

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.



PHOTO: A CEN Correspondent collecting feedback from refugees at the Transit Center in Malakal County. | © CEN

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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.



INTRODUCTION

According to community members, humanitarian efforts in Malakal face pressing food assistance challenges including distribution delays, inadequate rations, coordination issues, and a lack of communication, necessitating improved processes and transparency. Biometric registration complexities have led to some community members saying they do not think the distribution of assistance is transparent. Nutrition assistance sometimes encounters challenges like delays and missed distributions, however, the beneficiaries are thankful for ongoing efforts but protection challenges include criminal activities, youth violence, inadequate lighting, and concerns for vulnerable populations. WASH-related issues like damaged toilets, and conflicts due to water scarcity. Health challenges range from elderly eye care to mental health issues, limited healthcare facilities, maternal support gaps, and requests for more vector-borne disease control. Camp management faces issues like unauthorized digging, crowded conditions, safety concerns, and inadequate communication. Education access is hindered by financial constraints, prompting a plea for a primary school, along with requests for skills development, technology access, and gender equality awareness. These challenges underscore the need for coordinated efforts to enhance living conditions and well-being in Malakal.

BIOMETRIC REGISTRATION

“Last month we received our food rations, however, this month our names are surprisingly missing in the system.”

- 42-year-old Female in Malakal PoC, Sector 4 C.

“We are nine family members who came from Sudan. We have been getting support from our relatives because we have not been registered. We request the concerned agencies register us so we can get humanitarian assistance rather than relying on our relatives.”

- 41-year-old female in Sector 4, Block C.

Biometric registration challenges affect families relying on aid, creating disparities and delays. First, community members said that delays and inconsistencies in the registration of some family members mean some don't get the aid they need. Delays in giving out food worsen the situation. Some people shared that their names disappeared from the aid list without explanation, making it hard for them to trust the system. Ensuring attention to detail is crucial to rectifying errors and ensuring accurate representation.

WFP Response:

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

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

“We thank the nutrition team for the assessment and screening of children affected by malnutrition. We hope the exercise will, in the end, support children with nutritious food and improve their health status.”

- 35-year-old female in Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block B.

“Our children did not receive nutritious food last month and no reason was given. We request WFP to share the information with the community well in advance to reduce complaints from families with targeted children.”

– 30-year-old female in Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block E.

The state of nutrition assistance in Malakal reflects a mix of gratitude for ongoing efforts and concerns regarding recent lapses. The beneficiaries express appreciation for the nutrition team's assessment and screening of malnourished children, hopeful that the exercise will ultimately enhance the health of affected children through the provision of nutritious food. Acknowledgment is extended to WFP and its partners for the school feeding program benefiting Primary Eight (8) Certificate candidates, seen as a source of motivation for academic accomplishment. However, a recurring issue emerges as people report a lack of nutritious food for their children, with specific examples given of missed distributions, as well as a lack of communication about the challenges causing distress. Requests are made for more transparent communication, asking WFP to inform the community in advance about distribution schedules and potential disruptions, which people believe will minimize complaints and conflicts at distribution sites. Concerns are heightened by rumors of a two-month suspension of Plumpy'nut for children, highlighting the importance of community leaders and community members being informed early enough to prevent misunderstandings.

WFP Responses:

It was communicated to the community leaders that there is a break in the pipeline for LNS-MQ. The commodity will not be distributed unless received in the near future. 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 in a timely manner.



PHOTO: A CEN Correspondent collecting feedback from IDPs at the Fire Brigade Camp in Malakal, Malakal County - Upper Nile. | © CEN

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FOOD ASSISTANCE

"We heard community leaders have met with humanitarians to discuss the challenges of food distribution. We have not been given feedback regarding issues discussed in that meeting. We request all those involved in those meetings to inform the community about issues discussed soon after."

- 35-year-old female in Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block B.

"By now we should have received our food ration. But WFP has delayed the food distribution causing us to suffer with no food to eat. We request that WFP strictly follow its food distribution plan."

- 48-year-old female in Malakal PoC, Sector 4C.

