Baseline Report - South Sudan
Women's Participation Pilot Project

**Women's Refugee Commission &
International Organization for Migration
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Acknowledgements

Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACF ....Action Against Hunger (Action Contre La Faim)

CBO ....Community-based organization

CCCM ....Camp Coordination and Camp Management

CWG ....Community Watch Group

CHC ....Community High Committees

DRC ....Danish Refugee Council

DTM ....Displacement Tracking Matrix

FES...Fuel-efficient stove

GBV ....Gender-based violence

ICC...Inter-Church Committee

IDP...Internally Displaced Person

IO ....International organizations

IOM ....International Organization for Migration

IMDRM..Informal Mitigation and Dispute Resolution Mechanism

IRC..International Rescue Committee

MSF ....Médecins Sans Frontière

NVPF ....Non Violent Peace Force

PoC ....Protection of Civilian

PWD..Persons with disabilities

SPLA...Sudanese People's Liberation Army

UNFPA ....United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR ....United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNMISS ....United Nations Mission in South Sudan

WRC ....Women's Refugee Commission

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Introduction

As part of a global-level project aiming at reducing gender-based violence (GBV) risks in camps and camp-like settings, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Global Cluster sought to understand how women's participation in governance structures could contribute to reducing risks of GBV in camps and camp-like settings. Ensuring meaningful participation of all groups of the population in decision-making and in camp governance structures is an essential pillar of good camp management.[1] It is also essential to contribute to improved humanitarian response, disaster risk reduction, holistic community support, and ultimately, accountability toward affected populations. Finally, meaningful participation of different groups within the displaced community offers a basic step towards making sure that different needs, capacities and expectations of heterogeneous groups within the displaced community are reflected and addressed. Often making up half or more of the entire population in a displaced community, women's representation in camp governance structures have traditionally been limited and restricted. As such, increasing women's participation in camp governance structures could enable them to voice their safety concerns and support the identification of responses to mitigate identified GBV risks.

IOM, in coordination with the CCCM Global Cluster, and with technical support from the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC), conducted baseline assessments in five country operations – Ecuador, Iraq, Nigeria, Philippines, and South Sudan – in order to establish the existing levels of women's participation in each location and identify strategies to improve their participation. The identified strategies will inform pilot interventions that assess which approaches improve women's participation and whether they have an additional benefit on perceptions around their risks to GBV.

This baseline report outlines key findings from the assessment conducted in Bentiu Protection of Civilian site (PoC) in Unity State, South Sudan by IOM, collected between June 27 and July 15, 2016. The assessment set out to map existing governance structures in Bentiu PoC and learn how displaced men, women, adolescent girls and other at-risk groups currently participate in camp life and camp decision-making processes. The assessment also examined the barriers and opportunities to increasing women's participation in camp life and camp governance, and explored strategies that could facilitate this. Findings from this study which will be used in a learning document that will inform CCCM Global Cluster and the wider humanitarian system on how to improve women's participation in camp governance structures and contribute to reduction in women and girls' risks to GBV.

Background

The Republic of South Sudan faces enormous challenges in meeting the humanitarian needs across all its states due to recurring and intersecting threats of armed conflict, tribal violence, economic crisis, food insecurity, disease outbreaks and climate-related shocks.

Since the eruption of the conflict in South Sudan in December 2013, over 2.3 million people – one in every five people – have been displaced by violence and food insecurity, including 726,600 who have fled to neighboring countries and 1.66 million others who remain internally displaced. Nearly 54 percent of those internally displaced are estimated to be children. Over 6.1 million people across South Sudan require humanitarian assistance.[2] Some 185,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) have registered for refuge in UN PoC sites, while the remaining 90 percent of IDPs are outside the PoC sites. Humanitarian situation is dire, with only 41 percent of appeal funding received to date from the US$1.29 billion requirements for South Sudan 2016 Humanitarian Response Plan.[3]

Despite the signing of the Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in August 2015, violence continues to affect all civilians across the country. Lack of justice and the rule of law

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to respond compound the ongoing violence. An unprecedented cholera and malaria outbreaks have been recorded since 2014 and continue to remain a critical concern. As of July 2016, 4.8 million people are food-insecure. An entire generation of children is at risk with nearly one in every three schools being destroyed, damaged, occupied or closed, impacting nearly 1 million children's education. An estimate of 15,000 – 16,000 children are recruited by armed groups; over 10,000 are registered as unaccompanied, separated or missing. Hunger and malnutrition is widespread, with over 686,000 under 5 years are estimated to be acutely malnourished, including more than 231,300 who are severely malnourished. One in three pregnant and lactating women is malnourished.[4]

South Sudan has an exceptionally high early pregnancy rate (300/1000 for girls aged 15-19 years). According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)[5], this is attributable to high rate of child, early and forced marriage. Adolescents and youth, specifically females, are the most affected group in terms of HIV/AIDS. According to the Gender-based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), one in four recorded incidents is sexual violence, including rape. One in five IDP women reported to have been raped during the ongoing crisis. Cultural norms in South Sudan discourage reporting of incidences, and as such, combating gender inequality and GBV is extremely difficult. Women and girls' access to education and other empowerment opportunities are little to none, contributing to their increased risks of exposure to sexual violence. Displacement resulting from conflict and violence, mass numbers of armed groups, and the weak rule of law exacerbate the situation of women and girls.

