SOUTH SUDAN

"The body does not carry the name": community perspectives on displacement, humanitarian categorisation, and durable solutions

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SUMMARY

The title of this report, "The body does not carry the name," is a quote from a resident of Nimule who expressed frustration by being labelled an "IDP" – an internally displaced person - despite having lived in his community for many years. His words point to the risks associated with categorising people and communities – as IDPs, returnees, refugees, or host communities – in the course of humanitarian programming. While such labels are often necessary to humanitarian work, they can conflict with communities' own views of themselves, and risk reinforcing divisions. This research sought to explore how communities in South Sudan perceive these labels, what they mean, when they apply, and when they may cease to apply. Understanding communitiy's perspectives on these labels is fundamental to understanding their relationship to displacement, a critical starting point to any conversation on durable solutions.

The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement emphasize that "[s]pecial efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of internally displaced persons in the planning and management of their return or resettlement and reintegration."[1] While this is essential, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are not the only people affected by displacement – returnees and host community members are as well. If solutions to displacement are to be effective, durable, and rights-protecting, government and aid actors' durable solutions efforts must align with displacement-affected populations' rights, needs, and preferences. Therefore, REACH, with help from the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF), Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS), developed an assessment to support aid agencies, state actors, and civil society members to approach durable solutions programming from a community-centred and conflict-sensitive lens.

Displacement in South Sudan is extensive, damaging, and ongoing. As of June 2023, roughly 2.4 million South Sudanese refugees are displaced globally,[2] 2.2 million South Sudanese are internally displaced,[3] and IDPs are present in all 79 counties.[4] Displacement has divided families, disrupted livelihood opportunities, interrupted education, strained resources, and has contributed to conflicts between host communities and displaced persons.[5] Of the 2.2 million IDPs in South Sudan, 1.9 million were anticipated to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2023.[6] Additionally, displacement has not stopped: in 2022, flooding displaced almost 596,000 persons;[7] between April 2023 and October 2023, over 350,000 arrivals from Sudan were recorded since the outbreak of violence in Sudan.[8]

While displaced persons, the Government of South Sudan (GoSS), and aid agencies have all expressed interest in finding durable solutions to displacement in South Sudan, realising these aspirations is challenging. If contextualised to South Sudan, international standards for identifying, monitoring and measuring progress towards durable solutions, such as the Inter-Agency Steering Committee's Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons ("the IASC Framework"), can help guide South Sudan's durable solutions response.

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[1] United Nations. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (1998), Principle 28(2).
[2] UNHCR. South Sudanese Refugee Crisis (accessed October 2023).

[3] IOM. DTM South Sudan - Baseline Assessment Round 13 (March 2023)

[4] IOM. Mobility Tracking Round 13 Atlas (July 2023).

[5] International Crisis Group. Floods, Displacement, and Violence in South Sudan (October 2022).

[6] OCHA. Humanitarian Response Plan 2023 - South Sudan (December 2022), p. 7.

[7] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Country Profile: South Sudan (May 2023).

[8] RRC, UNHCR, and IOM. Population Movement from Sudan to South Sudan (accessed 30 October 2023).

This assessment seeks to contextualise the IASC Framework to South Sudan. To ensure a community-centred, conflict-sensitive approach to durable solutions, this assessment focuses on four questions:

1. How do IDPs, returnees, and host communities[9] (collectively referred to as 'displacement-affected communities') in the selected areas in South Sudan (Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau) understand the category of "IDP", particularly regarding when it ceases to apply to them?

2. What are displacement-affected communities' hopes for the future, and what do they think should be done to move closer to it?

3. To what extent do displacement-affected communities feel that integration has taken place in the selected locations?

4. What are displacement-affected communities' key decision-making criteria regarding future movement, and what information would they need to make an informed decision?

For this assessment, a qualitative approach was employed, consisting of 48 focus group discussions, 28 key informant interviews, and 22 individual interviews with displacement-affected communities (IDPs in former Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites, IDPs in host communities, returnees, and host community members – for a definition of terms, see Definitions).[10] The NGO Forum Durable Solutions Working Group had the opportunity to input into the design of research and contributed to location selection criteria (see Methodology), from which Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau were selected as case studies.[11] Findings are indicative.

Key findings

While participants in the four locations shared distinct perspectives on when IDP status ends, the most-cited factors were: self-reliance and access to land; living peacefully amongst the host community; and returning to where one originally came from. Access to land was often associated with the ability to cultivate crops, build shelters, and achieve self-reliance. In several interviews, participants reported that humanitarian assistance accentuated divisions between groups. Some participants said that this manifested through chiefs not distributing assistance to people who were not originally from the area, thus reinforcing the non-recipients' perceptions that they were not treated equally, while others saw dependence on assistance as a marker that one was an IDP.

In Juba, Jur River, and Wau, living amongst the host community (and, where relevant, leaving the IDP site) was seen as a necessary step towards ending one's IDP status. This is an important reminder that, while encampment may be necessary in the short term – for example, in situations of insecurity – providing people with the means to leave the camp in safety and dignity is essential if durable solutions are to be found. The emphasis on access to land also underlined the importance of housing, land, and property in finding durable solutions.

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[9] Although these categories are widely used and can be useful, they have limitations. First, rather than distinct categories, displacement is of a dynamic continuum, where displaced persons can take steps towards integrating into the host community over time, or can be made to take steps backwards. Second, the categories are, at times, externally imposed and may not fit how people see themselves, or people may see themselves as fully integrated while others see them as IDPs. Third, membership in the categories is dynamic and can vary based on context. For example, someone who fled from Wau to the former Protection of Civilian (PoC) site may have reestablished themselves in Wau town but maintained their status as a resident in the former PoC site, in case of future shocks or inability to pay rent in town. Fourth, the categories exclude other groups, such as migrants who were not forcibly displaced. Practitioners have come to recognise these challenges, as demonstrated in, for example, International Office for Migration. The Progressive Resolution of Displacement Situations (December 2016).

[10] The perspectives of persons recently displaced from Sudan to South Sudan were not included in this assessment. However, early solutions options are explored in a forthcoming study from ReDSS.

[11] For an overview of the context in the four locations, see Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility. County Profiles (updated October 2023).

Several participants also suggested that the passage of time was relevant to ending IDP status. However, the suggested lengths of time varied greatly, and simply being in a place for a given amount of time was generally not seen as sufficient. Rather, time appeared to be relevant insofar as it provided people with the opportunity to access land / increase their self-reliance / establish relations with the host community. **Given how much the perspectives on when IDP status ends varied by location, a community-centred, area-based approach to durable solutions programming is recommended.**

Additionally, this assessment sought to understand what displacement-affected populations themselves saw as the relevant markers of integration, to help contextualise the IASC Framework's criteria to determine to what extent a durable solution has been achieved. Across the 98 interviews, several IASC Framework criteria stood out more than others and some were not mentioned at all. Variation in which indicators were emphasized was greater between locations than between population groups. When asked what full integration means to them, participants most often mentioned

- (Long-term) access to land for farming and shelter (in all four locations);

- Self-reliance (primarily in Jur River);

- Equal access to assistance and resources (primarily in Juba and Jur River);

- Living peacefully together (primarily in Nimule and Juba);

- Access to services (primarily in Jur River);

- Participation in political life (primarily in Juba).

The IASC Framework's criterion of *enjoyment of an adequate standard of living without discrimination* includes having "adequate access, on a sustainable basis, to … basic shelter and housing",[12] possibly in recognition of the need to have intermediate steps on the pathway to durable solutions. In this assessment, the importance of *long-term access* to land for shelter and farming came out strongly across the four locations.[13] In locations close to IDP camps, there was further emphasis on the shelter and housing being situated within the host community.

Additionally, many participants stressed how self-reliance was central to integration and ending IDP status. This is consistent with the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention), which implores States Parties to

"[p]romote self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods amongst internally displaced persons, provided that such measures shall not be used as a basis for neglecting the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons, without prejudice to other means of assistance."[14]

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[12] Brookings-Bern Project on Internal Displacement. IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (April 2010), p. 31.

[13] "Long term" was generally not defined, but participants generally seemed to mean that they had secure tenure.

[14] African Union. African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009), Art. III(1)(k).

The emphasis on self-reliance also fits well with Objective Two of *The Progressive Resolution of Displacement Solutions,* a guidance from the International Organization for Migration (IOM): "To foster self-reliance by responding to the longer term consequences of displacement solutions." [15]

Given the scale of displacement and the amount of work that needs to be done to help millions of displaced persons get closer to durable solutions, prioritisation is key. The IASC Framework recognizes this and emphasizes the need for durable solutions actors to contextualize its criteria. Across the 98 interviews, no participants mentioned *access to effective remedies and justice*, nor *access to personal and other documentation*,[16] nor *family reunification* (all IASC Framework criteria) – despite some participants being separated from their families – as indicators of full integration. This underlines the highly contextual nature of integration and the importance of working with displacement-affected communities to develop indicators at a local level, if one wants to understand their perspectives on when integration is achieved.

Findings also indicate that **the extent to which IDPs and returnees had integrated depended in part on access to money**. Again, this accords with the Kampala Convention and with IOM's emphasis on fostering self-reliance: the closer one gets to self-reliance, the more one is able to take steps to secure integration, either in the location in which one is or elsewhere.[17]

In Juba, communities were reportedly sharing humanitarian assistance and resources and communities were reportedly largely living together peacefully. Additionally, there were some reports that previously displaced persons were being treated equally and were even participating in political life, such as attending community meetings and holding leadership positions, and, in some cases, intermarrying. However, long-term access to land appeared to be an ongoing challenge.[18]

In Jur River and in Wau, findings indicate that integration of IDPs and returnees into the host community depends heavily on whether they have access to money. In Jur River, persons who were able to purchase shelter materials could reportedly access land and shelter; in Wau, persons who could afford to rent places outside the former PoC sites seemed to be treated the same as the host community. However, in Jur River, those who could not afford to build shelters were living separately from the host community or remained in the former PoC sites in Wau. Integration in Wau was reportedly made more difficult by the limited amount of land on which to farm and the challenges of securing other livelihood opportunities. Additionally, participants were reportedly wary of returning to their villages due to concerns around safety.

In Nimule, participants reported that IDPs and the host community were living peacefully together, and that **women were integrating faster than men were because they were present for more of the year.** This is consistent with Intergroup Contact Theory, which posits that contact between members of different groups can reduce prejudice in conditions of equal status, cooperation, common goals, and authorities that support positive contact.[19] However, opinions differed on whether there was equal access to assistance and/or opportunities, with some IDPs asserting that host community leaders were redirecting assistance meant for IDPs to host community members. A key obstacle to

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[15] International Organization for Migration. The Progressive Resolution of Displacement Solutions (December 2016), p. 10.

[16] It is possible that access to personal documentation was not mentioned because identity documents were not a major concern at the moment. However, documentation could still be useful if people are forced to flee across borders or if they seek to purchase land or to access courts.

[17] IOM. The Progressive Resolution of Displacement Solutions (December 2016), p. 10.

[18] For more on this, see Acted. Housing, Land and Property Assessment of Juba Peri-IDP Sites Area (July 2023).

[19] Jim A.C. Everett. Intergroup Contact Theory: Past, present, and future (2013).

integration was access to land, with a host community member suggesting that long-term access to land was intentionally being withheld to prevent IDPs from fully integrating.

Across the four locations and the three population groups, the main hopes for the future that participants expressed were safety and security; improved access to food, children's education; access to health facilities and medication; shelter materials; access to clean water; long-term access to land; and livelihood opportunities and vocational training. However, again, the extent to which these hopes were emphasized varied by location, indicating the need to take an area-based approach and to consult all affected communities. Additionally, in a country in which the host population is itself struggling to meet these basic needs, it is not enough to aim for displaced persons to have the same access to basic needs as the host community. Rather, considerable work and funding is needed to ensure that host communities[20] can absorb displaced persons, that displaced persons are able to choose between options, and that all South Sudanese are resilient to future shocks.

IDPs and returnees most commonly said that their main considerations when determining whether to stay or relocate were peace and security, access to services, economic and family considerations, and quality of life. This underlines that **conditions of peace are necessary but not sufficient for IDPs to return, and that many people are balancing risks and opportunities**, including through relocation and through family separation. Additionally, it suggests that government, and humanitarian, development, and peace (HDP) actors must expand access to opportunities and services if displaced persons are to have a choice that is not simply between two undesirable options and could lead to further displacement at a later point. In Nimule, one participant expanded upon the concept of peace, stating,

> *"Peace is not just the absence of war. It's when there's food on the table, when kids are going to school, when police can't beat you for no reason, when violence isn't committed… Right now, there's no peace, no school, no health facilities. People are still there [in the area of origin] because there are NGOs there. But there are places that they can't reach."*

Most participants reported that they have not felt pressured to return. When participants did report feeling pressured to return, it was because of insecurity in the former PoC sites, the absence of assistance, and inability to access land.

When IDPs and returnees were asked what information they would want when deciding whether to move, they most often reported that they **wanted information on safety and security and the services they would be able to access**. Other subjects of interest included whether there would be access to housing and livelihood opportunities, whether others were returning (and staying), the safety and security en route, likelihood of flooding, and when they would be assisted to return. However, reported informational needs varied between locations.

Finally, the **preferred sources of information** were friends and family, humanitarian actors, radio, community leaders, and government, and, to a lesser extent, social media, checking for oneself, community meetings, and phone calls. Again, however, responses varied by location. Through facilitating communication with friends and family, rumour-tracking, communicating directly with participants, paying attention to what people want to know, and, to the extent possible, trying to ensure that the communication is accurate (including by admitting uncertainty, where relevant),

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[20] In a context like South Sudan, where the population is diverse and there has been widespread, multiple displacement, delineating the "host community" can be particularly difficult and, at times, contentious. For example, in some locations, one ethnic group may move to a new location and displace the population that was living there; it is not clear whether (and, if so, at what point) one should recognise the new majority as the host community.

government and aid actors can help to ensure that displaced persons' decisions are voluntary and informed, and possibly reduce the risks of multiple displacement.

