

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

ETHIOPIA

INTRODUCTION

On 15th December 2013, violence broke out in South Sudan's capital, Juba, and quickly spread to other parts of the country. The conflict resulted in wide-spread displacement within and outside of Sudan. 1.5 million people are internally displaced, and over 547,000 have fled to neighbouring countries. If the violence continues, it is expected that these numbers will rise to 1.9 million internally displaced people and 821,000 South Sudanese refugees by the end of 2015. By the end of May 2014, Ethiopia was hosting 209,510 new arrivals – 35% of the total refugees displaced since December 2013. In total, Ethiopia hosts 273,794 South Sudanese refugees.

During the early 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 established for a one year period (May 2014-June 2015), after which it would be reviewed and updated.

This document is the initial report of the Regional Framework review mission which was conducted 10-16 May 2015 by reviewers from UNHCR, UNICEF, and Plan International. The review team conducted a total of 8 focus group discussions with 133 refugee leaders, community structures, children and youth, and 3 meetings with 20 representatives of child protection stakeholders from the government, UN agencies and NGOs.

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**.

69% of the Sudanese refugees in South Sudan are **children**

13% of the Sudanese refugee children are **separated or unaccompanied**

14% of Sudanese refugees in South Sudan have specific needs

COORDINATION

Coordination of the child protection (CP) response to Sudanese refugees in South Sudan has been mainly driven by the field. In Gambella, there is a child protection working group (CPWG), and two specific groups on information management and case management. At the camp level, there is a weekly working group which covers CP as well as Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). The Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) participates in the CP working group and in the camp level coordination meetings. Besides refugee coordination, the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs Government (BOLSA) leads a child protection task force group for the Gambella region, but there is no established linkage between both coordination fora.

In Addis Ababa, the refugee response is covered by the Refugee Task force, the National Protection Working Group, and the sub-group for Child Protection and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV). Decentralization has, according to partners, worked well at the operational level, but at times has lacked strategic vision and the set-up of harmonized approaches and standards in some areas. At the Gambella level, a need to receive further support in order to resolve specific policy bottlenecks, and a closer involvement in partner selection, were mentioned by partners.

MEETING FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

Child protection actors, including UN agencies, NGO partners and government officials were asked what they considered to be the achievements, gaps and priorities for the child protection response to South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia. This section maps their responses against the objectives of the Regional Framework, highlighting the issues which were most frequently cited. The priorities mentioned below are also those put forward by partners in the different discussions.

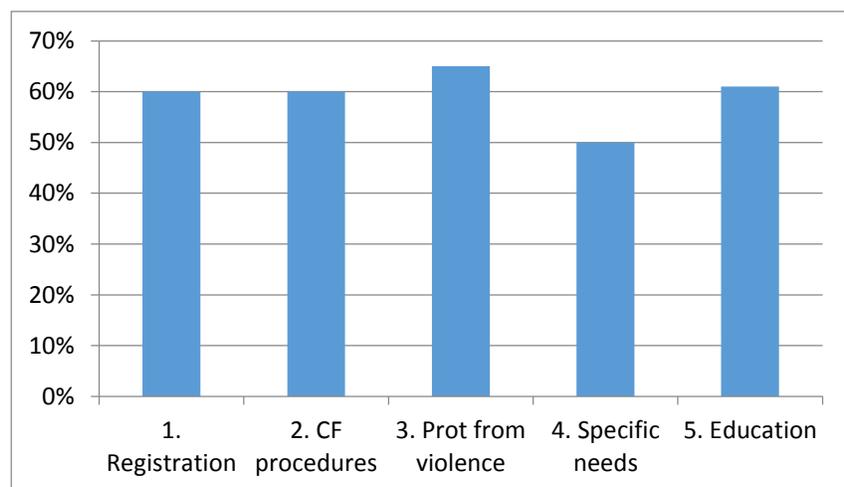


Figure 1: Self-assessment for extent to which needs are met in each objective

In general, Protection of Children from Violence (Objective 3) and Education (Objective 5), followed closely by Registration (objective 1) and application of Child Friendly Procedures (Objective 2), are the areas where partners expressed the greatest achievements, while the protection of Children with Specific Needs (Objective 4), is the area where there remains a large room for improvement.

