

WHITE NILE CAMPS - MULTISECTORAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Location: Refugee Camps in White Nile
States: White Nile
Localities: AL Jabalain and Elsalam

Norwegian Refugee Council, Al
Nile Tower, Khartoum, Sudan
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NRC

NORWEGIAN
REFUGEE COUNCIL



Nabitu, South Sudanese Refugee
Photo credit: Rawan Kara \ NRC

Introduction

A neglected crisis

Despite hosting the second-largest refugee population in the country, White Nile still represents one of the most underserved and neglected humanitarian responses in Sudan. Close to 274,000 refugees are living in the state, all of them South Sudanese. Often misperceived as simply a protracted refugee crisis, White Nile has since 2013 seen a continuous flow of asylum seekers. In 2021, 49,300 South Sudanese refugees crossed the border. These record numbers made White Nile the largest refugee emergency that year. Today, the population of refugees continues to grow, with more than 10,500 new arrivals between January and May 2022. The level of food insecurity is increasing in the state, rising from 15 per cent in 2021 to 23 per cent in 2022. Despite growing vulnerabilities, however, only four international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) and six UN agencies are present in White Nile.

Yearly flooding

During the rainy season from June to September, tens of thousands of people in White Nile are displaced as dwellings, villages, camps and roads are submerged by heavy floods. Out of the nine established camps, seven are routinely cut off from road access during the rainy season. Following the large influx in 2021, about 36,000 newly arrived refugees were placed in the new settlement of Al Ghana. But, during the rainy season of 2021, the camp was completely submerged. Al Ghana's refugees were dispatched to overcrowded camps nearby, while others went on living in makeshift shelters within the host community. Eleven months after the destruction of the camp, Al Ghana's refugees are yet to be relocated to a safe and appropriate location.

Basic services in jeopardy amid decreasing funds

Eighty per cent of the refugee population of White Nile lives in camps, whose size varies between 11,500 and 38,600 individuals per camp. Filled to their maximum capacity and not meeting the minimum humanitarian standards by far, they are chronically underserved and are greatly affected by the decrease in funding. Most of the camps have access to water for only two to five hours a day and open defecation is a common practice. The rainy season, overcrowding and dilapidated infrastructure are all risk factors for a surge of water-borne diseases. Since June 2022, refugees who arrived in Sudan more than two years ago also saw their food ration cut in half because of the decrease in funding. At a time of high food insecurity levels among refugees and rapid inflation, the cut in assistance is likely to cause a new shock for already highly vulnerable families.

Potential for durable solutions?

Despite its growing severity, the crisis in White Nile does offer some untapped opportunities for durable solutions and development. Compared with other highly vulnerable states, White Nile offers a relatively stable environment. In adopting an encampment policy, authorities have also demonstrated willingness to facilitate the movement of refugees outside of the camps, including for livelihood opportunities, such as agriculture. In the longer term, authorities, host communities, development and humanitarian partners and the refugees themselves could find large benefits in working towards the economic inclusion of refugees at the local level.



