

## Prioritisation of assistance in South Sudan:

# Community consultation report

### Introduction

The WFP and UNHCR South Sudan Country Offices are aiming to shift from status-based food and non-food items (NFI) assistance to **targeted and prioritised assistance** based on refugee households' vulnerability levels to ensure an efficient use of the limited resources available. In a first step, and as proposed by profiling analysis following the joint post-distribution monitoring (JPDM) exercise conducted in January 2023, household-level targeting and prioritisation of assistance will be implemented in the three camps **Ajuong Thok, Pamir and Makpandu**.

Consultations were held with refugees and other key stakeholders to include their insights into the **design of the targeting and prioritisation approaches**. More specifically, the consultations aimed to:

- Collect feedback from refugees on their perceptions of which types of households are the **most and least vulnerable**.
- Improve understanding of refugees' capacities, skills and support needs in terms of **livelihoods and self-reliance**.
- Identify **potential risks** of the targeting and prioritisation of assistance as well as **mitigation measures** together with refugees and host community members.
- Share initial **key messages** on the planned targeting and prioritisation of assistance.

### Recommendations

The following recommendations are made with regard to the targeting and prioritisation of food and non-food items assistance based on the community consultation findings:

- The **camp**s where the future targeting and prioritisation approaches will be implemented should be selected considering community feedback on the level of **acceptance** of the proposed targeting and prioritisation approaches and **potential risks**.
- The **eligibility criteria** should be finalised taking into account community feedback on the **most vulnerable types of households**.
- Community feedback on the main **livelihoods and self-reliance support needs** should inform livelihoods and self-reliance programming and related advocacy.
- The existing draft **joint communication strategy** for the planned targeting and prioritisation should be reviewed considering the preferences and suggestions of consultation participants. The key messages should include explanations that clarify how community feedback ultimately influenced decision-making.
- The existing **risk register** for the upcoming targeting and prioritisation should be reviewed and finalised based on the potential risks and mitigation measures highlighted by consultation participants.

The expected **limited community acceptance** of the proposed targeting and prioritisation approaches and the **potential risks** especially in terms of social cohesion should be mitigated through:

- **Transparent and timely joint communication** with refugee and host community members in close collaboration with **refugee and host community representatives**.
- The **timely expansion of livelihoods opportunities** through increased access to farming inputs, farmland, livestock, vocational trainings, finance, entrepreneurship development, etc.
- The establishment of an **effective joint appeals mechanism**, ensuring sufficient staff capacities for:
  - **Appeals intake** (e.g. help desk staff)
  - **Appeals data management** (including referrals to field-level focal points for further follow-up)
  - **Protection case management**
- Continued support to **peaceful coexistence initiatives** that strengthen communication and coordination between refugee and host communities.

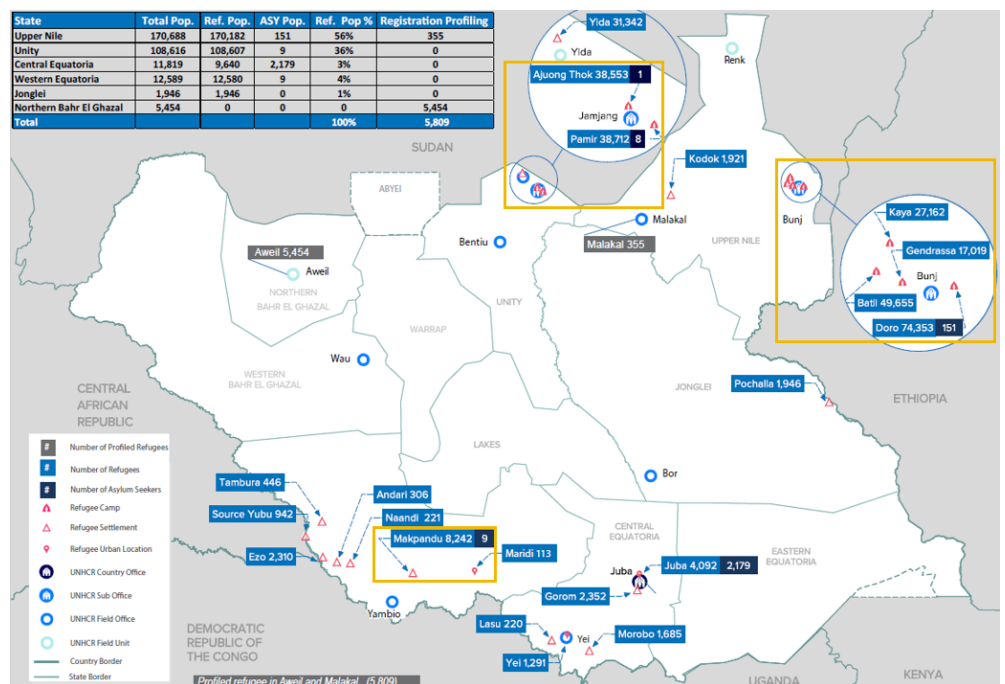
## Methodology

Refugees and other key stakeholders were consulted in and around the refugee camps **Ajuong Thok, Pamir and Makpandu** from **17 to 20 July**, and in **Doro, Batil (including participants from Gendrassa) and Kaya** from **6 to 8 September**. Ajuong Thok and Pamir are located in **Jamjang** county, Makpandu in **Yambio** county, while Doro, Batil, Kaya and Gendrassa are located in **Maban** county.

Originally, the aim was to also carry out consultations in the Gorom refugee camp, but due to the relatively significant influx of new arrivals and the resulting rapid increase in the camp's population, it was decided to hold targeting and prioritisation-related consultations at a later date once the situation has stabilised.

In total, **68 consultation sessions** including **38 focus group discussions (FGDs)** and **30 key informant interviews (KIIs)** were conducted in close collaboration between UNHCR, WFP, the Joint Hub and partners. There were **461 participants** across the FGDs and KIIs.

**FGD participants** were selected considering age, gender and other diversity factors, including nationality. FGDs were held separately with refugee women and men, refugee women and men with specific needs (including older people), as well as female and male youth. These different types of groups were consulted in each of the six refugee camps. Group discussions were also held separately with nearby host community men and women.



