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RAPID ASSESSMENT

SOUTH SUDAN // RAPID ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR LEER TOWN TEMPORARY PROTECTION AREA (TPA)

21ST MAY 2018

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01. BACKGROUND & CONTEXT

Leer County is located south of Bentiu, in Unity State, South Sudan. It has sixteen Payams: Thonyor, Gandor, Bow, Adok, Kaigai, Der, Guong, Guat, Rub-chai, Yang, Nyamirinyal, Pilieny, Dingding, Mayendit, Leer, and Pader. The area surrounding Leer Town recently witnessed intense fighting between opposition and the government forces in April and May 2018, leading to massive displacement to several locations. On 8th of May, DRC received information on the increased number of IDPs and very high concerns related to sexual violence and a lack of services in the Temporary Protection Area (TPA) in Leer town situated next to the UNMISS base. Little information has been available on the dynamics and humanitarian situation in the TPA as the location is not accessible by many NGOs and UN agencies based in Bentiu. Based on this information, DRC mobilised the deployment of a mobile team from Juba at short notice for a rapid protection-focused multi-sector assessment to gain a better understanding on the general situation of the area and humanitarian needs of IDPs in the TPA in particular.

The current approximate population of Leer Town is 15,000 and of Leer County is 80,000 individuals, according to RRC. The main population is Nuer of ethnicity, predominantly relying on livestock as source of livelihood. Cattle raiding is common practice in the county leading to recurrent violence. Leer has no functional market with the exception of a few kiosks within the town center. Leer experienced significant fighting in 2014, 2015, 2016 and now the current fighting that started on 21 April 2018 between the armed opposition and the SPLA forces and. The Leer TPA for IDPs was established in 2016 following the recurrent fighting. Today Leer Town is a strongly government-controlled area with opposition forces present in surrounding areas. The town is highly militarized, and civilians are encircled by army barracks.

02. ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGIES:

On 11 May 2018, DRC deployed its mobile assessment team to conduct the needs assessment following the clashes that began in April 2018. The assessment lasted for one week, from Friday 11 May 2018 to 18 May 2018 and was based and conducted in Leer Town and the TPA. The main assessment respondents and participants were the local authorities, humanitarian agencies, displaced populations, and the host communities. The IDP population generally reported preferring staying in and around the TPA due to fear of the military personnel in the town but a small group of IDPs is currently living in Leer Town in collective centres. The authorities have engaged with host communities to accept IDPs and share shelters.

The main objectives of the assessment were to:

- Conduct a quick protection-led multi-sector assessment and analysis in Leer TPA and provide recommendations to the humanitarian community for potential response.
- Assess the general living condition of the IDPs, most vulnerable persons and their relationship with the host communities.

The assessment methodologies included;

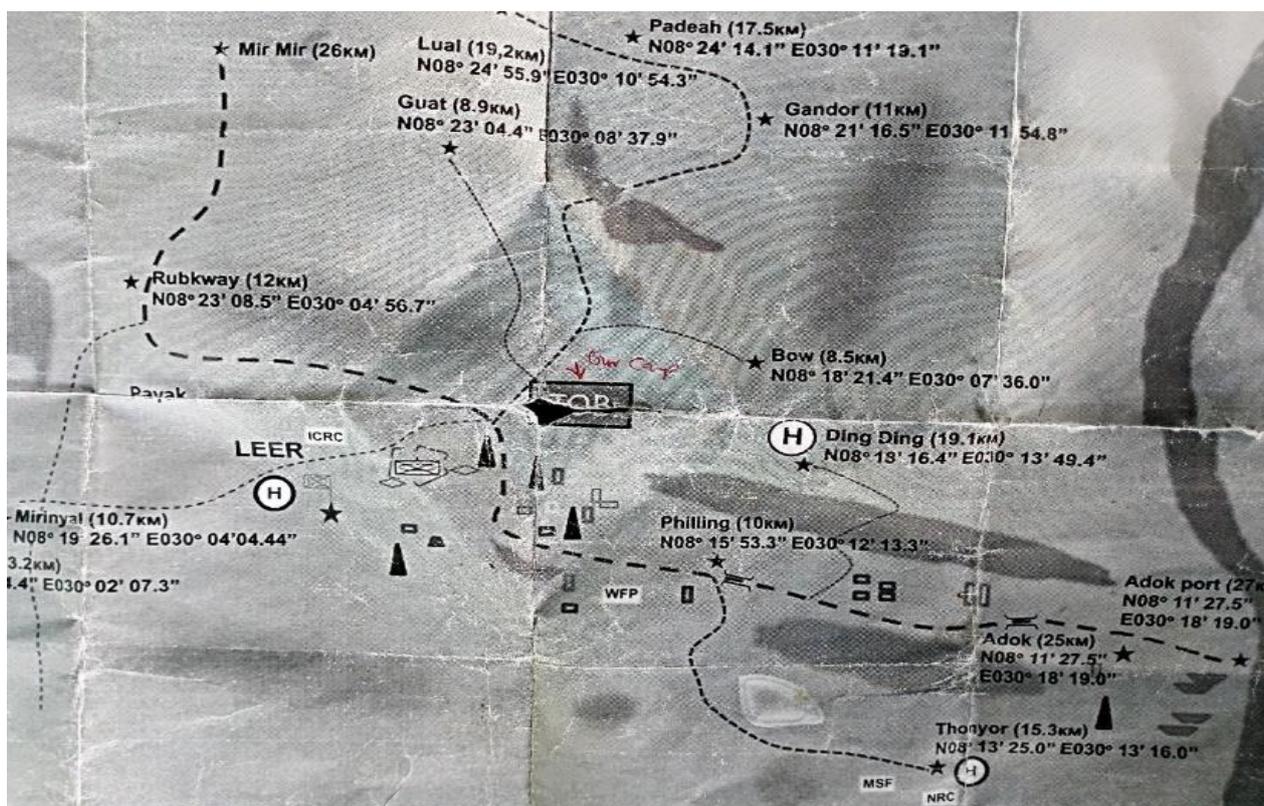
- Direct observation.
- Key informant interview (KII)
- Focus group discussions (FGD)

