Introduction

The Greater Bahr el Ghazal (GBeG) region experienced intermittent episodes of intercommunal violence (ICV) in the first quarter of 2020, which contributed to gaps in access to basic services. As needs continue to persist across the region, access to reliable and timely information remains critical to humanitarian planning and prioritisation of interventions in 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 uses this data to analyse changes in observed humanitarian needs across GBeG in the first quarter of 2020.

Key Findings

- Population movement and displacement were seemingly driven by intercommunal violence (ICV) in Warrap and Western Bahr el Ghazal (WBeG) states in the first quarter of 2020.
- In line with annual trends, access to food reportedly worsened across the region. The proportion of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food remained low in March 2020 at 26%, with a slight decrease from December 2019 (34%), likely due to the early depletion of limited food stocks.
- Perceptions of safety seemingly remained unchanged from the previous reporting period; only 25% of assessed settlements reported feeling safe most of the time, with the lowest reporting in Greater Tonj (12%) and Jur River County (0%), in line with high incidents of ICV throughout the reporting period. Conflict-related protection concerns such as killing or injury were most commonly reported for men, whilst early marriage and domestic violence were the primary concerns for girls and women respectively.
- Malaria remained the most commonly reported health problem across the region (33% of assessed settlements in March). Waterborne diseases were also commonly reported (26%), indicative of long-term water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) issues.

Map 1: REACH assessment coverage of the GBeG region, January (A), February (B) and March (C) 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.
3. Greater Tonj is comprised of Tonj East, Tonj South and Tonj East counties.
across the region. Ten percent (10%) of assessed settlements reported respiratory or lung diseases in March, indicating increased vulnerability to the effects of COVID-19.

- Access to functional boreholes reportedly worsened across the region, with 62% of assessed settlements in March reporting access, a 14 percentage points decrease from the previous quarter. Low reported access to latrines and WASH non-food items (NFI) such as soap also likely contributed to increased risk of waterborne disease in the region.

- Indicative of a recent displacement, 33% of assessed settlements with IDPs in Warrap reported IDPs living in the open in March, raising protection concerns for the most vulnerable populations.

- Access to education services within walking distance remained the same as the previous reporting period (86% of assessed settlements in March). Of assessed settlements with no access, the lack of facilities (44%), and the lack of teachers (16%) were the most commonly reported reasons for unavailability of education services in March.

Population Movement and Displacement

Findings suggest that, in the first quarter of 2020, displacement was driven by insecurity (36% of assessed settlements), family reunification (12%), and lack of jobs (12%) which were reported as the main push factors for the recently arrived IDPs who left their settlements across the region. Thirty-two percent (32%) of assessed settlements reported the presence of IDPs in March, with the highest proportion reporting this in Warrap State (54%).

Insecurity driven displacement

In the first quarter of 2020, intercommunal violence in Jur River County (WBeG), reportedly resulted in a large scale displacement. In March, 100% of assessed settlements in Jur River County reported a recent large scale displacement, and 88% reported cattle raiding as the primary reason the most recently arrived IDPs had left their home settlements. As a result of intercommunal fighting in Kuarjena area of Jur River County, an estimated 5,029 individuals were displaced. FGD participants who recently arrived in Wau from Rocrocde (Jur River), reported that the displaced population fled to Wau Town, Dangachak, Dakum and Wathalel in WBeG State. Participants further reported that the availability of humanitarian assistance, basic services, and security in Wau was a pull factor for IDPs.

In Raja County, 11% of assessed settlements reported insecurity and killing as the main reason why the recently arrived IDPs left their settlement, comparable to the previous reporting period (8% in December 2019). This is indicative of persistent violence in the region throughout the dry season, during which a decline in green vegetation in Sudan’s Darfur region drives pastoralists to NBeG and Raja County (WBeG) in search of greener pastures and access to water for their livestock. Cattle theft between the Sudanese pastoralists and host communities often leads to tension and violence during the migration season, creating insecurity and protection concerns for host communities.

