

Supported by the World Food Program (WFP), Internews is working with the Community Engagement Network (CEN) to respond to community information gaps, concerns, and needs at the Malakal Transit Centre, camps and the POC. The collaborative intervention aims to improve the efficiency of the humanitarian response to the Sudan Crisis in South Sudan by providing a safe and accessible two-way information platform. It connects refugees, returnees, and host communities with verified and actionable information from humanitarian responders to connect the community with services, elevate community voices, and inform decision-making. This project serves thousands of people displaced by the conflict in Sudan, Internally Displaced People, and the local host community in Malakal County, Upper Nile State in South Sudan.

The Internews humanitarian information service involves a continual process of listening and two-way communication with the community and humanitarian responders.

Community Correspondents collect feedback, questions, and concerns from community members each day through one- to-one and group discussions. We ensure a diverse range of voices is heard and provide an alternative for community members who may not feel comfortable, or may not know how, to approach humanitarian actors with their feedback directly.

If you want to contribute to this bulletin or discuss our data

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PHOTO: Malakal PoC Community members received radios provided with support from WFP for the Community Voices Project |© CEN

INTRODUCTION

In December, there were complaints about insufficient and poor-quality food. WFP addressed concerns by explaining how they do food quality checks for the community. CEN and WFP collaborated on PSAs and radio programs to raise awareness. Nutrition concerns focused on child malnutrition, particularly raised by females. Feedback on cash assistance was less negative, though included several requests for milling support. Challenges in registration and communication were acknowledged and protection activities during the 16 Days of Activism highlighted concerns about gender-based violence, alcohol and drug abuse, and safety issues. WASH feedback emphasized the need for facility repairs, open defecation risks, and leadership concerns. Returnees from Renk expressed challenges and requested skilled river navigators for safer journeys. Overall, there are some gaps in communication, registration, and addressing specific needs are crucial for effective humanitarian assistance.

FOOD ASSISTANCE

“We thank WFP for handling the issue of missing names in the Biometric System and resuming food distribution. We encourage WFP to design a lasting solution to food distribution issues.”

45-year-old male, Malakal PoC, Sector 2, Food Distribution Site - Malakal

“Since I came from Sudan, am suffering with my children. I cannot get any money to support my children. We request WFP provides food to avoid starvation.”

39-year-old female in Malakal POC Sector 4, Block B

In early December 2023, there was a restart of food distribution in previously paused locations, as reported through feedback from returnees at the Fire Brigade camp, the host community, and the Food Distribution Site in Malakal town. The World Food Program in Malakal reached out to families who had not received rations before. However, complaints about the lack of food continued to surface among returnees and other displaced persons in the days and weeks that followed.

According to feedback from CEN community correspondents, women aged 25 to 45, primarily IDPs, in the Malakal Protection of Civilians site, were the main group expressing concerns. Out of nine feedback pieces on food assistance, six highlighted issues related to insufficient or untimely food aid. Notably, a 35-year-old woman complained about the poor quality of the distributed sorghum.

Upon receiving these complaints, the WFP food programming team in Malakal assured that they take the quality of food seriously. WFP explained that an independent company conducts inspections to ensure the quality of provided food. In the case of Malakal, WFP acknowledged that occasionally, bags may become water-soaked during transportation. However, they assured that when such bags are identified at distribution points, they are promptly replaced.

To address the concerns raised by the affected population, CEN, in collaboration with WFP, acted by producing Public Service Announcements (PSAs) and radio programs. The PSAs aimed to raise awareness about people's entitlements, while the Community Voices radio programs focused on topics related to food, nutrition, and cash assistance.

Continuous communication between aid organizations and beneficiaries is crucial. Establishing transparent feedback mechanisms and promptly addressing concerns can enhance the effectiveness of relief efforts. Additionally, maintaining a consistent flow of information through various channels, such as PSAs, radio programs, and help desks, helps ensure that beneficiaries are informed about their entitlements and the measures in place to address any issues.

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

“Our children have not received nutritious food because they are not registered. We request WFP and its partners to register them so they can get the food.”

41-year-old female, Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block C

“We have not received CSB++ nutrition food. We request WFP to speed up and distribute it.”

38-year-old female, Malakal town, New Area IDP camp

Most of the feedback received on nutrition assistance was about the lack of food for children. Returnees and IDPs expressed concerns about a possible increase in cases of malnutrition in children due to delayed access to nutritious food supplements. All the concerns and complaints about nutrition were raised by women between 30 and 40 years, mainly from the Malakal POC and a couple of concerns from New Area, a camp in Malakal town.



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The Community Engagement Network featured the International Medical Corps on Nile FM in Malakal, a WFP partner, to increase awareness about malnutrition and its solutions.

In response to complaints about delayed Plumpy'nut distribution and inadequate information, WFP acknowledged a communication lapse between camp leaders and the community.

WFP Response:

As communicated to the community leaders, there is a break in the pipeline for LNS-MQ (a food supplement that is intended to prevent malnutrition for children 6 months and older) so the commodity will not be distributed unless received soon. We take note of the lapse in communication between the leaders and the community, and we will work with all stakeholders to ensure that communication that is passed to leaders is passed on to the community timely.