CONTENTS

List of Acronyms

CSRF:	Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility
DRC:	Danish Refugee Council
NGOF DSWG:	Non-Governmental Organization Forum Durable Solutions Working Group
FGD:	Focus Group Discussion
GoSS:	Government of South Sudan
HCT:	Humanitarian Country Team
HDP:	Humanitarian-Development-Peace
HNO:	Humanitarian Needs Overview
IASC:	Inter-Agency Standing Committee
IDP:	Internally Displaced Person
II:	Individual Interview
IOM:	International Organization for Migration
KI:	Key Informant
KII:	Key Informant Interview
PoC:	Protection of Civilian
ReDSS:	Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat
RRC:	South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission
UNHCR:	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

INTRODUCTION

Displacement in South Sudan is widespread

Depending on which definition of "internally displaced person" (IDP) one uses, roughly one third of the South Sudanese population is displaced.[21] Displacement can divide families, disrupt livelihood opportunities, interrupt education, strain resources, and lead to conflicts between host communities and displaced persons.[22] As stated in the 2023 South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), "[m]ultiple and protracted displacement has undermined people's resilience and ability to cope, as a result of loss of assets, livelihoods, homes, properties, family members and communal networks".[23] Of the 2.2 million IDPs in South Sudan, 1.9 million were anticipated to be in need of humanitarian assistance in 2023.[24]

Solutions to displacement are not straightforward in South Sudan. Conflict and flooding continue to trigger massive displacement: in 2022 alone, heavy flooding triggered nearly 596,000 new movements, an increase on the previously record-setting 2021 figure of around 509,000 persons displaced;[25] between April and October 2023, over 290,000 South Sudanese were forcibly displaced from Sudan back into South Sudan.[26] Further, displacement in South Sudan is countrywide (IDPs are present in all 79 counties)[27] and multigenerational – as stated by the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility, "generations of displacement due to conflict and its related crises has meant that to most *home* is not a single location, but spans urban and rural areas, including in refugee camps."[28]

There is broad interest in finding durable solutions to displacement in South Sudan

Amidst increasing humanitarian needs and decreasing funding, stakeholders across the humanitarian, peace, and development spectrum in South Sudan have expressed support for community self-reliance and resilience. Durable solutions are seen as a key component of these discussions and efforts. For example, the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan included "support for durable solutions to internal displacement" as one of three priorities in the peacebuilding-humanitarian-development nexus,[29] with an addendum that "[t]hese initiatives focus on area-based programming, involving the local communities in developing and implementing projects".[30] Further, South Sudan was selected as one of 15 pilot countries for the Action Agenda on Internal Displacement, where solutions pathways will be developed targeting up to 10 million IDPs over a two-year period.[31]

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[21] The World Bank estimated that South Sudan's population was around 10,913,164 in 2022. World Bank. Population Total – South Sudan (2022). In July 2023, UNHCR's estimated that the South Sudanese refugee population was roughly 2.4 million (UNHCR. South Sudanese Refugee Crisis (accessed October 2023)); IOM estimated that there were roughly 2.2 million IDPs in South Sudan as of August 2022 (IOM. DTM South Sudan - Baseline Assessment Round 13 (March 2023)). IOM defined "IDP" as, "Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obligated to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border" and used a temporal cutoff: people were only considered to be IDPs if they arrived in the assessed area no earlier than 2014.

[22] International Crisis Group. Floods, Displacement, and Violence in South Sudan (October 2022).

[23] OCHA. South Sudan Humanitarian Needs Overview 2023, p. 64.

[24] *Id.*.

[25] Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre. Country Profile: South Sudan (May 2023).

[26] UNHCR, IOM, and RRC. Population Movement from Sudan to South Sudan (acccessed 30 October 2023).

[27] IOM. Mobility Tracking Round 13 Atlas (July 2023).

[28] Nicki Kindersley and CSRF. Returns and Peace in South Sudan: Challenges, opportunities and the way forward (December 2019), p. 1.

[29] OCHA. South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan 2023, p. 76.

[30] *Id.*.

[31] United Nations. Action Agenda on Internal Displacement: A focus on solutions (September 2022).

To find effective solutions to displacement, we must consult displacement-affected communities

Amidst reduced funding and this complex situation, there is a need to ensure that efforts towards durable solutions are in line with displacement-affected populations' rights, needs, and preferences, including those of host communities.

South Sudanese have long used movement as a coping mechanism, not only to flee flooding and insecurity, but also to avail themselves of services and jobs when they are not available in another location. In seeking to support durable solutions, there is a risk of shrinking the protection space during displacement and of creating "an artificial environment pulling people towards unsafe locations."[32] Further, South Sudanese people have extensive experience with how difficult it can be to achieve durable solutions to displacement: 93 per cent of IDPs present at the time of IOM's assessment in August 2022 were previously displaced within South Sudan and around seven per cent of IDPs in South Sudan were previously displaced abroad.[33] These were the same figures as the previous year.[34]

The importance of centering affected communities has been recognised nationally and internationally, both in humanitarian work generally and regarding displacement in particular. The Grand Bargain calls for the systematic participation of affected populations in decision-making that affects them.[35] The South Sudan Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) has recognized accountability to affected populations (AAP) as a strategic priority in South Sudan, to ensure an accountable and rights-based approach to response planning and to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of aid. This was demonstrated through the development and endorsement of the HCT Strategy on AAP in 2021. Additionally, Principle 28 of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement stipulates that "[s]pecial efforts should be made to ensure the full participation of internally displaced persons in the planning and management of their return or resettlement and reintegration."[36] The Inter-Agency Standing Committee Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (later referred to simply as the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions) builds on this, stating that a rights-based approach to supporting durable solutions should ensure that, inter alia, "IDPs participate in the planning and management of durable solutions, so that recovery and development strategies address their rights and needs".[37] Similarly, the South Sudan Action Plan on Return, Reintegration and Recovery 2020-2022 states that

"Interventions should originate from direct engagement with the communities to identify their intentions and impediments and be based on a request for assistance to act on their intentions, based on age, gender, and diversity considerations. This should be collected through regular communication and engagement with IDPs (not just the IDP leadership and consider communication dynamics related to age, gender and diversity) both to inform them on the context in their areas of origin and to collect the intention of IDPs."[38]

Lastly, the first commitment of the United Nations Action Agenda on Internal Displacement is to

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[32] Research and Evidence Facility and Samuel Hall. South Sudan's Decades of Displacement (January 2023), p. 71.

[33] IOM. DTM South Sudan - Baseline Assessment Round 13 (March 2023).

[34] IOM. Mobility Tracking Round 12: Initial data release (July 2022).

[35] Inter-Agency Standing Committee. Grand Bargain: A shared commitment to better serve people in need (May 2016), p. 10.

[36] United Nations. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement (September 2004), Principle 28.

[37] IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, p. 15.

[38] Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management & RRC, South Sudan Action Plan on Return, Reintegration and Recovery 2020-2022.

"redouble efforts to ensure meaningful participation and systematic inclusion of IDPs and local community members of all ages, genders and diversities in decision-making on solutions, including by scaling up community-based planning, and advocate with States to put in place measures to ensure IDPs are heard and included in solutions planning."[39]

Research objectives

If solutions programming is to encourage an inclusive, community-centred, and area-based approach, it must be informed by the perspectives and experiences of displacement-affected communities, including not only IDPs, but also host communities and returnees. Given their extensive experience with displacement, displacement-affected communities in South Sudan possess valuable insights into what the most important considerations around solutions are for them.

In light of this, REACH worked with the Conflict Sensitivity Resource Facility (CSRF), the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), and the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat (ReDSS) to design research on displacement-affected communities' perspectives on displacement. This research set out to answer four questions:

1. How do IDPs, returnees, and host communities in the selected areas in South Sudan (Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau) understand the category of "IDP", particularly regarding when it ceases to apply?

2. What are affected communities' hopes for the future, and what do they think should be done to move closer to it?

3. To what extent do displacement-affected communities feel that integration has taken place in the selected locations?

4. What are displacement-affected populations' key decision-making criteria regarding future movement, and what information would they need to make an informed decision?

Through this research, REACH aimed to promote a transparent and accountable approach to work around durable solutions, based on displacement-affected communities' priorities and needs.

This research was funded by the United States Agency for International Development's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance and the United Kingdom's Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office.

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[39] United Nations. The United Nations Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement: Follow-Up to the Report of the UN Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on Internal Displacement (June 2022).

METHODOLOGY

The research followed a **qualitative** approach with **semi-structured** interviews, to enable participants to raise perspectives that the researchers had not previously considered.

The case study locations (Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau) were selected based on criteria agreed upon in a workshop with NGOF DSWG members:

1. Presence of IDPs / returnees.

2. Presence of actors conducting and/or interested in conducting work on durable solutions.

3. Variation in the primary cause of displacement (insecurity / flooding or drought).

4. Variation in living situation (some locations should have IDPs living in former Protection of Civilian (PoC) sites, and others should have IDPs living in host communities).

5. Variation in when the displacement occurred.

6. Geographic variation between locations (preferably with one close to an international border).

7. Likelihood that the research will add something new to what is known.

8. REACH's access to the site.

Participants were selected **purposively**. In Juba and Wau, where IDP camps (former PoC sites) were present, the target populations were camp-based IDPs, IDPs in host communities near the IDP sites, and host community members near the IDP sites. In Jur River, the target populations were IDPs in host communities, host community members, and returnees (many of whom had previously fled to Wau). Nimule was selected in part due to its proximity to an international border and the large number of IDPs and returnees residing there. The target populations in Nimule were anticipated to have been host community members, IDPs in host communities, and returnees. However, following discussions with host community members and returnees, it was established that dividing the returnees and the host community would be imposing divisions that did not make sense to the affected populations. Rather, the distinction that host community and returnee participants were making was between IDPs from Greater Equatoria and IDPs from other parts of South Sudan (particularly pastoralists). In Juba, interviews were conducted in Juba IDP Camp 3, Khor Rumula, and Wangleri. In Jur River, interviews were conducted in Marial Bai and Kuarjena. In Nimule, interviews were conducted in Olikwi and Rock City. In Wau, interviews were conducted in and near Hai Masna and Naivasha IDP Site.[40]

Data collection took place between 22 May and 3 June, 2023. Roughly 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) were held per location, evenly split between population groups. Additionally, around six key informant interviews (KIIs) and six individual interviews (IIs) were conducted in each location, again evenly split between population groups. In total, data collection consisted of **48 FGDs, 28 KIIs, and 22 IIs**. The findings are **indicative** and should not be extrapolated to a country-wide level.

To enable male and female respondents to raise gender-specific issues, FGD participants were separated by gender. In all interviews, the moderator, assistant moderator, and, where relevant, the interpreter were the same gender as the participants. Similarly, population groups were interviewed separately to provide room for disagreement while avoiding exacerbating tensions between groups.

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[40] CSRF has developed county profiles for all of South Sudan, including the counties selected for this assessment. CSRF. County Profiles (undated).

Individual interviews were conducted to ensure that perspectives of persons with disabilities, youth, and older persons were also included.

This assessment integrated protection principles throughout the research cycle, including the observation of do-no-harm, confidentiality and anonymity, and informed consent during data collection.

Definitions

Area of origin

The term "area of origin" refers to the geographic region from which individuals or populations migrated. In some cases, this may refer to where one's parents or grandparents were from, rather than the location from which one was most recently displaced.[41]

Displacement-affected populations

The term "displacement-affected populations" refers to internally displaced persons, returnees, and the host community in the areas in which IDPs and/or returnees are present.

Durable solutions

The IASC provides three kinds of durable solutions: sustainable return to the area of origin; sustainable local integration; and sustainable integration into another area.[42] Further, it states that a durable solution "is achieved when internally displaced persons no longer have any specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and can enjoy their human rights without discrimination on account of their displacement."[43]

Host community

"Host community" refers to the local community in which displaced persons reside.

Internally displaced person (IDP)

The 1998 Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement's definition of an IDP was used in this assessment:

> *"Persons or groups of persons who have been forced or obliged to flee or to leave their homes or places of habitual residence, in particular as a result of or in order to avoid the effects of armed conflict, situations of generalized violence, violations of human rights or natural or human-made disasters, and who have not crossed an internationally recognized state border."*[44]

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[41] Determining someone's area of origin can be difficult in contexts like South Sudan, in which displacement and migration has happened multiple times and across generations. For example, someone who grew up in Eastern Equatoria but whose parents and grandparents were from Upper Nile might see Upper Nile as their area of origin, despite never having been there themselves. For this assessment, participants were free to define area of origin as they liked.

[42] IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, p. 5.

[43] *Id.*.

[44] United Nations Commission on Human Rights. Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, E/CN.4/1998/53/Add (February 1998).

Returnee

The International Organization for Migration (IOM)'s definition of 'returnee' was used in this assessment: "Someone who was displaced from their habitual residence either within South Sudan or abroad, who has since returned to their habitual residence." This differs from the definition used by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in that IOM restricts the category of 'returnee' to individuals who returned to the exact location of their habitual residence, or an adjacent area based on a free decision. In contrast, UNHCR would also count as returnees people who find themselves in a situation of continued displacement (IOM would consider these to still be IDPs) or who have chosen a new habitual residence (IOM would consider these to be relocated).

