

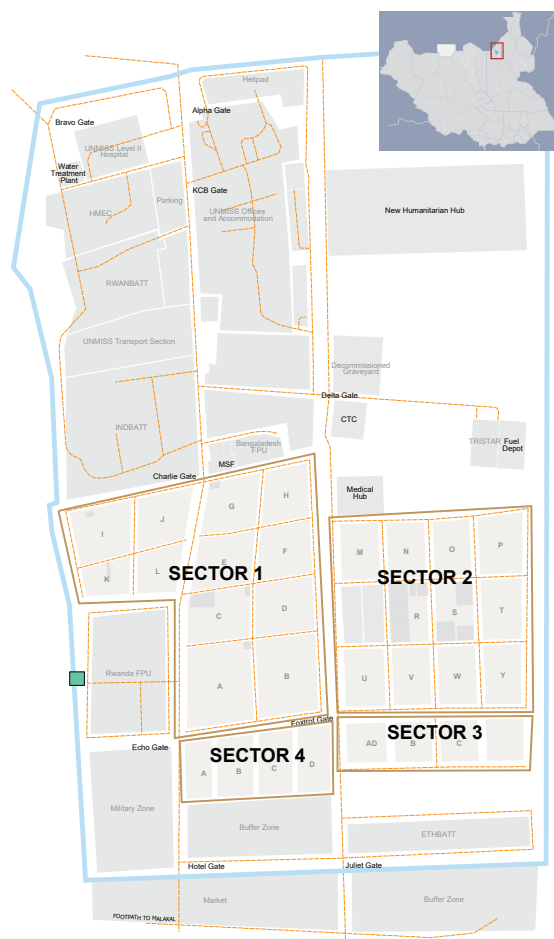


Background

The Malakal PoC site was born out of the civil war that started in South Sudan on 15 December 2013. At the time, civilians were fleeing from indiscriminate and deliberate attacks and their only place of refuge was the UNMISS Base in Malakal. To date, it remains a crucial safe haven for 34,056 IDPs/civilians (source: DRC April 2021 population head count) who still perceive the security environment outside the PoC site as unsafe, with the PoC site continuing to serve as a critical coping mechanism for populations facing risk in Malakal and beyond.

Since the conflict started, the PoC site has also been a microcosm for political and military developments. The site was initially mixed, comprising Shilluk, Nuer and Padang Dinka IDPs alongside traders from Dafur and elsewhere. However, it later came to reflect the alliance formation and fragmentation in the overall war in Upper Nile State. In February 2016, Padang Dinka militia, assumed to be supported by elements of the government entered the Malakal PoC and 19 IDPs were killed and 108 injured and the Padang Dinka moved out of the PoC site to Malakal Town¹. To date, the demographic composition of the Malakal PoC Site population remains predominantly Shilluk and Nuer with a few foreign nationals from Kenya, Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Eritrea, with total population figure of 34,056 living in the PoC as per latest head-count exercise in April. More than a microcosm, the Malakal PoC site is linked to the history of land claims and conflicts in Malakal and the surrounding areas of the East and West Bank of the Nile. The conflict has pushed many Shilluk into the PoC site or onto the West Bank and up into Sudan. This has meant that the PoC site is sometimes considered one of the few parts of the East Bank that the Shilluk hold onto. In this sense, the PoC site is about much more than just protection, it is also about the wider land conflicts.

There are 17 organizations (UN, INGO and NNGO) offering services in Malakal PoC. While IOM serves as the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster State focal point, the day-to-day coordination of service provision in the PoC is led by Danish Refugee Council (DRC) as the Camp Management Agency. DRC ensures there is regular community engagements between service providers and the PoC population by calling for regular camp coordination meeting, instituted open communication channels in all the sectors in the PoC by maintaining communication desks for receiving complaints and feedbacks. DRC ensures there are proper community leaderships structures where women, men, boys and girls of different age groups have a forum to express their views and concerns.



Layout of Malakal PoC

¹IOM. 2016. 'If we leave we are killed': Lessons learned from South Sudan Protection of Civilian Sites 2013-2016. IOM. Available at: https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/if_we_leave_0.pdf.



There are currently 31,095 individuals (53% female) registered at Malakal PoC site, however, this list might not correspond to the actual population, which will be confirmed with a count later this month, September 2021. Biometric registration data as of 14 September 2019 also shows that 4,759 individuals are registered with aid agencies in Malakal Town. Twenty-four further (open) IDP sites across the state host a total of 11,510 individuals according to latest Mobility Tracking figures.