Overall, 51% of refugee FGD participants were female and 49% were male. In terms of age, about 60-70% of both female and male participants were between the ages of 25 and 59 years, 14-18% were between the ages of 18 and 24 years, while the remainder of the participants was split between the age groups of 60+ years and below 13-17 years. About 6% of participants were people with disabilities. A large majority of 74% of FGD participants were from Sudan, while 15% were from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 3% from the Central African Republic, and 8% from other countries.

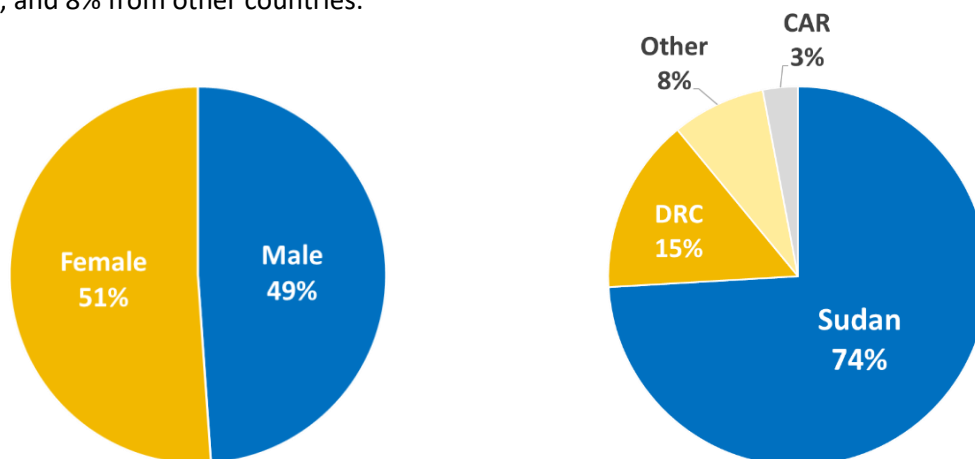


Figure 1: Gender of refugee FGD participants.

Figure 2: Nationalities of refugee FGD participants.

**Key informants** included female and male refugee community leaders, host community leaders, local authorities as well as UNHCR, WFP and partner protection and livelihoods experts.

Before the consultations were carried out, a half-day **training of the consultation facilitators and notetakers** was held on 13 July with a total of 36 participants including UNHCR, WFP and partner staff to ensure the quality of the data collection exercise. The different training sessions, which were facilitated by the Joint Hub as well as UNHCR and WFP Juba-level focal points, included an introduction to the upcoming targeting and prioritisation of assistance, an overview of the planned consultations including the objectives, methodology and participants, a session on key messages, an in-depth look at the FGD and KII questionnaires, as well as a session on the use of the digital data collection platform MoDa for notetaking.

## Key findings

This section presents the key findings of the consultations. Please note that even though consultation participants were selected considering age, gender and other diversity factors, the consultations employed **qualitative methods** and hence did not aim to consult a representative sample of the population. These limitations should be kept in mind when interpreting the findings.

Importantly, the below **graphs** always present findings from **FGDs with refugees** (not other stakeholders), and the **percentages** refer to the share of FGDs with refugees in which a certain issue was mentioned. For example, in the first graph below in 87% out of the total 30 FGD sessions<sup>1</sup> held with refugees, participants mentioned that the “Food ration [is] too low”.

<sup>1</sup> Out of the total 38 FGDs, 30 FGDs were held with refugees and 8 FGDs with host communities.

## Feedback on current assistance

Refugees participating in FGDs showed **appreciation** for the food assistance they are receiving from WFP and the NFI assistance from UNHCR. At the same time, FGD participants requested **increases in assistance**, especially for the most vulnerable families, in terms of food, NFIs (e.g. mosquito nets), water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), education (e.g. classrooms, scholastic materials and teachers), vocational training and health (e.g. drugs).

Requests for increased access to vocational training focused on broadening the different types of trainings offered as well as the number of participants.

Increases in NFI and WASH assistance were more often raised by **women**, especially regarding the lack of soap and dignity kits, while education, vocational training and health were mentioned more frequently by **men**.

**Refugee representatives and local authorities** interviewed as key informants mentioned many of the same points, and particularly that current food rations are too small, and that NFIs are either not sufficient or not reaching everyone. These key informants also highlighted **delayed distributions**, for example regarding the cash for milling that is often delayed in **Jamjang** and repeated delays in distributions in **Maban** since the beginning of 2023.

**Host communities** who were consulted in FGDs or as key informants showed appreciation for being able to access **basic services** in the camps, even though there are concerns about certain limitations such as the lack of drugs in health centres, which was also highlighted by refugees. Host community members also shared their concerns about the reduced rations refugees are receiving since these reductions are **negatively affecting trade** between the communities (e.g. refugees in **Jamjang** selling less of their in-kind food assistance to the host community or refugees in **Makpandu** buying less goods or services from the host community with their reduced cash assistance). Some host community members in **Maban** criticised that large tracts of their **land** had allegedly been given to refugees by the local authorities without being consulted beforehand.<sup>2</sup>

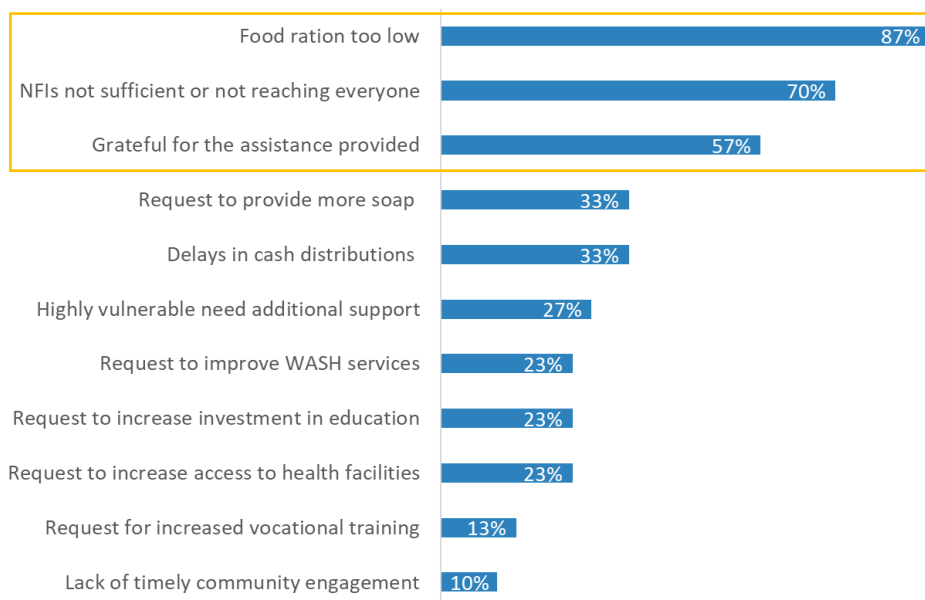


Figure 3: Feedback on current WFP and UNHCR assistance by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain issue was raised.

