



## Key findings from CARE's rapid gender analysis in Rhino and Imvepi settlements, March 2017

CARE has conducted a rapid gender analysis (RGA) during the week of 12<sup>th</sup> March 2017 in Rhino and the newly opened Imvepi settlements in the Arua district of the West Nile region of Uganda. Whilst the final report has not yet been compiled, the following are a set of initial findings pulled out of the analysis to support engagement with ECHO regarding potential work in the West Nile region.

**Methodology:** RGA can provide information about the different needs, capacities and coping strategies of women, men, boys and girls in a crisis by examining the experiences and relationships between women, men, boys and girls. However, an RGA should be built up progressively, and therefore the forthcoming report will provide an initial but incomplete insight into the gendered situation within the South Sudanese refugee community in West Nile.

In line with common practice, a combination of methods was used to collect data, including secondary data research; separated FGD conducted with women, men, girls, and boys; field observation; and a small number of key informant interviews. Conducting focus groups across the two chosen sites provides an interesting insight into the immediate concerns, conditions, and needs of some of the population in Imvepi; as opposed to the insights from a community settled on the medium term in Rhino.

### General gendered issues

As can often be the case in humanitarian response, a general misunderstanding about gender being solely related to sexual and gender based violence (SGBV) was noted as a concern in this response. This lack of understanding of how gender can affect people's access to, or interaction with, humanitarian aid can often result in harm. CARE's approach supports gender being mainstreamed throughout all sectors of the response, founded on a strong understanding of the gendered power dynamics in the community, and how these may change over time.

Gender relations in South Sudan are shaped by the social and economic realities of being one of the world's least developed countries, and by decades of conflict. Prevailing gender norms are based on a traditional, patriarchal concept of strict and clearly delineated roles of women and men. In the refugee settlements in Uganda, men make up only 14% of the population, (with women making up 28%, and children 58%). As such, a large proportion of households are now headed by women – relegating an additional burden onto women to not only take care of the household, water collection, wood collection, cooking, and childcare, but also to financially support large families. A number of women are also fostering additional children who are either separated, unaccompanied, or orphans.

Gender relations in hosting communities are also characterized by prevailing and deeply entrenched gender inequality, often accompanied by gender based violence and very limited decision making power by women and girls. The pressure put by refugees on local communities and the scramble for resources this entails for all, but particularly for women and girls, is further exacerbating gender inequality.

Whilst key insights into protection, GBV, and shelter will be covered off below, some other key gaps that arose, included:

- **Psychosocial support** was strongly demanded by the population, in particular by the male head of households. The South Sudanese population have suffered immense trauma, not only during the years of conflict, but also during the journey to Uganda. Men in particular reiterated the need for trauma counselling and requested groups to help them develop greater resilience and coping strategies to ensure they could adapt to a situation in which their role as providers for the family has been stripped from them, and they are left feeling disempowered, frustrated, and angry as a result – often resulting in domestic fighting. Distress, frustration, anger and lack of hope for the future was particularly high among the young men we spoke to. Left with nothing to do, many are considering going back to South Sudan knowing very well the risks they face by doing so. Roving livelihood opportunities to youth in general but to male youth in particular and Engaging Men and Boys for gender equality are going to be critical programmatic approaches to ensure the high level

of trauma and lack of “self-worth and feeling of usefulness” do not result in even higher levels of violence, including SGBV.

- **Difficulties with transparency** and information sharing were noted as of concern. The vast size, and rapid flow of new arrivals sees difficulties in having commonly understood information shared on available services and procedures across settlements. Women and girls report even more difficulties than men and boys in accessing relevant information to them.

