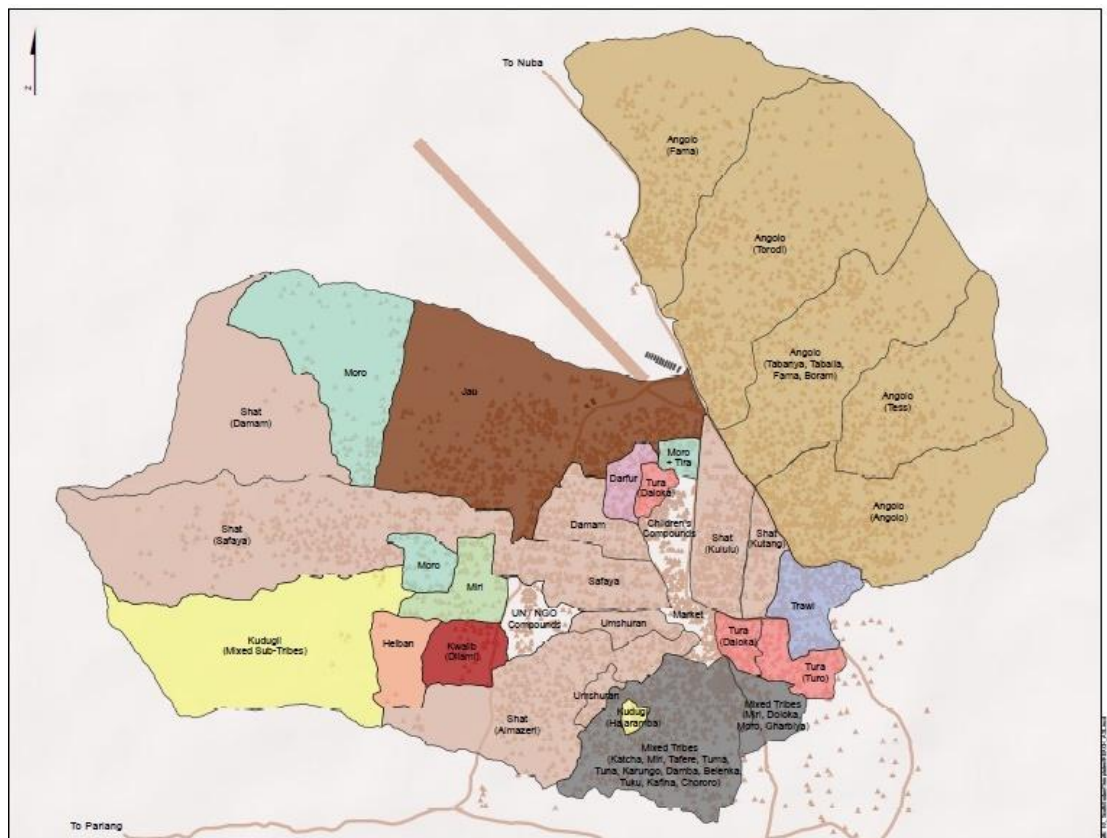


### YIDA REFUGEE CAMP SOCIAL PROFILE

#### UNITY STATE, SOUTH SUDAN

NOVEMBER 2012



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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the following REACH brief is to highlight the social and political dynamics present in Yida refugee camp. Understanding the social organization is essential for providing targeted, humanitarian aid in an effective and socially respectable manner. This brief provides the humanitarian community with a snapshot of the social dynamics of Yida refugee camp.

The situation in Yida is complex and evolving at a rapid pace due to the escalating humanitarian crisis, the presence of the SPLA, and intervention by the UN and NGOs. The unique tribal group<sup>1</sup> structures in Yida work to inform both the social organization and political composition of the camp. Tribal affiliation comprises the overriding identifying factor among the refugees. The strength of this tribal affiliation and related tribal social structures has contributed to the refugees' ability to become relatively well-organized and self-managed in the camp.

The refugees predominantly come from the province of South Kordofan in the Nuba Mountain region and share a strong common identity as Nuba people. The camp also contains a small population of Darfur refugees who had lived with the Nuba for up to five years before fleeing with them to Yida. The refugees fled from at least 13 distinct areas of origin in South Kordofan that encompasses approximately 45,600 square kilometers. The majority of refugees are from the expansive Shat, Angolo, and Kadugli areas.