I Ghana camp flooded (sept 2021)
Photo credit: NRC



Photo credit: NRC

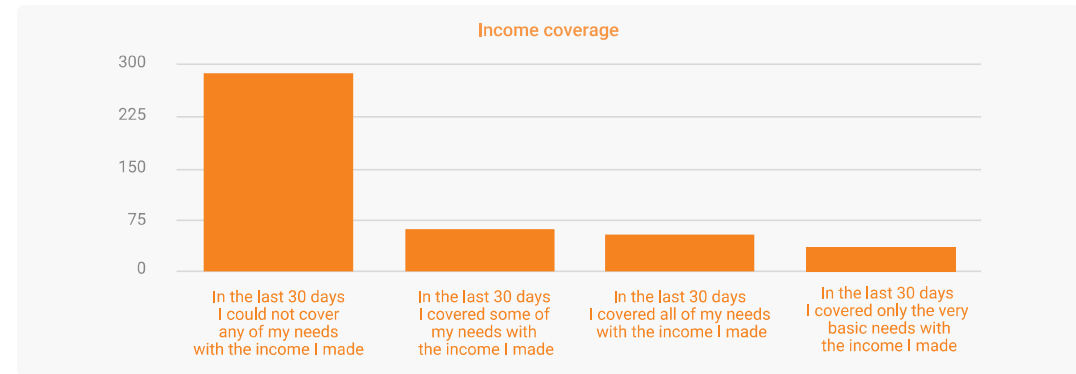
Assessment

NRC conducted a multi-sectoral needs assessment (MSNA) in the White Nile camps from May to June 2022 to gather evidence-based information and raise awareness on the situation of South Sudanese refugees in the nine camps of White Nile. The assessment followed a three-layered methodology of a) key Informant Interviews (KIIs), b) technical observations, and c) focus group discussions (FGDs) to capture both quantitative and qualitative data. In total NRC, conducted 424 KIIs, 10 technical observations, and 32 FGDs, across the nine camps. This included the population of Al Ghana camp which is currently integrated into the camps and peri-urban areas in the East Bank of White Nile on a temporary basis. Among the respondents to the KIIs, 73 per cent were women and 27 per cent men. The areas of focus during the MSNA were a) demographics and returns intentions b) market analysis and income sources, c) digital access d) accountability to the affected population (AAP) and community representation and e) sectoral information on needs and gaps.

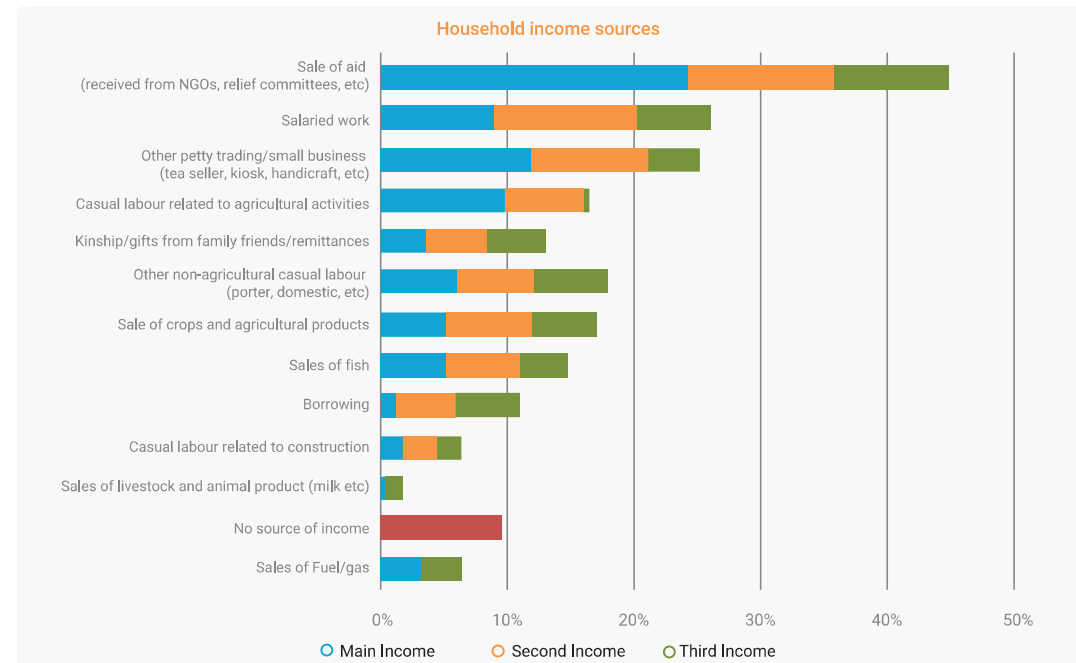
The main findings are presented here while all detailed information can be found in full report.

Market and cash

Only five per cent of the surveyed households could meet all of their needs with the income they earned.



The first source of income for refugee comes from selling humanitarian aid, followed by other petty trade activities (e.g. as a tea seller, running small kiosks and selling handicrafts), and casual labour related to agricultural activities.



