RENK
INTERAGENCY
RESPONSE

New arrivals sleeping in the open in Wunthou-Joda border.

JOINT SAFETY AUDIT REPORT

Renk, Upper Nile State, South Sudan
October 2024

Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
AAP	Accountability to Affected Population
CCCM	Camp Coordination and Camp Management
CP	Child protection
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
HDC	Humanitarian Development Consortium
IRC	International Rescue Committee
IOM	International Organization for Migration
INC	Internation Medical Corp
LWF	Lutheran World Federation
MSF	Medecins Sans Frontieres
SCI	Save the Children International
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
WASH	Water Sanitation and Hygiene

Introduction

The gender-based violence (GBV) working group carries out safety audits twice a year to identify risks, vulnerabilities, and gaps in services or infrastructure to enhance the safety and protection of individuals, especially in high-risk environments.

As part of the Renk interagency response, safety audits are led by the GBV working group co-coordinators IRC and UNHCR with the following partner agencies: UNICEF, HDC, UN IOM, SCI, ACTED, MSF, CEN, LWF, and IMC. In 2024, the first safety audit was done in April with a follow-up on 30-31 October. The second safety audit assessment was done at the transit centers (TCs) and surrounding areas, including Joda border and Zero informal settlement. It aimed to identify existing and emerging GBV and protection risks and gaps in accessing quality services for GBV survivors and individuals at risk. The GBV Safety Audits used an integrated approach, engaging various humanitarian sectors to identify GBV risks relevant to their programs and promote shared responsibility for GBV risk mitigation across all sectors.

This report assessed the implementation of the recommendations from the first audit. Significant improvements were noted, particularly in safety and security, with over 100 solar lights installed and more than 4,000 individuals reached through awareness campaigns. Community engagement was strengthened through the Community Feedback Mechanism (CFM), prioritizing disability-inclusive programming. Other achievements included capacity building on safe disclosure and PSEA for partner staff, and the installation of gender-segregated WASH facilities. However, limited assistance hindered the full mitigation of GBV risks, with ongoing issues such as domestic violence, psychological and emotional abuse, sexual abuse, and early child marriage. This highlighted the need for the second round of the safety audit to identify additional risks.

Objectives

- Inform on the progress made for the first round of the safety audit and address existing gaps that were not met.
- Identify new risks and explore mitigation measures to help respond to the needs of men, women, boys and girls.
- Inform additional measures to prevention, mitigate and respond to GBV

Limitations/Challenges

- The exercise was conducted in between other competing priorities, making it challenging for the enumerators to find conducive space for Focus Group Discussions.

Methodology

The second round of the Safety Audit used three main tools to collect data on GBV risks and response mechanisms: Community Mapping, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and Direct Observation. The assessment team successfully reached the recommended locations and involved the required number of participants and staff, ensuring the effective use of all tools.

- **Safety Walks/Observations:** The team, along with community women focal points, assessed site conditions, planning aspects, and access constraints to essential services. They conducted safety walks in TC1, TC2, surrounding areas, Joda, Zero, and Imtidad, with 24 staff from various humanitarian agencies participating.
- **Focus Group Discussions (FGDs):** This method engaged specific groups in interactive discussions to understand GBV and protection risks and strategies to enhance safety. A total of 18 FGDs were

conducted with 235 participants (111 refugees and 124 returnees) in transit centers, surrounding areas, Zero, and Imtidad.

- Community Mapping: An intersectoral team used tools to collect data from participants, identifying GBV risks, challenges, and mitigation measures. The agreed assessment sites included TC1, TC2, surrounding areas, Zero, Imtidad, and the Joda reception center (Wounthou).

Region	Renk, Upper Nile State, South Sudan			
Site/Location	▪ In TC1, TC2, Emtidad, and surrounding areas, the assessment team conducted focus group discussions and observations to gather feedback from men, women, girls, and boys. This helped identify the prevalence of GBV and protection risks, with the data collected used for analysis to inform response strategies and advocacy. ▪ At the reception center (Joda/Wounthou) and Zero, the team carried out observation assessments, focusing on evaluating available services such as health, shelter, WASH, police, and cross-cutting issues.			
Date	30th and 31st of October 2024			
Agencies/organizations conducting the Safety Audit	UNHCR, IRC, UNICEF, HDC, UN IOM, SCI, ACTED, MSF, CEN, LWF and IMC			
Focus Group Discussion # of participants	Women	Men	Boys	Girls
	60	43	60	72
Elderly Persons	4	2	0	0
Persons with Disabilities	3	2	1	2
Population type	235 (111 refugees and 124 returnees) participants were engaged through FGDs in transit centres, surrounding areas and the host community.			
Safety-Walk/observations.	24 staff from UNHCR, IRC, UNICEF, HDC, UN IOM, SCI, ACTED, MSF, CEN, LWF and IMC participated during the FGD, observation and safety walk in reception centres, transit centres, surrounding areas in transit centres and host community.			

