Introduction

Following the outbreak of violence in Juba in July 2016, the conflict in South Sudan expanded to previously peaceful areas, including the Greater Equatoria region (Central, Eastern, and Western Equatoria states). Many areas in the Greater Equatoria region are largely inaccessible to humanitarian actors due to insecurity. As a result, only limited information is available on the humanitarian situation outside of a few large towns and displacement sites. In order to fill these information gaps and facilitate humanitarian programming, REACH began collecting monthly data on hard-to-reach areas in the Greater Equatoria region from January 2017 through interviews with Key Informants (KIs). Between January and March 2018, data was collected through phone call interviews with KIs residing across the Greater Equatoria region and who had direct knowledge of the situation in a hard-to-reach settlement.

From January to March 2018, REACH interviewed 900 KIs that had knowledge about 400 different settlements: 214 settlements in all six counties of Central Equatoria State, 71 settlements in five out of eight counties of Eastern Equatoria State and 115 settlements in six out of ten counties of Western Equatoria State (Map 2). Findings were triangulated with 4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) conducted in Kapoeta Town with internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Budi County, and secondary data, including other assessments conducted by REACH in the Greater Equatoria region over the reporting period. Primary data collection was complemented by consultations with humanitarian partners based in Yambio and Kapoeta towns.

This Situation Overview provides a summary of displacement trends in addition to access to food and basic services for both IDPs and host communities across the Greater Equatoria region from January to March 2018. The following analysis will summarize trends for the Greater Equatoria region as well as analyse the three states separately.

Population Movement and Displacement

Following episodes of heavy armed clashes and large scale displacement at the end of 2017, lower intensity fighting continued to take place in the first quarter of 2018. While security deteriorated in areas previously quiet such as Kapoeta South County, other areas were more quiet than through most of 2017, including the western portion of Western Equatoria. The main towns of the Greater Equatoria region were largely quiet, but armed clashes continued to displace populations in rural areas of southern Central Equatoria State (Morobo, Yei, Lainya and Kajo-Keji Counties), in Mundri East County (Western Equatoria State) and in Kapoeta South County (Eastern Equatoria State).1

Due to the combination of relative safety around main towns and the beginning of the cultivation season in the Greenbelt area of South Sudan, some of those displaced by conflict which began in July 2016 started returning from their displacement areas outside and within South Sudan, mostly to settle in population centres perceived to be secure and to look for income generating activities. This has lead to a trend of urban displacement by IDPs returning from foreign or remote displacement sites and settling in major towns, including Kapoeta, Torit, Juba, Yei, and Yambio. Whether these movements

Map 1: Counties in the Greater Equatoria Region, March 2018

Map 2: REACH assessment coverage of the Greater Equatoria region, January (A), February (B) and March 2018 (C)

Information for this report was collected primarily from newly arrived KIs from Greater Equatoria to Yambio and Kapoeta Towns and supplemented with remote phone calls to KIs living in the settlements of interest. The remote assessment involved in-depth interviews with participants selected through a snowball sampling technique, where each KI was asked to name two additional people who could be interviewed. A standardised survey tool was used that comprised questions on displacement trends, population needs and access to basic services.

After data collection was completed, all data was examined at the settlement level, and settlements were assigned the modal response. When no consensus could be found for a settlement, it was not included in reporting. Descriptive statistics and geospatial analysis were then used to analyse the data. Qualify as permanent returns is still unclear. A more detailed discussion will follow in the “Central Equatoria State” sub-section.

In addition to this broader trend of movements of people previously displaced in Uganda or in the bush toward population centres, smaller numbers of people have also returned to their rural settlement of origin. Over the period, REACH KIs reported returns from Uganda refugee settlements in most border areas such as Magwi, Tort, Ikotos, Kajo-Keji and Lainya County. In March, 80% of assessed settlements reported that members of the local community had returned to the settlement following prior displacement. Among those, 34% reported that returns had a large impact on the population’s ability to access enough food in the settlement, including 100% of assessed settlements in Lainya County.

50% of assessed settlements reported IDP presence in March 2018, suggesting that many areas remain off limits and that protracted displacement remains the rule in a large portion of the Greater Equatoria region.