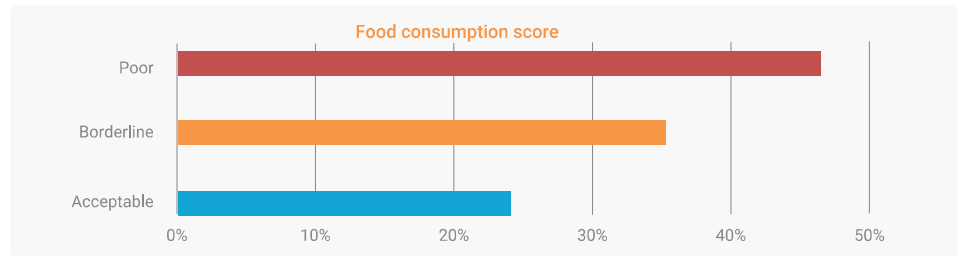
The barriers to income for the refugee population emerging from the lack of livelihoods opportunities (51 per cent) of in and around the camps. This was followed by the lack of knowledge about income opportunities (14 per cent) and the lack of adequate employable skills (13 per cent).

Livelihood and Food Security

Seventy-six per cent of the refugees have poor (45 per cent) or borderline (31 per cent) levels of food consumption, while only 24 per cent of them have an acceptable food consumption score.

Adult refugees (18+ years old) report an average of 1.8 meals per day. That is the same as children and adolescents between six and 18 years old, while children younger than five have two meals a day. Such patterns have an extreme impact, especially in the most at risk categories of young children.

Families are likely to immediately sell part of their in-kind food assistance to meet other basic needs, and then re-purchase the same commodities at higher prices later on in the month in local markets, with 73 per cent of the surveyed households declaring that they did not have enough money to afford food in the last seven days.



Livelihood and Food Security recommendations

- Design tailored cash assistance to complement the food in-kind distributions, increasing adaptability and diversification of households' economy;
- Mobilize resources for multi-purpose cash based assistance for particularly vulnerable families with specific protection concerns;
- Invest in programming to build refugees' self-reliance by encouraging livelihood opportunities and graduation schemes;
- Invest in identification of viable livelihood activities, tailored to sustain in-camp economy and enhance / sustain existing infrastructures and services (e.g. short term employment opportunities).

Education and Technical and vocational education and training (TVET)

According to UNHCR, 45 per cent of refugee children living in camps are enrolled while 55 per cent are out the school.

The NRC assessment also highlights an important gap in access to learning for out-of-school children and youth, with respondents indicating that only one per cent of them have access to vocational skills training and limited non-formal learning.

UNHCR / 2022 White Nile In-Camps Refugee Education Statistics June

School age population		
Gender		
M	F	Total
52,231	43,000	95,231

Enrolment								
Primary			Secondary			Total		
M	F	Total	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
19,914	20,036	39,950	1,724	1,506	3,230	21,638	21,542	43,180

Out of school Children		
M	F	Total
30,593	21,458	52,051

School age population	95,231
Net Enrolment Rate	43,180 - 45%
Out of School	52,051 - 55%

According to the NRC MSNA only 25 per cent of schools have access to both safe water and gender-segregated latrines. Most of the schools have neither latrines nor handwashing facilities.

Ninety per cent of teachers cited delays in payment of salaries and non-payment of incentives. Seventy per cent of schools reported a lack of trained teachers and of in-service training opportunities.



Education Recommendations

- Construct and rehabilitate school, including classrooms and WASH facilities and provide teaching and learning materials;
- Invest in teacher training, including In-service capacity building, ensuring that female teachers are prioritized;
- Invest in psychosocial support for teachers and students, with the provision of specialized training of teacher, and the creation of recreational facilities in schools;
- Engage in Non-formal education and in market-relevant vocational skills training for out-of-school children and youth.

Shelter and Non-Food Item (NFI)

Eighty-five per cent of the shelters occupied by the South Sudanese in the White Nile camps were made from local materials, another five per cent were made from plastic sheeting/plastic. Four per cent live in tents.

Type of shelter



- Shelter made of local materials
- Occupation of unfinished/ damaged houses
- Rented house/host family house
- Plastic sheeting/ cartons/ damaged tent
- Tent
- Occupation of public buildings

Thirty-two per cent of the shelters were reported as slightly damaged, while another 24 per cent are moderately damaged. The main material needed is plastic sheeting.