Even if sheltered inside PoC sites, women and girls' protection concerns do not end; they face risks of violence on a daily basis, living in fear of constant attack from men from within and outside the camp who act in an environment of impunity. Women and girls who must leave the camp in unending search of firewood are particularly at risk, as evidenced by researches conducted by many organizations, including the WRC, CARE, Refugees International, among many others.

The pilot study was conducted in the PoC located in Bentiu, the capital city of Unity State, South Sudan in July 2016. At the time of the study, there were 19,217 households residing in 5 sectors of the camp, making up a total population of 99,034 individuals, out of whom 51.2 percent were female. Based on IOM's July Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) data, estimated 70 percent of male IDPs are children while female children make up 56 percent of the total female population. Bentiu PoC site was established in December 2013; living conditions are poor, although the standards have been recently improved in accordance with CCCM expansion of service provision as well as the government's provision of additional land and support from UNMISS in the region.[6] Humanitarian partners and the UNMISS are working with the displaced community to continue to improve the living conditions of the PoC. Vulnerable groups include children, pregnant and lactating women, widows, adolescent girls, elderly, and persons with disabilities (PWD).

Methodology

The WRC and IOM developed a qualitative study methodology with the research question: Does women's participation in camp governance contribute to reducing their perceptions of GBV risks in the displaced community?

Goal: To improve women's participation in governance structures in camps and camp-like settings to reduce women and girls' perceptions of risks to GBV.

Objectives:
1. To map existing governance structures.
2. To identify barriers and opportunities for women and girls to voice their safety concerns, ideas, and questions.

3. To identify barriers and opportunities for women and girls to meaningfully contribute to decision-making processes in planning, programming, monitoring and evaluating service provision.

4. To obtain a baseline among women and girls as to their perceptions of current GBV risk in their community.

In order to reach these objectives, interview tools, inclusive of a safety mapping exercise, were developed to facilitate focus group discussions and in-depth interviews among female and male IDP leaders; female and male IDP non-leaders; displaced adolescent girls; and widows and other female heads of households. In total, twenty-one (21) focus group discussions were conducted with female and male IDP leaders and non-leaders (3 groups of female leaders; 9 groups of female non-leaders; 1 group of adolescent girls; 3 groups of male leaders; and 5 groups of male non-leaders). Safety mapping exercises were completed during FGDs with female respondents. Finally, 6 key informant interviews were conducted with representatives from UNMISS, the Non Violent Peace Force (NVPF), Internews, and IOM camp management staff. A total of 158 individuals participated in the study.

Data collection took place in Bentiu PoC from June 27 – July 15, 2016. The assessment team consisted of 8 female and 6 male data collectors from IOM, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and UNFPA, trained and supervised by David Preux from IOM's headquarters. Interview tools were revised for cultural appropriateness and phrasing by the IOM Bentiu office and further adjusted with the data collectors after pilot testing the tools among IDP community members. Facilitated transcription techniques were used to transcribe the data during daily debriefing sessions. The WRC analyzed the data on NVivo.[7]


Findings

Camp Governance Structure

Bentiu PoC site is divided into 5 sectors and is managed by IOM, in coordination with UNMISS and other humanitarian partners. Displaced populations are represented at all levels within the PoC's governance structure: within the Community High Committees (CHC)[8] at the camp level, as well as at the sector and block levels (see Figure 1). Secondly, IDPs are also gathered in the PoC site according to areas of origin or religious associations: the County Solidarity Associations and the Inter-Church Committee (ICC). Finally, conflict resolution and security are supported by the Informal Mitigation and Dispute Resolution Mechanism (IMDRM) as well as the Community Watch Group (CWG).

Members of the CHC are appointed by the County Solidarity Associations: there are three members per county with a total of 28 members, representing 8 counties (7 counties from Unity State and 1 from greater Upper Nile/Jonglei States, as well as 4 members who are Sector Leaders from Sectors 2 to 5). The Sector and Block Leaders are nominated by the community and include 1 Chairman, 1 Deputy, and 1 Secretary. Members of the IMDRM are appointed by the CHC, selected from among IDP elders, and consist of 8 members in total. As for the ICC, although not all church denominations are represented, major denominations (8) are, and are appointed from within each church. Members of the County Solidarity Associations are nominated by the IDPs from their relevant counties. Finally, members of the Community Watch Group are appointed by Block Leaders. Generally, there seems to be a term limit of 6 months for the leadership structures.