After crossing the border near Lake Jau, the refugees began arriving in Yida in June 2011 and commenced constructing shelters with permission of the small host community. At this time the only NGO present was Samaritan's Purse, which had been conducting programming among some of the tribes in South Kordofan and tracked them as they fled south. In parallel, the local authorities had identified the first groups that had crossed and immediately contacted UNHCR. Samaritan's Purse, CARE, and UNHCR were the original agencies on the ground in

August 2011. Their population in Yida remained relatively low until April, May, and June of 2012, which saw an influx of over 43,000 refugees. This rapid increase has further strained the relationship with the 400-person host community. The current population is estimated to be about 62,000 individuals, based on registration figures from October 26. The rate of new arrivals slowed dramatically with the onset of the rainy season, but has now begun to increase again with the arrival of the dry season. The most likely scenario will see an influx of up to 30,000 individuals by the end of the calendar year. As the UN and NGO presence in Yida was relatively minimal until recently, the camp is a prime example of an organic refugee settlement. The first refugees to arrive in the camp began to organize the placement of their shelters according to tribal identification. Primarily they are organized by larger tribal group, then secondarily according to sub-tribe, and thirdly by village or boma<sup>2</sup> of origin. Some groups identify themselves by tribal or ethnic origins, while other groups tend to identify themselves more geographically by village or county of origin. In this way some groups are more tied to their geographic area of origin than they are to the larger ethnic group from which they come. Many Nuba groups live in relatively close proximity to one another in South Kordofan and share a common language and customs, yet many orientate themselves in the camp according to village or boma of origin. There is also a complex political dynamic to this organizational scheme. Some linguistically and culturally homogeneous groups have chosen to separate themselves into individual village of origin or boma groups in order to differentiate themselves within the camp social structure. It is understood among some refugee leaders that recognition of their boma as a distinct social group could lead to higher visibility among the UN and NGOs and translate into better provision of services for their people. In this regard some of these boma groups have elected new Sheikhs to represent them.

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<sup>1</sup> For this purpose, a tribal group is defined as a group of persons who share the same language and geographic origins.

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<sup>2</sup> The South Sudanese refer to villages as bomas, while the Nuba in South Kordofan use the Arabic, Gharya.

This organization is evident in the settlement patterns in what is the older “core” of the camp, which is dominated by a few larger tribes and their sub-groups. The newly settled outer areas of the camp are more mixed, but still primarily organized according to traditional tribal structures. There are a few small pockets on the outskirts of the camp boundaries where tribes and sub-groups from different regions have settled together. This has created patterns where one tribe or sub-group might have a number of settlements in nonadjacent areas of the camp. This settlement pattern is related to time of arrival in Yida, with the late arrivals having to build their structures nearer the edge of the camp boundaries or within another group’s area.

The refugees have maintained their Nuba tribal leadership structures and adapted them to the organizational structure of the camp. The head of each tribe is referred to as the Mak. Every tribe in the camp is currently represented by a Mak or at least an Umda acting as a Mak. Each Mak is theoretically elected by his Umdas. In South

Kordofan the Umda can often be the head of several villages. In the camp, the number of Umdas is few compared to the number of Sheikhs and some tribes do not have an Umda. The Sheikhs are traditionally the head of each village, or boma. The Sheikhs are the most numerous of the tribal leadership in the camp.

A refugee council has also been organized by tribal leaders and members of the SPLA/N to manage security, education, relations with NGOs and UN agencies, organization of the camp, administration of tribal courts, and disputes among the tribes. The Refugee Council is headed by a chairman and deputy chairman. Twelve ministry heads are appointed by the rebel government in South Kordofan and only one traditional leader is counted among them. As such, the Council is highly political in nature and is not fully representative of the refugee population as a whole. The camp administration also operates a police force, which has considerable power within the camp compared to the local payam police force.

## 2. BACKGROUND

The first influx of refugees to Yida camp began in July 2011 due to the border conflict in South Kordofan. The independence of South Sudan in the same month of July 2011 brought renewed military action against the population and between SPLA/N and SAF North. The historical alliances and the proximity to South Sudan pushed Nuba tribes, mainly from AL Boram and Kadugli provinces to take refuge in Yida.

Since last year, UNHCR has tried to relocate the camp further south from the border to the UN established camps of Pariang and Nyeel without success. The refugee leaders discouraged refugees from moving to these locations. There are several reasons for this: (1) Pariang and Nyeel are relatively deforested areas prone to flooding in the rainy season and drought in the dry season. The lack of trees means there is little for the refugees to use as fuel for cooking or for building structures additional

to their tents; (2) the leaders want their people to be near the border to facilitate their circulation between the camp and their areas of origin; and, (3) to be in regular contact with the SPLA/N.

The current registration numbers for Yida are about 62,000, but UNHCR does not believe that all of those individuals are still in the camp. Since the end of May, the population has doubled, but since mid-July, the number of daily arrivals dropped. With the arrival of the dry season, an additional 30,000 refugees are expected to arrive in Yida. UNHCR is currently implementing biometric registration to resolve the actual number of refugees in the camp.

