



A young refugee woman collecting water at the KM 18 transit camp, near the Jamam refugee camp (2012). Photo: Darya Musiyenko /Oxfam

UPPER NILE REFUGEE CRISIS

Avoiding past mistakes in the coming year

Starting in November 2011, thousands of refugees fleeing aerial bombardments and food shortages in Blue Nile, Sudan, arrived in Maban County, in Upper Nile state, South Sudan. The international community and the Government of South Sudan were poorly prepared to effectively meet the needs of these refugees and, as a result, refugees suffered unnecessarily. Eighteen months into the response the situation for refugees remains fragile. With the rainy season due to begin in May and a Hepatitis E outbreak ongoing, at least twenty-five thousand refugees need to be relocated, and a further influx of refugees is predicted. Through concerted action, the humanitarian community can avoid repeating past mistakes to shape what happens now and in the future. Working together, the UN, the Government of South Sudan, NGOs and donors must improve the quality of the humanitarian response and accountability to refugees and the communities that host them.

SUMMARY

In June 2011, fighting erupted between the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North in South Kordofan, spreading to the Sudanese state of Blue Nile in September. An estimated 700,000 people, close to the population of Abuja, capital of Nigeria have been severely affected or displaced by this conflict. Of these, over 187,000 have fled ground fighting, aerial bombardment, and food shortages to seek refuge in Unity and Upper Nile States in South Sudan. More than half of these have fled to Maban County and are concentrated in four main camps: Doro, Jamam, Yusuf Batil and Gendrassa.¹

Maban County has proved to be a harsh environment for refugees and an extremely difficult operating environment for the humanitarian response. Since the beginning of the crisis, refugees have been arriving in Maban in a desperate state; weak and malnourished, with some having walked for weeks. As part of the humanitarian response led by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), Oxfam has been providing assistance and protection to refugees in this remote area, with exceptionally high running costs and only a five-month dry season before heavy rains make it yet more difficult to deliver humanitarian assistance. Government austerity measures, inaccessibility, the presence of large numbers of refugees, and an already-vulnerable host community have compounded pressure on scarce financial and natural resources. It cost Oxfam \$250 per person to provide water, sanitation and hygiene promotion (WASH) to refugees in Maban, compared to most other contexts Oxfam works in where the cost is less than \$75 per person.

The refugee population is overwhelmingly made up of women, children and young people; these groups account for 80 per cent of those living in camps in Maban.² Women and girls live under the threat of domestic violence, sexual harassment, beatings, and exploitation, particularly during firewood collection and at water collection points. In the current context where the rule of law is weak capacity building training on human rights and sexual and gender based violence should be provided to members of peace and conflict committees established to address tensions between refugees and the host communities, and traditional refugee and host community leaders. The presence of armed actors in the camps and the fear of recruitments is undermining the civilian nature of the camps and further endangering refugees.

As the crisis unfolds, humanitarian agencies have worked together tirelessly, in what has been described as an 'extraordinary spirit of cooperation' to raise funds and scale-up their work to tackle extremely high rates of malnutrition and mortality among refugees.³

Despite these efforts, refugees in Maban have suffered as a result of the collective failings of those who should have been assisting and protecting them. Donors were slow to come forward with appropriate funding: in the early stages of the emergency, neither Oxfam, UNHCR, nor many of the other humanitarian agencies involved in the response, had sufficient capacity or resources to match the scale of the crisis.

We arrived exhausted from our journey. We walked long distances. It took us 2 months to reach the border. People suffered a lot. We survived, by eating wild fruits and roots. We couldn't even build a fire to cook as we were afraid that the smoke would attract attention to our hiding place.

Community leader,
Gendrassa East camp

Shortcomings in planning and co-ordination, combined with external constraints that the humanitarian community had limited influence over, including a myriad of logistical hurdles, hampered the humanitarian response and the ability of agencies to deliver services to minimum standards.⁴

The newly established Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS), almost bankrupt after the shutdown of its oil pipelines due to an ongoing dispute with Sudan, was unable to play a significant role in the response at the national or local level. The government provided land for refugee camps and police posts outside some of these, but it has acknowledged that it did not have the capacity to lead the response.

The humanitarian response has, however, made progress since the influx of refugees began. Despite the difficulties experienced during the response, many lives were saved and protection was provided to large numbers of vulnerable refugees. Refugees now report better conditions overall, including greater access to food, water, sanitation and health care. There have also been improvements in humanitarian leadership and co-ordination, and the deployment of greater technical capacity by UNHCR, Oxfam and other agencies.

While these gains should be acknowledged, this is not a time for complacency. A Hepatitis E outbreak, declared in September 2012, threatens to derail what has been achieved. The government, UNHCR and many humanitarian agencies were slow to acknowledge the severity of the threat, which has infected nearly 6,340 people since July 2012 and killed over 121, as of February 25.⁵ The largest number of cases and suspected cases is in the Yusuf Batil camp, which has accounted up to almost 70 per cent of the total cases and majority of deaths. The Hepatitis E outbreak, combined with the ongoing threat of cholera and other waterborne diseases, are warning signs that the health and hygiene situation in the Maban refugee camps remains precarious.

During the early phases of the response, humanitarian agencies focused their efforts on the needs of refugees. However, the difficulties experienced in 2012, including the cost and scale of the response, meant that parallel assistance to host communities was inadequate. This imbalance has contributed to hostility between refugees and host communities. Members of these communities have expressed frustration with humanitarian agencies, who they feel have neglected their needs.⁶

Humanitarian agencies have set up various types of mechanisms to communicate with refugees, such as committees representing different community members (e.g. women and youth). Regular meetings are also held with community leaders. However, there is room to strengthen these and other accountability mechanisms.

Most refugees consulted by Oxfam said they will not return to the Blue Nile until the conflict ends. They want to see an improvement in the quality of basic services provided in the camps; some want to be relocated to avoid flooding and all called for longer-term support for livelihoods and access to land so they could grow food and become self-sufficient.

Eighteen months into the refugee response, key lessons can be learned

from what went wrong. It is vital that these lessons help shape what happens, now and in the future, to improve the quality of the humanitarian response. With the next rainy season due to start in May 2013, concerted action is needed from UNHCR, the GRSS, donors and NGOs, including Oxfam, to meet the needs of both refugee and host populations.

Seven key areas should be prioritized:

- Work with the Government of Sudan and Sudan People's Liberation Movement- North to end the conflict in Blue Nile and South Kordofan States;
- Ensure better funding for the humanitarian response;
- Identify clear realistic timelines and critical milestones for the preparation of the new Kaya site to relocate refugees from Jamam and Doro, and to establish a second site for new refugees;
- Co-ordinate better for higher quality service delivery;
- Build up state capacity to lead the response;
- Improve protection of refugees, particularly women and children;
- Reduce tensions between refugees and host communities, including through a more integrated response.

Given that the conflict in Blue Nile and South Kordofan will take a long time to resolve, important lessons can be derived from Darfur, where, on the tenth anniversary of the crisis, a third of the population is still reliant on food aid for survival. Early acknowledgement that the refugee situation is likely to be protracted will help avoid a similar situation in Maban.

The humanitarian response needs to shift to a more proactive, integrated approach to prevent failures being repeated and to give people in Maban the assistance they need and deserve.

This briefing paper is based on information gathered between November 2012 and February 2013, through Oxfam's programme in Maban County, including 32 interviews with representatives of the GRSS, aid agencies and UNHCR, and discussions with refugees and the local host communities.

A comprehensive set of actions are required to deliver effective solutions for refugees and host communities. These are detailed in the recommendation section in the full version of this briefing paper. The priority areas for action are listed below.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATIONS

To end the conflict

The League of Arab States, African Union, UN, UK and US should apply diplomatic pressure on the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North to negotiate a cessation of hostilities agreement; and to engage in an inclusive political process based on the 28 June 2011 agreement to address the underlying, political, social and economic grievances in Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

To ensure better funding

Donors should maintain sufficient levels of funding to meet vital needs and guarantee equal access to services across the camps, bringing new and existing sites up to standard, and providing better quality basic services, including water, sanitation and shelter.

To identify and plan for new refugee sites

UNHCR and humanitarian agencies should identify clear realistic timelines and critical milestones for the preparation of new refugee sites. In particular, they should relocate refugees to the new Kaya camp site only after the majority of water and sanitation systems, basic services and shelter are in place. Priority should be given to moving refugees from Jamam, as the area worst hit by flooding during the rainy season.

To co-ordinate better for higher quality service delivery

UNHCR sectoral co-ordinators and cluster co-ordinators need to work together more effectively, particularly on water, sanitation and hygiene promotion, health and logistics.

