

Voices of the people: "Security is the most important thing"

Findings from MSF survey
in the Malakal UN Protection
of Civilian site



UN peacekeepers stand guard, while site residents enjoy a game of football

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Note: This is an abridged version of the survey report. If you are interested in receiving the detailed report, you can write at: msfe-juba-hao@barcelona.msf.org

Introduction

The future of the Internally Displaced People (IDPs) living in the Malakal Protection of Civilians (PoC) site has been vigorously debated by stakeholders involved in its creation, management and the provision of security. Yet, central to any discussion must be the voice of the IDPs, which have largely been marginalised. It is essential that policy makers that are planning the future of Malakal PoC should not adopt a paternalistic approach, especially if the IDP population is to lead a safe and dignified existence within the PoC.

The debate took on a new urgency after the attacks of the 17 - 18 February, when an external military force entered the site, leaving between 25 and 65 people dead (including 2 MSF staff), 108 injured and over 29,000 IDPs displaced. The world's eyes were opened to the challenges of life inside and outside the PoC as well as the constant insecurity existing in the Upper Nile Region.

With this survey, conducted between 19 - 23 May, Médecins Sans Frontières – Doctors Without Borders (MSF), is trying to give the people of Malakal PoC site a voice, so that they can contribute to planning their own future. Without this input mistakes will continue to be made on security and the development of the camp.

Methodology

The sample taken for this survey includes 108 respondents, 65 women and 43 men, which roughly reflects the gender composition of the PoC site. The camp is treated as one coherent unit. We used spatial images of the POC, to randomly select two households in each block, including those inside the UN log base at the time¹. Within each household, we wanted to survey one male adult and one female adult.

Where only one member could be found at home, we revisited the household up to three times. In most cases, responses are reported at a 95 per cent confidence interval and a 10 per cent margin of error for an estimated population of 40,000. Our survey data was complemented by 10 semi-structured interviews. Interviewees were selected from all sectors and care was taken to ensure proportional representation of women and men². The report is broken into three sections: violence and insecurity, living conditions and people's decision to return.

¹ For the purposes of the survey, PoC settlements inside the UN log base were treated as blocks, with PoC 3 and 4 taken as one block, given the extremely low population numbers in PoC 4.

² Six women and four men were interviewed.

Section 1: Violence and insecurity

"I came because of the crisis. War reached my area. I saw the fighting. I saw the warring parties; my uncle was shot in front of me". Male, 39 years

The findings show that violence and insecurity are the biggest concerns for people at the site. Safety was a main reason why people originally came to the Malakal PoC site. In all, 98 per cent of the respondents said they came to the PoC because they were directly affected by violence. Very few respondents mentioned food or health, which clearly demonstrates that people view PoC sites as sanctuaries rather than camps from which they can access basic services.

The feeling of insecurity is rife. In all, 83 per cent said that they do not feel safe inside the PoC. The findings also show that 91 per cent of male respondents said they do not feel safe as compared to 79 per cent of female respondents. Those who were living inside the log base at the time of the survey said that they felt safe, the highest proportion when compared to all the other sectors. This percentage is statistically significant, as there is a positive correlation between respondents feeling of safety and where they live. The proximity to UN peacekeeping forces and a wide range of UN and NGO civilian personnel is without doubt an important factor why people inside the UN log base feel safer. Furthermore, 91 per cent respondents said they or someone else they know has been exposed to physical, sexual or psychological violence³. Most respondents who said they did not feel safe had been exposed to some kind of violence.



Physical violence

81% People who have or directly know someone who has suffered physical violence



Sexual violence

57% People who have or directly know someone who has suffered sexual violence

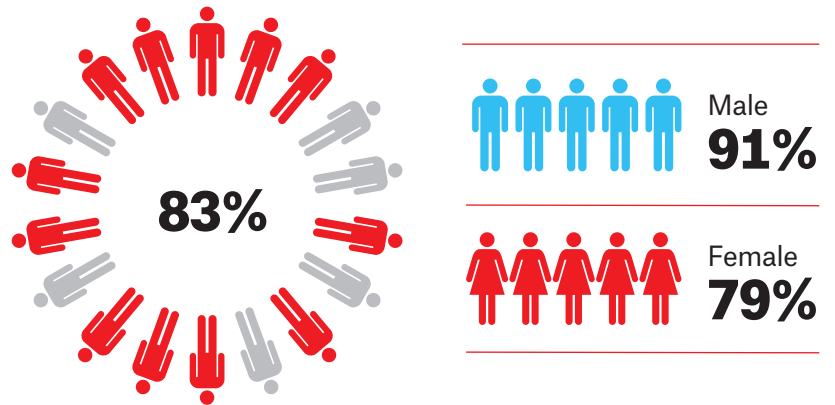


Psychological violence

52% People who have or directly know someone who has suffered faced psychological violence

³ The survey team was instructed to ask respondents to mention only those cases of violence where either they had been the primary victims of violence or if they directly knew someone who had experienced violence, and not those where respondents might have only heard about incidences of violence.

