

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.

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**PHOTO:** A CEN correspondent in a meeting with a Listening Group in Abu Khudara, Upper Nile State - South Sudan. | © CEN

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

November 16th -30th 2023 / Issue #3

## INTRODUCTION

Renk faces pressing humanitarian challenges amid a continuous influx of people fleeing conflict in Sudan. Aid agencies in grapple with dynamic circumstances, necessitating daily adaptive programming. Food aid complaints call for continued distribution and individuals raise concerns about the processes of the food distribution programs. Protection concerns raised by community members encompass wheelchair needs, gender-based violence prevention, and increased security measures, while feedback on biometric registration raises concerns about fairness and information accessibility. Healthcare gaps, including blood transfusion services and limited medicines, prompt urgent calls for 24-hour care, particularly for vulnerable groups. Shelter challenges involve threats of eviction, demanding alternative solutions, and refugee camp transportation. General needs encompass support for the elderly and disabled, burial assistance, blankets, and mosquito nets. Other concerns were raised about livelihoods, skills training, water, and sanitation issues including reptiles, insects, and overcrowding. Non-food item requests involve spare clothes and blankets. The refugee appeals stress the establishment of camps, vocational training, and efficient onward transport assistance. Renk urgently calls for improved services, transparency, and responsiveness across various humanitarian sectors.



## FOOD ASSISTANCE

***"I'm asking WFP to continue distributing food assistance because the living conditions are hard."***

- 36-year-old Paramount Chief in Renk.

***"What is the system being used to distribute humanitarian assistance? Some returnees receive rations while others do not. The following day there is no distribution of food to those who missed. We are requesting the distribution team to come up with sufficient amounts to cater to everyone on the list."***

- 54-year-old female at Zero Center, Renk.

The food assistance program faces challenges, as indicated in the feedback from the returnees who express distress over a sudden cut in aid and deteriorating living conditions, which prompted a chief in the community to appeal for continued food distribution rather than cash assistance. Returnees cite malnutrition concerns among children and adults, urging WFP to supply nutritionally appropriate food. Inconsistent humanitarian aid distribution exacerbates grievances, with disparities in the food rations and subsequent missed distributions. Community members also shared praise for efforts on child nutrition, but dissatisfaction persists over insufficient food quantities, and many people urged WFP to increase rations. Both returnees and refugees emphasize the need for timely distribution of sorghum and lentils to prevent starvation and malnutrition in transit centers. Additionally, a Paramount Chief and a 22-year-old female advocate for meals over cash assistance to address immediate hunger.

Of the 11 pieces of feedback on food assistance, most were complaints about rations while requests, concerns, and appreciation focused on energy-giving biscuits, and preference for food to money.

### **WFP Response:**

**Initially, the distribution of High Energy Biscuits only targeted new arrivals. Last week, Renk experienced an influx, causing delays in registration. During the four days, WFP ensured everyone received High Energy Biscuits. The CEN team collaborated with WFP Renk office to communicate any changes.**

### CASH ASSISTANCE

***“The cash assistance is insufficient to cover the duration of a week due to an increase in the price of food items. We request that WFP increase the cash assistance amount to match changes in the prices of food items,”***

- 45-year-old male refugee at Zero Center in Renk.

***“We would like to request a stop to airing information on cash distribution. Refugees attacked the site because they heard information about cash distribution to be done weekly, yet they have taken more than 45 days without receiving cash assistance. CEN must provide accurate information so as not to cause any problem between the bank employees and refugees in Transit Center 2.”***

- Kush Bank staff in Renk

Many individuals, aged 26 to 45, shared their concerns with CEN, of which most were complaints regarding the cash assistance provided by the World Food Programme (WFP). Delays in registration since October have hindered timely access to support. The plea is for WFP to increase the cash assistance amount to address the current inflation and soaring prices.