<sup>2</sup> To be noted that at least one other consultation participant indicated that community leaders had actually been consulted beforehand.

## Most vulnerable types of households

FGD participants in **Jamjang** and **Makpandu** were asked to describe the most vulnerable types of households in their respective camp.

The types of households considered to be most vulnerable by participants included **households headed by persons with a disability**, by **single women**<sup>3</sup>, by **older persons** or by **children**.

Other types of households considered highly vulnerable are those with **members who have a disability**, a **chronic illness** or a **mental illness**, households with **many dependents**<sup>4</sup>, and **foster families** caring for unaccompanied and/or separated children, etc.

As part of the consultations, refugees participating in FGDs were also presented with a **list of draft eligibility criteria** for the planned prioritisation of assistance.

Participants were asked if the types of refugee households included in the list of draft eligibility criteria are worse off than other households in their camp. Figure 5 shows that *households with members who have a chronic illness* were considered worse off than other households in the camp in all FGDs held with refugees, while *households with many dependents* were confirmed to be worse off than others in two thirds of FGDs held with refugees.

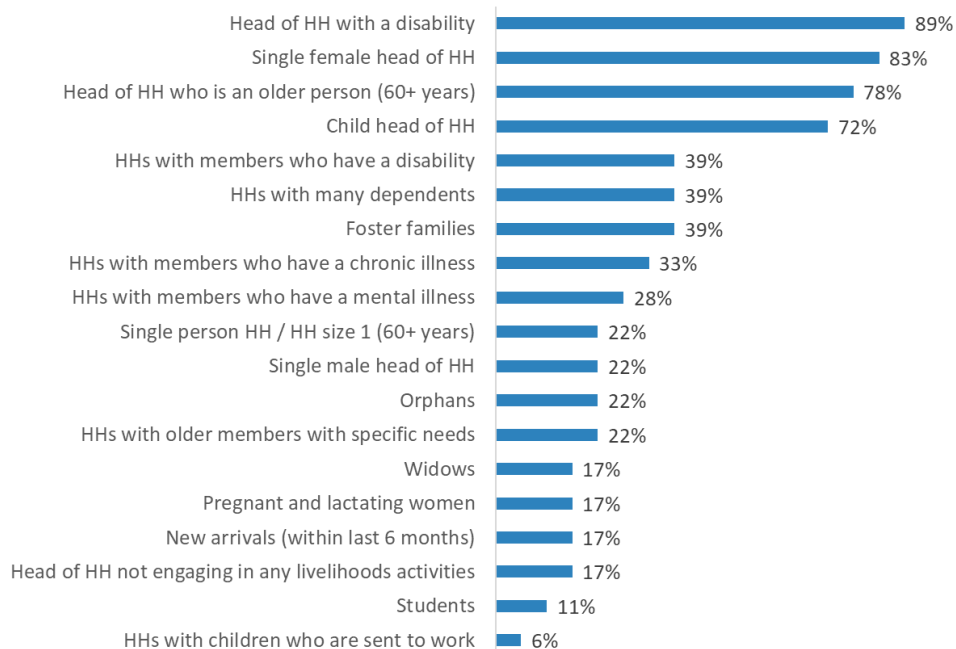


Figure 4: Most vulnerable types of households mentioned by refugee FGD participants in Jamjang and Makpandu. The percentages indicate the share of consultation sessions in which a certain type of household was mentioned.

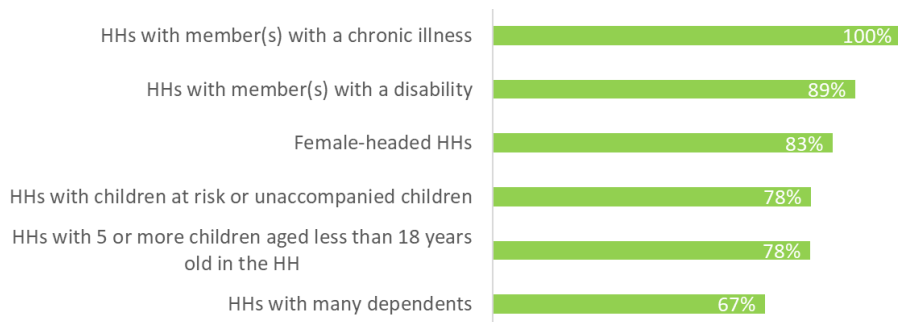


Figure 5: Feedback on draft eligibility criteria by refugee FGD participants in Jamjang and Makpandu. The percentages indicate the share of consultation sessions in which a certain type of household was mentioned.

<sup>3</sup> Households headed by a single woman without any other members between the age of 15 to 64 years that are able to engage in livelihoods.

<sup>4</sup> Such as, for example, children, older persons (60+ years) or persons with a disability or a chronic illness who are not able to engage in livelihoods.

Consultation participants indicated that the following types of highly vulnerable households were **missing in the list of draft eligibility criteria**:

Households headed by an older person, including older persons living on their own, as well as teenage parents, children who are married, persons with a mental illness, child-headed households, orphans and widows.

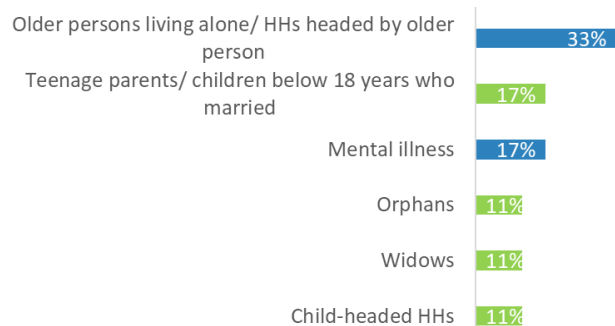


Figure 6: Feedback by refugee FGD participants regarding highly vulnerable types of households that are missing in the list of draft eligibility criteria. The percentages indicate the share of consultation sessions in which a certain type of household was mentioned.

