

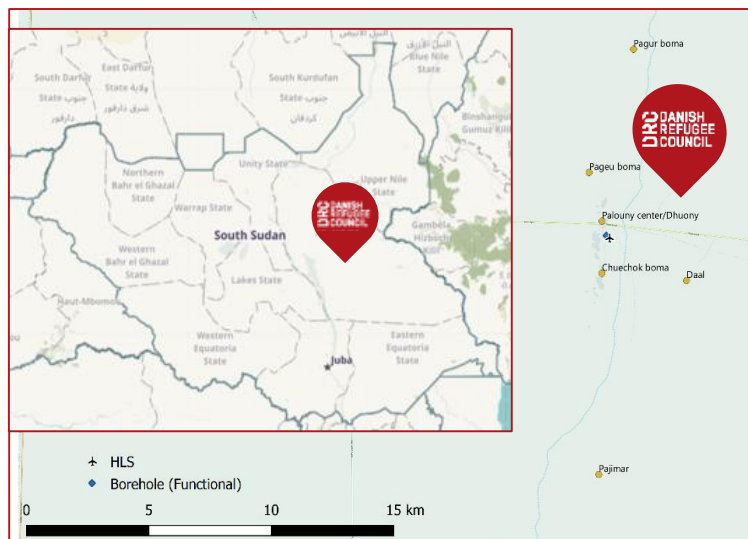
PALOUNY // RAPID PROTECTION ASSESSMENT FACTSHEET

GPS: N 8.103334, E 31.519211

UROR COUNTY, SOUTH SUDAN // OCTOBER 2019



SNAPSHOT



RESTRICTED FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT due to presence of armed actors, cattle raiding, and flooding

VARIABLE PROTECTION ENVIRONMENT linked to access fluctuations between wet and dry seasons

INCREASING INTRA-COMMUNAL TENSIONS due to population influx and stresses on available resources

RESOURCE SCARCITY increasing rates of existing harmful practices, including GBV and forced and early marriage

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT Palouny payam is located in Uror County, former Jonglei State. Palouny payam consists of 5 bomas (Palouny, Pagur, Pajimar, Jak, Cheuchok, and Ngok) with an estimated total population of 812 households.

Due to the civil conflict and clashes between armed groups in Uror County and neighboring Nyirol County, in particular along the Yuai – Waat corridor, until January and early February of 2018, Uror County saw a net reduction in the total population due to household displacement, the majority of which moved either internally to Malakal, Bor and Juba Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites, or into Sudan and Ethiopia. Following the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in 2018, armed conflict in Uror County has reduced and the security environment improved, and displaced households have begun returning to Palouny payam. An assessment conducted by Nile Hope, Tearfund, and Oxfam in April 2019 reported 7,000 to 10,000 returnees recently arrived in Palouny from displacement sites in Malakal and Ethiopia. Subsequent assessments completed by Medair with Action Against Hunger (ACF) and THESO in August 2019 highlighted high food consumption gaps, acute malnutrition rates, increasing morbidity and mortality, a critical lack of health and WASH services, high need for household NFIs across the payam and increasingly stretched resources due to the influx of new arrivals. In October 2019, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) completed a Rapid Protection Assessment to assess the protection environment and concerns of the conflict and displacement-affected population in Palouny payam and surrounding bomas.

(DDG) used a combination of focus group discussions (FGDs), key informant interviews (KIIs) and direct observation (DO) in Dhuony and Dengmier villages, and in Chuechok, Pageu and Pagur bomas of Palouny payam. 11 FGDs were completed with community members including women, men, elderly and youth, and 10 KIIs were completed with community leaders. DDG conducted an additional 3 Mine Risk Education (MRE) sessions during the assessment to raise awareness on mine risks in Dhuony, Dengmier, Pageu and Pagur.