Population Movement Dynamics

According to IOM DTM's Displacement Site Flow Monitoring (DSFM), Malakal PoC site movement dynamics during the second quarter of 2021 have continued to be characterized by a high rate of same-day movement for livelihood reasons, notably farming and fishing. This suggests that a large part of the population continues avoid nights outside the confines of the site as found during a 2019 IOM / UNHCR intention survey in which 30 per cent of respondents reported having family members who never left the site². Focus Group Discussions for the 180-day report informing the Future planning for the protection of civilians sites in South Sudan - Report of the Secretary-General (S/2019/741) equally confirmed that PoC site populations avoided staying outside the site during night-time due to safety concerns.

Livelihood activities in Q2 of 2021 were mostly carried out by female site inhabitants (59%). DTM's gate count continued to record a daily average net inflow (between approx. 4,000 and 5,000 entries / exits a day). Overnight travel has been mostly directed at locations within Malakal County but also locations in Sudan such as Khartoum, Kosti and Um Durman. The number of interviewed new arrivals continued to outnumber permanent exits with people mostly citing healthcare and family reasons for entry compared to natural disaster in the previous quarter. Among new arrivals that were interviewed, most arrived from surrounding counties, notably Fashoda, Fangak and Panyikang. IDPs fleeing 2021 floods in Fashoda have also been observed transiting through Malakal PoC site to further travel north into Sudan. Among those intending to permanently exit, half left for former homes mostly located in Fashoda and Fangak.

While there is increased movement of IDPs to Malakal town and the river side during the day to access markets, other services and livelihood activities, there are also reverse movements of traders from Malakal town into the PoC site. The traders normally come to the PoC site to access specific commodities which are not readily available in Malakal town but can be found in the PoC site market. Although there are continued movements of IDPs outside the PoC site into town, further surveys on IDP intentions and perceptions of their safety as well as ambitions to permanently return to areas of habitual residences, need to be undertaken. Based on a joint IOM-UNHCR survey undertaken in 2019, nearly one third of respondents said they have family members who have never left the PoC site due to security issues³, demonstrating just how precarious the perceptions of the security environment were even in the aftermath of the September 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS). The number of IDPs within the site has increased over the last two years, from 27,924 in January 2021 to more than 34,000 mid 2021. In a more recent study carried out by the CSRF, some participants apparently stated that they would prefer to wait until the 2023 elections have concluded to see how things unfold⁴.

Another critical element impacting population movement is the availability of services. The area surrounding Malakal is marked by a chronic gap in the availability and functioning public services. Assessments highlighted the limited availability of education facilities (approx. 6 per 10,000 children). Communities have also expressed their dissatisfaction with the quality of available services. The majority of education services (53%) are either run by a religious entity or UN/NGO.

Displacement Site Flow Monitoring (DSFM) involves interviewing a cross-section of persons passing through the site's entry and exit points. DTM aims to provide partners with a better understanding of mobility dynamics into and out of the sites categorized as same-day movement, temporary (overnight) travel, new entries and (intended) permanent exits. Interviews are conducted seven days a week from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. DSFM provides indicative traveller profiles rather than comprehensive or representative estimates. Between April and June 2021, 2,900 interviews were conducted representing 8,280 individual movements in to and out of the site.

^{2,3} IOM DTM and UNHCR. 2019. Malakal PoC-Intention-Perception Survey. Available at: <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94-iom-unhcr-intention-perception-survey-%E2%80%93-malakal-may-2019>.

⁴ Simon Harragin and CSRF. 2020. Back on their feet: The role of the PoCs in South Sudan and the potential for returning 'home.' CSRF. Available at: https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/CSRF-Analysis-Back-on-their-feet-the-Role-of-PoCs-in-South-Sudan-and-the-potential-for-returning-home.Final_October-2020.pdf.

Furthermore, Malakal County has a large gap in the availability of health services, with less than one functioning health facility per 10,000 people as well as water sources with over 90 per cent of functional water sources remaining potentially unsafe⁵.

Perceptions of physical threats among the mostly Shilluk PoC site population emanate mostly from populations currently living in Malakal Town, especially the Padang Dinka with whom there continue to be strained relations due to conflicts over land and unresolved grievances as well as the state security forces. Recently, there were violent clashes between the two communities over land or property which has been destroyed and occupied since they fled to the PoC sites. There have also been targeted killings of prominent Shilluk individuals in Malakal Town since 2020, reportedly over land issues. Recent political developments, including sub-national appointments have done little to alleviate tensions, with a number of Shilluk IDPs following the reception of the new Governor for Upper Nile in March of this year. These and many other issues, namely those related to housing, land and property (HLP), which remain a hindrance to any chance of peaceful coexistence between the two communities and have largely prevented those residing in the PoC site from seeking solutions.