Central Equatoria State

Many instances of localized fighting caused displacement in Central Equatoria State during the first quarter of 2018, including displacement of over 3,360 persons toward Yei County following armed clashes in Mukaya Payam, Lainya County. Moreover, displacement of an unknown magnitude was reported in Mundri East following clashes. Populations were likely also displaced by armed clashes in Morobo County during this period. However, KIs reported that constraints on humanitarian access prevented assessments from taking place in the area. As a result, the extent of displacement caused by the recent clashes remains unknown. Finally, partners reported displacement due to cattle raiding from Terekeka toward the town of Kuda, in Jubek State, in late March.

Displacement toward urban areas

As of 28 February, UNHCR reported that 1,053,598 refugees from South Sudan were in Uganda. The number of South Sudanese refugees present in Uganda has been stable since July 2017, following a steep, sustained increase throughout the previous year. While populations are still occasionally moving out of South Sudan toward Uganda as a result of bouts of small scale fighting in the southern portion of Central Equatoria State, returns are increasingly being reported. Following the trend in the rest of the Greater Equatoria region, most of those returning to South Sudan settled in major towns as they do not feel safe enough to settle back in their original rural settlements.

Temporary returns

Another REACH assessment of displacement between Moyo town in Uganda and Kajo Keji County also found that traditional and religious leaders from Kajo Keji County had successfully negotiated safe access to South Sudanese refugees seeking to go cultivate the land in February. This reportedly led to an increase in short trips across the border (Map 4).

Map 3: Percentage of assessed settlements in the Greater Equatoria region reporting IDP presence, March 2018.
Permanent returns

From late February, a trend of more permanent returns to Kajo Keji was observed, with REACH KIs reporting approximately 760 permanent returns to Kajo Keji town. Even in these cases, however, these permanent returns were usually partial households (HHs). This suggests that other members of the family had remained in the settlements in order to access services. Partners also reported that among households returning to South Sudan through the border crossing point at Nimule, Magwi County in January 2018, the main destination was Juba.10

Cattle migration

Following a government decree, several large cattle camps in Kajo-Keji and Magwi Counties were disbanded between February and March. This situation led an estimated 60,000 people, along with 200,000 heads of cattle, to consolidate and move along the Kit-Nesitu corridor, south of Juba, ultimately aiming to reach Bor County, Jonglei State, as a final destination.11 The migration was not seasonal, and such a consolidated movement along non-traditional routes in difficult conditions raised potential concerns for the safety of cattle keepers, as well as for the spread of cattle diseases among the herd.12

**Eastern Equatoria State**

**Returns from Kenya**

Returns from refugee camps located in Kenya have been noted by REACH road monitoring teams based in Kajo Keji town. HHs returning from Kenya often settled in Kajo Keji Town, and others transited toward other counties of Eastern Equatoria State (Torit, Budi, Kajo Keji East Counties) as well as to Juba. Many HHs returning to Juba were found to move straight from Kakuma refugee camp and its Kalobeyei settlement extension in Kenya to the Juba Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites, which suggests that returns are not necessarily fueled by a perception of safety within South Sudan. HHs returning from Kenya cited perceived safety concerns and distance from family as primary push factors, as found during a REACH assessment on intentions of South Sudanese refugees in Kalobeyei refugee settlement.13 The assessment revealed that refugees who were returning to South Sudan from Kenya at the time largely did so due to reportedly deteriorating living conditions in Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei settlement, with reports of tensions between the refugees and the local communities.14

As of March 31st, the total South Sudanese refugee population registered with UNHCR in Kenya was 114,090, and very few new registrations were still being reported.15 Insecurity along the Kajo Keji - Narus road slowed down movements of people into and out of Kenya. After a prolonged period of calm in the Greater Kajo Keji area, a series of localized armed clashes and violent road robberies, often targeting humanitarian convoys, took place between January and March along the road from Kajo Keji to Narus, which is the main entry point to Kenya, and Kakuma refugee camp. This reportedly led some population living along the road to move temporarily to the bush, and in some cases to cross to Kenya and register as refugees. By the end of March, the area was reported to be relatively safe again.16

**Returns from Uganda**

Humanitarian partners have also reported that refugees to Uganda who were originally from areas of Eastern Equatoria such as Torit County and Magwi County are also returning in increasing numbers.17 REACH KIs from Magwi reported that such returns had created competition over access to resources.