DISPLACEMENT HISTORY The population of Palouny payam consists of a combination of host community members, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and returnees arriving from displacement sites both within and outside of South Sudan. The host community is primarily of the Luol Nuer tribe, but also includes Dinka members due to frequent inter-marriage between the groups that is common across Uror. IDPs are in protracted and often multiple displacement, and primarily originate from wider former Jonglei and Upper Nile States, including Motot, Waat, Ayod, Pajut, Kuachdeng, Nasir and Duk Padiet. Spontaneous returnees include households originally displaced from their Area of Origin (AoO) in the payam starting in 2014 that began arriving back in Palouny and the surrounding bomas in 2018. Returnee households are arriving primarily from the PoCs in Malakal, Bor and Juba, from displacement sites in Uror County and wider Jonglei and Upper Nile (including Ayod, Fathai, Pieri, Padding, Lankien, Karam, Yuai, Duk Padiet, Fangak, and Renk). Refugee returnees reported displacing throughout the conflict to Gambella camp in Ethiopia, Kakuma camp in Kenya, and to Khartoum, Sudan.



ASSESSMENT METHODOLOGY To conduct the Rapid Protection Assessment, DRC with the Danish Demining Group

IDPs in Chuechok reported arriving in May 2018, following a series of displacement from Malakal to New Fangak to 2014, and now to Uror in 2018. In Pageu boma, IDPs reported to arrive from Duk

Padiet, Ayod, Waat, and Yuai. In Pagur, In Dhuony and Dengmier, IDPs originate primarily from Motot, Waat, Ayod and Kuachdeng.

Community leaders interviewed in Dhuony reported that returnees are arriving back in Palouny following a cycle of displacement from the payam in 2017 after armed clashes between Urur and Ayod displaced the local population to Motot. In April 2018, following the movement of SPLA troops from Waat to Motot, the population re-displaced back to Palouny, bringing both returnees and IDPs whose AoO was Motot, back to Palouny, and others to Karam. Returnees arriving in Pageu boma originally displaced from Pageu primarily in 2014 and fled to other locations across Urur County, and began returning in 2017 following fighting in Fathai and Pieri. Refugee returnees in Pageu reported leaving displacement sites in Kenya and Sudan. From the South Sudan-Kenya border, households reported traveling via Kapoeta, Juba, Bor, and Duk Padiet to reach Pageu. From the South Sudan-Sudan border, households reported traveling via Tonga, New Fangak, Pom, Diel, Normaniang, Pagil, Kandak, Thongiok, Jerew, Nyiew, Waar and Pagur. In Pagur boma, returnees began arriving in January 2018 in family units from Juba, Bor and Malakal PoCs via Duk Padiet, and from Khartoum and Gambella.

Mode of transportation used by new arrivals includes both commercial transport by vehicle or boat, and by walking. Returnees transiting through Bor and Ayod have reported paying for vehicle or boat transfer from their areas of displacement to Bor and Ayod, and then moving to Palouny on foot. Refugee returnees arriving from Sudan and Ethiopia reported taking commercial transport to the border, and then continuing on foot to Palouny. In terms of safety during their journey to Palouny payam, both IDPs and returnees reported looting and attacks by Murle and armed actors, especially those transiting through Yuai, Fathai, Jor, and Duk Padiet. Those that paid for commercial transport reported they were not exposed to attacks during their journey. While IDPs reported loss of items through attacks during their displacement to Palouny, the majority of returnees reported leaving behind their household items and any NFIs due to the long nature of the journey. Other threats reported included lack of food and water, and risk of drowning.

The main push factors reported by IDPs included lack of food and shelter in the displacement sites, and returnees from Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya reported deteriorating conditions in Gambella and Kakuma camps, and in Khartoum. IDPs from Jonglei reported displacement due to cattle raiding close to their AoO in Pibor. Returnee households reported engaging in “go and see” visits prior to their return to the payam, to check on the status of their shelter and property, and to understand the safety and food security environment in Palouny.



SAFETY AND SECURITY Safety and security in Palouny payam is variable and linked to seasonal access and movement constraints. During the rainy season, movement is restricted due to rising water levels, reducing travel of community members between and within villages and reducing access to services, but also minimizing exposure to threat by movement of armed actors. During the dry season access opens, increasing freedom of movement but also increasing exposure to risk of attack.