### 3. METHODOLOGY OF ASSESSMENT

The data used for this brief came from a larger assessment in Yida camp that focused on mapping both the physical assets as well as developing a social profile for the camp. To map the social profile of the camp, two parallel methods were used: (1) a community mapping exercise with leaders of each distinct tribal group; and (2) mapping of the actual boundaries of each tribal group in the camp using GPS coordinates. Comparing the results of these two methods ensured very little overlap of boundaries and full agreement from tribal

leadership. The Sheikhs of each tribal group also participated in the GPS mapping activity, facilitating communication with the residents within each boundary. Using the community map developed with tribal leaders, the assessment team walked the boundary of each tribal boundary with its associated Sheikh, recording a GPS track along the way. This data was recorded both electronically and in hard copy and transferred to a database at the end of each day. The GIS information was then used to develop static and interactive maps.

### 4. FINDINGS

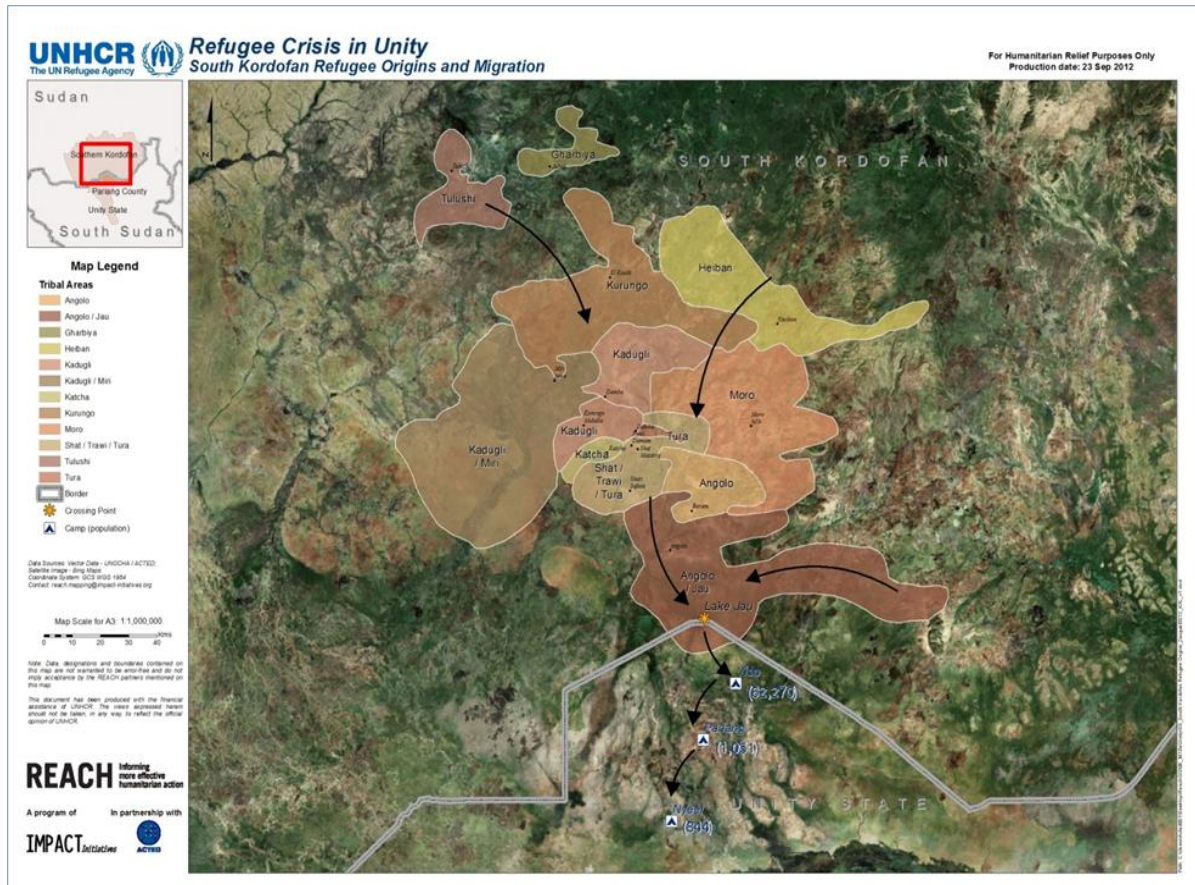
#### 4.1 REFUGEE ORIGINS

The majority of refugees in Yida come from the province of South Kordofan in the foothills of the Nuba Mountains. The first influx of refugees to Yida began in July 2011. The independence of South Sudan in the same month brought renewed military action against the Nuba population and between SPLA/N and SAF North. Historical alliances and their proximity to South Sudan pushed Nuba communities, mainly from Lagawa, Kielak, El Dalang, Talodi, and Kadugli counties, to take refuge south in Yida. Despite the wide area from which the refugees fled it appears the majority of them came to Yida via one main route. This route passed just north of the Sudanese town of Talodi where, at the time, the northern army maintained a presence. Their entry point into South Sudan brought them through the Lake Jauarea which lies to the north, northwest of Yida. The majority of refugees traveled between two to three days to reach the camp and walked an average of 100 kilometers. Some refugees from the northern areas of South Kordofan, such as Gharbiya and Tulushi, traveled over 200 kilometers and took significantly longer. The length of the journey also varies significantly by the age of individuals traveling and the size of the group/family.

The largest populations in the camp come from Kadugli County. This county is home to the Shatt, Katcha, Angolo, Miri, Tarawi, Tora, and Kadugli tribes. Within each major tribe are numerous sub-groups, many of which are represented in the camp. The largest tribes in the camp are the Shatt and Angolo. The eleven sub-groups of the Angolo that are present in the camp number their population at around 21,500 individuals. They come from an area in South Kordofan which is centered on Boram, in Kadugli County. The other tribes in the camp with large populations come from areas adjacent to Al Boram. The