yambio, Nzara and Ezo Rapid Market Assessment](#), February 2020.

24 12% of assessed settlements in the eastern counties reported over 4 hours.

25 12 IRNA Report. Maridi, WES. 17-18 February, 2020.

26 Among the 47 assessed settlements reporting that half, or less of school-aged girls attended school in March 2020.

27 Radio Tamazuj. South Sudan closes airports and borders over coronavirus fears. 23 March 2020.

28 Among the 30 assessed settlements reporting that half, or less of the school-aged boys attended school in March 2020.

29 Rakoobas are more temporary shelters made from straw, while tukuls are mud huts with more permanence.

30 Among the 191 assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs in March 2020.

31 REACH. Displacement Focus Group Discussion, Maridi town, Maridi

in abandoned buildings, or in the bush. IDPs congested in shelters provided by the host community and others staying without shelter was also reported by the Initial Rapid Needs Assessment (IRNA) of IDPs in Lalama, near Maridi Town.³²

Besides conflict, natural hazards also destroyed shelters in certain areas of WES. Heavy rains in the beginning of the year destroyed shelters in Basukangbi, **Nzara County**, and Naandi in Ezo County, whilst at the end of February, several settlements in Nzara County experienced bush fires destroying shelters, food stocks and NFIs.³³ With the onset of seasonal rains due in April, these areas will likely be in greater need of humanitarian assistance.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

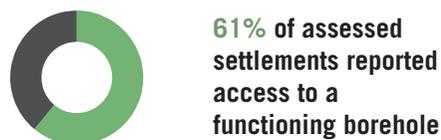
Access to safe drinking water and use of good hygiene practices seemingly remained low across WES. While reported access to a functioning borehole remained consistent, with 54% of assessed settlements reporting access in December and 61% in March, conditions seemingly deteriorated in **Greater Mundri**. While 58% of assessed settlements in Greater Mundri reported access to a functioning borehole in September, this decreased to 40% by December, and to 30% in March, possibly due to people moving to the villages for planting during the rainy season which generally have lower access to boreholes, and insecurity in the area forcing communities to use less-preferred water sources.³⁴ Low water quality, low water pressure during the dry season, or boreholes only being available

in the Primary Health Care Unit (PHCU) likely also prompted communities to shift to other water sources.

The quality and accessibility of clean water was reportedly challenging across WES, with over half of assessed settlements reporting using a well or river as their main source of drinking water (56%), of which nearly all reported that water was allegedly making people sick. In Greater Mundri, rivers were the main water source (61% in March), which reportedly took one hour to half a day to reach, access and return with water (see Map 4). Additionally, in nearly all of these settlements, livestock were reportedly using the same water source as the community. The use of unsafe water sources likely affected the health of these communities, who frequently self-reported parasites, diarrhea as the main health problems in March (see Health and Nutrition section).

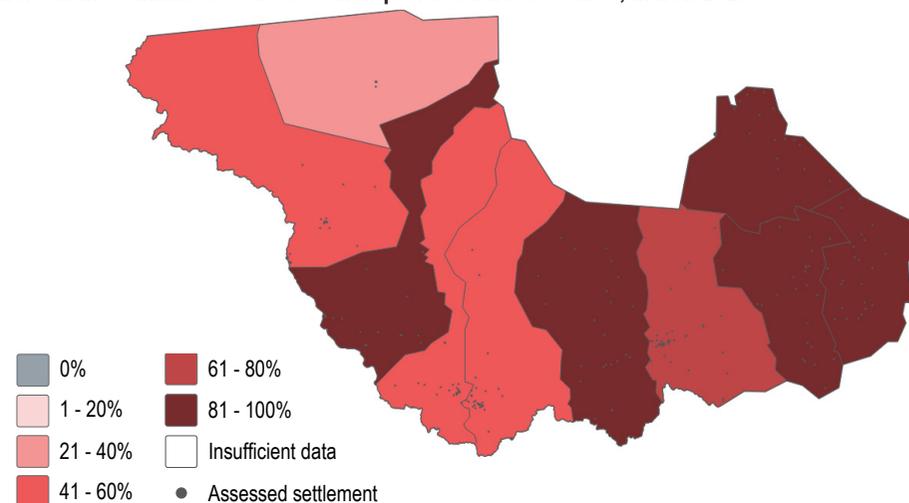
Reported latrine use remained similar to the previous quarter, with 20% of assessed settlements reporting that less than half of the population used latrines in March, with much higher proportions reporting this in Greater Mundri (62%). Across all counties, the primary reason reported for low or no use of latrines was that none were available (53% in March), however in Greater Mundri, cultural reasons