OBJECTIVE 1: REGISTRATION

Achievements

The *full individual registration of all children* was mentioned as a relative success by all child protection stakeholders, especially the registration of *separated and unaccompanied children (UASC)* at the point of registration. Major efforts have been made to train registration staff. At the entry point visited, (Pagak), there is a permanent child protection desk, which identifies the UASC and forwards the information to the camps. However, there exists no specific system for the identification, registration and targeted follow up of other vulnerable children at risk. Children receive *birth notifications* when born in health centers, but they do not always receive such notifications when they are born at home.

All 11 registration points have
child protection personnel
265 registration staff have been
trained on CP

Challenges

Full birth registration remains an important challenge. Partners in Gambella pointed out that not much action and follow up has been done to enhance complete access to full birth registration at the State level. However, ongoing advocacy efforts continue at the national level. *Full identification of children* at registration, especially vulnerable children other than UASC, such as children with disabilities, married children and survivors of SGBV; and regular updating of information on specific needs is also a challenge.

OBJECTIVE 2: CHILD-FRIENDLY PROCEDURES

Achievements

Training of child protection staff and other staff, and campaigns of safety measures for relocation have been conducted in all locations. There have also been *participatory assessments* involving 120 children in Leitchour, Terkidi, NipNip, Matar, Pagak, and Kule, and some initiatives have been put in place to enhance child participation, such as the four community suggestion boxes established in the Child Friendly Spaces (CFS) in Kule camp. *Children have also received child rights and responsibilities training* at all camp locations and have been active in peer-to-peer support activities. For example, during the back-to-school campaign, the peer-to-peer support groups, working alongside CP partners, sensitized parents on the benefit of sending children to school.

19 child protection desks have been
established, benefiting **15,000** children

Challenges

Despite the heavy investment in capacity building, the *capacity* of social workers and other staff involved in response to children needs is reportedly, very low. There is a need for more work to be done on *mainstreaming and prioritizing vulnerable children* (for example in food distribution, and also at the entry

points), and also setting up a more *comprehensive complaint mechanism*, which were also highlighted. Despite the numerous campaigns conducted on safety and protection in relocation exercises, partners recognized that such exercises were not conducted in a child friendly manner in some of the instances.

OBJECTIVE 3: CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE

Achievements

Partners highlighted the attention to and the provision of services to *child survivors of violence* as the most positive aspect of the response and a main area of focus of the response. Referral pathways have been agreed upon and are operational. The extension of the IMC services offered to SGBV survivors to also include other children in need of psychosocial support was positively highlighted. Children in need of more specialized psychosocial support are also referred to IMC for support. **Opportunities for play and recreation** have been expanded: currently there are 21 operational Child friendly Spaces (CFS) in Gambella region, accessed by a large number of children. Women Friendly Spaces are also operational in Kule and Tierkidi camps. In addition to providing a safe and confidential facility for interviews with women who have experienced violence and other traumatic events, the Women Friendly Spaces provide much needed private space for women to meet and share their concerns and the challenges they face in their daily lives.

52,000 children have been reached with child protection messages
15% of the children have participated in CFS

Challenges

In general, more emphasis has been placed on attention of survivors than on prevention. Particularly relevant according to partners, is the need to further strengthen community based structures, as the main strategy to enhancing prevention and inhibiting harmful practices. The low number of SGBV cases identified likely indicates that cases go largely unreported. CFS needs to expand the variety of activities and age reach, with a particular emphasis on girls. Despite a large number of social workers having been trained on counselling, only one partner has staff with real expertise on psychosocial response. The need to better analyze the physical safety in the camps, and the forces behind security incidences, was also highlighted.

BEST PRACTICES IN ETHIOPIA

- In Ethiopia, the information collected by CP partners through the **CPIMS has been shared with UNHCR**, so that the personal data related to vulnerable children can be updated based on the information collected by CP partners.
- In Gambella, a clear **prioritization criteria** in terms of the vulnerability of the children (high priority, medium priority, low priority), has been established in the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP), and partners have been trained on that prioritization.

OBJECTIVE 4: TARGETED SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS

Achievements

Great efforts have been made for setting up of a prioritization criteria (high, medium and low), which all partners and service providers seem to be aware of, as well as for uploading the registration forms in the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS), and the sharing of these data with UNHCR for the update of the proGres database. 56 social workers have been trained on case management. There are Standard Operation Procedures (SOP) and referral pathways at the camp level. Issues around case management and information systems are discussed on a weekly basis by specific coordination groups. The identification and placement of UASC children in foster care or extended families, as well as the training of those families, has been an important area of focus and is recognized as one of the areas of success.

