

NO SIMPLE SOLUTIONS

A photograph of a group of people in a white boat on a body of water, likely a lake or river, during sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a strong silhouette effect on the people and the boat. The water is dark, and the sky is a mix of orange and yellow. The people are dressed in simple, everyday clothing. The overall mood is somber and reflective.

Women, Displacement and Durable Solutions in South Sudan

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SUMMARY

Conversations surrounding returns and relocations in South Sudan and the future of the POC sites are often framed around clear-cut distinctions between single push and pull factors. This framing – often based on the perceptions of international actors of what internally displaced people (IDPs) or refugees do or *should* think – ignores the fact that decisions to stay or to move are made based on complex motivations in contexts of high uncertainty and, especially for women, limited information.

This report seeks to bring the perceptions and experiences of displaced and returned South Sudanese women to the forefront of conversations around durable solutions, and further convey the complexities of the current context. As up to 80% of displaced households in South Sudan are female-headed, and as women and girls face distinct threats in displacement and return, the report also advocates for a more gender-sensitive and durable solutions-based approach to analysis, planning and programming around population movements in South Sudan. The findings are based on focus group discussions and key informant interviews in nine locations across six of the 10 former states in South Sudan.

Return – or not – is often a coping strategy. Rather than an end in themselves, movements should be seen as coping mechanisms that are frequently open-ended and non-linear. The vast majority of civilian movements continue to be linked primarily – not to changes in the political situation – but to careful considerations of where they and their families have the safest access to services and the best chances of survival. They often involve the splitting up of households or moving back and forth between displacement and locations of return or relocation. In many cases, women who have come back from neighbouring countries also noted insecurity or difficult conditions as the main factors driving their movement, and most were not making it ‘home’ but were instead effectively becoming IDPs in South Sudan.

There are no simple solutions in a complex context of needs, threats and political uncertainty. Women and girls face particular challenges in achieving durable solutions, which are not always fully understood or adequately reflected in planning and response. The most salient challenges raised by women included: sexual and gender based violence; access to housing, land and property; and extremely scarce resources. Indeed, the report notes that in some cases returns may be driving even higher needs, as finite resources are split to accommodate more people. Women also noted continued insecurity in many areas, raising threats of inter-communal violence, criminality and the continued presence of armed actors. Many internally displaced women also noted they were unwilling to return until they were convinced that the R-ARCSS would lead to lasting peace. Overall, the report concludes that – given the complexity of the current context – all actors must respond in a context specific, community-driven and gender-sensitive way, with an aim of permanently ending the cycles of displacement experienced by millions of South Sudanese.

Key recommendations from the report include the following:

All actors should:

- Take a durable solutions approach to returns and relocations and planning for the future of the POC sites. In the current context, achieving a durable solution should be viewed as developing transitional pathways, with an

emphasis on tailored, case-by-case and location-specific approaches as well as a focus on (re)integration rather than merely physical return.

- Integrate gender considerations into planning and response and consider in a systematic way the ability of different segments of the population to access services as well as their distinct protection threats.
- Undertake special efforts to ensure the full participation – rather than consultation – of displaced persons in the planning and management of achieving durable solutions, including deliberate strategies to engage women and promote their role in decision-making.

The Government of South Sudan should:

- Urgently invest in building the necessary infrastructure and providing essential services.
- Along with other parties, reinvigorate progress on implementation of the R-ACSS ahead of the end of the pre-transitional period and ensure that the R-ARCSS leads to improved governance and sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Humanitarian actors should:

- Prioritize gendered contextual analysis and understanding of movement dynamics, motivations and intentions.
- Prioritize needs-based assistance over status-based assistance.
- Explore the importance of kinship networks and gender relations as key determinants of vulnerability.
- Improve accountability to affected populations. This should include the establishment of a specific, transparent and representative body to monitor assisted movements, gender-sensitive mitigation measures to address anticipated risks and effective, gender-sensitive community feedback mechanisms.
- Plan dedicated activities and investment specifically designed to challenge harmful gender norms and to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence.

UNMISS should:

- Ensure strategies to extend its presence beyond the POC sites are based on transparent, gender-sensitive analysis of risk and in close consultation with communities, particularly women.
- Ensure its planning and protection assessments include a thorough gender analysis of and activities aimed at preventing and responding to threats of sexual and gender-based violence faced by women and girls inside POC sites and outside, with particular emphasis on sexual violence.

Donors should:

- Ensure that gender-sensitive responses to return, relocation and (re)integration are effectively funded, with a strong focus on local capacity.



Photo by Andreea Campeanu/Oxfam

1 INTRODUCTION

Over the course of the conflict in South Sudan, hundreds of thousands of people have been killed and millions of women, men and children have been pushed to life-threatening levels of hunger.¹ The conflict has created the largest displacement crises in Africa, and one of the largest in the world. More than 1.8 million South Sudanese are internally displaced (IDPs) – including 178,000 in UN Protection of Civilian (POC) sites – and a further 2.3 million are refugees in the region.² Since the signing of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS) in September 2018, the country has experienced a marked reduction in clashes between parties.

While the vast majority of displaced South Sudanese have yet to return home, an increase in spontaneous returns has been reported since the signing of the agreement, and more than 3,500 IDPs have been supported by humanitarian actors and the UN peacekeeping mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) to relocate and/or return to their place of habitual residence or origin since April 2019.³ There have also been reports of authorities facilitating movements, and encouraging displaced people to relocate and/or return.⁴

According to the most recent Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Operational Guidance Note for Humanitarian Support to Returns, Relocations and Local Integration of IDPs in South Sudan, conditions are currently not conducive for ‘mass’ returns or relocations, though opportunities for smaller scale movements may exist.⁵ UNHCR similarly maintains that ‘sustainable conditions are not in place for the safe and dignified return of refugees and IDPs in South Sudan.’⁶ This report does not seek to debate these positions. Rather, it aims to contribute additional understanding of the return movements that have happened to date, add nuance to ongoing conversations, as well as highlight the areas needing greater attention in humanitarian and development planning and response. The report illustrates how decisions about returns (particularly those taken by women) are often made with incomplete information and in a complex context of push and pull factors. This has profound implications for the security and resilience of women and wider communities. The report provides recommendations to ensure that any involvement in returns – when occurring – is principled and effectively integrates gendered analysis into programme decision making and response.

By focusing on the voices of internally displaced and returnee South Sudanese women, this report aims to bring their perceptions and experiences to the fore. It highlights the particular vulnerabilities that women and girls face in displacement, relocation and return to inform discussions on the future of the POC sites and the ongoing analysis of patterns of population movement. The focus on South Sudanese women and girls is not meant to discount that the perceptions and preferences of South Sudanese communities as a whole, including men and boys, must be central to humanitarian engagement in South Sudan. However, the voices of South

Sudanese women and girls are often restricted and suppressed in decision making on various issues and at all levels, despite the fact that up to 80% of displaced households are female-headed and trends indicate that more women are moving – both temporarily and permanently – than men.⁷ The focus of this report is therefore an important and often overlooked aspect of the complexity of durable solutions in South Sudan.

The findings of this report draw mainly from focus group discussions (FGDs) and key informant interviews (KIs) conducted by Titi Foundation, Nile Hope, Oxfam, CARE and the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). These include 19 focus FGDs with returnee and internally displaced women (including previous refugees who have crossed back into South Sudan but not returned to their area of origin), and eight KIs with women's rights actors between May and July 2019. Their inputs are further contextualized by 10 KIs with humanitarian organizations, UN (including UNMISS), local authorities and government actors as well as a review of relevant literature carried out over the same period. FGDs and KIs were carried out in nine locations: Akobo (former Jonglei State), Bentiu and Rubkona (former Unity State), Wau and Baggari (former Western Bahr el Ghazal State), Malakal (former Upper Nile State), Torit (former Eastern Equatoria State), Juba and Kajo Keji (former Central Equatoria State).



Female arrivals from Khartoum, Sudan, being interviewed by DRC. (Photo by Gatluak Nen Chan/DRC)

A quick note on terminology...

One of the challenges at the moment is that different agencies and actors are using different terminologies, which sometimes creates confusion in identifying exactly who is a returnee, characterizing movement dynamics, and understanding the scale of returns taking place. The terms below are not an exhaustive list related to durable solutions, but they are technical definitions of key terms as used in this report.

Durable solution: A long-term process that is achieved when displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement. Achieving a durable solution should be viewed as an incremental pathway, with intermediate outcomes that can be categorized as material/economic (e.g. improved livelihoods), physical/social (e.g. increased social cohesion between displaced and host populations) and legal (e.g. being legally allowed to work, or access government-run health and education services). A durable solution can be achieved through three non-hierarchical pathways: return to a place of origin or habitual residence, local integration in the area of displacement, and resettlement/relocation to another location.

Return: Displaced persons go back to their place of origin or habitual residence. The women interviewed in this research who have come back to South Sudan from neighbouring countries have not yet returned to their place of origin or habitual residence, so must be considered IDPs rather than returnees (in Bentiu, Rubkona, Kajo Keji and Torit). This is distinguishable from internally displaced women who have 'returned' (in Akobo and Baggari).

Spontaneous movement/return: Refers to the independent movement or return of individuals or groups, by voluntary choice and without any form of organized support. The vast majority of movements that have happened since the signing of the R-ARCSS have been spontaneous.

