



Review of the Regional Framework for the Protection of South Sudanese Refugee Children in

UGANDA

INTRODUCTION

On 15th December 2013, violence broke out in South Sudan's capital, Juba, and quickly spread to other locations in the country. The conflict has resulted in the wide-spread displacement inside and outside Sudan. 1.5 million people are internally displaced, and over 547,000 have fled to neighbouring countries. If the violence continues, it is expected these numbers will rise to 1.9 million internally displaced and 821,000 South Sudanese refugees by the end of 2015. Uganda hosts 147,384 new arrivals – 27% of the total refugees displaced since December 2013. In total, Uganda hosts a total of 169,648 South Sudanese refugees.

During the first months of 2014, child protection partners decided to jointly develop a *Regional Framework for the Protection of South Sudanese and Sudanese Refugee Children*, to provide a common vision for child protection in Ethiopia, Kenya, South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda. The framework was set for a one year period (May 2014-June 2015), after which it should be reviewed and updated.

This document is the initial report of the Regional Framework review mission which was conducted 27 – 30 April 2015 by reviewers from UNHCR, UNICEF, LWF and World Vision. The review team conducted a total of 13 focus group discussions with 193 refugee leaders, community structures, children and youth, and 4 meetings with 48 representatives of child protection stakeholders from the government, UN agencies and NGOs.

67% of South Sudanese refugees in Uganda are **children**

4% South Sudanese refugees in Uganda are identified as having **specific needs**.

OBJECTIVES OF THE CP REGIONAL FRAMEWORK

1. Ensure that all refugee girls and boys are **registered individually** and documented with the relevant authorities.
2. Ensure that refugee girls and boys have access to **child friendly procedures**.
3. Ensure that refugee girls and boys are **protected from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation** at home, in the community and when in contact with humanitarian services.
4. Ensure that **girls and boys with specific needs** are identified, prioritised and provided ongoing, appropriate, and targeted support.
5. Improve the protection and wellbeing of refugee children and adolescents through **education**.

COORDINATION

Partners working in Uganda included AAH, DRC, InterAid Uganda, IRC LWF Plan International, Save the Children, TPO, URCS, Windle Trust, WVI, UNICEF and UNHCR. Coordination of the child protection response to South Sudanese refugees in Uganda appears to have happened mostly as an **organic process led by the field**. Both field locations visited had specific coordination forums for child protection, and at least six actors involved in child protection. Building on multi-sectoral coordination meetings, child protection actors in the field reported that they had organized themselves weekly and/or monthly in order to ensure harmonization of activities. In the field, **coordination is largely seen as positive**, and the large number of actors involved is also seen as a positive contribution.

However, despite positive and proactive coordination activities in the field there have been some challenges in the distribution of tasks, leading to duplications. In some locations, child protection actors in the field have **overlapping projects and plans** and sometimes confusion around roles and responsibilities. This was partially due to partnership agreements that were decided at the capital level. For example, in Kiryandongo, child protection actors recounted how three separate agencies were undertaking case management for the same children. They now coordinate so that representatives of all three agencies visit the same child together, thus reducing the number of visits the child had to receive, although not the number of visitors. At Kampala level, coordination is being addressed with the formation of a **new coordination group** led by UNHCR, UNICEF and OPM. This group will be linked to the national CPWG.

MEETING FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

Child protection actors, including UN agencies, NGO partners and government officials were asked in all locations what they considered to be the achievements, gaps and priorities for the child protection response to South Sudanese refugees in Uganda. This section maps their responses against the objectives of the Regional Framework, highlighting the issues which were most frequently cited.

OBJECTIVE 1: REGISTRATION

Achievements

The full individual registration of all children was mentioned as a success by all child protection stakeholders. Furthermore, in general, it was felt that there was a fair degree of success in identifying *separated and unaccompanied children at the point of registration*, and ensuring that these are reflected in proGres.

Challenges

Full identification of children at risk, especially identification of vulnerable children other than UASC such as children with disabilities, married children and survivors of SGBV, and regular updating of information on specific needs. Ensuring *birth registration* for all children born in Uganda was also a challenge, although progress has been made especially in Adjumani, with 1,578 children receiving birth certificates.