### Finalisation of eligibility criteria

Figure 7 on the right shows the types of households that were considered to be highly vulnerable by refugee FGD participants (same as Figure 4). Vulnerability profiles that are already covered in the list of draft eligibility criteria<sup>5</sup> are shown in **green**. The profiles highlighted in **blue** are currently not yet covered by the eligibility criteria and should be considered for inclusion in the final list. The profile that is highlighted in **red** can't be included in the eligibility criteria since this type of information is not available in UNHCR's proGres database for all households, which will be used to categorise households into two vulnerability categories.

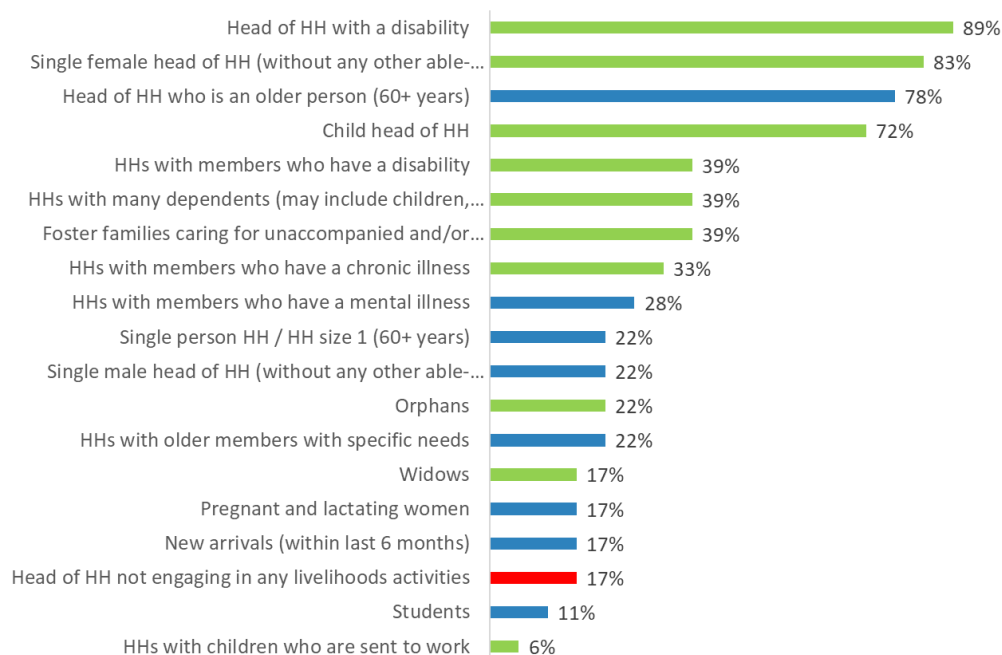


Figure 7: Most vulnerable types of households mentioned by refugee FGD participants in Jamjang and Makpandu. The percentages indicate the share of consultation sessions in which a certain type of household was mentioned.

As explained above, FGD participants were also presented with the list of draft eligibility criteria and asked to indicate what other types of highly vulnerable households were missing (see Figure 6).

While the community consultations were being conducted, Country Offices decided at the same time that child-headed households would be included in the list of eligibility criteria, based on protection considerations. This is why this profile is also shown in green.

<sup>5</sup> Female-headed households / Households with member(s) with a chronic illness / Households with member(s) with a disability / Households with 5 or more children aged less than 18 years / Households with many dependents (dependency ratio >2) / Households with children at risk or unaccompanied children

In protection case management, cases of mental illness can be recorded as a mental disability or as a serious medical condition, depending on the specific case. While cases of mental disability are already covered by the existing draft criterion focusing on *households with members who have a disability*, cases of mental illness recorded as a serious medical condition are not yet covered. Further clarifications are required to understand how cases of mental illness are recorded in the South Sudan operation. This will help ensure informed decision-making when finalising the list of eligibility criteria.

### Least vulnerable types of households

Consultation participants were also asked about their perceptions of the least vulnerable types of households.

Figure 8, which presents the feedback from refugees participating in FGDs, reveals that households that are perceived to be better off include those that have members who have access to **wage employment**, are **business or shop owners**, have access to **sufficient land for cultivation**, and households with **many members who are able to engage in livelihoods**.

Key informants including refugee representatives, local authorities as well as UNHCR, WFP and partner livelihoods experts pointed out that households with **access to sufficient livestock** should also be seen as better off.

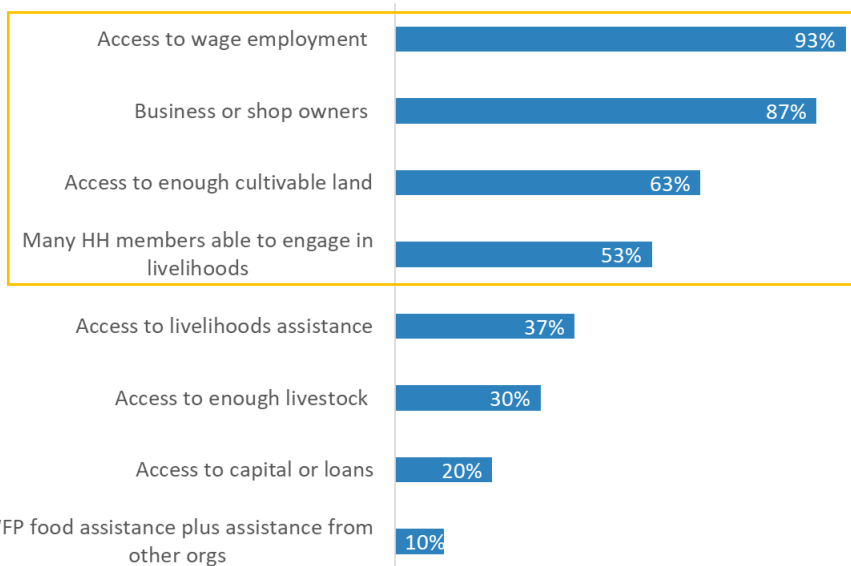


Figure 8: Least vulnerable types of households mentioned by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain type of household was mentioned.

