

Rapid Needs Assessment in Lokoromach and Moloktoch



Greater Pibor Administrative Area,
Jonglei State





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1. Introduction

Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) faces severe acute food insecurity.

According to the IPC analysis report of December 2020, parts of Pibor experiences famine likely at least through July 2021. The severe acute food insecurity is a result of frequent waves of violence and adverse climatic conditions. Repeated attacks



carried out by the neighbouring communities caused massive displacement, livelihood disruptions and assets depletion. Thousands of heads of livestock were looted compromising with the ability to cope with the ongoing shocks and undermines potential resilience of households. Meanwhile, two consecutive years of above average rainfall resulted in record levels of flood which also devastated homes and destroyed crops.

This area lies in the Eastern Semi-Arid Pastoral livelihood zone whose predominant system of production is pastoralism, with very limited crop production. While the main food cereal produced in the zone is sorghum, maize is the main cereal grown in Lekuangole and Moloktoch complemented on a small-scale by okra and other vegetables. The livestock kept include cattle, goats, and sheep and to a lesser extent poultry, mainly for household consumption.

The recent cattle raiding, and inter-communal violence have constrained livestock herding in the area and undermined households' access to livestock products including milk and meat.

The primary determinant of wealth in the zone is number and type of livestock owned per household. The poor group produces approximately staple food enough to feed them for two months, while the better-off group produce slightly more and all households depend for food on market purchases of staple foods, supplemented by livestock products especially during the rainy season. Milk consumption is normally throughout the year, although the quantities consumed vary significantly with the highest being in the rainy season.

In 2020, Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) recorded the worst violence since the outbreak of conflict in South Sudan in 2013. The violent attacks in May 2021 displaced over [20,000 people in GPAA](#), causing loss of livelihood assets including livestock and crops, disruption of markets and restricted humanitarian access. This created an unprecedented levels of severe acute food insecurity in the area. In December 2020, parts of western GPAA including Lekuangole and Gumuruk Payams were classified



as famine likely. Humanitarian assistance was scaled up following the release of the IPC report to prevent the deterioration of the situation and improve the food security of the affected population.

Report of an assessment conducted in February 2021 indicated that populations are forced to travel increasingly far from the settlements to collect food and water. Focus group discussion during the assessment revealed that those who do are often missed by registration teams. The report also showed that food was the most pressing need for 54% of households across western Pibor. According to focus group discussion participants, there are substantial populations who were not previously registered for food assistance and are now in need of humanitarian food assistance due to the collapse of the pastoralist production system and the unavailability of alternative sources of food.

WFP continued to receive request from local authorities for increased number of people not covered under the current distribution plan and need to establish new food distribution points (FDPs) given the distance between the present FDPs and isolated locations hosting the food insecure populations. In response to these requests, WFP (Logistics, Protection and VAM units) organized and implemented a rapid needs assessment mission to Lokoromach (Lekuangle) and Moloktoch (Gumuruk) to determine the levels of food insecurity, assess protection needs and evaluate logistical means as well as the need to establish new FDPs.

2. Objectives and methodology

The main aim of this mission was to assess the food security situation of the population in Lokoromach and Moloktoch in Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) and provide recommendations based on the findings including the food security situation and possible establishment of new distribution sites.

The specific objectives are:

- To assess the levels of acute food insecurity and vulnerability among the IDPs in Lokoromach (Lekuangle Payam) and Moloktoch (Gumuruk Payam) and assess the coping strategies and capability of the IDPs;
- To determine the type of livelihood options currently available for the IDPs in the two locations and investigate the level of engagement of the households in various livelihood activities as well as challenges faced;
- To assess and evaluate the level of assistance needs and find out whether the IDPs have access to humanitarian food assistance and the proportion of households that do have access to humanitarian food assistance;
- To assess if and how the communities are able to access WFP distribution points, reasons for not being able to access and determine distance to the nearest distribution point and assess the challenges and risks involved;
- To assess the migration patterns/intentions of the communities in Lokoromach and Moloktoch in the next 6 to 12 months, and determine whether these are “seasonal” or “unusual/exceptional” migrations, taking into account timing, destinations and mode/means of migration;
- To estimate the IDPs populations in the two location and recommend humanitarian interventions and specify the precise location for the assistance.