Priorities

- Agree harmonized tools for collecting and managing information
- Conduct a joint assessment to estimate real numbers of children at risk and their needs
- Scale up birth registration to reach of 100% of refugee children born in Uganda

2/16 registration points have child protection personnel and **70%** of the registration staff are trained on CP. **64%** of refugee children under 12 months have **birth certificates**.

OBJECTIVE 2: CHILD-FRIENDLY PROCEDURES

Achievements

Training of child protection and other staff has been conducted in all locations. In Kiryandongo, 4,415 children have participated in weekly focus group discussions and children's open days have been held to obtain their feedback and to provide them with information on child protection.

Challenges

In the field, there appeared to be a *lack of understanding* as to what child-friendly procedures fully entails.

Priorities

- Capacity building of the government personnel on child-friendly procedures
- Ensuring that there are child-friendly interviewing spaces in the field locations
- Establish feedback and complaints mechanisms in the settlements

2 child protection **helpdesks** have been established, benefiting **1,923 children**. **4,415** children have participated in focus groups as part of assessments.

OBJECTIVE 3: CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE

Achievements

The community-based approach and in particular the establishment of community structures such as Child Protection Committees and children's clubs was also mentioned by all groups of child protection stakeholders. In Kiryandongo in particular, the community-based approach had been applied in a number of areas, including the facilitation of child peer-to-peer networks which were very active in identifying and reporting child protection issues amongst their peers, and in establishing community outreach activities. Child Friendly Spaces are also clearly an important part of the child protection response, with many partners involved in their activities. The integration of early childhood care and development activities was mentioned as a particular strengthen of the CFS, as was the efforts to communicate with children on a variety of child protection issues within the spaces.

Challenges

The unwillingness of communities to report violence and harmful practices, especially child marriage and SGBV, and the existence of a "culture of silence".

Priorities

- Further engage with local government to strengthen links from refugee operations to national systems.
- Awareness raising and building capacities of refugees

26% of children have received **protection messages** through awareness-raising. **16 %** of children have participated in **CFS**.

OBJECTIVE 4: TARGETED SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS

Achievements

All groups of child protection stakeholders mentioned the care and protection of UASC, with identification and the support for UASC (foster families, material support) seen as most positive. 123 UASC also have been reunified between settlements in Adjumani.

Challenges

Family tracing and reunification overall was an area which many actors felt needed strengthening, and there appeared to be confusion especially in terms of the use of the RapidFTR tool. There were also some concerns about lack of progress, especially for cross-border tracing. SGBV was also mentioned specifically, in particular referring to defilement and child marriage which generally affected the protection and wellbeing of girls. The lack of services for and integration of children with disabilities into existing services such as schools and child friendly spaces was also frequently mentioned as a significant gap.

Priorities

- Agree procedures and tools for harmonized inter-agency case management to ensure that children are prioritized, assessed and followed up according to all aspects of their wellbeing
- Review the current system for the Best Interest procedure and ensure all partners are onboard
- Review roles and responsibilities for Family Tracing and Reunification and ensure all actors are clear on procedures

2,735 best interest assessments have been finalized.

3,560 South Sudanese refugee children have **specific needs**.

OBJECTIVE 5: ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Achievements

Access for refugee children to primary schools and early childhood development programmes was considered to be a limited success. However, the integration of child protection and education was mentioned as a positive aspect.

Challenges

Child protection actors identified significant gaps and challenges in the child protection response. The lack of education programming, and in particular post-primary education opportunities, was frequently identified as the most important gap. In particular, lack of support for refugee children to attend secondary school and lack of alternatives for children who cannot attend secondary school were frequently emphasized as having a very negative impact on children's protection, especially for girls.

Priorities

- Strengthen options for overage children, child mothers, and adolescents, for example through accelerated learning programmes, internet learning programmes and vocational training
- Develop a strategy for early childhood care and development
- Appropriate action for children with disabilities
- Prioritize training on teacher code of conduct

58% of children are **enrolled** in primary school, and **7%** in secondary school.