Assisted/facilitated movements/return: The provision of administrative, financial and logistical support, including reintegration assistance to displaced individuals or groups who volunteer to return to their places of origin or choose to relocate elsewhere. 'Voluntary movements' are those that involve freedom of choice and informed decision making.

Relocation: Movement within national borders with the intention to find a solution to displacement.

Local integration/reintegration: Refers to a process where previously displaced persons are gradually integrated – legally, economically, socially and culturally – into their country and communities of origin, or chosen place of refuge.

2 CURRENT CONTEXT OF RETURNS

The increase in spontaneous movement of people witnessed in recent months in several parts of South Sudan has been largely attributed to improved security resulting from the signing of the R-ARCSS in September 2018. Indeed, population movements have – in some instances – been used as an indicator of progress in the implementation of the revitalized agreement.⁸

While improved security is undoubtedly a factor in many of these movements, the signing of the R-ARCSS was often not the *main* motivation cited by women in FGDs. And, while displaced women in most locations expressed a clear desire to return home – ‘*home is home*,’ they say – a range of factors continue to prevent their return. There were, in every case, a number of individual factors and perceptions which carefully considered and weighed together led to decisions to return or to remain in displacement.

Data from IOM and REACH suggest that more women are moving than men – both for temporary travel and attempts at more permanent movements.⁹ As women, girls, men and boys face unique challenges in displacement and in pathways towards durable solutions, including return, the specific services, resources and protection they require must be adequately considered and reflected in planning and response. For example, data suggests that over half of South Sudanese households coming back from the wider region could include at least one member who is pregnant or lactating, who may therefore be more vulnerable to malnutrition.¹⁰

There is no single pattern of return – they are not simple or linear processes, and often have no clear beginning or end.¹¹ Movement patterns across South Sudan vary, and are not necessarily static.¹² This section highlights some common movement and intention trends for internally displaced, relocated and returned women interviewed across the research areas. The relatively small sample size (both in number of people and places) means that these findings are not necessarily exhaustive. However, they do serve to highlight some of the many complexities that characterize current movements in South Sudan.

RETURN (OR NOT) AS A COPING MECHANISM

Women who had crossed back into South Sudan from the neighbouring countries and IDP returnees described conditions of vulnerability in displacement resulting in ‘push’ factors for onward movement. Most women who had come back to South Sudan from Uganda, Sudan and Ethiopia cited difficult conditions in areas to which they were displaced as the primary factor driving their movement.¹³ In Bentiu, women who came back to South Sudan stated that even if the R-ARCSS had not been in place, conditions in Sudan resulting from the political crisis would have been enough to push them to return to South Sudan. One woman who had recently crossed the border from Sudan said: *‘If you have to die, you die in your own*

country.¹⁴ This was echoed by Grace*, a women's rights actor in Juba:

*'The reason there is a small number [of refugees who have come back to South Sudan] is because the services in the refugee camps are deteriorating. They just decided it is better to die at home than to die in the refugee camp. If I am going to die in the refugee camp, why should I not just go and die at home?'*¹⁵

Similarly, in Akobo, women who had come back from Ethiopia spoke of intercommunal conflict between the host community and refugees and between refugees in the camps as the driving factor in their movement. Indeed, they only spoke of the peace agreement when prompted, saying that while they could 'sense' there was peace because of a reduction in fighting, they were poorly informed about its status. Push factors for movement were also noted by internally displaced women from villages around Baggari who had fled into the bush to escape fighting (over lack of access to water) and in Kajo Keji and Juba (poor access to services). This reinforces that while the signing of the R-ARCSS may be a factor in decisions to come back to South Sudan, it is not the only – and often not the main – consideration. Decisions to move or not are often made based on where chances are greatest for survival, both in terms of security and access to services.

Furthermore, women who had come back from Uganda to Torit and Kajo Keji, and internally displaced women in Akobo, expressed the intention to flee to refugee camps if their situation further deteriorated either in terms of security or access to services. There have also been reports of people returning to the POC sites or proceeding to refugee camps after their departure from displacement sites.¹⁶ For example, IOM reports that more than a quarter of the permanent exits from Bentiu POC site in February and April 2019 were to other displacement sites.¹⁷

These movements are taking place in a simultaneous context of continued displacement. While population flows of refugees back into South Sudan have increased since the signing of the R-ARCSS, people also continue to leave the country – largely driven by hunger.¹⁸ Overall, in many parts of the country, hunger-related displacement continues, as well as displacement due to insecurity related to inter-communal violence and cattle raids, which increased between January and March 2019.¹⁹ Recently renewed fighting between the government and the opposition group National Salvation Front (NAS) – who are not signatories to the R-ARCSS – in former Central Equatoria State in June and July 2019 has also caused 'mass' displacement of civilians.²⁰

PARTIAL AND TRANSITORY RETURNS

Some patterns of return and relocation are also used as coping strategies, such as splitting up households or moving back and forth between displacement and locations of return or relocation. While some men, women, girls, and boys may be

* The names of the women's rights actors quoted in this research have been changed to maintain anonymity.

reintegrating in their areas of origin or place of habitual residence, many of the movements happening at the moment are more complex. These patterns should be analysed in the context of durable solutions. Transitional movements can build the foundations for more durable solutions by, for example, giving displaced people a chance to rebuild their homes and plant their crops. On the other hand, they can also increase vulnerability and promote further displacement. For instance, following a facilitated movement from Bor POC to Akobo in October 2018, some of the IDPs assisted moved on to refugee camps in Ethiopia when they faced limited access to services in Akobo.

The women interviewed who had come back to South Sudan from Sudan and Uganda had not returned to their area of origin. This was often linked to feeling they were unable to return to their areas of origin because of challenges mainly related to security or access to housing, land and property. According to UNHCR, up to 85% of people involved in spontaneous refugee movements across the border back into South Sudan are unable to return to their areas of origin.²¹ Instead, they are relocating to other areas or effectively becoming IDPs in South Sudan, in some instances moving to the POC sites for security, family reunification, and access to services. For example, women who had come to the Bentiu POC site from Sudan said the 'main reason' they went to the POC site was security: *'...although they say there's peace outside, we're still not sure. We've heard of things like revenge killings. So, we know we are safe in the POC.'* Access to services, particularly food and education, was also a factor in decisions not to return to areas of origin or habitual residence: *'Where are you going to educate your five children in Koch village?'* These movements present unique challenges, as those who have come back to South Sudan from neighbouring countries often have high levels of need and are vulnerable to further displacement.

Since September 2018, there has also been increased back and forth transitory movement of IDPs and South Sudanese refugees between locations of displacement and areas of origin or habitual residence. As one UN worker put it with regards to the Wau POC site, people have 'one foot in, one foot out' of displacement: they are, in some cases, moving between locations of displacement and return to assess conditions and begin laying the foundations for a more permanent return. While these movements can potentially support transitions towards more durable solutions, they also indicate ongoing challenges in the environment that prevent people from returning permanently. Therefore, it is important to continue monitoring where and why such movements are happening, with an emphasis on protection, and to analyse the patterns using a durable solutions framework.²² Humanitarian actors and UNMISS should explore ways to respond to gaps, while respecting the transitory nature of such movements and not discouraging them or pushing for permanent movements at a more rapid pace, for example through the rapid destruction of shelters in POC sites or other displacement sites without consultation.²³

AN ONGOING HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

All those interviewed reported high levels of need across sectors, including food security, health, education, water and sanitation, and shelter. This highlights the

complexity of taking steps towards finding durable solutions to displacement in the context of one of the most severe humanitarian crises in the world. The scale of humanitarian needs present in this crisis – with 7.1 million people in need of assistance – calls for thorough, realistic and evidence-based planning focused on meeting the most urgent needs.²⁴ While humanitarian actors reached more than two million people in need in all ten former states over the first quarter of 2019,²⁵ they do not currently have the capacity or the resources to respond to large-scale movements of people and their subsequent reintegration.

The most recent Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis found that levels of severe food insecurity have reached unprecedented levels this year, with over 60% of the population experiencing life-threatening hunger.²⁶ The additional needs of returnees was one of the factors noted in that report as driving worsening hunger, particularly in parts of former Upper Nile and Jonglei States.²⁷ This trend was not limited to food, but also showed in increased pressure on water resources. As stated by a South Sudanese woman in Rubkona town:

‘As much we as we’re happy to receive new returnees as our family, it also comes with challenges. The first challenge is that there was insufficient water supply even before they came. That challenge has now increased... How will it be with [more] families arriving?’

Most returnees interviewed in Baggari and Akobo and the women interviewed in Bentiu, Rubkona, and Akobo who had recently come back to South Sudan from neighbouring countries noted that due to a lack of services, they were relying on neighbours and relatives to meet essential needs. These resources are finite, and dividing often already limited resources between a greater number of people can increase the vulnerability of the broader community. Indeed, according to REACH data there is an overlap between areas of return and areas where access to basic services has been most severely limited in recent months.²⁸

Women who had come back to Rubkona, Bentiu and Akobo from neighbouring countries expressed the expectation that humanitarian actors would provide services on their arrival – and their disappointment that they had not yet received that assistance. It is well established that humanitarian actors provide the overwhelming majority of services in South Sudan, and equally that they have neither the capacity nor resources to respond to the vast level of need – including those created by displacement, relocation and return. While it is the primary responsibility of the government to respond to and to create conducive conditions for relocation and return, they similarly face capacity and resource restrictions. As summarized by Mary, a women’s rights actor in Juba:

‘Who is going to support returnees? If it is up to the government, I would say [conditions are not conducive]. Even for the implementation of the peace agreement, we have heard ‘there is no money, there is no money.’ But a lot [of resources] would be involved in supporting people to return.’