## Current livelihoods and self-reliance support

Consultation participants revealed that refugees are currently receiving different types of livelihoods and self-reliance support on a limited scale.

Refugees participating in FGDs mentioned different types of **skills trainings, farming inputs** (such as hoes and seeds), access to **capital** and support to **livestock** rearing as some of the most common livelihoods and self-reliance support.

**Refugee representatives** interviewed as key informants pointed out that some of the livestock that are provided to refugees include goats and chickens. They also highlighted **initiatives focused on women and people with disabilities**, as well as ongoing support to **village savings and loan associations (VSLAs)**.

**Livelihoods and protection experts** pointed out that **skills trainings** focus, among other things, on farming, finances, kitchen gardening, tailoring, welding, carpentry, baking, etc. Furthermore, they explained that refugee and host communities are supported with **peaceful coexistence initiatives**.

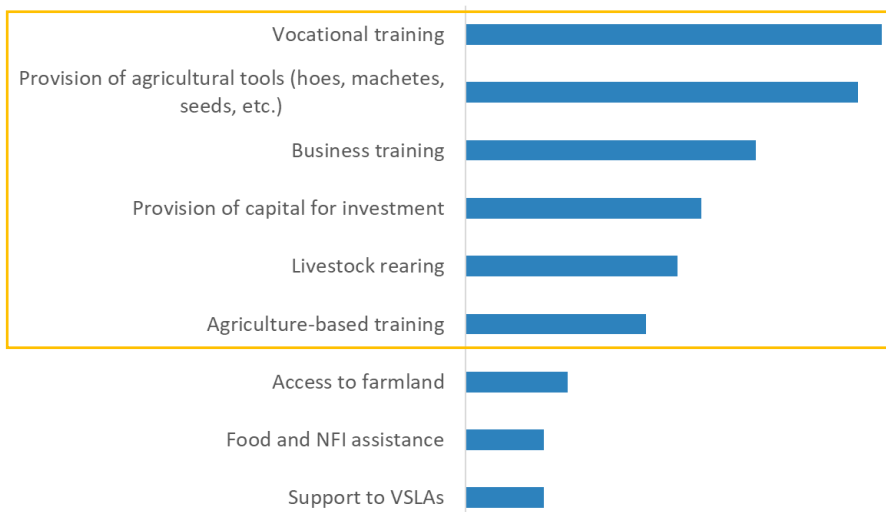


Figure 9: Existing livelihoods and self-reliance support highlighted by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain issue was raised.

## Livelihoods and self-reliance support needs

**FGD participants** indicated that refugees' primary support needs in terms of livelihoods and self-reliance included increased access to **farming inputs** (e.g. tools, tractors, seeds, etc.), **farmland, livestock, vocational trainings, finance, and entrepreneurship development** (such as mentoring and coaching).

**Access to more farmland** was raised less often in FGDs in **Makpandu** (17%) compared to other camps (67-100%), while **access to finance** was requested less often in **Ajuong Thok** (29%) and **Pamir** (40%) compared to other camps (67-100%). The need to strengthen the **security situation** was only raised in FGDs held in **Maban**.

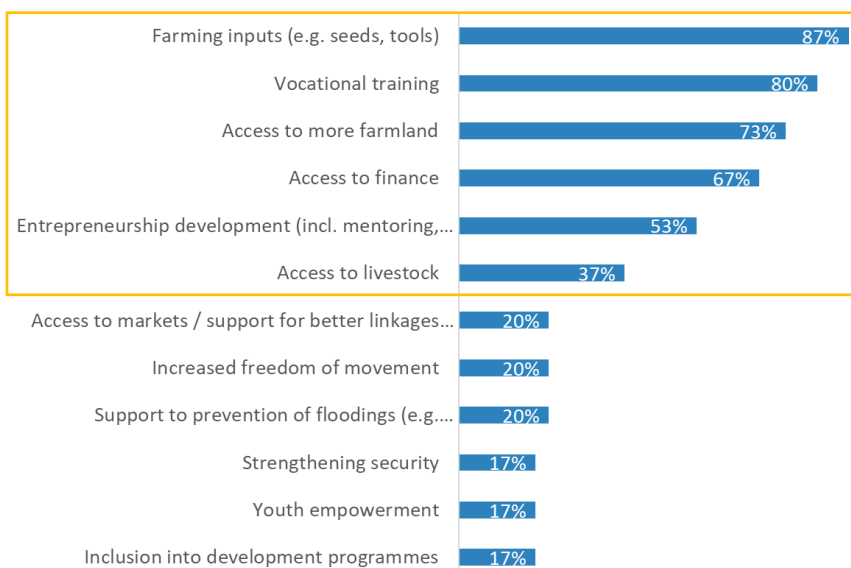


Figure 10: Livelihoods and self-reliance support needs mentioned by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain issue was raised.



In a follow-up question, refugees were asked to list their **top five support needs** in terms of livelihoods and self-reliance. The below table shows participants' priority lists per camp:

Doro:	Kaya:	Batil & Gendrassa:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to capital</li> <li>2. Access to land</li> <li>3. Support for education</li> <li>4. Vocational training</li> <li>5. Farming inputs</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Access to capital</li> <li>2. Access to land</li> <li>3. Farming inputs</li> <li>4. Access to market</li> <li>5. Support for education</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Strengthening security</li> <li>2. Farming inputs</li> <li>3. Business training</li> <li>4. Access to land</li> <li>5. Access to capital</li> </ol>
Ajuong Thok:	Pamir:	Makpandu:
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vocational training</li> <li>2. Farming inputs</li> <li>3. Access to land</li> <li>4. Business training</li> <li>5. Access to capital</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Farming inputs</li> <li>2. Access to land</li> <li>3. Vocational training</li> <li>4. Business training</li> <li>5. Support for education</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Vocational training</li> <li>2. Access to livestock</li> <li>3. Farming inputs</li> <li>4. Access to capital</li> <li>5. Business training and access to market</li> </ol>

Male and female FGD participants both tended to prioritise access to vocational training, farming inputs and land within their priority lists. However, **male participants** more frequently prioritised access to livestock and support to education (including higher education, e.g. through scholarships), while **female participants** more often prioritised access to capital and business training.