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[7] NVivo is software that supports qualitative and mixed methods research.
8 There are 2 CHCs in Bentiu POC, one dedicated to sector 1 and another dedicated to sector 2 to 5.
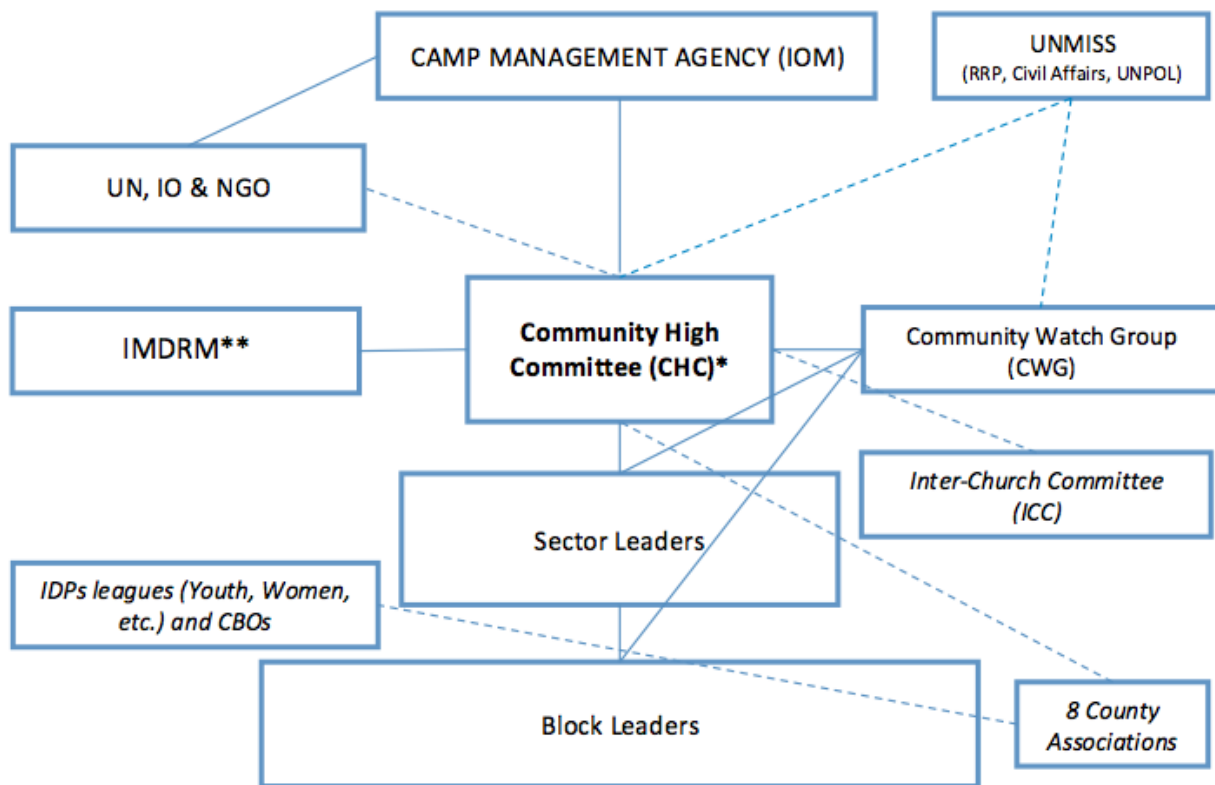
* 2 CHC – 1 for Sector 1, 1 for sectors 2 to 5.
** Informal Mitigation and Dispute Resolution Mechanism

Figure 1 Camp Governance Structure in Bentiu PoC, South Sudan

In addition to these formal governing structures, other IDP groups that influence camp decisions include various IDP leagues, including women and youth leagues, as well as community-based organizations (CBOs). These groups may be attached to formal governance structures (for example, women groups within the County Solidarity Associations), linked to INGO activities (i.e. women centers), or may be a form of spontaneous IDP initiatives, such as the "War and Disabled Committee", an independent group that can liaise with the CHC to request its issues to be included in the CHC agenda. Finally, IDP groups also participate in camp-wide activities, including in WASH infrastructure maintenance, hygiene promotion, cultural and sportive events.