Further understanding and evaluating how increased needs linked to current

movements impact women, girls, men and boys is critical to an effective and gender-sensitive response. In South Sudan, women and girls tend to bear greater burdens of household chores, but also tend to be particularly disadvantaged in situations of scarcity – whether it is eating ‘last and least’ or being left out of education, for example.²⁹ Women returnees in Akobo noted that their workload had increased on return, and become ‘too much’. These added pressures limit the ability of women and girls to pursue livelihood or educational opportunities and, in some cases, potentially increases their vulnerability to child, early and forced marriage or sexual exploitation and survival sex (see below).

In this context, all actors need to be very careful about the narrative they present surrounding return and relocation, how they do – or are perceived to – encourage or incentivise ‘return’, and how it could encourage or promote movements that they are unable to support. It is also important to consider how, in a context where humanitarian needs are so high, services can be a pull factor for communities. *Who* is moving *where* and *why* are key questions that all actors engaged in the country must be able to answer to ensure that population movements are fully safe and voluntary. In every context, integration, relocation and return are highly politicized – and South Sudan is no exception. ‘Unusual patterns’ of return have been alleged in some parts of the country, and previous reports have highlighted the links between the dynamics of population movements – particularly their ethnic dynamics – and political legitimacy and control over areas and resources.³⁰ Responses therefore have to be carefully considered and evaluated based on how they interact with or reinforce these dynamics.



Women carry sacks of food airdropped by the World Food Programme and distributed by Oxfam in Padding, Jonglei, South Sudan. Photo by Albert Gonzalez Farran/Oxfam

3 SAFE ACCESS TO SERVICES

‘We were not receiving humanitarian services outside the camp before. We were self-supporting and had livelihoods. If there is security, we will not depend on the NGOs.’

—Internally displaced woman at the Cathedral collective site in Wau, May 2019.

When identifying the greatest obstacles to relocation and return, an abstract debate often emerges as to whether it is insecurity or the absence of services that perpetuates displacement in South Sudan. What emerged clearly from discussions undertaken for this report is the need to reframe this debate so as to consider both security and services – or rather, to consider holistically safe access to services. The research results showed that rigid and limited metrics of security and access to services are of secondary importance to the perceptions of IDPs and South Sudanese refugees concerning what, for them, constitutes ‘conducive conditions’.

WOMEN’S PERCEPTIONS OF SAFETY AND SECURITY

Despite a noted reduction in the level of political fighting since the signing of the R-ARCSS, security remains a primary impediment to return cited by IDPs and women’s rights actors. They define security broadly, including factors linked to sexual violence, inter-communal conflict – which are often hard to differentiate between more politicized instances of armed conflict – and to criminality.³¹ These concerns are rooted in the current security context of South Sudan, and the lived realities of these women. Five women’s rights actors noted trauma as a barrier to return. For example, Rebecca – a women’s rights actor in Juba – felt that *‘though people swallow all this pain,’* trauma meant that many displaced people were still wary of returning home. In 2015 – even before the height of the current conflict – a study by the South Sudan Law Society (SSLS) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP) found that almost 41% of South Sudanese interviewed showed symptoms consistent with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).³² Meanwhile mental health and psychosocial services in the country are sorely lacking.

‘Truthfully speaking, we as South Sudanese are more traumatized than anyone in the world. We find happiness in things, but our hearts are not happy. When I sleep at night, I [still] become scared. You have to keep under your bed clean [in case you need] somewhere to hide.’

—Mary, a women’s rights actor in Juba, July 2019.

Women’s perceptions of security – for women in the POC sites in particular – were also closely linked to slow progress in the implementation of the R-ARCSS. While many noted the need for progress at the political level, the continued presence of armed actors in civilian areas and proximity of cantonment sites were also noted as immediate security concerns.



A DRC staff interviews a woman who arrived from Khartoum, Sudan. Photo by Gatluak Nen Chan/DRC

Many internally displaced women stated that they did not intend to return home until they could trust that a conflict between national actors would not resume.³³ As one internally displaced woman in the Malakal POC site explained: *‘There is no clear progress in the peace process, and no clear information about its implementation. They have to tell us whether this is now the final agreement, or whether there will be another peace agreement [signed later] again.’*

This was echoed by women’s rights actors, who also noted previous peace and ceasefire agreements that were repeatedly broken, and multiple displacements following the resumption of fighting after previous attempted return processes.³⁴ For example, two of them referred to fighting in Yei, former Central Equatoria State, between government forces and non-signatory opposition group the National Salvation Front (NAS) following the signing of the R-ARCSS, when *‘spontaneous returnees came back, and then were raped, attacked and had to flee again. Now many of them don’t trust coming back.’*³⁵ The close links between progress in implementing the R-ARCSS and decisions to return to places of habitual residence or origin are particularly relevant, given that women are more than twice as likely as men to feel uninformed about the peace process and are less likely to be engaged.³⁶ For example, women in Akobo said they had never been engaged in the peace process, *‘but [they] always hear men talking about it’.*³⁷ It is also important to note that estimates suggest some 60% of displaced South Sudanese have been displaced more than once, and one in 10 have been displaced more than five times.³⁸

And while women who had recently relocated or returned generally said they felt safe in their locations, this was very much connected to the immediate town or area where they were residing. When venturing further – to collect water and firewood, particularly – women noted threats of sexual violence, ‘unknown armed men’, and – in Akobo, particularly – inter-communal violence. This was noted to restrict their

access to services as well as limit their income-generating opportunities. Additionally, women in Akobo, Torit and Bentiu noted incidents including extortion, robbery and inter-communal violence they had faced in their movement to relocate and/or return.

Nyangino Akwoch Deng, 37, IDP

Nyangino Akwoch Deng is a mother who has been living in the Malakal Protection of Civilians (POC) transit site with her five children for a year and a half. She is originally from Ashab Nil - western Doleib Hill opposite to Canal, under Panyikang County. During the crisis, they went to Aboruc, but due to lack of access to clean drinking water and limited food rations, she and her children went to the POC site. She said that **“currently nobody is living in Ashab Nil. If finally there is peace, and the situation goes from red to green, then me and my family will go back.”**

WOMEN’S RIGHT TO ACCESS SERVICES AND LIVELIHOODS

‘What makes women and girls safe is when things are all available [security and services]. What makes them unsafe is poverty.’

—Internally displaced woman in Torit, June 2019.


Women noted a wide range of services as factoring into their decisions, including access to food, water and sanitation, health and education. They constitute an essential component of material safety and perceptions of the type and level of services required to develop durable solutions for displaced, relocated or returned men and women. They should inform the interventions of government, humanitarian and development actors. It is undeniable, however, that service infrastructure is insufficient to respond to large-scale relocation and return of people in most areas – indeed, humanitarian and other actors are struggling to meet the needs of those who have relocated and returned to date. Yet, access to these services is fundamental to a rights-based approach and critical components of international principles surrounding durable solutions.

Women who had returned from the Bor POC site to Akobo were glad they returned, as in Akobo *‘...you feel at home. Home with the relatives who can assist you.’* *Otherwise however, ‘the situation in Bor [POC] was better. We were getting assistance: the food was monthly, there were sanitary pads and non-food items. Health and education services were also better in the POC.’* Access to services can also affect relocation and return patterns: two of those women who had returned from the Bor POC specifically noted that they had left children behind in the POC so that they could continue to access education.³⁹ This highlights the importance of providing holistic support and services that support family unity and ensuring that returnees are informed of the services available in areas of return, and that the conditions are

in place to ensure a durable solution. It is also important to note that there may be instances where services are technically available in areas of relocation and return, but for some reason new arrivals can't benefit from them. This could be because they are not registered, as was the case for women in Bentiu POC site and Akobo who had come back from the region, but could also be due to the timing of service delivery. Food distributions, for example, usually only happen every several months.⁴⁰

In addition to the services listed above, two other key interventions were frequently noted by the women engaged in this research: menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and access to livelihoods. Internally displaced and returnee women all noted gaps in MHM, one example of how interventions may not be attentive to the particular needs of women. MHM could therefore be considered an important indicator for ensuring returns are 'dignified'. This does not necessarily have to constitute the blanket distribution of dignity kits, which (though effective) could be challenging in large numbers: research demonstrates that awareness raising on MHM and community engagement (including men and boys) can also be effective, and relocated and returnee women in Baggari requested support to learn to make re-usable sanitary pads as a potential livelihood intervention.⁴¹

Indeed, internally displaced and returnee women in almost every location highlighted the importance of livelihood interventions. For displaced women, access to an income can strengthen resilience and support them to return spontaneously at their own pace and in a more dignified and sustainable way. For relocated and returnee women, livelihood interventions can similarly build resilience as well as promote (re)integration in communities.⁴² Research also shows that improving women's economic standing can give them higher status in their family and thus greater decision-making capacity, as well as have ripple effects on community economic development⁴³ and positive impacts on household wellbeing.⁴⁴



Women and children arrive in the small host community in Panyijar county.
Photo by Bruno Bierrenbach Feder/Oxfam

'If I had my sewing machine now, I could generate income. I could even train others on how to use the machine here. But I don't have it.'