Figure 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting access to a functioning borehole, March 2020



³⁴ In March, 18% of assessed settlements in Mvolo County and 4% in Mundri East and Mundri West counties reportedly could not access their preferred water source due to insecurity.

Map 4: Proportion of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria State reporting most people took more than 30 minutes to access their preferred water source, March 2020



also played an important role (51%).

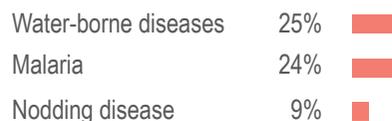
In terms of hand washing practices, 68% of assessed settlements across WES reported in March that most people did not wash their hands at all, or washed them only with water; 88% reported this in Greater Mundri, where handwashing practices were reportedly worse, likely due to the previously mentioned challenges in accessing clean water. However, from January to March, notable improvements were observed in Maridi County, where handwashing with soap or ash

reportedly increased from 5% to 50%, likely due to information on COVID-19 reaching communities through various channels.

Health and Nutrition

Healthcare services reportedly remained accessible across WES, with all assessed settlements reporting that there was at least one health facility that residents could walk to from their settlement in the first quarter of 2020. However, these were predominantly PHCUs, as 52% of assessed settlements reportedly had no access to a hospital in March, most critically in Ezo County, where all assessed settlements reported lacking access, and in Ibba, Mvolo and Nagero counties (80-87% of assessed settlements). In terms of COVID-19, FGD participants from Maridi and Yambio towns reported they intended to seek healthcare or call the COVID-19 hotline in case they exhibited symptoms,³⁵ however,

Figure 5: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting main perceived health problems, March 2020



³⁵ REACH. Health Seeking Behaviour Focus Group Discussion, Yambio town, Yambio County, 4 April 2020, and Maridi Town, Maridi County, 17 April 2020.

³² IRNA Report. Maridi, WES, 17-18 February, 2020.

³³ UNMISS. [Wildfire kills one and leaves hundreds homeless in Nzara County, Western Equatoria](#), 26th February 2020.

lack of access to health services, and health facilities lacking water, electricity and essential medical supplies was reportedly a barrier to a successful COVID-19 response in Western Equatoria.

Similar to previous quarters, assessed settlements continued to self-report water-borne diseases and malaria as the main health problems in March (25% and 24%, respectively). During the period of December 2019 to March 2020, assessed settlements in Mvolo County frequently perceived parasites to be the primary cause of death in the community (50% in December and 65% in March), likely due to people moving closer to the river side for fishing, pasture and water during the dry season. Nodding disease³⁶ (or neurological diseases with similar symptoms) was reported to be the primary health problem for most people in one in four settlements in Greater Mundri, especially in Mundri West (46% in March).

Education

Education facilities across South Sudan closed on the 20th March, 2020 to curtail the spread of COVID-19.³⁷ Prior to this event, which further hindered access to education for children across the country, pronounced differences in access to education remained between the western and eastern counties in WES, similar to previous quarters.

