

UNHCR: Durable Solutions Assessment

Minawao refugee camp, Far North/Cameroon, 20 March 2015

1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From 18 to 20 March 2015, UNHCR conducted an assessment in the Minawao refugee camp in the Far North Region of Cameroon. In total, 246 heads of families, from different blocks in the camp were interviewed taking into account an age and gender balance. They were asked about their return intentions, pre-conditions to be met before returning and how they would sustain themselves upon return. A second part of the evaluation focused on the situation in the camp situation and issues such as access to information and security. This assessment is meant to capture at the emergency phase opportunities to initiate and facilitate the realization of durable solutions. It is not an exhaustive assessment of all aspects necessary to draft a durable solutions strategy, but rather represents a first snapshot of the situation on which later assessments will build upon.

Key findings are summarized as follows:

Return

- ✓ 59% of respondents receive regular information from their area of origin, mostly from family/friends (31%) and mouth-to-mouth (25%), but at least once a week (33%). Media (20%) and internet (19%) play an important role in accessing information this information.
- ✓ 58% of the respondents indicated that their areas of origin are still active fighting zones and 13% said that their villages are “empty and fighting stopped” based on information they obtained.
- ✓ 72% of all interviewed said that they want to go back to Nigeria (76% of all women and 66% of all men). Among the respondents, 53% indicated that this opinion was unanimous among all family members. However, where there was a difference of opinion, it was the majority men (24%) who did not want to return. The most cited reason for not wanting to go back was being “too afraid to return”.
- ✓ As most important pre-conditions to go back, respondents replied with “government has retaken permanent control” (28%) and “education facilities are being restored” (19%).
- ✓ 76% indicated that they want to resume the activities they did before they left Nigeria (mostly farming), but 36% also indicated that they would not have financial resources/equipment to restart.
- ✓ As coping mechanism upon return, the majority indicated to rely on government support (33%), to stop sending children to school (15%) and to send children to work (13%).

Safety and security

- ✓ 60% of respondents said that they feel safe in the camp, but 40% highlighted “discrimination” (44%), followed by “proximity to border” (20%), “harassment” (18%) and “armed elements” (18%) as reasons why they don’t feel safe in the camp.
- ✓ 64% of the respondents confirmed that there are no tensions among refugee families in the camps. When asked about existing tensions between refugees and host communities, 59% replied that there are no tensions.

Access to information

- ✓ When asked whether or not they have sufficient information on services and assistance provided/available in the camp, 66% answered by the affirmative.
- ✓ The preferred choice of refugees to receive information is through megaphone (35%) and through community leaders (17%), followed by “radio” (14%).

As a result of the findings, UNHCR will implement several follow up actions:

- ✓ The assessment provides first baseline data which will be shared with UNHCR in Nigeria and widely disseminated through UNHCR’s webportal; it is planned to conduct another durable solutions assessment in three months to evaluate trends
- ✓ UNHCR will set up a community information center in the camp where refugees can access information on available services, receive information on the area of origin and exchange information. Partners will be able to display information and awareness materials and a feedback corner will be established
- ✓ Outreach activities involving community members will be increased as well as sensitization sessions aiming at discussing “discrimination” of young female and other groups in the camp
- ✓ Dissemination of information through community leaders, the usage of megaphones and to the extent possible radio, will be promoted

2 METHODOLOGY

The questionnaire was administered using a random sampling methodology. The 36 data collectors working in teams of two people were divided per sector (total of 4 in the camp) and blocks in the camp in equal number, each team being responsible for two blocks. Each team was asked to interview at least 10 families per block while taking into account an equal number of male and female interviewees. All data collectors were chosen based on their prior experience working with IEADA Relief in the camp as community volunteers and data collectors. They received a one day training in administering the questionnaire and interviewing techniques and they had previously been trained on the Code of Conduct. To ensure that questions and results were interpreted correctly, a debriefing was held with the data collectors to discuss findings.