—Woman returnee, Akobo, May 2019.

Women who had recently relocated and/or returned in Akobo noted that they had received livelihood training in their areas of displacement (tailoring and hairdressing), and felt that these had equipped them with important skills to reintegrate into the community and sustain themselves – and even to share with other women in Akobo. However, they noted that they were unable to resume these livelihoods on return: either they lacked the capital to start a business, or they had been unable to carry their equipment when moving (particularly sewing machines). This highlights the importance of coordinating services between locations of displacement and relocation and return, and of consulting communities on the type of assistance delivered in order to avoid duplication and ensure the sustainability of interventions. It also highlights the importance of focusing on types of livelihood and skills training in displacement that are inexpensive to resume and utilizes tools and materials that are locally available in places of anticipated return. Previous relocation and return processes in South Sudan have highlighted the importance of livelihoods for (re)integration, and lessons learned from these interventions should inform future planning (along with proper contextual analysis).

WOMEN'S INFLUENCE AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

In addition to challenges accessing information around the implementation of the R-ARCSS, several other concerns emerged around ensuring returns are informed. Internally displaced and returnee women indicated a heavy reliance on word of mouth for their information surrounding relocation and return. In fact, no FGD respondents noted humanitarian actors or UNMISS as a source of information on potential durable solutions. Women who had returned to Akobo from the Bor POC site also noted that information from these informal networks was often confusing and contradictory – especially around access to services – making an informed decision return challenging: *'Even from the beginning we were getting really conflicting stories. Some people were encouraging us to come [to Akobo], while others were saying not to come, that services are not sufficient.'* Overall, this means that the information women receive is often filtered through those in a position of power over them, and may lack a gendered lens.⁴⁵

These gender and power dynamics also play out in decision-making. In decisions surrounding return, some women felt they had the capacity to decide or to influence the decision for themselves and their households. For others, however, the picture was more mixed. If the head of the household was a man, generally women's influence over decisions became much more restricted. Still, some women felt decisions were 'negotiations' that they could influence, though sometimes men could 'push for their agenda.'⁴⁶ Returnees in Kajo Keji as well as several key informants noted the influence of community leaders, chiefs, religious leaders and male relatives to 'call' women home.⁴⁷

Many women interviewed in this research were also demanding more influence over humanitarian interventions. IDP women in Akobo noted that several agencies had come to ask about their needs, however felt that conditions had not changed in response to these discussions: *'Many people come and interview us about our ideas and our conditions – we always share them. But when we get assistance, nothing changes.'* This was echoed by Mary: *'international NGOs, thank you for the work you do, but sometimes you come with solutions that you don't get from the people.'* This limited influence of communities over the design and implementation of programming should be urgently addressed. It is difficult to mobilize women in decision making – including around durable solutions – if they do not have confidence in the system and the impact of their participation, which risks enforcing passive or ineffective modes of information sharing, consultation and participation.⁴⁸

Many women interviewed in this research were also demanding more influence over humanitarian interventions. But some noted that several agencies had come to ask about their needs, however felt that conditions had not changed in response to these discussions.

KEY PROTECTION THREATS

Challenges of achieving housing, land and property rights

'Most of the houses have been destroyed. It's not easy for you to go at once and resettle. You need some reconstruction.'

—Internally displaced woman, June 2019, Cathedral collective site in Wau.

Challenges surrounding access to housing, land and property (HLP) were noted by IDPs and returnees in every location, which are also well reflected in other reports on returns.⁴⁹ For example, according to IOM, more than half of all returnees were estimated to live in either partially damaged housing (39%) or makeshift shelters (20%).⁵⁰ Similarly, the challenges reported in FGDs, and emerging in other assessments and reports, include the destruction of housing (and lack of resources to rebuild); the occupation of homes and land (including by soldiers); multiple documents for the same property; the demarcation of land by authorities; and the absence of effective remedies for competing claims and land disputes.⁵¹ This was reinforced during FGDs conducted by FAO held in displacement sites, areas of return, and host communities in Wau, in which many women said that while they may wish to return, they have no land to return to.⁵²

Others have returned or are renting land in Wau town, but they require access to land for agriculture or other livelihoods. Women's restricted access to resources – including livestock – and greater vulnerability to poverty means that they often lack the capital required to claim their HLP rights. For example, a returnee woman in Rubkona noted that she did not have the money to reclaim her land, which has been demarcated by local authorities – while *'they go to the first occupant first, [when you] don't have the money, they go to someone else.'*

Respondents repeatedly noted that returnee women trying to reclaim their homes or property faced threats and cited instances of sexual and physical violence.⁵³

For example, a humanitarian staff working on gender-based violence reported that instances of rape were increasing in Juba, linked to the occupation of housing and shelter belonging to returnees. There is also strong evidence that poor shelter increases women's risk of gender-based violence.⁵⁴ For example, displaced women in Akobo linked the construction of a fence and of stronger shelters to protection from sexual violence. Several also expressed concern that HLP challenges could perpetuate the practice of 'widow inheritance' (when a widow is required to marry a male relative of her late husband, often a brother),⁵⁵ as otherwise property would be taken outside of the family if the woman remarried. This practice was linked to broader disputes between widows and their husband's family over HLP ownership, which were also raised in KIs with two women's rights actors.

Women in South Sudan, including displaced and returnee women, are particularly vulnerable to challenges accessing their rights. While laws exist to protect women's equal rights to HLP,⁵⁶ they are not effectively implemented. Social and cultural norms in South Sudan mean that women's HLP rights are often dependent on their marital and childbearing status.⁵⁷ These issues are also often dealt with through customary judicial and mediation processes which rarely favour women – let alone allow their representation and participation – because when you talk of these structures *'you talk about the patriarchy'*.⁵⁸ In the FGDs held by FAO, women also noted that complex, costly and bureaucratic procedures prevent many women from obtaining security of tenure through surveying, documentation or registration processes. This, combined with a lack of awareness of HLP rights, often means that

Respondents repeatedly noted that returnee women trying to reclaim their homes or property faced threats and cited instances of sexual and physical violence.

women are unwilling to report HLP issues, or face challenges in doing so. For example, Flora, a women's rights actor working closely on HLP issues, cited a case in Bor where a returnee woman's land claim was stalled in the traditional court, leading to her suicide. Anecdotal evidence like this highlights the challenges and level of hopelessness that women can face in addressing HLP issues.

Access to HLP is closely linked to strengthening the resilience and security of displaced people who are integrating, relocating and/or returning to a community.⁵⁹ It also interacts closely with other 'minimum' standards, including health and access to food, water and sanitation, and provides opportunities for income (particularly agricultural).⁶⁰ At a minimum, before intervening, humanitarian agencies should invest time, capacity and resources into ensuring they have a comprehensive picture and understanding of the local context and perceptions surrounding HLP particularly for women and women-headed households. Otherwise, there is a risk that interventions – especially long-term resilience and development programmes – could reinforce 'unjust' land claims or aggravate existing HLP disputes.

It is important to note that efforts are underway to further document, understand and respond to HLP issues.⁶¹ These efforts should be closely coordinated. HLP issues in South Sudan are often highly political, however, and closely linked to the number and delineation of states.⁶² It therefore requires the creation of mechanisms at a local level and significant political will to ensure the equitable and sustainable resolution of HLP disputes. It is important to note that in December 2018 the President of South Sudan issued a directive for those occupying the houses of IDPs (specifically those in the POC) to vacate, though this order has yet to be fully implemented.

Sexual and gender-based violence risks in displacement and return

Violence against women and girls is endemic in South Sudan: rape has been used as a weapon of war; women and girls have been routinely abducted and forced into sexual slavery; and domestic and other forms of gender-based violence have increased as a result of the conflict.⁶³ Because of these dynamics, it would be realistic to expect that sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) is pervasive during displacement and return. Understanding and responding to the relationship between movements of women and girls and SGBV – for example, the increased threat of sexual violence linked to HLP, as explored above – must therefore be a central component to planning and response, given the irreparable harm it causes women and girls. This section does not reflect a comprehensive picture of the violence women and girls face in South Sudan in connection to displacement or return. However, it sheds light on some of the SGBV risks that were most frequently raised in connection to such movements in this research.