Key Findings of the Assessment in TC1, TC2 and Surrounding Areas

Summary key findings

- The safety audit assessment was conducted with support from GBV, CP, and protection actors in transit centres, reception centres, and surrounding areas, including TC, Imtidad, and Zero area.
- Staff observed that some of the washroom facilities were shared between men and women.
- While lights were present in transit centre shelters and reception centres, they were inadequate in the toilets at both facilities.
- In Imtidad and site Zero, no lighting was observed in shelters and latrines
- 70 percent of women stated that GBV incidents can happen anywhere to anyone, but only 35 percent mentioned that GBV incidents affect anyone specifically.
- Girls expressed a preference for speaking to their mothers rather than anyone else when experiencing violence.

- Residents in Imtidad and Zero highlighted the limited humanitarian assistance in their locations.
- Few individuals were aware of traditional methods for resolving issues.
- Both men and girls noted that violence is often perceived as normal.
- Focus group discussions and observations highlighted cross-cutting issues, indicating that factors escalating the risk of GBV persist while services remain unavailable in some areas.
- There is a pressing need to scale up humanitarian responses to unreachable locations.
- Enhancing soft skills through awareness and community engagement is necessary to prevent GBV in the vicinity of transit centres, reception centres, and other parts of the host community.

Risks in Safety and security

- Both male and female respondents from the FGDs in Transit Centre 1 and Transit Center 2, and surrounding areas expressed feelings of continued insecurity due to the lack of lighting and police patrols at night, which contributes to their fear of unknown individuals moving in the dark. This anxiety is heightened by the threat of violence, including harassment, physical assault, rape, and emotional abuse, both within the transit centers and nearby areas. Reports of harassment by certain groups of men and boys against girls and women have been noted, with some individuals engaging in unhealthy relationships.
- Women and girls in TC 1 and TC 2 voiced concerns about unsafe areas such as bushes, roads, communal shelters, public transport, the Renk market, washrooms, and water points. They often feel uncomfortable, irritated, sad, and stranded due to the unsettling behavior of strangers, creating fear when traveling to the market or using shelters and washrooms at night.
- Additionally, the insufficient lighting some of the latrine sites in TC1 and TC2 makes it challenging to access these areas after dark. Those in surrounding areas also fear dangers in the bushes, including wild animals like snakes.
- Lack of livelihoods opportunities, unemployment, and idleness have been identified as contributing factors to crime, particularly in TC2. This situation is worsened by food shortages, leading to increased thefts and other forms of violence. Theft is prevalent in both the transit centers and surrounding areas, and moving around at night poses significant risks, especially after 6:00 PM, due to suspicious behaviors and substance users.

Risks in Site planning

- Compromised Security: Broken locks and doors and windows that do not close properly in TC1 and TC2.
- Inadequate Shelter Construction: Inability to build better shelters with secure doors and windows in surrounding areas, exacerbating criminal activity.
- Lack of Lighting: Insufficient lighting in shelters and toilets at transit centers, and total darkness in surrounding areas, increasing protection risks.
- Absence of Privacy: Lack of privacy and boundaries between males and females in washrooms and shelters, leading to discomfort and vulnerability.
- Fear of Assault: Women-headed households fear assault from intoxicated individuals, with noise from youth and substance abuse creating a tense atmosphere.
- Overcrowding and Uncleanliness: Overcrowded and unclean shelters, with residents neglecting cleanliness.
- Flooding Concerns: Risk of flooding during the rainy season in surrounding areas.
- Forced Sexual Relationships: Risk of forced sexual relationships and lack of respect and privacy in shelters, impacting the safety and well-being of women and girls.
- Dangerous Latrines: Lack of lighting in latrines, making them dangerous to access at night, and stagnant water creating breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

- **Accessibility Issues**: Residents, particularly those with disabilities and the elderly, struggle to reach and use washroom facilities, highlighting the need for improved accessibility and sanitation services.

Risk of Gender based Violence (GBV)

As highlighted by both male and female respondents, increased risks of forms of GBV identified were Physical violence, rape, sexual assault, psychological or emotional abuse, early or forced marriage, and denial of resources or opportunities due to below factors:

- **Limited Livelihood Opportunities**: Increasing the risk of negative coping mechanisms to meet basic needs mainly food.
- **Safety Issues in Washrooms**: Women highlighted of men frequently following women and girls to washrooms at night in TC2, leading to harassment, domestic violence, rape, and fights.
- **Economic Exploitation**: Women and girls highlighted the lack of money continue to make them vulnerable to exploitation by businessmen and other wealthy men in Renk and in market.
- **Safety Concerns in Various Areas**: Issues such as lack of privacy, theft, open doors, domestic violence, harassment, sexual assaults, physical assaults, and psychological or emotional abuse in washrooms, shelters, and firewood collection areas were among the most mentioned locations where women did not feel safe.
- **Reporting Mechanisms**: Both male and female respondents highlighted to be reporting risks of GBV to police, ACTED feedback desk, protection desk and to community leaders.
- **Lack of Action on Reports**: In particular, girls expressed frustration over delayed action on reported cases, leading them to confining to their mothers or caregivers.
- **Domestic Violence**: Common forms highlighted include physical assault and emotional abuse, including child abuse.
- **Educational Disparities**: Financial constraints lead parents to prioritize boys' education over girls', leaving girls to handle household chores and exposing them to harmful practices including child marriage.
- **Negative Coping Mechanisms**: Mainly alcohol abuse, continue to increase domestic violence, and child labor among children.

