



*IDPs in Waystation*

## BACKGROUND

The conflict in Jonglei state, that erupted in December 2022 and escalated in early 2023, has displaced an estimated 20,000 people to Malakal town, Canal/Pigi, Baliyet, and Ulang counties. The conflict mainly transpired in Northern Jonglei counties of Akobo, Nyirol, and Uror and among the displaced the majority are women, children, persons living with disabilities and other vulnerable people. Civilians fleeing the areas are visibly traumatized with unconfirmed reports of deaths, injuries, extortion, looting and heavy damage of public and private infrastructures, and conflicted-related sexual violence. GBV incidents and family separations have been widespread and the number of unaccompanied or separated children is increasing daily.

## CURRENT SITUATION

The security situation in Northern Jonglei counties remains volatile with at least two reported attacks in March 2023 in Thol and Thep payams. The fear of violence, coupled with extremely limited access to services and extreme food insecurity, have forced IDPs to flee to various locations including to Upper Nile counties. In Malakal town, IDPs have settled in three temporary informal IDP sites; Waystation, Fire Brigade, and Daniel Comboni church.

Unconfirmed numbers of IDPs remain in Khorfulus payam in Canal/Pigi county and plan to move to Malakal. Their fear for safety and security has further been increased by recent violence in Thep. Protection cluster members in Malakal town have already recorded increased movements of IDPs, with some 600 individuals arriving the last week

of March. However, many have difficulties paying for transportation, which puts those most vulnerable at greater risk.

Malakal town is currently hosting some 14,000 IDPs, with at least 4,000 new arrivals from Jonglei State. The majority of IDPs are women, children, and the elderly from Nyirol, Akobo, and Uror. The new arrivals have increased the IDP population by 20% and this has stretched the already scarce resources of humanitarian partners. Based on rapid assessments and observations by Protection Cluster members working in the Upper Nile, it was reported that there is an urgent need for food assistance, the provision of shelter and non-food items, WASH support, health services, and the delivery of services to mitigate GBV.

The government has plans to move IDPs to a new IDP site in Malakal town, but there is no indication of the dates. Considering the sensitivity of HLP issues in Malakal town, and should this relocation take place, it is important to ensure strict compliance with the humanitarian principles of do no harm, voluntariness, while emphasizing conflict sensitivity and HLP considerations. The provision of shelter materials, possible establishment of new structures at the areas of displacement, as well as mitigating cases of encroachment in houses of returnees by IDPs will need a protection sensitive approach.

### KEY PROTECTION CONCERNS

- **Safety and security:** The IDPs fear going to the bush to collect firewood and materials needed to build shelter, and due to the restricted movement, they are unable to provide livelihood opportunities for themselves. Women and girls also fear being attacked while fetching water at the riverside, especially in the evening. While on the move, IDPs reported cases of extortions, rape, and abductions by unidentified groups.
- **Lack of Food:** IDPs arrived in Malakal without resources. Due to the limited response in terms of food and other livelihood activities by religious organizations and only cereals by WFP, IDPs cannot cultivate land due to access and a lack of tools. As a result, there is a high risk of food insecurity in Malakal, with many IDPs reporting negative coping mechanisms (eating wild food, eating once every two days, etc.). Many IDPs reported being sick because of eating lollipop seeds for most meals.
- **GBV:** IDPs leaving the 12 stores known as waystations are sharing limited space, which has led to congestion due to limited shelter. There are no latrines on site, and women and girls need to walk to a distant location, which exposes them to the risk of GBV. Incidents of sexual violence were reported.
- **UASCs:** 24 unaccompanied or separated children were identified and referred to relevant service providers.
- **Access to education is disrupted, and many children do not attend school,** resulting in an increase in child labor and the risk of forced marriages.
- **Health:** IDPs arrived traumatized and exhausted as they had to cross the river Sobat and walk for 5 to 12 days to arrive in Malakal. Many report difficulties accessing health services, including MHPSS, due to distance to service points and lack of funds. FGDs conducted by protection partners on the services available revealed information on cholera cases. MSF and IMC are providing health services on an emergency basis at the site.
- **Shelter/NFIs – Waystation:** Due to strong winds, the roofs were blown away. IDPs leaving near the Malakal Stadium are living in an open space without proper shelter. Protection Cluster and partners responded with NFIs targeting 380 people with special needs (PSNs) in both sites; however, more NFIs are needed as many continued to sleep in inadequate conditions, which increased their vulnerability and GBV risks.
- **WASH services:** are limited and not widely available. There is a lack of clean drinking water for the community, and people drink water directly from the river, increasing their exposure to water-borne diseases. Due to the limited number of latrines, open defecation is practiced. This is of particular concern during the time of the cholera outbreak in Malakal.
- **Potential for return:** Reportedly, IDPs in Malakal have no intention to return to areas of origin, until security situation is improved back in their homes

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Expedite provision of basic services to the most vulnerable** (food, shelter/NFIs, WASH, Health, Education) by humanitarian actors and Upper Nile state government at existing sites, in line with conflict sensitivity
- **Advocate with the government and UNMISS to extend patrols** to areas of IDPs livelihoods activities.
- **Strengthen protection services**, especially for GBV and Child Protection at Fire Brigade and Waystation IDP sites.
- **Strengthen mobile response** to reach vulnerable people in remote locations of Gokjak and Mareng.
- **Increase advocacy with peace actors** such as local authorities and UNMISS to improve security situation in Northern Jonglei and allow IDPs voluntary gradual return.
- **Establish and capacitate community-based Protection Networks (CBPNs)** to monitor and provide feedback on the protection related issues and quality of service in collaboration with local authorities.
- **Strengthen presence of protection actors at the Waystation** to expand the capacity of identification and mitigation of protection concerns.
- **Enhance support for women and girls** including provision of dignity kits, clothes and other NFI.
- **Strengthen coordination and support mechanisms** that enhance information sharing, analyses of challenges, and availability of local solutions.
- **Provide cash support to the most vulnerable IDPs and PSNs** to address immediate protection and health concerns.



*IDPs sheltering in Malakal town*