Key informants were also asked about refugees' livelihoods and self-reliance support needs. **Refugee representatives and local authorities** requested the provision of **tractors** to support refugees' farming activities. Moreover, they underlined the need for **value chain development** as well as further support to **peaceful coexistence initiatives**.

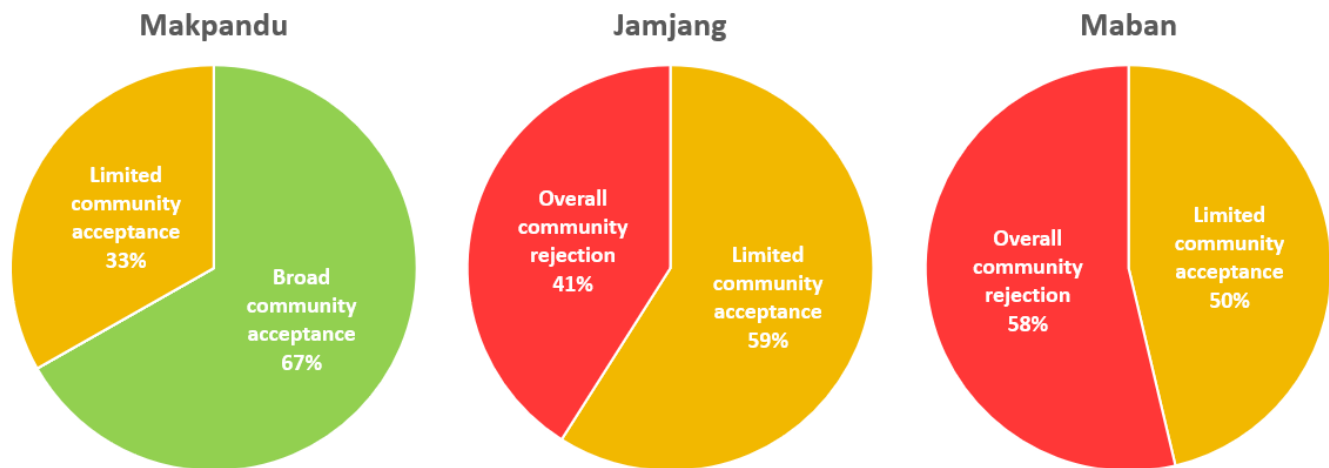
**Livelihoods and protection experts** recommended supporting access to farmland and farming inputs on a scale that would allow refugees to go **beyond subsistence farming** (e.g. by providing tractors). In addition, they highlighted the need to improve **market access** (e.g. by providing transport), and to provide tailored support to **people with disabilities**. Lastly, in Jamjang, they mentioned that transportation should be provided so that community members could reach nearby **fishing spots**.

In **Maban**, key informants asked to advocate for the **construction of a bridge** in the southern part of Maban which would allow both refugees and host community members to reach additional farmland. At the same time, they requested support for **irrigation** projects as well as the **construction of dykes** to protect against flooding.

## Community acceptance of proposed prioritisation

Before each consultation session, participants were informed about WFP’s and UNHCR’s intentions to start providing **two different levels of assistance to different refugee households based on their level of vulnerability**.

Consultation participants were asked what community members’ overall reaction or views would be regarding the proposed prioritisation approach.



*Figures 11: Community acceptance of the proposed prioritisation approach, as estimated by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of consultation sessions in which a certain response was given. Note that the percentages do not always add up to 100% since FGD participants within the same group were given the freedom to give different responses instead of having to settle on one single response.*

The above pie charts show that refugee **community acceptance** of the proposed prioritisation approach would be much higher in **Makpandu** compared to Jamjang and Maban. In 41% of FGDs with refugees in **Jamjang** and 58% of FGDs in **Maban**, participants indicated that there would be overall rejection by the refugee community.

While consultation facilitators highlighted the difficult funding situation and the fact that different refugee households have different vulnerabilities and needs, these aspects did not change participants’ responses much in Maban and Jamjang. In Makpandu, however, while initial reactions were also overall negative, there was more understanding for the above aspects, leading to more positive responses – especially, as participants pointed out, if the planned changes are communicated in a timely manner.

The views of **key informants** including refugee representatives, local authorities, protection and livelihoods experts as well as **host communities** closely aligned with the perceptions of refugee community members presented above.

## Potential protection risks

Refugees participating in FGDs highlighted various potential protection risks that may accompany the implementation of the proposed prioritisation approach.

Among the most mentioned risks were **potential increases in tensions between refugees** as well as in **theft and robberies between refugees** (especially from households that would be receiving the higher rations).

Participants also highlighted potential increases in **tensions between refugees and host communities**, **theft and robberies from host**

**communities** committed by refugees (e.g. theft of animals or produce), increases in **repatriation** (while security risks remain high in the country of origin), increased **challenges in covering the basic needs** of the household (e.g. leading to increases in malnutrition), increased **tensions with humanitarian staff**, and increased **migration** to urban areas or other countries.

Potential risks of increased tensions were mentioned less often in Makpandu:

- A likely increase in **tensions between refugees** was mentioned in 80-86% of FGDs in **Jamjang** (Ajuong Thok 86%, Pamir 80%), 67-100% of FGDs in **Maban** (Doro 100%, Kaya 100%, Batil/Gendrassa 67%), and only in 33% of FGDs in **Makpandu**.
- The risk of increased **tensions between refugees and host communities** was raised in 71-80% of FGDs in **Jamjang** (Pamir 80%, Ajuong Thok 71%), 0-67% of FGDs in **Maban** (Batil/Gendrassa 67%, Doro 33%, Kaya 0%), and in none of the FGDs in **Makpandu**.
- The risk of **increased tensions with humanitarian staff** was highlighted in 20-43% of FGDs in **Jamjang** (Ajuong Thok 43%, Pamir 20%), 33-83% of FGDs in **Maban** (Doro 83%, Kaya/Batil/Gendrassa 33%), and in none of the FGDs in **Makpandu**.