In Warrap State, intermittent episodes of violent conflict reportedly contributed to internal displacement this quarter. The majority of assessed settlements in Warrap State reported the presence of IDPs in the settlement (54% in March), a 22 percentage point increase from December 2019. Similar to Raja County, the reported displacement across Warrap State may be attributed to the increased intensity of intercommunal violence, driven by competition over grazing pastures and disputes over land ownership.

Greater Tonj was reportedly the most affected by intercommunal clashes during the reporting period. Of all assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs in Tonj East, Tonj North and Tonj South counties, respectively 100%, 71% and 89% reported insecurity or killing as the main reason why IDPs left their former settlement in March. Whilst the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs remained consistent between December and March in Tonj North and Tonj East counties (22%), there was a considerable increase in Tonj South over the same period, from 29% to 64%. This reported increase in IDPs arriving in Tonj South may be due to an increase in intercommunal violence across the county as reported by FGD participants in Wau Town.

Map 2: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs, March 2020

4. IOM, Western Bahr el Ghazal Event Tracking Report, 24 March 2020
Retrieved on April 14, 2020
Similar to Greater Tonj, displacement in northern Warrap was reportedly driven by insecurity, in addition to lack of access to health services. There was an increase in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs across Gogrial East, Gogrial West and Twic counties between December 2019 and March 2020. This increase may be due to insecurity, which was reported as the main push factor by 100% of assessed settlements reporting the presence of IDPs in Twic, 20% of those reporting IDPs in Gogrial West, and 14% of assessed settlements with reported IDP presence in Gogrial East in March. Additionally, assessed settlements in both Gogrial West and East reported lack of health facilities (7% and 36% respectively) and seasonal movement (20% and 14%) as push factors.

**Displacement driven by COVID-19 contingency**

The COVID-19 pandemic ushered in a new movement trend towards the end of March, with many IDPs reportedly leaving Wau PoC. **Figure 1: Proportion of assessed settlements with inadequate access to food reporting main reasons people could not access enough food in GBeg, March 2020**

**Western Bahr el Ghazal State**

In WBeG, 25% of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food in March, a marginal decrease since December 2019. Whilst reported adequate access to food remained relatively high in Wau County (41% of assessed settlements in March), reported access remained low in Raja County (9%) and decreased in Jur River County from 28% in December to just 16% in March.

Despite the reported adequate access to food in Wau County over the last two quarters, March data suggests future vulnerability for populations dependent on markets for food. In March, over half (53%) of the assessed settlements in Wau County reported that most people subsisted mainly on purchased food, which indicates potential vulnerability to shocks. Importantly, of the assessed settlements reporting inadequate access to food, 37% reported high food prices to be the main reason. In parallel, 19% of assessed settlements reported an end of food distributions, which, combined with the above-mentioned high food prices and dependency on markets, highlights potential future access challenges for populations across Wau County.

A high proportion of assessed settlements in Raja County relied on bought foods (49%) and cultivation (33%) as the main source of food in March. Similar to the previous reporting period, high prices (reported by 27% of assessed settlements in March) was one of the main reasons why assessed settlements reported inadequate access to food in Raja County. Critically, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting the closure of food distributions as the main reason they could not access enough food, increased by 13 percentage points.

Eighty percent (80%) of assessed settlements in Raja reported consuming one meal per day, unchanged from the previous reporting period. This high proportion of settlements reportedly resorting to negative coping strategies toward the dry season indicates an increased vulnerability to future food security shocks.

In Jur River County, inadequate access to food was reportedly driven primarily by theft of crops reported by 22% of assessed settlements in March, likely due to previous reporting that former IDPs returned to their land to find many of their crops had been stolen. Cattle eating crops was also reported by 13% of assessed settlements, and FGD participants reported that the early return of cattle in December 2019 meant many crops were consumed by livestock before they could be harvested.