3 CHALLENGES

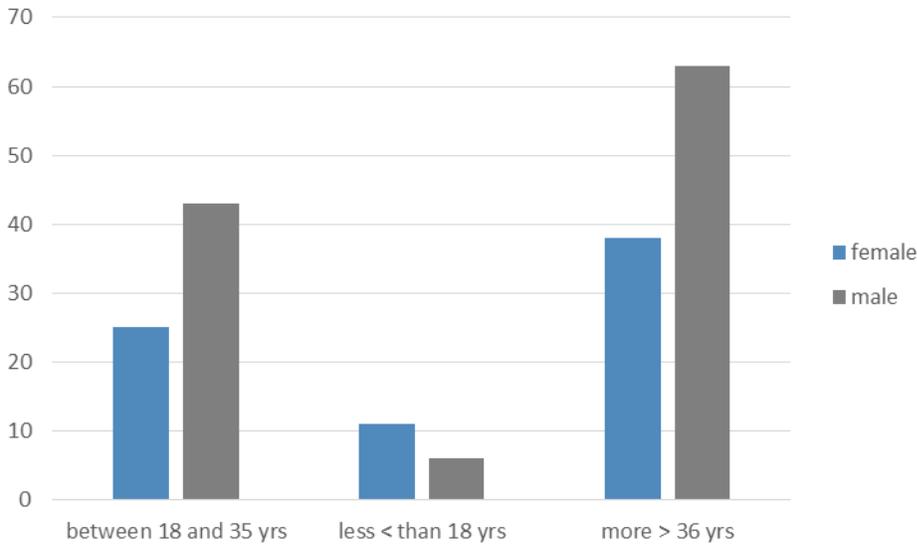
Despite the training provided highlighting the importance to have equal participation of all tribes, 60% of those being interviewed were from the Hausa tribe. According to UNHCR’s registration data base (proGres), the Hausa tribe only represents 1% of the overall refugee population. This might create a bias in the overall findings and should be taken into consideration when drawing overall conclusions for the camp population.

In addition, the questionnaire was written in English. Although data collectors were selected based on their knowledge in reading and writing English, it became clear during the training, that some of them did not have sufficient English proficiency. To balance this, data collectors were teamed up in pairs of two to ensure that the questionnaire could be administered in English and the local language.

During the de-briefing it became clear that several did not fully capture the sense of the meaning “harassment” which needs to be taken into consideration when interpreting the findings of question number 11b (“why don’t your family feel safe”).

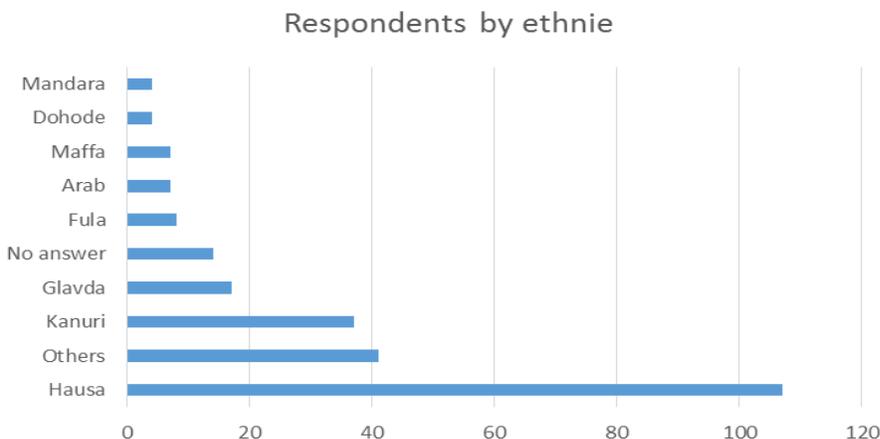
4 DETAILED FINDINGS

In total, **246** households were interviewed. An age and gender balance was sought when conducting the interviews as well as different tribes (see graph one and two below).