To achieve the above objectives, the following main research questions were used to guide the discussions:

- How is the overall current food security situation of these communities (consumption, food sources, livelihood options, access to basic services, shocks, coping strategies etc.) and how is the situation expected to evolve in the next 6 to 12 months?
- Do the communities have access to WFP distribution points? If NOT, why, and if YES, how do they access the FDPs and how long does it take to reach, and what are the associated challenges and risks?
- Do the communities or part of the communities have the intention to migrate in the next 6 to 12 months? Is this normal “seasonal migration” or “unusual/exceptional migration”? Where, when, and how do they intend to migrate?
- How many people have been affected (including those intending to migrate) and need assistance?

Focus group discussion was used to gather information using a semi-structured checklist. The assessment team split into sector-specific sub-teams including two food security and livelihood sub-teams, logistics, gender and protection sub-teams. Each focus group comprised of 10 – 15 individuals (mixed groups of males and females). Population figures estimates were obtained from local authorities through key informant interviews.

3. Key findings

3.1. Demographics

An estimated **18,000 people** were reported by the local authority in **Moloktoch** (Gumuruk Payam), meanwhile local authority in **Lokoromach** (Lekuangle Payam) estimated the number of people living in the area to be **750 – 1,500 individuals**. Majority of the population had been displaced at some point in time during the repeated attacks on various areas of GPAA. The population in Lekuangle has not been affected by recent waves of violence. Meanwhile, four Bomas (Manymar, Agoi, Kothile and Meri) in Gumuruk close to Moloktoch were affected by the latest conflict. Most of the displaced people have since then returned to their villages, though few are still in the bush.

3.2. Food security situation

Large food consumption gaps exist among the households in Lokoromach and Moloktoch. Although the time spent on the ground was not enough to conduct a structured household interviews, interviews with key informants and focus group discussions indicate inadequate food consumption among the households. Multiple shocks including the recurrent attacks and cattle raiding as well as two consecutive years of flooding have undermined the households’ ability to produce crops and cope with extreme food shortage leading to large food consumption gaps.

In Lokoromach, the last attack occurred in May 2020. According to the respondents, all cattle were looted by the invaders leaving the households with nothing. During the 2020 agricultural season, households lost most of their crops to the floods. As a result, currently households rely on wild foods as the main food source. The common wild foods consumed by the households include wild fruits, roots, wild vegetables, and honey collection. Some of the wild food include *lalob*, *awolech* (tuber) and

water lilies. Households in Lokoromach relied on hunting during the dry season when the animals were migrating south towards Boma Hills and during their return (expected soon). Unlike the southern Payams where the animals spend longer time, Lekuangole is the migration route through which the animals pass. Currently, hunting is not taking place and therefore access to game meat has reduced. Access to fish is not possible since the rivers have dried.

3.2 Food sources

Households in Lokoromach and Moloktoch rely on wild foods for survival. Milk and other livestock products are not available for most households as livestock have been looted. Two consecutive years of flooding have significantly reduced crop production and in lowlands resulted in total crop failure. Given the disruption in the regular food sources, the population in these places depend on wild foods to cope with the food shortages. In Lokoromach, households rely on *lalob* and *awolech* (tuber). Hunting was common during the dry season. However, with the start of the rainy season, the animals are expected to migrate back towards Ethiopia where they spend time during the rainy season. Fish contributed significantly to the diet of households when the rivers were still full. However, currently fish is not available as the rivers/streams have dried. Fish is expected to be available in June/July when the rivers have fully recharged.



Figure 1: Foods consumed by households in Lokoromach. Above: Wild tuber locally known as *awolech*, and below: spoiled dried fish and the same tuber.

3.3 Livelihoods

The communities in this area are predominantly pastoral with cattle rearing being the main livelihood activity. This is complemented, to less extent, by crop production. In a normal year, sale of livestock and livestock products including milk constitute the main source of income for the households. Fishing is carried out during the rainy season from June to October/November. In addition to agro-pastoral livelihoods, the community is also involved in hunting during the dry season. Wild animals seasonally migrate into this area during the December to May period and this is the time when hunting activities increase. Game meat provide the main source of protein during this time of the year.