## Protection and SGBV

A high risk for exploitation, negative coping strategies, and a number of forms of SGBV are evident through both the conditions and experiences the refugees are facing. These include:

- **The lack of livelihood opportunities** is strongly compounding the already high level of vulnerability of the refugee population to the risks of exploitation, and emergence of negative coping strategies as a means to provide for families. CARE colleagues working on protection in Imvepi have a lot of evidence of girls using transactional sex to access goods and food mainly;
- **Lighting** is largely absent in a majority of the settlements, and of high concern for much of the population, in particular women and girls. SGBV hotspots such as water points are not lit, and women are feeling insecure within their shelters at night with no light.
- **Inter-Ethnic and host/refugee conflicts** have both been noted as issues. With mounting pressure on resources such as water, firewood, and health services, the likelihood of increasing conflict between host and refugee communities is high, with reports of arguments and violence, including deliberate use of sexual violence against women and girls in South Sudan, already emerging. Likewise, the inter-tribe conflict that contribute to much of the current conflict in South Sudan are also fuelling tension, fear, and potential conflict amongst the displaced community.

SGBV was pervasive in South Sudan even before the conflict; and has been further exacerbated by years of violent conflict. Much of the refugee community are likely to have experienced or witnessed extremely traumatic violent incidences, much of which is likely to have been sexual in nature, particularly during the flight to Uganda. In regards to SGBV occurring in the refugee settlements, a number of immediate concerns arose. Whilst, in line with the *WHO ethical and safety recommendations for researching, documenting and monitoring sexual violence in emergencies*, this RGA did not involve the incitement of disclosing information about instances of sexual violence; secondary research, KIIs, and general discussions in FGD highlighted a number of key concerns:

- **Intimate partner violence:** domestic violence was highly prevalent in South Sudan before the conflict. Displacement, and the many challenges that are being experienced by families in Uganda are compounding the likelihood of further violence. Incidences of physical abuse, psychological abuse and control have been reported, and are likely to increase over time due to mounting frustrations and tension within families as they struggle to cope without livelihood opportunities.
- **Sexual violence** and notably **child rape** has been indicated as of particular concern within the refugee community. Women and girls are often walking long distances alone, and waiting for long periods to collect water, wood, and grass – often meaning they may return in the dark. It is also feared that child prostitution and survival sex are emerging amongst the settlements.
- **Sexual exploitation and abuse** of refugee communities by aid workers, contractors, and volunteers is already being reported. The hugely dispersed settlements, the high dependency of agencies on volunteers, and the desperate situation of many refugees leave them vulnerable to continued harassment and exploitation.
- **Child marriage** was high in South Sudan before displacement (52% of girls married before 18, and 9% before they were 15 in 2016).<sup>1</sup> The potential for girl child marriage to increase as a strategy of the community for both protection reasons, and financial reasons is high.

## Shelter

A number of gendered issues regarding the shelter arrangements in the settlements arose, including:

- **Gender blind distributions of shelter kits** have lead to potentially harmful situations. For example, a two-person household is distributed one sleeping mat, regardless of the make-up of the family. This was causing significant distress for fathers travelling alone with their daughters.

- Additionally, no extra tarpaulin to create **separate sleeping spaces** within shelters have been provided, raising issues for the community in regards to dignity, privacy, and appropriate sleeping arrangements within families.
- **Security of shelters** was a concern, particularly for women. The current shelter arrangements offer no doors, and no way to secure the doorway, leading to fear of rape and robbery.
- Whilst particular PSNs are being offered the **construction** of their temporary shelter, unsurprisingly many of those outside of this category are still struggling to erect their shelters. This research identified a number of elderly women travelling alone who are particularly vulnerable, as well as many others (particularly women headed households, and children headed households) who are either incapable, or unsure of how to construct safe structures that can offer dignity, privacy, and shelter.
- A number of women reported having their **shelter kits and belongings stolen** from them, and therefore they have been left with nothing. This evolved from a variety of situations, including male relatives leaving them once they had the plot (and taking the belongings), and robbery.

## WASH

There are many gender issues associated with the WASH sector, some of which are mentioned above under protection. Of critical importance however is the lack of menstrual hygiene management options for women and girls. This came up as a recurrent issue during this RGA but CARE staff are confronted with this challenge all the time. We have evidence of women cutting blankets received in their NFI kits to use as pads, men beating their wives or female partners for using these blankets for their menstruation, girls fighting during distribution of sanitary pads as quantities were insufficient to serve all girls, “women sitting in the sand for three days” when having no option.....

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<sup>1</sup> Girls Not Brides (2016). South Sudan: Child Marriage Rates. <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/childmarriage/south-sudan/>