258 teachers have been trained on child protection & psychosocial support

GOOD PRACTICE IN UGANDA

- **Peer-to-Peer support groups for children:** In Kiryandongo these groups of very active and well-trained children impressed reviewers with their knowledge of child protection issues and referral mechanisms. They identify children who need support, listen to their concerns, and refer them if necessary.
- **Birth registration in Adjumani:** In addition to running 12 campaigns on birth registration, UNICEF has supported the Ugandan authorities to set up a new birth registration centre in the north of the country. This has helped make sure that refugee children born in Uganda receive birth certificates.

MEETING FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

In general, child protection actors expressed positivity about the response and the extent to which it has met the various objectives of the Regional Framework.

On the whole, Objective 1 on registration was seen as the area where needs were most fully met, and Objective 5 on education was the area where the most improvement was required.

There were variations between the level to which other objectives had been felt to be achieved between locations (see Figure 3 below) with, on average, Objective 2 on child-friendly procedures perceived as an area of greater success than Objectives 3 on safety and 4 on children with specific needs. However, on the whole it should be noted that while there was perceived success in terms of Objective 2, there also appeared to be a lack of understanding as to what it entails.

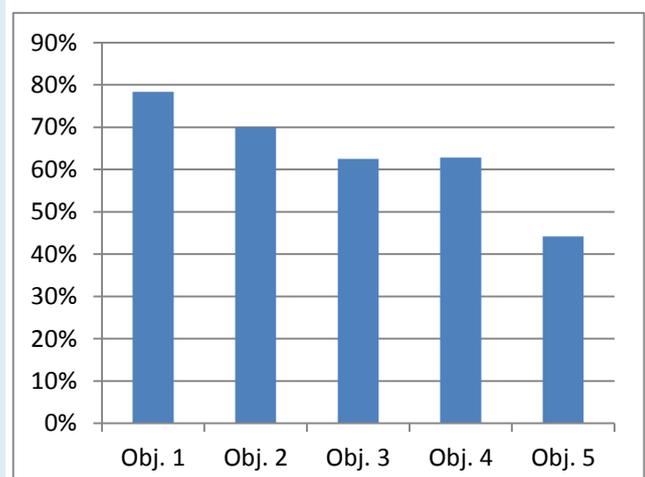
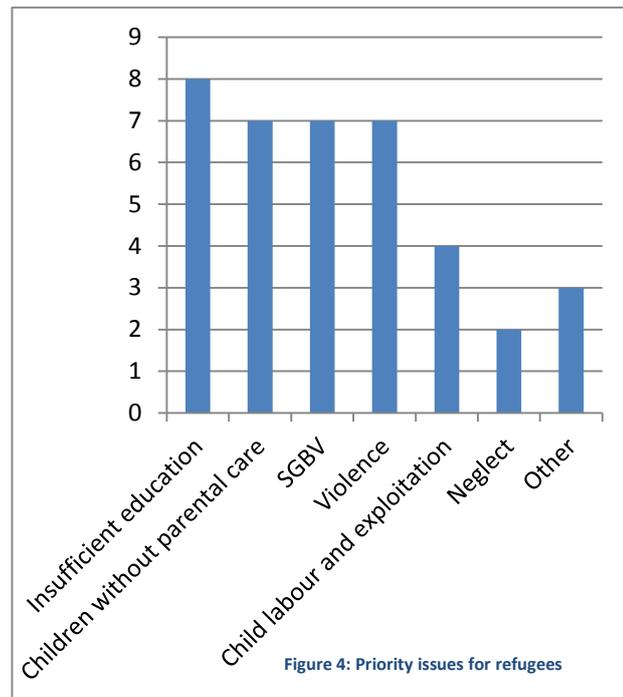