FINDINGS

When the category of 'IDP' no longer applies, according to displacement-affected communities in Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau

In 2006, the Brookings Institution – University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement noted that there was a need to provide guidance on when IDP status ends, in part to avoid a situation in which a government could attempt to project normalcy by declaring prematurely that there are no longer IDPs, or a situation in which funding dictates whether people are considered IDPs.[45] In light of the number of IDPs in South Sudan and reductions in funding, having a contextualized, accountable framework for durable solutions is of paramount importance if durable solutions are to be achieved.

The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions provides eight criteria that "may be used to determine to what extent a durable solution has been achieved":

1. Long-term safety and security;

2. Enjoyment of an adequate standard of living;[46]

3. Access to employment and livelihoods;

4. Restoration of housing, land and property;

5. Access to documentation;

6. Family reunification;

7. Participation in public affairs; and

8. Access to effective remedies and justice.[47]

The drafters of the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions recognized that the criteria needed to be contextualised. In an effort to do so and to ensure that displacement-affected communities'

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[45] Brookings Institution – University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement. When Displacement Ends (2006), p.7.

[46] The IASC Framework specifies that this "requires that at a basic minimum IDPs have adequate access, on a sustainable basis, to: Essential food and potable water; Basic shelter and housing; Essential medical services, including post-sexual assault care and other reproductive healthcare; sanitation; and at least primary school education." (IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (April 2010), pp. 31-32). However, many of its suggested indicators of progress towards achieving a durable solution compare the IDPs' standard of living to that of the resident population, the situation before displacement, or the national average.

[47] IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (April 2010), p. 27.

perspectives are included, REACH asked host community members, IDPs inside and outside of camps, and returnees when they felt that IDP status ends.

While participants in Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau shared distinct perspectives on when IDP status ended, several key conditions arose.

Self-reliance and access to land

"We are IDPs because we do not have access to our own cultivation field, we still beg for help from the community and the government, we cannot afford to live on our own."

– IDP in host community, Jur River

A commonly shared perspective across the locations was that ending IDP status was linked to achieving self-reliance and accessing land for farming. This was particularly evident in Juba, Jur River, and Wau. In all FGDs and in most KIIs and IIs in **Jur River**, participants asserted a link between IDP status and reliance on assistance and its inverse (the link between self-reliance and ending IDP status). An IDP KI emphasized the importance of self-reliance, stating, "Our problem here is that, though nobody discriminates against [IDPs], we are not self-reliant. We don't have livelihood, no huts, no farms, and more basic things are missing when we compare to our villages of origin." At times, the order of causality was flipped from the way one ordinarily conceives of it. As a male IDP FGD participant stated, "When someone does not rely on assistance anymore, including shelter, then he is not an IDP". Female participants linked cessation of IDP status to access to land more often than male participants did: in most FGDs with women, this connection was made, whereas it was raised in just one FGD with men. However, all KIs mentioned long-term access to land, and access to land and shelter was linked to cessation of IDP status in all individual interviews in Jur River.

In **Juba**, one KI stated, "When I have established myself in the community and no longer depend on humanitarian assistance, then I do not need to be called an IDP." In most FGDs with camp-based IDPs in Juba, self-reliance was given as the response to the question about when IDP status ends. Although self-reliance was not mentioned in the FGDs with IDPs based in host communities, long-term access to land was mentioned in all four FGDs. Given that land enables people to farm and, if they produce enough, to earn money to provide for their other needs, this may be a proxy for self-reliance. In contrast, long-term access to land was mentioned once in FGDs with the host community and in none of the FGDs with camp-based IDPs.

In **Wau**, in most FGDs (all FGDs with men and half the FGDs with women), self-reliance was stated to be a criterion for IDP status ending. KIs echoed this perspective, with one female camp-based IDP stating, "[o]nce a person is able to feed him or herself in her own house without depending on another person, he is not an IDP anymore." A host community KI concurred: "[p]eople who are still in the IDP camp or living with us without having their own shelters and no livelihood are IDPs because they need assistance from NGOs to integrate and live normal life like others in the community."

In **Nimule**, in most FGDs, participants connected the ending of IDP status to long-term access to land. An IDP explained that, according to him, "what makes someone part of the host community is to go to the village chief, and then go to the head of the payam, and then to the landowner, and then they're given land. From there, I'm a member of the host community."

Withholding land to prevent integration and to enable people to return?

Because long-term access to land is linked to integration, host communities may be reluctant to grant it. A female host community FGD participant in Nimule explained that "the chiefs want [the IDPs] to go back to their place. If [the chiefs] give land for cultivation, [the IDPs] will not go away from here." This reluctance to grant land was reflected in other interviews. When asked about the extent of integration, participants in a minority of FGDs in Nimule asserted that IDPs had long-term access to land. An IDP participant stated, "If you look for somewhere to dig, nobody will give you land. Same if you want to build a tukul."

A male returnee participant hinted at the reason for this reticence: "When you go back to your land, the first thing you need is to settle, to have a house, a place for digging, and to take your children to school. If you do all those things, you qualify to be a host community. But if you go back to your land and someone has taken your home, you do not qualify as a host community." In addition to hosting a large number of IDPs, Nimule has also seen many people flee violence. Nimule's proximity to the border with Uganda enables circular movement to take place, with people fleeing to Uganda when violence erupts and then returning when the situation has calmed down and/or when there are reductions in assistance in Uganda. Granting IDPs land in these communities could complicate returns if the land claims conflict with those of people who fled. This competition for land can also impact acceptance of IDPs into the host community: a male returnee FGD participant in Nimule stated, "If you're taking someone's land, if you're stopping them from returning, then you're still an IDP."

These tensions hint at the importance of minimizing competition over and competing claims to land if widespread durable solutions are to take place – not only for the 2.2 million IDPs, but also the 2.4 million South Sudanese refugees currently living outside South Sudan.

In several FGDs in Nimule, participants linked ability to provide for oneself with ending IDP status, with one participant stating that he identified as an IDP because he "always need[s] to ask people for things and [is] not permanently settled." Again, this is interlinked with access to land on which to farm, particularly in an agrarian community. Similarly, in an FGD with male IDPs, a participant connected the ending of IDP status with not relying on humanitarian aid: "If you go back to your place, you have nothing to eat. You would still be an IDP because the UN would supply you with food."

Living peacefully amongst the host community

"If you're staying with the nearby people in peace for a long period of 3+ years, maybe they will see your behaviour and you could buy a land, and nobody would call you an IDP."

- Male host community member, Nimule

In Juba, Jur River, and Wau, living amongst the host community (and, where relevant, leaving the IDP site) was seen as a necessary step towards ending one's IDP status. This is an important reminder that while encampment may be necessary in the short term – for example, in situations of insecurity – providing people with the means to leave the camp in safety and dignity is essential if durable solutions are to be found.

In **Wau**, one KI explicitly stated that self-reliance alone was not enough: "Living in the camp, even if we depend on ourselves for daily needs, it makes people call us IDPs." Another KI went as far as to say, "If you are outside the camp, then you are not an IDP." Others saw it as necessary but not sufficient: a camp-based individual interviewee stated, "If someone integrates with the host community and can't do anything for himself, I think he is still IDP. It is important to provide something for yourself by doing certain work, then you can rent a shelter or build your own within the host community, and we can call you a non-IDP." Again, this is consistent with critiques of the camp-based approach to displacement programming.[48] However, as discussed in greater depth below, living amongst the host community is not necessarily straightforward. Several KIs linked the end of IDP status to returning to one's area of origin, with one IDP in the host community framing it as a necessity, stating that host community members where she lived felt that people in the former PoC sites take up space and contribute to high market prices. Participants in Wau rarely specified that one needed to be living *peacefully* with the host community[49] – the closest a participant in the FGDs got was to give the example of, "if someone collects fruits from forest and there is extra they share among neighbours", with two KIs in the camps also mentioning sharing resources (e.g., humanitarian assistance) and none of the II participants discussing living peacefully.

In **Nimule**, participants put less emphasis on whether people were living in the host community, possibly because IDPs there were not proximate to IDP camps. However, living *in peace* with the host community was mentioned in most FGDs and IIs, and in around half of the KIIs. A male IDP explained that he felt like a member of the host community member because of the length of time he had lived there (14 years), plus that he has a "good character in the community, so the land owners gave [him] land to settle. Also the relationship with the host community and [his] children is good." This difference between Wau and Nimule may be due to the difference in how land is acquired: in Wau, ability to purchase or rent land depends on ability to pay, whereas in the outskirts of Nimule it depends more on one's relations with the community.

In **Juba**, leaving the IDP camp was mentioned as a condition for ending IDP status in most of the FGDs with host community members and in half of the FGDs with IDPs in the IDP camp, but was not mentioned by IDPs in the host community. In **Jur River**, male participants seemed to put greater emphasis on living with the host community, as this was raised in all FGDs with men but in just one FGD with women. A male host community participant described the divide as,

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[48] For example, the Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat stresses the need to "shift away from short-term, camp-based programming, which runs in parallel to host community service delivery, towards area-based approaches that focus on building self-reliance and resilience among refugees/IDPs/returnees, host communities and local institutions." Regional Durable Solutions Secretariat. ReDSS Durable Solutions Framework (May 2018), p. 7.

[49] Participants did not always explain what they meant by living peacefully. Where they did, it was usually related to respecting local norms and not causing conflicts with host community members.

> *"IDPs in Marial Bai are not living in a camp, they live in a building that was constructed by the local government for something else ... If they live in one place like families of IDPs we call them IDPs until they move to their individual huts and start doing livelihood like us in the host community."*

Further, both returnee KIs linked the ending of IDP status to not living in a camp, with one stating, "If persons are being controlled or put in the camp like when I was in the camp in Wau, it means I am an IDP" and the other saying, "IDPs are people who ran for safety from their village and then they go to live in camps where they are provided with almost everything such as water, food and even shelter. When you live in your own place like this, you are not an IDP."

Return to one's area of origin

> *"When you go back to your land, the first thing you need is to settle, to have a house, a place for digging, and to take your children to school. If you do all those things, you qualify to be a host community. But if you go back to your land and someone has taken your home, you do not qualify as a host community."*

<div align="right">

– Male returnee, Nimule

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Participants in all four locations mentioned return to one's area of origin as way in which IDP status could end. In **Wau**, for example, in most FGDs, participants asserted that returning to one's area of origin (and having access to services / being able to cultivate) meant that IDP status had come to an end. As one host community participant stated, "if a person is living in their settlement of origin having quality access to water, school, hospital and [can] cultivate in their own field with no fear, this person is not an IDP." This answer was very close to the GoSS Framework for Returns, Reintegration and Relocation of Displaced Persons, which states that solutions will only be durable if, *inter alia*, people have freedom of movement and can access an adequate standard of living (including access to food, water, housing, health care and basic education) and have access to employment and livelihoods. A camp-based IDP provided the mirror image of this, stating, "I call myself an IDP because I'm not living in my place of origin and rely on CCCM for help to get a shelter, water, and treatment when I'm sick. When I return to my village in [redacted] then I will call myself a non-IDP."

In **Nimule**, return to one's area of origin was mentioned in half of the FGDs, one KII, and one II, in most cases with the explanation that if there is security across the country, people will be able to return. In one FGD, an IDP from Eastern Equatoria asserted that return to one's area of origin was the only way that one could become the host community: "It's not possible to be host community in this area. At some point, if my children cause accidents or problems, it would still follow me that I am from somewhere else. If I went back to my homeland, the name 'IDP' would disappear."

In **Juba**, return to one's area of origin was mentioned in most FGDs with IDPs in the host community, but not mentioned in FGDs with IDPs inside the camp nor by the host community. In **Jur River**, return to one's area of origin was mentioned in most IIs and FGDs (including in all four FGDs with returnees), and in half the KIIs. A returnee FGD participant explained that he does not feel like an IDP because he had returned to his village of origin: "Here I can cultivate and build a shelter for myself without being discriminated by my community or waiting for assistance like water and shelter materials from NGOs."

However, perspectives in Jur River and Juba varied slightly regarding whether return alone was sufficient. In Juba, two male KIs noted that IDP status could end if people were to return to their area of origin, with one asserting that the person would cease to be an IDP "the moment he or she goes back to his or her habitual residence." Return to one's area of origin was mentioned in one II: "If peace is implemented and everyone is taken back to his community, then we will not be called IDPs." In Jur River, in contrast, a host community FGD participant asserted that one was no longer an IDP once "the person has gone back to their home, and they are able to cultivate and they have enough food in their

house, they are able to access medical health, schools … it will take a while to fully recover, even when you have returned to your household. It will take two years for the affected person to fully recover." Similarly, a female host community KI explained, "once a person has gone back to their home and they can cultivate without challenges, they are no longer IDPs."