CASH ASSISTANCE

"We have not received October and November cash assistance for grinding miles. We request that WFP and partners distribute the cash assistance."

40-year-old female in Malakal POC Sector 1, Block D

"We came from Renk to Malakal. We appreciate the cash assistance that has been provided. It will help us buy food to feed until we are transported to our places of origin."

34-year-old female Transit Center – TC – (Bullukat) Returnee and IDP Camp.

The feedback about cash programming was mainly requests and appreciation for the assistance that WFP and partners are providing. The period less feedback was collected about delayed or lack of registration for cash assistance. All the feedback was provided by women of ages between 25 years of age and 45 years of age. Most of them were not residing in the POC and are recent returnees or refugees awaiting onward transport assistance or relocation to areas of

their origin. Some of the requests highlighted the importance of cash assistance in helping with grinding grains for food. WFP in Malakal responded by saying that it had provided two months of cash for milling covering the months of November and December. CEN developed Public Service Announcements (PSAs) to raise awareness of cash assistance, highlighting the entire process from registration, to where to go for the cash, and where and whom to get help from in case of a need for clarification.

Any specific needs or concerns regarding cash assistance that have been communicated by beneficiaries should be responded to urgently by the relevant agencies for better assistance.

WFP Responses:

WFP provided two-month of cash for milling, covering the months of November and December at once. Communication regarding the double distribution was provided to the PoC Camp Coordination Committee during the pre-distribution meeting.

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BIOMETRIC REGISTRATION

“Most women and the elderly have lost their registration IDs. We request IOM-Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) to raise awareness on the importance of safely keeping registration cards.”

38-year-old female, Malakal PoC, Sector 4C.

“Some families have returned to Renk because they didn’t get registered for food rations. We request agencies respond to returnees’ needs so they can stay in their places of origin.”

41-year-old male, Malakal PoC, Sector 1B, block C

A thirty-seven-year-old male said that he last had food rations while in a Sudanese camp before crossing over to South Sudan. He added that for three months, he hadn’t been registered leading to a lot of suffering. This individual experience reflects the challenges faced by the affected population in registering for humanitarian assistance. Families, based on received feedback, are sharing their limited resources with those in urgent need, and many express frustrations due to a lack of information and clarity of procedure. Some families have returned to Renk from Malakal seeking survival solutions. Concerns about gaps in biometric registration, particularly in Malakal POC and the Fire Brigade camp, were communicated to WFP. Notably, several individuals reported their names disappearing from the system.

Streamlining communication and improving registration processes can alleviate suffering and ensure efficient distribution of aid.

WFP Responses:

Biometric registration is the only accountable way to register beneficiaries, and it is unavoidable. Those whose names “disappeared” were found to be registered as beneficiaries in other places. There is an ongoing process to move their registration to one place. WFP requests patience from the affected beneficiaries and confirms that no one will miss their rightful entitlement.



PROTECTION

“We see some people sitting alone and not talking to anyone. We request humanitarians to raise awareness on mental health issues to avoid mental illness.”

38-year-old male Malakal PoC, Sector 1A, block A

“We appreciate Geneva Call for raising awareness on GBV issues through radio programs This will help reduce domestic violence in families, especially for women and girls.”

40-year-old male, Malakal PoC, Sector 1, block A

The 16 Days of Activism Against Gender-Based Violence was one of the major highlights of protection in the month of December. Activities were organized in the POC and were attended by women and girls. They were encouraged to seek assistance from the appropriate individuals or organizations. Many concerns about alcohol and drug abuse have been raised and feedback indicates that people feel that the increase in the number of new arrivals has worsened the situation, with some people describing a spike in violence and criminality. Women raised concerns about their safety and security while out fetching firewood. An incident was cited where a woman was attacked by a wild animal. This has also been experienced around the New Way Station a place occupied by displaced people. Women (13) and men who provided feedback expressed concerns about juvenile delinquency, the need for psychosocial therapy, and the lack of robust security in the camps and the POC. Some appreciated the GBV-related awareness creation. CEN continues collaborating with WFP to produce Public Service Announcements (PSAs) on general protection issues, Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and free humanitarian assistance entitlements.

Some requests that community members made include implementing targeted interventions to address alcohol and drug abuse, improving safety protocols for women collecting firewood, prioritizing and strengthening security measures in both camps and the POC, and establishing and promoting accessible psychosocial therapy services to address the mental health needs of individuals, particularly focusing on concerns about juvenile delinquency.

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WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)

“The PoC population is high because of the people who came from Sudan. Services such as water and toilets are inadequate. We request the issue of water pressure challenge and inadequate toilet facilities be addressed to improve the situation.”

45-year-old male, Malakal PoC, Sector 2, Block Y

“The community was requested to take on the responsibility of cleaning the toilets, but people have not embraced the idea. Let community leaders call for an open community discussion about the issue.”