*Graph one:
Respondents by age
and gender*

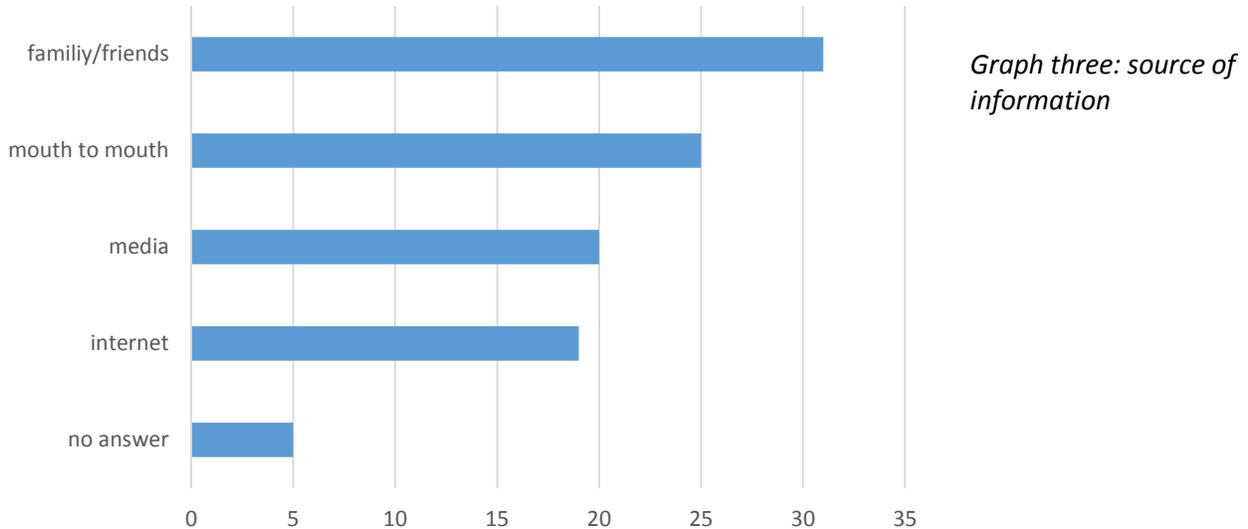
Graph two: respondents by tribe



48% of the respondents indicated that **there family got split up** and that they arrived at different dates in the camp. 20% arrived between 1 and 6 months ago and 19% arrived more than 6 months ago. Given the high number of families being split up, it is not surprising that UNHCR has registered currently 146 non-accompanied and 166 separated children in their registration data base.

Access to information on area of origin

59% of the respondents indicated to **receive regular information on their area of origin**, mostly from family/friends (31%) and mouth-to-mouth, i.e. new arrivals or by-passers in the camp (25%). The media (20%) and internet (19%) play an important role in accessing information (see graph three below). This information is important to include in a future information campaign and provide refugees with additional information such as reliefweb and other internet sources where they can retrieve timely information on their area of origin. Information seems to flow regularly as 53% indicated to receive information at least once a week. 58% indicated to trust these sources.