The views of key informants closely aligned with refugee community members' perceptions. **Refugee representatives and local authorities** highlighted that the increased **felling of trees** would feed into tensions between refugees and host communities in **Jamjang** and **Maban**. **Host communities** also pointed out that tensions with refugee communities would likely increase due to increased **competition for limited natural resources**, especially with regard to farmland in **Maban**, and **increases in theft and robberies** committed by refugees in **Jamjang** and **Maban**.

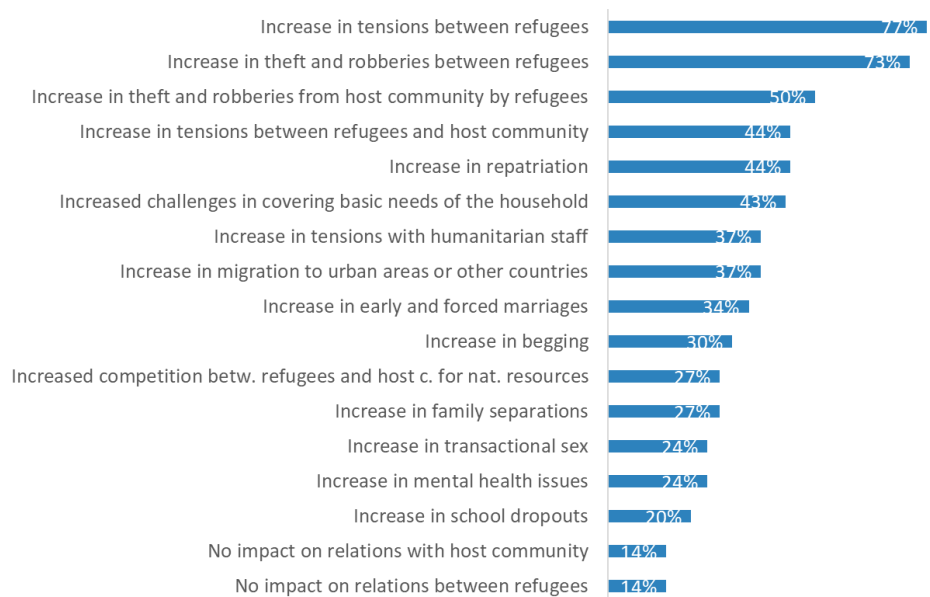


Figure 12: Potential protection risks of the proposed prioritisation approach as indicated by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain issue was mentioned.

## Suggested risk mitigation measures

Consultation participants were also asked about possible measures to mitigate the protection risks mentioned in the previous section.

Refugees participating in FGDs highlighted the importance of **transparent and early communication with refugee communities** about the planned prioritisation approach in close collaboration with **refugee representatives** (and including key messages about peaceful coexistence).

FGD participants also raised the **timely strengthening of livelihoods opportunities** as a key mitigation measure, mainly through increased access to farming inputs, land and capital as well as other livelihoods opportunities.

Key informants underlined that **robust communication with communities** in close collaboration with **community representatives** would be crucial. **Refugee representatives and local authorities** suggested that refugees should **participate in key decision-making processes**, and that **peaceful coexistence initiatives** should continue to be supported – the latter was also highlighted by protection and livelihoods experts.

**Host communities** equally pointed out that **peaceful coexistence initiatives** such as joint peace committees should continue to be supported. Host communities in **Jamjang** suggested that **integrated farming practices** between refugees and host communities should be strengthened.

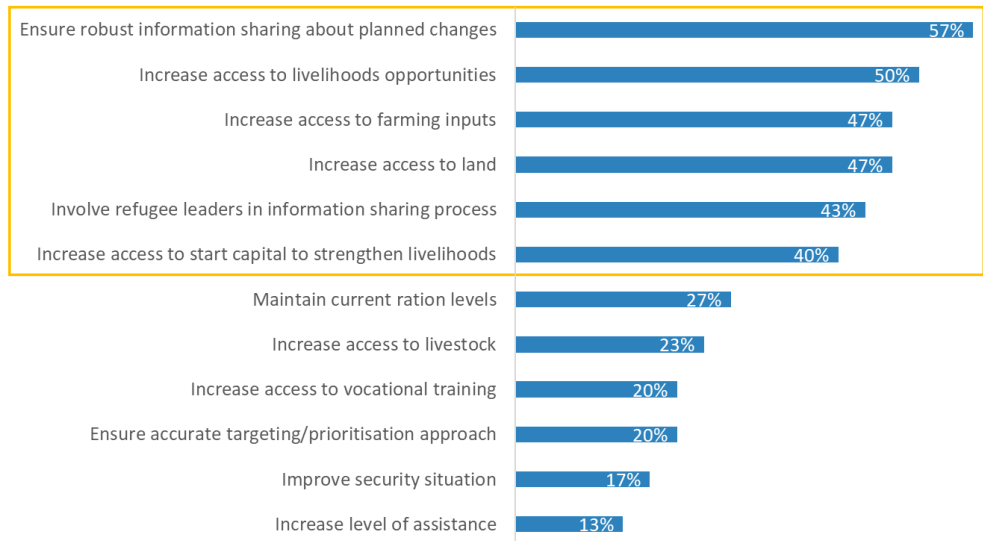


Figure 13: Risk mitigation measures suggested by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain issue was mentioned.

## Preferred channels for receiving eligibility decisions

Refugees participating in FGDs in **Jamjang** and **Makpandu** were asked how they would prefer to learn about their household's vulnerability categorisation (and the related assistance level).

The communication channel that was clearly most preferred across FGDs are the **refugee representatives** such as zone, block and village representatives. Interestingly, refugee representatives were mentioned more often in FGDs with men (100%) compared to FGDs with women (67%). At the same time, **UNHCR partner protection desks** were more often mentioned in FGDs with women (33%) compared to FGDs with men (11%).

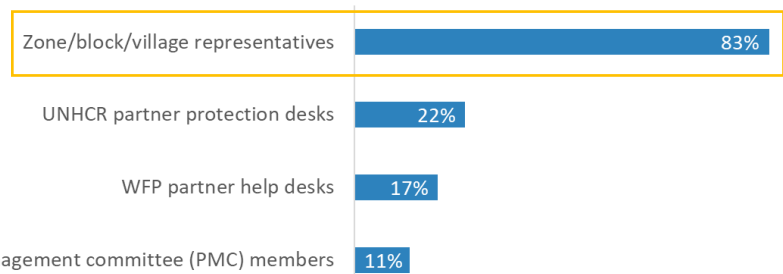


Figure 14: Preferred channels for receiving eligibility decisions indicated by refugee FGD participants in Jamjang and Makpandu. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain channel was mentioned.