1,946 Best interest assessments have been finalized

20,300 South Sudan refugee with specific needs have been identified

Challenges

Despite the investment and efforts on setting up a data base case management system, adequate and timely follow up was identified as a gap, due to the limited number and capacity of the incentive workers. In regards to UASC, *partners mentioned the limited success in tracing and reunification* outcomes. This limited success may also be linked to the strength of kinship care and other extended family care systems prominent in the South Sudan culture. A large number of UASC (about 4500 children) are in foster care, even though the quality of the foster care is still limited. The challenges to set up foster care arrangements for adolescents, the consensual nature of family separation, and the mobility of the population, was mentioned as some of the biggest obstacles for adequate follow up.

OBJECTIVE 5: ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Achievements

In general, partners recognized the huge progress that has been made in this field, not only in regards to the increase in coverage, but also on the capacity building of teachers, and on the establishment of education as a referral and entry point for child protection, including the inclusion of vulnerable children in the education system. To ensure a safe learning environment, partners have developed a Code of Conduct that has been signed by teachers and reinforced in the schools. Parents Teachers Associations (PTAs) are in place to support the running of the schools, mobilizing communities on issues related to the school, such as absenteeism and discipline cases. The learning spaces are child and gender sensitive, with separate toilets for boys and girls, and with complaint mechanisms in place. School, debate clubs and girls clubs have been formed and are active. Plans are in place to set up an

Education enrolment is **43%** in Gambella

375 teachers have been trained on psychosocial care

Education Information Management System, which we hope will improve on the monitoring of progress in education.

Challenges

Despite the progress, having in place the education services needed, still seems like a hard to reach goal. Even at the reportedly ratio of 100 pupils per class, it would still be necessary to build 850 classrooms alone for primary schooling. The education level and training of teachers, particularly in the upper grades, remains a concern. Girls' enrolment is relatively good in early primary, but drops substantially in post-primary¹. Post-primary education opportunities are limited; access to secondary schools is minimal, with only Pugnido and Okugo offering secondary education. As a result, only 5% of secondary school age children, access secondary education, with only 21% of them being girls. Corporal punishment continues to happen at the schools, and partners felt that more activities to disseminate safety and protection messages could be arranged.

FEEDBACK FROM REFUGEES

Priority issues for refugees

In discussions with refugee children and adults, several issues came up repeatedly. Most of the groups identified material needs, specifically **cloths and shoes**, as the key priority. **Sexual and gendered based violence**, especially sexual harassment and assault, or cultural practices such as early marriage, followed by **children without parental care**, were the other most prominent priorities highlighted by the refugee community. It is interesting to note that the request for **lighting** was mentioned several times in the discussion, particularly by children, as well as violence. Both elements are to some extent related, as children at times referred to the issue of lighting, connecting it with the perceived insecurity and inability to freely move around at night.



"WE HAVE A LOT OF WORK, WE DO ALL TASKS AT HOME, CLOTHES WASHING, CLEANING, COOKING, FIREWOOD COLLECTION AND WE CANNOT DO OUR HOMEWORK AS WE ARE OVERWHELMED AND TOO TIRED AFTER ALL TASKS. EVEN IN THE EVENING IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO STUDY AS THERE IS NOT LIGHT"

REFUGEE GIRL, TIERKIDI CAMP, MAY 2015

¹ For example in a school visited in Kula, the NGO partner reported that even though the ratio boys/girls was more or less equal, in post-primary it dropped to 80% boys/20% girls.