Passage of time is sometimes seen as relevant but insufficient on its own

"Even if more than 20 years have passed, you will be called an IDP if you haven't bought land and you are not at peace with the local community."
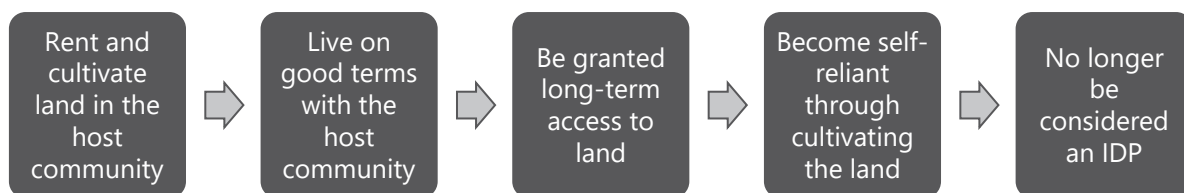
– Male host community member in Nimule

In places that have experienced many waves of widespread, protracted displacement, and that are experiencing reductions in funding, it can be tempting to provide a cutoff date whereby people are no longer counted as displaced. Perspectives on the importance of time in ending IDP status varied across the four locations, with the passage of time being raised far more often in Nimule than in other locations. However, the passage of time was generally given as a necessary-but-not-sufficient factor, and the lengths of time varied greatly. For example, in an FGD with female host community members, participants suggested that IDP status ends when IDPs have stayed for long time within the community and show respect and unity; in another FGD with female host community members, a participant suggested that IDP status ended when IDPs have good behaviour and have respect to the community they joined, putting the length of time at around one year. In the corresponding FGD with male host community members, a participant suggested that "If you're staying with the nearby people in peace for a long period of three or more years, maybe they will see your behaviour and you could buy a land, and nobody would call you an IDP". However, in an FGD in Nimule with IDPs from Greater Bahr el Ghazal, a participant stated that they had been in Nimule since 1992, but humanitarians and the host community still consider them to be IDPs. The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions acknowledges that "[a] solution may become durable only years, or even decades, after the physical movement to the place of origin or place of settlement has taken place, or the decision to locally integrate has been made."[50]

Given the varied paths towards ending IDP status, area-based approaches are needed

The shared viewpoints and the diverse emphases on self-reliance, access to land, leaving the IDP camp, return to the area of origin, and integration with the host community underscore the complex nature of transitioning out of IDP status, including that paths out of IDP status vary by location.

In Nimule and, to some extent, Jur River, a common path towards ending IDP status seemed to be:

Rent and cultivate land in the host community	→	Live on good terms with the host community	→	Be granted long-term access to land	→	Become self-reliant through cultivating the land	→	No longer be considered an IDP

In contrast, in Juba and Wau, IDPs seemed to face a dilemma even separate from whether it is safe enough to return to their village: IDPs reportedly have greater livelihood opportunities in their village of origin (where land for farming is more available and is cheaper), but they have greater access to services in town, especially closer to the camps. As noted in *When Displacement Ends* (2006), "safety is not a sufficient condition for a solution; rather, it is only then that rehabilitation and reconstruction can

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[50] IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, p. 7.

begin."[51] This dilemma has reportedly sometimes led families to separate, with some family members (typically men) returning to villages of origin to farm and reconstruct shelters, and others staying in town or in camps so that the children can access education. This approach can be seen as a rational means of spreading risk, especially in circumstances in which none of the options are considered ideal.

Participants also reported that delays in achieving self-reliance were a barrier to return: even if one were to have access to land and shelter upon return, one would need assistance in the period before one could reap one's harvest. Without this buffer, return is difficult. IDPs who had access to money (often through friends and family) were reportedly more able to exit the IDP camps and rent a room in town. However, the limited livelihood opportunities in town and the cost of living pressured people to stay in or return to the camps. Additionally, the limited services outside of the camp reportedly put pressure on IDPs to remain close to the camps. In an FGD in Wau with IDPs living in the host community, a participant spoke about how services in camps are superior to services outside the camps, and that therefore there is pressure to remain close enough to the camp that one can continue to avail of services therein. Any reductions in services in camps should therefore be balanced by expanding services elsewhere, to ensure that efforts to encourage durable solutions do not damage people's access to education, healthcare, clean water, or other services and resources.

Several participants noted that humanitarian's use of the category of IDP could reinforce their outsider status. In Nimule, a male IDP from Upper Nile reminded the data collection team that "the body does not carry the name" (from which the title of this report is derived), and another IDP from Greater Bahr el Ghazal asserted that "the name IDP is an issue… it creates segregation." Humanitarians' categorization can perpetuate divisions, be it during data collection or provision of assistance. Additionally, unequal distribution of assistance within communities seemed to aggravate tensions between groups: also in Nimule, a male IDP FGD participant stated that "whenever there's any assistance, we're not included. If there's discrimination, we don't feel like members of the host community." In a different FGD with male IDPs, a participant stated that "sometimes when NGOs come and distribute seeds, for example, we are excluded [by] the people here … It doesn't matter whether we're registered, our name will be cancelled." These comments underline the importance of conflict-sensitive programming.

Displacement-affected communities' perspectives on integration

> *"A durable solution is achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement."*
>
> – IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons

> *"We share our pain and suffering together."*
>
> – Female IDP in host community, Nimule

The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions' indicators of integration could be read to suggest that durable solutions are achieved when displaced persons no longer have protection and assistance needs *related to their displacement* and have access to their rights without discrimination. However, this needs to be adapted in contexts in which protection and assistance needs are widespread regardless of displacement status, and where non-displaced persons are still heavily affected by displacement from and into their communities. Therefore, REACH asked displacement-affected

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[51] Brookings Institution – University of Bern Project on Internal Displacement. When Displacement Ends (2006), p. 51.

communities for their perspectives on integration to try to develop key indicators for government, development, humanitarian, and other actors to work towards.

In furtherance of this, REACH asked participants in Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau what full integration would look like and to what extent integration had occurred in their communities. It is important to note that integration in an area of refuge should not foreclose the possibility of seeking durable solutions through return or relocation.[52] It is hoped that the participants' answers can help government, development, and humanitarian actors better understand what affected communities think could be done to facilitate integration.

Indicators of full integration, according to displacement-affected communities

Rather than framing the discussion directly around the IASC Framework's eight criteria, REACH sought to understand what affected populations themselves saw as the relevant markers of integration. Although the responses resembled some of the IASC criteria, several indicators stood out more than others (access to assistance and resources; access to land; and access to services). Other IASC criteria were rarely mentioned, if at all (access to documentation; family reunification; participation in public affairs; access to effective remedies and justice). Variation in which indicators were emphasized was greater between locations than between population groups.

Below are a set of figures showing the main indicators of full integration in the four locations, with the size of the bubbles roughly corresponding to how often they were mentioned:
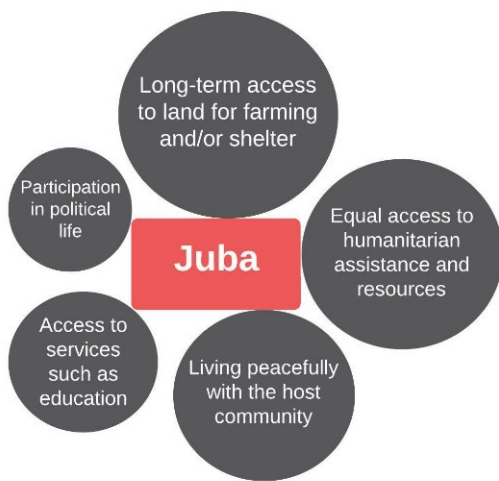
Figure 1: Indicators of full integration (Juba)   Figure 2: Indicators of full integration (Jur River)

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[52] The three durable solutions available to IDPs are sustainable local integration into areas where IDPs take refuge (local integration), sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (return), and sustainable integration into another part of the country (relocation). IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, p. 5.
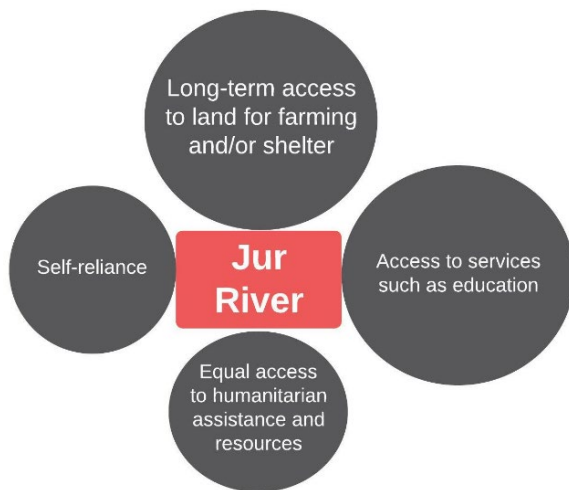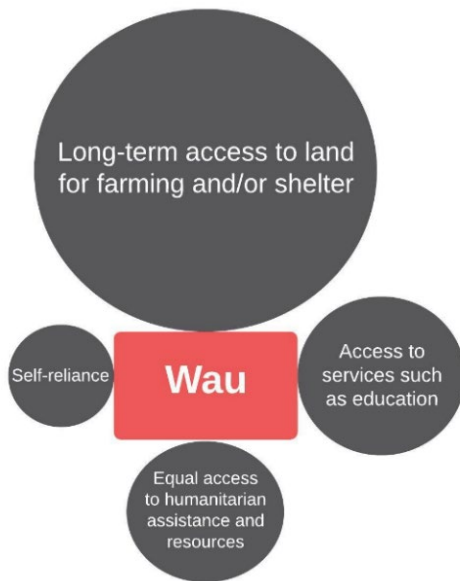
Figure 3: Indicators of full integration (Wau)

Figure 4: Indicators of full integration (Nimule)

(Long-term) access to land for farming and/or shelter *(all four locations)*

Access to land emerged as a significant indicator of integration, mentioned in multiple interviews and locations. It was often associated with the ability to cultivate crops, build shelters, and achieve self-reliance.

In **Jur River**, access to land was listed in all FGDs and KIIs, and in most IIs, as an indicator of full integration. One female HC KI stated, "full integration means having access to your own agricultural field, access to school, hospital, and water, and having the right to resources available in the community. Once one has a water point, food, and is staying in [one's own] house, that is integration". One II participant explained the process as follows: "IDPs have been living separately in those payam buildings since they came last year. Whoever wants to integrate is allowed to receive a piece of land to make their shelters and to cultivate crops for themselves".

Access to land / housing was by far the most mentioned indicator of full integration in FGDs in **Wau** – it was mentioned in most FGDs, including in all five FGDs with IDPs in camps, in most FGDs with IDPs in the host community, and host community members all regularly mentioning it.

In **Nimule**, long-term access to land was mentioned in half of the FGDs as an indicator of full integration and was allegedly used to limit integration: a female host community participant stated that "the chiefs want [the IDPs] to go back to their place. If [the chiefs] give land for cultivation, [the IDPs] will not go away from here." However, it was not mentioned in any of the KIIs or IIs.

In **Juba**, access to land was mentioned in almost half of the FGDs, one KII, and one II, with several participants specifying that *long-term* access to land was key to integration. In Juba, participants defined access to land as land for shelter and for farming, and defined long-term as secure tenure, which usually meant ownership rather than renting. It is worth noting that participants did not explicitly mention the importance of having legal title to the land. Rather, it was a feeling that they could not be forced off of the land. This may be explained by widespread knowledge that land-grabbing can and does occur in Juba even when one has legal title to the land.

Despite the apparent importance of (long-term)[53] access to land in achieving full integration in all four surveyed locations, it does not have a clear equivalent in the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions. The criterion of *Protecting of Housing, Land and Property Rights* focuses more on restitution than on acquiring rights: it focuses on whether displaced persons have "access to an effective and accessible mechanism for property restitution and compensation (including, where needed, free legal assistance) and are able to reside safely and securely during the interim."[54] This may be because the drafters of the IASC criteria recognised that long-term access to land would be difficult and that interim solutions are needed.

Given that many of the communities where data collection occurred were agrarian, the *adequate standard of living* and the *employment and livelihoods* criteria come closer to what participants meant by access to land for farming or shelter: the former includes "adequate access, on a sustainable basis, to ... basic shelter and housing";[55] the latter specifies that "Employment and livelihoods available to IDPs must allow them to fulfill at least their core socio-economic needs, in particular where these are not guaranteed by public welfare programs."[56]

Self-reliance (primarily in Jur River)

Under the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention), States Parties shall "[p]romote self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods amongst internally displaced persons, provided that such measures shall not be used as a basis for neglecting the protection of and assistance to internally displaced persons, without prejudice to other means of assistance."[57] However, even though self-reliance was regularly mentioned in the four studied locations as an indication that someone was no longer an IDP, only participants in Jur River regularly raised self-reliance as an indicator of full integration.

In **Jur River**, in almost half of the FGDs, self-reliance or access to livelihood was described as an indicator of full integration. As a female IDP put it, "When someone is integrated into the community, that person is able to do their work by themselves and not depend on others in most cases. That person may be able to have houses, have the same opportunities shared by the community members, and have livestock in the community." Similarly, self-reliance was raised as an indicator of full integration in all the IIs with women in Jur River. While none of the KIs in Jur River mentioned self-reliance per se, several mentioned having access to livelihood, e.g., "fully integrated people in our community ... are now having huts, farms, and goats they are busy with their livelihood" (male returnee KI); "when both IDPs and returnees are having access to education, employment, food and health services with no differences" (female returnee KI).

Across interviews in **Wau**, **Nimule**, and **Juba**, self-reliance was barely mentioned directly as an indicator of full integration. However, access to employment was mentioned. In Wau, the one KI who mentioned self-reliance (a male KI from the host community) phrased it less as an indicator of full integration than an enabling factor: "We have people with skills who have integrated because they were able to work for themselves, pay rent and take care of their families in Wau". Access to employment was also mentioned in several IIs in Wau. In Nimule, several KIs mentioned self-reliance, with a male host community KI saying, "It's hard to integrate here because people coming from Uganda are used to getting food for free, but here you need to have your livelihood. Someone who

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[53] Participants generally did not define what they meant by "long-term". When they did, they referred to ownership.

[54] IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, p. 36.

[55] *Id.*, p. 31.

[56] *Id.*, p. 34.

[57] African Union. African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2009), Art. III(1)(k).

has fully integrated has their garden here or their office here, and their daily bread is covered." In Juba, self-reliance was not directly mentioned at all as an indicator of full integration.

It is unclear why self-reliance, which came out strongly as a condition for IDP status to end, was not as emphasized in discussions about indicators of full integration in Juba, Nimule, and Wau. It is possible that it was simply not raised because participants had already mentioned it when discussing what it would mean for someone to no longer be an IDP. However, as recognised by the Kampala Convention and IOM's framework on *The Progressive Resolution of Displacement Solutions*, fostering self-reliance can be an effective means of enhancing communities' ability to pursue their needs and desires.