Figure 1: Self-assessment for extent to which needs are met in each objective

FEEDBACK FROM REFUGEES

PRIORITY ISSUES FOR REFUGEES

In discussions with refugee children and adults, several issues came up repeatedly. Over half of focus groups prioritized issues around **education**, and especially the over-crowding of schools and the lack of scholastic materials, were mentioned very frequently. Equally, as with challenges, the lack of post-primary education support for adolescents was a very pressing concern. **Children outside of parental care**, including unaccompanied children, child-headed households, and children who are cared for by step-mothers or foster parents were mentioned as being discriminated against in families and deprioritized for school. Children without their parents were often felt to be the most vulnerable and the least likely to access services. Both children and adults were also very concerned about **violence and discrimination against girls**. Child marriage, teenage pregnancy, sexual exploitation and sexual violence ranging from harassment to defilement were mentioned frequently. Violence, and in particular **tribal conflict** as well as **generalized violence** against children, was another priority issue. Several groups, especially children’s groups, also prioritized **exploitation of children** for work which meant that they could not attend school. Finally, **neglect** of children by parents was another pressing issue.



FEEDBACK ON THE RESPONSE

In focus group discussions, refugees were positive about some aspects of the response. In particular, **Child Friendly Spaces, schools for primary education, psychosocial support, and case management for vulnerable children** were mentioned most frequently in discussions. A variety of other aspects of the response were also mentioned as services to respond to child protection issues. However, there were significant variations between respondent groups and location as to whether and which services were considered positively.

Focus group discussions with refugees also present a number of challenges and gaps in the response. **Education** was also highlighted as a main area for improvement – in particular, overcrowding of schools, violence in schools, and the lack of educational facilities and opportunities were highlighted. Concerns over the **lack of infrastructure** were also mentioned in terms of health and other facilities in the settlements, including a lack of NGO and UNHCR office presence in settlements in Adjumani. Similarly to child protection actors, children echoed issues around the “**culture of silence**” in mentioning that pervasive violence, including intimidation, meant they were unlikely to report child protection issues such as sexual abuse. However, contrary to child protection actors’ conviction that child friendly procedures has been an area of success, children in Adjumani in particular also highlighted their **lack of consultation on, participation in and information about humanitarian services. Activities for adolescents and young people**, in particular post-primary education opportunities such as secondary education and vocational training as well as sports and recreational activities, were mentioned as services to be expanded and improved.

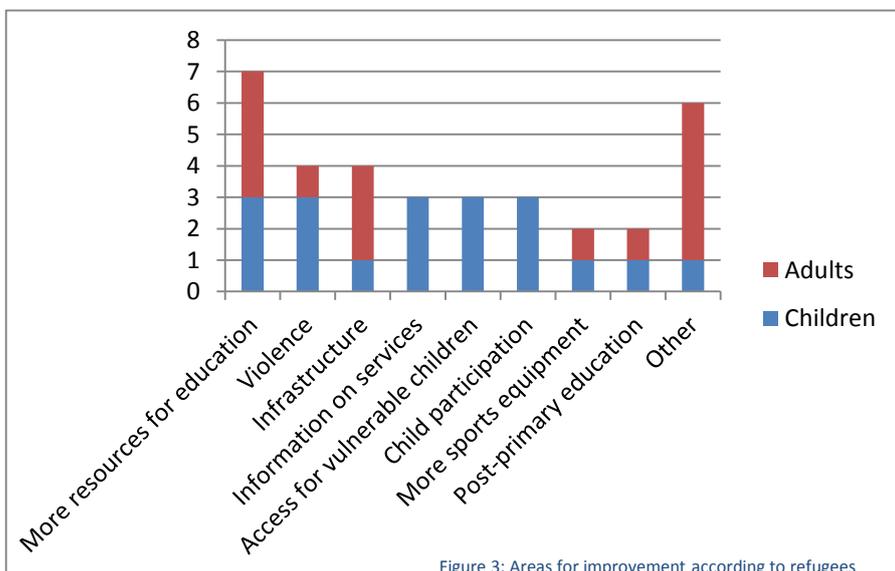


Figure 3: Areas for improvement according to refugees

“Children came here confused from the war. Now [in the CFS] they can’t think about it - they are free.”
- *Child Protection Committee member, Kiryandongo*