03. CURRENT CONFLICT

According to CTSAMM, armed youth groups allied to the opposition attacked government positions in Koch County on 17 April and overran Koch town for three hours. In response, the police, prison police, army, and the youth allied to the government mobilised themselves and recaptured Koch Town very shortly afterwards. According to the local authorities, youth allied to the opposition had been conducting these types of attack for quite a long period of time and as a consequence, youth groups allied to the government pursued the opposition with the intention of neutralising them. The perception of the IDPs is that fighting is fuelled by inter-tribe hostilities and a lack of resources.

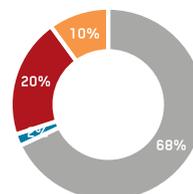
It was reported that a significant lack of food and resources may be playing a part in the escalation of the conflict with skirmishes taking place to loot food or destroy opposition stockpiles. There are unconfirmed reports of burning of food stocks, houses, looting of animals and other valuable household belongings in the areas of Rufkwai, thonyor, Dorwang, Bou Dingding and Payani.

Sketch map showing affected areas of Leer County in recent armed conflict



Total population in Leer County	80,000 Individuals.
Population in Leer town	15,000 Individuals.
Total IDPs in Leer town	400 Individuals.
Total in IDPS TPA	1995 Individuals

Population in the TPA



- Children (<18)
- Men (18-59)
- Women (18-59)
- Elderly (60+)

04. DISPLACEMENT TRENDS AND HISTORY

The current conflict started on 21 April 2018 in Rubkoy between the SPLA in Opposition (SPLA-IO) and the SPLA. The fighting intensified and extended to other areas from 22nd April 2018 to date. Armed youth are taking active part on both sides. About 8,000 people have been displaced from Gandor, Mirimiri, Rubkoy, Payak, Piling, Tonyor, Bow, Sonyor, Ruopnor, Kaigai, and Turiak, to Leer Town, Mer, Koch, Nyal and Mayendit. About 60% of the displaced persons fled to Mayendit, Mer, Kok, Malakal, and Bentiu while others were believed to have crossed the river Nile to Fangak. On 12 May 2018 between 5:00am to 8:00 am, about 800 new IDPs, mainly women and children, were seen arriving to the TPA as a result of significantly increasing violence that day, suggesting that there is a significant directly link between active conflict and new arrivals at the TPA.

A major factor that has led to the massive displacement is the war tactic applied by the armed youth, which includes raping of girls and women, burning of houses including food items, indiscriminate killings and extra-judicial killing of civilians through hanging. The IDPs lost their property such as goats, cattle, chicken, cooking sets, houses/shelter, beddings, and food items.

On 11 May 2018, the DRC assessment team witnessed about 60 armed youth in civilian clothes in Leer Town returning from operations in the surrounding Payadeah and villages along with looted property. Some of these items have been sold in Leer Town by armed youth groups at a third of their usual price.