The community reported that the last distribution of shelter materials took place in 2017, and said they urgently need support to receive or purchase plastic sheeting to protect their households during the rainy season.

Shelter and NFI recommendations

- Work in consultation with the host and refugee communities to design non-permanent but more sustainable shelter models, as land agreements with host communities for the land makes it difficult to establish a permanent shelter;
- Include rehabilitation in shelter intervention, including the regular replacement of plastic sheeting;
- Distribute emergency shelter kits to people living in shelters that are heavily damaged and irreparable and ensure that more NFI distribution is done based on needs.



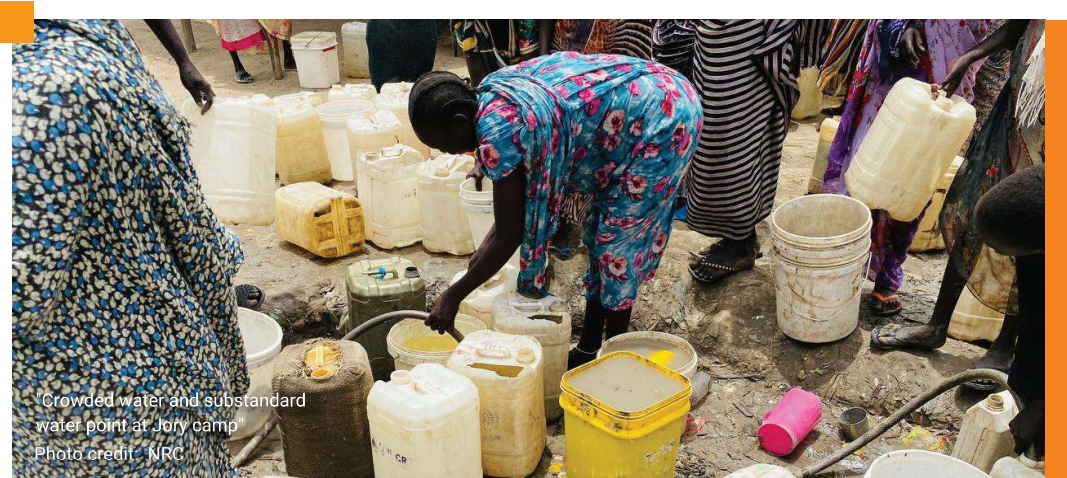
Photo credit: NRC

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The estimated consumption of water per person among the White Nile population is only 20 liters of water per week. This is 80.95 per cent below the minimum SPHERE standards (a minimum of 15 litres per person per day).

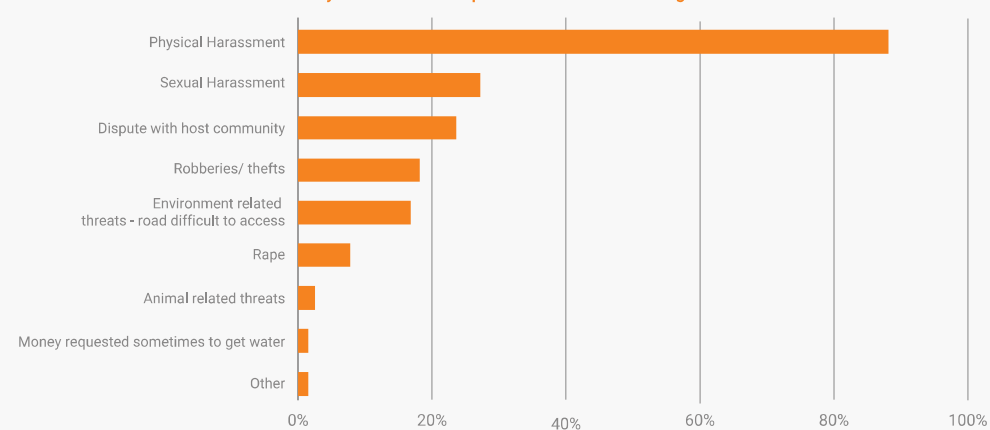
Seventy-one per cent of respondents stated that water coverage is inconsistent, i.e. not enough. Fifty-two per cent of the respondents reported that running water is only available between two and five hours a day on average, while 35 per cent said it was available for less than two hours a day.