Female Representation

In terms of female representation in governance structures, out of 24 leaders in the CHC, for example, 8 were female (1 female out of 3 from each county). Several study participants referred to the fact that women should have 25 percent of the seats in any given group, association or committee. This rule of 25 percent quota granted to female representation reportedly originates from repeated statements made by various political leaders and, although yet to be fully implemented, is reflected in the Transitional Constitution of South Sudan for all levels of government institutions. While there is presence of women in various governance structures in Bentiu PoC (see Figure 2), as one key informant put it, "anything that is announced, you will get women there," the more widespread view from other key informants was that "you will not be surprise[d] if you do not hear their voice in meetings" and that "male personalities overpower the female personalities". Indeed, the study team could not verify whether this 25 percent quota on female representation is actually applied through all governance structures within Bentiu PoC.

Community High Committee	• 1/3 of members are female • **Only males occupy formal positions** (Chairman, Deputy, Secretary, etc.)
Sector/Block Leaders	• More female representatives • **Some formal positions are occupied by females** (i.e. women mostly in position of Secretary)
IMDRM	• Presence of female representatives
Community Watch Group	• Recent participation of females (not in all functions, i.e. night patrol)
Inter-Church Committee	• Strong presence of female leaders
County Associations	• Each association includes a women's group/league (i.e. "Prika", a women's ensemble representing the county in cultural events, such as Dance Contests)

Figure 2 Female Representation at Bentiu PoC Site

Participation and Decision-Making

Decision-making Authority

As Bentiu PoC is located within a UNMISS base, the UN agency seems to have taken on most of the responsibility usually linked to camp administration and state prerogatives such as maintaining law and order within the site or deciding upon land use.[10] At the PoC, all decisions made regarding the camp life are jointly made by IDP leaders and the camp manager (IOM) in coordination with other UN bodies, international organizations (IO) and NGOs who provide services (see Figure 3). The study demonstrated that the decisions that influence the camp life can be generally distinguished in two ways: 1) coordinating with external actors for service provision; and 2) coordinating internally among IDP leadership for conflict mediation, security, and accountability. For service provision, study participants referred primarily to UN agencies, IOs, and NGOs as having important influence over the camp life and particularly on the situations of women and girls. These include IOM, UNMISS, UNFPA, UNICEF, Médecins Sans Frontière (MSF), International Rescue Committee (IRC), World Relief, DRC, etc. For conflict mediation, security, and accountability, study participants referred to the IDP leaders as key decision-makers with the capacity to influence the life of IDPs. In particular, participants mention the CHC and the church leaders (ICC). These IDP leaders are also identified as the main liaison between the IDPs and the external actors/service providers.

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[10] *For more information, please refer to "If we leave, we are killed. Annex III: Responsibilities in UNMISS POC Sites for Planning and Budgetary Purposes, IOM South Sudan, 2016.*
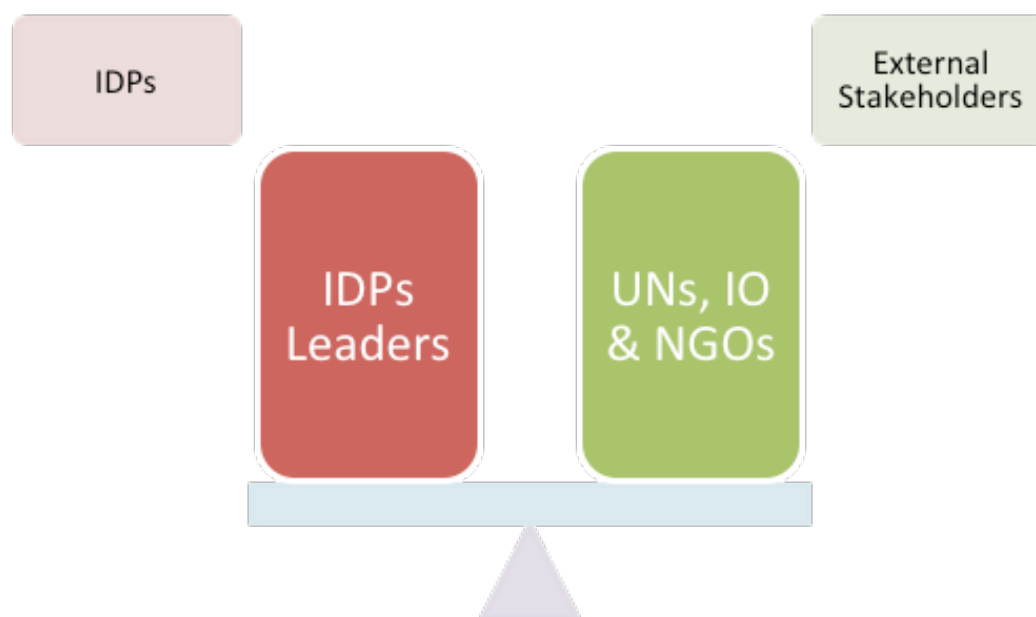
Figure 3 Decision-making Power within Bentiu PoC

Decisions regarding the camp life are therefore made by different actors at different levels. At the camp level, UN agencies, IOs, NGOs, and the CHC hold authority to make decisions, while at the sector or block levels, IDP leaders have power to make decisions, limited as it may be. The study found that sector or block leaders' level of authority is primarily in relaying IDP concerns and feedback upwards to the CHC or disseminating information from the CHC and non-IDP stakeholders back to the IDPs. As such, although the sector and block leadership structure is in place, most decisions involve camp-level actors, such as the CHC and other non-IDP stakeholders.