As of 6 April 2018, the number of IDPs in the TPA was 575, but this number had already risen to 1774 individuals according to a head counting exercise conducted on 5 May 2018. On 16 May 2018, Relief Reintegration and Protection (RRP), UNIDO, HRSS and DRC jointly conducted a joint headcount of the total population of civilians living in the TPA for humanitarian planning, and the total was **1995 individuals**. No partner is undertaking Camp Coordination and Camp Management activities in the TPA, hence no formal registration is taking place and a lack of humanitarian assistance or overall coordination was identified. The RRP team from Bentiu visits Leer TPA occasionally (once every two weeks on average).

Husbands of displaced women reportedly remained in the original areas of displacement and pressured their wives and daughters to return from TPA and Leer Town. The number of new arrival per day was estimated between 100 and 150 individuals and the number increased substantially when fresh attacks occurred. Currently, the situation remains very complex and unpredictable as women are seen leaving the TPA for their village due to lack of services, congestion at the TPA, lack of shelter and heavy downpour of rain in Leer. Previous humanitarian interventions have also reportedly resulted in an increase in violence due to competition for scarce resources.

New arrivals from Gandor Payam to TPA on Saturday 12 May 2018



05. SAFETY AND FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Interviewed IDPs reported that civilians could not move freely within and outside Leer Town. The IDPs are not accessing their original places of displacement due to the presence of military and opposition forces creating conflict front lines. IDPs can largely only move within a peripheral of 2 km around Leer Town, and some IDPs have developed coping mechanisms of moving at night to access their sorghum buried on underground in areas of origin in order to survive. There is a curfew in Town from 7:00 pm to 7:00 am to both humanitarian agencies and civilians. The population in the TPA and around could not freely access water points in Leer Town, as an army barracks is located between and along the road to Leer Town and report a fear of abduction and harassment. Male youths said they do not feel secure, as they fear possible abduction. UNMISS provided lights for the TPA and conducts daily night patrols from 11:00 pm. There are many cases of exploded remnants of war (ERW) in Leer town and its surrounding area and the Danish Demining Group is currently undertaking mine risk education and ordinance disposal.

06. RELATIONSHIP AND INTENTIONS:

A generally cordial relationship exists between the host communities, former IDPs and the new arrival IDPs. They share shelter, cooking sets and beddings as they belong to the same clans, ethnicity and share same cultures and values. A few of those interviewed said they would like to relocate to a safer place like in Bentiu and Malakal if possible. However, some reported that they did not feel safe anywhere and so were likely to stay in the TPA.

07. TPA LEADERSHIP

There is a local community leadership structure in the TPA with leaders self-elected by the civilians. The leadership is inclusive of chiefs, elders, women and youth. They help resolving minor criminal and civil cases in the TPA. There is very limited humanitarian coordination at site level.

08. HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

There is limited humanitarian access to Payams and Boma outside Leer town due to poor roads, robbery, roadblocks and harassment of humanitarian workers, alongside a significant threat of extra-judicial killings. A strong relationship between humanitarian agencies and the local authorities has been observed in Leer. UNMISS is conducting regular patrol within the TPA and it provides protection to humanitarian agencies delivering services to hard to reach areas on request and based on availability of resources. The only communication means is currently through Thuraya, with no functional cell network since 2016.

DRC-DDG have an operational presence in Leer town as the only INGO in the area with a compound close to the TPA and UNMISS base. DRC-DDG have internet facilities established within UNMISS compound and accessed by humanitarian agencies. There is one functional airstrip for both helicopters and fixed wing flights located 2kms west of Leer town with weekly UNHAS flights.

09. PROTECTION CONCERNS

09.1 Extrajudicial killings

During the FGDs, the participants shared that about 30 people, including women and men were reported hanged by armed individuals, both in uniform and civilian wear, during the armed conflict in the affected areas. Government encouraged civilians in the affected areas to move to Leer Town for protection.

09.2 Sexual and gender based violence

From 21 April to date, 11 survivors of rape have been received by UNIDO, a national child protection NGO and a significant number of SGBV cases reported to Hope Restoration for South Sudan (HRSS), a national NGO. However, the survivors were not able to receive any assistance due to the absence of medical PEP kits in Leer Town or SGBV response services. The actual number of survivors is believed to be higher since most of the victims are presumed not to have reported for fear of being stigmatised and lack of available services. FGD participants said they physically witnessed a gang rape perpetrated by ten armed youths in one of the surrounding villages, which was a driving factor for people to flee the location.