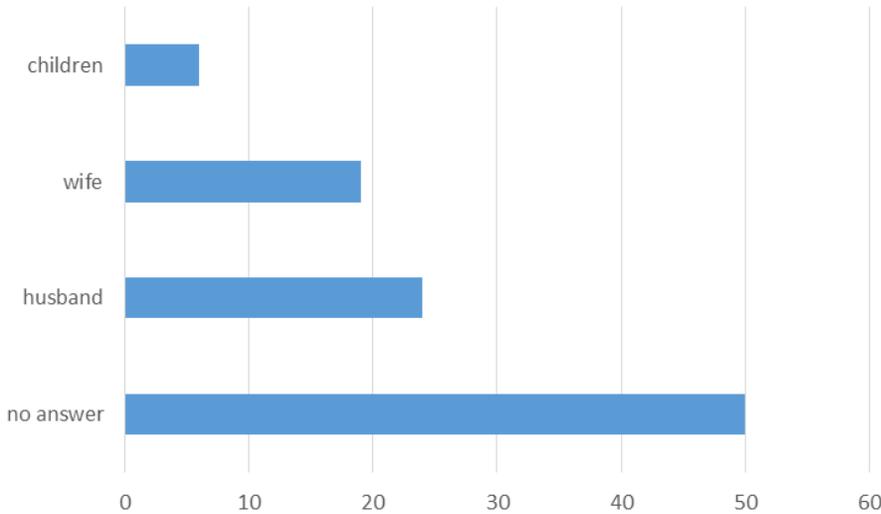


58% of the respondents indicated that their areas of origin are still active fighting zones and 13% said that their villages are “empty and fighting stopped” based on information they obtained.

Return intention

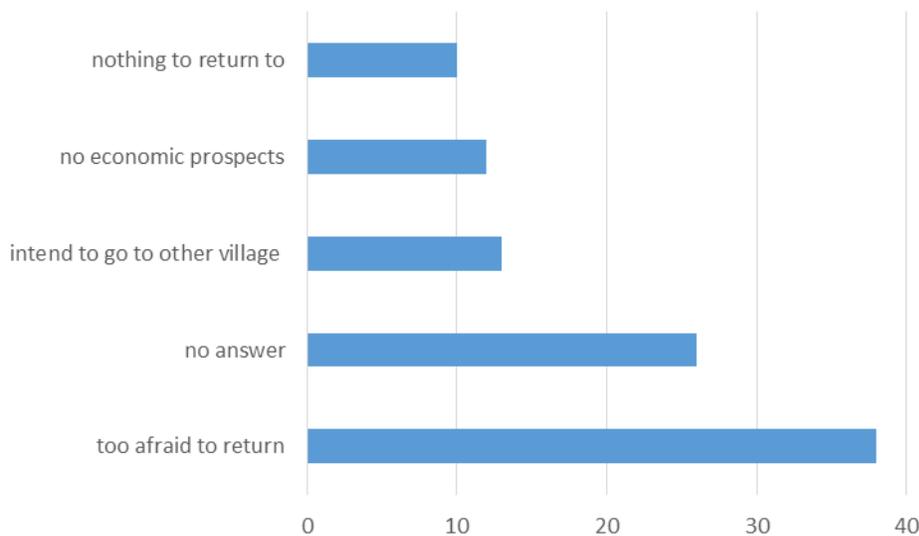
72% of all interviewed said that **they want to go back** to Nigeria (76% of all women and 66% of all men). Among the respondents, **53%** indicated that this opinion was **unanimous among all family members**, 20% provided no answer to this question.

Among the respondents where there was a difference of opinion, it was the majority men (24%) who did not want to return. The wife (19%) and children only 6% (see graph four below). However, 50% of the respondents did not provide an answer to this question. This is a very high percentage and thus, the results of this question can only be partially taken into account.



Graph four: Who from your family does not want to return?

