

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 Renk Transit centre. We provide a two-way information platform that connects community members 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 in Renk County, Upper Nile State in South Sudan.



PHOTO: WFP staff conducting registration for High Energy Biscuits (HEB) to both refugees and returnees who had stayed more than two days without getting the cash assistance so they can have something eat while they wait at the Renk Transit Center | © WFP

**If you want to contribute to this bulletin
or discuss our data please contact:**

Senior Humanitarian Program Manager

(lkrivchenia@internews.org),

Humanitarian Media Advisor,

Tusiime W. Romeo (Akiiki) (atusiime@internews.org),

Program Manager, Philip James Lukudu

(Philip.James@cen-ss.org),

Renk, Upper Nile, 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.

Humanitarian Information Needs Community Voices Bulletin

December 1st -15th 2023 / Issue #4

INTRODUCTION

There is a surge in complaints regarding cash assistance, primarily due to delays in distribution and concerns about inadequate amounts to cover living costs amid rising market prices. Refugees at the Renk Transit Center express urgency for expedited cash assistance upon arrival. Biometric registration feedback includes concerns about congestion and material shortages. Some refugees prefer food rations over cash, fearing hunger if cash assistance continues. Concerns about malnutrition and starvation dominate feedback on nutrition assistance. Protection concerns focus on women, girls, and children's safety, including gender-based violence, unlit spaces, and exposure to the elements. Information access issues, water shortages, overcrowding, and hygiene concerns are highlighted, prompting efforts to improve communication channels and hygiene practices. Returnees face challenges with premises eviction, transportation delays, and obstacles to private travel. Feedback on Onward Transport Assistance emphasizes stranded students and logistical difficulties. Collaboration between agencies aims to address and respond to the multifaceted challenges faced by the affected populations in Renk, Joda, and other sites. We should highlight these more prominently as its our bread and butter



INFORMATION NEEDS

“There is no need for a communication and complaints desk because we are not getting any responses to the complaints. We have complained of hunger for a long, but there are no responses.”

40-year-old-male – Renk, Transit Center

“I was ill-treated by community leaders when I went to make inquiries. I’m asking camp management to change the community leaders periodically and train them on people management.”

Adult female - Renk, Transit Center

Affected populations are seeking refuge in Renk and nearby areas, and it's happening intermittently. This makes it challenging for humanitarian efforts. To share information quickly and accurately, a range of methods have to be used, including responding in real-time and having a ready-to-go collection of useful information.

Several returnees and refugees have complained about a lack of clarity in information access. Some feedback from the community indicates that there is not sufficient access to information and sometimes the information they do receive is from unreliable sources. Some say their complaints and concerns are not responded to in time. A female refugee heard that everyone would receive a meal on arrival but has complained that there is nothing she has received up to now. Several people complained that they provided information with some agencies for various services but didn't receive much follow-up about how their information was utilized. Some of the refugees and returnees want the registrations halted until they are satisfactorily provided with humanitarian services. Most of the people giving feedback on lack of information access are in their early thirties and late mid-forties.

WFP is increasing information access channels by establishing more help and information desks while CEN is collaborating with the agency to produce more awareness through the airing of pre-recorded messages at the Registration and Transit sites.

CASH ASSISTANCE

“There is a challenge of serving new arrivals with people who have lived at the Transit Center for a longer time, especially during the distribution of cash. We would like WFP to serve new arrivals separately so that everyone gets their share of cash.”

41-year-old female – Renk Transit Center

“A refugee is concerned about the long distance between the residential area and the cash distribution site. She is asking WFP to establish a cash distribution site closer to the Transit Center for easy access.”

Adult female refugee, Renk Transit Center

There is an increase in the number of complaints and concerns about cash assistance, mostly from the Renk Transit Center and Joda. They are mainly about the delay in cash distribution. Returnees and refugees are requesting an expedited process of cash assistance once they arrive at the Transit Center. Feedback further highlights concerns about insufficient amounts of cash to meet the increased cost of living and soaring market prices. Other returnees and refugees said that they had stayed longer at the Transit Center and run out of cash before being assisted with onward transport to Malakal and other areas. Feedback on cash assistance was collected from nineteen (19) men and three (3) women. The women are more concerned about whether they will manage to sustain their families because some of them do not have their husbands to provide support.