Aside from the sector and block leaders, IDPs also receive information from other IDP and non-IDP actors and via feedback mechanisms, including outreach workers, information desks, and "boda boda talk talk" (BBTT)[11], a communications program implemented by Internews. While various mechanisms are in place for information transfers between the governance structures and the IDP populations, the study could not confirm whether IDP leaders fully represent the views of the community. Likewise, the study could not determine to what extent decisions are inclusive of consultations with under-represented and other vulnerable groups.

As for IDP women, they have little authority over camp-level decisions and even while they can influence decisions at the household level, decision-making power rests with the men. Among the interviewed IDP populations, there was also a general sense that women do not have the capacity to make decisions either because women were "not good at making decisions" as perceived by male respondents, or because of existing barriers as perceived by female respondents. IDP women also have limited opportunities to voice their concerns and share their views. Several female community members in different group discussions also remarked that "NGOs first consult men" and that "whether we are educated or not, they don't want to involve the women". A group of widows shared that they "blame the aid workers that didn't identify women (to participate in humanitarian activities)". Even if opportunities arise, both male and female respondents shared that "women and girls are afraid and shy to talk in public places".

Women's Participation in Camp Life

The study demonstrated that the participation of women in the camp life is primarily through conforming to the socially and traditionally accepted roles of engaging in domestic chores and child-rearing. The activities that women are engaged in are collecting firewood, cleaning (inside

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[11] For more information, please refer to "If we leave, we are killed. Annex III: Responsibilities in UNMISS POC Sites for Planning and Budgetary Purposes, IOM South Sudan, 2016.

and outside their homes, including communal latrines, collecting garbage and sweeping the blocks), fetching water, cooking and feeding the family, and raising their children. Women spend all day, starting very early in the morning, as one group of female community members shared, "we all work and collect firewood. That is because we are mother[s] of children. We are supposed to help our children go to school".

The study found that external stakeholders, including the camp manager and service providers, must make an effort in order to ensure women's participation in camp activities. One service provider described what it takes to involve women in activities: "we are trying to organize our activities so that they [women] can make it" and that "you can never schedule something very early… nothing either when distributions are organized. You also have to organize activities on a regular basis so that women can anticipate, know, and get organized accordingly. It is also important to have a dedicated space or person taking care of the children".

Group discussions with adolescent girls demonstrated that most girls participate in the camp life through attending school, although a few did not, as the group had mixed in-school and out-of-school girls. Girls mentioned the unique challenges of being young and female, as one girl shared that "they [fathers] force us to be married" and of being powerless in decisions that affect their lives, "our parents are the ones making decisions for us". Although some girls appreciate living inside a PoC which offers educational opportunities and shared that they "know the importance of school", there appeared to be a sense among the girls that they are second class beneficiaries, "for everything it is the men and boys first and then women and girls" when asked about why women and girls were not included in some activities. Girls seemed aware that being female means less status and privilege generally, and were treated as inferior to boys and men.

It is note-worthy to pause on the issue of firewood collection, which is a burden borne by women and girls in many contexts, including in South Sudan. Risks for sexual violence during firewood collection have been well documented for over a decade.[12] In Bentiu PoC, many women and girls leave the camp daily in search of firewood to cook the food they are responsible for feeding their families. Firewood is not only a source of energy for the task of cooking to feed the family, it is also a source of income for widows and other female heads of households who have no other source of income. Such women and girls take the risk of rape every time they are out to collect firewood to sell them. One female respondent shared that "the most vulnerable people are women and girls that are always going outside POC and collect firewood and from there they are raped and sometime killed by the criminals". While farming was a livelihood for women before displacement, now there are far too few livelihood opportunities and with no education, they are forced to risk their lives daily in order to feed their families. Displacement forces many changes in how people make a living; as one male respondent admitted, "females are selling fruits and tea but that was not there in previous days".