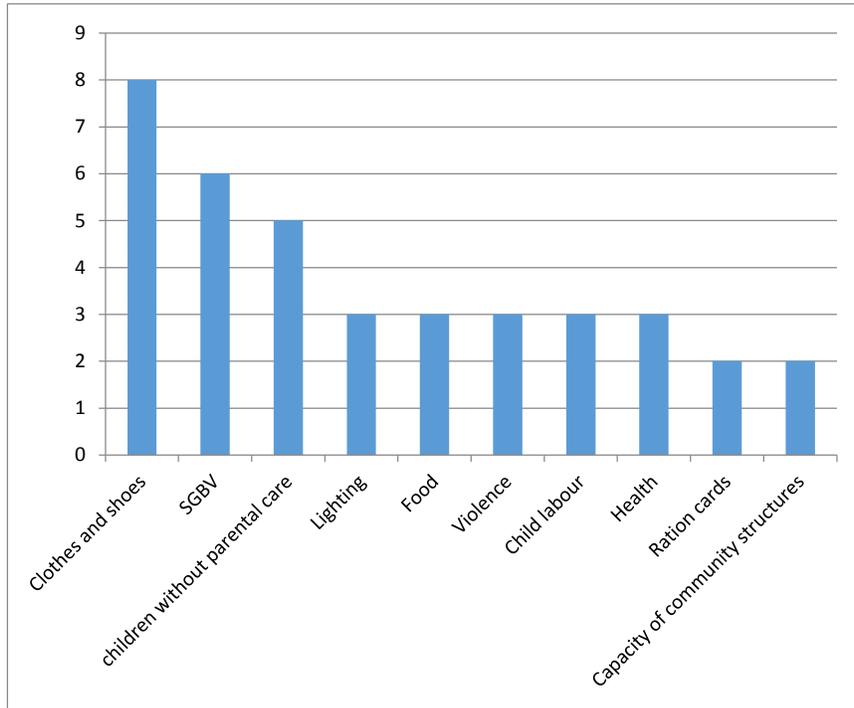


Figure 2: Priority issues for refugees

Food was also highlighted as a priority, especially by children. Specifically, children mentioned the lack of school feeding programs, and the fact that some UASC or household children could not access food distribution.

It is interesting to note that, as can be appreciated in the graph below, children mentioned more often, comparatively to adults issues of **lighting** (most of the times related to security, as well as an element that can bring the opportunity to study at night), **food**, and **violence**.

It is also important to mention that even though **child recruitment** was not openly referred to in focus groups, it was however mentioned in separate discussions with refugees and service providers in some instances. As a final observation of the refugee feedback, it surprises the fact that **education** was not mentioned as a key area of priority among the refugees

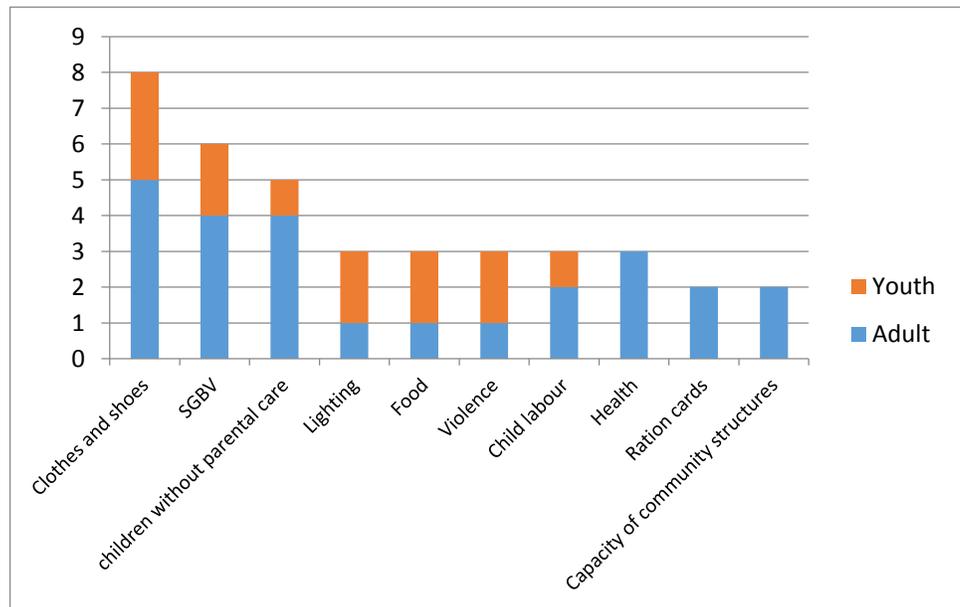


Figure 3: Priority issues for refugees disaggregated children/adults

Feedback on the response

In focus group discussions, refugees were positive about some aspects of the response. In particular, and as the graph shows below, refugees referred more often to the **CFS schools, health centers, recreational activities, distribution of NFIs, case management, and SGBV services.**