further away from Al Boram the tribe, the less represented their population in the camp. The eleven sub-groups of Shatt number their population at around 13,000 individuals. They come from an area of South Kordofan to the northwest of Boram. To the west and north of the Shatt are the populous Kadugli, Katcha, and Miri tribes. A small population of late arrivals come from an area far to the north of South Kordofan called Dilling. There is also a population of Darfur refugees present in Yida. The Darfur spent between three to five years as IDPs in the Nuba Mountains before fleeing south to Yida with their host community. Image 1 below shows the geographic distribution of major tribes in the refugees' area of origin.



Image 1: South Kordofan Refugee Origins



## 4.2 TRADITIONAL DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

The Nuba are organized in a highly hierarchical nature. They are represented by a social governance system consisting of three levels: Mak, Umda, and Sheikh. Within the camp 13 major tribes are represented by 11Maks and 2 Umdas. There are 20 Umdas and 128 Sheikhs representing the numerous sub-groups in the camp. Some sub-groups control territory that may contain many villages. The role of the Umda is to oversee all the villages in a particular area. Each village within an Umda's area will be represented by a Sheikh. Within the camp each sub-group can have a number of Umdas and Sheikhs representing them. In a feature unique to the camp, the Maks are superseded by the Camp Chairperson, an SPLA/N member and representative.

### 4.2.1. Maks

The Mak is overall leader of the tribal community. From the existing group of Umdas, one is elected by his peers to the position of Mak. The Mak is elected for life, but the Umdas may theoretically decide to

remove him through a collective vote in the event of a serious problem or due to illness. Presently there are 11 Maks in Yidacamp, with 2 Umdas playing the role of Mak due to the fact their traditional Maks are not present.

### 4.2.2. Umdas

The Umda is theoretically elected by an assembly of those Sheikhs within his area of administration. However, this position is said to typically be passed on from father to son. Like the Mak, an Umda is elected for life, except in the case of serious problems or illness. There are 20 Umdas in Yida including 2 who are acting as Maks.

### 4.2.3. Sheikhs

Each Sheikh is the representative of a *boma*, or village, and is thought to act as the direct liaison with the Umda on behalf of the households of his village. His community in South Kordofan will typically consist of an average of 30-80 households. The Sheikh is theoretically elected by the adult men

and women of the boma, though as is the case with the Nasserand Umdas, the position appears to often be hereditary. In the event of an indecisive community vote, the Umda has the authority to

appoint the Sheikh. Images 2 and 3 below illustrate this traditional decision-making structure present within the camp.