In Malakal, the challenges in food distribution and assistance are complex, demanding urgent attention and strategic solutions. Feedback about general food distribution delays is exacerbating the situation, compelling the community to request swift action from food aid agencies. With the current reduction in food rations, the community faces the additional burden of sharing limited resources with unregistered family members from Sudan, prompting many to ask WFP to increase the overall food supply.

Furthermore, concerns arise over the nutritional well-being of children as they have at times missed out on essential nutritious food in recent distributions. Coordinating the distribution has proven problematic, with reports of missing family names, highlighting the need for improved coordination with the community. Several community members also felt that the quality of sorghum distributed is not clean, emphasizing the importance of the quality of food assistance.



Lack of communication and feedback about the meetings between WFP staff with community leaders adds to the challenge, prompting a plea for transparent and timely dissemination of information through channels like Nile FM. A call is also made for a comprehensive review of families excluded from the distribution system to rectify oversights and ensure equitable access. Others said that establishing a well-coordinated food distribution committee would mitigate future disruptions and enhance the efficiency of the distribution process. In light of the camp's historical food scarcity, the community implores WFP to provide sustained support, mirroring the rumored regular assistance received by families in Malakal town.

WFP Response:

It is true WFP met with the community leaders to discuss challenges regarding food distribution. We have taken note of the fact that the outcome of such meetings are not being passed on to the community by the leaders. WFP will work with all stakeholders and the leaders to ensure that communication is improved.

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WASH

“Whenever a new toilet facility is to be constructed, families are reluctant to surrender the allocated site. We request the Camp Management to sit with community leaders and find a solution to the issue so that derelict toilets are replaced with new ones.”

- 40-year-old male in Malakal PoC, Sector 4C.

“Our children have been defecating in open places because they do not have allocated toilets. We request the WASH cluster help construct toilets for children to avoid disease outbreaks such as Cholera.”

- 45-year-old man in Malakal Town, Daniel Comboni Camp.

Returnees have raised critical concerns regarding Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) conditions in their camp. Issues include damaged toilet sheets requiring replacement, and overgrown grass near drainage attracting mosquitoes and snakes. There is accumulated garbage needing collection, missing toilet doors, and dysfunctional block bathrooms necessitating reconstruction. The toilets are full requiring emptying, insufficient soap distribution, crowding at existing toilets, low water pressure leading to conflicts, inadequate water points and the practice of open defecation by children. There is a lack of general cleanliness, flying insects, inefficient toilet-emptying vehicles, and unclear reasons for toilet closures. Requests are made to the WASH cluster for immediate action on these challenges to ensure a safer and healthier living environment in the camp.



PROTECTION

“Our children do not have child-friendly space centers in the PoC as it was before. We request the Child Protection Cluster help to construct these centers to support children’s activities.”

- 31-year-old female living in Malakal Town, New Area Camp.

“We appreciate the role of International Medical Crops in raising GBV awareness issues. The awareness will help reduce Gender Based Violence in the community.”

- 48-year-old in Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block C.

The community faces a range of protection challenges: rising criminal activities and youth violence, insufficient lighting, and neglect of vulnerable groups like the elderly and persons with disabilities. They urgently seek enhanced security measures, including United Nations Police deployment and alcohol deterrence or control mechanisms. Safety concerns for children, road safety awareness, and infrastructure issues like missing lights, and broken fences also prevail, while forest-related risks like being robbed while fetching firewood and cultural worries, such as early pregnancies and cultural conflicts, persist. Despite these challenges, the community appreciates the humanitarian aid efforts, emphasizing the need for collaborative action between locals, leaders, and humanitarian agencies to ensure a safer living environment.

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HEALTH

“Women on antenatal do not have follow-up services with midwives. We request awareness among pregnant women on the need to make follow-up visitations and checkups with midwives,”

- 25-year-old female in Malakal Town, Fire Brigade IDPs Camp.

“Alcoholism is the cause of mental illness among young people. Can camp management guide community leaders on how to stop alcohol brewing in the camp?”

- 43-year-old man in Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block A.