WFP is working with CEN to continuously develop new messages and update the current ones to address any concerns and complaints regarding cash assistance. The messages are aired three times a week and there are plans to increase the frequency to cover more days and sites within Renk.

WFP Response:

This would be possible if WFP is allocated a space at the New Transit Center. Currently, WFP does not have access at the New Transit Center and still negotiating with ACTED, and probably UNHCR, to allocate a space, until then, WFP will continue using the current space.

BIOMETRIC REGISTRATION

“There is congestion at the registration site due to the large number of people. The elderly are exposed and do not manage the procedure. They are asking WFP to improve the registration process and distribute cash assistance.”

25-year-old female - Renk, Transit Center

There were only three (3) pieces of feedback on Biometric Registration. These were collected from the Renk Center and Joda. They focus on congestion at the registration site, lack of registration materials which leads to delays in the process and a baby not being included on the registration card. There is a request to have the biometric registration process improved to ease the distribution of cash assistance.

CEN produced a **“Welcome”** Public Service Announcement to provide key information to new arrivals. The PSA gives guidance to the refugees on how to proceed to the UNHCR Protection Desk for profiling. After the profiling process, the refugees will be scheduled for biometric verification, which is a prerequisite for receiving cash distribution from the World Food Programme (WFP). All registered refugees will be scheduled for transportation to Maban County in the coming weeks. The road to Maban and the surrounding areas is flooded. Upon the opening of the road, refugees will be settled in Kaya Refugee Camp.

WFP Response:

WFP in conjunction with other protection partners have deployed staffs at the registration and cash points to identify the most vulnerable people and prioritized them during registration and cash distribution.

Humanitarian Information Needs Community Voices Bulletin

December 1st -15th 2023 / Issue #4

FOOD ASSISTANCE

"We are so scared of being exposed to hunger. We would like WFP to reinstate the provision of meals as was in the past."

37-year-old male - Renk, Transit Center

"I would like to propose the return to the provision of food assistance and nutritious food supplements instead of cash assistance. The cash is not enough to support families."

32-year-old female refugee - Renk, Transit Center

Some refugees and returnees prefer the resumption of food rations instead of cash assistance because they have extended families, and the cash isn't sufficient for all their needs. There is fear of possible hunger and starvation among the affected population if they continue with cash assistance. Feedback from the Renk Transit Center indicates that when they receive sorghum, the market prices reduce to the advantage of both the crisis-affected people and the host community. They are appealing for the continuation of food assistance or hot meals. Most of the feedback on food assistance was received from male refugees and returnees.

WFP said that the distribution of High Energy Biscuits only targeted new arrivals. The recent influx of crisis-hit people in Renk caused delays in the registration of refugees and returnees. During the delay which lasted four days, WFP ensured everyone received High Energy Biscuits. The CEN team collaborated with the WFP Renk office to communicate any changes.

WFP Response:

WFP gives provides cash so that people can buy food of their preference.



PHOTO: A CEN Community Correspondent collecting feedback from returnees and refugees at the Renk Transit Center - Upper Nile. | © WFP

Humanitarian Information Needs Community Voices Bulletin

December 1st -15th 2023 / Issue #4

NUTRITION ASSISTANCE

“I’m breastfeeding a four-month-old child, and I do not have enough breast milk for the baby. The cash assistance is not enough to buy milk for the child. I’m requesting WFP to provide milk and flour for me and the baby.”

50-year-old-male - Renk, Transit Center

“I’m a mother of several children. The nutritional food intended for children did not reach me. I have a seven-month-old baby. The threat of malnutrition is eminent.”