Image 2: Traditional Leader Social Hierarchy

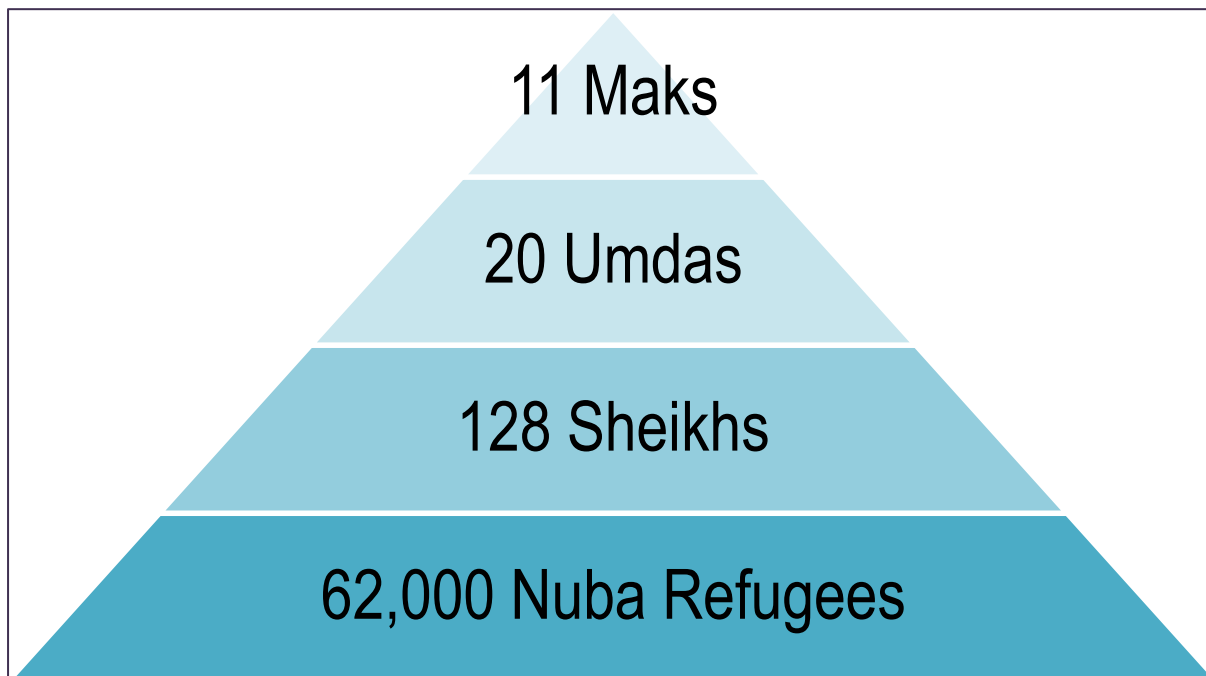
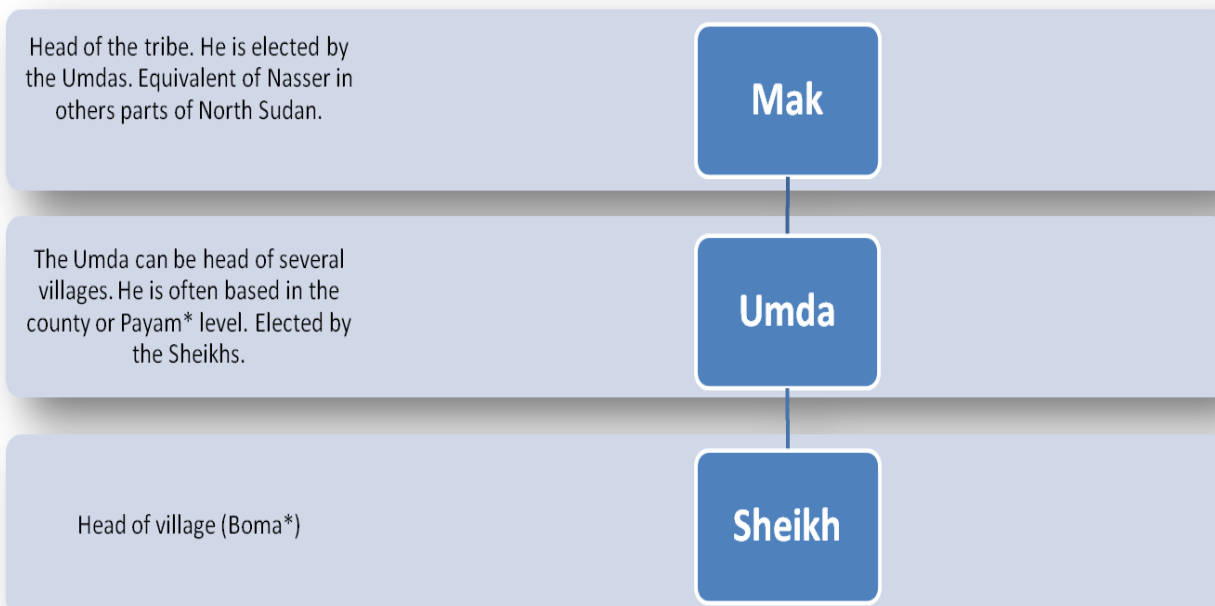