**Displacement toward urban areas**

Perceived insecurity of rural areas and roads of Eastern Equatoria State continued to prevent IDPs displaced in main towns from returning to their settlements of origin. FGD Participants in Kajo Keji Town who had fled from Budi County in 2016 explained that many HHs were usually partial households (HHs) that refugees to Uganda who were originally from areas of Eastern Equatoria such as Torit County and Magwi County are also returning in increasing numbers.17 REACH KIs from Magwi reported that such returns had created competition over access to resources.

**Map 4: Displacement patterns across the Greater Equatoria region, January - March 2018.**

11. REACH. Kit-Nesitu Corridor Cattle Migration Brief. April 2018.
12. Ibid.
15. Ibid.
16. Ibid.
Map 5: Percentage of assessed settlements in the Greater Equatoria region reporting adequate access to food, March 2018.

along the roads and the ever-increasing price of transportation toward Budi County. FGD participants further explained that adult male members of the HHs often travel back to Budi County first in order to assess the condition of their HH’s possessions and to decide whether a permanent return would be possible for the HH. In some cases, men stay in Budi temporarily and look for income generating opportunities while women and children remain in Kapoeta town or in Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei Settlement to access services such as food distributions and education. It was reported that community relations were often tense between IDPs from Budi in Kapoeta town and host community due to historical rivalries and competition over increasingly scarce income generating activities and resources.

**Western Equatoria State**

In contrast to other states, most of Western Equatoria State remained relatively calm during the first quarter of 2018. This allowed people to visit their cultivation land in rural areas, visit family members or look for livelihood opportunities in urban centres.

**Temporary returns**

The majority of departures and arrivals recorded by REACH road monitoring teams in Yambio town were HHs travelling to and from Nzara County and other neighbouring counties and were mostly moving to reunite with family, access food and healthcare services. Both arriving and departing HHs were planning to stay in their new location temporarily.

**New displacement**

In mid-February, armed clashes in the area of Deim Zubier, Western Bahr al Ghazali pushed IDPs to cross into Western Equatoria State. An assessment conducted by World Vision International toward the end of March found 845 IDPs to be lacking access to food, and in urgent need of NFI and shelter support.

**Displacement to the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)**

Movements to and from DRC were reportedly minimal among both South Sudanese refugees settled in refugee camps in DRC and Congolese refugees settled in Makpandu camp, Yambio County. The total number of South Sudanese refugees registered with UNHCR in DRC increased slightly over the period, reaching 91,038 as of March 31st from 88,870 as of December 31st, 2017. New registration were likely a result of heavy clashes in the Mundri area during the second half of 2017.

**Situation in Assessed Settlements**

**Food security and Livelihoods**

Conflict, inflation, and environmental shocks all contributed to severe levels of food insecurity throughout the Greater Equatoria region during the first quarter of 2018. Twelve percent (12%) of assessed settlements in the Greater Equatoria region reported adequate access to food in March. Inadequate access to food was reported to be particularly high in Magwi County, Eastern Equatoria State, Mvolo County, Maridi County and Ezo County, Western Equatoria State (100% of assessed settlements) and in Terekeka County, Central Equatoria State (84%).

A plurality of settlements (22%) in March reported that inadequate access to food was caused mainly by high food prices in markets, particularly in Maridi and Juba Counties. Insecurity was the second most cited primary reason for inadequate access to food (21% of assessed settlements), followed by lack of rain (15%).

In Central Equatoria State, reasons for inadequate access to food were still heavily connected to conflict. The primary reasons for lack of adequate access to food cited by assessed settlements of Yei County, for example, all revolved around conflict: in March, 43% of assessed settlements cited insecurity, 29% others cited the destruction of crops by fighting and the remaining 29% reported that inadequate access to food was primarily caused by looting of stored harvested crops.

Other parts of the Greater Equatoria region did not face the same challenges. Settlements in the Greater Kapoeta area, in the eastern portion of Eastern Equatoria State, did not report being directly affected by conflict as much as other parts of the Greater Equatoria region, but have been affected by dry spells for several years, preventing HHs from accumulating harvested crops and, in remote areas, forcing HHs to rely almost exclusively on livestock products such as milk and wild fruits.

Cultivation was reported to be the main source of food in 54% of assessed settlements in March. Almost no assessed settlements reported that livestock was their main source of food in March, including in traditionally pastoralist areas of Central Equatoria State, such as Terekeka County, where cattle keeping is a major source of livelihood, but where...
the animals are rarely slaughtered for food. Animals are rather often sold or exchanged against food and other commodities at the market.