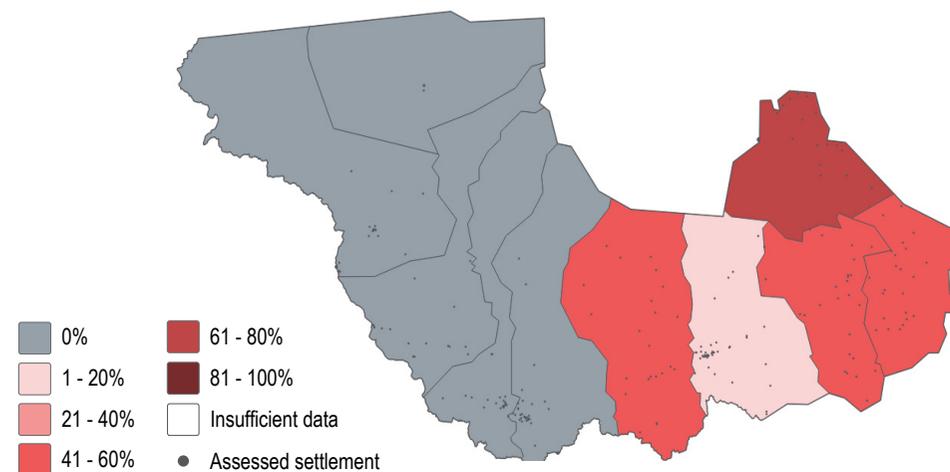
While nearly all assessed settlements in the western counties reported access to education within walking distance (99% in March), only half of assessed settlements in the **eastern counties** reportedly had access (55%, see

Map 5). The lack of education services in the eastern counties was reportedly almost entirely due to a lack of facilities, likely as a result of the ongoing insecurity in Greater Mundri. In addition, there was reportedly almost no education above primary 1-2 available at the boma³⁸ level, with such facilities only available in payam centers, likely too distant for many children.

Where education was available, attendance was reportedly often low in the eastern counties, especially for girls. The highest proportion of assessed settlements reporting low attendance among girls was in Greater Mundri, with all assessed settlements reporting that half or less of the school-aged girls attended school in March. The most commonly reported barriers for girls to access education in WES were an inability to pay school fees (reported by 43% in March),

and early marriage and early pregnancy (34% in March).²⁶ Due to the school closure, early teenage pregnancies may rise, further reducing girls' school attendance.³⁹ Boys' school attendance was reportedly the highest in Maridi and Yambio counties, with about 50% of assessed settlements reporting that more than half of school-aged boys attended school in March. The highest proportion of assessed settlements reporting low attendance among boys was also in Greater Mundri, with all assessed settlements reporting that half or less of school-aged boys attended school in March. For boys, similar to girls, aside from school fees, early marriage was the most frequent barrier to education (24% in March).²⁸ Additionally, with the approaching planting season, boys in Mvolo County were reportedly increasingly involved in agricultural or other work around the household.⁴⁰

Map 5: Proportion of assessed settlements in Western Equatoria state reporting inadequate access to education services, March 2020



36 Nodding syndrome is a disease specific to South Sudan, Tanzania and Uganda, mostly affecting children of 5-15 years old, "causing progressive cognitive dysfunction, neurological deterioration, stunted growth and a characteristic nodding of the head", according to WHO. The epicentre for the disease in South Sudan is Greater Mundri. Little is known on the causes of the disease. For more information, [see the following](#).

37 Sudan Tribune. South Sudan closes schools, suspends religious events over COVID-19. 21 March 2020.

38 "Boma" refers to the administrative unit below the payam level

39 Plan International. [COVID-19 school closures around the world will hit the girls hardest](#).

40 Agricultural or other work around the household was reported as the main barrier to education by 20% of the assessed settlements in December 2019, and by 50% in March in Mvolo County.

Conclusion

Overall improvements in security continued to positively affect the food security situation in WES, with nearly all assessed settlements reporting that most people had enough food in Q1. Nevertheless, pockets of insecurity prompted new displacements in Maridi and Mvolo counties, and natural disasters destroyed food stocks at a critical time before the start of the planting season. The COVID-19 movement and trade restrictions introduced in Q1 might have far-reaching effects, increasing the economic strain on people at the peak of the lean season, when they are generally more market-dependent, and increasing protection concerns, particularly for women.

About REACH Initiative

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. The methodologies used by REACH include primary data collection and in-depth analysis, and All REACH 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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