09.3 Abductions and kidnapping

Interviewed IDPs confirmed that several abductions of girls by the armed groups took place on different occasions. Between 27th and 28th five girls were reported abducted at a water point by the armed youth 250 meters away from the TPA however when the matter was reported to the UNMISS and the local authorities, the girls were released and reunited with their families. Abduction of girls mostly take place at water points or during firewood collection and poses a high threat to women and girls in Leer Town. A significant number of girls are reportedly still being held captive following different abduction instances but cases are too sensitive to report. Prior to the eruption of hostilities, three boys were arbitrarily arrested and detained by the regular armed forces in Leer Town on suspicion of having joined opposition forces. Two were released after payment and one was detained for a period of three months.

09.4 Drowning and fear of violence

Twenty-five children and women were reported to have drowned in Mer and Adok River as they were attempting to cross the river and swamps fleeing to Malakal, Bentiu and Fangak, including to the island areas for fear of being killed and raped. One of the female FGD participants said; *"I am one of the IDPs coming from Mer, I witnessed children and women drowning as they crossed the river"*.

The population in the TPA, inclusive of new arrivals, are afraid to access services such as education, water, and health, due to fear of abduction, since military barracks are located along the road.

09.5 Unaccompanied children

Several cases of separated, unaccompanied and missing children were identified in TPA, with around 30 cases of missing children were mentioned by the participants during the FGDs. Cases of early marriage and pregnancies were identified among the IDPs in the TPA and in the host communities. On 11 May 2018 about nine armed children were seen among the armed youth in Leer Town while returning from operation.

09.6 Vulnerable people with specific needs

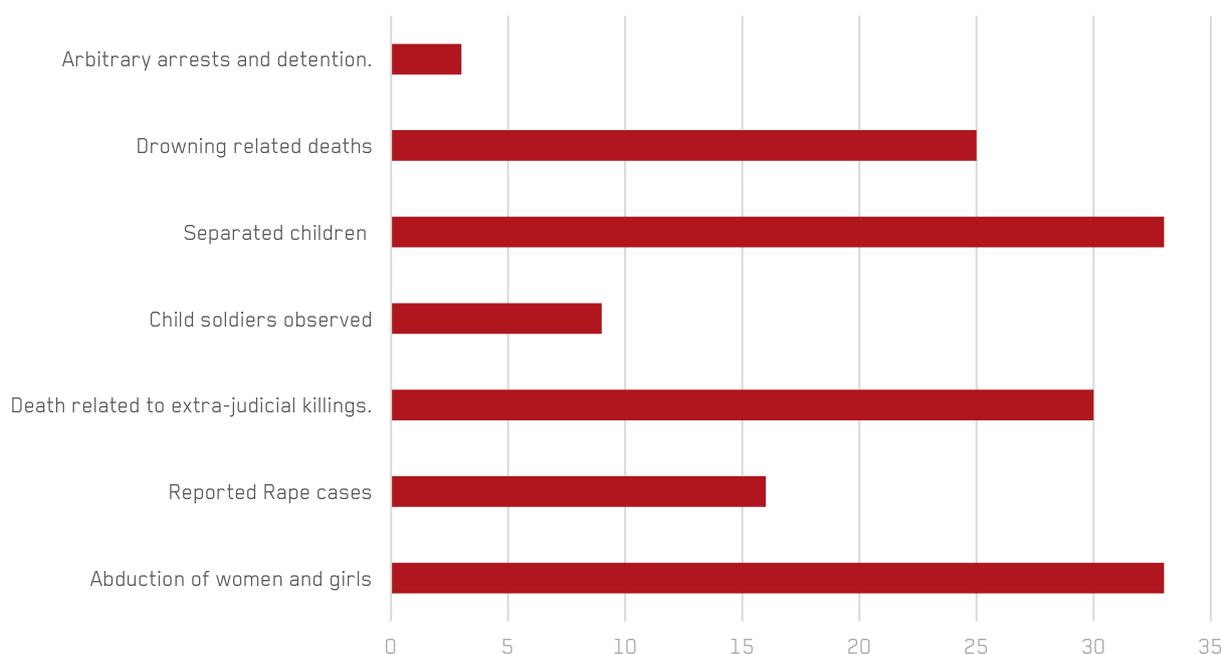
The number of persons with specific needs (PSNs) in the TPA is very high, especially among the new arrivals. The PSNs identified included widows, lactating mothers with children, persons with disability, elderly, and persons with medical conditions.