The main reported safety threat common across all sites assessed was fear of attack by the Murle through cattle raiding. Attacks and cattle raiding by the Murle take place during the dry season when access opens and movement increases, intensifying in January and February. During the previous dry season, community members reported that approximately 200 cattle were raided by the Murle, and an unconfirmed 10 individuals were killed and 11 children abducted. Specific cases were directly reported of family members being killed and abducted while traveling between Duk Padiet and Toich.

An additional key threat identified is insecurity along the Ayod-Waat road, which crosses a potential frontline. FGDs and KIs across all areas assessed indicated community members no longer take the Ayod-Waat road to access the closest market in Ayod (approx. 4 hours walking), because they fear armed actors reportedly stationed at a junction just before reaching Ayod. As a coping mechanism, community members will instead walk 11 hours to a secondary market in Fathai. Male community members in Dhuony reported they had been attacked by armed actors while traveling to access markets

in Ayod, Fathai and Duk. As a coping mechanism, community members traveling to these areas move in groups with armed youth.

Community members reported that due to the increase in movement of armed actors along the Ayod-Waat road during the dry season, people will vacate areas of residence close to the road. Moreover, community members in Pageu reported that the neighboring villages of Thung, Dior and Nyandieng reaching to Ayod were abandoned in 2014 due to fighting and the presence of Government troops, and households displaced to Pageu and Ayod. Due to proximity to Ayod and the ongoing presence of armed actors, the households interviewed reported not intending to return to the villages.

There was an observed high presence of armed soldiers in and not in uniform as well as armed youth patrolling between Dhuony and the surrounding bomas. Such community militarization was reported as a coping mechanism against the threat of armed attacks, but poses additional risks to community members traveling in the bush, in particular women and girls. Women in Dengmier reported being targeted by armed actors when traveling through the bush to collect firewood. As a coping mechanism, women will only travel in groups, and do not feel safe traveling alone. In addition, youth in Pageu expressed fear of traveling with cattle, particularly during the dry season when longer distances are traversed to reach functional watering holes.

Otherwise, community members commonly reported restricted movement due to fear of attacks by animals when traveling through the bush or swamp, especially by hyenas and snakes. Hyenas in particular have attacked livestock and goats and injured community members in Chuechok. As a result, youth reported additional fear of being alone in their homes due to risk of attack.



RELATIONS WITH HOST COMMUNITY

Low-level tensions between newly arriving households and host community members were reported across all assessment sites. Returnee households reported being accepted back into the communities due to family ties and history in the area, and IDPs of the same Luol Nuer tribe as well as Dinka reported being taken in by the host community due to marriage links. However, FGDs and KIs in all assessment sites indicated low-level but prevalent tensions between households due to limited shelters and NFIs, and strain on already limited resources due to increasing population levels. Returnee households reported that their former shelters were destroyed during the conflict either by burning or by the rains, and IDPs reported there was limited elevated/dry land available for additional shelter construction and that locally available materials were not yet ready for sourcing. As such, IDP and returnee households reported cohabitating with host community members.



INTENTIONS

IDPs and returnee households reported consistently in all assessment sites that they intend to remain in Palouny payam, citing family ties (returnees) and local fruits that can be eaten during times of food scarcity (IDPs), making Palouny a feasible host location. However, many IDPs reported that if food security and tensions with the host community do not improve, they will consider re-displacing onwards to a different site.



SPECIALIZED PROTECTION CONCERNS



SGBV Households surveyed in all assessment locations reported high rates of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), which is primarily linked to traditional gender roles, but also exacerbated by resource scarcity and the lack of basic NFIs. All female FGDs reported that women are blamed for household scarcity, and beaten if there is not enough food or water. Likewise, if inter-household conflict arises over sharing of limited NFIs such as cooking sets, women are reported to be blamed and beaten. As such, significant WASH, FSL and NFI needs across the payam (see multi-sector findings) indicate a high frequency of related domestic violence incidents, a protection concern that is likely to increase as tensions over limited resources grows. Findings of the female FGDs are confirmed by other community FGDs, where men echoed the high

rate of violence against women in the community, in one case stating “women only understand if they are beaten”.