Eighty-two per cent of respondents reported that water collection is done by adult women. Forty-nine per cent of the respondents have experienced or heard of disturbing incidents during the water collection process, with a 44 per cent consisting of physical and sexual harassment.



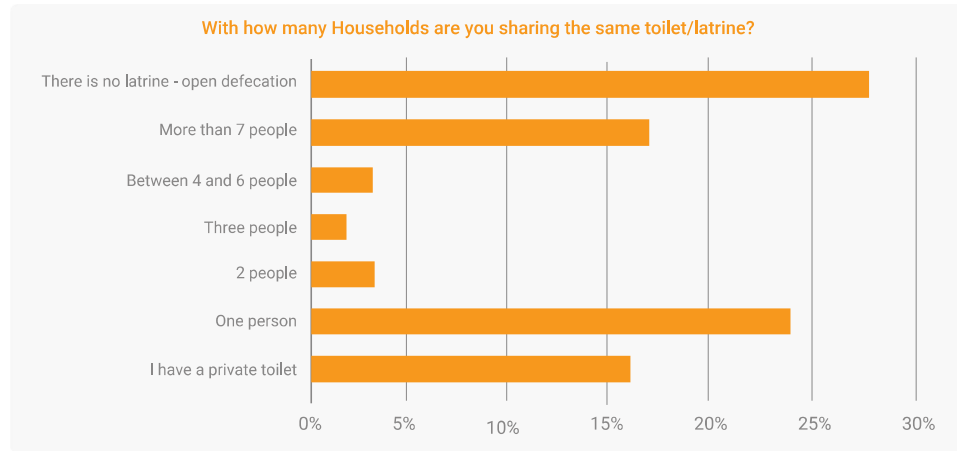
Crowded water and substandard water point at Joly camp
Photo credit: NRC

What may be the issues experienced when collecting water?



Twenty-six per cent of the population engages in open defecation because of the lack of available sanitation facilities or because they must share the same latrine with more than seven people, (18 per cent).

Fifty-four per cent of the female population indicated that they do not have access to sanitary products, while another 17 per cent said that access is inconsistent.



WASH recommendations

- Increase the number of tap stands and extend the water supply pipeline;
- Improve water pressure. This would minimize congestion at tap stands by improving water collection time;
- Ensure continuous latrine maintenance and distribution of cleaning kits to improve the use of existing latrines and ensure cost efficiency. In general, proper latrine maintenance should be prioritized in hygiene-promotion activities;
- Increase community-led hygiene promotion and the dissemination of information, education and communication (IEC) materials, including for new arrivals.
- Establish WASH committees in the community to facilitate operation and maintenance of the WASH infrastructure at community level;
- Increase community-led hygiene promotion and the dissemination of information;



Photo credit: NRC

- Carefully consider and include the needs of persons with disability whilst setting up WASH infrastructure.
- Increase the distribution of menstrual hygiene and dignity kits among the reproductive female population.

Health

Health facilities are available in the camps, although, as reported, they a) lack medication (92 per cent), b) lack sufficient medical or trained medical personnel (38 per cent), c) are unable to conduct laboratory tests (34 per cent), d) charge high prices for medical consultations (23 per cent), e) lack adequate specialised facilities (17 per cent), f) unavailable or non-functioning facilities for sexual reproductive health (SRH) (15 per cent).