Perception of insecurity inside PoC



Arijun Claire © MSF

A young boy rests in the shade to take refuge from the blistering sun

Confidence in the commitment of UN peacekeepers to protect was low. Recent measures to secure the main UN compound with sand bags have added to the distrust of people, as one interviewee put it, "now the UN is building sand barriers to secure its area. Let them also do it around the whole PoC. Now if something like February happens, IDPs will not be able to get inside".

When asked which two places they felt most in danger, most respondents said they felt most insecure when collecting firewood outside the PoC or shopping in Malakal town. In terms of protection measures that would make them feel safer, many said better security around the PoC and more peacekeepers inside the PoC would make them feel more secure. The findings show 81 per cent of the respondents said robust security around the PoC would be a sound protection measure. Women were more likely to suggest this given the risk associated with sexual violence when leaving the site. Also 64 per cent of respondents agreed that an increase in peacekeeper numbers inside would make them feel secure. Respondents, mostly from Sector 2, also mentioned that engagement of the international community with government authorities and armed actors would make them feel more protected.

"I got shot during the attack. One soldier came to my door and shot me in my cheek and arm".

Female, 27 years

Since February 2016, MSF has provided 406 consultations for physical injuries associated with violence



Two men look on as a woman returns to the site after collecting firewood

This year until May, MSF has received five cases of sexual violence in its health facility. However, MSF believes that there are many more cases that go unreported

Physical violence

Physical violence was defined as incidents involving fighting, shooting or abduction. In other words violence that has a clear physical impact. Physical violence was found to be pervasive with over three-quarters of all respondents (81 per cent) saying they have or know directly someone who has been exposed to physical violence at least once. MSF medical data attests to the high level of violence. Since February 2016, MSF has received 406 people with physical injuries related to violence for consultations. All the injuries were related to violence that is intended to do harm.

In all 44 per cent of respondents from Sector 3 said they or someone they know suffer from regular violence. This reflects the particular vulnerabilities of Sector 3 residents, many of whom are women-headed families, and may be prone to violence both inside and outside the PoC. Women were more likely to have suffered or known someone who had suffered violence outside POC, with 63 per cent of female respondents reporting physical violence to have taken place outside.

Sexual violence

Sexual violence was defined as incidents involving rape, sexual assault, forced marriage or prostitution. Incidence of sexual violence was high with over half of all respondents (57 per cent) saying they or someone they directly know has suffered sexual violence. Moreover, nearly one-fifth of all respondents (18 per cent) said they have, or someone they know has, been exposed to sexual violence regularly (more than two times).

Almost half of all respondents (44 per cent) who said they suffered sexual violence were from Sector 3. This is a statistically significant figure implying that residents of Sector 3 are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence. Households in Sector 3 tend to be women-headed families who are forced to supplement food rations by finding firewood and other commodities outside the camp, which they can then sell inside the PoC. Male respondents were more likely to report incidents of sexual violence. There is stigma attached with acknowledging such acts and thus women feel less comfortable reporting it. Until May of this year, MSF has only received five cases of sexual violence in its health facility. However, MSF believes that there are many more cases that go unreported.

Artun Claire © MSF

"I used to hear from many women that they had been raped and were threatened to be killed. This happened to them when they went to look for firewood and green leaves. The armed men tell them don't collect firewood here. You cannot collect firewood here. They tell us to go to our area and look for firewood there, not in Malakal town. They say, this is not your area".
Female, 30 years



Arjun Claire @ MSF

Boys watching a game of football in the PoC, one of the few activities that keeps them busy

"Inside PoC there is harassment and violence. Even among the youth we are not secure from each other. People are losing their mind. Youth are fighting among them because they are growing hopeless". Male, 32 years

The survey found that 87 per cent of respondents noted that most incidents of sexual violence took place outside the PoC, which attests to the heavy armed presence around the site. Incidents of sexual violence appear to have increased since February, with 57 per cent of respondents reporting incidents of sexual violence after the February attack. The recall period was set around four major events that people were likely to remember: beginning of clashes in December 2013; switching of sides by the military leader of Shilluk forces, Johnson Olony in March 2015; closure of the river access in September 2015; and the period after the February attacks in 2016.

Psychological violence

Psychological violence was defined as incidents involving threats, verbal abuse and harassment. More than half of all respondents (52 per cent) said they have, or someone they know has, suffered harassment, abuse or threats at least once. Some 14 per cent of the respondents said they have faced psychological violence at least twice. Male respondents were more likely to say that they suffered regular psychological violence. Most men have not left the camp since they arrived and the build-up of frustration, which results from living in a tense and confined space for extended periods of time, can manifest in aggression, verbal but at times also physical. MSF believes that there is a strong need for improved psychosocial support for the people living in the PoC.