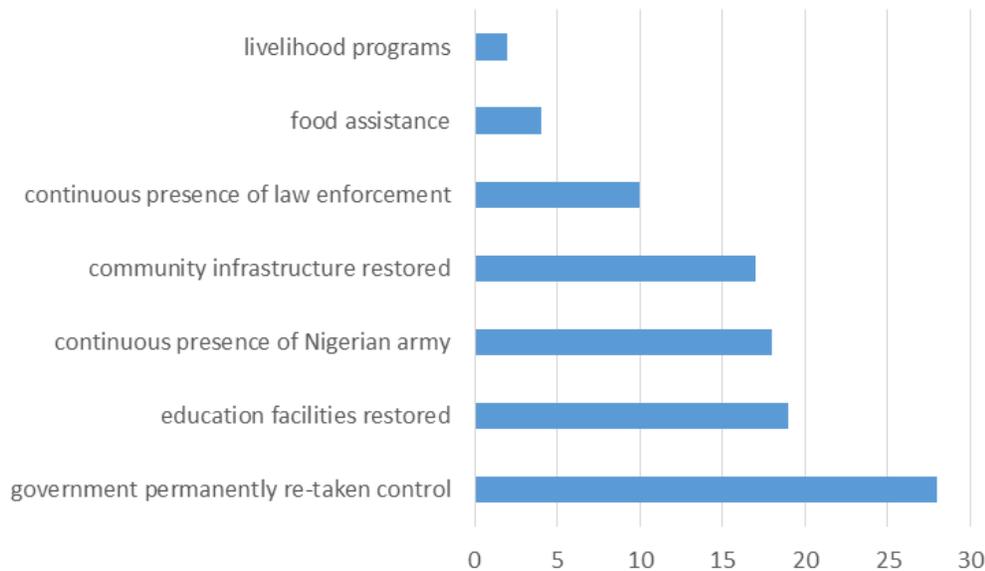
The most cited reason for not wanting to return was **being “too afraid to return”**. Given the fact that people arrived on average between one and six months ago and often witnessed attacks, killings, kidnappings and other grave human rights violations such an answer is not surprising. It will be important to evaluate in three months if the same trend is still being observed. UNHCR, conscious about the trauma most families have suffered, offers psychosocial assistance, but given limited resources and the lack of qualified personnel, more efforts might be necessary. 13% indicated wanting to go back to another village than their village of origin and 12% and 10% respectively cited “no economic prospect” and “nothing to return” to respectively as reasons for not wanting to return.



Graph five: if you don't want to return, why not?

When asked “what are the most important pre-conditions to be met for your family to return”, it is consistent that most of the respondents replied “government has permanently re-taken control” (28%). 18% indicated the need for a “continuous presence of the Nigerian army” and 10% “continuous presence of law enforcement”. For informing durable solutions programs in Nigeria, it will be essential to highlight the importance Nigerian refugees give to the “restoration of education facilities” as priority condition for

return (19%). Food assistance and livelihood programs are at the bottom of the priority list with 4% and 2% respectively.

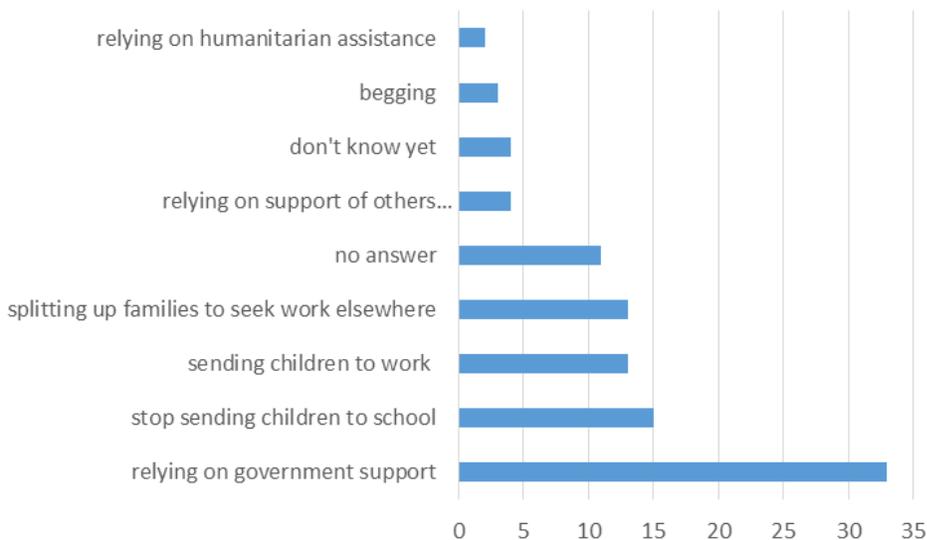


*Graph six:
number of times
where answer
was ranked as
one of the top
three priorities as
pre-condition to
be met before
returning home*

Most of the respondents indicated to have earned a **living back in Nigeria with agriculture/farming (71%)**, trading (22%) and cattle herding (8%). This is in line with the information in the UNHCR registration data base where a majority has indicated to be farmers or working as farm labors. 77% indicated that they will resume the activity they did before they left Nigeria. As **obstacles** to resuming past activities, refugees indicated “**no financial resources/equipment**” (50%), “no house/land to go back to” (42%) and “intend to go to other village” (23%).