To improve state capacity to lead the response

UNHCR and donors should help strengthen the capacity of government institutions, including the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the new Refugee Office, at capital, state and county levels, in areas such as awareness-raising on the new refugee law and refugee rights and protection.

To better protect refugees, particularly women and children

UNHCR and NGOs should provide capacity-building training on human rights and sexual and gender-based violence to peace and conflict committees and traditional refugee and host-community leaders.

To reduce tension with host communities

UNHCR, GRSS, NGOs and donors should support the expansion of programmes, such as tree planting, reforestation and the provision of energy-saving stoves, to manage environmental degradation, and reduce tensions and conflict between refugees and host communities.

1 INTRODUCTION

I had just given birth two days ago. I was indoors when the bombing started. One bomb landed close to our compound. We grabbed our children, including the newborn and ran. We went on foot, people got scattered; some people disappeared, others were captured by the army. We walked to the mountains and hid there for 10 days. We then got news that our houses had been burned and our properties destroyed, so we decided to escape.

Mother of six, Gendrassa camp, Upper Nile State

In November and December 2011, aerial bombardment and ground fighting forced up to 1,000 refugees a day to flee Blue Nile State in Sudan, seeking refuge in Doro and Jamam villages in Maban County in Upper Nile State, South Sudan. Refugees continued to arrive in waves throughout the next five months, their numbers outpacing the ability of humanitarian agencies to meet their basic survival needs.

Reserves of survival essentials, such as tents, mosquito nets, blankets, plastic sheets and sleeping mats, were insufficient to meet the needs of the rapidly growing refugee population. In response, the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) started to airlift in supplies.⁷ With the closure of the border with Sudan, alternative routes through Kenya and Ethiopia were established by the World Food Programme to transport food to refugees. However, food was in short supply, with refugees only receiving full monthly food rations from March 2012.⁸

Jamam and Doro camps soon became overcrowded, exceeding their maximum capacities. Difficult ground water conditions meant that Oxfam and other humanitarian agencies struggled to find enough water to sustain large numbers of refugees as well as the host population. As early as February 2012, Oxfam began to raise the alarm that refugees needed to be moved from Jamam, but it was not until mid-May that a new camp, Yusuf Batil, was established by UNHCR to relocate up to 10,000 refugees from Jamam. However, humanitarian agencies had to halt relocations from Jamam to Yusuf Batil to make way for a new influx of refugees.

At the peak of the emergency in May 2012, a sudden influx of 35,000 people arrived in Maban during the onset of the rainy season. They arrived traumatized, exhausted from weeks of walking, malnourished and sick from drinking dirty water. Despite the best efforts of humanitarian agencies, some people died soon after making it to Maban.⁹

For many refugees, their condition deteriorated further on reaching Maban. Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) reported mortality rates more than double emergency levels, with three to four children a day dying in Yusuf Batil camp.¹⁰ Once Yusuf Batil camp became full, a second new camp called Gendrassa was established in July 2012.

Flooding in May 2012 in the Jamam camp made conditions even more difficult, with tents collapsing and latrines overflowing. Even areas that were not flooded became extremely muddy, increasing the risk of waterborne diseases. These conditions had stark consequences for refugees, with many falling ill to deadly diseases. A Hepatitis E outbreak took hold in July 2012. The Government of the Republic of South Sudan (GRSS), UNHCR and humanitarian agencies were slow to acknowledge the outbreak and to put in measures to address it, despite prior knowledge that Hepatitis E had been present in the Blue Nile for more than three years.

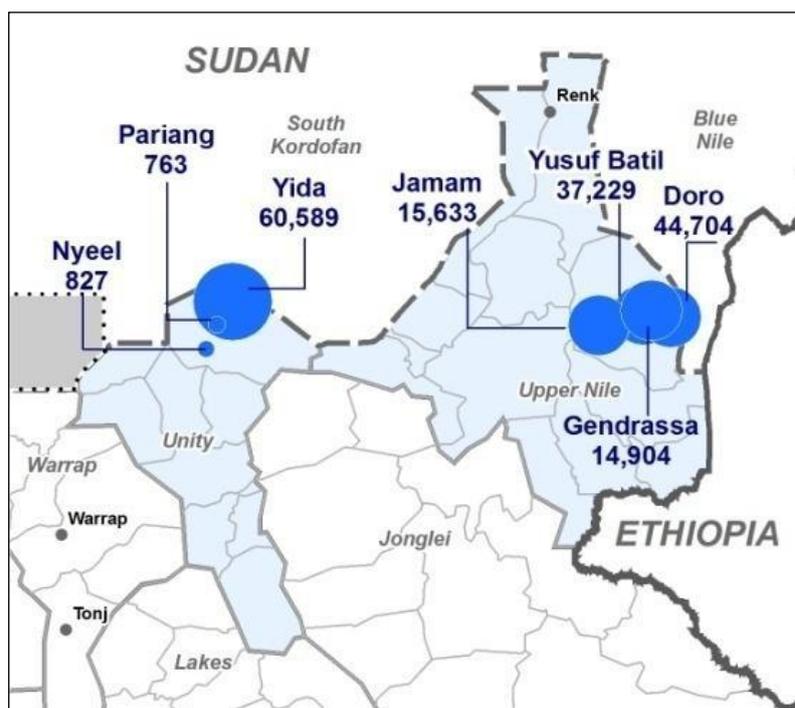
Humanitarian agencies struggled to scale-up and deliver services to meet the rising needs of the refugee population and to save lives; agencies failed to meet acceptable minimum standards. During the early stages of the response, immense effort was expended to drill for water, set up the camps and relocate people simultaneously, with few resources and under difficult conditions. This struggle could have been managed more effectively with better planning, funding, leadership, co-ordination and decision making, and greater government capacity.

Adding to this, tensions between refugees and host communities steadily increased in the Gendrassa, Doro, and Yusuf Batil camps, and to a lesser extent in Jamam, due to conflicts over land, use of water and natural resources. In September 2012, fighting broke out between a refugee and member of the host community in Gendrassa market resulting in the death of the refugee and 20 other people sustaining injuries.¹¹ Another violent incident was reported between refugees and host community members in January 2013, close to Doro camp, leaving four people injured.¹²

When the rains came, there was water and mud everywhere, our shelter started floating in the water. We were taken [from Jamam] to a transit camp where we spent five days. Next we were shifted from the transit to a new camp, Gendrassa. We then realized that the area we had been allocated was also flooded. So we moved once again.

Female refugee volunteer, Gendrassa camp

Figure 1: Map of refugee camps and populations figures for Upper Nile State



Source: UNOCHA, January 2013

2 WHAT WENT WRONG?

A DIFFICULT CONTEXT

Maban County presented a harsh environment for refugees and a difficult operating environment for the humanitarian response.¹³ In Maban specifically, there were three major complicating factors for the refugee response: austerity, inaccessibility and an already-vulnerable host community.

Austerity

The influx of refugees into Maban took place against a backdrop of severe austerity measures following the shutdown of oil production in South Sudan, depriving the government of 98 per cent of its domestic revenue.¹⁴ The newly established government structures were rendered practically inoperable because of this lack of resources.¹⁵

In Maban, austerity made humanitarian access even harder. Cash-strapped local and state authorities increasingly saw NGOs in the area as a source of revenue, similar to the oil companies that had operated there for years. They attempted to introduce taxes for marram (a rock and soil mixture used for constructing roads and buildings) and for the wooden poles used to build shelters and latrines. One agency reported that its programme was held up for a month and a half because wooden poles were confiscated by local authorities demanding payment of taxes.¹⁶ UNHCR raised the issue of taxation with local, state and central authorities. However, the imposition of taxes continues to be arbitrary to take place without clear and transparent taxation procedures.

Inaccessibility

Humanitarian agencies working in Maban have faced huge logistical challenges. The area in which the refugee camps are located is extraordinarily remote, with little infrastructure. Up to 60 per cent of South Sudan, and most of Maban, is inaccessible by road during the five-month rainy season. Even when access is possible, few supplies are available locally; agencies have had to rely on imported goods, transporting them via barge up the Nile, and then by road to Maban. In 2012, road access was cut twice because of rains and the barges were not a reliable alternative as they were too slow to get supplies to Maban.

These conditions made it particularly difficult to transport bulky water, sanitation and engineering equipment, such as drilling rigs. Humanitarian agencies had to rely on flights to support their operations. As a result, people faced a shortage of water and sanitation facilities, food, nutritional supplements and vital medical supplies.

An agency providing medical support reported that it took three months to get vital supplies to Maban, seriously affecting their ability to deliver an adequate service to refugees and local people.¹⁷ However, the

This has been a terrible year. Cultivation started well. I planted maize and many other types of crops. But then we had a prolonged dry spell followed by heavy rains which flooded the land. It ruined all my crops. I have nothing left.