While the reported eating of crops by livestock likely reduced seasonal harvest, movement restrictions due to insecurity reportedly increased dependence on humanitarian food assistance in the county. Indicative of aid dependence, 20% of assessed settlements in Jur River County reported that GFD had stopped as one of the main reasons for inadequate access to food.

Recent insecurity in Jur River County may have contributed to the reported severity of food insecurity and the adoption of extreme coping strategies. Thirty-one percent (31%) of assessed settlements in Jur River County reported hunger to be severe in March, with 65% reportedly consuming one meal per
Northern Bahr el Ghazal State

Access to food in NBeG decreased in the first quarter of 2020, from 36% in December 2019 to 19% in March 2020, with lower proportions reporting this in Aweil South and Aweil West counties. Assessed settlements reported destruction of crops by flooding (31%) and pests (35%) as the main reasons for inadequate access to food in March. In Tonj South County, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting new arrivals as the main reason for inadequate access to food was 7% and in Tonj, 25% of assessed settlements across the region reported skipping entire days, a severe consumption coping strategy, which indicates that food insecurity may worsen toward the lean season when most households struggle to gain adequate access to food.

Protection

Perceptions of safety remained relatively low across the reporting period, with 25% of assessed settlements reportedly feeling safe most of the time in March, with particularly low proportions of assessed settlements reporting this in Jur River (0%) and Tonj South (7%) counties. This may be due to disputes over land and cattle raiding affecting communities in both Warrap and WBeG states.

Warrap State

In Warrap State, protection concerns were primarily driven by intercommunal violence and land disputes, especially in Greater Tonj. In Tonj South County, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting land ownership disputes increased from 0% in December 2019 to 50% in March 2020. Land disputes and cattle raids reportedly resulted in the death of assessed settlements reporting adequate access to food and most people not engaging in cultivation as a livelihoods activity in GBeG, March 2020

on bought food as the main source of food, increasing from 31% in December 2019 to 67% in March 2020. The increased proportion of assessed settlements resorting to bought food much earlier than is typical raises concerns for future food security, particularly if access to Sudan is restricted due to COVID-19 contingency measures.

Findings suggest that new arrivals contributed to food insecurity in Greater Tonj, with 34% of assessed settlements reporting new arrivals as the main reason for inadequate access to food. In March, a high proportion of assessed settlements reported destruction of crops by flooding as the main reason for inadequate access to food in Tonj, 25% of assessed settlements across the region reported skipping entire days, a severe consumption coping strategy, which indicates that food insecurity may worsen toward the lean season when most households struggle to gain adequate access to food.

Warrap State

Adequate access to food was reported by 42% of assessed settlements in Warrap state, a slight decrease from the previous reporting period. The situation was seemingly severe in Twic County, where 0% of assessed settlements reported adequate access to food, likely due to flooding lowering cultivation yields and insecurity limiting access to alternative livelihoods.

Similar to NBeG, areas of northern Warrap experienced severe flooding in the last two quarters of 2019, and in March 2020, 35% of assessed settlements reported that crops were destroyed by flooding as the main reason for inadequate access to food. In March, a high proportion of assessed settlements reported destruction of crops by flooding as the main reason for inadequate access to food in Twic (84%), Gogrial West (54%) and Gogrial East (24%) counties. This may be due to disputes over land and cattle raiding affecting communities in both Warrap and WBeG states.

13. REACH, Aweil South FGD Notes, February 2020.
14. CSRF, County Profile - Jur River County, Western Bahr el-Ghazal State https://www.csrf-southsudan.org/county_profile/jur-river-county/
of conflict resulting in the death of a civilian in Tonj South County, increasing from 9% in December 2019 to 19% in March 2020. Similarly, land ownership disputes were reported in assessed settlements in Tonj East (44%), Tonj North (40%), Gogrial East (44%) and Gogrial West (39%) counties in March, showing consistent patterns of conflict across the state. Furthermore, reported incidents of looting were high in Tonj North (45%) and Tonj South (50%) counties in March. The rise in cases of land ownership disputes may be attributed to competition over grazing land among pastoralist communities during the dry season.