Returnee families are facing challenges in providing essential services for children and grinding sorghum due to a lack of cash. Complaints also highlight the inadequacy of current cash assistance to cover escalating food prices. Some refugees criticize the distribution system, citing lengthy waits without support, and urge WFP to enhance efficiency. Despite gratitude for a recent cash assistance increase, there are also some demands for more frequent disbursements.

Concerns extend beyond cash to overall living conditions, prompting calls for a systematic and monitored distribution system.

There were calls to improve communication on distribution dates and humanitarian activities. Beneficiaries should be told several days before the distribution takes place and also involve the community leaders in the information dissemination.

### WFP Responses:

- WFP is working on the second round of distribution of food assistance on a one-time basis to both Refugees and Returnees who have stayed at the Transit Center for more than two weeks.
- WFP experienced a one-day SCOPE Server breakdown which led to a delay. It was restored and as a mitigation measure, a backup server was installed.

#### Cash Management

- WFP will work with their cash service provider to implement measures that promote the beneficiaries' safety and security at the cash dispensation points.

#### Recurring complaints on less cash issued to beneficiaries.

- WFP will employ additional measures to support, remind, and ensure beneficiaries verify their entitlements.

#### Complaints from beneficiaries' attitudes towards the staff beneficiaries.

- WFP will increase monitoring of the cash sites and, in some instances, hold both formal and informal discussions with its beneficiaries to promote beneficiaries' dignity.



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## BIOMETRIC REGISTRATION

***“There’s overcrowding at the registration center. Vulnerable people collapse while queuing up for registration.”***

- 21-year-old female at the Transit Center in Renk.

***“The Biometric Registration method is unfair and non-transparent. We want everyone registered regardless of their affiliation.”***

- 33-year-old female at the Transit Center.

Community members voiced dissatisfaction about the perceived unfair and opaque registration process, urging the implementation of a more inclusive approach that registers individuals irrespective of their background or origin. Their primary grievance revolves around the overcrowding at the registration center, where vulnerable individuals, including the elderly and disabled, are reported to be unable to cope during the queues. WFP and CEN are collaborating up to make people more aware and enhance Help Desk services. They're adding more Help Desk service points and creating flexible messages for border crossings and the Transit Centers. CEN is getting feedback from beneficiaries to improve the communication of the content. The concerns raised by the beneficiaries are being addressed through the PSAs, audio programs, banners and posters produced by WFP and their partners.

### **WFP Response:**

**The overcrowding at the Registration Center and assistance for vulnerable individuals require complementary collaboration from Protection partners. WFP requested the support of Protection partners to identify, and refer for WFP action.**



**PHOTO:** A WFP partner staff distributing the High Energy Biscuits in Renk. | © WFP

### **WFP Response:**

**UNHCR informed WFP that all refugees who are complaining about the biometric registration process should approach UNHCR Protection Desk at the Transit Center where protection staff will register their complaints. The registration team has already been informed.**

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## PROTECTION

***"I'm worried about my children and family's safety when we go back home."***

- 32-year-old woman at the Renk Transit Center.

***"Latrines and water collection points have become risky places for girls and women, especially at night. Sexual assault and exploitation are taking place around those points. They are requesting humanitarian agencies to form Safety and Child Protection Committees to protect vulnerable persons from abuse."***

- 33-year-old female at the Transit Center.

Many returning people are afraid for their lives and belongings. It's mainly women who are concerned about keeping their children safe, and how they'll manage to look after them. Agencies working on protection in crisis areas face difficult challenges. Organizations must deal with urgent issues, like giving specific help quickly, stopping violence, making places secure, educating communities, and setting up ways to solve problems—all while making sure the most vulnerable, like older people, those with disabilities, and children, are protected and have their rights respected. The World Food Program was asked to keep giving money until people feel safe back home. People also want the managers of camps to make safe places, prevent theft, handle fights, and look into claims of unprofessional behavior by aid workers. Many worries about protection came from women aged 18 to 35 at the Renk Transit Center.



## SHELTER

***"We would like humanitarians to organize a camp for us to stay in when we leave the church compound especially some of us with no desire to go to our states due to insecurity."***

- 45-year-old male at the Zero Center in Renk.