Access to assistance and resources *(primarily in Juba and Jur River)*

In Juba and Jur River, shared access to assistance and resources was regularly mentioned as an indicator of full integration. In most FGDs in **Juba**, participants suggested that shared humanitarian assistance and resources was an indicator of full integration. A male IDP in the host community described it as, "When one is fully integrated, he or she would have access to resources and services without restriction." Similarly, sharing resources was mentioned in most KIIs and IIs in Juba. In **Jur River**, access to resources was mentioned in most FGDs, KIIs, and IIs in which the question was understood. As a female host community FGD participant in Jur River stated, "for the IDPs to settle, they need to be offered a permanent residence and they would need freedom of movement including traveling to search for resources and the right to responsibilities within the community so that they don't feel different from the community where they came to."

In Nimule and Wau, access to assistance and resources was mentioned less as an indicator of integration. In **Nimule**, although most KIs mentioned access to assistance and resources as an indicator of integration, it was not mentioned at all in the FGDs or IIs. The reason for this is unclear, although it could be that the experience with cattle-herders arriving in Nimule in 2022 led to participants focusing more on intercommunal relations and less on assistance and access to resources. In **Wau**, access to assistance and/or resources was mentioned in several FGDs, although in a slightly different context than it was discussed in Juba and Jur River. In two of the FGDs in which access to resources was mentioned in Wau, the participants were speaking about a future in which they were to return to their communities; in the FGD in which assistance was mentioned, a host community participant suggested that full integration would look like IDPs sharing the food that they receive – another participant then noted that they know IDPs do not have any food.

Living peacefully together (primarily in Nimule and Juba)

As was the case with when IDP status ends, many participants suggested that communities living peacefully together was an indicator of full integration. However, there was a stark difference between locations: whereas many participants in Nimule and Juba mentioned living peacefully together as an indicator of full integration, participants in Jur River and Wau barely mentioned it at all.

In **Nimule**, the most-mentioned indicator of full integration was living peacefully together, which was raised in all four FGDs with host community members and in all FGDs with IDPs in a very ethnically diverse area, as well as in one with IDPs in a more homogenous area. This emphasis on living peacefully together may have been spurred by violence perpetrated in Nimule in 2022 by people from other parts of South Sudan. Further, several KIs suggested that living peacefully with the host community was an indicator of full integration, as did two participants in IIs. In **Juba**, living peacefully together was mentioned in half of the FGDs, half of the KIIs, and most IIs as an indicator of full integration. Examples of this included conducting daily tasks together, such as going to the market together, or having a women's association that included all communities.

In **Wau**, one female camp-based IDP FGD participant mentioned having good relations with all community members as an indicator of full integration, albeit in the context of returning to one's area

of origin. Additionally, two female host community FGD participants in Wau suggested indicators of full integration that could be manifestations of living peacefully together: jointly attending social activities; and cultivating together. In **Jur River**, living peacefully together was not directly mentioned as an indicator of full integration. However, one host community FGD participant mentioned engaging in daily tasks together and one KI mentioned "good relationships amongst the communities" as an indicator of integration, both of which could imply living peacefully together.

Access to services, such as education *(primarily in Jur River)*

Participants frequently linked full integration with equal access to essential services such as education, healthcare, water, and housing. This corresponds roughly to the IASC Framework on Durable Solutions' criterion of *adequate standard of living*, for which possible indicators of progress include "percentage of IDP children with access to at least primary education in adequate conditions and quality, compared to the resident population, the situation before displacement or the national average, as appropriate", as well as "IDPs do not face specific obstacles to access public services, assistance or remittances from abroad compared to local residents with comparable needs."

In **Jur River**, access to services was mentioned in all IDP FGDs and all returnee FGDs. A female IDP participant showed how displacement can affect one's expectations regarding services and influence decisionmaking about returning, stating,

> *"We have never been accessing education services in our settlement. Since we were displaced to here, our kids are accessing education services, which is a good part of displacement. However, once we get back to our settlement, we will need to access education services for our children."*

Similarly, all KIs in Jur River mentioned access to services like school, healthcare, and water, as did two participants in IIs.

In Juba, Nimule, and Wau, there was less emphasis on access to services: in **Juba**, it was mentioned in several FGDs, and participants in one KII and one II specifically mentioned access to services. In **Nimule**, shared access to services such as hospitals was mentioned in several FGDs, IIs, and KIIs. One FGD participant suggested that even though everyone may be able to access services like education or healthcare, the quality of the services seemed to vary based on one's ethnicity. In **Wau**, shared access to services was mentioned as an indicator of full integration in a few FGDs, KIIs, and IIs. However, it also seemed to be a cause of tension: a female host community member asserted that the host community and the camp-based IDPs' use of the same healthcare and schools was causing overcrowding. This highlights the importance of not only ensuring displaced persons' right to access services, but also the ability of those services to keep up with increased demand.

Participation in political life *(primarily in Juba)*

Participation in political life, such as attending community meetings and holding leadership positions, was cited as an indicator of full integration in Juba and, to a lesser extent, in Nimule. This indicator corresponds closely to the IASC Framework's *participation in public affairs* criterion. In **Juba**, participation in political life was raised in half of the FGDs, including all four FGD with IDPs living in the host community. Additionally, it was raised in several KIIs (all male) and IIs. In their answers, participants focused on ability to attend community meetings and ability to be selected in leadership positions.

In **Nimule**, participation in political life was mentioned in a few FGDs and KIIs, but not in the IIs. In **Jur River**, participation in political life was raised just once, by a female IDP KI who suggested the indicator of, "if there are leadership positions within the community, I could also be one of the leaders and have a voice in the community." Participation in political life was not raised as a possible indicator of full

integration in **Wau**. It is unclear why participation in political life appeared to be a more salient indicator in Juba than in Jur River, Nimule, and Wau. However, it may be that political participation is more salient in proximity to visible government structures.

The variation between locations suggests that an area-based approach is needed

Interviews in the four locations generated vastly different indicators of full integration, emphasizing certain aspects of the IASC Framework criteria more than others. Across the 98 interviews, no participants mentioned *access to effective remedies and justice*, nor *family reunification* – despite some participants being separated from their spouses and children – nor *access to personal and other documentation as an indicator of full integration*. This variety of indicators underlines the highly contextual nature of integration and the importance of working with affected communities to develop indicators at a local level if one wants to understand their perspectives on when integration is achieved.

It should also be noted that the fact that several IASC Framework criteria were not mentioned does not mean that they are irrelevant. While they might not be the focus of subjective, present-day determinations of whether full integration has been achieved, they may be relevant at a later stage or in other parts of South Sudan. For example, while access to personal documentation may not be relevant in the short term, it can be key to securing land tenure and access to justice.

Extent of integration in Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau

Juba

In Juba, in all FGDs and in most KIIs and IIs, participants indicated that **sharing of humanitarian assistance and natural resources** was taking place. However, this comes with caveats. First, this was not to say that they necessarily had access to abundant resources: as a female host community FGD participant explained, "We all live by sharing the available resources, our water point is the same, we all drink from the stream." Second, access to resources was reportedly not always complete access: a male IDP participant asserted that he "sometime witnesses restriction from access to local natural resources from the host community." Third, an II participant asserted that "IDPs here are looked at as [more] privileged than the host community. The IDPs receive assistance from the camps. Some still have ration cards. In those days they could receive food and non-food items and share it with the host community." While this may be cause for concern among service providers in camps, it could also be seen as a way in which continued assistance facilitates integration in host communities, as it enables newly-arrived IDPs to share with host communities.

Long-term access to land seemed to be an ongoing challenge: in FGDs, only one host community member mentioned that new arrivals are allocated land by the chief (without clarifying whether the access was long-term) and it was listed in most FGDs with IDPs in the host community. A female IDP noted, "there is some restriction in terms of constructing a house for yourself. The community refuses building of houses, they said we can stay on the ones they have built already for a period of time and go away from there." Similarly, in one of the FGDs in which an IDP stated that communities share resources like farming land, another said that they had only been allowed to settle temporarily by the host community. Reinforcing this, an IDP KI indicated that he did not feel integrated because he had not been granted land ownership. Later in the interview, he underlined this by stating, "the moment someone gains land ownership access and becomes a resident he or she will cease to be an IDP."

In half of the FGDs in Juba, at least one participant mentioned that there was **equal treatment** of IDPs, with a male host community FGD participant stating, ""If there are misunderstandings between people we treat the matter on individual basis and not on tribal lines" and a female IDP FGD participant stating that there were no differences in terms of services and opportunities. Most KIs who were asked

about the extent of integration said that communities had the same access to services. Similarly, in most FGDs, KIIs, and IIs, participants indicated that communities were **living together peacefully**.

In almost half of the FGDs, **participation in political life** was cited as an instance of integration having taken place, with a host community participant explaining that "[e]ven the chief committee is composed of almost all the tribes living here". In two FGDs, participants indicated that IDPs could attend meetings and that communities shared leadership roles. In one FGD with male IDPs, however, a participant explained that IDPs are allowed to attend some meetings but not all. Amongst the key informants, a male host community KI and a male IDP KI also indicated that IDPs were participating in political life through attending community meetings and even sharing community leadership roles.

Finally, a few participants in FGDs, KIIs, and IIs stated that **intermarriage** was occurring and that this was both an indication of existing integration and a driver of further integration.

Jur River

Integration in Jur River seemed to depend heavily on access to land, which in turn depended on whether one had access to money, either directly or indirectly. As an II participant explained, ""people [who] got assistance from their relatives, or they sold their cows to buy materials for making shelters, they have integrated now. I don't have a cow to sell, so it is difficult for me to make a shelter or get tools and seeds for cultivation."

In most interviews in which it was discussed, participants stated that at least some of the displaced persons in the area (IDPs / returnees) have **access to land and/or to shelter and resources**. A host community FGD participant described the process of acquiring land and shelter as: "Whenever someone wants to integrate, they go to our chief for directives, then they build their shelters beside us, the host community. It is an easy process if the IDPs have the materials to make shelters." A male returnee participant explained that "[p]eople whose relatives are good with resources to build shelters are quick to integrate, while those with no resources like me are slowly trying to live a new life again by doing what we can do." A key informant reiterated this, explaining, "People who return and have resources, such as goats, sold them and used that money to hire some people to clear for them land so that they could cultivate a farm. They also bought materials for constructing shelters for their families. People who I lived in the camp [with] have now come and they have built shelters. I heard them talking about preparing to work on their farm this season." However, one KI asserted that integration was possible even for those who initially lacked funding: "Those who came two years or three years ago have fully settled. They started from zero and now have huts, farms, and goats, they are busy with their livelihood."[58]

Most FGD, KII, and II participants indicated that displaced persons in Jur River are **treated the same** as the host community and that they have the same access to services as the host community, including schools and healthcare. This did not, however, mean they enjoyed adequate access to schooling and healthcare. As a male host community participant put it, "People who have integrated in Marial Bai are cultivating farms close to ours, we have the same difficulty of water, food, and farming tools, you cannot differentiate a host from the integrated IDP."

Nimule

In most FGDs, particularly with women, participants reported that IDPs and the host community were **living peacefully together**. One female host community participant explained, "we as a community here … are very peaceful. [It] is only the IDPs from the cattle keepers we don't cooperate [with]". A male host community participant concurred, stating, "[p]eople coming from Equatoria, it's easy to communicate and understand each other well. People coming from Jonglei or Upper Nile, it takes time

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[58] Note: due to a misunderstanding, among KIs in Jur River, only male KIs' responses were collected.

to have good relations with them." Amongst the KIs, just two (both host community members) reported that people were living peacefully together.

Two KIs noted that there was a difference between men and women's integration due to the amount of exposure to the community, with one KI explaining, "Women are integrating fast, they have their networks. Men are slower, they prefer to be on the other side because during wars men are usually the ones targeted. Most therefore send other family members to lay the foundation while they remain behind." The other KI provided a similar explanation: "In the dry season, men can go far and keep their cattle there, but the women and children remain here. Some of the children are in school and cannot move. We tell the women to register with their children. They do register. There's no conflict with the women."

Further, a youth KI indicated that progress towards peaceful coexistence was possible. He explained that he was "part of the peace community moving from village to village. It was very hard, but when people reached a point, they could understand. They heard what the other community thought and what was affecting them, and we were normalizing things, then people became okay. When people quarrelled, they were able to solve it." While II participants did not explicitly discuss whether the groups were living peacefully together, most reported that communities conducted daily tasks together and that there was cooperation between groups. One returnee participant specified that the cooperative coexistence varied by ethnicity or area of origin, saying that "there is not much difference between the returnees and the host communities here because we are all the same mother tongue; only [cattle-herders were] causing the issues of land grabbing from the people."

Opinions differed on whether there was **equal access to assistance and/or opportunities.** In several FGDs, participants indicated that there was equal access. A male host community KI stated, "IDPs or returnees must come to an office in my village – my office as a chief – and write their names down. After they have done that, if you need help then you can receive that thing. We share the name with the local authorities." However, this conflicted with accounts from IDPs in both surveyed locations in Nimule. IDP FGD participants asserted that assistance was not shared equally, with one stating, "In some areas, the village chief records who the community members are and who owns what, but that's not the case here. When assistance comes, we do not benefit" and the other saying, "when an organization comes to register people, maybe for food distribution, you find only certain people are being called." Similarly, whereas two host community KIs indicated that IDPs have the same access to services or resources as the host community, male and female IDP KIs suggested that IDPs were less likely to receive assistance, with the female IDP KI reporting that displaced people sometimes missed out on assistance because they were not registered and the male IDP KI stating, "When you find that humanitarians come for assistance, the people who benefit the most aren't the displaced people… When something is meant for displaced people, it should go to them." Most participants in individual interviews suggested that there was the same access to services and opportunities, with a male IDP stating, "When some assistance came in, some IDPs received [it] and some did not, and the same for host community." Additionally, one IDP KI asserted that integration had reached the point at which they were **attending community meetings together**.