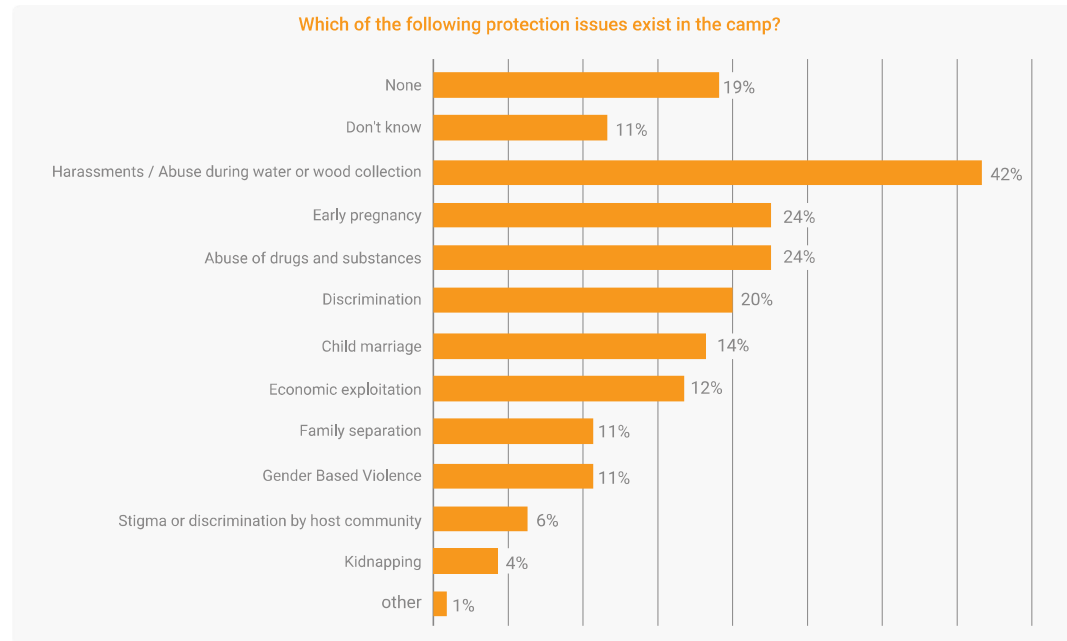
Health recommendations

- Improve access from/to all camps during the rainy seasons through infrastructure upgrades and ferry maintenance to facilitate medical referrals and improve access to healthcare;
- Support the community with transportation allowances when specialised health care outside the camps is required;
- Increase support to Ministry of Health MoH especially around medical supplies, access to lab tests and relevant technology;
- Improve awareness among the community, of key diseases and their prevention at household level.

Protection

The most common risks that refugees face in the camps are harassment and abuse during water or wood collection, an activity undertaken by women, (42 per cent), early pregnancy (24 per cent), child marriage (14 per cent) and gender-based violence (GBV) (11 per cent). Risks that apply to the overall population are abuse of drugs and other substances (24 per cent) and discrimination (20 per cent).

Observations in the camps and consultation with authorities and the community reveal that there is a large and growing number of Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children in White Nile camps. The main reasons are a) parents died (89 per cent) mostly in South Sudan and b) children were lost during displacement events (45 per cent), when the family crossed to Sudan.