When asked how they think they **will sustain their families** if they don’t resume past activities, the majority indicated “**relying on government support**” (33%), “stop sending children to school” (15%), “sending children to school” (13%) and “splitting up families to seek work elsewhere” (13%).

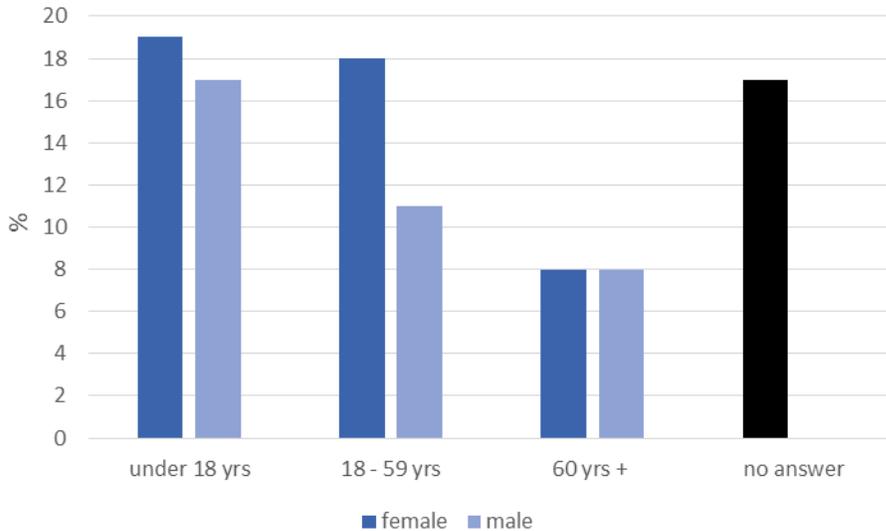
This important information should be factored in when designing information campaigns and durable solutions programs in Nigeria.



Safety and security in the camp

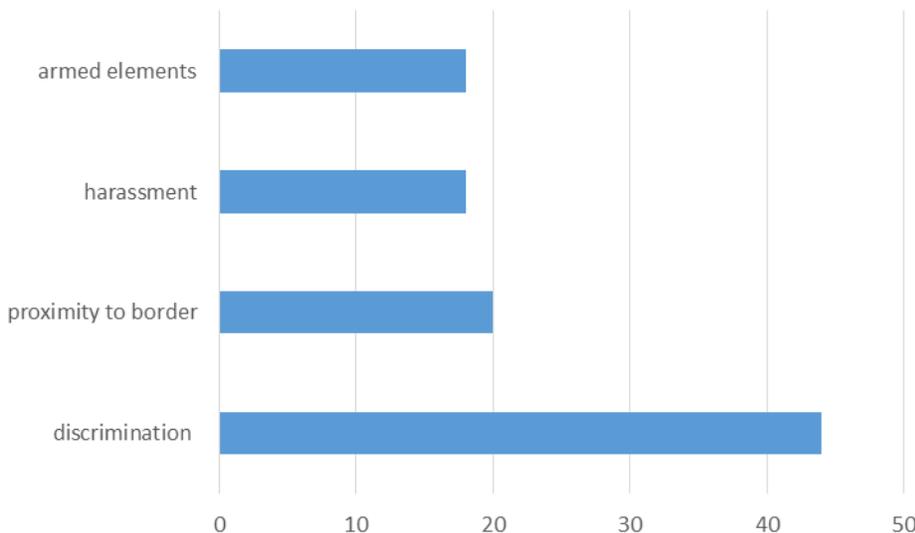
The second part of the assessment focused on safety and security and communication in the camp. **60% indicated that they feel safe in the camp**, 40% replied that they don't feel safe.