There are critical gaps in access, quality and availability of SGBV services in South Sudan, particularly in rural areas. Moreover, for displaced and returnee women, even if services are available, they may not know how to access them; for example, women newly arrived in Akobo noted that they believed there were women's centres in the area, but they did not know where they were. Female-headed households in South Sudan are at high risk of SGBV when they are on the move, including in return and relocation, due to the broken or disrupted protection mechanisms and community structures, leaving them more vulnerable and often more exposed to risks of gender-based violence such as exploitation and abuse. Given the prevalence of SGBV – and the immense harm that it causes – there is a need to further explore the links between displacement, return and SGBV and effectively reflect these issues in needs assessments and security analysis including, for example, available services and information in areas where women do not feel safe to go.⁶⁴ For example, IOM data shows that 33.9% of IDPs and 41.2% of returnees live in settlements with areas avoided by women.⁶⁵

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Child, early and forced marriage (CEFM): Women in several locations – both IDPs and returnees – raised CEFM as a key protection threat in their communities. Research suggests that displaced girls may be at increased risk of CEFM as a result of the loss of resources and networks that are associated with displacement.⁶⁶ For example: a man could – as Mary, a women's rights actor in Juba put it – *'give away one girl to save the rest of the girls'* (in reference to his daughters). While the links between return and the risk of CEFM are not clear, the vulnerability and loss of assets associated with return and displacement are often similar for women and girls in the current context. The frequency with which it was raised in the research also indicates that it is a key concern for women in the search for durable solutions to their displacement – for example, women in Kajo Keji noted that a barrier to returning to their place of origin was the fear that their daughters would be married off by their extended family. Additionally, in the current context, return areas must be closely evaluated based on their proximity to cantonment sites. In addition to a range of other protection of civilian threats linked to the close proximity of armed groups, anecdotal evidence suggests this could increase risks of CEFM.⁶⁷

Sexual exploitation and survival sex: Displaced women in Wau and Juba reported sexual exploitation and women and girls resorting to survival sex as a coping mechanism to address their lack of resources.⁶⁸ The increased use of survival sex as a coping mechanism to alleviate the effects of poverty has been widely reported in South Sudan, including specifically in relation to the impacts of displacement.⁶⁹ For example, a displaced woman in the Cathedral collective centre in Wau noted that

'...some women resort to having sexual relationships with men who are wealthy in order to sustain themselves.' As women and girl returnees who have come back to South Sudan from the other countries in the region are, in many instances, living in conditions similar to displacement, there is a risk that this trend will also extend to them. For example, women in Torit expressed concern that lack of resources could force them into prostitution in order to meet their family's needs. This is supported by reports to humanitarian agencies of parents encouraging their daughters to engage in this practice because of difficult conditions for survival. While this has been reported in connection with both host and returning households, it is important to understand the dynamics behind this threat to avoid perpetuating it and to prevent harm.

Sexual violence: The risk of sexual violence was also closely linked to women's perceptions of safety and security, and therefore to decisions surrounding relocation and return.⁷⁰ For example, in Kajo Keji, women indicated that some returnees were choosing to leave adolescent girls behind (in Uganda) for fear of exposing them to sexual violence, and in Akobo sexual violence linked to inter-communal conflict was noted as a push factor for some women coming back to South Sudan from Ethiopia.⁷¹ Humanitarian needs assessments have also highlighted that displaced and returnee women, particularly those whose husbands were known to have died, are perceived as at increased risk of rape in some areas because *'men learn they have no husband to protect them.'*⁷²

In South Sudan, risks of sexual violence are often linked with travel over long distances and the continued presence of armed actors. This held true in displacement, with women in Bentiu and Malakal POC sites expressing concern that travelling outside the POC site to gather firewood (for cooking and additional income) and for livelihood activities could expose them to sexual violence. Similarly, women who had recently come back to South Sudan in Rubkona and Kajo Keji also associated longer distances for firewood collection and access to water with increased risk of sexual violence, compared with their location of displacement. As above, the interaction between areas of return/relocation and cantonment must also be considered and closely evaluated based on the resulting increased risk of sexual violence.



Photo by Rhea Catada/Oxfam

4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROGRAMMING AND RESPONSE

While there may be opportunities in some areas for smaller scale return or relocation movements – with rigorous and transparent assessments to ensure they are safe, voluntary informed and dignified – generally more must be done to improve the conduciveness of conditions on the ground, in terms of both security and access to services. A strategy on durable solutions for South Sudan must be led by the wishes and needs of affected people and heavily involve local organizations. It should also involve the UN (including UNMISS), international and national humanitarian and development actors as well as local and national authorities.⁷³ It is clear that women and girls can face particular challenges in achieving durable solutions and that these are not always fully understood or adequately reflected in planning and response. The continued challenges raised by women in this report – including SGBV, HLP rights, and the high level of needs – demonstrate the continued complexities surrounding returns and relocations in the current context. There is an urgent need to respond to these challenges in a context specific, community driven and gender-sensitive way.

The primary responsibility to provide durable solutions for IDPs and refugees and ensure their protection and assistance needs must be assumed by the national authorities. The government should urgently invest in building the necessary infrastructure and providing essential services, and all parties should ensure that the R-ARCSS leads to improved governance and sustainable peace in South Sudan. The humanitarian community, including the UN, international and national NGOs, should coordinate and lead international efforts with respect to decision making, planning and support for the achievement of durable solutions, ensuring its efforts are inclusive and gender- and conflict-sensitive. UNMISS should continue to complement these roles, including continuing to protect the POC sites and seeking ways to improve security in the sites, as well as continuing to explore ways to extend its presence beyond the sites.⁷⁴ These efforts should be based on transparent, gender-sensitive analysis of risk and in close consultation with communities, particularly women.⁷⁵

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. All actors should take a durable solutions approach to returns and relocations and planning for the future of the POCs. A durable solutions framework – such as that of the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS)⁷⁶ (which operationalizes the IASC framework) – should be developed, and must be guided by the wishes and needs of affected men, women, girls and boys. It should involve the UN (including UNMISS), international and national humanitarian and development actors and local and national authorities. The law on protection and assistance to internally displaced people currently being drafted could provide an opportunity to legislate such a framework.

- a. In the current context, **achieving a durable solution should be viewed as developing transitional pathways, with an emphasis on tailored, case-by-case and location-specific approaches.** The objective is to help displaced men, women, girls and boys secure a dignified, meaningful and safe life while in displacement and to support them in finding a lasting solution, including improving conditions for the physical, material and legal safety of displaced, returning and host populations.
- b. While much of the current debate seems to focus on facilitated returns and relocations, **planning should explore ways to facilitate integration into areas of displacement and/or promote an environment in which safe, voluntary, informed and dignified spontaneous movements are possible.** Such movements should be recognized as preferable to assisted movements.
- c. **Where returns are occurring, resources must be focused on reintegration, rather than merely physical return.** Research has highlighted that limited service provision and failing to meet minimum standards *during* displacement in South Sudan actually reinforces the dependency of displaced people, as such programming fails to encourage recovery and ensure that communities are able to support themselves when they relocate or return.⁷⁷ Similarly, evaluations from previous returns processes in South Sudan demonstrate an overemphasis on physical return over reintegration (economic and social) in areas of return, and advocated for a greater focus and proportion of resources to be allocated to supporting people to (re)integrate into areas of return or relocation.⁷⁸

2. All actors should recognize that achieving durable solutions is a long-term process. Previous experience in South Sudan has also highlighted some of the risks with rushing such movements – including Yei, as noted above.⁷⁹ All actors should be wary of supporting or facilitating movements that are premature and perpetuate people’s displacement, increasing their vulnerability, rather than acting as a step towards a durable solution. This is especially true given the scale of need and continued uncertainty in the political process. This was echoed by Elizabeth, a women’s rights actor in Juba, who cautioned that rushing relocation/return or supporting them without a comprehensive understanding of the context would be like supporting people to *‘jump from one frying pan to another frying pan. The temperature may be bit lower, but you still get burned.’* According to her, all actors *‘should take things slow, until returnees and IDPs can move themselves.’*

3. All actors should integrate gender considerations into planning and response. All actors should systematically integrate gender considerations in all planning and response in developing durable solutions to displacement in South Sudan. According to one GBV actor in Juba, while there was a *‘respect and interest in the differential needs of women and men’*, there was – at this time – still limited gender analysis on the issue: *‘In meetings, you have to keep flagging gender concerns. This tends to be a fairly gender-blind process.’*⁸⁰

- a. At a minimum, this should include **building in the disaggregation of data by age and gender** in the pre-design and evaluation phases.
- b. **Assessments – including gender analysis, security and needs assessments – should systematically consider the ability to access services by different segments of the population,** as well as the needs and threats facing women,

men, girls and boys and people with specific vulnerabilities.

4. All actors should undertake special efforts to ensure the full participation – rather than consultation – of displaced persons in the planning and management of actions towards achieving durable solutions.

a. This should include deliberate strategies to engage women and promote their role in decision making, given that their capacity to decide or influence decisions around return or relocation is sometimes restricted. Research has shown that, once again, utilizing women- and girl-friendly spaces can be an effective tool to do this, as well as ensuring women’s meaningful participation in community mechanisms that have a direct influence on national and humanitarian decision making more broadly.⁸¹

b. **This should include deliberate strategies to engage women and promote their role in decision making**, given that their capacity to decide or influence decisions around return or relocation is sometimes restricted. Research has shown that, once again, utilizing women- and girl-friendly spaces can be an effective tool to do this, as well as ensuring women’s meaningful participation in community mechanisms that have a direct influence on national and humanitarian decision making more broadly.⁸²

5. Actors should not divert attention and resources from ongoing life-saving interventions in order to promote or facilitate returns. Returns and relocations are not currently the most pressing or life-threatening humanitarian need in South Sudan. While long-term planning for durable solutions to displacement is important, in the current context the focus must remain on meeting the most urgent needs.