CHILD PROTECTION Across all the areas assessed, early and forced marriage was reported in all communities. The average age reported for marriage was 15, which in times of food scarcity is reported to reduce to as early as 10 years. Neither females nor males are allowed to decline a marriage arrangement. If girls decline, they are reported to be beaten until they accept. As the practice is linked to economy and trade of cattle for household income, early and forced marriage appears to increase in parallel with growing resources scarcity, which is linked to wider economic trends in economic deterioration across South Sudan, as well as with the stretching of resources in Palouny due to arriving households. In addition, child labor was observed in assessment locations with children engaged to transfer shelter materials and carry water from the borehole by the airstrip through the swamps to the surrounding bomas, often traveling in pairs or small groups.



MINE ACTION During the assessment, DRC's Danish Demining Group specialists conducted additional FGDs and KIs with community members and leaders, and identified high need for mine action. One rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) was identified along the main road to Dengmier, which was subsequently marked and reported, and Mine Risk Education (MRE) provided to the surrounding community. Community members also reported Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) close to Daal along an old road to Ayod, which the community has since ceased to use. Additional UXO were reported in Diekmaan, referencing an explosion that took place in 2018 while the community was burning grasses. Host community members and IDPs have since abandoned the area, which is currently under water due to the flooding, and UXO may have shifted. Moreover, community abandonment of the villages of Thung, Dior and Nyadieng reaching towards Ayod indicates potential contamination and risk.



VULNERABLE GROUPS Blindness and disability of community members were reported in each boma assessed. In the areas assessed, a total of 52 persons requiring assistive devices were reported, including 17 fully blind, 14 requiring wheelchairs, and 21 requiring crutches. In addition, many areas reported a high number of elderly without caretakers, the majority of which were separated from their family units during the conflict.



ACCESS TO SERVICES



EDUCATION There are no education services in Palouny payam, and community members and leaders reported that there were not any present prior to the conflict. There are no facilities available that can be used. During the dry season, a community leader provides volunteer lessons to a limited number of children in Dhuony village under a tree, but does not have any materials.



SHELTER/NFI Assessment findings indicate scarcity of and high need for shelters and basic NFIs across Palouny payam. The lack of available S/NFI items is linked to five key factors: 1) Returning households have reported that upon their return, they encountered their former shelters damaged beyond repair, either burned down during the conflict or destroyed by the rains and flooding; 2) IDPs reported being looted during their journey to Palouny, and returnees overwhelmingly reported leaving their household NFIs behind in their displacement site due to the long distance of the journey, while those that carried NFIs also reported looting; 3) Due to the topography of the area, there is a lack of available high land that remains habitable during the rainy season and can be used for safe shelter construction, and so newly arrived IDP and returnee households have not been able to build; 4) For households that have a plot of land made available to them by the community leaders for shelter construction, locally available materials are not yet ready, and so households continue to cohabitate with host community households; 5) Restricted access to the market in Ayod has resulted in very few NFIs across the payam; households regularly reported an estimated

1 cooking utensil (ex. grinder, pot) per village. Cohabitation and scarce NFIs has resulted in low-level tensions between host community members, IDPs and returnees, with community members reporting inter-communal disputes as a result. FGDs and KIs indicate a strong link between S/NFI scarcity and SGBV, particularly domestic violence against women and girls. Basic NFIs frequently requested by community members include clothing, sandals, gum boots, mosquito nets, torches, sleeping mats, cooking sets, and fishing gear. Medair completed a Shelter/NFI report in October 2019 with comparable findings shared.



AGRICULTURE/FSL Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis from August 2019 places Uror County in Level 3 “Crisis” phase food insecurity, including Palouny payam, and projects the area to remain in Level 3 through to August 2020. Traditional livelihoods include fishing as well as cultivating sorghum, maize, beans and pumpkins for household consumption and bartering. Host community members as well as IDPs and returnees that arrived in Palouny before the onset of the rainy season planted crops, but the harvest failed due to flooding. Communities also reported a critical lack of basic agriculture inputs such as seeds and tools (approx. 1 tool reported per boma shared among households) as well as fishing nets, limiting potential output and income.