Barriers to Women's Participation

Lack of Female Education

In a country where education indicators remain among the worst in the world and where adult literacy rate stands at a mere 27 per cent,[13] most women living in Bentiu PoC likely have had very limited education of any form in their lives. One adolescent girl shared with the study team that "it is because from the very beginning many women and girls did not go to school and that is why we participate less". All study participants consistently mention lack of education – "women and girls are not educated" – as the main reason for why women and girls do not participate in decision-making. One female community member lamented that "in South Sudan there is no balance between male and female. Like in our house, our daughters are not allowed to go to school", while one male community member simply stated that "to give women the school mastery is not allowed". Moreover, among the women the study team spoke to, there was a sense that the lack of education renders them poorly equipped to navigate the

[12] "In Need of Protection" Addressing Sexual Assault against Women and Girls Associated with the Collection of Firewood in Refugee Camps in Sub Sahara Africa. C. Meyer. 2005 Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health, Program on Forced Migration and Health
[13] UNICEF South Sudan, Basic Education and Gender Equality, http://www.unicef.org/southsudan/Education.pdf

male-dominated governance structures, and poorly informed to regularly claim their rights to participate in collective action.

Heavy Domestic Work

The study team found that the second most common barrier to participation that study participants mention is that women and girls are overly burdened with domestic work, including cooking, cleaning, laundry, collecting firewood, fetching water, and child rearing. Domestic chores are a heavy burden for women and girls. The extent of the burden create barriers to women's participation in other camp activities, as illustrated by one key informant: "they are not going to go anywhere in terms of participation… women are busy all day feeding, raising their children, cleaning the households, etc." No male respondents mention sharing of any household duties, except in culturally acceptable instances; for example, males from a particular tribe work on building their home ("tukul") while for other tribes this is a female task. Key informants and male respondents similarly share that women and girls are "too busy with their domestic work… to participate… in place where decisions are made". Unpaid and under-valued domestic work and care-giving that defines women's work and contributions perpetuate women and girls' low status in society.

Lack of Livelihood Opportunities

Among the female respondents in the study, the study team heard little mention of what livelihood opportunities exist for women within Bentiu PoC. Few IDPs seem to be engaged in farming outside the PoC, as there are security risks. Livelihoods activities provide opportunities for engaging with people, services, institutions, and economies outside the household, and may create opportunities for people to organize for collective action. Lack of viable economic activities limit the level of women's participation within the household, while being dependent on humanitarian assistance or other external assistance to provide for theirs and their families' basic needs. A fortunate few women are hired by service providers; but the majority is pre-occupied by domestic work and child-rearing, or else risking their lives leaving the camp to collect firewood to sell as a form of livelihood. Despite limited opportunities that exist for safe livelihoods for women, several mentioned interest in adult education. Additionally, adolescent girls the study team spoke to seemed to understand the value of education to "make it in this life", as one girl mentioned.

Unfair Preferential Treatments

Among study respondents, there were several comments about some IDP leaders exercising powers to favor one group over another. According to one male respondent, some IDP leaders "only address their family issues at the expense of others" and as a result, these leaders are "very reluctant to give up their position" and "sometimes cause problems when their term expires". One of the key informants also shared with the study team and illustrated how nepotism exists in the camp in that "if I am in the CHC I can make sure that the block leaders are from my county…. Therefore, I have more control against another county having control over resources". The terms of most leadership structure are 6 months; the study could not, however, verify how often a leader gets re-elected to serve on the various leadership teams or how much authority over community decision-making powers, and hence over community resources, lie within one group (i.e. county) over another. The study team also noted, and confirmed by at least one key informant that, there are "huge" competitions between social and geographic leadership in which "all come to play" – tribes, clans, and counties. In such an environment, the key informant confirmed that "male representatives run the show" in both formal governance structures and within the society at large, as he illustrated, "next to the market, women come and sell things on the side but the proper stalls inside the market are all run by men". When certain IDP groups perceive that preferential treatments are widespread, there may be less willingness for those groups to actively participate. Women's groups remain within the fringes of any social or governance structures, and being powerless to bring change

within complex male-dominated structures, often lack the motivation to participate actively.

Cultural Factors Reinforcing Gender Gap

One of the most complex force working against women's equal participation in collective decision-making and action is the cultural context in which IDPs in Bentiu PoC live. Women and men conform to traditional gender roles of male dominance and female subservience. Men make the decisions and women accept them; women may contribute to decisions, but not be the one to decide. One female community member shared that although women may be included in some community meetings, "they [women] think that they are not equal with men in every occasion" while another simply concluded that "women have less power than men". Thus, women themselves conform to the rigid gender roles; they are too "weak", "shy", "uncomfortable" and "afraid" to act any differently. There is even shame associated with women taking leadership, as one female respondent shared "it is a shame for women and girls that hold big positions or chair meetings in front of the people (men)".

Moreover, men are not supportive of women voicing their opinions and attending public events to contribute to collective discussions, let alone leading in any community efforts. Several male leaders shared that "women and girls are not allowed by their husband and parent to be leaders". Even if there is presence of women in smaller meetings, hearing women's voice is a challenge, as one key informant shared that "some men, they don't like women to disappear or go to public places" and that "they [women] have a say only when we solicit them to speak".

