

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

SUDAN



BACKGROUND

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 South 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. Sudan hosts 157,088 new arrivals, but the planning figure for the end of the year is 196,000 South Sudanese.

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 based on a UNHCR Regional Refugee Coordination's Office (RCCO) mission to White Nile State and Bantiu (Khartoum), during 6-11 June 2015. The report is also informed by a previous mission in April 2015 in Khartoum. The review focuses mainly on the child protection responses in White Nile and to some extent Khartoum. While there may be situational similarities and overlap in some recommendations, the report does not reflect the response in South or West Kordofan. During the course of these missions, meetings with key informants in Khartoum and White Nile took place (UNHCR, UNICEF, State and National Council for Child Welfare, State and Federal Ministry for Child Welfare, Humanitarian Action Commission (HAC), and Commissioner for Refugees (COR), Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRSC), ICRC. Also field visits were conducted in Khartoum (Bantiu¹), and White Nile (Um Sangor, El Redis1, El Redis2, El Kashafa), and in White Nile, a group discussion was held with the South Sudan Coordination Meeting, the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), as well as with social workers.

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**.

¹ In Bantiu, three focus groups discussions were arranged (one with men community leaders, one with female community leaders and one with both women and men community leaders).

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 review had some limitations. First, it was limited in time, and also in contrast with other countries of asylum of South Sudanese, there was limited space for engagement and discussions with refugees and beneficiaries. The findings of this review must therefore be seen as indicative rather than definitive.

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF THE RESPONSE IN SUDAN

Sudan has been confronted by a steady influx of South Sudanese refugees following the outbreak of violence on December 2013. As of 31st May, over 157,000 South Sudanese refugees have entered the country and joined an estimated 350,000 South Sudanese who had remained in Sudan following the secession of South Sudan in 2011. In the onset of the crisis, the inflow was mainly to South Kordofan State, but progressively, an increasing number of arrivals are entering Sudan through White Nile State, which currently hosts 57% of the refugees that have arrived in the country since December 2015. The second largest new arrival population of South Sudanese is in Khartoum (35,000), Khartoum where they have found support among long standing South Sudanese populations residing in residential areas but also in the so called “open areas”.²

The operational context in Sudan differs greatly from that of other countries in the region, where UNHCR and partners have mounted traditional large-scale emergency programmes, with the support of international and national NGOs. In Sudan, the response to the South Sudanese has been defined by the overall parameters of engagement established by the government to the international community, and the limited access to some of the areas where South Sudanese are.

Another reason for the disparity of approaches lies on the status of South Sudanese in Sudan. The President of Sudan declared at the outset of the emergency that borders were to remain open and that South Sudanese would enjoy the same status as Sudanese citizens. While this position is welcomed particularly to ensure the prevention of *refoulement*, the lack of national legislation to underpin the Government’s policy, and the lack of clarity of their legal status as refugees, causes confusion about the standards of treatment and rights South Sudanese are to enjoy.

² The Open Areas were initially established as Departure Points in October 2010, following an announcement by the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (SSRRC) in Khartoum that South Sudanese wishing to return to South Sudan should congregate in specific open areas for organized voluntary return road movements. Around 116,000 individuals were assisted to return between October 2010 until returns stopped at the beginning of 2011, as resources were diverted to referendum preparations. Thus, a number of people remained stranded in these areas, devoid of infrastructure and functioning services.