In March, traditional livelihoods such as subsistence agriculture and livestock rearing were all reported to be widely taking place in areas of the Greater Equatoria region where such livelihoods are typically found. As such, 50% of assessed settlements reporting livestock rearing to be taking place in their settlement. This was particularly reported in semi-pastoralist areas of northern Central Equatoria State, including 95% of assessed settlements in Terekeka. Moreover, 75% of assessed settlements reported that subsistence agriculture was taking place. FAO’s Global Information and Early Warning System reported in its March 2018 update that favourable rainfall in the Greater Equatoria region had allowed for an early start to the cultivation season.23 FEWSNET reported that farmers in Magwi and Budi Counties had been able to begin cultivation early, but warned that above average rainfall early on in the season could indicate that flooding of cultivated land could occur in areas of the Greater Equatoria region later in the season.24 KIs from NGOs in Yambio town reported being optimistic that the agricultural output of Western Equatoria State would improve in 2018 due to good patterns of rainfall and improved security.

Nevertheless, casual labour remained the second most widely reported livelihood source among assessed settlements of the Greater Equatoria region in March (66%), suggesting that stored food from the previous harvest (December-January) had been exhausted and that many HHs were relying on income generating activities in order to be able to access food until harvest reserves become available. Many HHs are therefore dependent on markets to compensate for shortcomings of their other sources of livelihood. In March, Juba and Magwi Counties were found to be especially market dependent, with 89% and 71% of assessed settlements respectively reporting that market was the primary source of food in their area.

In spite of a stabilization of large parts of the Greater Equatoria region during the period, pockets of insecurity continue to inhibit market access in areas where populations are heavily dependent on markets, such as the Greater Kapoeta area. KIs in Kapoeta town reported that insecurity along the road from Kenya had prevented traders from bringing supplies. This reportedly led to less products being available at the market and to a rise in prices. The past few years have been characterized by low agricultural output in the Greater Kapoeta area due to annual dry spells, and as such the population is reported to be highly market dependent, thus particularly vulnerable to negative changes in market conditions. In late March 2018, a World Food Programme (WFP) mission was deployed along the Kapoeta town - Narus road and re-opened the axis for humanitarian convoys, including WFP’s own supplies from Kenya.25 Traders movements between Kenya and Kapoeta became fluid again.

Coping strategies

HHs in the assessed settlements have adopted various types of coping strategies during the first quarter of 2018 in order to cope with a shortage of food or resources to buy food. The majority of settlements assessed in March reported adopting strategies such as relying on less expensive food (71% of assessed settlements), limiting meal sizes (72%) and reducing the amount of meals consumed per day (84%). Eighty-three (83%) of assessed settlements reported consuming one meal a day, suggesting that HH resilience for further shocks is low, with food consumption already restricted for many in the area.

A smaller proportion of assessed settlements reported adopting additional coping strategies that suggest more severe food insecurity, such as spending entire days without eating (19% of assessed settlements) and only feeding children within the HH (25%). In March, settlements in Mvolo County reported high instances of severe coping strategies, where 89% of assessed settlements reported that only children eat, and 33% reported that HHs spent entire days without eating. Nevertheless, the prevalence of reporting such strategies at the Greater Equatoria region level has diminished over the quarter. This suggests that some of the most food insecure settlements were able to capitalize on slightly improved security to access larger quantities of food.

In addition to restricting and rationing consumption of available food, HHs also compensated for inhibited livelihoods by relying on strategies designed to increase overall quantities of food available. The most widely used strategies of this type in March were borrowing food from neighbours or relatives (72% of assessed settlements) and gathering wild food (57%). These strategies were most widely reported by assessed settlements in Central Equatoria State where armed clashes were reported during the quarter (Yei and Lainya Counties), suggesting that normal livelihoods are still inhibited in areas that suffered recent waves of insecurity.

Protection

Perceptions of safety remained low during the reporting period. The vast majority of assessed settlements of the Greater Equatoria region reported that most people “sometimes” felt safe (76%) in March, and 20% of assessed settlements reported that people felt safe “all the time”. A very low proportion of assessed settlements reported that people “never” felt safe (3%). However Yei County in particular had a relatively higher proportion of assessed settlements reporting a permanent perception of insecurity (15%).