***"We refused to live in the shelters constructed by the Camp Management due to overcrowding and insect infestation."***

- 30-year-old female at the Transit Center.

Shelter concerns have risen among returnees due to an abrupt evacuation demand from the church administration, who provided no reasons for the move. Faced with a one-day ultimatum to leave, returnees are unsure about their safety in their hometowns. They are reaching out to local leaders and humanitarian agencies responsible for Onward Transportation Assistance, seeking an investigation and alternative housing options.

Returnees are also urging the transportation of refugees to camps to escape harsh weather conditions. Some are seeking support for shelter and cash assistance, expressing fears about security in their home regions. The dissatisfaction with current shelter conditions is apparent, with requests for relocation to other sites and calls for alternative, safer camps. Returnees are rejecting overcrowded and insect-infested shelters, underscoring the urgent need for viable and secure housing solutions.



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## GENERAL HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

***“There are no permanent agencies operating in Zero Center and humanitarian services are irregular. We are asking humanitarian agencies to have operational offices at Zero Center.”***

- 30-year-old male at Zero Center.

***“We are requesting that humanitarian assistance be availed to the disabled and people with special needs by bringing it closer to their places of residence.”***

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

In Renk, people are worried about not getting enough help, especially the elderly and those with disabilities. They're having trouble getting support for the funerals of people who have come back home but passed away. The community is asking for money to help with burial costs.

The cold weather is tough, and people who have returned home are sleeping outside and getting cold. They need blankets, and they are also worried about not having mosquito nets and plastic sheets. People with disabilities want help taken to them where they live.

Some young people in Transit Centers feel like they're not getting enough care from their parents or organizations, so they're asking protection agencies for help. People in Zero want a regular and permanent presence of agencies to help them because services are not consistent.

Even with all these problems, people are thankful for the help from humanitarian agencies.



## LIVELIHOODS

***“We would like humanitarians to initiate income-generating activities like crafts, tailoring, and weaving for women.”***

- 43-year-old female who is a community Women's Representative at Zero Center in Renk.

***“We are requesting IOM to construct a vocational training center for skills and knowledge acquisition for self-reliance and livelihood.”***

- 20-year-old Youth Chairperson at Zero Center.

The major concerns shared by communities related to livelihood assistance revolve around the need for skills development and income-generating opportunities. Several people, including the youth chairperson, women's representative, refugees, and returnees, highlight the necessity for vocational training centers and initiatives promoting self-reliance. Requests range from constructing training centers for skills acquisition to initiating income-generating activities like crafts, tailoring, weaving, and catering. Refugees emphasize their existing skills and seek opportunities to improve their livelihoods. One returnee underscored the challenges of securing jobs through labor offices, citing favoritism, and advocated for humanitarian agencies to create job opportunities.

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## WASH

***“There’s a low level of personal hygiene due to a lack of washing soap. Raising awareness to maintain hygiene without soap doesn’t make sense. Let aid agencies support us with washing soap.”***

- 45-year-old female at Zero Center in Renk.

***“There is poor hygiene. Employees recruited to do the cleaning are not doing their work. They should consider giving volunteer work to the community who will be responsible for maintaining hygiene in the center.”***

- 21-year-old female returnee at the Zero Center.

Complex concerns about WASH among refugees and returnees include challenges despite the provision of drinking water. Urgent needs involve systematic distribution of sanitary pads, enhanced lighting at water points, bathrooms, and dark areas in the Transit Center, and corrective action for insect and reptile presence. Community members identified issues ranging from delayed water tank arrivals causing overcrowding, to maggot-infested latrines. Calls for solutions include improved water flow, water channels, and separate centers for men. Hygiene concerns extend to stolen latrine doors and inadequate cleaning. Additional requests encompass soap provision, lighting around latrines, community patrols to curb abuse, general awareness campaigns, and support for dignity kits. Overcrowding and disputes over water transport tanks necessitate an increase in numbers, while mosquito breeding prompted a plea for stagnant water point intervention.