Figure 2: Maize seedling in Moloktoch

The recent waves of violence resulted in loss of most of their livestock. While there hasn't been recent attack on Lokoromach, Bomas in Moloktoch including Manymar, Agoi, Kothile and Meri have been attacked between 9 and 17 May 2021. Unspecified number of cattle have been raided during the attack. Households who still have livestock, have moved them (6 hours walk) further away from Moloktoch for safety reasons. This deprived the households, especially children, from access to milk. It was reported also that some animals died of diseases prior to the raiding.



Crop production is done on a small scale mainly for subsistence. The community in these areas cultivate maize and mostly consume it while still green. Maize crops planted in May were at seedling stage during the assessment period and green consumption is expected around late August and the dry harvest is expected around mid-September. With the ongoing instability, poor households produce cereal enough to last for only one month and normally consumed while still green. This year, likelihood of above normal rainfalls poses a major threat to crop production given that soils are still saturated due the previous years' floods.

In addition to livestock and crop production, poor households are involved in hunting, fishing, collection of wild foods including fruits, water lily, tubers, and various wild vegetables. These livelihood options are expanded during exceptionally bad years. Reliance on wild foods was particularly reported by the population in Lokoromach as the main means of survival from November/December 2020 since they did not receive food assistance since late 2019 and they have reduced access to fish. Lokoromach is a transit route for the migrating wild animals. Currently, the community is waiting for the animals to make their way back as they moved northeast towards Ethiopia. Recent attack in parts of Moloktoch has displaced the population disrupting agricultural activities. Respondents also mentioned that livestock diseases present a major challenge in Moloktoch in addition to the frequent cattle raiding.

Lack of agricultural tools and seeds could limit cultivation and restrict farm sizes. This will further reduce the expected crops yields during the 2021 cultivation season. Few households in Lokoromach planted maize, meanwhile most of the households could not plant due to lack of seeds.

3.4 Shocks and challenges

The shocks experienced by households in Lokoromach and Moloktoch include violence and floods. Record levels of floods in 2019 and 2020 significantly reduced crop yields. The floods had minimum effect on the homestead as dykes made around the homes prevented water from submerging the houses. Most of the houses are built on higher grounds. Households whose houses are on low grounds were displaced to higher grounds.

During the 2020 cultivation season, most of the crops were washed away by the floods. Therefore, little was harvested. There is an ongoing anxiety among the community in Lokoromach as they worry that current crops will also be washed away given the above average rainfall forecast. This assertion from the respondents of their knowledge of rainfall forecast surprised the team. They reported that this information was communicated to them by the authority in Lekuangle.

Sub-national and localized violence have played a significant role to the vulnerability of the communities in Greater Pibor Administrative Area. Loss of livestock which is the main livelihood for the communities undermines the resilience of the communities. Livestock sale as a source of income and a coping strategy is not happening anymore among the population in Lokoromach and Moloktoch. In addition to the external threats, internal fights between various age groups cause insecurity in the area with a likelihood of restricting the population's ability to access wild foods and other coping strategies. Such localized conflict is likely to compromise the resilience of the community.



The two locations are isolated from Payam headquarters. It takes two days to walk from Lokoromach to Lekuangole during the dry season and three days during the rainy season. There is no paved road between Lekuangole and Lokoromach. Similarly, the distance from Moloktoch to Gumuruk is estimated to be six hours walk. There is insecurity threat along the routes connecting those locations. The river between Lokoromach and Lekuangole is navigable by boat during the rainy season from June to November and become impassable between December and May when the water level becomes too low.

3.5 Access to markets

There is no market in both Lokoromach and Moloktoch. The nearest market to Lokoromach is in Lekuangole and the nearest to Moloktoch is in Gumruk. The market in Gumruk has been destroyed during the recent attack. Pibor market is not accessible by the population in Lokoromach and Moloktoch due to long distance and insecurity along the way. Previously livestock owners could access Pibor market to sell their livestock and purchase cereals. Currently, households are not able to continue with this activity due to excessive loss of livestock and the prevalent insecurity on the way.