6. Humanitarian actors should prioritize needs-based assistance over status-based assistance. Planning for service provision for IDPs, returnees and host communities should continue to be based on clear and transparent disaggregated needs assessments. Prioritizing assistance purely on displacement (or return/relocation) status can mean that some of the most vulnerable people in communities are left out. For example, women who had returned to Akobo from Ethiopia said: *‘We want humanitarians to consider us as the host community. Because they see the host community receiving assistance, but we are also suffering. We just need assistance.’*

7. Humanitarian actors should prioritize gendered contextual analysis and understanding of movement dynamics, motivations and intentions. Evaluations from previous return programmes have found that there was insufficient ‘research and analysis of the dynamics of return and reintegration’, particularly when it comes to gender.⁸³ This meant that the particular contextual dynamics – including political and conflict implications – and the specific needs of men, women, girls and boys were not adequately reflected in responses.

8. Humanitarian actors should improve accountability to affected populations:

a. **A specific, transparent and representative body should be established to monitor assisted movements against existing policies and principles**, including ensuring inclusive and transparent pre-movement assessments and post-movement monitoring, and hold stakeholders to account. Ideally, this should

include reporting lines to the HCT.

b. Humanitarian actors should plan for and employ gender-sensitive mitigating measures to address anticipated risks, adopt contingency planning to respond to unforeseen risks, and monitor conditions in areas of return against minimum indicators in the medium to long-term. This could include transparent third-party monitoring, which has been a best practice in returns and relocations by the Somalia Return Consortium.⁸⁴ As far as possible, findings should be shared with affected communities and all actors expected to engage with the assisted movement.

9. Humanitarian actors should ensure that effective gender-sensitive community feedback mechanisms are in place: Women are identifying weaknesses in the humanitarian system, and humanitarian actors should be listening, encouraging them to speak out, and taking concrete steps to improve their services.⁸⁵

10. Humanitarian and development actors should explore the importance of kinship networks and gender relations: Humanitarian and development actors where possible should seek to further understand kinship networks around relocation and return, including how they operate across borders. Understanding the information shared regarding potential durable solutions, the capacity of kinship networks to support relocated and returned men, women, girls and boys, and resultant considerations on perceptions of security are important factors in people's decisions on where to return or relocate. This could inform ways to strengthen community networks to respond to spontaneous relocation or return, reduce tensions and inform approaches to resilience programming. It could also help determine levels and population segments of vulnerability: previous relocation and return processes in South Sudan demonstrate that people without kin networks, particularly women and the elderly, are among the most vulnerable.⁸⁶

11. Humanitarian and development actors should plan dedicated activities and investment specifically designed to challenge harmful gender norms and to address and prevent sexual and gender-based violence, such as SASA! and EMAP.⁸⁷ Humanitarian and development actors should ensure these responses are prevention focused, survivor centred, evidence-based and community driven in order to encourage sustainability. They should support and build on the capacities, strategies and mechanisms that women and girls (including women's rights actors) and local communities have already begun to develop to transform gender relations and address SGBV in its various forms.

a. Humanitarian and development actors should seek ways to engage men and boys in strategic behaviour change and as agents for change, especially community and political leaders who influence traditional norms and who dominate reporting and response structures.

b. They should equally prioritize women- and girl-friendly spaces as evidence-based interventions that provide physical and emotional safety to women and girls.⁸⁸

12. Humanitarian actors and UNMISS should improve and systematize communication with communities around possibilities for gender-sensitive durable solutions: Humanitarian actors and UNMISS should develop and implement

strategies to systematically communicate with communities on the potential for durable solutions, and coordinate with other actors on such communications (and messaging) to ensure that movements are voluntary and informed. This would support informed and thus genuinely voluntary decisions to return. Such information should include the role of UNMISS in security provision and assessments of security and available services in areas of return.

a. IDPs should be provided with more information about their preferred area of return or relocation, with specific information about the security situation. In intention surveys from Bor, Wau and Malakal POCs over two-thirds of IDPs indicated they needed more information about their preferred area of return or relocation, with information about the security situation being the most frequently requested.⁸⁹

b. Actors should explore ways to coordinate with local and government authorities on messaging. These strategies are essential to ensuring that displaced people are receiving accurate information.

13. UNMISS' planning and protection assessments should include a thorough gender analysis of and activities aimed at preventing and responding to threats of sexual and gender-based violence faced by women and girls inside POC sites and outside, with particular emphasis on sexual violence. This should be done in collaboration with local women's rights organizations and in close consultation with communities. For example, in previous research in Wau, women living in the POC expressed a high degree of confidence in UNMISS-accompanied trips outside of the POC to collect firewood in protecting them from SGBV. However, while these trips could constitute important confidence building activities for further movements outside POC sites, women were concerned these trips were too infrequent to meet their needs.⁹⁰

14. Donors should ensure that gender-sensitive responses to return, relocation and (re)integration are effectively funded, with a strong focus on local capacity. Supporting people with durable solutions, including return and relocation, will likely require concurrent gendered service provision in both locations of return and displacement. Development and resilience activities will also need to be stepped up and closely coordinated, integrating strong conflict and gender analysis. In this context, donors should recognize that *increasing* budgets can be a sign of progress and can increase resilience and accelerate recovery.

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- ⁸ Statement of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General David Shearer Briefing to the Security Council on South Sudan, 25 June 2019. Accessed from: <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/statement-special-representative-un-secretary-general-david-shearer-briefing>;

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¹¹ This was reinforced in KIIs with UNMISS staff, Juba, June 2019.

¹² This is also reflected in historical patterns of return. See H. Bohnet (2016). Back to turmoil: Refugee and IDP return to and within South Sudan. BICC Working Paper 7.

¹³ FGD with women who had returned from Sudan in Rubkona, June 2019; FGDs with women who had returned from Sudan in Bentiu POC, June 2019; FGDs with women who had returned from Ethiopia in Akobo, May 2019 (this was supported by KIIs with humanitarian actors and local authorities in Akobo in May 2019); FGD with women who had returned from Uganda in Kajo Keji, June 2019; FGD with IDP returnees in Baggari, May 2019.

¹⁴ FGD with women returnees in Bentiu POC, June 2019. This sentiment was also echoed in a KII with a women's rights actor in Juba (Grace), July 2019.

¹⁵ For example, last year's Regional Refugee Response was only 50% funded, limiting service delivery capacity. See: UNHCR (December 2018). Financial Tracking Service: South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan. <https://fts.unocha.org/content/south-sudan-regional-refugee-response-plan-2018>

¹⁶ KII with humanitarian actors in Akobo, May 2019.

¹⁷ IOM (27 March 2019). South Sudan – Displacement Site Flow Monitoring: February 2019. <https://migration.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94-displacement-site-flow-monitoring-feb-2019>;

IOM (31 May 2019). South Sudan – Displacement Site Flow Monitoring: April 2019. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/20190531%20IOM%20DTM%20DSFM%20Monthly%20April%202019.pdf>

¹⁸ REACH. (June 2019). Cross-Border Population Movement Factsheet: Kapoeta Road Monitoring, http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/prm_factsheet_for_kapoeta_june_2019.pdf;

REACH (May 2019). Cross-Border Population Movement Factsheet: Renk Port and Road Monitoring, http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_sdd_factsheet_renk_port_and_road_monitoring_may_2019.pdf;

REACH (June 2019). Cross-Border Population Movement Factsheet: Akobo Port and Road Monitoring, http://www.reachresourcecentre.info/system/files/resource-documents/reach_sdd_factsheet_akobo_prm_june_2019.pdf

¹⁹ OCHA (2019). South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan Monitoring Report: January–March 2019. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/file/ss_20190520_q1_periodic_monitoring_report.pdf

²⁰ OCHA (15 July 2019). South Sudan: Humanitarian Snapshot. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-humanitarian-snapshot-june-2019>

²¹ UNHCR (31 March 2019). Overview of Spontaneous Refugee Returns to South Sudan. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/UNHCR%20South%20Sudan%20Spontaneous%20Returnees_Statistics%2031%20March%202019.pdf

²² See for example, the durable solutions framework developed by DRC, NRC and ReDSS for Somalia. DRC, NRC and ReDSS (November 2016). Local Integration Focus: Lower Juba Region

Durable Solutions Framework.

https://drc.ngo/media/3007785/redss_somalia_solutions_framework_lower_juba_region_201601-2.pdf