35-year-old-female – Renk, Transit Center

Between the 1st and 15th of December, the CEN community correspondents collected fifteen (15) pieces of feedback on nutrition assistance. Several of them reflected the fear that many refugees and returnees have of malnutrition and starvation. Many of the female returnees and refugees are lactating mothers and are low on means of survival. The greatest number of feedback received were complaints and concerns about the lack of sufficient nutritional food and not receiving assistance due to biometric registration challenges.

WFP Response:

Her 7-month-old baby is eligible for Blanket Supplementary Feeding Program (BSFP) assistance and other children below the age of five (5). Beyond that, they will not be targeted for the BSFP assistance.



PROTECTION

“We stand in the sun with our children during cash distribution. The children cannot stand in the hot sun for long periods of time. We are asking WFP to install rub hall.”

41-year-old female - Renk, Transit Center

“There is marginalization in the provision of humanitarian services. Attention is given to women, girls, and the elderly yet even the boys are marginalized and vulnerable. Let them provide services fairly without sidelining them because they are boys. They are also affected and needy.”

29-year-old female – Renk, Transit Center

Out of the thirty (30) pieces of feedback on protection, 29 were collected from the Transit Center and only one (1) from Joda. Most of the feedback was complaints and concerns about the safety of women, girls, and children. There are concerns about GBV, sexual harassment, and the safety of the vulnerable. There are complaints about unlit spaces around watering points and toilet facilities. Female returnees and refugees raised concerns about suspicious and unsanctioned entry into the Transit Center by some men from the host community. They also complain about exposure to the elements while they are lining up for service provision. They are requesting camp management for shelter for protection against the heat and direct sunlight. Some children have been separated from their parents and want to be left to stay in Renk until they reunite with their relatives when they come from Sudan. Most of the feedback was collected from ten (10) female respondents and only nine (9) male respondents.

WFP Response:

There is already a Mobile Storage Unit (MSU) installed at the site to shelter both the refugees and returnees.

Humanitarian Information Needs Community Voices Bulletin

December 1st -15th 2023 / Issue #4

WASH (Water, Sanitation and Hygiene)

“Many returnees and refugees are drinking directly from the taps. This is causing congestion at the water points. I would like to request IOM to provide drinking water tanks to reduce the crowding in the water collection points.”

Male adult – Renk, Transit Center

“I’m requesting the camp management to dig latrines in Transit Center 2 due to the increase in the number of refugees and returnees. The lack of enough facilities leads to open defecation and will bring diseases such as typhoid and cholera.”

45-year-old male returnee - Renk, Transit center

Refugees and returnees are facing challenges due to water shortages and overcrowding during specific times of the day. The high number of people is causing some to drink directly from the taps, risking the spread of diseases and compromising the cleanliness of water sources, as well as slowing down the lines. Poor hygiene practices around the Transit Center are also worrying, and the insufficient toilet facilities lead some community members to resort to open defecation.

Women and girls are requesting sanitary kits, and there is a plea for the camp management to prioritize cleanliness and provide soap to improve hygiene conditions. Despite these challenges, there is gratitude expressed to the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and ACTED for providing an adequate water supply in the Transit Center and maintaining hygiene and sanitation in Joda, respectively.

It is important to address the water concerns promptly to prevent the spread of diseases. In addition, focusing on awareness about proper hygiene practices and providing necessary resources can contribute to a healthier living environment for the community.



IOM Response:

IOM WASH is not able to establish separate water distribution points based on gender, due to space constraints. However, IOM WASH has recently constructed one new water distribution point. IOM WASH is planning to increase the storage capacity of the water storage at the Transit Center, which will take place during the first two weeks of January. In addition, IOM will increase (2x) the number of trucks over January.

ONWARD TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE (OTA)

“We have delayed in Joda. Because of many people and crowding, we have had to wait in Joda for four days without food. I’m asking IOM to provide vehicles on daily basis and if possible, increase their number.”

29-year-old Female - Renk, Transit Center

“There is crowding at the gate during the transportation of returnees, which hinders movement. I’m requesting IOM to identify a large place to ease the process.”