Refugees in Malakal shared several urgent health challenges, including a lack of eye treatment for the elderly, alcohol-related mental health issues among youth, limited nighttime healthcare access, inadequate existing health facilities, a lack of support for mothers and newborns, gaps in antenatal care follow-up, and a risk of mosquito-borne diseases. Some suggestions made by community members include providing mobile eye treatment services, addressing alcohol production through community guidance, implementing nighttime mobile clinics, opening additional health centers, offering support for mothers and infants, promoting antenatal care follow-up, and distributing mosquito nets.



CAMP MANAGEMENT

“There are many problems in the PoC because the leaders are not in touch with humanitarian agencies to solve emerging problems. We request that Camp Management arrange a community leaders’ election because the current leader’s term of leadership has expired.”

- 51-year-old male in Malakal PoC, Sector 1, Block G.

“We are living in a crowded camp area with many people. We request DRC camp management relocate us to a place with a larger space so that families can live comfortably and have access to humanitarian facilities such as health centers, schools, and child-friendly space centers for young children.”

- 48-year-old male in Malakal Town, Fire Brigade Camp.

Camp Management in Malakal faces several key challenges that impact the well-being and safety of the community. There is concern about the unauthorized digging around the football playground, posing a risk of water stagnation during the rainy season. Additionally, the crowded living conditions in the camp prompt a plea for relocation to a larger space, ensuring families can live comfortably and access essential facilities like health centers, schools, and child-friendly spaces. The safety of the football playground is compromised, leading to a request for assistance in leveling another ground for recreational activities. While the Danish Refugee Council is appreciated for footbridges in Assosa, issues arise, such as families extending tents near drainage, potentially causing blockages. The lack of communication between camp leaders and humanitarian agencies due to the leadership vacuum prompts a call for DRC to arrange new community leader elections. Concerns also arise about soil digging, impacting the camp during the rainy season, and the need for a new venue for communal gatherings and

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discussions. Further requests include assistance for newcomers' living spaces, soil for festive season decorations, and action against indiscriminate tree cutting, calling on agencies like IOM and FAO to address these challenges. Lastly, the proximity to a cemetery raises the need for the DRC to engage with the government for a relocation of the displaced people.

EDUCATION

"Some families do not send their children to school when schools open. We request UNICEF to raise awareness about the importance of girl-child education."

- 31-year-old female Malakal Town resident in the host community.

"Our children are not in school because we do not have money to enroll them in private schools. We request UNICEF to help us in constructing a primary school near the camp because we do not when we will depart to our places of origin."

- 43-year-old male in Malakal Town, Daniel Comboni Camp.

Access to education in Malakal can be difficult due to money problems, stopping kids from attending private schools. The community asks UNICEF to help build a new school nearby because they're not sure if they'll go back home soon. They want to acquire knowledge and learn new skills. They also want a place to learn about computers for better chances in the future. Even though some go to private schools, girls don't get the same financial help. They ask **"Food for the Hungry (FHI)"** to step in and help. Families are hesitant to send girls to school, and some community members want **UNICEF** to talk about why girls' education matters.



World Food
Programme



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Local voices. Global change.



PHOTO: WFP staff distributing High Energy Biscuits at the Malakal Transit Center. | © WFP

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103

Total
Feedback
Collected

Gender



28 66

Feedback By Location

Sector 1..... **29**
Sector 2..... **15**
Sector 3..... **06**
Sector 4..... **09**

Protection Of
Civilian Site

Fire Brigade Camp.....**12**
Host Community.....**05**
Daniel Comboni Camp.....**14**
New Area.....**05**
Transit Center.....**04**

Malakal Town

Type Of Feedback

17 Complaints

32 Concerns

06 Suggestions

15 Appreciation

29 Requests

01 Rumor

Feedback By Topic

Food Assistance.....**14**
Biometric Registration.....**05**
Cash Assistance.....**03**
Nutrition.....**08**
Onward Transport Assistance...**02**
Health.....**07**
Protection.....**27**
WASH.....**24**
Camp Management.....**13**

Age Groups

18-25 Years..... **03**
26-35 Years..... **34**
36-45 Years..... **51**
46-60 Years..... **14**
60+ Years..... **01**

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.