- **Even war has rules. Civilians and health facilities must be protected and humanitarian access must be granted.**
- **MSF calls for sustained and meaningful protection of civilians by UNMISS and the Transitional Government of National Unity .**

Section 2: Living conditions



Arijun Claire © MSF

A young boy washes his hands in a pool of stagnant water

"The way to improve the camp is to create more space". Female, 27 years

With the combination of the rainy season and the challenging living conditions, MSF is concerned that the incidence of water-borne diseases such as diarrhoea and malaria could increase

The lack of space was the most widely mentioned problem, by half of all respondents, and especially by those living in the most overcrowded sections of the site. Living space almost everywhere in the site falls way short of internationally-accepted minimum standards.

Besides being an affront to human dignity, overcrowding and substandard living conditions can also have severe consequences on the health of people. For instance, MSF saw a marked increase in cases of diarrhoea and respiratory tract infections⁴. This coincides with the period following the February incident, when people were living in extremely overcrowded conditions inside the log base with limited availability of water. Open defecation was common in the first weeks after displacement from the PoC into the log base. Rains tend to exacerbate conditions that lead to outbreaks of diseases. The onset of the current rainy season could lead to an increase in communicable diseases.

Last year, for example, MSF saw a dramatic increase in patients during the rainy season, when cases of malaria more than doubled from August 2015 to November 2015 (557 in August to 1153 in November). Furthermore, overcrowding also impacts the availability of latrines and drinking water, where in some sections of the camp one latrine is shared by 60 people, and water availability can be as low as 10 litres per person per day. Minimum humanitarian standards suggest that one latrine should not be shared by more than 20 people and every person should have access to at least 15 litres of water per day.

All respondents said they would not move to Sector 5 without a guarantee of protection, while 67 per cent of respondents said they would if protection was guaranteed⁵.

⁴ Diarrhoea cases increased from 7 in February 2016 to 64 in April 2016. Likewise, cases of lower respiratory tract infections increased from 304 in February 2016 to 408.

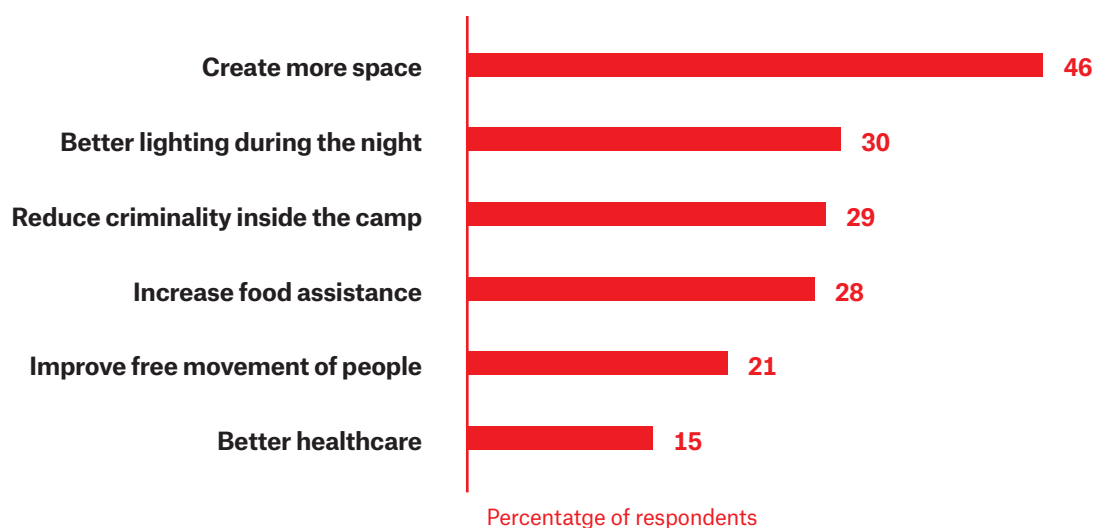
⁵ To improve living standards, MSF and other humanitarian actors, most notably IOM, have been advocating for the development of an extra space adjacent to the PoC, which is commonly called Sector 5. Earlier, UNMISS allowed for the development of the land but would not guarantee protection of the new space. In late April this year, it demanded that all construction work be stopped.

	Actual living space per person (target: 30 sq.m²)*	Percentage of respondents mentioning space as a major problem	Percentage of respondents saying more space would improve living conditions
Sector 1	11.4	47	44
Sector 2	27.2	25	19
Sector 3	9.6	53	75
Sector 4	8.4	56	50

* Data about living space per person is from June 2016

Everyday concerns around crime, lack of sufficient food, risk of fire and the need for better drainage facilities and lighting were also mentioned.