Host community member, Jamam

International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) began water and sanitation interventions as a result of a shortage of capacity among Oxfam and other agencies and managed to transport and install 14km of pipeline during the rainy season.

An already-vulnerable host community

Maban's refugee population of more than 115,000 vastly outnumbers the widely dispersed host communities in Maban County of 45,238 people.¹⁸ Even before the presence of refugees in the area, these communities were extremely poor and vulnerable, unable to meet some of their most basic needs, including access to safe drinking water, sanitation and health care. In January 2012, the price of food and basic commodities skyrocketed after the closure of the border between Sudan and South Sudan, pushing prices beyond the means of many. Refugees arrived at a time when the host community were unable to produce enough food even for themselves. The influx of thousands of refugees put extra pressure on the limited water, natural resources, and land for farming and grazing animals.

Before the refugees came, the situation was very good. When the refugees came, people's homes and gardens were destroyed by their cattle, damaging and destroying sorghum, maize and pumpkin planted in the fields. People in Maban had no problem with hunger until now.

Host community leader,
Gendrassa

A SUB-STANDARD RESPONSE

Even taking this tough and complex setting into account, the humanitarian community did not do all it should have done to meet the urgent needs of the camp populations. More could have been done in the areas of delivery of basic services, funding, leadership, and co-ordination.

Delivery of basic services

Many humanitarian agencies did not deliver a high quality response. Oxfam's own response was a case in point. Despite a good start, with contingency stocks/and materials and Oxfam's Emergency Response Team (ERT) being deployed quickly on the ground, their response stalled from March to June 2012, initially due to a lack of funding (until mid-April). Oxfam was then slow to pick up momentum.

Oxfam's biggest challenge was to find water for the refugee population in Jamam without jeopardizing the water supply for the host community. The water situation in Jamam was known to be fragile at best, and very scarce at the worst. 'Black cotton' soil and ground water conditions made the search for water extraordinarily difficult. Having worked in Jamam for six years, Oxfam had found a good source of water for the needs of the local community and, when, the refugee crises began, it was initially thought that another water source could be found. In mid-February 2012, Oxfam commissioned an external hydro-geological survey which provided an over-optimistic and flawed conclusion that there was medium-depth groundwater available.

When we first arrived in Maban the situation was really tough. There were no services such as water or latrines and no food. We had to harvest wild fruits and eat them to survive. If we got caught by the host community we were harassed.

Female Refugee
Gendrassa camp

After months of trying based on this analysis, Oxfam determined that, even if one additional source could be found, this would not meet the needs of the refugee community and refugees would therefore need to be relocated.

In the meantime, Oxfam was trucking in water and continuing to search for new sources, despite a lack of good quality hydrological surveys. Oxfam initially used emergency contingency stock to build water systems in Jamam, but staff could not make further progress due to poor forward planning on their part, a lack of funds and equipment, and uncertainty about population movements within and outside of Jamam. In mid-August, the arrival of more water equipment from Oxfam allowed the extension of water distribution systems in Jamam, but Oxfam was not able to provide minimum emergency standards in water until September 2012.¹⁹ This was in part due to a lack of equipment, but also Oxfam's reluctance to explore other alternative options for supplying water.

UNHCR and NGOs have supported us with our basic needs but things have not been easy. We moved four times since we arrived in Jamam. The moving around has been disruptive and unsettling.

Male Casual Worker,
Gendrassa camp

One potential solution was to extend water storage systems and pipes from a borehole several miles away from the Jamam camp. However, in the absence of adequate funding, Oxfam struggled to implement this solution alongside other work. Oxfam was late in carrying out a technical assessment of a borehole known as Bantiko to determine its water production capacity and the feasibility of a pipeline to transport water from Bantiko to Jamam camp. Once the borehole was assessed, it was discovered that it had a high production capacity. Subsequently, in November 2012, ICRC completed a 14km pipeline from Bantiko, which Oxfam then connected to a pipeline distribution network connecting Jamam with water. This reduced the need to truck water to Jamam. Oxfam only considered the potential of shallow water sources as a last resort; water experts were reluctant to pursue this route as they did not want to deplete the water sources of the host community, particularly as water supply levels in Jamam camp were above levels that people need to survive on. Still, Oxfam could have done better.

A lack of experienced staff proved to be a critical limitation on Oxfam's ability to quickly scale-up once funds were mobilized. All of the senior management team were new to Oxfam's South Sudan programme at the start of 2012. Staff turnover was high and there were frequent changes in management structure. Other agencies also report high staff turnover, changes in management, and loss of knowledge due to short-term deployments. Continual changes of staff resulted in changes in direction, loss of institutional memory, and confusion and disagreement among agencies about strategies and plans.

Many other agencies only secured funding and got staff into Maban after the rainy season began; they then found it difficult to bring in supplies and to access refugees because of flooding and inaccessible roads. These conditions hampered the cholera-prevention work of medical agencies, who struggled to reach refugees or to deliver soap and medicines to health facilities.²⁰

Oxfam has since commissioned a number of internal and external evaluations of its response in Maban to review the speed and quality of its response and to contribute to internal learning.²¹

Funding: A donor response that was too little, too late

The South Sudan refugee response was phenomenally expensive – one of the most expensive humanitarian responses the world has ever seen – and was often overshadowed by other world events, such as the drought in the Horn of Africa, the food crisis in the Sahel and the conflict in Syria. Oxfam's six month budget for its WASH response from August 2012, for just Maban, was \$5m. It cost Oxfam \$250 per person to provide WASH to refugees in Maban, compared to most other contexts Oxfam works in where the cost is less than \$75 per person.

Many donors were slow to respond to the refugee crisis. Despite refugees arriving from November 2011, the crisis did not attract significant donor attention until March/April 2012. Some donors had funding available earlier, but were slow to process proposals and required convincing to provide the high levels of funding necessary.

According to one major donor, funding for the Upper Nile refugee response was competing against a range of other donor priorities: a shift to a development approach after the independence of South Sudan, the predicted arrival of large numbers of returnees from Sudan, and conflict in Jonglei.²²

The slow donor response hampered the ability of UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies to scale-up staffing and equipment, and also prevented the stockpiling of contingency materials and vital supplies in the short period ahead of the rainy season.

For Oxfam, the response was delayed by two or three months largely as a result of the lack of institutional donor funding; secured funding rose sharply from \$180,000 in March 2012 to \$2.7m by April 2012. UNHCR also struggled with funding. UNHCR's 2012 global appeal for South Sudan was revised upwards to \$186 million in 2012 for refugees in South Sudan and Ethiopia. However, by October, UNHCR only managed to secure 40 per cent of this required amount. UNHCR and humanitarian agencies had to appeal to donors for a further \$20 million to cover needs until the end of the year.²³

Pooled funds went some way to alleviating the funding situation. In addition to a \$20m grant from the Central Emergency Response Fund, which is only available to UN agencies and the International Organization for Migration, the UN Humanitarian Co-ordinator allocated \$10m of the Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) for NGOs to support priorities in health nutrition, water and sanitation and access to supplies for refugees in late July 2012. Although this funding was welcome, it did not get dispersed until August and was a drop in the ocean compared to the overall funding needs.

Humanitarian leadership

In mid-December 2011, UNHCR took an active lead in co-ordinating the refugee response in Maban. This meant that UNHCR's short-comings affected the whole response.

The conditions in the camps have got better. There is more water and smaller queues to get water and less sickness than when we first arrived. We suffered a lot at the beginning. There was a shortage of food and water, lots of cases of diarrhoea and long queues at the clinic. People were also getting sick from drinking water from the haffirs [ponds].

Mother, Jamam camp

Against the backdrop of limited funding and difficult conditions on the ground, UNHCR, alongside Oxfam and other NGOs, struggled to scale-up quickly and fully take on this role.

A number of factors contributed to this, including problems securing necessary funding and difficulties recruiting high-calibre technical and managerial staff willing to work in the tough conditions in Maban. In addition, UNHCR did not fully utilize the existing humanitarian cluster co-ordination system in South Sudan, and did not tap into the skills and experience of cluster co-ordinators and cluster resources.²⁴

Prior to the crisis UNHCR had an office in the state capital, Malakal, which focused on returning South Sudanese and existing refugees in South Sudan, but it did not have a team in Maban. In the initial stages of the response, UNHCR moved staff from Malakal to work in Maban. UNHCR also relied on deploying short-term emergency staff to work in Maban.

It was not until April 2012 that UNHCR finally consolidated its operational team on the ground and appointed a Head of Office in Maban. In Jamam, despite the difficulties of the operating environment, there was no senior manager in place to provide leadership until May 2012.²⁵ This slowed down the response, planning and decision-making and co-ordination with humanitarian agencies.