34-year-old female, Renk, Transit Center

Feedback from returnees indicates that recently the Zero Church administration asked them to vacate their premises in preparation for the Christmas festive season. This left many stranded. There are complaints about congestion at the Transit Center with refugees awaiting transportation to the camp in Maban. A returning sheik says that the procedures for private travel for those returning to their places of origin have become difficult. It takes an individual three weeks to travel. The sheik says he does not have the money to last him three weeks. Many refugees who have been at the Transit Center for a long don't know when they will be transported to the refugee camps.

There are students who are stranded and would like to continue with their education but can't proceed to Juba as they have requested.

Most of the feedback on Onward Transport Assistance (OTA) was provided by women of late twenties (20s) to early forties (40s).

Humanitarian Information Needs Community Voices Bulletin

December 1st -15th 2023 / Issue #4

The feedback was shared with IOM for updates and responses on the situation and facilitation of onward transport assistance.

IOM Response:

IOM currently deploys eight trucks and five buses daily to transport returnees from Joda to Renk. To adapt to the influx, we can readily scale up transportation capacity based on border crossing projections. Importantly, all crossing individuals are transported, with priority provided to those with special needs.

IOM Response:

IOM raised the issue of crowding/limited space for boarding at the Transit Center to the designated Camp Management agency (ACTED). They will consult with the responsible authorities (RRC) to allocate IOM a new boarding location at the new Transit Center.



ONWARD TRANSPORT ASSISTANCE

"I have spent two months in the Transit Center since I came from Sudan. I don't have food, no clothes, and no place to settle. If we can't be transported to refugees to camps, then they should transport us back to Sudan."

- 25-year-old female refugee at the Renk Transit Center.

"I would like to appeal for a speedy transportation of refugees to the camp."

- 33-year-old Sheik from the refugee community at the Transit Center.

The International Organization for Migration's (IOM) efforts have been appreciated. However, there are concerns about irregular transport services for returnees. Some individuals are requesting speedy arrangements for timely and efficient movements. A sheik from the refugee community appeals to UNHCR for faster transportation to the refugee camp, stressing the urgency for swift and organized transit.

While one returnee appreciates IOM's efforts, another refugee faces distressing circumstances after spending two months in a transit center without access to necessities. This refugee suggests that if there are difficulties in transporting refugees to camps, they should consider facilitating their return to Sudan.

These stories highlight challenges in the onward transport system, emphasizing the need for collaboration between stakeholders to refine and strengthen the transportation process.

IOM Response:

As of last week, IOM started transporting returnees on daily basis from Monday to Friday.

Humanitarian Information Needs Community Voices Bulletin

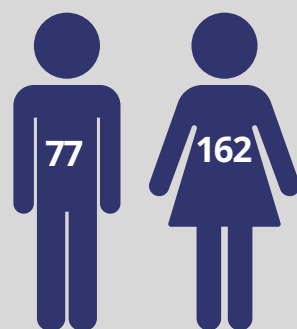
December 1st -15th 2023 / Issue #4



Total Feedback Collected



Gender



Age Groups

18-25 Years.....	17
26-35 Years.....	101
36-45 Years.....	92
46-60 Years.....	17
60+ Years.....	01

Type Of Feedback



Feedback By Topic

Food Assistance.....	10
Biometric Registration.....	03
Cash Assistance.....	29
Nutrition.....	15
Onward Transport Assistance...	27
Health.....	23
Protection.....	49
WASH.....	23
Non-Food Item.....	15
Livelihoods.....	06
Humanitarian Assistance.....	13
Shelter.....	03
Information Needs.....	15
Recreation.....	01

Feedback By Location

Transit Center.....	197
Zero Site.....	37
Joda.....	03

All data was collected by Community Engagement Network (CEN) Community Correspondents in Renk County - Upper Nile.



PHOTOS: High level visit to Renk of WFP, UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, Country Representatives | © WFP

The Community Engagement Network (CEN) has Community Correspondents in Renk 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 of the Boda Boda Talk Talk programs.

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 Renk.