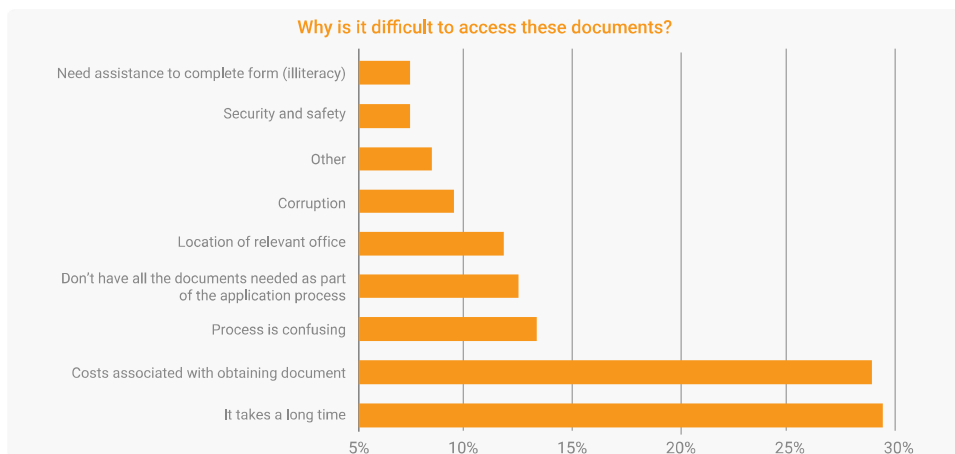


Protection recommendations

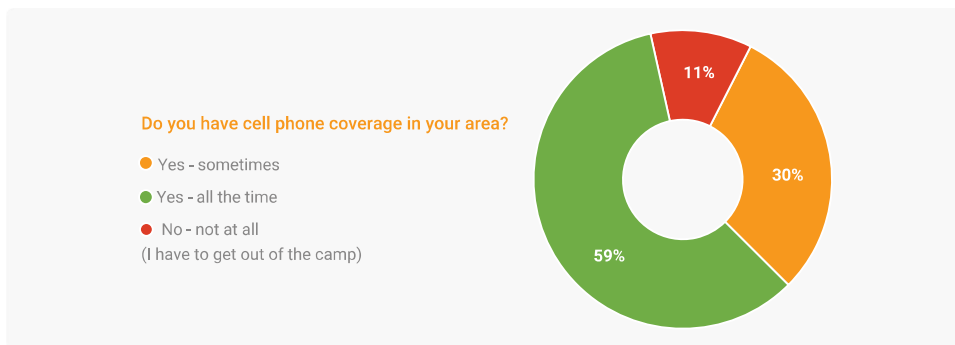
- Conduct dedicated vulnerability assessments by specialised protection agencies;
- Increase dedicated safe spaces for women and case management services to improve response;
- Improve infrastructure based on protection mainstreaming principles to increase meaningful access for vulnerable groups;
- Improve referral pathways and reporting mechanisms and ensure the community is both aware of them and has access to them.

Access to Information, Counselling and Legal Assistance (ICLA)

Some refugees have been in the camps for years, but only 58 per cent reported having the refugee registration card, only eight per cent have birth certificates, and only two per cent have marriage certificates, a reality that restricts refugees' access and right to full assistance packages;



Digital access in the camps is limited with only 30 per cent of the community reporting that they have access to mobile phones at all times. Lack of electricity inside the camps increases the challenges in accessing electric or electronic devices;



ICLA recommendations

- Increase access to information in local languages (Arabic, Shilouk and Nuer) on the importance of legal identity and civil documents and the procedures for obtaining them;
- Support access to legal identity and civil documentation through counselling and legal assistance, including financial assistance;
- Provide counselling and legal assistance to enable beneficiaries to overcome barriers that limit their access to work.



Photo credit: IIRC

Conclusion

The MSNA highlighted immense humanitarian needs, with yearly shocks (i.e. floodings, new arrivals) that regularly propel suffering to emergency levels. For refugees in White Nile, however, the protracted nature of their exile has meant a steady fall to oblivion. The humanitarian response has remained minimal, far below international standards.

The intention survey among refugees indicates that the overwhelming majority of refugees in White Nile have no choice but to remain where they are, mainly because of insecurity in their place of origin. With no return perspective, 72 per cent intend to stay in the camps, despite substandard and undignified conditions.

What does this mean for the foreseeable future? There will be continuous needs that the humanitarian community should address.

There also has to be a more strategic approach to refugee response, one that builds on refugees resilience and skills to improve self-reliance, alleviate pressure on the host community, reduce aid dependency, and foster social cohesion. White Nile offers opportunities to test out models for refugees' economic inclusion that benefit both refugees and host communities. This would not only elevate refugees' rights and living conditions, but also equip them for the durable solutions they choose. On the other hand, if the status quo prevails, White Nile's population in need is likely to face further adversity, driven by the spiralling crisis that Sudan is living today.

General recommendations

- Immediately prioritize White Nile's refugee response with multi-year and flexible funding that will address both emergency response (floods and new arrivals) and resilience building. This should also include resources to improve the coordination and the production of timely information and evidence to feed the response;
- Engage at the policy level to encourage more flexible encampment policies, including the possibility of turning camps into settlements;
- Accelerate the adoption of a Durable Solutions Strategy for refugees, including the implementation of South Sudanese refugees' rights to work, as committed in the "Four Freedom" document;
- Develop contextualized and comprehensive self-reliance models for White Nile's refugee population, that include linkages with host communities, the private sector, local authorities, and humanitarian and development actors.



Photo credit: NRC