“There is no one to help and nowhere to go for support.”
- *Boys aged 12-15, Adjumani*

“We would like to have a school for girls so that we are safe from the boys and men.”
- *Girls aged 12-15, Adjumani*

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REVIEW TEAM

- **Clarify procedures for case management** and review the prioritization and support for children without parental care. The best interests procedure should be the basis for all partners involved in case management, with initial best interest assessment (BIA) as the element that determines the level of follow-up required for a child. Only one partner should be responsible for case management for one child, although others may contribute individual services. Information on children at risk should be collated by UNHCR and fed back into proGres, regardless of the information management tools used by partners.
- **Develop vulnerability criteria** in partnership with children and the community to look beyond UASC. This exercise should help UNHCR and partners to prioritize children based on a holistic consideration of their situation, and not just their separation status.
- **Clarify roles and responsibilities for family tracing and reunification.** Currently, there appears to be some confusion about roles and responsibilities, with Save the Children using RapidFTR for separated children, but with the Uganda Red Cross and the ICRC being the only agencies working in tracing. This division is nonsensical – since RapidFTR is being used only as a data entry tool, it can be used for all UASC, or not at all.
- **Prioritize the strengthening child friendly procedures,** and especially mechanisms to ensure regular consultation and communication with children of different ages, ethnicities, genders in all settlements. In particular, it is suggested that children and youth be mobilized to design and disseminate their own messages on assistance and services available for children, so that girls and boys better understand their entitlements and how to access these.
- **Invest in measures to strengthen linkages between the national child protection system and refugee operations.** For example, continued engagement of local government authorities in best interest procedures and in training initiatives for refugee social workers is recommended, and strengthen the coordination with government activities.
- **Conduct a participatory assessment of child protection issues and existing protection mechanisms** amongst the refugee community, with a view to increasing awareness and accountability around service provision and facilitating community-led action on child protection. It is critical to understand and engage with existing attitudes and practices.
- **Review programming with a conflict sensitivity lens,** including looking into staffing and attendance of child friendly spaces and other child protection services to ensure diversity in staffing. Prioritise peacebuilding programmes that meaningfully engage children and youth, and ensure the continuation of support to host communities.
- **Prioritise programming for adolescents and youth,** and explore their involvement in child protection and peace building programming. Strengthen post-primary education and livelihoods activities.

FUTURE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION FRAMEWORK

In general, management or focal point members of UN agencies, OPM, and international NGOs (especially UNHCR partners) were aware of the Framework. More partners seemed to be aware of the Framework in Adjumani, where some training took place at the initiation of UNHCR Kampala.

On average, participants rated the usefulness of the Regional Framework at 3.8 out of 5 (NB: the rating was not asked in Kiryandongo). It was mentioned that the Framework was useful as a “**basis for programming**”, for example in proposal writing. It was noted that the Regional Framework was very close to global frameworks, including those of UNHCR and UNICEF, but that it gave a **regional perspective** which is also useful.

However, there were also suggestions for improvement. In both groups, the importance of **reinforcing monitoring and information management** in relation to response measurement was mentioned as a priority for a next framework. It was also felt that more of a focus on **durable solutions** is necessary for any future versions. Furthermore, several participants mentioned that the Framework’s timeframe was not long enough – especially since it was late to be rolled out.

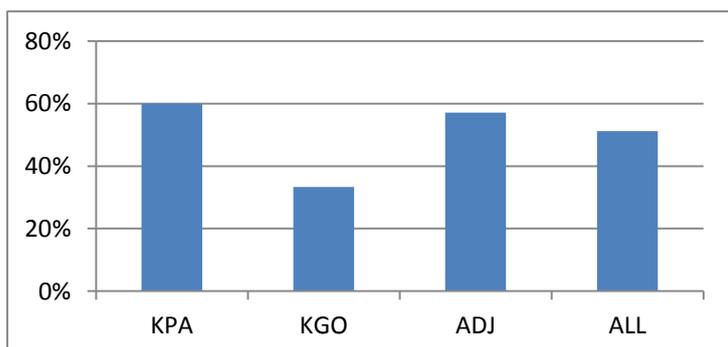


Figure 5: %age of actors aware of Regional Framework

LESSONS LEARNED IN UGANDA

- **Joint advocacy, programming initiatives and training** are effective in helping partners work better together.
- **Establish standardized monitoring and reporting tools** for all partners to avoid confusion on numbers and results.
- **Integration** with education has been a key strength. Better integration with SGBV is needed in the future.