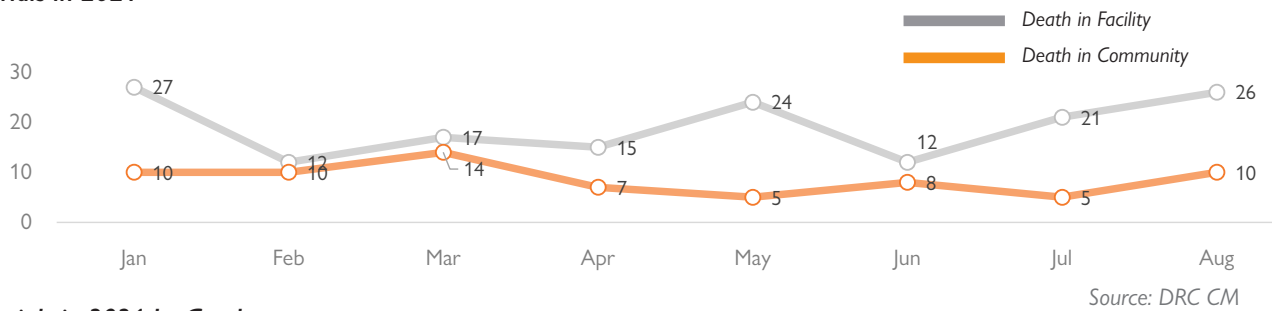
Simultaneously, the PoC site continues to witness new arrivals fleeing flooded areas and localized and sub-national conflicts elsewhere in Upper Nile State, as well as Jonglei State. Displacement in Upper Nile State was caused by natural disasters, notably flooding for 29 per cent of IDPs displaced in 2020 (28,243 individuals) compared to the 13 per cent across

the entire country. The Malakal town and Wau Shilluk has a population of 28,422 individuals as per the latest population headcount conducted by DRC in April 2021.

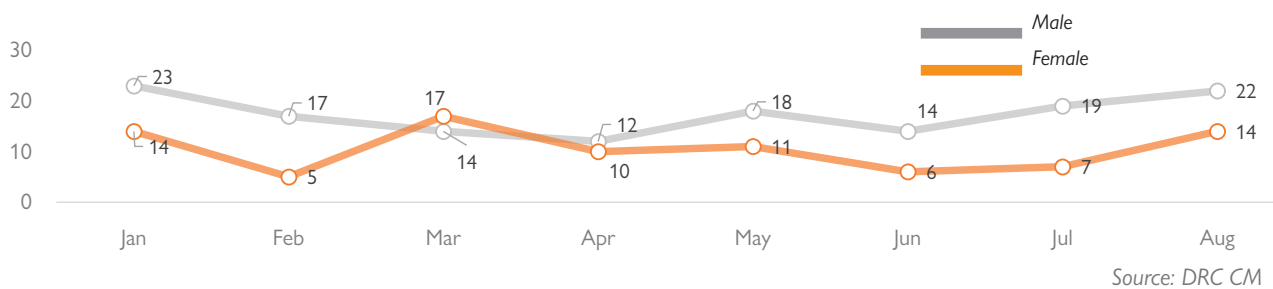
In the last two months, an estimated 270 households have arrived in Malakal. ICCG member partners, coordinated by OCHA, responded and reached 349 households with the distribution of site clearing tools like spades, dignity kits, kitchen sets, sleeping mats, packing bags, blankets and mosquito nets.

Coupled with natural population growth and protracted displacement, these new arrivals have contributed to acute levels of congestion in the PoC site. Camp management agencies, including DRC and IOM were already raising the alarm on congestion in 2017 and the impacts that it was having on service delivery and emergency preparedness, as well as protection. Lacking alternative options, IDPs have built shelters in fire lanes, WASH corridors and the few communal spaces left, such as playgrounds and temporary reception areas. As a result, it has become difficult to de-sludge latrines, posing a serious public health hazard. Not surprisingly, the IDP population continues to report high levels of chronic stress and domestic violence, affecting both children and adults due to a lack of privacy, thus also posing a serious protection concern. There is an urgent need to expand Malakal PoC site to accommodate the excess population. DRC records and reports fatalities / deaths at the PoC site. Between January and August 2021, 223 deaths were recorded (Camp Management facilitated burials).