UNHCR did not lead sector-specific co-ordination meetings in Maban until August 2012.²⁶ Partly as a result of the lack of technical staff from UNHCR and partly due to UNHCR's reluctance to work with the cluster system, agencies responding to the refugee crisis were left without technical leadership. For example, there was no forum through which partners could share learning and knowledge or compare, WASH services provided by different agencies.

This was compounded by the design of UNHCR's information management system which prevented agencies from getting information on who was doing what where, in order to identify gaps or share information. Instead, information was disseminated in weekly situation reports, but was difficult to analyze; consolidated data and analysis of health indicators, for example, were not available.²⁷

The GRSS, UNHCR and many humanitarian agencies were slow in responding to the Hepatitis E outbreak. It was only in January 2013, when the Ministry of Health assigned three specialists to take the lead in addressing the outbreak. While this was a welcome development, it was nevertheless a late one. Similarly, though the Hepatitis E outbreak started in July 2012, joint health and WASH co-ordination meetings led by UNHCR were weak and did not take place until January 2103.

It was only then that mapping of Hepatitis E cases was shared with humanitarian agencies, a joint working group was set up, and an action plan to address the disease developed.

Separate co-ordination structures

UNHCR states in a note developed on the co-ordination of refugee emergencies in South Sudan, 'the statue of UNHCR confers... both accountability and authority for matters pertaining to refugees. For this reason refugee responses were never included in the "cluster" approach'.²⁸ UNHCR therefore created another co-ordination structure separate from the existing cluster co-ordination system in South Sudan. Separate refugee co-ordination and sector co-ordination meetings in WASH, health, protection and other key sectors continue to be held in Maban and Malakaal.²⁹

This dual co-ordination structure led to a duplication of efforts, with the same issues being discussed at various meetings. Multi-sector refugee co-ordination meetings in Juba led by UNHCR were also dealing with day-to-day operational activities rather than concentrating on leadership, planning or strategic decision-making about the response. Many NGOs did not have previous experience of separate refugee co-ordination structures; UNHCR's partners in the refugee response were used to working within the cluster co-ordination system and did not understand UNHCR's role as lead agency co-ordinating the refugee response.³⁰ This caused uncertainty among agencies about standards of operating and co-ordination.

Although UNHCR shared information with the Humanitarian Country Team and the Humanitarian Co-ordinator, strategically important issues were not sufficiently addressed at this high level forum.³¹ For example, to support a collective response by the wider humanitarian community, UNHCR needed to proactively highlight obstacles to humanitarian access affecting the ability of agencies to deliver assistance to refugees.

To address the difficulties in delivering water, UNHCR brought in a number of different (WASH) actors to 'double up' efforts and step-up activities. For example, in the newly established Yusuf Batil camp, in May, 2012, there were six agencies working on water and sanitation. Although this led to some positive collaboration between agencies who benefited from each other's support, it also led to an uneven approach to service delivery. Humanitarian agencies had different capacities and ways of working, and did not always work to common strategies and agreed plans. UNHCR could have provided better co-ordination by sharing the lessons from the previous rainy season and ensuring the community was prepared for the coming rainy season.

UNHCR as the agency mandated to lead and coordinate refugee responses has agreed to implement the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Transformative Agenda to ensure its overall contribution to the humanitarian response effort is effective.³² In doing so, UNHCR has acknowledged the importance of developing an effective interface between the co-ordination of a refugee situation, under its mandate and accountability, and the co-ordination of the broader humanitarian response led by the Humanitarian Co-ordinator. This approach needs to be applied more robustly in South Sudan to ensure UNHCR's partners understand its role better from the outset and that UNHCR works more effectively with the cluster co-ordination system and the Humanitarian Co-ordinator.

3 WHAT NEEDS TO HAPPEN NOW

THE CURRENT SITUATION

Violence continues to spread across Blue Nile State and refugees continue to flee to across the border to Maban. Although there have only been a small number of new arrivals in the first months of 2013, refugees continue to arrive with very few personal belongings, having survived their long journeys eating wild fruits and edible roots, and drinking water from contaminated sources. Clearly, the situation remains unpredictable.

In December 2012, Oxfam carried out a series of focus group discussions with refugees and host communities in Jamam and Gendrassa.³³ New arrivals to Gendrassa said they had left Blue Nile because their lives were in danger from the intensification of aerial bombing and restrictions on freedom of movement prevented them from cultivating their crops. Like those that arrived at earlier stages, the refugees who arrived in December 2012 stated that they had seen burned or otherwise destroyed villages on their journey to South Sudan.³⁴ In contrast, refugees who arrived more recently, in February 2013, confirmed to ACTED the camp management agency, that a lack of access to food and water, rather than insecurity or bombing, as their reason for fleeing Blue Nile.³⁵

People in camps have reported to Oxfam that conditions have improved in terms of access to food, water and sanitation, medical services, and access to primary education for children.³⁶ Refugees have also reported that their children are healthier, with fewer incidences of malnutrition and diarrhoea. Despite these encouraging reports, vital needs remain unmet: most people talked about delays in food distribution. There were also concerns over the lack of secondary or adult education, gaps in water and sanitation services, shortages of new tents and a lack of replacements for those that have worn out. Thirty per cent of refugees in Doro camp have yet to be provided with tents.³⁷

We left because the bombing increased. Antonovs [military planes] were in the sky in the morning and evenings. There was heavy and continuous bombing. Because the bombing was constant...we couldn't cultivate our land any longer. The bombing instilled fear in everyone. It became too dangerous to stay.

Farmer, newly arrived, Gendrassa East camp

MEETING PEOPLE'S NEEDS IN MABAN: SEVEN ACTIONS

15,000 refugees in Jamam camp need to be moved to a more suitable location and at least 10,000 refugees need to be relocated to decongest Doro camp. Between December and the beginning of March an additional 2,445 new refugees had fled to Maban. While this is significantly lower than the 30,000 refugees who were expected to arrive in the first part of 2013, a larger influx is expected between April and June. The experience of May 2012 highlights the need for effective preparation and planning in the event of another large influx of refugees. Both the current refugee population and new arrivals need to be assured of adequate protection and assistance.

There are seven key areas in which the international community, including donors, UNHCR, humanitarian agencies and the GRSS, need to take action:

1. End the conflict

Refugees consulted by Oxfam expressed a wish to return home, but were firm that they would not do so until the conflict ended. They want to see disarmament in their home areas, guarantees of their safety and security, and implementation of a popular consultation on their views on the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement.

The humanitarian response cannot distract from the fact that a cessation of hostilities and a peace agreement is needed to end the conflict so that people are able to return to their homes. The Arab League, African Union, UN, UK, and US should urge the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North to allow humanitarian access in line with the tripartite agreements on the Blue Nile and South Kordofan.³⁸ They should apply diplomatic pressure on both parties to negotiate a cessation of hostilities agreement; and to engage in an inclusive political process based on the 28 June 2011 agreement, to address the underlying, political, social and economic grievances in Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

2. Ensure better funding

UNHCR's 2013 global appeal for South Sudan is just over \$219m; of this amount, just over \$36.6m has been raised, as of 24 March 2013.³⁹ Most donors have once again been slow to make new funding available for the refugee response. Many agencies involved in the crisis ran out of funding in December 2012 and, with the rainy season approaching, are now urgently in need of new funds. Although some donors have started to make funding available, the funds will not be released in sufficient time for agencies to gather the necessary supplies and resources ahead of the impending rainy season.

The Common Humanitarian Fund

The Common Humanitarian Fund (CHF) did not prioritize the refugee response in the first round of allocations for 2013, but will support agencies with prepositioning of contingency stocks, such as buckets, soap, and educational materials, and the provision of common transport services, such as barges and trucks. Unfortunately, funding through the CHF did not become available until March 2013 – only 2 months ahead of the rainy season.

The second round CHF allocation will be released in August; this will support agencies to preposition for the dry season in 2014. This is a positive move, but will not have an impact in 2013.