Access to land was apparently limited. While participants in a few FGDs implied that IDPs had access to land, both participants in IDP and host community FGDs asserted that access to land was limited. The former stated, "If you look for somewhere to dig, nobody will give you land. Same if you want to build a tukul"; the latter explained that there was a reluctance to give IDPs land as that would increase the likelihood that they stay. An II participant noted that there were challenges in fairly allocating land in areas with many tribes.

Wau

In most FGDs in which the extent of integration was discussed, participants suggested that at least some previously displaced people had **access to land**. In two FGDs with IDPs in the camp, participants suggested that some IDPs were managing to establish themselves out of the camp. Like in Jur River, this ability to access land and integrate quickly was reportedly tied to access to funds. One IDP FGD participant stated, "[t]he host community has allowed IDPs to build on their land if they are able… Some people go to look for help from their relatives to make huts for their families in the host community." Another explained that "people go out [of the camp] on a weekly basis through the support of relatives who gave them land or shelters within the host community. Other people have livelihood activities in the town, so they are able to rent simple shelters and start living outside the camp." However, in an FGD with male IDPs in the host community, one participant noted that moving out of the IDP camp was difficult as "people need materials for constructing a tukul." He further explained that security restricted people's ability to source local materials, stating, "I went to the bush to get wood and grass then I built my tukul, but it was not safe. Most people don't want that risk of insecurity on the road and in the bush." Other FGD participants reportedly agreed that it was risky to collect shelter materials from the forest.

Renting an existing structure, rather than building one's own shelter, appeared to be financially unfeasible for many: in an FGD with IDPs in a camp, one participant stated that, "[t]he challenge of integration here is that renting shelters is expensive[.] The lowest price is SSP 8,000 per month. This is too much for [an] IDP like me. I would prefer to remain in the camp and use that cash for my family." This underlines how integration is a multifaceted challenge, whereby land and shelter aren't enough, as people also need security and livelihood activities if they are to avoid having to return to the camp. Host community members who struggle to earn enough to afford to cover rent and other needs are likely to face similar challenges, but would not have the option of avoiding having to pay rent by returning to the camp.

Relatedly, two KIs suggested that IDPs could access land, with one noting that the key determinant was whether one could afford to do so. According to the host community KI, people with marketable skills have been able to earn enough to afford to pay rent, while "[p]eople with no capacity to work, for example the old age and those with disabilities, remain in the camp with the help of their relatives, or they find their way back to their places of origin if it is safe."

II participants also discussed access to land: The IDP participant who lived outside Masna camp stated that some families have worked hard to make their huts in the host community, and said they were living together as integrated people. In contrast, a female IDP II participant who lived outside Naivasha camp reported that host community members asked why she left her home and said she should stay in the camp.

FGD participants also highlighted the importance of having **productive land**. In an FGD with host community members, one reported that IDPs and host community members did not cultivate in the same areas. Separately, in an FGD with female returnees, a participant asserted that they needed to be moved because their seeds were not growing in the location where they were.

Most KIs that discussed the extent to which integration had occurred and indicated that IDPs had either **equal or greater access to services**, particularly education and water. Similarly, IDPs' equal-or-greater access to services was raised in several FGDs. In an FGD with female host community members, participants differed: one participant noting that the host community uses the same school and hospital as IDPs in camps, which has caused overcrowding; two participants mentioned that IDPs used to receive food while the host community did not, but that the IDPs were no longer receiving food; and others asserted that whereas the host community lacked boreholes and received neither tarpaulins nor cooking materials, IDPs had three boreholes and received both tarpaulins and

saucepans. While the host community could reportedly use the boreholes in the camp, it was far for them to walk. Sharing limited resources may have contributed to tensions between groups. A female II participant reported that, in the hospital, people reportedly told her that she should go to the hospital in her original area. This likely reflects competition for very limited resources – improved medical services was mentioned as a hope for the future in several host community FGDs and KIIs. That said, one IDP in the host community indicated that IDPs and host community members **share food** with each other in times of need, and a male IDP in the host community explained that they have dances and play together and, if there is enough land, they will cultivate together.

Displacement-affected communities' hopes for the future

The African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (the Kampala Convention), which South Sudan has signed, stipulates that, among other things,

1. States Parties shall seek lasting solutions to the problem of displacement by promoting and creating satisfactory conditions for voluntary return, local integration or relocation on a sustainable basis and in circumstances of safety and dignity.

2. States Parties shall enable internally displaced persons to make a free and informed choice on whether to return, integrate locally or relocate by consulting them on these and other options and ensuring their participation in finding sustainable solutions.[59]

Through understanding affected communities' hopes for the future, humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding actors can better match their programming to communities' stated needs.

Across the four locations and the three population groups, there were several commonalities in hopes for the future. However, the extent to which these hopes were emphasized varied, indicating the need to take an area-based approach and to consult all affected communities.

Safety and security

"Among the first things that would need to be done to move the community closer to better future comes safety and security. This will allow access to natural resources like land for cultivation and others like building poles, thatching grass, and charcoal for cooking."

– Male IDP in host community, Juba

Safety and security was a top concern for the future in Wau, Juba, and Nimule, but not in Jur River. Participants highlighted how insecurity can act as a major disruptor, reducing people's access to healthcare, schooling, and livelihood activities.

In **Wau**, safety and security was listed as a hope for the future in all FGDs and IIs, and in most KIIs. Participants consistently expressed the need for improved security to enable them to go about their daily activities, including farming and gathering wood for charcoal, without fear. As a female camp-based IDP FGD participant put it, "In the future, we want to have security and safety where everyone will be able to move to their cultivation field with no fear of being killed or looted or raped on the way there." Similarly, a male host community FGD participant stated, "people are now in the town with no job, and they say the village is not safe. Let the government focus on that security issue so we can fight

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59 African Union. African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (2012), Article XI.

hunger through farming." This priority reflects the impact of (in)security on livelihoods and overall well-being.

In **Juba**, safety and security was mentioned in most FGDs, KIIs, and IIs, with many participants stating that it is the first priority, from which other hopes can follow. Several male host community participants also noted that cattle-keepers were a source of insecurity, as their animals grazed on people's farms.

In **Nimule**, safety and security was mentioned as a hope for the future in half of the FGDs and in most KIIs, and several IIs. The impact of insecurity seemed to be particularly acute for the host community, who reported that the threat of cattle keepers discouraged them from planting. As one male host community FGD participant put it, "you cannot gain something if someone is standing with guns. Without peace, we're doing nothing."

In **Jur River**, participants only raised safety and security as a hope for the future to say that it was not an issue. For example, an IDP KI stated, "we go deep in the bush to collect firewood, there is no problem related to insecurity". This lack of emphasis likely also reflects that many of the IDPs in Jur River fled flooding, not violence.

Improved access to food

"Let the NGOs help us with [an] ox plough to improve our farms. We are leaving the old way of digging the land with our hands because it produces very little crops; people have learned to use ox plough with their cows, which is good."

– Elderly host community member, Jur River

Improved access to food, including to farming materials, was mentioned in FGDs, KIIs, and IIs across the four locations as a hope for the future. Access to food and farming materials can be vicious cycle: the less food one has, the less energy one has to farm; the worse one's farming equipment, the more energy it takes to farm; insufficient energy and insufficient farming equipment can lead to harvests that are insufficient to sustain one through the lean season, leading to less energy and less money to upgrade one's farming equipment for the following planting season. Additionally, participants often cited the impact of violence or unpredictable weather on ability to farm and of the need for initial food support while IDPs or returnees were waiting for their initial harvest.

In **Jur River**, 'food assistance' and 'seeds or farming equipment' were mentioned as hopes for the future in most FGDs, KIIs, and IIs. Participants framed these as ways to facilitate integrations (an IDP II explained that she wanted "tools and seeds for cultivation so that when we are given land, we can be able to cultivate and change from being an IDP to host community") and for hedging against poor harvests (a visually impaired returnee II said his "hope is that vulnerable people should be supported with food items in case the harvest season fails.").

In **Juba**, 'food assistance' and 'access to seeds or farm equipment' were each mentioned in most FGDs, with one female camp-based IDP FGD participant asserting that there was "a high rate of robbery cases within the camp among the children and adults because of not enough food." Food assistance was also cited as a hope for the future in most KIIs and IIs, with seeds or farm equipment mentioned by a few KIs. A female host community II participant stated that cattle had destroyed crops; a female participant in an FGD with IDPs in the host community linked the lack of food access to lack of rain and not having enough farm equipment.

In **Nimule**, food assistance was the most-mentioned hope for the future in FGDs, and was also mentioned in most KIIs and IIs. IDP FGD participants mentioned that even chiefs were sometimes having to skip meals. Host community participants cited cattle keepers as a reason for not cultivating their fields. Similarly, seeds and farm equipment were mentioned in most FGDs and KIIs, and in several

IIs. A host community KI explained, "The best business here is farming if you have a tractor. Then you can farm more land in shorter time. We now hire from Uganda, and it's expensive. Our business community should invest in agriculture because people would rent it." Again, the vicious cycle arises: without access to good farming equipment, people struggle to grow enough to eat, let alone to rent a tractor. Without a tractor, they struggle to grow enough to eat.

In **Wau**, the focus on food assistance, seeds, and farming equipment was less pronounced among men than among women. Food assistance was raised in half of the FGDs (including in most of the FGDs with women), and in most of the KIIs and IIs. In what was likely a reflection of lower access to land for cultivation, seeds or farm equipment was listed as a hope for the future in almost half of the FGDs, not at all in KIIs, and in one II. While this was still a hope for the future, it was not as prominent as in the other locations.

Children's education

"I want a school to be opened in my settlement so that once we get back our child will be able to go to schools."

– Female camp-based IDP, Wau

Children's education was consistently mentioned as a top priority across Juba, Jur River, and Nimule. While it was not one of the most-cited hopes in Wau, it was still mentioned by all three population groups in FGDs and KIIs, and several IDPs expressed hope that schools would be established in their areas of origin.

In **Juba**, children's education was mentioned in most FGDs, all KIIs, and all IIs, with an additional FGD listing vocational education as a hope for the future. Among the host community, some participants raised the issue of the distance that children had to travel to go to schools. In **Jur River**, children's education seemed to be a less prominent concern for IDPs – whereas children's education was raised as a hope for the future in all interviews with host community members, it was raised in half of the FGDs with IDPs and none of the IDP KIIs. In **Nimule**, children's education was again raised in most disucssions and interviews. Among FGD participants, the existing challenge regarding education appeared to be inability to afford school fees. In **Wau**, education was not one of the most-cited concerns, with safety and security, shelter, access to food, access to land, and health being mentioned as hopes by more FGD, KII, and II participants. This may have been due to existing access to education. However, lack of access to education in areas of origin was raised as an issue, with a male IDP FGD participant imploring the government to "take teachers to the villages of the IDPs so that [IDPs] can go back knowing that [their] children will get education." This was reinforced by interviews in Jur River, in which several returnees stated that they had left their children in Wau to finish their education.

Health facilities and medication

"We need more [health] facilities to be constructed, even if it's a mobile health facility. It will help people living in far settlements to access healthcare."

– Female returnee, Jur River

In **Juba**, access to health facilities and medication was included as a hope for the future in more FGDs than in any other location. Among the host community and IDPs in the host community, multiple participants called for health facilities to be built within their communities, whereas in Camp 3 the focus was more on access to medication.

Health facilities and medication were less of a concern in **Jur River**, where they were raised in half of the FGDs, half of the KIIs, and most IIs. While there was no major difference between how often the different population groups raised health facilities and medication, they were raised far more often in

interviews with women than with men. In a female host community FGD, a participant explained that "in this community people only access one health care centre which is far from other settlement, and it has less drugs that is not enough for the entire community."

In **Nimule**, health facilities and medication was included as a hope for the future in most FGDs, KIIs, and IIs. Access to health services was limited: a host community interviewee in the location slightly farther from town noted that it was hard for pregnant mothers to reach the health centre; an IDP interviewee closer to the town centre explained, "In the county hospital where I'm doing my practice, the services are limited to the population here... Even guys from Uganda are coming to Nimule for service. There are limited personnel and drugs. They'll tell you to go buy medication and you cannot afford it so you just go home."

In **Wau**, health facilities and medication was listed as a hope for the future in most FGDs and KIIs (including by host community, IDPs in camps, and returnees) and in one II. Again, the specifics of the hopes varied, with some participants hoping for more nearby health facilities and others focusing on free provision of medication.

Shelter materials

"Our IDPs, their shelter got destroyed by the flooding. [They] want their shelter rebuilt so that they can get back to their home and start a new life again."

– Female host community member, Jur River

Given the connection than many participants made between integration and long-term access to land, it is perhaps not surprising that the availability of shelter materials was a common hope for the future in the four locations. Access to shelter materials was raised as a hope for the future in most FGDs in Jur River, Juba, and Wau, and in half of the FGDs in Nimule. Additionally, it was raised in most KIIs and in all IIs in Jur River, in most KIIs and IIs in Juba, and in several KIIs in Nimule,

In **Jur River**, multiple participants reported that housing had been destroyed, either by flooding or fires, and they did not have money to purchase materials. In an FGD with male IDPs, one participant stated that IDPs "who got support from relatives in Wau can buy shelter materials and build huts for themselves." Additionally, a male returnee KI explained that people were not able to gather grass for thatching because it was the rainy season. In the absence of shelter materials, they were not able to build their own homes amongst the host community and had to live with friends and family.