"WE TELL OUR PROBLEM TO THE PEOPLE OF UNHCR, BECAUSE IT WAS UNHCR WHO SAVED US FROM WHAT HAPPEN IN SOUTH SUDAN"

REFUGEE GIRL, KULE CAMP, MAY 2015

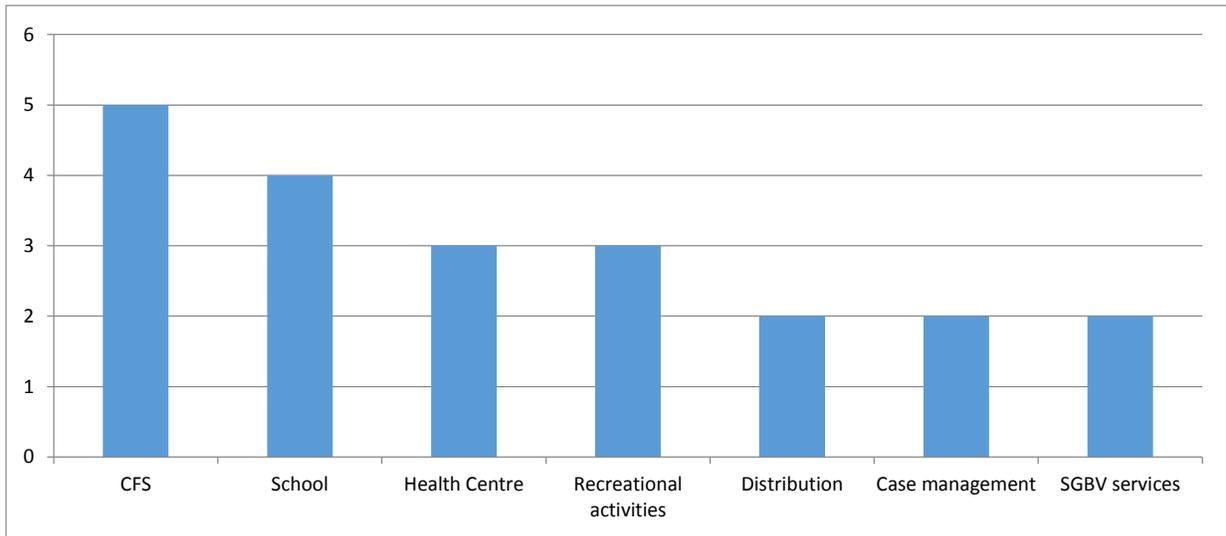


Figure 4: Services for children most commonly identified by refugees

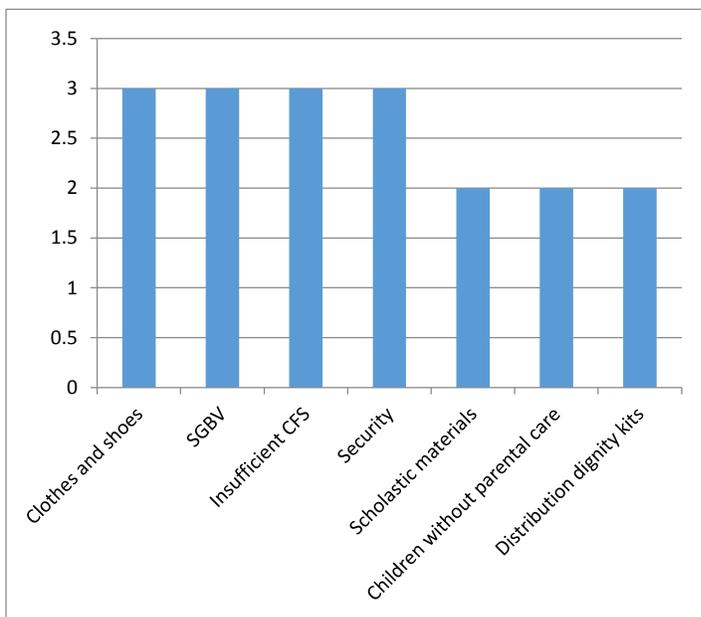


Figure 5: Areas of improvement according to refugees

Focus group discussions with refugees also presented a number of challenges and gaps in the response. As in the priorities, **clothes and shoes** were stressed as the main gap in the intervention, followed by the services to prevent and respond to **SGBV**. It is interesting to note that SGBV services were mentioned as a positive aspect of the response, but at the same time as an area that requires improvement. The frequency of the topic in the discussions, reflect the importance of the issue for the community. Some of the proposals mentioned to address issues around SGBV and other forms of violence were fencing of schools, separation of girls and boys at the schools, increase family planning, and increase the distribution of dignity kits.

When analyzing the difference in the responses among children and adults, children repeatedly highlighted SGBV as a pressing concern, and demanded more CFS (mainly play) as well as scholastic materials, while adults were very vocal in airing their concerns surrounding security in the camp, as well as the needs of the children without parental care. Finally, both adults and children demanded a wider and more frequent distribution of dignity kits, and in general services to prevent SGBV.

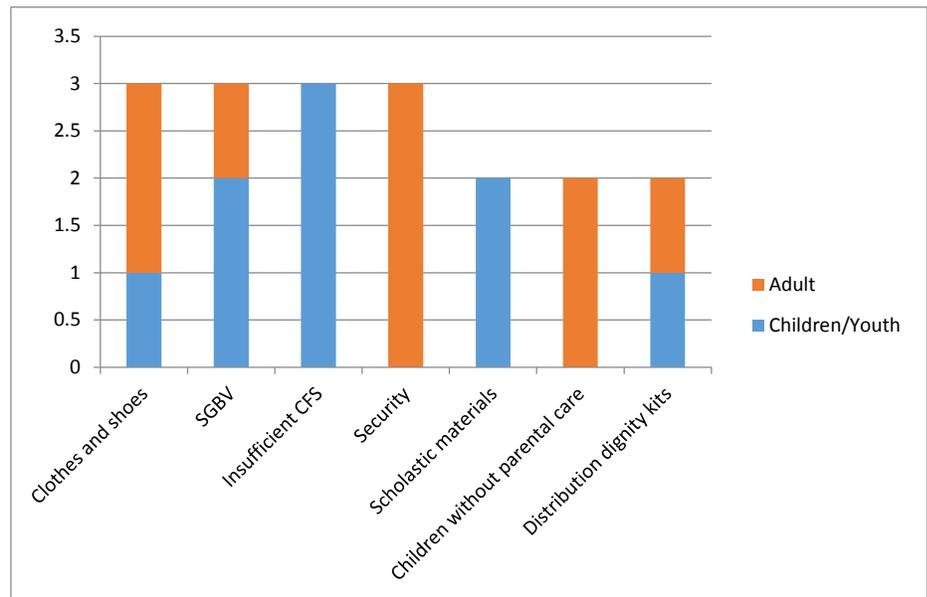


Figure 6: Areas of improvement according to refugees disaggregated by children/adult

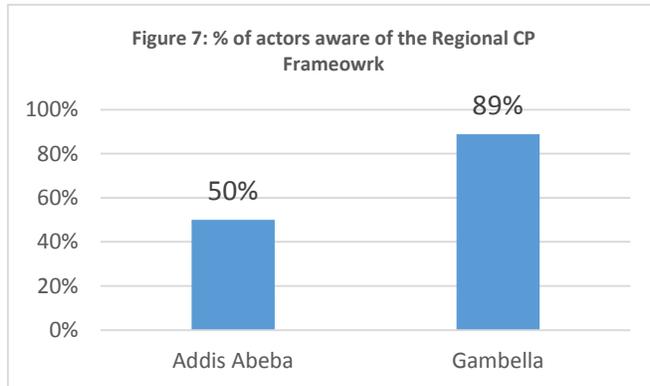
RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERAGENCY TEAM

- **Scale up child protection programmes, including allocation of more child protection dedicated staff for the different activities, and strengthening of community based protection.** That may involve joint advocacy and joint funding initiatives. Coverage of children for most of the programmes falls far behind the needs, and the ratio of social worker/vulnerable children is among the highest in the South Sudan and Sudan response if we measure against number of UASC. (70 UASC per social worker, with some locations having as many as 126 UASC per social worker). Being aware that funding increases may not be possible, it is important to increase the engagement of the communities and develop strategies based on community protection to increase outreach and coverage.
- **Enhance the harmonization of activities and standards among partners.** Despite the positive relationship among partners and efforts for coordination, there are disparities in the design and the standards amongst the different partners, which is worrisome, taking into account that the distribution of responsibilities are geographically based, rather than content based. It is also recommended that such distribution of tasks be analyzed in the future, to decide, in close consultation with the field, if it is providing optimum results.
- **Improve the management of CP human resources.** Taking into account the high ratio of social workers per vulnerable child, it is crucial to optimize the time allocation and performance of the CP teams. For

example, the team observed large numbers of staff staying around the child friendly spaces, while they could be doing outreach activities in the community. This would include setting-up clear weekly goals according to optimum planning and prioritization, arranging for a system for monitoring of activities, and a clear division of labour.