Child Protection Services

- Limited access to available services among children with disabilities increased risks to their vulnerabilities.
- Limited basic needs among primary and secondary caregivers leading to safety issues and increased risks to exploitation among children.

Risks in WASH

- **Conflicts at Water Points**: Competition for access to water points often leads to conflicts among women and risk physical assault.
- **Compromised Privacy**: Risks of lack of privacy in washrooms among women compromise privacy, with incidents of individuals opening doors while others are inside.
- **Damaged lighting in Latrines**: Broken and damaged lighting in latrines makes it dangerous to access the washrooms at night.

Risks in Food security and Cash Assistance

- **Insufficient food for Cash Assistance**: The one-time assistance continues to pause a risk factor by increasing negative coping mechanisms.
- **Increased vulnerability among the individuals with specific needs**: People with chronic illnesses, disabilities, the elderly, and separated children face significant challenges in accessing financial support without assistance increasing risks of vulnerability.

Health

- **Limited Medical Supplies**: As mentioned by respondents, although medical services are accessible and free, the limited availability of supplies often prolongs recovery times, increasing vulnerability.
- **Transport Challenges**: Difficulties in transporting patients to Renk Hospital, where medical supplies are also scarce, exacerbate health risks.
- **Limited services for health in Renk Civil Hospital:** As mentioned by respondents, patients are sometimes sent back to the transit center before fully recovering, leading to inadequate care and increased vulnerability.

Legal

- Many GBV and conflict related issues are often occurring at the family level or through traditional courts.
- Respondents highlighted to refer protection related cases to Police or partner IRC .
- Many residents are unaware of barriers to accessing legal services, hindering their ability to seek justice.

Key findings in Site Zero and Imtidad

Coping Mechanisms

- Respondents highlighted engaging in various activities to survive, such as collecting firewood, selling personal belongings, and operating small-scale businesses.

Cross-cutting Issues

Additional risk highlighted by men and women

- High public transport costs raise fears of congestion and harassment.
- Issues with beneficiary identification lead to segregation in service access.
- Public transport is fraught with violence, including harassment and sexual assault.
- Some vendors offer services in exchange for sexual favors, highlighting vulnerability.

Food/Cash for Food

- Severe lack of food and humanitarian services in Imtidad and Zero.
- Lack of awareness on reproductive health.
- Open defecation and lack of washrooms pose significant challenges.
- Financial difficulties lead to selling personal belongings for survival.

Safety-Walk/Observations Findings

- Some washrooms are shared by both men and women and are not well desegregated.
- Inadequate lighting in toilets and shelters.

Recommendations

The recommendations listed below are linked to the findings of the Safety Audit. This list is not exhaustive and will be presented to various sectors and the community with the aim of encouraging them to take action to address the identified GBV risks. The goal is to collaborate in developing an integrated GBV risk reduction plan for the site or location.

Sector	Recommendations	Location	Responsibilities
GBV Services	- Need to scale up GBV services in Renk host community areas. - Enhance awareness in Imtidad and surrounding location	- Imtidad, TC1 and TC2	- GBV sub-sector

	- Engage more men in dialogue forums on GBV in the community - Increase risk mitigation activities in Renk north, TC1 &2.		
CCCM	- Rehabilitate the lighting system in transit centers	- TC1 & TC2.	- Protection and CCCM
Shelter	- Ensure shelters are closely monitored for reallocation among the individuals with specific needs.	- TC1, TC2, reception centre and surrounding areas.	- CCCM and protection sector
WASH	- Monitor the gender segregated washrooms for males and females TC1 &2. - Ensure wash facilities have lockable doors in TC1&2. - Drainages need to be open and clean for water to flow in TC2	- TC1, TC2 and surrounding areas	- WASH and protection sectors
Health/ Nutrition	- Advocate for more resources for health / Sexual Reproductive Health/Clinical Management of Rape in Primary and Secondary health facilities	- Transit center 2 and Renk Civil Hospital	- Health sector/GBV sub sector
Food Security	- Advocate for livelihoods opportunities to enable new arrivals meet their basic needs	- Imtidad	- Protection sector
Protection	- Continue to advocate for onward movement and relocation of refugees and returnees. - Strengthen the legal system by supporting existing legal institutions in Renk county - Train the new police officers in TCs on protection, basic GBV and CP - Have additional police officer in TCs	- TC1, TC2 and surrounding areas.	- UNHCR/IOM
Child Protection	- Scale up CP services in Imtidad - Engage and scale up activities related to adolescent girls	- Imtidad - TC1, TC2 - Surrounding areas.	- CP sub sector.
Community-Based Protection	- Strengthen community support groups of women, youths and men through capacity building, life skils opportunities and ensure inclusive participation of the groups throughout the process.	- TC1, TC2, Surrounding areas.	- Protection sector
PSEA	- Review and adopt the new strategic direction and Action Plan	- TC1, TC2, surrounding areas.	- PSEA task force members

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