## 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.**



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## HEALTH

***“I have observed widespread mental and psychological disorders among young people and children. These cases are consequences of war. I’m requesting aid agencies to provide counseling and psychosocial support to the victims,”***

- 20-year-old female in the Renk Transit Center.

***“Medical services are not available 24 hours for critical medical cases especially urgent referrals to the hospital. We are requesting for mobile 24-hour health services.”***

- 20-year-old male at the Zero Center

Feedback collected from Zero Center and the Transit Center in Renk underlines pressing health needs and concerns among returnees and refugees. Issues include the absence of blood transfusion services, limited medicine availability, inadequate critical medical care access, extended waiting times, and overcrowding at health facilities. Urgent requests are directed to relief agencies for blood transfusion services, diverse medicines, 24-hour mobile health care, crowd management assistance, and a dedicated emergency health facility. Additionally, community members requested affordable treatment, critical case transportation, and ways to address widespread mental health challenges. The community appreciates the existing services and emphasizes the necessity for combined efforts to enhance the overall health and well-being of Renk's population.



## INFORMATION NEEDS

Refugees and returnees are worried because they don't have enough information about the help available to them. They've asked for a special place where they can go to get help and have their problems listened to.

To make sure everyone gets the best help possible, all Aid Agencies should talk to each other and share how things are going. This way, they can work together better and make sure nobody misses out on the help they need.

WFP and CEN are partnering in expanding and improving the Help Desk services. This will help refugees, returnees and other crisis-hit persons to have easy access to timely and fact-checked information that highlights their entitlements.

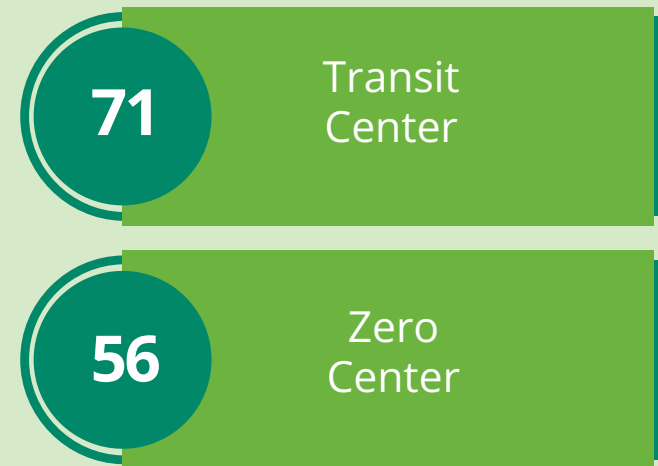


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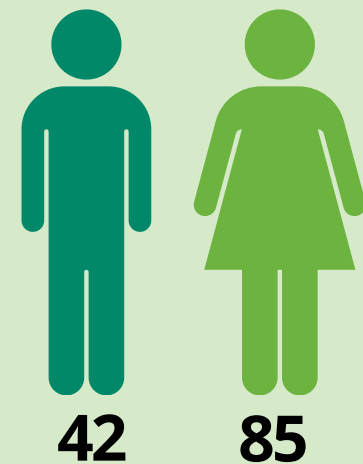
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## Feedback By Location



## Gender



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.

## Age Groups

18-25 Years.....	22
26-35 Years.....	46
36-45 Years.....	25
46-60 Year.....	10

## Type Of Feedback

Concerns.....	15
Complaints.....	53
Appreciation....	11
Fear.....	02
Clarification.....	01
Suggestion.....	02
Request.....	40

## Feedback By Topic

Food Assistance.....	11
Biometric Registration.....	02
Shelter.....	07
Cash Assistance.....	16
Information Needs.....	04
Onward Transport Assistance.....	06
Health.....	10
General Humanitarian Assistance.....	11
WASH.....	24
Livelihoods.....	05
Protection.....	24

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](mailto:Philip.James@cen-ss.org), or our Community Correspondents in Renk.