Across Warrap State, 29% of assessed settlements reported feeling safe most of the time in March. Reported protection concerns for men were predominantly due to cattle-raiding and ICV across the state. Twenty-one percent (21%) of assessed settlements in Greater Tonj reported cattle raiding as the main protection concern for men; for boys, 11% of assessed settlements reported killing or injury from another tribe as the main protection concern.

The main reported protection concerns for women in March were looting (17% of assessed settlements) and domestic violence (16%). Looting could be attributed to increased rates of criminality reported across Warrap state, particularly in Tonj Town. Similarly, unchanged from previous reporting period, early marriage (16%) and sexual violence (12%) were the most commonly reported main protection concerns for girls across assessed settlements in March 2020.

Western Bahr el Ghazal State

In Jur River County, 98% of assessed settlements reported most people feeling unsafe most of the time in March. FGD participants, who fled conflict in Jur River County areas of Rorocodeng, reported that it was unsafe to return to their homes following the recent outbreak of violence, which reportedly resulted in killing and looting of property.16 The proportion of assessed settlements reporting looting of property in Jur River County remained high at 46% in March.

Overall, protection challenges across genders were likely related to the commonly reported domestic concerns. Family separation continued to be the most commonly reported protection concern for both women and girls, with 14% and 19% of assessed settlements reporting this in March. Whilst the proportion of assessed settlements reporting domestic violence as the main concern for women decreased by 17 percentage points (14% in March); rates reportedly remained the same for girls (13% in March).

Northern Bahr el Ghazal State

In the first quarter of 2020, only 21% of assessed settlements across NBeG reported access to primary health care centres (PHCC) within walking distance, whilst smaller proportions reported access to a hospital (35%) in March. During the same period, 56% of assessed settlements reported access to pharmacies within a walking distance. Access

Figure 3: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting waterborne diseases as the main health concern in the GBeG region, March 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBeG</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrap</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBeG</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

to PHCC services seemingly reduced in Tonj East County, with the proportion of assessed settlements reporting access decreasing from 89% in December 2019 to 44% in March 2020, likely due to conflict cutting off populations' access to health services. Additionally, low access to pharmacies in Twic and Jur River counties, reported by 0% and 7% of assessed settlements respectively in March, has likely affected access to essential medicines in these two counties.

Across GBeG, the proportion of assessed settlements reporting malaria as the primary health issue remained consistent with December 2019, with 33% reporting this in March. Only Warrap State saw a reduction in the proportion of assessed settlements reporting malaria as the most common health problem, from 45% in December to 31% in March. Despite this reduction, a high proportion of assessed settlements in March to be the mainly perceived health concern, consistent with December 2019. Relatively high proportions of assessed settlements reported this in Tonj South (21%) and Tonj East (22%) counties; this is concerning since pre-existing lung conditions could make people more vulnerable to COVID-19.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Consistent with previous reporting periods, findings indicate that high WASH-related needs persisted in GBeG in the first quarter of 2020. Overall, 62% of assessed settlements across GBeG reported access to a functional borehole in March, a 14 percentage points decrease from the previous quarter, possibly due to seasonal reductions in the water table in parts of GBeG. NBeG (75%) and Warrap (60%) had the highest proportion of assessed settlements reporting borehole access, whilst reported access in WBeG was relatively low (42%). Jur River County saw the lowest proportion (25%) of assessed settlements reporting borehole access, whilst reported access in WBeG was relatively low (42%). Jur River County saw the lowest proportion (25%) of assessed settlements reporting borehole access, whilst reported access in WBeG was relatively low (42%). Jur River County saw the lowest proportion (25%) of assessed settlements reporting borehole access, whilst reported access in WBeG was relatively low (42%). Jur River County saw the lowest proportion (25%) of assessed settlements reporting borehole access, whilst reported access in WBeG was relatively low (42%). Jur River County saw the lowest proportion (25%) of assessed settlements reporting borehole access, whilst reported access in WBeG was relatively low (42%). Jur River County saw the lowest proportion (25%) of assessed settlements reporting borehole access, whilst reported access in WBeG was relatively low (42%).