- ²³ This was reported as a practice in the Juba POC site, where shelters are quickly demolished after residents leave. While this practice is not new, Devex reports that it has become more widespread since June 2019, and is causing unease for some civilians still in the site, who feel they are being pressured to leave the site. S. Mednick. (11 July 2019). Should humanitarians support returns in a country still reeling from war? <https://www.devex.com/news/should-humanitarians-support-returns-in-a-country-still-reeling-from-war-95252>
- ²⁴ OCHA. (13 December 2019). South Sudan 2019 Humanitarian Response Plan. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-2019-humanitarian-response-plan>; Protection Cluster South Sudan (March 2019). Enabling a Protective Environment: Key protection advocacy messages from ICWG.
- ²⁵ OCHA (2019). South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan Monitoring Report: January–March 2019. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/file/ss_20190520_q1_periodic_monitoring_report.pdf
- ²⁶ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) analysis is a joint food security analysis developed by government, NGO and UN actors. IPC Update: South Sudan (June 14 2019). Accessed from <http://www.ipcinfo.org/ipcinfo-website/where-what/east-and-central-africa/south-sudan/en/>
- ²⁷ REACH (April 2019). South Sudan Crossborder Population Movement Dynamics Brief. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/reach_ssd_brief_crossborder_population_movement_dynamics_april_2019.pdf
- ²⁸ Ibid.
- ²⁹ H. Dragicevic (October 2017). Everything Except the Soil: Understanding wild food consumption during the lean season in South Sudan. Oxfam. <https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620360/rr-south-sudan-wild-foods-lean-season-301017-en.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>
- ³⁰ For example, as noted in a private discussion paper by Oxfam and NRC, article 1.19.4 of the R-ARCSS ‘stipulates that the power sharing between parties at State and local levels be according to a set ration, but notes that the appointment of key positions “shall take into account the relative prominence each Party has in the respective State or county”. It is not clear in the R-ARCSS what constitutes a “party’s prominence” – whether this is based on military presence, ethnic makeup or support base.’ Oxfam and Norwegian Refugee Council (February 2019). A Post-POC South Sudan? Durable Solutions and the future of Protection of Civilian sites. Private Discussion Paper.
- See also: Refugees International (November 2018). Displaced Nation: The dangerous implications of rushed returns in South Sudan. https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2018/11/29/displaced-nation-the-dangerous-implications-of-rushed-returns-in-south-sudan?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=South+Sudan&utm_content=2018-11-29+South+Sudan+Report+Launch;
- Conflict Research Programme and LSE (February 2019). The Future of Protection of Civilians Sites: Protecting displaced people after South Sudan’s peace deal. <http://www.lse.ac.uk/international-development/Assets/Documents/ccs-research-unit/Conflict-Research-Programme/crp-memos/POCS-in-SS-Feb-2019.pdf>.
- ³¹ As noted by Andrew Gilmour, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights at the 8,560th meeting of the Security Council: ‘He reported that violence in other parts of the country has shifted primarily to actions perpetrated by community-based militias and other armed elements. Frequently referred to as “cattle raids” or “intercommunal violence”, such incidents have largely evolved from traditional practices into acts of political violence, he noted.’ As reported in: UN. (25 June 2019). Drop in Violence Reveals ‘Glimmer’ of Possibilities for Peace, Secretary-General’s Special Representative for South Sudan tells Security Council. SC/13857. <https://www.un.org/press/en/2019/sc13857.doc.htm>
- ³² South Sudan Law Society and UNDP. (June 2015). Search for a New Beginning: Perceptions of Truth, Justice, Reconciliation and Healing in South Sudan. <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/southsudan/library/Rule%20of%20Law/Perception%20Survey%20Report%20Transitional%20Justice%20Reconciliation%20and%20Healing%20-.pdf>
- ³³ FGD with IDP women in Wau POC, May 2019; FGD with IDPs in Juba, June 2019; FGD with IDPs in Malakal POC, June 2019; FGDs with IDP women and women who have come back from Sudan in Bentiu POC, June 2019; FGDs with IDP women and women who have come back from Sudan in Bentiu Town, June 2019; FGD with IDP women and women who have come back from Sudan in Rubkona, June 2019.
- ³⁴ KII with three women rights actors in Juba, between June and July 2019.
- ³⁵ KII with women’s rights actor in Juba (unnamed), July 2019; Also noted in KII with a women’s rights actor in Juba (Elizabeth), June 2019.
- ³⁶ South Sudan Civil Society Forum. (27 November 2018). Revitalizing Peace in South Sudan:

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- Citizen Perceptions of the Peace Process.
<https://www.southsudanpeaceportal.com/repository/revitalizing-peace-in-south-sudan-citizen-perceptions-of-the-peace-process/>
- ³⁷ FGD with women returnees and women who had crossed the border from Ethiopia, Akobo, May 2019.
- ³⁸ Concord Consulting (July 2018). Inception Report Oxfam IBIS: Survey to measure perceptions of social cohesion and peace in South Sudan and Uganda. Unpublished.
- ³⁹ Access to education is one component of the definition of an 'adequate standard of living' as defined in the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions. See: IASC (April 2010). IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons. The Brookings Institution–University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement. <https://www.unhcr.org/50f94cd49.pdf>; Access to education (at a minimum, primary education) is also an indicator of the achievement of a durable solution. See: JIPS. Durable Solutions Indicator Library. <http://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/library/adequate-standard-of-living/>.
- ⁴⁰ New arrivals in the Bentiu POC site cannot be registered for food assistance. However, they can receive assistance outside the POC – though this takes some time as they have to wait until the next registration, which can be several months away.
- ⁴¹ Oxfam (2019). Gender Analysis: Wau, Baggari and Agok Communities. Unpublished.
- ⁴² Access to a livelihood is also an indicator in measuring whether or not a durable solution has been achieved. 'IDPs who have achieved a durable solution are able to fulfil their basic socio-economic needs on an equal basis with the non-displaced population. This entails access to employment and income sources more generally, including productive assets and financial services.' JIPS. Durable Solutions Indicator Library. <http://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/library/employment-livelihoods/>
- ⁴³ UN Security Council. (2017). Report of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security; F. Rhodes, R. Harvey and A. Parvez. (2017). An Economy that works for Women: Achieving Women's Economic Empowerment in an Increasingly Unequal World. Oxford: Oxfam International. https://www.oxfam.org/file_attachments/bp-an-economy-that-works-for-women-020317-en-summ.pdf
- ⁴⁴ UN Women. Facts and Figures: Economic Empowerment. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/economic-empowerment/facts-and-figures;>
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- ⁴⁵ UNHCR. (8 May 2019). Tearing Down the Walls: Confronting the barriers to internally displaced women and girls' participation in humanitarian settings. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5cd17b2d4.html>
- ⁴⁶ FGDs with IDPs and women who had come back from Sudan in Bentiu Town, June 2019; FGDs with IDP and women who had come back from Sudan in Bentiu POC, June 2019; FGD with women returnees and women who had come back from Ethiopia in Akobo, May 2019; FGD with women IDPs in Juba, June 2019; KII with women's rights actor in Wau, May 2019; KII with UN worker in Wau, May 2019.
- ⁴⁷ FGD with women IDPs and women who had returned from Uganda in Kajo Keji, June 2019.
- ⁴⁸ UNHCR. (8 May 2019). Tearing Down the Walls: Confronting the barriers to internally displaced women and girls' participation in humanitarian settings. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5cd17b2d4.html>
- ⁴⁹ See for example: South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan; January–December 2019, https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/south_sudan_humanitarian_response_plan_2019_final.pdf;
- D.K. Deng. (March 2019). Housing, Land, and Property Disputes in South Sudan: Findings from a survey Nimule, Torit, Wau and Yei. South Sudan Law Society.;
- D.P. Sullivan (November 2019). Displaced Nation: The Dangerous Implications of Rushed Returns in South Sudan. Refugees International.;
- UN Habitat and FAO (April 2019). Enhancing Women's Access to Land to Consolidate Peace in South Sudan: Summary report of inception phase.
- ⁵⁰ IOM (19 July 2019). South Sudan Mobility Tracking Round 5. https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/dtm/south_sudan_dtm_20190719.pdf
- ⁵¹ KII with women's right actor in Juba (Flora), July 2019. Reflected also in Briefing Notes (not published) from breakout sessions at a workshop on Women's HLP Rights and Challenges in South Sudan in May 2019, jointly hosted by the Parliamentary Land Committee, the