THE CHILD PROTECTION RESPONSE IN SUDAN

63% of the Sudanese refugees in South Sudan are **children**

83% of the population are women and children

80% of the households in White Nile are women headed

COORDINATION OF THE CHILD PROTECTION RESPONSE

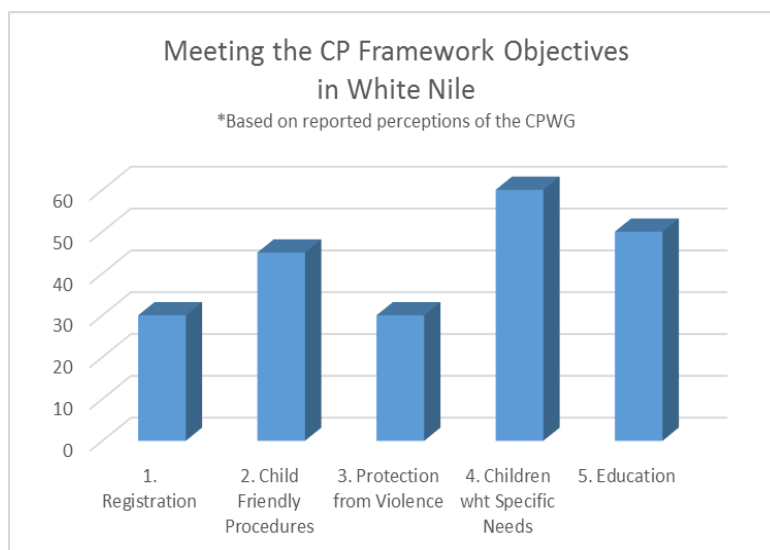
Overall the response is lead and coordinated by the Government and UNHCR through the Refugee Multi-Sector Model (RMS). This forum discuss the intersector response, but there is no a specific forum for CP nationally. Under the cluster system, there is a national CPWG chaired by the NCCW, but the forum does not focus on the South Sudanese response.³

Coordination on the child protection (CP) response for the South Sudanese refugees in Sudan has been decentralized. In White Nile, West Kordofan and South Kordofan, there are CPWGS chaired by the State Council for Child Welfare (SCCW), with strong engagement of the Ministry of Social Welfare. The CPWG in White Nile is almost entirely devoted to the response of the South Sudanese. This is not the case in South Kordofan and West Kordofan, which oversees CP response for refugees and internally displaced (IDP) population. There is presently no dedicated CP coordination structure for refugees in Khartoum State.

MEETING FRAMEWORK OBJECTIVES

The following headings provide further description of achievements and challenges against the five objectives of the Regional CP Framework, based mainly on the meetings conducted, but also on the observations on the field.

In White Nile, UNHCR met with the CPWG, as well as social workers, and asked them what they consider are their achievements, gaps and priorities for the child protection response to South Sudanese refugees. In general, the provision of



³ For further contextualization see *Saving Lives, Supporting Communities and Facilitating Solutions: A Protection Strategy for the South Sudanese 2014-2016*.

assistance to children with specific needs (Objective 4) was the area where partners were more positive about achievements, followed by Education (Objective 5), and by application of Child Friendly Procedures (Objective 2). Registration (Objective 1) and Protection of Children from Violence (Objective 3), were identified as the areas where there is a larger room for improvement.

OBJECTIVE 1: REGISTRATION

Important progress has taken place in the area of registration. First, the Directorate General of Passports and Immigration (IPP), based on the Tripartite agreement with COR and UNHCR signed on December 2014, has started to issue identity cards (IDs) to every South Sudanese above five years. These ID cards serve as a recognized proof of identity and seeks to provide South Sudanese the

same rights and services as Sudanese citizens, including the right to work and buy property, as well as freedom of movement and to live anywhere in the country. . These cards do not carry an expiration date. As of May 2015, 153,500 have been registered in Khartoum and about 18,000 in White Nile (mostly in urban areas). The exercise is to continue in White Nile and expected to be finalized by the end of June. No disaggregated data is available as to how many of the numbers above are children.

Second, household registration continues to take place in White Nile, conducted by the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS), main partner of UNHCR. The household registration contemplates the specific identification of unaccompanied children, even though the information has not been systematically shared with UNHCR.

Third, individual registration started in White Nile in April 15th, and has been completed in Jouri camp. As a result of the exercise, the population registration was reduced by 37%, which shows the importance of the individual registration. As part of the registration, Community Services Desks have been established, where social workers from the Ministry of Social Welfare and UNHCR can identify and refer to services population with special needs, including vulnerable children. Unfortunately, the registration was halted by the government in May, but UNHCR has been in close dialogue with the government authorities to seek the continuation of this important exercise.