Image 3: South Kordofan Tribal Hierarchy



### 4.3 ORGANIZATION WITHIN YIDA CAMP

The tribal structure and organization in Yida is complex due to the fact that the refugees come from a large area of South Kordofan and represent a wide array of the Nuba population. Altogether their places of origin represent a land area of over 45,600 square kilometers. In addition to the lingua franca, Arabic, there are at least seven distinct language groups in the camp, with many dialects spoken of each. The refugee community has largely self-managed the social organization of the camp. The refugees have arranged themselves in the area according to tribal alliances and under their respective Sheikhs, Maks, or Umdas. The organic nature of this settlement pattern is evidenced by the relatively disorganized layout of the camp. In the early settlement of the camp there was an attempt to organize groups according to "blocks". However, as the population quickly grew group boundaries expanded in a haphazard manner. Some paths and roads in the camp have been constructed for the purpose of travel between the market area, air strip, and water points, etc. However, the majority of paths and roads have been cut to accommodate the meandering boundaries of tribal territories and to facilitate travel between them. In some areas these boundaries are demarcated by paths and rough fence structures constructed out of thorn bushes, tree branches, etc. Other group boundaries are not demarcated at all, but known by the local Sheikhs, Umdas, and inhabitants.

The refugees have organized themselves according to sub-tribe or by boma. They also sometimes identify themselves by the greater tribe if there are few members of each sub-tribe or boma. Maks play a role in the settlement patterns of the larger tribes as group members arrange their structures as near to them as possible. This is also the case with the Umdas and Sheikhs, but to a lesser degree. Some groups have arrived without a Sheikh or other traditional leader. These groups usually come from smaller bomas and have either elected a new Sheikh from within the camp or chosen to be represented by their larger tribal group leaders. The latter has become more uncommon as groups have

realized an advantage in being recognized as a separate social group. It is understood among some refugee leaders that recognition of their boma as a distinct social group could lead to higher visibility among the UN and NGOs and translate into better provision of services for their people.

The first areas of the camp to be settled were those surrounding what is now the market just south of the air strip. This area was settled primarily by the Shatt tribe. The 11 sub-tribes of the Shatt command densely populated areas to the west and east of the market, and further west surrounding the UN and NGO compounds. Despite the relatively small population of the Shatt, their proximity to the market and potential NGO resources has positioned them to wield influence among the other tribes. For example, the primary camp tribal leadership meeting area is within the Shatt Kululu sub-tribe territory adjacent to the compound of their Mak. The location of the Refugee Council office is also within Shatt territory.

Besides the areas surrounding the market, the other densely settled areas of the camp are to the east of the air strip. This area is dominated by the 11 sub-groups of the Angolo. Despite almost no infrastructure as compared to other areas of the camp, this large area supports a population of over 20,000 individuals. Access to water has been raised as a concern to the sustainability of the groups here. However, it appears that at least during the rainy season they have access to water from marshlands and hafirs. Those closer to the southeast have some access to established water points. There are plans to encourage the Angolo people to move to areas in the west of the camp by providing access to water points. Borehole drilling has begun in the western areas of the camp and at least one new borehole is operational.

Image 4 below shows the boundaries of each tribal group's territory within the camp, while Image 5 illustrates the tribes and sub-tribes present within Yida.



**UNHCR** The UN Refugee Agency  
**Refugee Crisis in Unity**  
Yida Camp - Community Structure

For Humanitarian Relief Purposes Only  
Production date: 24 Sep 2012

Sudan  
Unity State  
South Sudan

**Map Legend**

**Main Group (Sub-Group)**

- ANGOLO
- DARFUR
- JABAL ADIAR
- KADUGLI
- KAWONVARO
- KAWONYARO
- KEIGA
- MIRI
- MIXED GROUPS
- MORO
- SHATT
- TALOCHI
- TILLO
- TORA

Data Sources: Vector Data - UNHCR/ACTED; Satellite Imagery - Bing Maps; Coordinate System - UTM 48QD 1984; Contour Interval - 10m; Elevation Source - SRTM30 PLUS

Map Scale for A3: 1:14,000

Note: Data, descriptions and boundaries contained on this map are not warranted to be error-free and do not represent the official position of UNHCR.

This document has been produced with the financial assistance of UNHCR. The views expressed herein should not be taken, in any way, to reflect the official position of UNHCR.

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Despite the somewhat disorganized look of the camp settlement patterns, site planning has been employed in the past. During the initial phases of settlement site planning tasks were managed by one of the refugees who has some experience in engineering and access to basic drafting software. He originally designed the camp according to a grid pattern, with “blocks” allocated to communities and large family plots within each block. The first arrivals to the camp were allocated space in these blocks and evidence of this settlement pattern exists in the central areas of the camp to the west of the market. However, as the camp grew rapidly from April 2012 it was not possible for the site planning effort to keep pace and most areas of the camp are bereft of this formal grid pattern.