- **Simplification of case management and full application of the prioritization criteria.** There has been substantial progress in the development of a case management system, as well as in the establishment of a prioritization criteria. However, due to the high number of children and the low education levels of the case workers, the children's follow up falls behind the required standards. Some specific suggestions would be a more clear focus on high priority cases (identification can be done already from the registration point), the use of the CPIMS UASC form as a BIA (to avoid having two forms with similar information), and the simplification of the follow up forms. It is also suggested that not all of the follow up visits need to have a full follow up registration form filled out, but only those in which the case workers find relevant information to be reported.
- **Improve the dissemination of information on tracing and to restore the family linkages services offered by ECRS/ICRC, including cross border activities, and increase the efforts of all partners to improve the inter-camp tracing and reunification.**
- **Prioritize programming for adolescents and youth,** and review the programming with a conflict sensitive lens, engaging children and youth in peace building programmes.
- **Increase outreach of CFS, and incorporate more specialized psychosocial programming for children** who have experienced traumatic events. It is important to note that only approximately 15% of children access CFS, and therefore it is crucial to expand the outreach of activities.
- **Advocate with the government to ensure child friendly procedures are put in place and ensured in all elements of the response, and in the relocation exercises.** Despite the joint efforts of UNHCR and partners, the recent relocation to Jewi has faced challenges from the child protection point of view, due to the high number of refugees relocated per day, and the late arrivals at night at the new camp, to mention but a few. It is important to dialogue with the government to ensure that the children's welfare is given paramount consideration.
- **Conduct participatory mapping of potential danger zones for children and women and take community action to protect them from the risks identified.** It is important to have the involvement of women and children in such exercises so that the awareness about potential risk is increased.

FUTURE OF THE CHILD PROTECTION FRAMEWORK



In general, partners were aware of the Regional CP Framework, especially in Gambella. **On average, participants rated the Regional CP Framework at 3.65** (3.5 in Addis Ababa, and 3.75 in Gambella). Partners at both at Gambella and country level mentioned that the document is a useful one that has been used as a general programmatic guidance, as well as a basis for funding proposals. In Gambella, the Regional CP Framework has been reportedly used for the development of the Gambella CP Action Plan,

and the monitoring tool developed locally used the indicators from the Regional CP Framework.

Nevertheless, partners also suggested areas for improvement. First, it was highlighted that the Regional CP Framework is too detailed and therefore difficult to use. Also, some partners mentioned that perhaps the Regional CP Framework is too ambitious and that clear benchmarks and goals should have been established to make it more operational. Finally, the importance of connecting the Regional CP Framework to funding, was also highlighted.

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 **12 focus group discussions** with **224 refugee leaders, community structures, children and youth, and members of host community**, and **9 meetings** with **40 representatives of child protection stakeholders** from the government, UN agencies and NGOs (see Table 1 below for details).

Number of participants		GMB				ADD				ETH			
		#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total
FGDs	Community	2	0	18	18	0	0	0	0	2	0	18	18
	Children	2	15	30	45	0	0	0	0	2	15	30	45
	Leaders	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Service	2	21	4	25	0	0	0	0	2	21	4	25
	Youth	2	9	16	25	0	0	0	0	2	9	16	25
	Sub-total FGD	8	45	68	113	0	0	0	0	8	45	68	113
Meetings	CP organisations	1	1	3	4	0	6	7	13	1	7	10	17
	Govt	1	2	1	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	3
	Sector	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
	Sub-total MTG	2	3	4	7	1	6	7	13	3	9	11	20
Totals		10	48	72	120	1	6	7	13	11	54	79	133

LIMITATIONS

The principal limitations of this review were 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 consistently present 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 perceptions and understanding 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 fidelity to the original discussions were often at odds. However, these limitations were, as much as possible, mitigated by taking extensive notes which could be used as a reference with which 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.