In Warrap State, distant water sources likely presented protection challenges for women and girls. Indicative of the persistence of intercommunal conflict in Warrap State, 30% of assessed settlements reported not being able to access their preferred water source due to safety concerns in March. In particular, a high proportion of assessed settlements reporting on this indicator were in Greater Tonj (35%) and Twic (44%) County in March. This is likely a result of dry season cattle raiding and ICV across Warrap State.

Access to sanitation services remained a concern across the region, with 46% of assessed settlements reporting access to latrines in March, unchanged from the previous reporting period. Reported access to latrines was high in Warrap (54%) and WBeG (50%) compared to NBeG (39%) in March, with particularly low reported access in Twic (21%), Aweil South (20%) and Jur River (15%) counties. Limited availability of latrines was reportedly the primary reason for low usage, with more than half (55%) of assessed settlements in GBeG reporting that people were not using latrines because there were none available. In the absence of latrines, populations are likely to practice open defecation, increasing the chance of diseases which result from fecal contamination of water sources.

Poor hygiene practices, exacerbated by limited

Figure 4: Proportion of assessed settlements reporting not using latrines in GBeG, March 2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Proportion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NBeG</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrap</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WBeG</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

access to WASH NFIs continued to be reported across the region. Hand washing with soap was only reported by 33% of assessed settlements in GBeG in March, unchanged from the previous reporting period, likely due to limited hygiene awareness and lack of soap. Alternative hand washing practices reported included using water only (28% of assessed settlements in March), and ash (26%). The continued low proportion of assessed settlements reporting hand washing with soap over the last two quarters is perhaps linked to the frequent reporting of cases of waterborne diseases.

Shelter and Non-Food Items

Since the last quarter of 2019, the most commonly reported shelter types for IDPs remained tukuls and rakoobas (42% and 38% of assessed settlements respectively in March). Across the region, only assessed settlements in Wau and Raja counties reported IDPs were living in permanent shelters (26% and 33% of assessed settlements with IDPs respectively), likely due to the availability of pre-existing permanent shelters for IDPs in Wau and Raja towns.

IDPs have reportedly integrated into host communities in assessed settlements across the region. In March, 29% of assessed settlements in GBeG reported IDPs were living within walking distance, unchanged from the previous quarter. Of assessed settlements reporting no access to education services in March, lack of teachers (16%) and teachers having fled (9%) were the most commonly reported reasons. The proportion of assessed settlements with access to education reporting girls’ and boys’ attendance remained comparable to the last quarter (36% and 43% respectively in March). One hundred percent (100%) of assessed settlements in Gogrial East County reported that insecurity was the main barrier to education services, raising concerns of the impact of ICV on access to education across the region, especially during the dry season when competition over grazing pastures and cattle rustling usually creates insecurity and internal displacement.

Although reported access to education services in Jur River County remained comparable to the last quarter, the proportion (31%) of assessed settlements reporting this in March was the lowest across the region. Of assessed settlements that reported no access to education services, the main reasons reported in March were a lack of facilities (44%), lack of teachers (21%), and teachers having fled (12%). The reported factors disrupting access to education are indicative of ongoing conflict and patterns of displacement in Jur River County.

**Figure 5:** Proportion of assessed settlements reporting the primary reasons why boys and girls were not attending school in GBeG, January 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reason</th>
<th>GBeG 31%</th>
<th>GBeG 42%</th>
<th>GBeG 43%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work outside the home</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannot afford school fees</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School too far</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Early marriage</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

Findings suggested that the effects of last season’s flooding left many settlements in GBeG with depleted food stocks. This, coupled with continued protection concerns and displacement, seems to have impacted access to livelihoods, further driving increased food insecurity. In light of these factors and the movement restrictions implemented to control the COVID-19 outbreak, populations will likely require humanitarian assistance to meet both their immediate food and basic services needs across the region.

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