While community members reported no general food distributions (GFDs) having taken place in Palouny payam, households arriving in Palouny reported accessing a GFD managed by Catholic Relief Services, which provides FSL interventions in the bomas surrounding Bor. Based on flow data and reported migration routes, it is likely that households accessed the GFD while transiting through Bor during their displacement to or return journey to Palouny. Other households reported to have not received any food assistance, and report limited market access for bartering due to restricted movement to Ayod and the long distance to a secondary market in Fathai. When asked about market access during FGDs in Pagur, multiple female respondents said, “what market?”. As a coping mechanism, women in Dhuony reported that they risk traveling to the bush to scavenge for fruits.

Households returning to Palouny not only lack basic shelters and NFIs, but also productive assets, further negatively impacting on household income and food security. In particular, refugee returnee households frequently reported having sold their cattle prior in order to pay for the journey to Ethiopia, Sudan or Kenya. Host community households with cattle reported that the flooding and high water levels has resulted in the deaths of cattle, as they will frequently become stuck in the deep mud and drown, further negatively impacting on household assets, income and food security. Households interviewed also reported high death rates of cattle due to disease, data which supports findings from a REACH multi-sector needs assessment in Jonglei State from June 2018 that reported a high prevalence of livestock disease in Uror (36%) and Ayod (27%).

Oxfam participated in the initial multi-agency assessment from April 2019 and ACF in a subsequent joint assessment with Medair in August 2019, outlining FSL and nutrition concerns and needs across the payam, which DRC's findings and observations support.



WASH WASH needs across Palouny payam are high, in particular in the outlying villages and bomas of Dengmier, Pageu and Pagur. There is 1 functional borehole and 3 latrines in the payam, all located in Dhuony. The borehole is located between the center village and the airstrip, and requires a 20 - 30-minute walk through high water to reach from the center, and up to 4 hours walking from Pagur (1 - 2.5 hours one-way from Dengmier, Chuechok and Pageu). 2 of the 3 latrines have been built recently since Medair established a semi-static set-up, and the third is on a compound not accessible to the general population. An additional borehole is located in Chuechok, but spoiled in July and is under assessment for repair by Medair. Otherwise there are no WASH services available in Dengmier, Pageu or Pagur, and communities drink unfiltered swamp water and practice open defecation, and report high rates of bacterial and parasitic infections. As a coping mechanism during the wet season, community members will catch and store rainwater for drinking. During the dry season, they will dig holes to reach groundwater for drinking, but report that these will dry up within 2-3 weeks.

Medair completed a WASH assessment of the payam in August 2019, and is currently intervening to provide hygiene promoters training and participatory house to house to house hygiene messaging, repairs of existing boreholes, training of pump mechanics and water user committees, WASH NFI distribution of buckets, jerrycans, PUR, filter cloth and soap, and supporting the newly established primary healthcare unit (PHCU) with the minimum WASH package. Catholic Relief Services has a mobile presence in the area providing additional borehole repair and rehabilitation during the dry season.

HEALTH FGDs and KIs indicate high health needs across Palouny payam. Community members consistently reported high death rates due to lack of available medications, as well as high rates of malaria, tuberculosis, guinea worm, typhoid, and maternal mortality. Overall, distance to health facility sites was mentioned as the main inhibiting factor to accessing health services. In Pageu and Pagur, community members reported that if a person falls ill, they will first treat with local herbs. If cases worsen, they will be carried to the THESO clinic in Dhuony. For cases requiring specialized treatment, they will be carried onwards to the MSF clinic in Fathai (11 hrs walking), Pieri (17 hrs), or Lankien (3 days). There is a primary healthcare unit (PHCU) operated by Christian Mission for Development (CMD) in Ayod, but community members are reluctant to travel there due to the safety concerns associated with Ayod. Linked to the long distances and travel times, female FGD participants in Dengmier and Pageu reported 3 cases each of deaths during childbirth while the women were traveling to the clinic.