46-year-old female, Malakal PoC, Sector 1B, Block E

Requests for an improvement in service delivery and repair of facilities dominate feedback on WASH. The influx of returnees and refugees has continued to pile pressure on the already limited facilities. Low water pressure, derelict toilets and bathrooms, uncollected garbage and clogged drainage systems are some of the major concerns raised by the returnees and IDPs. There are calls for open discussions regarding how the community can take over the management of the toilet facilities due to dwindling funding of activities. A thirty-two-year-old (32) female returnee is worried that the practice of open defecation close to the river is likely to lead to water pollution and hence disease. There is a need for increased awareness about the negative outcomes of open defecation.



CAMP MANAGEMENT

“Male community leaders are not involving female community block leaders in meetings and discussions with humanitarian agencies. We request for the raining of the PoC Camp Coordination Committee (PCCC) on gender inclusion in camp issues.”

39-year-old female, Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block A

“We came from Sudan in August and settled in the PoC. We were told community leaders are responsible for registering returnees but since then we have failed to find those leaders. We request for the registration of returnees because the community leaders are not doing their work.”

37-year-old female, Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block H

The lack of strong community leadership within the Malakal POC features prominently in the feedback shared by IDPs and returnees. There is a clear lack of confidence in the current leadership and some people are calling for a formation of another set of leadership in the camp. Incidents of vandalism have also been mentioned. Sections of the fence around the camp have been breached exposing the IDPs to possible security risks and criminality. The lack of a safe space for women to congregate and discuss issues that affect them was mentioned by a 37-year-old female IDP in Malakal POC. There are calls for gender inclusion because women feel marginalized by their male counterparts. There are ten (10) pieces of feedback from women regarding camp management compared to three from men. This underlines the fact that most times in poorly planned environments women feel more exposed to risks than men.

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ONWARDS TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE (OTA)

“When we were coming from Renk to Malakal by boat, we lost direction. We request that humanitarians hire boat drivers who have a clear sense of direction on the river to avoid exposing passengers to suffering and anxiety.”

56-year-old male, Malakal town, Transit Center – TC – (Bullukat) Returnees and IDP Camp.

“We lost our belongings because we were transported by one boat while another boat carried the items. We request IOM to allow people to carry their belongings to avoid losing them.”

41-year-old female, Malakal town, Transit Center – TC – (Bullukat) Returnees and IDP Camp.

Returnees and refugees traveling from Renk to Malakal face challenges as indicated in some of the feedback. They requested skilled boat drivers to prevent lost directions, reducing suffering. Another concern is losing belongings when items are on a separate boat. They request humanitarians to let people carry their belongings together for a safer journey and prioritize skilled drivers and unified transport to help them rebuild their lives. It's time to make travel easier for those seeking stability and hope.



PHOTO: WFP Staff distributing High Energy Biscuits (HEB) to returnees at the Malakal Transit Center - Malakal County - Upper Nile. |© CEN

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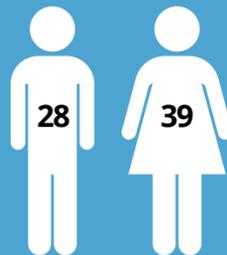
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Total Feedback Collected



Gender



Age Groups

<18 Years.....	01
18-25 Years.....	06
26-35 Years.....	38
36-45 Years.....	67
46-60 Years.....	15
60+ Years.....	01

Feedback By Topic

Food Assistance.....	09
Biometric Registration.....	07
Cash Assistance.....	09
Nutrition.....	06
Onward Transport Assistance...	03
Health.....	02
Protection.....	16
WASH.....	25
Camp Management.....	13
Non-Food Item.....	06
Livelihoods.....	05
Education.....	05
Agriculture.....	05
Humanitarian Assistance.....	02
Shelter.....	02
Information Needs.....	01
Recreation.....	02

Type Of Feedback

- 17 Complaints
- 32 Concerns
- 06 Suggestions
- 25 Appreciation
- 42 Requests
- 01 Rumor

Feedback By Location

Protection Of Civilian Site

Sector 1.....	33
Sector 2.....	08
Sector 3.....	06
Sector 4.....	17

Malakal Town

Fire Brigade.....	21
Transit Center.....	09
Host Community.....	04
New Area.....	06
Distribution Site.....	02
Daniel Comboni.....	05
Way Station.....	11

All data was collected by Community Engagement Network (CEN) Community Correspondents in Malakal POC and different sites in Malakal Town.



PHOTO: CEN Community Correspondent getting feedback from returnees at the Malakal Transit Center - Malakal County - Upper Nile. | © CEN

The Community Engagement Network (CEN) has Community Correspondents in Malakal who constantly engage the refugees and returnees to get feedback about their concerns.

They collaborate and coordinate with humanitarian agencies on relief aid to the affected populations.

The content is produced into broadcast Nile FM.

You can share information with us and respond to community complaints, questions and concerns through the **Community Voice** program.

Contact Philip Lukudu on Philip.James@cen-ss.org, or our Community Correspondents in Malakal.