09.7 Congestion and access to space

The TPA is congested and flooded as the current population is believed to have tripled over the past month and there is very little access to shelter. Cattle belonging to some IDPs and host communities occupied one of the open spaces for the child friendly space (CFS) in Leer Town managed by UNIDO. Existing shelters destroyed in TPA during the heavy rainfall that caused flooding on 12 May. Further multi-sectoral needs are analyzed in section 10 below.



Main reported human rights abuses during the assessment period



10. ACCESS TO SERVICES AND MULTI-SECTOR NEEDS

The following were reported to be the main priorities of the community in order of preference:

- Food
- Shelter and NFIs (plastic sheets, blankets, cooking sets,)
- WASH
- Agricultural tools, seeds and fishing gear for food acces
- Education
- Nutrition

Multi-sector findings and gaps.	Sector priorities and recommendation.
<p>GENERAL PROTECTION, GBV AND CHILD PROTECTION:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 30 people including women and men have been reportedly hanged in villages surrounding Leer Town. ■ Approximately 30 girls and women had been reported abducted. ■ 3 boys abducted and arbitrarily detained for being suspects of opposition forces. ■ 25 children and women drowned in Mer and Adok River. ■ The population in the TPA inclusive of new arrivals fear to access services including education, water, and health due to fear of abduction as military barracks located along the road. ■ There are cases of separated, unaccompanied, and missing children in TPA, with about 30 cases of missing children mentioned by the participants during FGDs. ■ Cases of early marriages and pregnancies are reported among the IDPs in the TPA and in the host communities. ■ 9 armed children were seen among armed groups in one week. ■ There are high numbers of PSNs with many widows, 40 persons with disabilities, and many elderly and frail people. ■ Some IDPs and cattle are occupying the Child Friendly Space (CSF) established by UNIDO which is consequently not functional. ■ The TPA is congested and flooded as the current population is believed to have doubled. ■ Women have been reportedly abducted while fetching firewood by armed youth. At least one women was a breast-feeding mother. ■ Family linking was undertaken by ICRC but stopped due to recent armed conflict and the agency has withdrawn from Leer. ■ General protection is undertaken by HRSS but limited within Leer TPA due to funding constraints. ■ No statutory courts with the exception of customary courts in town. ■ Police are available but not actively responding to GBV survivors and perpetrators. No services are available for SGBV survivors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Continuous family tracing and reunification, if deemed feasible and safe. ■ GBV referral pathway and trainings; need to establish SGBV service provider. ■ Scale up protection monitoring and human rights monitoring. ■ Information sharing on available services with the community ■ Establishment/reclaiming of a child friendly space (CFS) ■ Child protection training for actors and stakeholders. ■ Advocacy to government for release of child soldiers. ■ Psychosocial support initiatives to stress women, men and children. ■ Reporting and follow up of the abducted individuals. ■ Individual protection assistance (IPA) support for PSNs. ■ Scale up of case management for general protection concerns. ■ Continuation of Mine Risk Education (MRE), Non-Technical Surveys (NTS) and Exploded Ordinance Disposal (EOD)
<p>CAMP COORDINATION & CAMP MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ TPA leadership structures are in place elected by the civilians ■ There is very limited site coordination, coordinated assessments or flow monitoring. HRSS have funding to conduct CCCM in the area. ■ Several collective centers are present in Leer Town where IDPs have moved as they have no access to services in the TPA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Rapid deployment to provide site level management and coordination given the influx of new arrivals. ■ Consider support to local actors and communities for site management ■ Consider assessment of collective centers in Leer town.