There are limited but improving access to basic health services in Palouny payam. THESO is operational in Dhuony where, with support from Medair, it is transitioning from a mobile clinic set-up into a PHCU. Medair completed a Health assessment of the payam in August 2019, and is partnering with THESO to initiate IEHC appropriate treatments for children under 5 and outpatient consultations for all ages, develop antenatal and postnatal reproductive services, support the establishment of a surveillance and reporting system for disease and deaths, provide staff capacity building, and to begin routine EPI services if coldchain logistics allow.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Intentions surveying** in host PoCs of Bor, Malakal and Juba, and in Gambella and Kakuma camps, and **flow monitoring** to identify potential influxes of returnees during the dry season.
- **Protection mainstreaming** into distribution planning to ensure meaningful and safe access for beneficiaries to planned distribution sites, especially for very vulnerable community members (elderly, blind, disabled), and taking into account specific vulnerabilities related to age, gender and diversity.
- **House-to-house** beneficiary identification and verification to ensure selection is **needs-based**, rather than determined by

access, and selection process communicated to communities to avoid increasing existing tensions.

- **Accountability to affected populations:** Inclusion of a complaints and response mechanism at distribution sites to ensure beneficiary feedback is received.
- **Safety and dignity of populations on the move** and risks associated with movements should be taken into consideration when identifying solutions and increasing service provision in the payam to avoid creating pull factors.
- **Continued collaboration and information sharing** between humanitarian partners across sectors to ensure gaps are identified and responses are evidence-based.
- **Follow-up assessment** is recommended in the dry season to capture the variable protection and security environment concerns and risks between the rainy and dry seasons

SECTOR SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Sexual and Gender-Based Violence:** Identification of a GBV actor to provide static GBV prevention and response services in Palouny, including case management, PSS and social behavior change programming. Establishment of a women and girls' friendly space is highly recommended.
- **Child Protection:** Child protection actor to be identified and provide information dissemination on the rights of women and children, as they relate to forced and early marriage and the use of child labor.
- **General Protection:** Provision of protection monitoring as needed if population flows increase with opening of access in December 2019/January 2020.
- **Housing, Land and Property (HLP):** Monitoring of HLP issues in tandem with flow monitoring from major displacement sites to ensure provision of support (especially Shelter) does not exacerbate existing community tensions.
- **Mine Action:** Survey (clearance and EOD, as required) recommended along Ayod-Waat road and in villages of Thung, Dior and Nyandieng when the water level reduces. Potential additional MRE recommended.
- **Education:** Identification of an Education partner that can provide basic services.
- **Shelter/NFI:** Distribution of basic S/NFI materials to reduce inter-household tensions and to mitigate the causal link with GBV. Due to the expressed intentions of the majority of IDPs and returnees to remain in Palouny, partners should engage with communities for sustainable options where possible, and interventions should follow a resilience-based approach to sourcing materials and labor for construction.
- **Food security and livelihoods:** Distribution of fishing gear and agriculture inputs recommended to support access to traditional livelihoods. Inclusion of Urur as GFD priority area.
- **WASH:** Expansion of WASH services to outlying bomas of Dengmier, Pageu and Pagur.

SECTOR SNAPSHOT

Disclaimer: The sector snapshot is based on data collected during a protection assessment, not on an in-depth assessment for each sector, and is meant to demonstrate the overall situation in the relevant

WASH

● RED - HIGH NEEDS

S/NFI

● RED - HIGH NEEDS

EDUCATION

● RED - HIGH NEEDS

FOOD SECURITY

● RED - HIGH NEEDS

CHILD PROTECTION

● RED - HIGH NEEDS

SGBV

● RED - HIGH NEEDS

CCCM / COORDINATION

● GREEN - LIMITED NEEDS

MINE RISK

● ORANGE - MEDIUM NEEDS

NUTRITION

● ORANGE - MEDIUM NEEDS