Donor Funding

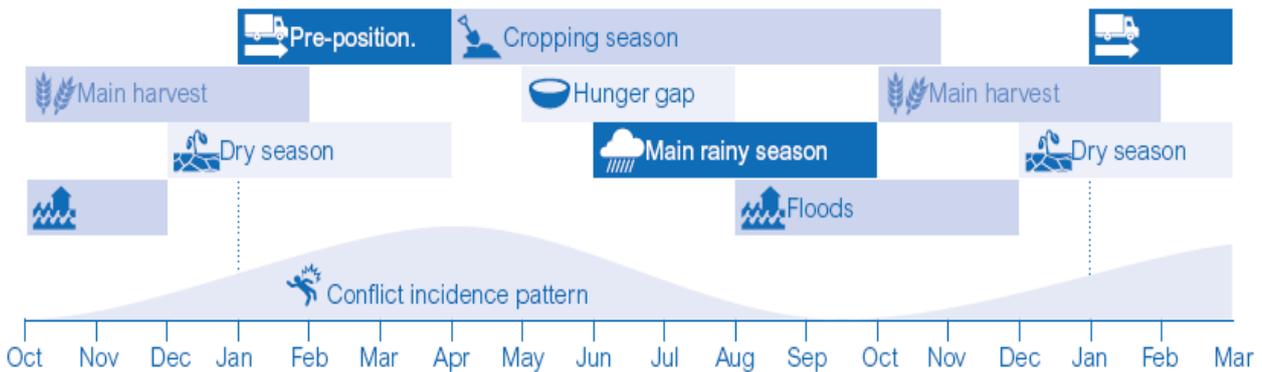
Donors, such as European Community Humanitarian Office (ECHO), have been flexible with their funding cycle, have made funding available directly to humanitarian agencies, and have released funding early enough to allow agencies to preposition humanitarian goods ahead of the rainy season. Currently, most donors fund on a short-term yearly cycle, and funding does not become available until around March or April. This has a detrimental impact on humanitarian agencies and their ability to deliver timely, high-quality humanitarian assistance in Maban.

The reason we left is because of the war. The war came about because we were demanding our rights to a popular consultation. The government, instead of giving us rights, rained down on us with bombs. We won't go home until the conflict ends and we are given a chance to decide our future.

Community leader,
Jamam camp

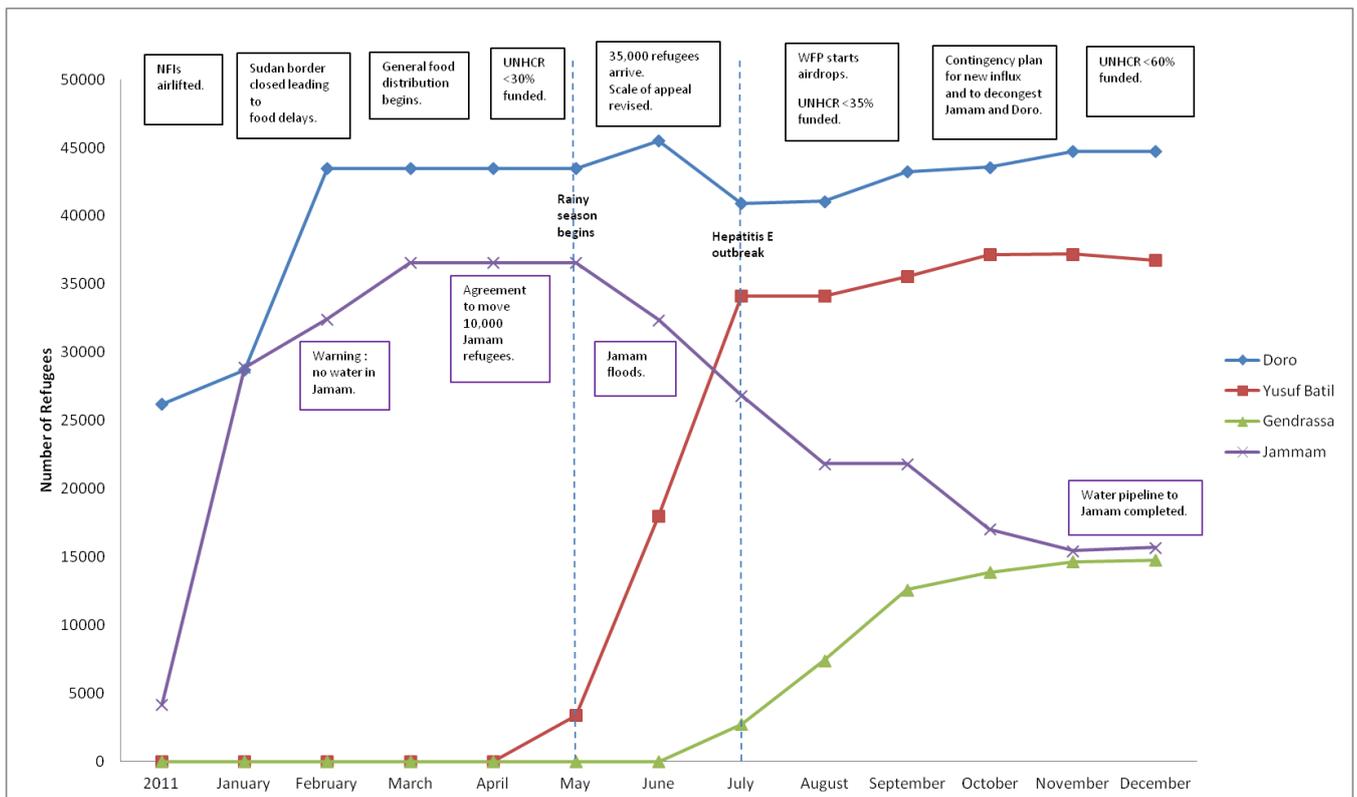
Donors should ensure that their funding cycles are flexible in order to support the retention of humanitarian staff, and enable contingency planning and pre-procurement and positioning of supplies in the short five-month time frame of the dry season (see Figure 2). Funding cycles of three to five years should be provided by donors to ensure effective longer-term planning and continuity in programming. Donors, NGOs and the humanitarian community should break down the barriers between humanitarian and development programmes by ensuring funding mechanisms and humanitarian and development programming are better integrated to support the transition from relief to development. This will involve bringing together humanitarian and development strategies, for example, through joint analysis, assessments and planning.

Figure 2: Critical seasonal events in South Sudan



Source: UN OCHA, January 2012

Figure 3: Timeline of refugee flows, funding, and events, Maban, 2012



Source: All funding and refugee figures from UNHCR. Funding figures are indicative and based on UNHCR's for Sudanese refugees across the region. Refugee numbers for Doro and Jamam camps are not known for April and May; as such indicative figures have been used.

3. Identify and plan for new sites

A draft contingency plan was drawn up by UNHCR in December 2012. Three potential new sites were identified to decongest the existing Jamam and Doro camps, and to accommodate new arrivals, but, the GRSS agreed to only one, Kaya, based in Maban. UNHCR, Oxfam and partners working on WASH, camp management, protection and health have started work on site-planning and preparations for the new camp. However, the government, host communities and UNHCR have yet to agree on a site to accommodate new refugee arrivals. Local authorities and some host communities in Maban have opposed the establishment of another camp in the area for new refugees because of the large numbers already in the area. They have raised concerns over access to grazing land and depletion of natural resources. The only contingency site under discussion, Guel Guk, is remote and will present operational challenges for humanitarian agencies because of its inaccessibility. In the interim, a transit site in Jamam, with the capacity to hold 3,000 people has been established by UNHCR to temporarily host new arrivals from Blue Nile.

UNHCR and the government have not shared concrete timelines for when a new site will have to be agreed by and the steps needed to get a camp ready to receive new refugees.

However, time is of the essence in planning and preparing the new camps and relocating people. Oxfam estimates that it will take five months to prepare Kaya and relocate 20–25,000 refugees. With the rainy season approaching, any delays will mean operational costs will increase and set up/construction work will become increasingly difficult.

Medical agencies are concerned about mixing people infected with the Hepatitis E in Jamam with the refugee population from Doro who are only marginally affected by the disease. If the humanitarian community has time to prepare and can avoid airlifting equipment and supplies, water trucking, and disruption to vital basic services, then the refugee population will not suffer further, and the potential to contain the Hepatitis E outbreak in the relocation process will be greater.

4. Better co-ordination of service delivery

Humanitarian agencies involved in the Upper Nile refugee crisis generally report good working relationships; there is now a clearer picture of who is doing what where, and agencies are reporting on common indicators. UNHCR is considering creating an NGO co-ordinator post to support it on strategy, planning and decision-making, as well monitoring standards and accountability to refugees in the Unity and Upper Nile responses. This is the first time that UNHCR has considered such a role in a refugee response and is a positive step.

UNHCR has stated its commitment to open and transparent partnerships.⁴⁰ As UNHCR is both the lead agency co-ordinating the response and a major funder, NGOs perceive this as a very powerful position. This has created reluctance among some partners to have a transparent discussion about their challenges in terms of funding, staff deployment, capacity and technical gaps. Some NGOs, including Oxfam,

It's been more than a year, we still have problems with getting food on time, our tents are worn out and we are not sure they will survive the rains. Some people still have problems with water, the supply is not always constant, and we still have to travel quite far to get to taps. Although we have schools the quality of education is low and there is no secondary education. We'd like to see better access to services, food, water and education.