Birth registration remains a critical gap, whereby the 2011 Civil Registry Act requires the presentation of valid identification of the father of any newborn at the point of requesting a birth certificate. Taking into account South Sudanese have not systematically been provided with identification documentation since the separation of South Sudan, this is one obstacle to receiving birth registration. Other challenges are the remote location of the camps/settlements for South Sudanese and the communities overall awareness of the importance of birth registration. However, significant progress has been made when it comes to the issuance of birth notifications. In White Nile, 482 new born children were identified by Ministry of Health in partnership with UNHCR in 2014, and granted birth notifications. Moreover, an

All 2 entry points in White Nile have child protection personnel

482 have been granted birth notifications in White Nile

agreement is under discussion with the Office of Civil Registry so that they regularly visit the camps to provide birth registration documents.⁴

OBJECTIVE 2: CHILD-FRIENDLY PROCEDURES

In White Nile, as a result of access and presence in the field, and the competing demands as a result of the continuous influx, **child friendly procedures**, including referral pathways at camp sites, and dissemination of services available in a child friendly manner, are yet to be established. Similarly, the mission identified the urgent need for a **reception system** for refugees in the camps, which may be child friendly and incorporate basic services such as nutrition screening, provision of a welcome package, and identification of vulnerable children. UNHCR and Ministry of Social Welfare agreement for this State, recently signed, envisions the establishment of offices in each camp for child protection interventions.

3 help desks have been established in White Nile

75 children have participated in focus groups discussions

A recent joint training was held in May 2015 with UNHCR the Ministry of Social Welfare and SCCW focusing on strengthening alternative care arrangement and also included a component on child friendly interview techniques for social workers directly dealing with children. A number of other trainings have been held facilitated by UNICEF and Plan Sudan incorporating child friendly procedures, targeting FTR volunteers and animators, social workers and volunteers working in the Child Friendly Spaces.

Important efforts have been made to incorporate the voices of the South Sudanese refugees. In Khartoum, a **Rapid Needs Assessment** was conducted during 2014, which revealed critical needs for a range of protection interventions, especially in child protection.⁵ In White Nile, focus group discussions took place with children in foster care families, which also revealed critical gaps that will be further explored in the Objective 4.

A number of **Police Family and Child Protection Units** (FCPU) operate in White Nile, South Kordofan and West Kordofan, but not necessarily in the areas where South Sudanese are. During the UNHCR RCCO mission in White Nile, FCPU reported that 25 South Sudanese children living in the streets are currently overnighing in the FCPU, to protect them from the risks of the streets at night. Plans are already in place to train the police from these Units in White Nile to enhance their protective role and their knowledge on procedures related to children in contact with the law.

⁴ This agreement is under late stages of negotiation with the Civil Registry in White Nile State, however there is a delay at the Federal/Khartoum level for permission to issue the birth certificates to South Sudanese.

⁵ A child-specific forum was planned during the Rapid Needs Assessment, but unfortunately was beyond the time and staffing limits of the exercise.

OBJECTIVE 3: CHILDREN ARE PROTECTED FROM VIOLENCE

Partners highlighted the efforts made on this front, but also the challenges for obtaining more robust results, in part due to the discontinuity of funding, and the sensitivity of some of the issues comprised by this objective, particularly Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV).

In White Nile, to better understand the vulnerabilities of women and children, Ahfad University conducted a study on the **prevention SGBV and Mental Health Disorders**. Both of these issues are currently being addressed through capacity building efforts of partners, the rolling out of a mental health project, and the enhancement of the engagement of the community through narrative theater as a strategy to create forums for dialogue. During the mission to White Nile, a few posters with SGBV messages displayed were seen in some locations, which represent an important step towards the opening of the space for the discussion of these issues.

654 of the children have been reached with child protection messages in White Nile

3,500 of the children have participated in CFS activities in White Nile

Partners stressed the importance of strengthening **community based structures**, as the main strategy to enhance prevention from violence and harmful practices. In White Nile, an agreement has been reached with the Gender Advisor of the Governor for the training of 30 decision makers at the state level, and plans are already firmed with the Ministry of Social Workers to have five community based volunteers in each camp, which will support the setup of community based structures and the mobilization of the community around child protection and similar issues. In Khartoum, 65 south Sudanese female leaders

“MY FATHER DIED IN THE WAR. WHEN I HAD TO RUN, I DIDN’T DO IT IN THE SAME DIRECTION AS MY MOTHER. NOW I AM HERE ALONE, WITH MY OTHER TWO SISTERS”

13 years old South Sudanese girl, White Nile, June 2015

have been trained in protection concepts referral pathways, and identification of vulnerable individuals, during two workshops in 2015. However, during the field visits conducted to Bantiu refugees reported the disruption of pre-existing community structures due to the relocation, and therefore it is a priority to support the revitalization of such structures in the new location.