ANNEX: A NOTE ON THE METHODOLOGY

The review used mixed methodologies in order to probe different aspects of the response and to triangulate the responses received. Secondary data review, meetings and group discussions with refugees and child protection actors, and observation were used as the principle sources of information. Throughout, the design of the methodology has been guided by the purpose of the exercise, which is not to evaluate the response, but rather to identify the individual successes and challenges in the response, the extent to which the response has been approached strategically and in a coordinated way, and the extent to which the regional framework has been useful.

The proposed review presented a number of methodological challenges – in particular, how to compare and consolidate information across a variety of locations, countries and respondents. In order to analyse the data effectively given limited time and resources, the review adopted several measures to structure information in such way as to make it more easily comparable. For secondary data, an indicator matrix was developed, which different operations were asked to fill in according to the information available to them. These matrices were also reviewed on location by a member of the review team with the focal point for the information in the specific location. For group discussions, several strategies were used. A ‘tag word’ approach was adopted for several questions, where essentially those conducting discussions were asked to assign no more than 5 tag words to capture the main issues raised. These tag words were then reviewed and cleaned at the end of the mission so that points relating to the same issue were grouped under the same tag, and tags were given definitions that were refined as the exercise went forward. A number of questions that asked respondents to assign a number to a particular question (either a rating or a percentage) were also introduced as a way to compare the relative positioning of issues across locations and countries.

The Review team conducted a total of **13 focus group discussions with 193 refugee leaders, community structures, children and youth, and 4 meetings with 48 representatives of child protection stakeholders** from the government, UN agencies and NGOs (see Table 1 below for details).

Table 1: FGDs and meetings with participant breakdown in Uganda

Number of participants		KPA				KGO				ADJ				UGA			
		#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total
FGDs	Community members	0	0	0	0	2	4	12	16	1	2	14	16	3	6	26	32
	Children (12-15)	0	0	0	0	1	7	5	12	2	9	24	33	3	16	29	45
	Leaders	0	0	0	0	1	11	1	12	2	7	12	19	3	18	13	31
	Service providers	0	0	0	0	1	8	5	13	0	0	0	0	1	8	5	13
	Youth (16 – 24)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	3	59	13	72	3	59	13	72
	Sub-total FGD	0	0	0	0	5	30	23	53	8	77	63	140	13	107	86	193
Meetings	CP organisations	1	4	13	17	1	4	8	12	1	7	7	14	3	15	28	43
	Govt	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	4	1	5	1	4	1	5
	Sub-total MTG	1	4	13	17	1	4	8	12	2	11	8	19	4	19	29	48
Totals		1	4	13	17	6	34	31	65	10	88	71	159	17	126	115	241

LIMITATIONS

The principal limitations of this review are in its ambition: it is important to remember throughout that the review does not attempt to *evaluate* the response or even the Regional Framework, but rather to identify common achievements, challenges and ways forward. The findings of this review must therefore be seen as indicative rather than definitive. The review was limited especially in time (often only one day spent in a location to collect information), and in resources (review team size varied from 1 to 8 persons, but only one person was constant for all of the missions). In terms of the methodology, the approaches adopted in terms of ‘tag words’ (see above) and numerical ratings, while helpful in being able to compare issues across settings, are also very much of the ‘quick and dirty’ school of measurement. These approaches are inevitably subject to the lens of those persons assigning and cleaning the tag words, and – given that the discussions were conducted by a variety of different persons – ensuring consistency and faithfulness to the original discussions were often at odds. However, these limitations were, as much as possible, mitigated by taking extensive notes which could be referred back to check the original meaning of tag words, and by ensuring wherever possible that more than one person was involved in the discussions and assigning of tag words.