Refugee Community Leader, Jamam camp

have been reluctant to criticize UNHCR or themselves because of a perceived fear of losing funding and/or hurting their reputation. This reluctance can also be attributed to a culture of blame and competition which has surfaced at times among humanitarian agencies in Maban. NGOs and other UNHCR partner organizations need to be more forthright and bring blockages and shortcomings to the table so that the right support is made available.⁴¹

The fragile health situation of the refugee population illustrates the increased need for regular information sharing between health and WASH partners, greater mapping of cases where people are affected by disease outbreaks, and a consolidated overview of the health situation. While co-ordinated action to tackle Hepatitis E started late, there has been progress in this area. Intensified efforts by UNHCR and humanitarian agencies to scale-up sanitation and hygiene interventions, particularly in the Yusuf Batil and Doro camps, is starting to have some impact.⁴² Common strategies, hygiene promotion messages, and appropriate interventions on cholera and Hepatitis E are now being implemented.

UNHCR technical experts need to take a stronger role in leadership and co-ordination, with the support of the World Health Organization (WHO), to bring the health and WASH clusters together.

Humanitarian agencies must also co-ordinate the supplies pipeline more effectively. Many agencies have found themselves competing for the same barge, truck and plane capacity. UNHCR did seek the support of the logistics cluster to airlift and transport supplies during the rainy season. It has also worked through the logistics cluster to support partners with a common transportation service. UNHCR, and the World Food Programme, as the logistic cluster lead agency, need to co-operate and co-ordinate better to overcome the many logistical hurdles. The humanitarian community needs to work together now to ensure enough food, nutritional items and WASH supplies are in place ahead of the rainy season.

Humanitarian agencies have set up various types of mechanisms to communicate with refugees, such as committees representing different community members (e.g. women and youth). Regular meetings are also held with community leaders. However, it has not always been clear from the current system how much of the feedback from agencies passed along through committees and community leaders is reaching people. There is room to strengthen these and other accountability mechanisms by ensuring timely feedback and information sharing using multiple channels of communication, and enabling refugees to participate meaningfully in decision making, and the design and delivery of programmes.

While vital, humanitarian interventions are short-term fixes. In other countries, Oxfam and other agencies have found medium-term, more development-oriented solutions that lower the cost and improve the sustainability of service provision. For example, over the last six years, Oxfam has installed 20 solar-powered water systems in villages in drought prone areas, such as Wajir in Kenya. Some of these systems can also be used to provide livelihoods for refugees, for example through training

metal workers to make spare parts for boreholes that have broken. Oxfam has been doing this through a joint livelihoods and public health project in Rumbek, in Lakes state, South Sudan.

There is now a greater awareness among the humanitarian community of the need to provide balanced assistance to both the host and refugee communities. UNHCR hosted a development partners meeting, attended by key donors, in December 2012 to increase attention on the needs of the host community and to discuss how development actors can provide complimentary interventions in parallel to the refugee response.⁴³

In the coming year, humanitarian agencies will need to focus on further stabilizing the situation in all four camps and ensuring equal access to services. Better co-ordination between humanitarian and development actors, alongside sustainable and cost-effective solutions, will be required to meet the medium-term needs of refugees, host communities and returnees. For long-term sustainability, the humanitarian community must invest in building the capacity of national partners and staff.

5. Improve state capacity to lead the response

The newly established GRSS has so far been unable to play a significant role in the humanitarian response at a national or local level. As the primary duty-bearer for providing humanitarian assistance in South Sudan, the GRSS must ensure that it actively facilitates all humanitarian goods and services by ensuring clear and transparent taxation procedures and preventing the introduction of arbitrary or illegal taxes. All humanitarian goods and services should be tax exempt. In a positive move, the President's Office has called on all state authorities to ensure an immediate end to taxation of humanitarian goods, and free movement of relief cargos at the border and throughout Upper Nile State.⁴⁴

The GRSS sees its contribution to the response as providing security for refugees and humanitarian agencies, and land for refugee camps humanitarian agencies' offices 'without charge'.⁴⁵ The government says it has deployed police posts outside Gendrasa, Doro and Yusuf Batil camps for the safety of refugees. Officials point out that the government is 'newborn' and acknowledge that it lacks any further capacity to lead the response; the government has therefore asked for support from the international community to provide services for refugees.⁴⁶

Government institutions lack both the resources and qualified staff to co-ordinate effectively with humanitarian agencies. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) is the principle implementing body for humanitarian operations in South Sudan. However, in Maban, the RRC, located within the County Commissioner's Office, only has three members of staff: two Refugee and Host Community Co-ordinators, and a Head of Office. The state-level RRC is similarly understaffed; the Director of the RCC office emphasized the need for capacity strengthening of government staff at both state and county levels.⁴⁷

Government officials have played a limited role in refugee co-ordination meetings, except for sporadic attendance by RRC officials and a representative from the County Commissioner's office at Maban level co-ordination meetings. The GRSS lacked a single agency responsible for

The government is providing land for the refugees to settle and is ensuring security for refugees and humanitarian agencies. The government is newborn. We don't have the staff, resources, and capacity to lead the refugee response.

Senior official, GRSS

refugees; the remit fell in between several departments, including the Interior Ministry, Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and the RRC.

To address this gap, the GRSS has set up a Refugee Office located within the Interior Ministry; a process that will include deploying state level representatives. The parliament has drafted and passed the Refugee Act setting out the government's legal obligations to refugees and refugee rights and entitlements. However, GRSS has not allocated funding for this, meaning that the Act has not been implemented. A Refugee Commissioner and Deputy have recently been appointed by the GRSS, under the Interior Ministry.

These developments are positive moves towards ensuring that there is a mandated government agency with ownership and clear lines of responsibility to lead and co-ordinate with UNHCR and other humanitarian agencies on refugee-related issues. These positions will also be important in advocating for resources within government to implement the new refugee legislation. As well as a presence in Juba and at the state level, the new Refugee Office should have a permanent presence on the ground in Maban.

6. Ensure safety of Refugees

Protect women and children

Women, children, and young people account for 80 per cent of those living in camps in Maban.⁴⁸ In line with camp management guidelines, the GRSS has primary responsibility for protecting their rights, providing law and order, and ensuring the safety of refugees in their territory.⁴⁹ A number of agencies are working on the protection of refugees, including addressing violence, access to basic services, and the protection of children.

Single women and female-headed households are particularly vulnerable to exploitation; they often have to walk long distances to get to food distribution points and then carry back heavy bags of rations. Sometimes they are forced to give up a portion of their rations in exchange for help transporting the food home.⁵⁰

Sexual harassment and the exploitation of women and girls have been highlighted as prevalent issues in Doro camp by the Danish Refugee Council, which works on the protection of refugees. Women and young girls face a particularly high level of risk at firewood and water collection points, where incidents have included beatings, sexual abuse and attempted rape.⁵¹ Domestic violence is also a prevalent concern across the refugee camps.

There is a lack of safe spaces where women and girls can go to report incidents of violence and receive the support they need. Fear of stigmatization and lack of identifiable staff trained in mediation and counselling mean that many acts of violence against women go unreported.⁵² The camp setting makes it difficult to set up adequate safe houses for women, but attempts should be made to establish women's centres where women can gather in a safe environment to talk about sensitive issues such as violence.

Back home we were freer. Here we can't move around so freely. There are many restrictions on us. We are not allowed to collect firewood or cut grass. If we are caught then we are harassed or beaten, our tools are confiscated, or we are asked to pay a fine which we can't afford.

Teacher, Gendrassa camp

In addition, currently customary methods are used to resolve conflict; they do not address sexual and gender-based violence. In the absence of formal legal mechanisms, training on human rights and sexual and gender-based violence should be provided to peace and conflict committee members (see below for more details about these committees) and traditional leaders from host and refugee communities. In parallel, the police and judiciary need to strengthen the rule of law and formal legal mechanisms to ensure perpetrators are held to account for sexual and gender-based crimes, as well as addressing other serious crimes.

Maintain the civilian nature of the camps

In November 2012, unofficial reports suggested a recruitment drive by armed groups in a number of the camps, which saw large numbers of teenage boys 'disappear'.⁵³ There were also unofficial reports of refugees contributing a percentage of their food to support armed actors.

UNHCR communicated their concerns to the GRSS about the presence of armed actors undermining the civilian nature of the camps and endangering the safety of refugees and aid workers.⁵⁴

In response, the Deputy Governor of Upper Nile led a disarmament process in January 2013 which UNHCR and the United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) staff observed. In total, the government collected 64 guns and 487 rounds of ammunitions from Yusuf Batil camp (none were recovered from Jamam). UNHCR reports that a total of 1,014 suspected combatants are thought to have left the camp.⁵⁵ However, UNHCR and humanitarian agencies remain concerned about ongoing recruitment in the camps.