3.6 Wash and health

Lack of health facility and clean drinking water is another factor affecting the population in both locations. There is no bore hole in Lokoromach while one functioning bore hole was observed in Moloktoch though the water yield from this borehole is very low and not enough to serve the large population.

The communities in Lokoromach and Moloktoch both complained of lack of non-food items (NFIs) including plastic sheets and cooking utensils. This is because they have lost all their assets during the conflict.

3.7 Humanitarian assistance

The last distribution of humanitarian food assistance in Lokoromach was in October/November 2019. While some people attempted to access humanitarian food assistance in Lekuangole, they were denied access because they are not registered, thus not eligible. However, some women acknowledged that beneficiaries in Lekuangole shared with them part of the food assistance they received. Lokoromach is very far from Lekuangole making it difficult especially for women to access any assistance from Lekuangole. Therefore, any registration or food assistance for this population can only be done in Lokoromach.

The population in Moloktoch have been registered and were receiving food assistance in Gumuruk. The last food distribution was conducted in April 2021 before the attack in Gumuruk between 9 – 17 May 2021. Households in the affected Bomas (Manymar, Agoi, Kothile and Meri) lost the food they received during the attack. The destruction of the food in Gumuruk has affected all the beneficiaries in the Payam including those in Moloktoch and deprived them of the May food rations.



3.8 Logistics

Both Lokoromach and Moloktoch are remote and hard-to-reach areas of GPAA and surrounded with network of seasonal streams with no good roads. The poorly paved routes become completely impassable during the rainy season.

The road connecting Lokoromach to Lekuangle is only passable during the dry season from November to March but cuts off during the rainy season when Lalabo stream fills up. However, during this period, river transport become feasible and the location can be accessed from Pibor, Lekuangle and Akobo.

Window of opportunity to access Moloktoch from Gumuruk is narrower. Moloktoch is accessible by land only between January and March. Rivers/streams between Moloktoch and Gumuruk are not navigable as they are covered by thick weeds.

Since there is no commercial transport operating in these locations, the team could not determine the rate of transport.

3.9 Protection

Focus group discussion revealed that the security situation in Lokoromach and Moloktoch is relatively calm. According to the respondents, there is no significant protection issues in Lokoromach though there is a perceived threat of possible attack by Lou Nuer from Akobo. Since they border Akobo county, any attack perpetuated by Lou Nuer will first target them. Other concerns include fear of being attacked on the way to Lekuangle by youth groups.

Generally, the security situation in Moloktoch is calm. Although there was no direct attack on Moloktoch in the last three months, Bomas (Manymar, Agoi, Kothile and Meri) close to Gumuruk experienced attacks in May 2021. Given that Moloktoch is further away from Gumuruk, respondents asserted that they are more comfortable staying in Moloktoch. According to the respondents, 2020 attacks were widespread and more violent. In September 2020, Gumuruk and the surrounding areas were attacked causing mass displacement, deaths including some community members who drawn in the rivers when fleeing from the conflict. Currently, there is no protection issues in Moloktoch besides severe food shortage.

3.10 Expected evolution of the situation

Severe acute food insecurity is expected to continue through July and expected to improve with the start of green consumption of maize in late August/September. Households will continue to rely heavily on wild foods and fish expected to become available in June/July as the rainy season progresses. Despite availability of fish from June significant food consumption gaps is likely to continue among the households.

Harvest of the current maize crops is expected in September though green consumption is likely to start in late August. Probability of above normal floods is very high given the saturated soils from the previous years' flooding and likelihood of above average rainfall forecast during the 2021 cultivation season. Vegetables are not currently available.