For some women and girls, conflict and displacement separated them from their husbands or were left widowed by the war and remain extremely vulnerable. While conflict and displacement can often lead to changing gender and social norms as more women and girls take on traditionally 'male' economic and community leadership roles, it can also perpetuate them. One key informant describes the social stigma widows might experience if they do not conform to social expectation: "they [widows] are not supposed to make decisions. Instead they are to remain under the authority of a male figure of the family. In the PoC it's not happening, or its forcing them to be under a family they weren't that acquainted with, which obviously creates problems. If they don't want to, then they become stigmatized by the rest of the community". Some women end up "doing double work for their families" because they "do not have a husband in this camp" and "so they sell firewood to get money" as several female respondents shared.

Gender-based violence and other safety concerns for vulnerable groups

One of the most prevalent safety concerns that the study team heard from women and girls in Bentiu PoC Site was gender-based violence--rape and physical beatings, specifically. Women and girls respondents all mentioned that "they can be subject to rape" especially when they are out collecting firewood, but they mention the risk of rape even if they move in the PoC too early or too late, if they go out to wash their laundry, or when they go to the latrines at night. As a result of the high risks of GBV, the study team learned that there have been recent measurements to increase security. Several male respondents shared that there have been "improvement of security this year not like last year, nightpatrolling implemented, CSG patrolling in the block and UNPOL on the road", and that "solar light have been installed in the camp". In addition, UNMISS informant shared that while they "set up patrols to different locations, some covered on daily basis, others less regularly", that for a camp with nearly 100,000 residents, "[they] cannot be all over all the time". As such, women and girls mention the dangers of "beating", "killing and raping", "animals in the bush", "gangs", "SPLA solders", "gunmen", and "thieves who could beat us, or steal our things or our clothes". Although no female respondent shared with any study team, one service provider mentioned that "there are quite a lot of domestic abuses out there".

It is also noteworthy to mention that anywhere where women and girls are exposed to GBV, the rates of violence may be 4-10 times greater among persons with disabilities than among non-

disabled persons.[14] In displacement settings, this has significant implications for protection of women and girls with disabilities, as they are much more likely to be hidden from humanitarian actors, isolated, and unable to access critical services and activities as other women and girls. At Bentiu PoC, the War and Disability Committee, an informal, independent group, exists to ensure that persons with disabilities have appropriate access to services and an avenue by which to bring up concerns of PWD to the CHC. The study team did not confirm if this Committee included women with disabilities or whether its activities also involve addressing safety concerns for women and girls with disabilities.

Facilitators to Women's Participation

Strong IDP Participation in Decision-Making

UNMISS, as the camp administrator for the PoC, instituted the management structures for IDPs and women's participation. This is notably a good practice set by UNMISS, as demonstrated in the description of Bentiu PoC site's governance structure, IDPs equally share in decision-making with camp manager and external stakeholders. The site's governance structure is complex and vibrant; its multi-level system allows for IDP leaders of varying levels of authority and competencies, agendas and policies to be coordinated and interact with external stakeholders who also influence camp decisions. There are regular meetings held within the various committees and there is strong involvement of IDPs in conflict resolution. Community mobilization occurs regularly through all sector activities – hygiene promotion, sanitation, nutrition, CCCM – as well as through cultural activities. Although there is limited system to hold the leadership accountable for commitments made, there are term limitations that allows turnover of powers to different groups of leaders. IDP communities are thus generally able to identify and express their own views and needs and a system is in place to take collective action to contribute to solutions. Consequently, there is opportunity to challenge the existing governance structure to ensure its effectiveness on the basis of how accountable, inclusive and responsive its decisions are to all members of the community, including women and girls.

Camp Management Support for Women's Participation in Governance

At Bentiu PoC site, camp management and UNMISS supported the IDPs to form formal women's groups that have representation and which can raise concerns to the CHC and other IDP leadership. Although women's participation in decision-making may be limited, channels exist, such as the Women's League and ICC's Women Desk where women can present their concerns and ideas. Moreover, humanitarian partners have established two-way communication and feedback mechanisms (BBTT, "Radio Miraya" - Peace Radio via UNMISS, Info desk, etc.). Thus, there is overall support and effort from camp management and external stakeholders to promote women's participation at all levels of decision-making processes.