In **Juba**, the host community mentioned shelter materials the most, often stating that previously provided tent material was worn out.

The slightly reduced emphasis on shelter materials in **Nimule** may have been related to people already having built their shelters – like in Juba, the emphasis was more on replacing or upgrading worn-out materials than on providing materials for constructing new shelters. This suggests that attempts to provide shelter materials to IDPs to facilitate integration could cause tensions if host community members do not also benefit.

In **Wau,** shelter materials were often described as a way to facilitate integration. For example, an IDP living in the host community stated in an FGD that "most people have made temporary shelters for themselves" and that he hoped that "NGOs [would] come ... with some materials to make good shelters as [they] integrate into the host community." Relatedly, most KIs listed secure housing as a hope for the future.

Access to clean water

"Now that everyone is coming back, the existing water facilities would not be enough for everyone in the community."

– Male returnee, Jur River

Across the four locations, participants expressed the need for improved water sources, such as boreholes, to ensure clean and safe drinking water for all. Participants connected the issue of limited sources of clean water to pressures created by growing populations, as well as to increased demands for medical assistance and to tensions between communities.

In **Wau**, access to clean water was raised as a hope for the future in most FGDs and KIIs. Further, access to water seemed to vary by population group. A host community KI asserted that 5,000 people were sharing one well, and a female FGD participant from the host community explained that they had to purchase water, as there were reportedly no boreholes outside the IDP camp. Another host community FGD participant stated that he wanted to leave South Sudan in part due to the lack of access to clean water. Similarly, an out-of-camp IDP KI reported that she wanted to return to the camp because she was "suffering outside due to lack of plot and water." An out-of-camp IDP stated in an FGD, "We want to see construction of a well to provide water and help integrate people from the camp into this community. Water is not enough for the population." KIs who were out-of-camp IDPs echoed this sentiment. In contrast, of the five FGDs conducted with IDPs in camps, access to water was raised in just one FGD.

In **Jur River**, participants in most FGDs listed access to clean water as a hope for the future, with the main issues being that the water sources became contaminated due to flooding and that there were not enough clean water sources for the population. Access to clean water was also raised in several KIIs and IIs. It was raised far more often in interviews with women than with men, possibly due to gender norms around collecting water. However, this trend was not repeated in other surveyed locations, perhaps because of nearby alternative sources of water elsewhere.

In **Juba**, access to clean water was listed as a hope for the future in most FGDs with host community members and with IDPs in the host community, but not at all in FGDs with camp-based IDPs. It was also raised in most KIIs, and IIs. Multiple host community participants stated that host community members were drinking untreated water from the stream due to a lack of boreholes. In an FGD with female IDPs living in the host community, a participant reported that people were "getting sick every day with skin diseases and typhoid because of the unclean water."

In **Nimule**, access to clean water was mentioned in half of the FGDs, most KIIs, and several IIs as a hope for the future. As an IDP explained in an FGD, "water sources are also an issue because there aren't many boreholes. It's especially an issue in the dry season because people are fighting at the boreholes." Another IDP reported in an FGD that the boreholes were old and needed to be replaced. A third IDP, a youth attending medical school, stated that he saw many people in the hospital with typhoid due to the use of unclean water sources. He said that his hopes for the future included NGOs providing both a good water source and awareness-raising sessions about how to prevent typhoid.

Long-term access to land

"Local government must give the IDPs a piece of land to build shelters and live their lives because our places of origin are not safe yet and we don't know when it will become safe for us to return."

– Male camp-based IDP, Wau

Understandably, the desire for land for cultivation was especially prevalent among IDPs and returnees. Access to land was often linked to agriculture and self-reliance, and many participants hoped for support in this regard.

In **Wau**, long-term access to land was listed as a hope for the future in most FGDs, including in all FGDs with IDPs in camps – the only other hope mentioned in all FGDs with IDPs in camps was safety and security. In many cases, the desire for land and safety and security in their areas of origin was linked: participants asserted that the continued insecurity in their areas of origin made return unfeasible, so they needed to be granted land in or around Wau. An IDP II made this same point. Additionally, a host community FGD participant hoped for land so she wouldn't have to rent and a returnee hoped for more land for cultivation. Two KIs in the host community (one returnee, one IDP) concurred, explaining that the land they currently had in town was not enough to cultivate on.

In **Juba**, participants in most FGDs with camp-based IDPs raised long-term access to land as a hope for the future. The precise visions varied, with a female IDP specifically stating that they need the RRC and UNHCR to help them return to their states, a male IDP stating that "[t]he first priority is have peace and security then the government of Central Equatorial can allocate us land for settlement. Then other things like education and health can follow", and a third explaining that they need support to regain the land and property that they lost during the conflict.

In **Jur River**, it appeared that the host community and returnees already had land, as access to land was only raised as a hope for the future by IDPs. Specifically, it was raised in most FGDs with IDPs, as well as by a male IDP KI and a female IDP II. Unlike in Juba, where the implication was that the hope was for *long-term* access to land, IDPs in Jur River seemed interested in land as a temporary solution, as typified by a male IDP FGD participant: "What the community can do is to ask for land from the host community, so that we can cultivate our crops as we wait for the right time to go back to our villages." Building self-reliance during displacement is still highly valuable, as it both helps people to live in dignity and better equips them for a time when they may choose to move. For example, if one were able to make savings in one location, one would be able to more quickly (re-establish) oneself in another location if one were to choose to do so. This approach is in line with international norms on durable solutions, in which making steps towards one solution does not foreclose others.

In **Nimule**, access to land appeared to be less of an issue, as it was only raised as a hope for the future in several FGDs with male IDPs and in two IIs – one with a female returnee, one with a male IDP. However, the male IDP II participant, who was from Eastern Equatoria, reported that "some of the people here don't have access to land … In the future, if possible, land would be owned by everyone, not divided where some is open to only host community."

Livelihood opportunities and vocational training

"In my village, I would be having something to do as livelihood, but look at me, I do nothing every day, only sleeping and sitting in front of the shelter with nothing to do for livelihood."

– Male IDP in host community, Jur River

Displacement can be hugely disruptive to livelihoods, especially when it forces people to relocate to a context they are not familiar with, such as a farmer fleeing to a city. Additionally, given the emphasis that participants put on self-reliance as a factor in ending one's IDP status, it makes sense that livelihood opportunities and vocational training were among the main hopes for the future across the four locations.

In **Wau**, a male host community member described how insufficient livelihoods can limit IDPs' ability to integrate: "People have to pay for everything on daily basis, yet they don't have any kind of work to do. I heard some people in our area talking about returning to the IDP camp because it is cheap with

free water and free shelters." Similarly, a female camp-based IDP KI noted that the advantage of living in the camp over living in the host community was that one did not have to pay rent and could save money. Another KI, a male host community member, asserted that there was a need to "transform[] people's attitude from depending on humanitarian assistance to working hard for themselves to create positive changes." However, he acknowledged how challenging it was to care for one's family, and that people resorted to casual labour or collecting firewood. Separately, a female camp-based IDP KI hoped that people could more safely access the forest to collect firewood to sell in the market; reportedly, doing so now comes with the risk of sexual violence.

In **Juba**, access to livelihood was listed as a hope for the future in several FGDs, KIIs, and IIs, primarily in discussions with women. Additionally, vocational training was raised in several FGDs, KIIs, IIs, with participants mostly indicating the desire to be more self-reliant.

In **Nimule**, livelihood opportunities was mentioned as a hope for the future in several FGDs, as were vocational training and seed funding for livelihood activities. There did not appear to be a divide between communities in their desires for such support.

In **Jur River**, initial funding for livelihood activities was mentioned as a hope for the future in a few FGDs with host community members and returnees, with vocational training raised in almost half of the FGDs and several KIIs and IIs. Host community members and returnees raised livelihood activities more often than did IDPs.

Additional hopes for the future

While the above were the primary hopes asserted across the four locations, other hopes emerged, including psychosocial support, specialised assistance for persons with disabilities, access to electricity, and the construction of churches.

In some cases, the hopes are highly localized and related to causes of past displacement. In Jur River, for example, there appeared to be particular interest in climate adaptation. The hope for training on flood mitigation was raised in two FGDs and one KII, with a female IDP FGD participant stating, "We need to be trained on how to control flooding, I am tired of being displaced all the time" and a female IDP KI suggesting that organisations should "support the communities where their home gets flooded [through constructing] dykes and water channels to allow water to pass through and not to destroy shelters and farms next year." Additionally, participants expressed interest in receiving training on cultivating during the dry season.

Possible next steps

In a country in which the host population is itself struggling to meet these basic needs, it is not enough to aim for displaced persons to have the same access to basic needs as the host community. Rather, considerable work and funding is needed to ensure that host communities can absorb displaced persons, that displaced persons are able to choose between options, and that all South Sudanese are resilient to future shocks.

The Government of South Sudan Framework for Returns, Reintegration and Relocation of Displaced Persons does not focus on whether displaced persons' access is no worse than non-displaced persons. Rather, it states that a "solution will only be sustainable if the following conditions are met:

1. Long term safety, security and freedom of movement;

2. Adequate standard of living including access to food, water, housing, health care and basic education;

3. Access to employment and livelihoods;

4. Access to justice through the establishment of rule of law and an effective Commission for Truth, Reconciliation and Healing (CTRH) to support peaceful co-existence."

The GoSS' recognition of its resposibilities and its efforts to align with international guidelines is to be encouraged. Conditions 1-3 closely mirror the surveyed displacement-affected communities' hopes for the future (safety and security, access to food, clean water, shelter, health, children's education, and livelihood). This suggests that, if ratified and implemented properly, the GoSS Framework could serve as an important step towards finding durable solutions for the many displaced South Sudanese. However, a full investigation of the advantages and drawbacks of that particular framework are beyond the scope of this assessment.

Key decision-making criteria regarding future movement, and what information is needed to make an informed decision

The IASC Framework on Durable Solutions clearly states that "[h]umanitarian and development actors … should adopt a rights-based approach to supporting durable solutions" and that this "right-based approach should ensure that IDPs are in a position to make a voluntary and informed choice on what durable solution they would like to pursue".[60] If humanitarian and development actors are to ensure that people are making voluntary, informed decisions, and that our programming is accountable, it is important to understand what IDPs want to know and how they want to learn about it, as well as their key decision-making criteria on whether to move.

To that effect, REACH asked IDPs and returnees in the four locations what they considered when deciding whether to stay or relocate, what information they wanted, who they wanted to hear it from, and through which means they wanted to receive it.

Considerations on whether to stay or relocate

Understanding displaced persons' considerations on whether to stay or relocate can help government and aid actors to align their programming with what matters to affected people. When IDPs and returnees were asked what their main considerations were when determining whether to stay, return to their area of origin, or relocate to a safe third location, the main answers were **peace and security**, **access to services**, and **economic and family considerations**. The responses underline that peace is necessary but not sufficient for IDPs to return, and that expanding access to opportunities and services is necessary if displaced persons are to have a choice that is not simply between two undesirable options.

Peace and security

Across all four regions, peace, and security in the area of origin consistently emerged as a crucial factor influencing the decision of IDPs. In **Juba**, in all eight FGDs with IDPs, participants reported that peace factored into their decision of whether to stay. Additionally, in half of the IIs, participants cited peace and security as a factor in whether they would stay or move. In **Nimule**, in several FGDs and IIs, participants mentioned peace in their area of origin as a consideration. Further, one participant expanded on the concept of peace, stating,

> *"Peace is not just the absence of war. It's when there's food on the table, when kids are going to school, when police can't beat you for no reason, when violence isn't committed…*

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[60] IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons, p. 15.

> *Right now, there's no peace, no school, no health facilities. People are still there [in the area of origin] because there are NGOs there. But there are places that they can't reach."*

In **Jur River**, half of the II participants indicated that they had no intention of leaving due to a lack of peace in their area of origin. The ability to rebuild one's life and concerns about flooding were linked to security considerations. In **Wau**, safety and security in one's area of origin was cited in most FGDs in which considerations were discussed, with an even distribution between men and women.

Access to services

Access to services, particularly education and healthcare, played a significant role in the decision-making process. In **Wau**, in all IIs and FGDs with IDPs in camps, as well as in one of the FGDs with returnees/IDPs in the host community, participants stated that access to services factored into their considerations of whether and where to move. Among these participants, access to education and health services were most mentioned, with multiple participants stating that education in Wau was preferable to education in villages. This point was reinforced by data collected in Jur River, where multiple research participants indicated that they had left their children in Wau to continue their education. There was minimal difference between men and women's concern with education. However, when participants in **Jur River** were asked about considerations for whether to move or remain, just one FGD participant and no II participants indicted that they considered access to services or assistance. This could be explained through revealed preferences: if services matter to IDPs, they are more likely to go to or remain in Wau than to go to Jur River.

In **Juba**, two II participants stated that access to services would be among their considerations, with a host community member stating that he preferred to stay where he was because it was near to the urban area and enabled him to access services like education and health. Access to services was also mentioned as a consideration in two FGDs among camp-based IDPs, with one participant stating that he "will relocate near the [former] PoC because [he] want[s] to access services like schools and hospitals." In **Nimule**, access to services was raised in a few FGDs and IIs.

Economic and family considerations

Economic factors, such as access to work and land, were mentioned in several regions. In **Juba**, in a few FGDs, participants indicated that quality of life and access to land and services were factors in deciding whether to stay or go. Similarly, two II participants mentioned 'ability to cultivate' as a factor in their decision-making, with one IDP in the host community stating that he could decide to stay if he felt well established in the host community and if he owned the land he was living on. In most FGDs in **Nimule**, participants' decisions depended at least in part on whether they had access to land; In three FGDs, participants referred to the cost of living; in two FGDs, female participants mentioned access to family support as a consideration. In one case, the participant explained that nobody was taking care of her or her grandmother, but she would receive support if she were to return to her area of origin. In another FGD, a student explained that his decision on whether to stay depended on where there were opportunities. Access to land and the cost of living were factors that influenced decisions. Family-related considerations, such as access to family support, were also mentioned by female participants in Nimule.