There are 11 **Child Friendly Spaces** (CFS), seven in refugee camps and four in the host communities, operating in the different camps of White Nile, managed by Plan International and Ethar, with the support of UNICEF. ⁶ The CFS visited in AlKhasafa was well maintained and equipped with items for play and for conducting different activities. Within some of the CFSs, basic psychosocial individual counseling is provided. CFSs are currently limited to children from 4 to 6 years old. Currently, UNICEF together with Ahfad University is conducting a three months pilot in three of the camps in White Nile, to strengthen the psychosocial component and to explore the expansion of activities and age coverage. However, the continuity of the activities may be compromised by the lack of funding. However, the CPWG mentioned the limited capacity and training of the counselors to adequately deal with the psychosocial needs of the children.

⁶ Four CFS in the Western camps (Alkasafa, Jouri, Redas 1, Redas 2). Another 2 CFS in Aljableen locality managed by SRCS and MOSA in Alagay and Dabat Bosen and 4 CFS in the host community.

OBJECTIVE 4: TARGETED SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN WITH SPECIFIC NEEDS

Case management systems are not yet in place in White Nile, in contrast with Khartoum, where 125 children are currently receiving individual follow up, and undergoing Best Interest Assessments (BIAs). Concerning CP Standard Operation Procedures (SOP), only in Khartoum were these finalized and operational, however there are also draft SOPs available for White Nile State.

Full identification of children with special needs in all locations has been hampered by the lack of systematic individual registration for South Sudanese, as indicated above. Because of the lack of clear systems at the reception, during the field visit to White Nile, it was unclear the **care arrangements made for unaccompanied and separated children** (UASC) identified in the SRSC managed reception areas. The large number of UASC and children headed households, the problems around foster care arrangements (specially around for unaccompanied and separated adolescents), and **child labour** (specially in the markets around urban areas in White Nile), were reported by social workers as the key concerns.

Despite the challenges, some **advances towards the identification of the most vulnerable children**, specially UASC, have taken place. In an assessment conducted by the Ministry of Social Welfare in February 2015, 617 UASC were identified, targeted for support, and 443 have been placed in foster care arrangements. However, focus group discussions with 75 UASC in foster care families revealed serious issues concerning the treatment children received by the families. To address this concerns, and upon request of the Ministry of Social Welfare, UNHCR, together with the SCCW and the Ministry conducted in May 2015 a workshop with 30 participants, and established a more comprehensive approach to the support and follow up of these children.

In White Nile **617** unaccompanied and separated children have been identified

156 adolescents participate in targeted activities

30 children with disabilities receive targeted support

Similarly, no systematic registration of **tracing** requests of UASC or relatives seeking children in White Nile is taking place. Both nationally and in White Nile, there are government led FTR Networks with a wide range of partners, but is not clear to which extent the Network covers South Sudanese population. In White Nile, however, partners reported the reunification during 2014 of 25 children using church networks. The details of these reunifications, however, are not known by UNHCR. Finally, after the suspension of activities by ICRC, the organization is in discussion to support SRSC in the set-up of a comprehensive family tracing and reunification (FTR) and restore of family linkages (RFL) services in the country.

Youth (ages of between 15-25 years of age) represent 19% of the population. A number of sporting events have been held in White Nile State, with 13 sports team established in the camps and two inter-camp competitions held in 2014. Concerning vocational training, 30 (15 male and 15 female) youths are currently being supported to undertake vocational training. Using these activities, peaceful coexistence was promoted among refugees and host community. Concerning Khartoum, an Ahfad University for Women project recently commenced and will target children and youth aged 15-25 with a narrative theatre and psychosocial support project that will then develop and mobilize youth committees in Bantiu site.

OBJECTIVE 5: ACCESS TO EDUCATION

In White Nile, partners recognized the important 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 parents and teachers associations (PTAs).

In White Nile, in the beginning of the emergency, temporary learning facilities were built in each of the camps to deliver the education services. Four public schools in the host community have been erected with 24 classrooms serving five camps, and an enrolment campaign has been conducted. The education services have limited capacity according to the student classroom ratio, as they were built to provide services for both host and refugee communities. However, El Rides 1 and Redis 2, will require further support with classrooms construction given the size of the population.