**Tribal Groups**

- Slatt
  - Demam
  - Debalia
  - Mashaha
  - Macarg
  - Hukuku
  - Safaya Hufi
  - Safaya
  - Safaya Moss
  - Taravii
  - Umehuran
  - Hutang
- Ladugli
  - Tafere
  - Damba
  - Tulu
  - Haji Aramba
  - Arif Ashgri
- Tabodi
  - Tira
  - Werni
  - Tabodi
- Aliri
- Tora
  - Dakla
  - Tora
- Iatcha
  - Tuna
  - Iatcha
  - Iafina
  - Faruk
  - Debalia Iatcha
- Heiban
- Kurungo
  - Tuna
  - Kurungo
  - Bikanya
- Nawalib
  - Nawalib
- Moro
  - Andoreen
  - Saraf Amus
  - Moro
- Miri
- Jalal Adair
- Angolo
  - Taraji
  - Angolo
  - Boram
  - Der
  - Gulu
  - Pela
  - Fama
  - Talanya
  - Taballa
  - Toro
  - Tess
- Darfur
- Dilling
  - Dilling
  - Gharba
  - Lagavai
- Lera
- Hauemari
- Iaga
- Shargia
  - Shawaja
- Tilo
  - Abu Hashim

**Sub-Groups**

Small-scale farming is the primary livelihood activity practiced by the refugees in Yida. The sandy, well-drained soil found in and around the camp is conducive to small-scale planting with limited tools. Traditional hand-made tools and natural pest control methods are employed. Most family groups have organized themselves in compounds of three to four structures surrounded by rough fences constructed of sticks or thorn bushes. As of August, nearly every family group was seen to be attempting small-scale agriculture on their plots. Some of these crops include ground nuts, maize, melons, and tomatoes. Many of these crops can already be seen in the camp market. There is also a local river where fish are caught by the refugees and sold in the market. There have been numerous reports concerning a large community-operated farm one hour's walk from the camp that is regularly visited by camp leadership. The location and size of the farm, as

The camp market functions as a vibrant center to the community and some of the refugees operate small retail shops, restaurants and even movie theaters. There are also a number of engine repair and metal workshops. The Darfur refugees play an important role in operating and supplying shops in the market as they have a reputation as businessmen.

The current number of livestock owned by the refugees has not yet been verified, but there are a considerable number of goats, sheep, and cattle in the vicinity of the camp. While the animals are sometimes herded through the camp, the majority of livestock are kept grazing on the outskirts. Slaughtered animals are commonly seen in the market.

Food is commonly prepared using wood harvested from the surrounding forest. Charcoal, while available, is not widely produced or used by the refugees. Despite the heavy reliance on wood from the surrounding forest, the refugees have refrained from deforesting areas within the camp or immediately adjacent to it. They often travel to

designated areas some distance from the camp to collect wood for cooking and construction. Deforestation within the camp has clearly increased, most likely due to the increase in shelter construction (5,700 shelters in June to 7,800 in October) and fuel wood collection.

## 4.5 POLITICAL STRUCTURE

The refugee leadership has organized a Refugee Council to manage security, education, relations with NGOs and UN agencies, organization of the camp, administration of tribal courts, and disputes among the tribes. The Refugee Council operates out of a refugee-built compound near the local *payam* administration building. The Council is headed by a chairman and deputy chairman. The twelve heads of the various ministries are appointed by the rebel government in South Kordofan. Only one traditional tribal leader is counted among them. As such, the Council is highly political in nature and is not fully representative of the refugee population as a whole. Image 6 below shows the leadership structure within the camp as well as the names of the leaders at each level of the hierarchy.

The members of the council refer to themselves as Coordinators. Below are the 12 ministries composing the Refugee Council:

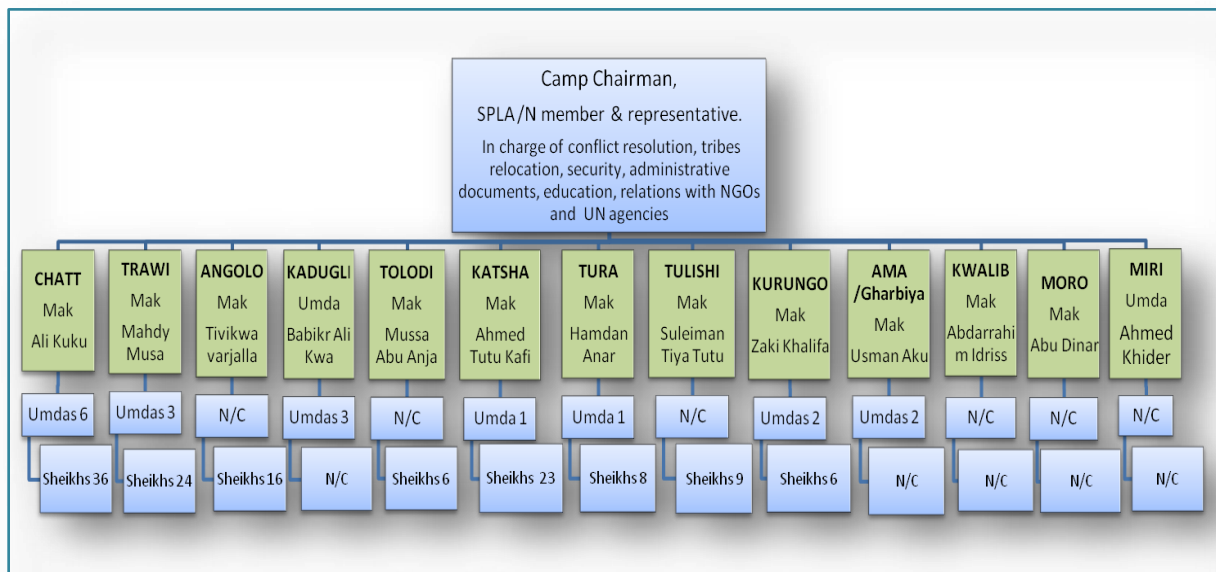
1. Chairman
2. Deputy Chairman
3. Information
4. Judiciary
5. Police
6. Agriculture
7. Engineering
8. Social Affairs
9. Education

10. Health
11. Child & Women
12. Administration

The camp administration also operates a police force, which has considerable power within the camp compared to the local *payam* police force. It has also been reported that the community maintains its own jail. It has not been possible to independently verify this. To facilitate community mobilization, the Council maintains a truck mounted loudspeaker system that is used for making important announcements. While the Council is predominantly male, there are two female members, one who manages a social affairs ministry and one who manages a ministry for children and women.

Considering the circumstances, the Council has done an impressive job in organizing the camp and prioritizing assets. The Council serves as the contact point for humanitarian agencies operating in the camp and the Council in turn communicates their needs to the agencies. However, it is questionable whether the Council's priorities and needs are the same as the majority of refugees, or are more political in nature. It is apparent that the Council and its leadership work to control what the refugees are allowed to communicate to the humanitarian community in Yida.

Image 6: Snapshot Example of Yida Camp Leadership Structure



Throughout the refugee crisis in Yida, UNHCR and the NGOs currently active in the camp have focused on interacting with the Refugee Council. The Council has a direct line of communication with every leader in the camp and has substantial political power to get things done. The relationship has mainly been on an ad hoc basis whenever specific organizations need to implement an activity or project in the camp. The NGOs active in the

camp, however, have realized the need to engage with the local payam administration as well and have taken steps to do so. There is tension between the Refugee Council and local payam given the lack of coordination between the two bodies. The NGOs that are present have tried to improve this coordination with the partnership of UNHCR with some success.

## 4.6 RELIGION

Religion does not appear to play a major role in the tribal organization of the camp. Within a tribal territory Christians and Muslim appear to be evenly mixed, with no particularly Christian or Muslim settlement areas. There are 23 church structures and 6 mosques structures. The proliferation of churches could be attributed to the strong presence of a faith-based NGO in the camp that has supplied labor and materials for their construction. Overall, it is hard to verify the role religion may play in the

social dynamics and organization of the camp. There are reports that the religious Makeup of the camp is nearly split between Christian and Muslim. Some Sheikhs, particularly those in the Angolo tribe report that their population is around 65% Christian. According to some church leaders the breakdown in percentage is as follows: 40% Christian, 35-40% Muslim, and 20-25% Animist. Other reports peg the breakdown as follows: 50% Muslim, 30-35% Christian, and 15-20% Animist.

# REACH BRIEF SERIES

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The REACH Brief is published on a semi-regular basis with the goal of informing the greater humanitarian community about critical issues in some of the world's humanitarian 'hotspots.' The REACH Brief is intended for humanitarian aid practitioners and international donors to provide greater clarity on some of the issues often overlooked in emergency settings. The information is mostly based on primary data collected in the field, with some secondary data to enrich the analysis.

In 2010 IMPACT launched REACH, a program that supports humanitarian and development planning through the provision of assessment, evaluation, management information systems (MIS) and geographic information systems (GIS) mapping services. REACH has been active in South Sudan since February 2012. Beginning with Jamam refugee camp, REACH has provided static maps, databases and analysis reports that have contributed to the operational set-up and management of the camp. Additional assessments and interactive webmapping efforts aimed at improved coordination among aid actors, consolidated information management systems and geo-tracking of aid provision have been rolled-out in the other Maban County refugee camps, as well as in Yida.

This REACH Brief is the first in a series on the refugee crisis and internal displacement in South Sudan.