While armed clashes and road ambushes continued to be reported during the first quarter of 2018, the conflict intensity was relatively lower than during the last half of 2017.26 Accordingly, only 11% of assessed settlements reported that an incident of conflict had taken place.

place in the month prior to data collection in March, and 18% reported incidents of looting of property. However, presence of armed actors in bush areas across the Greater Equatoria region continued to create uncertainty among local populations.27

Among women, the most frequently cited primary protection concern in March across the Greater Equatoria region was domestic violence (22% of assessed settlements), followed by sexual violence (19%) and family separation (9%). Among men, protection concerns were found to be very diverse across the Greater Equatoria region in March. The most frequently cited concerns were looting (9% of assessed settlements) and cattle-raiding (9% of assessed settlements). The latter was most commonly reported in pastoralist areas such as northern Central Equatoria State (Terekeka). 44% of assessed settlements in Mvolo County also reported that the main protection concern for men was cattle-related violence, although Mvolo is not traditionally a pastoralist area. During the dry season, pastoralist communities often migrate south from Lakes State through Mvolo County in search of pasture, and often destroy crops while moving, creating tensions and conflict with local communities.

Shelter

In March, 15% of assessed settlements reported that shelters had been destroyed or partially destroyed in the month prior to data collection. The highest recorded proportion at the county level was in Mundri East County, where 100% of assessed settlements reported such destruction. The County had been disputed in this area in previous months and low intensity armed engagement continued over the quarter. Humanitarian access was also reported to be very low in most rural areas of the Greater Mundri area (Mundri East, Mundri West and Mvolo Counties), both due to insecurity and to poor road conditions.28

Across the Greater Equatoria region, most host communities were reported to be living primarily in tukuls (79% of assessed settlements) and to a lesser extent in rakoobas (17%). Access to conventional shelters such as tukuls was much lower for IDPs. In over a quarter of all assessed settlements reporting IDP presence (28%), IDPs were mostly reported to be staying in abandoned buildings, community buildings or tents. Elsewhere, IDPs were mostly reported to be hosted in rakoobas (38% of assessed settlements reporting an IDP presence). Rakoobas are commonly known to be less solid than tukuls, made up of dried grass and stacks, and protected from rain with plastic sheeting. With the arrival of the rainy season in the next few months, IDPs living in rakoobas will be more vulnerable to flooding of their residence than those living in tukuls. FGDs with IDPs in Kapoeta town, for example, revealed concerns that worn out plastic sheeting covering existing rakoobas would not be sufficient to endure the rainy season.29

Settlements in southern Central Equatoria State (Lainya, Morobo, Yei, and Kajo-Keji County) reported relatively higher proportions of assessed settlements where most IDPs were living in abandoned buildings in March, including 33% of assessed settlements in Yei County.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Access to at least one functioning borehole was reportedly high across the Greater Equatoria region in March, with 77% reporting the presence of one or more boreholes in their settlement, and 91% among those reporting that at least one of the boreholes was functional. In March, 22% of assessed settlements - mostly the ones without access to a functional borehole in their settlement - reported that the average walking distance to and from the nearest water point was between one hour to half a day. In spite of improving access to boreholes, 33% of assessed settlements reported that perception of insecurity has prevented people from fetching water at their preferred water point in March. The use of latrines was reported to be low among the assessed settlements of the Greater Equatoria region, with 68% reporting that less than half of the population were using latrines. Moreover, 18% of assessed settlements reported that no one in the settlement had been using latrines at all. This number is likely attributable to extremely low usage reported in areas inhabited by semi-nomadic cattle herders (Terekeka County), an area where open defecation is very common. A large proportion of the population have been on the move in grazing areas during the period, limiting access to WASH infrastructure even further.

Health

Access to health services remained stable across the Greater Equatoria region over the assessment period, with 65% of assessed settlements reporting that healthcare services were accessible from their settlement in March. Among assessed settlements reporting access to health services in March, most reported that the closest facilities were within an hour walk (81%). However, 18% also reported that the facilities were at a distance of up to half a day’s walk. Among counties where REACH AoK data met minimum coverage of 5% of settlements in March 2018, access to health services was especially low in Maridi County (64% of assessed settlements reporting no access), Terekeka County (53%) and Ezo County (57%). In Mundri West County, all assessed settlements where health services were said to be unavailable reported that lack of access was caused by the destruction of facilities by violence. The Greater Mundri area has been affected by heavy armed clashes during the conflict.