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- Parliamentary Committee for Gender and Social Welfare, the Women's Parliamentary Caucus, and the IOM.
- ⁵² UN-Habitat and FAO, Enhancing Women's Access to Land to Consolidate Peace in South Sudan: FAO Study on women's Land Tenure in Wau, August 2019(draft)
- ⁵³ KII with women rights actors in Juba, July 2019 (Flora, Mary and unnamed). FGD with women IDPs and women who have come back from Uganda in Kajo Keji, June 2019.
- ⁵⁴ Oxfam and European Union (EU). (March 2017). South Sudan Gender Analysis: A Snapshot Situation Analysis of the Differential Impact of the Humanitarian Crisis on Women, Girls, Men and Boys in South Sudan. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rr-south-sudan-gender-analysis-060317-en.pdf>
- ⁵⁵ This was also noted in an FGD with IDPs and Returnees in Bentiu POC, June 2019.
- ⁵⁶ See for example, the Transitional Constitution of the Republic of South Sudan (2011). Article 16; South Sudan Land Act (2009), Article 13; Draft Land Policy (2014), Article 3.7 on gender equality and 4.7 on the equality of men and women in the exercise of land rights.
- ⁵⁷ While this is true in practice, the legal framework directly contradicts this. For example, the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan (2011) states in article 16(1) that 'Women shall be accorded full and equal dignity of the person with men' and in 16(5) that 'Women shall have the right to own property and share in the estates of their deceased husbands together with any surviving legal heir of the deceased.'
- ⁵⁸ KII with women's rights actor working closely on HLP issues, Juba, July 2019.
- ⁵⁹ NRC and ICRC (2016). The Importance of Addressing Housing, Land and Property Challenges in Humanitarian Response. Accessed at: http://www.globalprotectioncluster.org/assets/files/tools_and_guidance/housing_land_property/ifrc-nrc-hlp-report-2016.pdf
- ⁶⁰ These minimum standards are laid out in numerous principles documents, including: IASC (April 2010), IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, The Brookings Institution–University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement, <https://www.unhcr.org/50f94cd49.pdf>; NRC (March 2014). Life can change: Security housing, land and property rights for displaced women. <https://www.nrc.no/resources/reports/life-can-change---securing-housing-land-and-property-rights-for-displaced-women/>
- ⁶¹ These efforts include a parliamentary review of the Land Act of 2009, just completed. The Chair of the HLP Committee has said that they have considered the needs of returnees and IDPs in this. IOM and other partners helped facilitate the review. They also hosted a workshop in Juba of women stakeholders and organizations relating to women's land rights.
- ⁶² KII with women's rights actor working closely on HLP issues, Juba, July 2019.
- ⁶³ UN News (15 February 2019). 'Endemic' sexual violence surging in South Sudan: UN human rights office. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/02/1032831>;
- F. Mold (10 July 2018). UN SRSG for Sexual Violence in Conflict Condemns Use of Rape as a Tactic of War in South Sudan. <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/un-srsg-sexual-violence-conflict-condemns-use-rape-tactic-war-south-sude>;
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- Oxfam and European Union (EU). (March 2017). South Sudan Gender Analysis: A Snapshot Situation Analysis of the Differential Impact of the Humanitarian Crisis on Women, Girls, Men and Boys in South Sudan. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rr-south-sudan-gender-analysis-060317-en.pdf>
- ⁶⁴ Indeed, providing support to SGBV survivors is one of the 'priority areas for implementation' of the government's 2017 Framework on Return, Reintegration and Relocation of Displaced Persons (which is currently being updated). See: Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management. (February 2017). Framework for Return, Reintegration and Relocation of Displaced Persons: Achieving Durable Solutions in South Sudan. <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/5b72a64a4.pdf>
- ⁶⁵ IOM. (March 2019). Mobility Tracking Round 5: Site/Village/Neighbourhood Assessment Report. https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IOM%20SSD%20DTM%20MT5%20SVNA%20Part%20I_1.pdf
- ⁶⁶ E. Buchanan. (February 2019). Born to be Married: Addressing Early and Forced Marriage in Nyal, South Sudan. Oxfam. <https://www.oxfam.org/en/research/born-be-married-addressing-child-early-and-forced-marriage-nyal-south-sudan>
- ⁶⁷ An internal report by CARE based on FGD with heads of women-led organizations in Juba highlights increased cases of CEFM in Lobonok resulting from the presence of armed groups. The report suggests that this trend could take shape more broadly as processes of cantonment continue.
- ⁶⁸ This is supported by findings from humanitarian assessments in former Lakes and Jonglei States. Further details withheld due to sensitivity.

- ⁶⁹ Oxfam and European Union (EU). (March 2017). South Sudan Gender Analysis: A Snapshot Situation Analysis of the Differential Impact of the Humanitarian Crisis on Women, Girls, Men and Boys in South Sudan. <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/rr-south-sudan-gender-analysis-060317-en.pdf>
- ⁷⁰ See also: DTM Malakal Combined Assessment, February 2018.
- ⁷¹ This is supported by humanitarian assessments from other areas. For example, as reported in former Upper Nile State in DRC (April 2019) Jikou and Urieng Rapid Protection Assessment.
- ⁷² Protection assessment of authoring agency. Unattributable due to sensitivities.
- ⁷³ The IASC principles (see no. 60) state: 'The primary responsibility to provide durable solutions for IDPs and ensure their protection and assistance needs to be assumed by the national authorities...The rights, needs and legitimate interests of IDPs should be the primary considerations guiding all policies and decisions relating to internal displacement and durable solutions.'
- ⁷⁴ The HTC Principles of Engagement of UNMISS and humanitarian actors on Returns and Relocations of Displaced People in South Sudan (2018) recognizes humanitarians' 'leading' role with respect to decision making and planning to support returns and relocations.
- ⁷⁵ This is in line with findings from other research. See C. Briggs (January 2017). Protection of Civilians sites and their impact on the broader protection environment in South Sudan. <https://odihpn.org/magazine/protection-civilians-poc-sites-impact-broader/>
- ⁷⁶ For more details, see ReDSS Solutions Framework. <https://regionaldss.org/index.php/research-and-knowledge-management/solutions-framework/>
- ⁷⁷ DRC (6 March 2017). Congestion in the Malakal Protection of Civilian Site, South Sudan. <https://drc.ngo/media/3339916/malakal-congestion-report-final-pdf-03052017.pdf>
- ⁷⁸ OECD (September 2017). Responding to Refugee Crises: Lessons from evaluations in South Sudan as a country of origin. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/responding%20to%20refugee%20crisis%20booklet.pdf>
- ⁷⁹ Oxfam and Norwegian Refugee Council (February 2019). A Post-POC South Sudan? Durable Solutions and the future of Protection of Civilian sites. Private Discussion Paper; Refugees International (November 2018). Displaced Nation: The dangerous implications of rushed returns in South Sudan, https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2018/11/29/displaced-nation-the-dangerous-implications-of-rushed-returns-in-south-sudan?utm_medium=email&utm_source=engagingnetworks&utm_campaign=South+Sudan&utm_content=2018-11-29+South+Sudan+Report+Launch
- ⁸⁰ KII with humanitarian actor specializing on GBV, June 2019, Juba.
- ⁸¹ Principle 28 (2) of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement states: 'Special efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of internally displaced persons in the planning and management of their return or resettlement and reintegration.' UNHCR (22 July 1998). [Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, ADM 1.1, PRL 12.1, PR00/98/109;](http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3e686c6d.html)
- The JIPS Indicator Library includes indicators on participation along three themes: participation in political affairs, participation in community and social affairs, and participation in reconciliation and confidence-building initiatives. For more information see: [http://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/library/participation-public-affairs/;](http://inform-durablesolutions-idp.org/library/participation-public-affairs/)
- See also HERE Geneva, DRC, EU and Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark (July 2018). 'Listen to our Voices': What does it take to improve refugee participation in durable solutions process? https://drc.ngo/media/4736779/participation-and-durable-solutions-guidance-for-crrf-drc-here_july-2018.pdf
- ⁸² UNHCR. (8 May 2019). Tearing Down the Walls: Confronting the barriers to internally displaced women and girls' participation in humanitarian settings. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5cd17b2d4.html>
- ⁸³ OECD (September 2017). Responding to Refugee Crises: Lessons from evaluations in South Sudan as a country of origin. <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/responding%20to%20refugee%20crisis%20booklet.pdf>
- ⁸⁴ Samuel Hall Consulting (2014). Towards Durable Solutions in Somalia – Achievements and challenges in supporting voluntary returns of IDPs. An impact study commissioned by UNHCR and the Somalia Return Consortium and funded by UNHCR. <http://www.regionaldss.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Towards-Durable-Solutions-in-Somalia>Returns-Consortium-Somalia.pdf>
- ⁸⁵ UNHCR. (8 May 2019). Tearing Down the Walls: Confronting the barriers to internally displaced women and girls' participation in humanitarian settings. <https://www.refworld.org/docid/5cd17b2d4.html>
- ⁸⁶ NRC. (2016). Pastoralism, Conflict and Recovery in South Sudan. http://southsudanhumanitarianproject.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/21/formidable/Pastoralism-Conflict-Recovery-Roundtable_May2016-1.pdf
- ⁸⁷ Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP) is a transformative individual behavioural change intervention for conflict-affected communities, which aims to prevent violence against women and girls, developed by the International Rescue Committee. Start Awareness Support

Action (SASA!) is a community mobilization intervention that aims to prevent violence against women and HIV, developed by Raising Voices.

- ⁸⁸ 'A Women and Girls Friendly Space (WGFS) is a formal or informal place where women and girls feel physically and emotionally safe, comfortable and able to express themselves. Depending on the context, WGFS can provide an opportunity for women and girls to gather and socialize informally and/or can be used as a platform for conducting more structured group activities.' As defined in: UNICEF (2016). Promoting Positive Environments for Women and Girls: Guidelines for Women and Girls Friendly Spaces in South Sudan, <https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/sites/www.humanitarianresponse.info/files/documents/files/guidelines-for-women-and-girls-friendly-spaces-in-south-sudan-1.pdf>. This was a common recommendation raised in this research: [FGD with women returnees and who had come back from Ethiopia, Akobo, May 2019](#); [KII with local authority, Akobo, May 2019](#); [KII with women's rights actor in Juba \(Mary\), July 2019](#); [KII with GBV actor in Juba, June 2019](#).
- ⁸⁹ UNHCR (6 May 2019), South Sudan Intention Survey of IDPs in Bor POC, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/69322>; IOM (8 May 2019), DTM South Sudan: Malakal POC Intention Perception Survey, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/dtm-south-sudan-malakal-poc-intentions-perception-survey-may-8-2019>; IOM (11 January 2019), DTM South Sudan Wau POCAA: Intention Perception Survey, <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/dtm-south-sudan-wau-pocaa-intentions-perception-survey-january-11-2019>.
- ⁹⁰ Oxfam and Norwegian Refugee Council (February 2019). A Post-POC South Sudan? Durable Solutions and the future of Protection of Civilian sites. Private Discussion Paper.