The GRSS has the primary responsibility for maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of the camps by providing security for refugees and preventing the flow of arms into the refugee camps. It should continue to take safe, robust measures, with the support of UNHCR and UNMISS.

7. Reduce tension with host communities

Maban, a predominantly agrarian community, is facing a difficult dry season, with local people dependant on a meagre harvest and a few livestock to sell in order to buy food. Into this context, the arrival of refugees has put additional pressure on these already limited resources.

Major flash points and safety issues emerging from focus group discussions conducted by Oxfam with both refugees and host community members include: tensions between the communities over the theft of animals; the cutting and selling of trees and wood; grazing land for livestock and the destruction of crops by livestock; access to employment; and access to cultivation land for host communities and refugees.⁵⁶

Those agencies tasked with managing the camps, the Agency for Technical Co-operation and Development (ACTED) and the Danish Refugee Council, have set up peace and conflict committees involving the leadership of refugees and host communities, NGOs, the County Commissioner and UNHCR. They meet on a monthly basis and have generally been received positively by members of the host communities and refugees. In addition,

When the refugees arrived, so did many more NGOs, but all the resources were diverted to the refugees. Support to the host community stopped. The local villagers were left out. This has led to deep levels of frustration.

Farmer, Jamam

UNHCR is working with leaders from the host communities and local authorities to identify grazing and farm land for the use of refugees.

These ad-hoc measures are working for now. However, humanitarian agencies have emphasized the need to put in place longer-term solutions by clearly identifying and demarcating areas where refugees can graze their animals, collect firewood and cultivate crops.⁵⁷

A reforestation plan should be developed by the Ministry of Forestry with the support of UNHCR. NGOs should expand the introduction of fuel-efficient stoves and other programming options that can help to address tensions and reduce the impact of refugee camps on the environment. When seeking long-term solutions, agencies need to remember the 'Do No Harm' principle and ensure their programmes do not inadvertently favour one group over another.

UNHCR should ensure that the refugee response strategy recognizes early on the potential for the situation to be protracted; there is scope for humanitarian and development actors to effectively co-ordinate and link budgets and to ensure the refugee response is complementary to, and well co-ordinated with, programmes targeted at host communities.

Limited resources will lead to conflict between refugees and local people. There needs to be a careful balance to share resources equally.

Women's Host
Community Leader,
Gendrasa

4 CONCLUSION

The response to the refugee crisis in the Upper Nile has put the spotlight once again on the ability of the humanitarian community as a whole to prepare, rapidly scale-up and deliver high-quality humanitarian assistance. A potential catastrophe was averted in the earlier phases of the response as a result of immense collective efforts. The current situation in the camps, although stable, remains fragile. Early phases of the response have provided important lessons for the direction and scale of humanitarian action needed in Maban in the coming years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To end the conflict

Recommendations to the League of Arab States, African Union, UN, UK, US

- Urge the Government of Sudan and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement-North to realize humanitarian access in line with the tripartite agreements on the Blue Nile and South Kordofan.
- Apply diplomatic pressure on both parties to negotiate a cessation of hostilities agreement; and to engage in an inclusive political process based on the June 28, 2011 agreement to address the underlying, political, social and economic grievances in Blue Nile and South Kordofan.

To ensure better funding

Recommendations to donors

- Maintain sufficient levels of funding to meet vital needs and guarantee equal access to services across the camps, bringing new and existing sites up to standard and providing better quality basic services including water, sanitation and shelter.
- Make funding cycles flexible to correspond with the seasons in South Sudan and enable timely procurement and prepositioning ahead of the rainy season.
- Ensure funding mechanisms are flexible enough to cover both humanitarian and development work, by supporting comprehensive multi-sector programming and a well-planned transition from immediate humanitarian relief to long-term development.
- Ensure longer-term funding cycles of three to five years to allow for longer-term planning, retention of staff and continuity in programming.
- Support the transition to medium-term solutions by encouraging innovation and investing in more cost-effective and sustainable solutions that are appropriate to the context e.g. solar powered water systems.

To identify and plan for new refugee sites

Recommendations to UNHCR and NGOs

- Identify clear realistic timelines, and critical milestones, for the preparation of new refugee sites. In particular, relocate refugees to the new Kaya camp site only after the majority of water and sanitation systems, basic services and shelter are in place. Priority should be given to moving refugees from Jamam, as the area worst hit by flooding during the rainy season.
- Agree a realistic relocation strategy in consultation with refugees, host community leaders and humanitarian agencies.
- Work with local government and host communities to quickly and effectively agree and establish a new site to accommodate new refugees.

To co-ordinate better for higher quality service delivery

Recommendations to donors, UNHCR, the GRSS, NGOs, and UN agencies

- Ensure continuity in leadership as well as technical and co-ordination capacity in the field. Shift to longer-term deployments of staff, minimize gaps between recruitments and ensure proper handovers take place to capture institutional knowledge.
- UNHCR sectoral co-ordinators and cluster co-ordinators need to work together more effectively, particularly on WASH, health and logistics.
- Build the capacity and skills of national partners and staff to ensure continuity and long-term sustainability.
- Improve co-ordination between humanitarian and development actors through, for example, joint needs assessments and closer collaboration between donors working in different sectors.
- Ensure the refugee response, host community and development strategies are integrated at an early stage.

Recommendation to NGOs

- Ensure greater transparency and openness with UNHCR on what has actually been achieved and on the support needed to address gaps in financial, human and technical capacity.

To improve state capacity to lead the response

Recommendation to UNHCR and donors

- Help strengthen the capacity of government institutions such as the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and the new Refugee Office, at capital and state and county levels, in areas such as awareness-raising on the new refugee law and refugee rights and protection.

Recommendation to the GRSS

- Ensure clear and transparent taxation procedures and prevent the introduction of arbitrary or illegal taxes. All humanitarian goods and services should be tax exempt. The Relief and Rehabilitation Commission should work with other authorities to ensure all taxes are issued in line with federal and state regulations, and clearly communicated so that humanitarian partners can factor them into their response planning and budgeting.

To better protect refugees, particularly women and children

Recommendations to UNHCR and NGOs

- Provide capacity building training on human rights and sexual and gender-based violence to peace and conflict committees and traditional refugee and host community leaders.
- Establish women's centres to create safe spaces for women and girls within refugee camps.

Recommendations to the Government of South Sudan

- Strengthen the rule of law, police and judiciary to ensure perpetrators are held to account for sexual and gender-based violence, and other serious crimes such as murder and assaults.

To reduce tension with host communities

Recommendation to donors, UNHCR, the GRSS, NGOs, and UN agencies

- Support the expansion of programmes such as tree planting, reforestation and provision of energy saving stoves, to manage environmental degradation, and reduce tensions and conflict between refugees and host communities.

Recommendation to UNHCR and the GRSS

- Negotiate and agree land usage rights through mapping and clear demarcation of areas where refugees are able to graze their animals, collect firewood and cultivate crops. These rights should be agreed ahead of establishing new camps.

Recommendation to NGOs

- Integrate humanitarian and development activities by investing in programmes that jointly benefit refugees and host communities, particularly in the areas of livelihoods and economic activities, promoting equitable access to natural resources, and regenerating the environment.