In White Nile education enrolment is **34%** in White Nile

22 teachers have been trained on psychosocial support

Discussions on the language of education has continued, as some refugees, including refugee teachers, have opposed to children being taught in Arabic. Even though as a general policy UNHCR supports the inclusion of children in the curricula of the host country, it remains crucial to continue the dialogue with the refugees, as well as with the education authorities and other key partners on this matter, as well as to provide a transitional period for the pupils to be able to be ready to move to the Arabic curricula⁷.



**“IF WE SIT HERE LIKE ANIMALS WE WILL
BECOME NOTHING. WE WANT YOUR SUPPORT
THROUGH THE SCHOOLS”**

South Sudanese teacher, Bantiu, Khartoum, June 2015

Finally, it is important to strengthen the role of education as a referral and entry point for child protection, including the inclusion of vulnerable children in the education system. In the discussion with social workers in White Nile, the need to conduct peace building initiatives through education to build trust among refugee and host communities was highlighted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Monitoring the provision of birth notifications in White Nile, and finalization of the agreement with the Office of Civil Registry to ensure this office schedules a system for visits and provision of **birth registration** to new born children. Explore similar agreements in the other States where South Sudanese are.
- Ensure the set-up of a **child friendly reception structure** for children arriving to the sites in White Nile, and **strengthening the Community Services Desks** at the registration points in White

⁷ It was reported that in the final examination last scholar year, 6 south Sudanese children learning with the Arabic curriculum presented the exam, and 5 of them passed. For the English curriculum, out of 297 children, only 4 passed the exam.

Nile, ensuring all children with specific needs (including but not only unaccompanied and separated children), are duly identified and referred to social workers for adequate follow up.

- Strengthen the **case management system** in collaboration of the Ministry of Social Welfare in White Nile (building on the May 2015 alternative care workshop recommendations), and if possible, in South Kordofan and West Kordofan, which should include a clear prioritization criteria. That will require the development of referral pathways including at the camp level, training of social workers on the Best Interest Procedures, and establishment of a Best Interest Panel at a later stage. It will be important the establishment of child protection offices or desks at the site level.
- Development of a specific child protection SOPs and common forms for **family tracing and reunification (FTR)** in White Nile, with clear distribution of responsibilities between the SCCW, the Minister of Social Welfare, SRCS and other partners, and establishment of FTR desks at the sites. Concerning in-country tracing, it is recommended the strengthening of UNHCR engagement in the FTR Network to avoid duplicity of efforts and improve information flows. Concerning cross-border tracing, this would be best coordinated with ICRC.
- Implement the **support package** through the existing agreement with the Ministry of Social Welfare for foster care families depending on their needs, as a support and incentive for those families who are taking care of unaccompanied or separated children.
- Develop a more **integrated CFS model** that serves as an entry point for referrals to services, that incorporate children of broader range of ages (e.g. include ages groups higher than the current practice to serve ages only between 4 to 6 years), and that provide a more robust psychosocial support. Also, incorporate child friendly lens in the design of the new sites,
- Development of **child friendly materials** on procedures and services, so children understand the services and referral pathways operating in the sites. Establishment of feedback mechanisms (for example, suggestion boxes), to ensure children's participations and inclusion in the design and revision of services provided.
- Strengthen the capacity of the police working in the areas where South Sudanese are. Advocate for the establishment of **Police Family and Child Protection Units** in El Salam and Jabalein in White Nile, strengthen the ones in West Kordofan and South Kordofan, and train police of those units on child protection and refugee law.
- **Prioritize programming for adolescents and youth**, and review the programming with a conflict sensitive lens, engaging children and youth in peace building programmes

ANNEX: LIST OF ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

Number of participants		BANTI				WHITE NILE				SUDAN			
		#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total	#	M	F	Total
FGD	Leaders	1	25	0	25					1	25	25	25
	Women	1	0	18	18					1	0	18	18
	Leaders	1	19	4	23					1	19	23	23
	Sub-total FGD	3	44	22	66					3	44	66	66
Meetings	CP organisations					1	9	7	16	1	8	3	11
	Social Workers					1	7		7				7
	Intersector					1	12	7	19	1	12	7	19
	Sub-total MTG					2	28	14	42	2	20	10	37
Totals		3	44	22	66	2	28	14	42	5	20	10	37