In half of the FGDs in **Wau**, including in most FGDs with IDPs in camps, access to land was listed as a consideration on whether or where to move. One participant stated, "I want to leave the camp and integrate in the host community, but government should give us land so that people can build shelters and leave the camp." In **Jur River**, access to work or to land was raised in most FGDs and in several IIs. A male returnee described the reason he returned as,

> *"In the IDP camp, everything was from NGOs… If they delayed, people suffered from shortages of everything and there was no way to help myself. Here, there are lots of*

possibilities such as farming and relatives. Here it is very good to live; I cannot compare it with [the IDP camp]."

Resilience to flooding and other factors

Although the three considerations listed above were the main things reported, other answers highlighted the importance of accounting for the populations' specific characteristics and needs. For example, in Jur River, flooding, which had caused many of the IDPs to flee to Marial Bai, featured heavily in reported considerations. In half of the FGDs in which it was discussed, IDP participants mentioned that the prospect of flooding was a major consideration in whether to return to their area of origin. Separately, in one of the FGDs with female IDPs, three participants agreed that they would only return to their settlement once they had been trained on how to mitigate flooding. These diverse needs underline the necessity of understanding affected communities' perspectives and shaping programming around it, to maximize their ability to choose between viable options.

Informational needs when deciding whether to relocate or stay

Although the UNHCR Emergency Manual focuses on refugees rather than IDPs, its guidance on refugees' informational needs when deciding whether to return is instructive and can also be applied to IDPs.[61] Among other things, it states that refugees "should be kept fully informed of the situation in the country of origin in order to guarantee the voluntary nature of the return. Though refugees are already well informed, it may be necessary to provide additional information to the situation in their home country."[62] The Handbook advises that "[i]nformation should be available about their planned reception and prospects for reintegration into their community. They will want to know if they have the right to repossess their houses and land, what the type and amount of material support they will initially receive, what they can take with them, etc."[63] However, while guidelines are useful for suggesting what people who have been displaced may want to know, accountability requires that they are asked directly.

When asked what information they needed when deciding whether to relocate or to stay, participants' answers were similar to their reported considerations. Across the four locations, IDPs and returnees most often reported wanting information on **safety and security** in the place to which they were going and on what **services** were provided in the place to which they were going.

However, there was considerable variation between locations. Whereas safety and security was mentioned in all FGDs in Juba and most FGDs in Nimule, it was mentioned in less than half of the FGDs in Wau and Jur River. In contrast, services were mentioned in most FGDs in Wau and Jur River but just one FGD in Juba and not at all in Nimule.

Other subjects of interest included access to housing (exclusively mentioned in Wau), livelihood opportunities (raised more by men than by women), whether others were returning and staying (mentioned more by women than by men); safety and security en route (mentioned in Juba and Nimule); likelihood of flooding (mentioned by IDPs in Jur River, likely reflecting the cause of their displacement); and when IDPs would be assisted with return (mentioned in Jur River).

The informational needs reported by IDPs and returnees in the selected areas aligned well with the UNHCR guidance. However, because the informational needs varied by location and these findings are indicative but not representative, actors seeking to address information needs would do well to

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[61] As IDPs are also within IOM's mandate, IOM's guidance on what information to provide to IDPs who are considering moving would also be relevant. However, it is not discussed here because it was not addressed in IOM's general guidance and the authors of this report could not find guidance that addressed it directly.

[62] UNHCR. Handbook for Emergencies (Third Edition), p. 454 (2007).

[63] *Id.*.

consult groups in particular areas, rather than taking a nationwide approach. Additionally, situations in areas to which people are considering going are dynamic. Therefore, actors would do well to stress that the information is subject to change and to be open where there is uncertainty.

Preferred sources of information on whether to relocate or stay

Being accountable to affected populations' informational needs requires not only paying attention to the content of the message, but also to the preferred format and messenger.

When participants in Juba, Jur River, Nimule, and Wau were asked how they would want to receive this information, there was again considerable variation in preferences between locations. **Friends and family** was listed as a preferred source of information in over half of the FGDs, including in all FGDs in Juba and Nimule but only in one FGD in Jur River and not at all in Wau. **Humanitarian organisations**, **radio**, **community leaders**, and the **government** was mentioned in several FGDs as a preferred source of information. Again, however, there was variation between locations – the government was listed as a preferred source of information, including in half of and the majority of FGDs in Juba and Wau respectively, but not at all in Jur River or Nimule. Other less-mentioned preferred sources of information included **social media** (particularly in Juba), **checking for oneself**, **community meetings**, and **phone calls**.

FGD participants in Jur River provided contrasting examples of the importance of receiving reliable information. One participant living in the host community reported that he had returned based on false information from humanitarian actors in Uganda and regretted having left the camp:

> *"I asked about livelihood before I came back but they said everything was good if you come you have to cultivate your land and to sell wood or charcoal. It sounded good, but now I found that people are hungry, last year the rain was not good for cultivation. I don't have a shelter and no tools to make charcoal or cultivate some crops, this makes me feel that it would have been better to remain in the camp."*

In another FGD, a participant demonstrated the value of multiple sources of information:

> *"I communicated to people in the village they said things were okay, life was normal, no worry about security. The returnees also used to visit the camp in Wau [and] they kept telling us how safe the village had become. I came and found that it was true, safety and security was not a problem at all."*

Participants' responses largely mirror the UNHCR Handbook for Emergencies' suggestion that many of the possible returnees' questions *"can best be answered by*

  i.   arranging for refugee representatives (including women) to make a visit to the home area to see the situation at first hand, if this is possible (go and see visits);

 ii.   assisting with the exchange of letters;

iii.   enabling communication by radio with relatives in the country of origin;

 iv.   displays of information about home conditions; and

  v.   formal or informal discussions with recent visitors to the area of return, or through visits to the refugee camps of returnees or country of origin local authorities."[64]

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[64] *Id.*, p. 545.

Through facilitating communication with friends and family, communicating directly with participants, paying attention to what people want to know, and trying to ensure that the communication is accurate (including by admitting uncertainty, where relevant), government and aid actors can help to ensure that displaced persons' decisions are voluntary and informed, and possibly reduce the risks of multiple displacement.

CONCLUSION

Safety and security is essential to finding solutions for the millions of already-displaced South Sudanese citizens and to avoid future displacement. Insecurity forces people to flee, curtails their ability to return, and reduces people's access to livelihoods and resources. Additionally, it can constrain host communities' activities, putting further strain on humanitarian assistance and reducing host communities' ability to support others.

Safety and security, while necessary, is not enough on its own. This assessment indicates that access to resources greatly increases displaced persons' ability to integrate, be it through renting existing structures in towns (e.g., Wau) or through building one's own structure in rural locations (e.g., Jur River). However, in many cases, displaced persons were apparently stuck in a vicious cycle, wherein, for example, they arrived with limited access to land, insufficient farming equipment, and insufficient food. This (and, in some cases, insecurity) limited their ability to grow enough food to support themselves, let alone to sell it and improve their situation. When the next planting season arrived, they were no more prepared than they were in the prior season, and no closer to having the resources needed to move towards a durable solution. When displaced persons are only supported enough to survive, but not enough to progress, protracted displacement and continued reliance on assistance are the logical conclusion. Therefore, **the passage of time since one's displacement does not appear to be a useful proxy for whether someone is an IDP, nor whether they are in need of assistance.**

Additionally, at present, uneven access to services like healthcare, education, and clean water appears to be contributing to protracted displacement and family separation. The unevenness appears to largely be linked to location rather than population group – IDPs in camps in Wau reportedly had greater access to services than did returnees in Jur River, for example. This has important implications for return as a viable option for families: the findings suggest that access to services, particularly education and healthcare, played a significant role in IDPs' and returnees' decision-making process on whether to remain. This uneven provision of services has reportedly sometimes led to families separating to balance risks and opportunities. For example, as schooling was hard to access in areas of origin and/or there was insecurity, some parents returned while children remained in places where they could attend school and live relatively safely. In other cases, the uneven access to services reportedly has compelled people to remain in or near IDP camps because services were worse elsewhere, which has reportedly contributed to tensions with host community members. Given that the uneven assistance is more linked to location than to population group and given that support targeted to particular groups can exacerbate tensions, an area-based approach that includes host communities may make more sense than one focused specifically on IDPs.

The GoSS Framework for Returns, Reintegration and Relocation of Displaced Persons states that solutions will only be durable if, *inter alia*, people can also access an adequate standard of living (including access to food, water, housing, health care and basic education) and have access to employment and livelihoods. This acknowledgement of the GoSS' responsibilities regarding IDPs, returnees, and refugees is to be applauded, as are the GoSS' efforts to align with internaitonal frameworks. If properly implemented, the GoSS Framework could be a step towards finding durable solutions for the millions of South Sudanese who have been displaced. **Securing this adequate standard of living and access to employment would likely require an initial investment greater than what is currently being spent**. However, access to food, water, housing, health care, and basic education are among displaced persons' human rights, and, in the long run, these investments could not only reduce the number of displaced persons, but also improve community relations and set South Sudan up for future success.

Finally, it is worth remembering that

"deciding that displacement has ended encompasses both subjective and objective facets. IDPs might persist in viewing themselves as displaced long after national authorities and international observers determine that their situation has been resolved using a set of objective criteria. Conversely, IDPs might perceive their displacement as concluded upon returning home, even though a more objective analysis would indicate that they remain vulnerable as individuals previously uprooted, necessitating ongoing protection and assistance".[65]

If government, development, peacebuilding, and humanitarian actors want to approach durable solutions in a rights-protecting, principled way, it will be necessary to adhere to both the objective and the subjective, which necessitates consulting displacement-affected communities to understand their perspectives.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed, with input from REACH, CSRF, DRC, and ReDSS:

1. If programming is to uphold the rights of all displacement-affected people to participate in decisions that affect them, actors working on durable solutions in South Sudan must ensure that displacement-affected communities' perspectives are central to planning. The variety of responses in the four locations covered in this assessment indicate that approaches need to be contextualised to particular locations. The area-based approach taken by the Flagship Initiative appears to be a promising step. If adjusted, intention surveys could help humanitarian and development actors not only to understand displaced persons' intentions and the reasoning behind it, but also to inform community-centred planning regarding durable solutions. However, as noted in the draft Guidance for Durable Solutions Pathways in South Sudan, host communities must necessarily also be included in planning, as their perspectives are critical to ensuring that integration takes place.

2. This assessment suggests that access to land for shelter and livelihoods is a key component of integration. Government and HDP actors should continue to strengthen access to productive land and to rule of law in a conflict-sensitive manner.[66]

3. If durable solutions to displacement are to be found in South Sudan, donors must ensure that there is sufficient funding to help displaced people to establish self-reliance and resilience to future shocks. While this would require increases in funding in the short term, it should result in a lower need for funding in the long term.

4. Given the scale, frequency, and impact of shocks in South Sudan and neighbouring countries, displacement is likely to continue to occur. At present, the main drivers of displacement in South Sudan are insecurity and climactic events (particularly flooding and, to a lesser extent, drought). While reducing the scale and frequency of shocks will be difficult, **HDP actors can reduce the impact through acknowledging that movement is a coping strategy and through ensuring that consultations and assistance provision are done in a manner that avoids reinforcing divisions between communities**.

5. If displaced persons are to exercise their right to make informed decisions about their futures, they will need accurate information about, among other things, the situations in their areas of

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[65] When Displacement Ends (2006), p. 11.

[66] For an examination of land tenure with regards to displacement, see Acted. Housing, Land and Property Assessment of Juba Peri-IDP Sites Area (July 2023).

origin and other places to which they might go, as well as the services that will be provided there. In many cases, accessing accurate, up-to-date information is challenging, as the security situation and provision of assistance can change rapidly. **Where possible, humanitarian actors should strive to support community-led information-gathering, rumour-tracking, and, where relevant, rumour correction**. Additionally, this assessment suggests that further information needs exist, that they vary by location and population, and that friends and family are the most-desired source of information. **Humanitarian organisations should facilitate informed decision-making by, where possible, helping displaced persons connect to friends and family who can answer their questions**.

6. If an accurate picture of the scale of displacement in South Sudan is to be obtained, this assessment suggests that **humanitarian agencies must be careful about using cutoff dates when counting the number of IDPs** (e.g., only counting persons displaced between 2014 and the present). While integration can happen with time, the passage of time does not appear to be a reliable indicator of whether a durable solution has been reached.

7. During data collection, participants reported that many organisations have consulted with these communities but have not followed up afterwards, and that the consultations have not always led to increased or better-targeted assistance. Understanding displacement-affected communities' perspectives is essential to developing effective solutions. However, unless the consultations are coupled with meaningful action, there is a risk that survey fatigue could make it difficult to get input from displacement-affected populations going forward. **To limit survey fatigue, HDP actors should therefore continue to consult secondary sources, to share relevant information with each other, and, where possible, to implement community preferences. Where the communities' preferences cannot be acted upon, the HDP actors should try to explain the constraints.**

Finally, between April 2023 and October 2023, over 350,000 people have been forcibly displaced from Sudan to South Sudan, with more expected to arrive.[67] The preferences expressed in this assessment were context-specific and should be verified with persons arriving from Sudan, as well as with other affected communities in which they are settling.[68]

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[67] RRC, UNHCR, and IOM. Population Movement from Sudan to South Sudan (accessed 30 October 2023).

[68] ReDSS is producing a forthcoming study exploring early solutions options for those coming to South Sudan from Sudan.