NOTES

- ¹ Figures taken from OCHA Sudan Humanitarian Dashboard, 31 December 2012, for internally displaced people within Blue Nile and South Kordofan
http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/sud17_dashboard_a4_31%20DEC%2012.pdf
Figures for refugees in Upper Nile taken from UNHCR Refugees in South Sudan, Information Portal, <http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/country.php?id=251>
- ² UNHCR, Refugee Information Portal.
- ³ Interview with humanitarian agency, 12 January 2012,
- ⁴ See Sphere Handbook, *Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response*. These set out widely known and internationally recognized sets of common principles and universal minimum standards in life-saving areas of humanitarian response. The minimum standards cover four primary life-saving areas of humanitarian aid: water supply, sanitation and hygiene promotion; food security and nutrition; shelter, settlement and non-food items; and health action. UNHCR also has its own emergency minimum standard indicators.
- ⁵ Figures from World Health Organization: <http://www.emro.who.int/surveillance-forecasting-response/surveillance-news/hep-e-sudan-february-2013.html>. Refugees brought the Hepatitis E virus with them. It is now confirmed that an outbreak of Hepatitis E has been ongoing in Blue Nile for more than three years.
- ⁶ Oxfam focus groups with host communities and refugees from Jamam and Gendrassa, December 2012 to January 2013.
- ⁷ UNHCR (2012) 'New UNHCR Airlifts to Sudanese Refugees', UNHCR Briefing Note, 19 June 2012, www.unhcr.org/4fe0589f9.html
- ⁸ UNHCR Weekly Update, 3 March 2012.
- ⁹ Straziuso, J. (2012) 'New influx of refugees in South Sudan in desperate need of water', UNHCR Refugees Daily, www.unhcr.org/cgi-bin/texis/vtx/refdaily?pass=463ef21123&id=4fe01f135
- ¹⁰ Data from MSF mortality survey carried out in Batil camp between 25 July 2012 and 30 July 2012, www.msf.org.uk/South_Sudan_Crisis_Update_20120629.news
- ¹¹ Danish Demining Group (2012) 'Displacement, Disharmony and Disillusion', <http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/download.php?id=362>
- ¹² Minutes from Maban County Refugee Co-ordination meeting, 10 January 2013.
- ¹³ In July 2012, Oxfam published a paper describing the catalogue of issues facing South Sudan, including reasons for the country's food crisis and subsequent impacts on returnees, refugees and host communities. Oxfam (2012) 'Tackling the Food Deficit in the World's Newest Country', Oxford: Oxfam GB, <http://www.oxfamblogs.org/eastafrica/wp-content/uploads/2010/09/Tackling-the-food-deficit-in-the-worlds-newest-country.pdf>
- ¹⁴ The World Bank South Sudan Overview, www.worldbank.org/en/country/southsudan/overview
- ¹⁵ On 12 March 2013 South Sudan and Sudan reached an agreement which could see oil production resume by May 2013. This is a positive development which could facilitate the payment of salaries to public servants and has the potential to increase government investment in basic services to its population. 'South Sudan Official Expects Oil to Reach Global Markets by May', *Wall Street Journal*, 13 March 2013.
- ¹⁶ Interview with humanitarian agency, 12 January 2013.
- ¹⁷ Interview with humanitarian agency, 27 January 2012.
- ¹⁸ UN OCHA, 24 December 2012, Map on 5th Sudan Census 2008, Total Population Figures by County.
- ¹⁹ In September 2012, Oxfam reached UNHCR emergency minimum standards of 20 litres of water per person per day. Mid-Term Review, Oxfam South Sudan Emergency Response in Mabaan County, Upper Nile State, 18 September 2012.
- ²⁰ Interview with humanitarian agency, 25 January 2013.
- ²¹ More information on how Oxfam is utilizing this learning to improve its performance in future responses can be found in 'South Sudan Emergency Response in Maban County, Upper Nile State: Mid-Term Review Summary, January–August 2012' (2013), <http://oxf.am/U4k>.
- ²² Interview with major donor, November 2012.
- ²³ Joint Agency letter to donors from UNHCR, Oxfam, Danish Refugee Council, Solidarites, Care and ACTED, October 2012.

Alongside the consolidated appeals process, UNHCR's Initial Appeal (Sudanese Emergency Response, covering both South Sudan and Ethiopia) was published in January 2012. This was revised in June 2012 to \$186.2m (for Refugees Emergency response in South Sudan only). These appeals also informed the consolidated appeal.
- ²⁴ Factors affecting UNHCR's ability to scale-up have been identified from discussions with humanitarian agencies, UNHCR and donors.
- ²⁵ Interview with humanitarian agency, 15 December 2012.
- ²⁶ Interview with UNHCR officials, 6 February 2013.
- ²⁷ To address the shortfalls mentioned, UNHCR has significantly scaled-up its operational presence on the ground since the start of the response, including introducing long-term positions for key leadership and co-ordination posts. The organization has deployed more technical expertise in WASH and other areas to support its partners. Most

technical posts have been secured for 2013.

- ²⁸ UNHCR Note on Coordination of Refugee Emergencies in South Sudan, 6 February 2012.
- ²⁹ The multi-sectoral co-ordination group focusing on refugees is chaired by UNHCR and attended by cluster co-ordinators.
- ³⁰ In 2005, a major reform of humanitarian coordination, known as the Humanitarian Reform Agenda, introduced a number of new elements to enhance predictability, accountability and partnership. The Cluster Approach was one of these new elements. Clusters are groups of humanitarian organisations, both UN and non-UN, in each of the main sectors of humanitarian action, e.g. water, health and logistics. They have clear responsibilities for coordination.
- ³¹ The Humanitarian Coordinator (HC) is responsible for leading and coordinating the efforts of humanitarian organisations (both UN and non-UN) in an emergency setting. The HC is responsible for designating Cluster Lead Agencies for all key humanitarian response sectors. The Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) comprises of the HC, the Cluster Lead Agencies and selected operational partners, donors involved in the response, and it is within the framework of this strategic decision-making forum that the overall humanitarian response operation is guided and led.
- ³² The Inter-agency Standing Committee's transformative agenda (IASC), under the leadership of the Emergency Co-ordinator, agreed on a set of actions to address challenges in leadership and co-ordination, as well as to enhance accountability for the achievement of collective results in humanitarian responses. See, Informal Consultative Meeting on UNHCR's implementation of the IASC Transformative Agenda, Briefing Paper, 7 February 2013, <http://www.unhcr.org/5118cfc9.pdf>
- ³³ This work encompassed five focus group discussions with refugees (including one with newly arrived refugees), four focus group discussions with host communities, and individual interviews with two sheikhs (from refugee and host communities) and two representatives of women's committees.
- ³⁴ UNHCR Weekly Update, 9 December 2012.
- ³⁵ Minutes from Gendrasa Camp Co-ordination Meeting, 19 February 2013.
- ³⁶ Oxfam focus groups with host communities and refugees from Jamam and Gendrasa, December 2012 to January 2013.
- ³⁷ Minutes from Kaya Relocation meeting, 21 February 2013.
- ³⁸ The Tripartite Agreement is an agreement between the Sudanese government and Sudan People's Liberation Movement – North (SPLM-N) over humanitarian access to the rebel held areas of South Kordofan and Blue Nile, signed by both parties on 3 and 4 August 2012.
- ³⁹ UNHCR Weekly Update, 18-24 March 2013.
- ⁴⁰ See recommendations from the 'High Commissioner's Structured Dialogue NGO-IFRC-UNHCR Partnership: An initiative to improve partnership between UNHCR and NGOs in 2012 and beyond', (2013), <http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/download.php?id=350>
- ⁴¹ This issue came up in conversations with a number of humanitarian agencies partnering with UNHCR between November 2012 and February 2013.
- ⁴² Refugee Surveillance Update, Maban and Yida, 25 February to 3 March 2013, <http://data.unhcr.org/SouthSudan/download.php?id=378>
- ⁴³ The US Government's Office of Foreign Disaster Affairs (OFDA) is providing \$4m to the Rapid Response Fund administered by the International Organization for Migration for emergency water and sanitation, and to support the health needs of the host community in 2013. ECHO is supporting a food security assessment for both refugees and the host community, and DFID has ring-fenced £400,000 of its funding provided to UNHCR for community-based services provided to the host community in the vicinity of refugee camps.
- ⁴⁴ Letter from the Office of the President of Republic of South Sudan to the Deputy Governor of the Upper Nile, 'Movement of Humanitarian Relief Convoys, Upper Nile', 18 March 2013.
- ⁴⁵ Meeting with the Deputy Governor of the Upper Nile and state-level Director of the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission, 17 January 2013.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*
- ⁴⁸ UNHCR, Refugee Information Portal.
- ⁴⁹ See: Norwegian Refugee Council (2008) 'Camp Management Tool Kit', 'Chapter 12: Camp Security and Staff Safety', <http://www.nrc.no/?aid=9380323>. See also, UNHCR (2006) 'Operational Guidelines on Maintaining the Civilian and Humanitarian Character of Asylum', <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/452b9bca2.html>
- ⁵⁰ IRIN (2013) 'Women without men vulnerable in South Sudan's refugee camps', IRIN Humanitarian News and Analysis, www.irinnews.org/printreport.aspx?reportid=97260
- ⁵¹ Danish Refugee Council (2012) 'A Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Rapid Assessment of Doro Refugee Camp, Upper Nile State, South Sudan', July 2012. See: www.humansecuritygateway.com/documents/DRC_ASexualandGenderbasedViolenceRapidAssessment.pdf
- ⁵² *Ibid.* Incidences of sexual and gender-based violence are generally dealt with through customary mechanisms and, as a result, are often left unaddressed because the subject is taboo and survivors fear stigmatization. Because of this, reports of such incidences rarely occur nor are they brought to the attention of health care providers.
- ⁵³ Interview with humanitarian agency, 28 December 2012.
- ⁵⁴ UNHCR Weekly Update, 24 November 2012.
- ⁵⁵ UNHCR Weekly Update, 10 February 2013.
- ⁵⁶ Oxfam focus groups with host communities and refugees from Jamam and Gendrasa, December 2012 to January 2013.
- ⁵⁷ Interview with humanitarian agency, 15 January 2013.

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For further information on the issues raised in this paper please e-mail advocacy@oxfaminternational.org

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