IOM and other protection partners, including IRC and Upper Nile Center, have also set up informal women's groups and centers where they can discuss women's concerns. Indeed, during safety mapping exercises, women and girls identified these spaces as being safe places for them. The women's groups are consulted by service providers, including on GBV. The study could not, however, determine how regularly women's groups are consulted on decisions, or to what extent these groups represent the needs of all females in the PoC. On reporting any incidents, including on women's safety concerns, there are referral structures in place where anyone could go to; although incidents of sexual violence are always under-reported and therefore not all access services through these channels. Given that there are regular coordination meetings between service providers, including these protection partners, with UNMISS and IDP governance structures (CHCs, CWGs, etc.), there are opportunities for these informal groups to identify formal mechanisms for participating and elevating their concerns to higher decision-making bodies.

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[14] *World Health Organization's World Report on Disability 2011: http://www.who.int/disabilities/world_report/2011/report/en/*

Opportunities for Capacity Building and Leadership

Women living at the Bentiu PoC site may have mechanisms to provide feedback, voice their concerns and ideas through sector/block structures, through women's groups that have representation within the CHC, and through other informal channels; however, they are not capacitated to use them to their full benefit. Female leaders lack the confidence and motivation to share their views in the community, mentioning that "women and girls are afraid and shy to talk in public places" and that even if they managed to speak up, "they are ignored". Thus, investments should be made in strengthening women's leadership to participate more fully in governance structures as well as building their capacity to participate more fully in the camp life. These may include leadership training, adult learning opportunities, and/or creation of other public spaces for women that can open up dynamic ways for women to organize at the community level.

Opportunities for Safe Livelihoods

Humanitarian agencies working within Bentiu PoC, whenever possible, hire IDP women and provide needed livelihood opportunities for them. But such opportunities are few. Most women and girls the study team spoke to are engaged in firewood collection to meet their own family energy needs and as a livelihood option. Firewood collection is not only exceptionally labor and time intense[15] for women and girls, combined with the typical domestic responsibilities women and girls assume, they have little time or energy for participating in the community life. Because most women and girls are at high risk of abuse, attack and exploitation during firewood collection, the Bentiu context could warrant implementation of a fuel-efficient stove (FES) program. FES programs can seek to address a wide variety of objectives, including safe generation of income or employment, reducing risks or incidence of GBV, and environmental damage mitigation.[16] Charcoal or firewood distribution may also be implemented in order to keep women and girls safe and free up their time to pursue both safer livelihood opportunities that can foster women and girls to take on more active participation in the camp life. Given limited economic opportunities within Bentiu PoC and the limited skills women and girls possess, skills training, not exclusive of gender-traditional activities, can be considered to expand safer livelihood options for women and girls and their ability to participate more actively in the community.

Conclusion

Although there are formal systems in place for women to engage in governance structures within the Bentiu PoC site, meaningful participation remains a challenge due to several factors. These include women's perceptions of being unable to contribute due to lack of education, their time poverty due to heavy housework, and the cultural norms and expectations that perpetuate male dominance in decision-making. However, the study also found several ways to foster a more active involvement of women in governance processes. With increased support for adult learning, leadership training for women leaders, opening up more public spaces to voice concerns and ideas, including on safety, women and girls can increase their capacity, confidence, and motivation to participate in camp governance and camp life. However, these efforts cannot be made in silo; men must also be engaged and sensitized on the need for policies and processes for making decisions that should address the differing needs, interests, priorities and responsibilities of all people – men and women – as well as their unequal economic and social power.

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[15] *Statistical Snapshot: Access to Improved Cookstoves and Fuels and its Impact on Women's Safety in Crises, Global Alliance for Clean Cookstoves. https://cleancookstoves.org/binary-data/ATTACHMENT/file/000/000/331-1.pdf*
[16] *See USAID Fuel-Efficient Stove Program in Humanitarian Settings: An Implementer's Toolkit, 2010 http://www.energytoolbox.org/cookstoves/*

Next Steps

Following the study and upon reflecting on the initial findings, IOM Bentiu team met to review and reflect on all recommended ways to improve women's participation proposed by the study participants, including community leaders and members and key informants from UNMISS and NVPF. The team developed an action plan and a preliminary project design for a pilot approach to implement in consultation with communities:

- Promoting the use of fuel-efficient stoves that will be tested with women's groups to give recommendations on large-scale distribution;
- Supporting adult education and learning initiatives targeting women in existing structures in the PoC (schools, ICC);
- Supporting micro projects led by women's groups attached to County Solidarity Associations: Distribution of 8 small grants to the 8 women's groups;
- Linking and structuring a dialogue between existing governance structures with existing women's groups: Setting up a women's league or conference that would regroup the representatives of the different women's groups / committees in the PoC, and clearly defining their mandate to be inclusive of representing and addressing safety concerns of particularly vulnerable groups, including adolescent girls, widows, elderly women, and women with disabilities; and
- Establishing community-based safe spaces at the disposal of IDPs for community-based activities targeting women and girls.

Appendix

Interview tools