27. Ibid.
28. FGD with IDPs from Budi County in Rei B neighbourhood, Kapoeta Town, 1 March 2018.
29. FGD with IDPs from Budi County in Rei B neighbourhood, Kapoeta Town, 1 March 2018.
prior to the reporting period, in November, and a REACH Rapid Assessment conducted in December reported that access to healthcare services was limited.\(^30\)

Forty-seven percent (47\%) of assessed settlements reported that malaria was the primary health concern in their area in March, followed by 17\% of assessed settlements reporting that typhoid was the primary health concern. Malaria was also reported to be the main cause of mortality in 34\% of assessed settlements in January and 33\% in March, followed by diarrheal diseases, reported by 18\% of assessed settlements. Incidentally, 90\% of assessed settlements also reported a need for malaria drugs in their area.

Most assessed settlements reported that no specific increase in mortality had taken place in March across the Greater Equatoria region, but some exceptions were noted at the county level in areas of Central Equatoria State. 54\% of assessed settlements reported an increase in mortality in Yei County, likely driven by low health service provision and lack of access to food. This is much higher than the average in the Greater Equatoria region, where 19\% of assessed settlements reported the same.

While very few assessed settlements reported malnutrition as either the main cause of mortality or most common health problem, the end of the dry season in coming months (late April and May) should bring an influx of pastoralist HHs, including children, back from remote dry season pasture areas toward their settlement of origin in pastoralist areas such as northern Central Equatoria and the Greater Kapoeta (Kapoeta South, Kapoeta North and Kapoeta East) area. This typically leads to an increase in admission in nutrition centres due to malnutrition. 63\% of assessed settlements reported that there was no facility providing nutrition supplements in their settlement.

### Education

Sixty-nine percent (69\%) of assessed settlements in the Greater Equatoria region reported that education services were available in March, with access levels remaining stable since January. Among assessed settlements that reported that services were not available, 28\% reported that facilities were too far. Lack of access to education services was also reported to be tied to conflict or insecurity during the reporting period, as 19\% of assessed settlements reported that education services were not available because facilities had been destroyed by conflict. This was notably the case in 60\% of the assessed settlements that reported no access to education services in Lainya County. Terekeka was the County where assessed settlements reported the lowest levels of access to education services, with 53\% of assessed settlements reporting no access.

Availability of education services is not a guarantee of enrollment. In March, 56\% of assessed settlements reported that half or less of the girls of the settlement were attending school, 32\% reported the same for boys. HHs in the Greater Equatoria region have been using various strategies to cope with disrupted livelihoods, including cutting on service expenses and having children help around the house during the day. The inability or unwillingness to pay school fees was the reason most cited across assessed settlements of the Greater Equatoria region to explain the lack of attendance of both girls (44\%) and boys (52\%). In 11\% of assessed settlements, girls were reportedly not attending school because they were required to work around the house, while, similarly, 30\% of assessed settlements reported that the main reason why boys were staying away from the classrooms was because they were supposed to support agricultural work.

### Figure 6: Proportion of 6-17 year old girls and 6-17 year old boys attending school in assessed settlements, March 2018.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than half</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than half</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

The first quarter of 2018 was characterized by a generalized reduction in armed clashes in most of the Greater Equatoria region. This has led to some returns among HHs who had been staying in refugee camps and settlements or in the bush for the past few months or years. However, in many cases returning HHs had moved to urban areas closer to their settlements of origin, yet were not ready to move back to the rural areas where their homes are. While there have been fewer attacks by armed groups, armed actors are still present in many rural areas surrounding main towns of the Greater Equatoria region, roads were still largely not secure and civilians and NGOs alike were vulnerable to robberies and ambushes.

Access to services remained stable over the quarter, including levels of access to education services, health services and to clean water. However, seasonal early rains expected in April and May risk making roads inaccessible and armed actors may seek to make quick territorial gains as a result, which may create renewed insecurity. With the dry season drawing to a close and given continued presence of armed actors in various parts of the Greater Equatoria region, however, the levels of access to services recorded between January and March are unlikely to be sustained in the long term.

About REACH

REACH facilitates the development of information tools and products that enhance the capacity of aid actors to make evidence-based decisions in emergency, recovery and development contexts. All REACH activities are conducted through inter-agency aid coordination mechanisms.

For more information, you can write to our in-country office: southsudan@reach-initiative.org or to our global office: geneva@reach-initiative.org.

Visit www.reach-initiative.org and follow us @REACH_info.