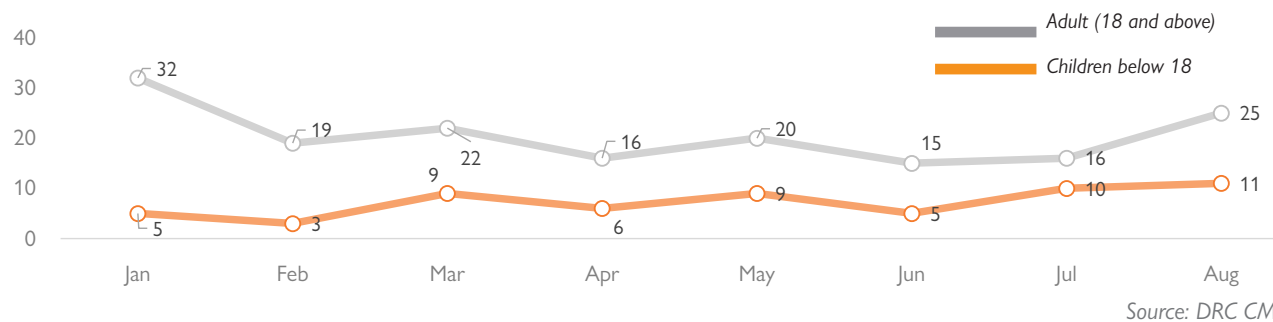
Burials in 2021



Burials in 2021 by Gender



Burials in 2021 by Age Group



⁵ IOM DTM Village Assessment Survey, Malakal County (2020), South Sudan - Village Assessment Survey - Wau, Rubkona, Bor South, Aweil Centre, Malakal, Magwi and Torit, FIS (August 2019 - March 2020)



Redesignation and Transition

On 4 September 2020, the UN Mission announced their intention to withdraw troops from the PoC sites across the country, redesignating them as formal IDP settlements under the jurisdiction of the South Sudanese government. Malakal is the last remaining PoC site to be redesignated and was pending the appointment of the Governor and the sub-national government there and a possible pacification of the tensions that had developed through 2020 and that have continued into 2021.

The redesignation of the Malakal PoC site has yet to take place, however, once it does a transformation can be expected. For example, in different parts of South Sudan, the redesignation has already meant that in some sites partners have had to start to drastically reduce services. This has obvious protection implications in the context as Malakal, as a reduction in services in the PoC site would potentially push people to seek alternatives offsite in ways that would render them vulnerable to predation. With the endemic HLP issues that exist in Malakal Town, most people would also not be able to obtain the land they need to make up for the shortfall in things like food. As it stands, according to the past IOM-UNHCR survey,

Conflict Sensitivity

The land claims and conflicts that pre-dated and fed into the civil war still exist in and around Malakal and heavily influence perceptions about the prospects for any real peace in the area. While the kinds of large-scale returns witnessed in the post-2005 and post-2011 period have yet to take place, the possibility of returns or other population movements to contested areas, whether that be Malakal Town, or surrounding areas like Nagdiar, will invariably be a possible trigger for further violence. Accordingly, the 2018 R-ARCSS is just one measure of peace and there are other processes that could act as the 'match' for future conflict, including the elections and everything leading up to them, which can incentivize population movements, whether it be forced displacement or returns, raising concerns about ethnic gerrymandering. Humanitarian partners were already confronted with this problem in 2017

over $\frac{3}{4}$ of those interviewed reported owning housing, land or property, however, 80% of that number had reported that their land had been destroyed, 10% had said their land was occupied and 5% said they weren't sure about the status⁶. The levels of illegal occupation were expectedly most prevalent in contested areas, including Nagdiar and Malakal Town⁷.

Since earlier this year, the PoC site transition has been discussed in a few forums between UNMISS and humanitarian in Malakal. Several concerns were also raised by the PoC community leadership and communities related to HLP and the inconclusive implementation of revitalized agreement on the Resolution of Conflict in South Sudan (R-ARCSS). Recently United Nations Under Secretary General (USG) for Peace Operations visited Malakal town and met both humanitarian and community leadership. The same issues were raised. The USG in his response to the community concerns, pledged to take those concerns to respective stakeholders. He also made a commitment to advocate to donors for increased funding to support humanitarians who are providing services in the PoC camp.

when government aircraft transported Dinka IDPs to Malakal Town in February, bringing over 2,000 people⁸.

The inequitable distribution of funds and services had been fundamental to reinforcing division between the Shilluk and Padang Dinka in the aftermath of the previous civil war that ended in 2005. The same applies today where many people, whether rightfully or not point to the concentration of aid resources amongst one or the other side. It is incredibly critical that humanitarian partners in Upper Nile State, particularly on the East and West Bank are aware of these dynamics and the ways in which aid, deliberately or not, can feed into strategies of re-territorialization by, for instance, legitimating illegal occupation through different modalities of service delivery. This means thinking critically about whether and what kind of assistance to provide in contested areas.

^{6,7} IOM DTM and UNHCR. 2019. Malakal PoC-Intention-Perception Survey. Available at: <https://displacement.iom.int/reports/south-sudan-%E2%80%94-iom-unhcr-intention-perception-survey-%E2%80%93-malakal-may-2019>.

⁸ UN Human Rights Council. "Report of the Commission on Human Rights in South Sudan." A/HRC/37/71.