4 Conclusion and recommendations

4.1 Conclusion

- **Severe acute food insecurity exists among the population in Lokoromach and Moloktoch Bomas.** The main drivers of the food insecurity include livelihood disruption resulting from the repeated attacks and cattle raiding as well as looting and destruction of assets. The situation is yet compounded by two consecutive years of above average flooding affecting both livestock and crops. Although the rapid assessment did not do households interviews, it was clear from the focus group discussions and observations that there is a large food consumption gap among households in the two locations.
- **The population in Moloktoch received assistance until April 2021 while in Lokoromach, the last distribution of humanitarian food assistance was in October/November 2019.** While severe food shortage exists in the two locations, Lokoromach appears to be the worst affected. The population has not recovered from the attacks in 2020 and are not receiving any kind of humanitarian assistance. The food stored in Gumuruk had been destroyed during the recent attack in Gumuruk in May 2021. This has deprived the population including those in Moloktoch from the humanitarian food assistance.
- **The households depend on wild foods including fruits, roots/tubers, and leafy wild vegetables for survival.** Fish contributed substantially in the diet of the households during the rainy season starting from July. With the advent of the dry season fish became unavailable and hunting increased starting mainly in December. Access to game meat has started to reduce since the animals have started seasonal migration away from GPAA.
- **Livestock were looted and households do not have access to livestock products currently.** The current food security situation in Lokoromach suggests Emergency food security outcomes (IPC Phase 4) with proportion of population in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). In Moloktoch, households received food assistance in Gumuruk in response to the IPC famine-likely classification of parts of GPAA. The last general food distribution was conducted in April 2021 before the recent attacks. The humanitarian interventions helped to improve the situation from November/December 2020 IPC analysis; however, needs remain high among the affected population.
- **The communities in Lokoromach and Moloktoch have no intention to migrate to other areas.** The population in Moloktoch feel more secure where they are right now and do not have intention to migrate except for people who are currently displaced and are expected to return. Similarly, the community in Lokoromach do not have a plan to move elsewhere.



4.2 Recommendations

- Given the severe acute food insecurity, **provision of food assistance to the affected populations to prevent deterioration of the situation is recommended.** There was no population data, but community leaders estimated that about 18,000 people live in Moloktoch and 750 – 1,500 individuals in Lokoromach.
- **Verification and registration** (headcount) are recommended to come up with accurate figures prior to intervention. This will minimize exclusion error especially among the population in Lokoromach where households were not previously registered. Like the population in Lokoromach, it is likely that there are pockets of isolated population in GPAA not currently registered for assistance.
- Given the distance of the two locations from the Payam headquarters which are WFP food distribution points and coupled with security threats along the long routes, **it is important to establish new food distribution points in Lokoromach and Moloktoch.** Food delivery to the two locations currently can only be done by air drops or airlift. This is because the water level in the rivers are too low to allow for boats to navigate through but also the river between Moloktoch and Gumuruk is overgrown with weeds.
- Advocate for other humanitarian actors to **provide non-food items as well as health, shelter, and protection services.** Given that the rainy season has arrived, plastic sheets are important to protect the population from rains. Other NFI needs include cooking utensils and chlorine tablets for water purification.
- **Provision of agricultural inputs including seeds and tools.** Since households have lost tools and seeds, this is important to enable the households to plant as the season progresses.



Annex

SEASONAL CALENDAR, ZONE 5

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seasons												
Rainy season												
Dry season												
Lean season												
Cropping												
sorghum												
Livestock												
calving/lambing/kidding												
milking												
Other												
seasonal livestock movement												
Hazards												
dry spells												
cattle raiding												
Legend	land preparation				sowing		weeding		harvest			

The rainy season starts in June and ends in October. Although this area is mainly suitable for rearing of livestock, small quantities of the sorghum and some vegetables are grown. Cultivation starts with land preparation in April to May. This is followed by wet sowing in June and weeding in July. Crops are harvested green for consumption from early September and the main harvest is in late September and October.

Seasonal livestock movement takes place from November to December, with livestock returning around the end of April to May.

Lambing, kidding and calving takes place from March to June. Peak milk production is during the rainy season.



CONSUMPTION CALENDAR FOR POOR HOUSEHOLDS, ZONE 5

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Staple foods												
Sorghum												
Blood for consumption												
Milk consumption												
Income												
herding, gold extraction/domestic work												
charcoal sales												
milk sales												
Expenditures												
livestock drugs												
health care												
Legend												

The poor group purchases sorghum for most of the year from October until July the following year. The purchases also cover the lean months (January to April) during which period the only source of income available is sale of charcoal. This poses a great challenge to the poor group. This is the only cash income used to purchase sorghum grain during the lean months. Other priority expenditures include health care services (especially during the rainy season, due to mosquitoes) and school fees, paid at the beginning of a new school year between the months of March to April.