When asked which member of their family does not feel safe, the 40% replied the following:



17% did not provide an answer to this question. This should be taken into account when analyzing the findings.

The majority of those 40% indicated that the **main reason they don't feel safe** is discrimination (44%), followed by "proximity to border" (20%), "harassment" (18%) and "armed elements" (18%). During the debriefing with the data collectors, this question was discussed in detail to find out more about the type of information respondents provided. When mentioning "proximity to border" respondents mentioned in particular the fear of being close to the border, but not specific incidents which had already occurred due to the proximity. The same transpired for "armed elements"; respondents were highlighting their fear of



armed elements given what they had endured, but not the fact that they have seen armed elements in the camp. They stressed the point that it would be difficult to have arms in the camp as any weapon possession is closely monitored and reported by community and religious leaders.

It will be important to do a follow up on the findings and use the outreach and community mobilizers to assess in more detail what are the reasons for the discrimination.

Peaceful co-existence

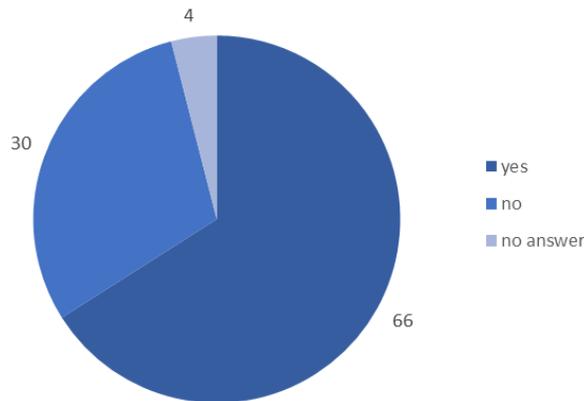
64% of the respondents confirmed that there **are no tensions among refugee families** in the camps. The 34% respondents who indicated that tensions exist mentioned tensions over resources/assistance (41%), “don’t know” (24%), and “tensions over domestic issues” (14%).

When asked about existing tensions between **refugees and host communities**, **59% confirmed that there are no tensions**. Those mentioning tensions indicated as reasons: tensions over resources/assistance (43%) and tensions over domestic issues (19%).

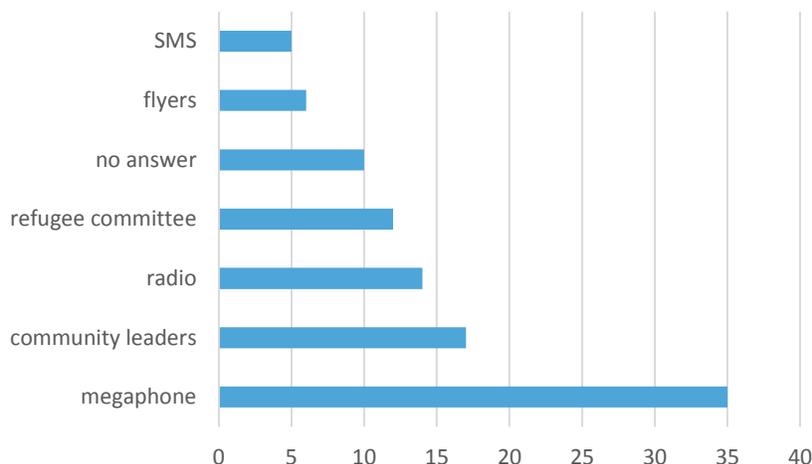
It is important to note that the refugees did not mention any tensions based on religion or ethnic grounds.

Access to information on assistance

When asked whether or not **they have sufficient information** on services and assistance provided/available in the camp, **66% answered by the affirmative**.



Those who said, they did not receive sufficient information, indicated their preferred choice of communication as follows:



Those who regularly receive information, indicated that they receive this information through the following channels:

