

Review of the Regional Framework for the Protection of Refugee Children

SOUTH SUDAN

INTRODUCTION

On 15th December 2013, violence broke out in South Sudan's capital, Juba, and quickly spread to other parts in the country. In Sudan, the war broke out on June 2011 in the border region of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, where up to now some areas within these two states are controlled by non-government entities and which humanitarian actors have no access to. Both conflicts have resulted in wide-spread displacements within and outside of Sudan and South Sudan. At the end of May 2015, over 550,000 South Sudanese refugees were present in Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia and Sudan. In South Sudan itself, there are currently over 264,000 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 between 4th and 9th May 2015 by reviewers from UNHCR, UNICEF, and Plan International. The review team conducted a total of 12 focus group discussions with 224 refugee leaders, community structures, children and youth, and 5 meetings with 23 representatives of child protection stakeholders from the government, UN agencies and NGOs.

60% of
the Sudanese
refugees in
South Sudan
are **children**

5,570
Sudanese refugee
children are
**separated or
unaccompanied**

4.5% of
Sudanese
refugee
children in
South Sudan
have 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

Coordination of the child protection response to Sudanese refugees in South Sudan has been mainly driven by the field. In both Maban and Ajuong Thok, there are Child Protection Working Groups, Education Working Groups, and Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV) Working Groups. In Maban the group meets on a weekly basis, while in Ajuong Thok the meetings are conducted on a monthly basis. In Ajuong Thok, some challenges for adequate coordination were mentioned, given the fact that staff is overstretched and that for most of the organizations, the same focal points attend each of the above referred coordination groups. In Maban, great efforts have been made to coordinate activities among the two partners, but some challenges were also reported in ensuring full harmonization of activities, taking into account that the distribution of responsibilities is geographically based. Despite the challenges mentioned above, the coordination is largely seen as positive. In Yida, there is no child protection coordination structure operational. At the South Sudan national level, given the competing priorities and the existing heavy coordination structure based on the cluster system, child protection issues have been discussed mainly during the Multisector Refugee Coordination meeting. UNHCR is considering establishing a Refugee Protection Coordination Group, where child protection issues could also be discussed and addressed.

*"WE WANT TO STAY HERE BECAUSE WE DON'T WANT TO BE UNDER
THE BOMBING, AND HERE THE BOMBING DON'T COME"*

REFUGEE GIRL, AJUONG THOK, MAY 2015

MEETING FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

Child protection actors, including UN agencies, NGO partners and government officials were asked in Maban and Ajuong Thok what they considered to be the achievements, gaps and priorities for the child protection response to Sudanese refugees in South Sudan. In Yida, no structured discussion took place, but the team met with UNHCR and other key informants. It is important to note that in this location, no proper child protection and education programme are in place, due to the proximity of the settlement to the border, and due to the fact that the civilian character of the settlement is severely compromised.

This section maps their responses against the objectives of the Regional Framework, highlighting the issues which were most frequently cited.

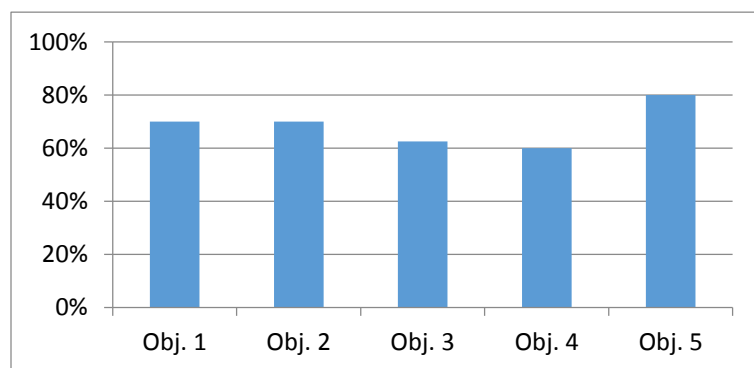


Figure 1: Self-assessment for extent to which needs are met in each objective

General education (Objective 5), followed by application of child friendly procedures (Objective 2) and registration (Objective 1), are the areas where partners expressed more positivity, while the protection of children (Objective 3), and the protection of children with specific needs (Objective 4), are the areas where it was perceived that there is great 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 in Ajuong Thok and Maban, including the registration of *separated and unaccompanied children at the point of registration*. In Yida, registration is also ongoing for those refugees that are willing to move to Ajuong Thok.

Registration points in Ajuong Thok have a child protection desk, and at this location, eight LWF staff have been trained in CP and registration. In Maban, all registration points have community services staff who act as CP focal points, but in the case of a large number of arrivals, CP partners establish CP specific desks (that was the case in November 2013). In Yida, UNHCR staff double as registration and CP personnel.

In Maban and Ajuong Thok, 16 registration staff has been trained on child protection, and have regular presence in the entry points.

In Ajuang Thok, 626 new born children have received birth notifications

Challenges

Birth registration remains a big challenge across the different locations. In both Maban and Ajuong Thok, newly born children are given a birth notification at the health centers. There is a system for children born outside of the health system to be issued with birth notifications, but reportedly many of the children born at home do not receive this notification. There are no civil registry services in any of the locations, meaning refugees must travel to Juba. *Full identification of children at risk*, especially children other than UASC, such as those with disabilities, married children and survivors of SGBV-, and regular updating of information on specific needs, was also mentioned as a challenge. In Yida, registration of UASC remains difficult, despite efforts of UNHCR to collaborate with the Refugee Council to conduct a full registration of these children, particularly those who reside at the market.

Priorities

- Ensure all children born in the camps are registered (whether born in or out of the health facilities).
- Ensure the adequate registration of children at risk beyond UASC; and in Yida, ensure full registration of all UASC, with special emphasis on those living at the market.

OBJECTIVE 2: CHILD-FRIENDLY PROCEDURES

Achievements

The establishment and application of child friendly procedures was also mentioned as a positive aspect of the child protection response. *Training of child protection staff and also other staff* has been conducted in all locations, although further capacity building is needed. There have also been

25 child protection desks have been established, benefiting 61 children

participatory assessments involving children; Ajuong Thok reported 99 children participating in specific focus groups. In both Maban and Ajuong Thok, there have been over 140 *awareness campaign sessions* on child protection and child friendly procedures, and 600 posters on CP issues were distributed in Arabic and English. Finally in Maban, over 10,000 children have been reached through radio programming.

Challenges

There are no child friendly procedures for children in *conflict with the law*, and also there is a lack of *materials for the dissemination* of child friendly procedures. In *Yida*, child friendly procedures are largely not applied, due to the lack of a specific child protection programme (with the exception of the Child Friendly Spaces managed by Non-Violent Peace). None of the locations mentioned the existence of *systematic complaint* mechanisms for children.

Priorities

- Capacity building on child-friendly procedures
- Develop awareness raising materials (IEC) on child protection and child rights

OBJECTIVE 3: CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE

Achievements

Child Friendly Spaces was highlighted as a very important part of the child protection response, with many partners involved in their activities, especially in Maban.

8 % of the children have been reached with child protection messages
15% of the children have participated in CFS

Challenges

Due to poverty and lack of opportunities, *child labour* is rampant in the market, with many children living and working at the market, particularly in Ajuong Thok and Yida. Violence related to *harmful cultural practices*, such as corporal punishment or early marriage, continues to be unreported. In *Yida*, the *limited number of partners*, and the *lack of information sharing* on protection cases among them and UNHCR, represent a challenge for a coordinated and holistic response.

Priorities

- Increase outreach activities with children, focusing on building their awareness on child protection and children's rights

OBJECTIVE 4: TARGETED SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS

Achievements

In both Ajuong Thok and Maban, several referral pathways have been developed, and in Ajuong Thok a Standard Operation Procedure (SOP) is also in place. To support case management, the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS) operates in one of the camps in Maban, but not in Ajuong Thok.

1,946 Best interest assessments have been finalized

Great efforts have been made for the identification and placement of UASC children in foster care or extended families, as well as for the finalization of Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) for UASC and other children at risk. In Maban, there is a case conference system where cases are discussed among agencies. A BID panel is also functional in this location, but it has been more reactive than proactive. In Maban, there are 10 early childhood development centers, but in Ajuong Thok or in Yida, no ECDs are available. Partners in Ajuong Thok and Maban highlighted the attention and provision of services to child survivors of violence, and specifically gender based violence, as a positive aspect of the response: 91 cases have been reported, and all received specialized assistance. In the same location, a workshop was conducted with 24 partners' staff participating, on *grave violations against children*.

Challenges

Family tracing and reunification overall, was an area which actors felt needed strengthening, particularly for cross border tracing. Despite the efforts to strengthen foster care arrangements, foster care placements outcomes are still limited. *Case management* in Ajuong Thok was mentioned also as a big challenge, especially due to the lack of Child Protection Management Information System (CPIMS). The lack of services for and the integration of *children with disabilities* into existing services such as schools and child friendly spaces was also frequently mentioned as a significant gap.

"CHILDREN SUFFER THE MOST. THEY FLED SOUTH KORDOFAN CONFLICT WITHOUT CLOTHES (...). SOME ORPHANS ARE LIVING ALONE OR ARE HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD. GIRL SURVIVORS OF RAPE ARE FORCED INTO EARLY MARRIAGE. (...) CHILDREN WITHOUT THEIR FAMILIES ARE TRAUMATIZED BY THE CONFLICT IN SOUTH KORDOFAN AND GET INCREASINGLY FRUSTRATED WHEN FOSTER PARENTS OR CAREGIVERS ARE UNABLE TO PROVIDE BASIC NECESSITIES. CHILDREN ARE ALSO LURED BY TRADERS TO WORK FOR THEM AT HOME, IN THE MARKET"

REFUGEE LEADER, MABAN, MAY 2015

The impunity, *lack of law enforcement and justice system* at large, poses a serious challenge to ensuring holistic prevention and protection of children from different forms of violence. Cases of girls being *sexually abused, or engaging in survival sex*, have also been identified. Also on SGBV, the lack of services for male survivors was also mentioned as a significant gap, particularly in Ajuong Thok.

No cases related to grave violations against children was documented in any of the three locations, despite serious indications of possible child recruitment into militia groups happening in some of the locations, but fear of *children recruitment* was reported.

Priorities

- Explore the establishment of the Child Protection Management Information System (CPIMS) in Ajuong Thok, and strengthening the CPIMS in Maban
- Strengthening of foster care and tracing services for children, in consultation with ICRC and Red Cross/Crescent Movement
- Scale up programmes for youth and adolescent engagement, as well as for children with disabilities
- Clarify the interagency mechanism for monitoring and reporting grave child rights violations
- Strengthen the capacity of the police and government offices to enhance legal services for children
- Clarify rights monitoring of grave child rights violations.

OBJECTIVE 5: ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Achievements

Access for refugee children to primary schools and early childhood development programmes was considered to be a success, especially in Ajuong Thok. Efforts to scale up the Accelerated Learning Programme have been conducted. In general, refugee children have shown a very good performance in official school examinations. Largely, the integration of *education* was mentioned as a positive aspect of the response. The participation of girls seems to be relatively high, at least in primary school, and girls' attendance seems to be higher than for boys. In Maban, 256 children were trained on psychosocial support.

Education enrolment is 91% in Ajuong Thok, and 65% in Maban
284 teachers have been trained on psychosocial support

Challenges

The lack of post-primary education opportunities was frequently identified as the most important gap; specifically lack of support for refugee children to attend secondary school and lack of alternatives for children who cannot attend secondary school. In Yida, a decision was made not to offer education services to the children, to avoid the provision of education acting as a motivator for children to stay in the area. However, as many children are still in Yida, the number of out of school refugee children in Unity is very high.

Priorities

- Ensure final examinations for primary and secondary are conducted.
- Increase the number and capacity of teachers as well as Parent Teacher Associations, including sensitization on child protection issues. Due to capacity issues, the recruitment of teachers from other parts of South Sudan and East Africa should be considered.
- Intensify the mobilization campaigns for child enrolment in schools.
- Improve the coordination between child protection and education.
- Increase the teaching and learning supplies.

GOOD PRACTICES IN SOUTH SUDAN

- In Maban, a case conference system has been established, where all the partners meet regularly to jointly discuss and agree on the way forward for those cases which are more complex and that require a coordinated approach

FEEDBACK FROM REFUGEES

Priority issues for refugees

In discussions with refugee children and adults, several issues repeatedly came up. Most of the groups identified the large number of **children engaged in child labour**, specifically children working in the market, as a pressing concern. The availability of food and work at the market acts as an incentive for many children, and the work prevents them from enrolment in school. Lack of **education opportunities, sexual and gender-based violence and children without parental care**, are the other issues mentioned most commonly. It is interesting to note the differences between the priorities identified by adults versus those mentioned by the children. **The need for clothes and shoes, violence** and the need for **expansion of child friendly spaces**, was mentioned comparatively more times by children than by adults. It is also interesting to highlight that **child recruitment** was mentioned by children but not by adults (even though government authorities expressed concern about this issue too). Finally, episodes of tension between the refugee communities and the host communities were also reported.

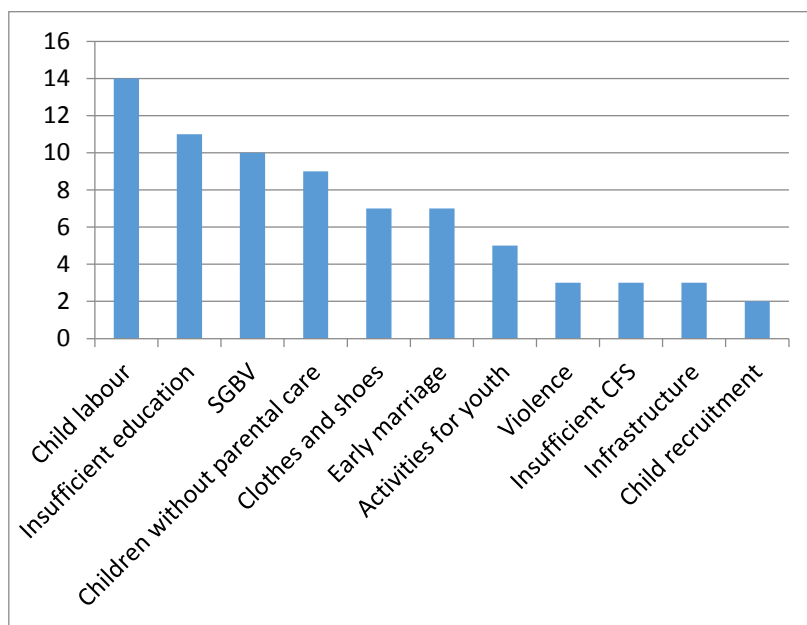


Figure 2: Priority issues for refugees

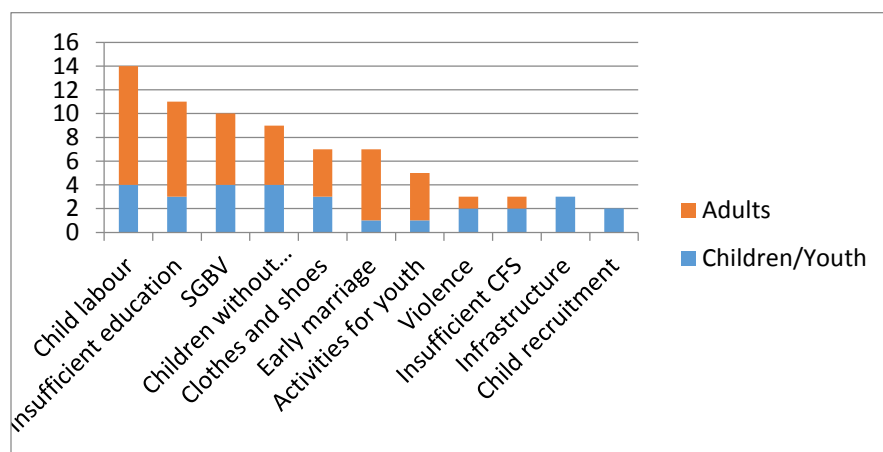


Figure 3: Priority issues for refugees, disaggregated by children/adults

Feedback on the response

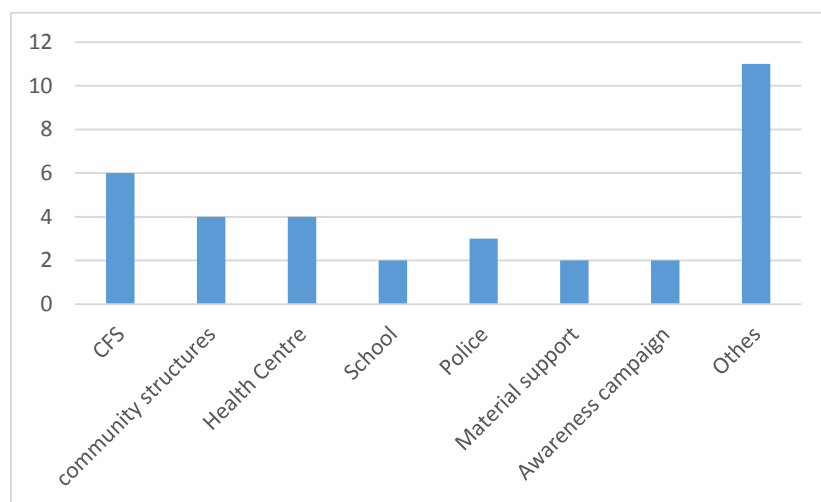


Figure 4: Services for children most commonly identified by refugees

In focus group discussions, refugees were positive about some aspects of the response. In particular, **Child Friendly Spaces, community structures, health centers, school and police**, 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 which and what services were considered positively.

Focus group discussions with refugees also presented a number of challenges and gaps in the response. **Education** was highlighted as a key area for improvement. In spite of the fact that **CFS** were the most frequently mentioned service in the discussions, refugees emphasized the need to increase the outreach, infrastructure and activities within CFS. If we add this to the need to increase **recreational activities**, we see that

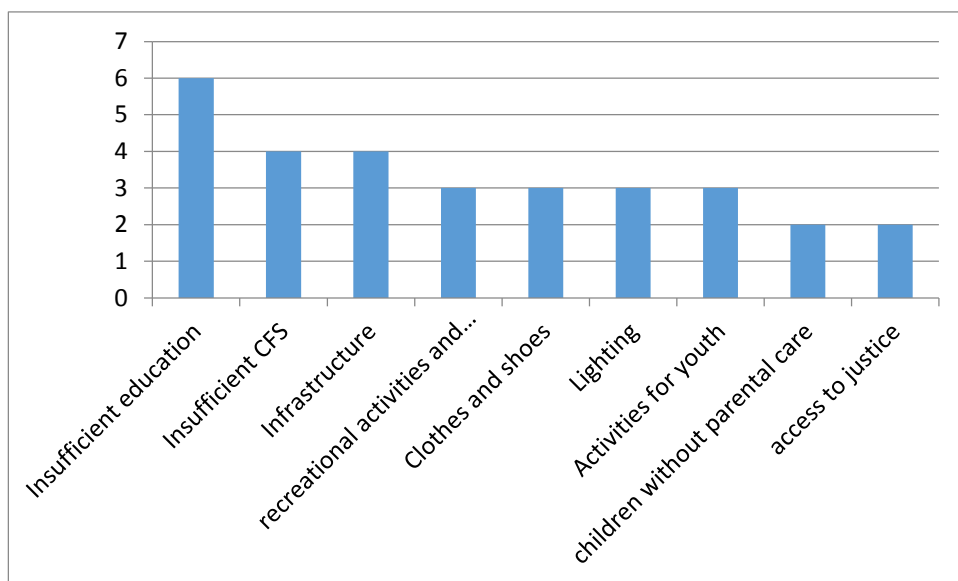


Figure 5: Areas of improvement according to refugees

spaces and opportunities for socialization, recreation and play are huge concern. It is imperative to stress once more, the large number of children that identified **clothes and shoes** as a pressing need, as well as a request for the provision of **lighting** at night.

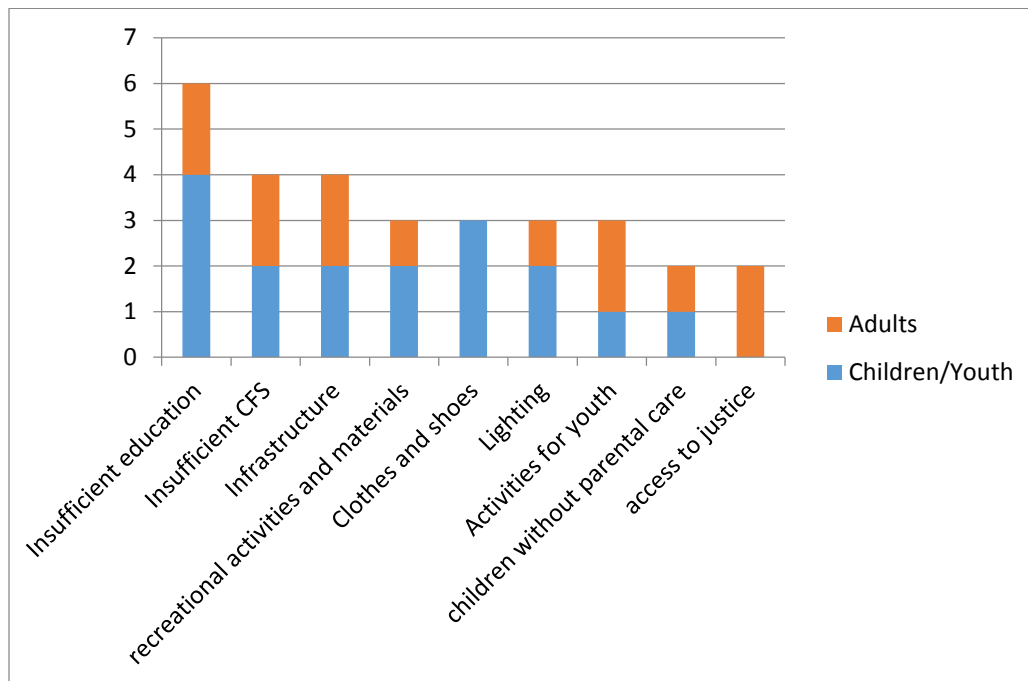


Figure 6: Areas of improvement according to refugees, disaggregated by children/adults

RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE INTERAGENCY TEAM

- **Scale up child protection programming, including allocation of more dedicated staff for child protection in the different agencies.** That may involve joint advocacy and joint funding initiatives. Coverage of children for most of the programmes fall far behind the needs, and the ratio of social worker/vulnerable children is highest in the South Sudan and Sudan response if we measure against number of UASC (116 UASC per social worker).
- **Strengthening the case management system, and develop vulnerability and prioritization criteria,** ensuring the CP programme looks beyond UASC, and that best interest procedure is initiated for the most urgent cases. This exercise should help UNHCR and partners to prioritize children based on a holistic consideration of their situation, and not just on their separation status.
- **Advocate for the return or reinforcement of the presence of government and law enforcement agents in areas where refugees are.** Specifically, request the social welfare department in Ajuong Thok to return to the area, with an identification of a focal point for Yida, and continue to advocate for an increase of the presence of police in these areas.
- **Identify and systematize the number of children with cross-border tracing needs,** so that the information can be shared with UNHCR Sudan and ICRC.
- **Consider setting up a core child protection programme in Yida,** with a special focus on UASC and children living at the market. Arrange for a verification and registration initiative for these children, and consider the provision of non-formal literacy or other education classes around the CFS already operating.

- Engage the Commission for Refugee Affairs and the Ministry of Social Welfare in an **initiative to ensure and maintain the civilian character of the refugee camps**, and the prevention of child recruitment.
- **Review programming with a conflict sensitivity lens**, engage the Commission for Refugee Affairs to enhance dialogue with the host community, and prioritize peace building programmes that meaningfully engage children and youth, and ensure the continuation of support to host communities.
- **Prioritize programming for adolescents and youth**, and strengthen post-primary education and livelihood activities.
- **Clarify and implement arrangements on monitoring and reporting grave child rights violations (MRM)** as per global UN obligations.

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 analyze the data effectively given the 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		AJT				MBN				YDA				Juba				SSD			
		#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total
FGDs	Community	1	3	5	8	2	23	20	43	1	1	5	6					4	27	30	57
	Children	2	45	32	77	1	13	11	24	0	0	0	0					3	58	43	101
	Leaders	1	18	7	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0					1	18	7	25
	Service	0	0	0	0	1	6	2	8	0	0	0	0					1	6	2	8
	Youth	2	23	4	27				0	1	6	0	6					3	29	4	33
	Sub-total FGD	6	89	48	137	4	42	33	75	2	7	5	12					12	138	86	224
Meetings	CP organizations	1	4	3	7	1	5	2	7	1	1	0	1	1	4	5	9	3	10	5	15
	Govt	0	0	0	0	2	7	1	8	0	0	0	0	3	5	3	8	2	7	1	8
	Sector	0												1	1	4	5				
	Sub-total MTG	1	4	3	7	3	12	3	15	1	1	0	1	5	11	9	14	5	17	6	23
Totals		7	93	51	144	7	54	36	90	3	8	5	13	5	11	9	14	17	155	92	264

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 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 perception 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 was often at odds. However, these limitations were, as much as possible, mitigated by taking extensive notes which could be used as a reference to check on 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.