Multi-sector findings and gaps.	Sector priorities and recommendation.
<p>FOOD SECURITY AND LIVELIHOODS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Last food distribution was completed in January 2018 for greater Leer County including rural areas by WFP. ▪ UNIDO distributed sorghum for new arrivals but there is significant reports of not enough food. ▪ Food distributed by WFP has been reportedly buried underground by new arrivals in their places of displacement and then accessed at night as it is the only time that they feel safe to do so. ▪ Rains have started but the population (especially IDPS) could not access gardens as government warned them not to return to their original places of displacement due to the insecurity. ▪ The population has been feeding on wild fruits like the coconuts, dry water lily, lulu and leaves. ▪ ICRC started distributing seeds and agricultural implements in April 2018 but the process interrupted for the outside Payams due to the armed conflict. ▪ The assessment team witnessed people eating chemically treated maize seeds designed for planting as an emergency food survival mechanism. ▪ Cases of food looting and burning of food stores have been reported. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Registration and verification inclusive of new arrivals and host communities. ▪ General food distribution in Leer and outside areas to avoid conflict between the host communities, IDPS in TPA and new arrivals. ▪ FSL cluster to continue distributing Seeds and other relevant agricultural implements if security allows.
<p>EDUCATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No school in the TPA and three primary schools in Leer town with one functional in a Catholic Church compound. ▪ Nonfunctional schools are located within barracks, which could not easily be accessed by the children in the TPA for fear of possible outbreak of armed conflict and kidnapping. ▪ NRC and UNICEF provided scholastic materials in 2016 and 2017 respectively. ▪ Windle Trust had conducted assessment for GESS programme in March 2018. ▪ There is a lack of teachers and incentive support. ▪ No agency is supporting education in Leer at the time of assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education partners to consider emergency education intervention and longer term establish primary schools within or near the current TPA depending on population movements. ▪ Provision of scholastic materials and incentive support to teachers. ▪ School feeding programmes to increase school enrolment. ▪ Dignity kits for adolescent school going age girls. ▪ Negotiate with government and local authorities for free access to education facilities within the town.
<p>HEALTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Two semi-functional health centers in Leer Town: one PHCU supported by UNIDO and one within UNMISS supported by UNMISS. ▪ UNIDO used to have a health facility outside the TPA located but relocated to the PHCU in town due to government orders. ▪ Some pregnant mothers give birth in the TPA attended by traditional birth attendants while others have been referred to UNMISS. ▪ There is a lack of any PEP kits for rape response. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reinstate the health center formerly run by UNIDO to respond to emergency health cases more especially at night. ▪ Supply of PEP kits for available health centers. ▪ Training of health partners on clinical management of rape and referral.
<p>NUTRITION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Currently supported by UNIDO. Observation suggested significant malnourishment among children although a nutrition assessment was not conducted. ▪ WHO, RRP, UNICEF and OCHA carried out an assessment in May 2018 with more detailed nutrition needs assessment. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Screening of malnutrition cases inclusive of the new arrivals. ▪ Provision of CBS++

Multi-sector findings and gaps.	Sector priorities and recommendation.
<p>WASH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ UNIDO distributed dignity kits, buckets, mosquito nets to the IDPs in the TPA. ▪ A six door toilet facility established within the TPA is only used at night, while during daytime the population practices open defecation in the nearby bushes. ▪ Toilets are available outside the TPA constructed by UNIDO with support from World Vision. ▪ Three water tanks measuring 1500 liters each have been installed for the TPA water supplied by UNMISS on daily basis but in small quantity. ▪ Two new arrivals observed drinking water directly from gallons. ▪ Children seen bathing in the stagnant water. ▪ Open defecation commonly practiced around the TPA and in town. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ More WASH awareness activities in the TPA. ▪ Drilling of boreholes in or around the TPA or increased scale of water trucking to the TPA ▪ Construction of additional latrines in the TPA and installing some lights for easy access at night. ▪ Provision of water purifiers and water containers for new arrivals.
<p>SHELTER AND NFI:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ ICRC distributed plastic sheets, blankets, buckets, mosquito nets to the IDPS in the TPA in May 2017 but many are already destroyed and leaking. ▪ Red Cross distributed sleeping mats and blankets. ▪ Currently new arrivals are staying under trees, in one of the abandoned health facility built by UNIDO while others sharing in the TPA. One shelter accommodates up to 20 Individuals. ▪ Cases of burnt and looted shelters and NFIs especially amongst the new arrivals. ▪ One saucepan shared between five families on average. ▪ Some shelters destroyed by the stormy and heavy rains in May 2018. ▪ Local materials for shelter construction are available and accessible with the exception of ropes. ▪ Other IDPS in Leer town are sharing houses with the host communities. ▪ On 14th May 2018, some IDPs were seen moving back to their original places of displacement during evening hours due to lack of shelter and come to the TPA in the morning hours for safety ▪ Children are sleeping in water and mud due to flooded shelters. Men and children seen on 13th May 2018 transporting dry soil outside TPA to the flooded floors. ▪ No cooking sets have been distributed in Greater Leer. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Shelter and NFIs partners to distribute emergency shelter and NFIs to the new arrivals/IDPS. ▪ Expansion and drainage of the TPA if new arrivals increase. ▪ Relocation of the new arrivals occupying CFS and HRSS Compound. ▪ Shelter construction to the elderly IDPs without caregivers.