Priorities to improve living conditions



- MSF calls on UNMISS to ensure minimum conditions for dignified living in the PoC. With regard to this, UNMISS must facilitate the work of humanitarian partners to improve living conditions, especially by supporting them to increase living space available per person to internationally-recognised minimum humanitarian standards (30 square meters).

Section 3: Decision to leave

"Everything in Malakal was destroyed, there is nowhere to return".

Female, 70 years

When asked to give two main reasons for not leaving the PoC, insecurity was unanimously mentioned by all respondents. Those surveyed mentioned food and health as another reason. In all 60 per cent of the respondents said food was a factor in their decision to stay, while 26 per cent noted health concerns.

When asked, if they were to leave the PoC where they would go, 58 per cent mentioned Sudan or Khartoum. This, however, should not be interpreted in a way to suggest people want to be re-settled in Sudan. In all, 92 per cent respondents said they were from Malakal town, and with the current situation, where the threat of renewed clashes is ever-present, people do not see the possibility of returning to their homes in the near future as a realistic option- The wish to leave for Sudan also reflects a growing frustration among people that the current situation may last for years. In addition, the February attack has shattered perceptions of the PoC as a safe and secure place.

- **MSF calls for the voluntary, safe and dignified returns of people in the PoC based on free, informed and individual choice.**
- **MSF calls on all political and military actors to ensure the safety and free movement of civilians.**
- **MSF calls on all parties to ensure that until there is no better or safer alternative PoC's cannot be dismantled and identified gaps in assistance and protection must be met.**

Conclusion

The findings of this report show that residents of the PoC find security the most important factor when considering whether to stay or leave. This concern for safety cuts across lines of gender and ethnicity. The survey findings highlight the particular vulnerabilities of women who are routinely faced with violence outside the PoC, while men are prone to attack inside the site.

Single women with children find themselves the most vulnerable. With food rations lasting less than a month, many are forced to supplement their income by searching for other commodities outside in order to trade within the PoC. Harassment, abuse and even rape are all too common. Most men who have taken refuge in the PoC have barely ventured outside since arriving, making them hopeless and turn aggressive.

The survey also shows that food or health provision is not what principally motivates people to remain inside the PoC. People stay because they remain gripped by fear. But after the recent attack in February, their perception of the PoC as a safe place has been shaken. Over three quarters of the respondents said they no longer feel safe. In the aftermath of the attack, exposure to all forms of violence including physical, sexual and psychological has also increased. This corresponds with heightening of tensions in and around Malakal linked with the territorial struggle in the region.

The threat from the outside is very real. But UNMISS's slow response during the February attack, and its inability to take measures in order to restore the confidence of people, has added to their sense of uncertainty. UNMISS must now work towards regaining the confidence of the people inside the PoC. This report has highlighted some of the measures the PoC residents have proposed that would make them feel more protected including better perimeter security and more peacekeepers.

Concerns around lack of space, crime and insecurity, insufficient food, risk of fire, and the need for better drainage facilities and lighting are real and were widely mentioned. Lack of space in particular poses a high risk of increased morbidity among people living in the most overcrowded sectors especially as the rainy season now approaches. The tensions between UNMISS and humanitarians are evidently in part responsible for the lack of progress in improving the living conditions in the PoC. This suggests an unofficial policy of making the PoC an uncomfortable place for IDPs to reside in order to encourage them to leave as early as possible

and not to attract new arrivals. But the dismal living conditions only add to the distress of people. UNMISS must therefore ensure minimum conditions for dignified living in the PoC and work with humanitarian partners to reach internationally agreed standards.

Finally, people's perception of insecurity should not be used as an excuse to suggest that the best option for them is to leave. Despite feeling insecure inside the PoC, people still consider it as the best option. All respondents said they have not left the PoC because of fear of violence outside. UNMISS must not continue to use its failure to protect civilians as an excuse to encourage returns and impede attempts to expand the site in order to reach minimum humanitarian standards necessary for dignified living. PoCs continue to be the only partially efficient, albeit uncomfortable, solution for the dire protection needs of the population. As long as there is no better or safer alternative, they cannot be dismantled and identified gaps in protection and assistance must be addressed.

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A team of 13 international staff and over 180 South Sudanese staff are working in the MSF hospital in the POC and also Malakal town, providing urgent medical assistance. From January 2015 until May 2016, MSF provided 27,549 external consultations and in-patient care to 1,791 people.

MSF operates 17 medical projects across South Sudan, providing free assistance to whoever needs it regardless of race, religion, political affiliation or ethnicity. In 2015, MSF provided medical care to over 800,000 people in South Sudan.

Malakal PoC Map



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