## Reasons for not using feedback mechanisms

When community members have a question, suggestion or complaint, they can reach out to WFP, UNHCR and their partners. However, a joint assessment carried out in January 2023 found that some community members do not feel comfortable asking questions or sharing suggestions or complaints with WFP, UNHCR or their partners.

Refugees participating in FGDs were asked about the reasons for this. The main reason given by participants across Makpandu, Jamjang and Maban is the **lack of responsiveness** of the existing feedback mechanisms. Other factors include a **lack of awareness** of the existing feedback channels (most often mentioned in **Jamjang**), a **lack of trust** (e.g. concerns around confidentiality), and a **lack of access** to feedback channels.

Lack of trust and lack of access were raised most often in **Makpandu**. Examples for the lack of access include the fact that there is no WFP office in Makpandu, and that the office in Yambio is too far away. Language barriers were raised in **Ajuong Thok** (e.g. staff not speaking Arabic) and **Makpandu** (e.g. Congolese refugees struggling to communicate with staff).

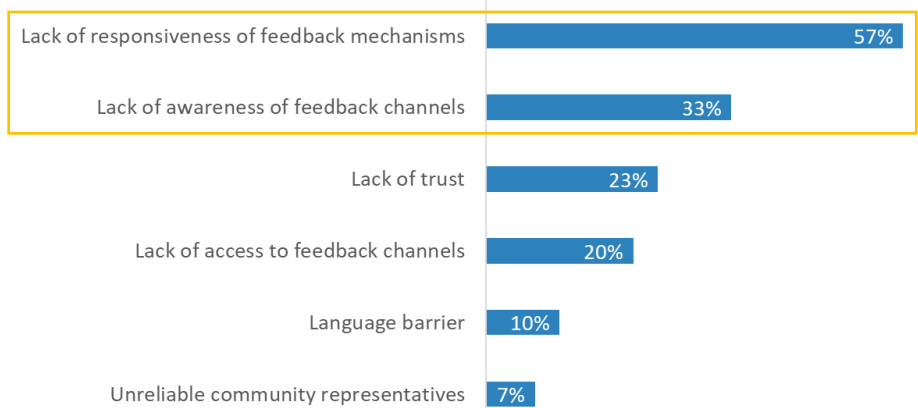


Figure 15: Reasons for not using feedback mechanisms highlighted by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain issue was mentioned.

## Preferred level of assistance

WFP and UNHCR may have to further reduce ration levels in the future due to the limited funding that is being received by donors. As part of the consultations, refugees participating in FGDs were asked which of the following two options they would prefer if ration levels had to be reduced further:

- Receive the current ration level during a shorter time period instead of the entire year, or
- Receive a slightly lower ration level during the entire year.

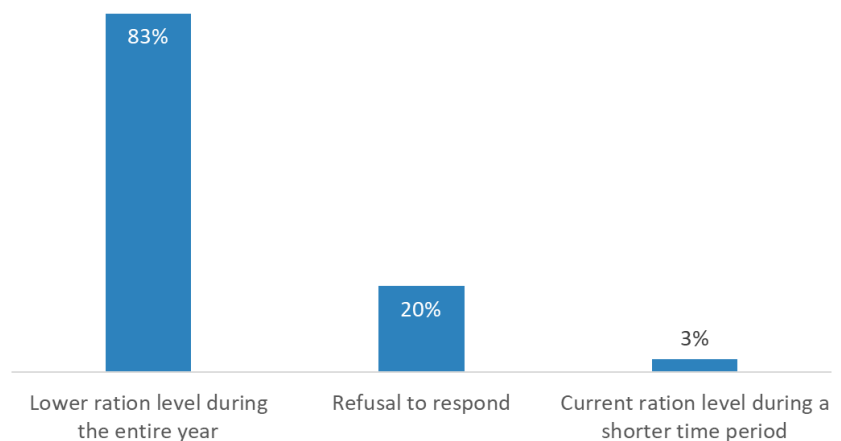


Figure 16: Preferred level of assistance in case of further reductions in the future, as indicated by refugee FGD participants. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain response was given.

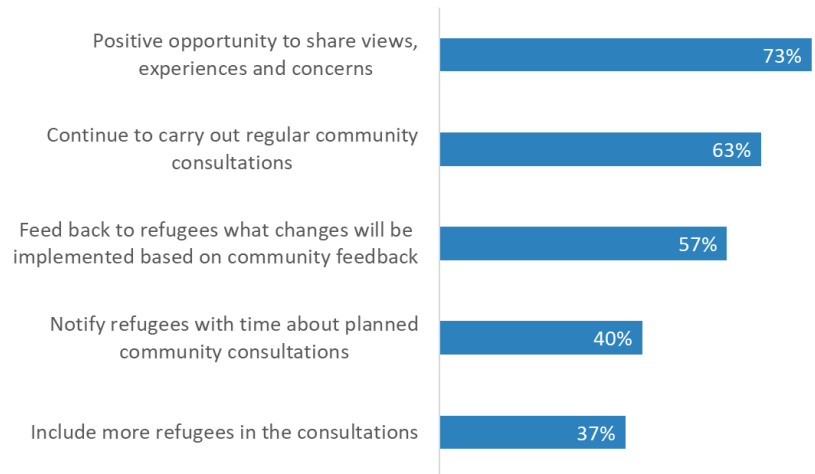
In a large majority of FGDs, participants showed a preference for receiving **continuous support throughout the year**. In a fifth of all FGDs with refugees, at least some of the participants refused to pick any of the two options presented to them. More specifically, such a refusal to respond was encountered in Pamir (60%), Ajuong Thok (29%) and Kaya (33%).

## Feedback on consultation process

At the end of each consultation session, FGD participants and key informants were asked to provide feedback on the consultation process itself.

Figure 17 shows that refugees participating in FGDs appreciated the consultations as a **positive opportunity to share their views**, and requested for **consultations to be conducted regularly**.

FGD participants also made a request to explain to community members **how their feedback ultimately influenced decision-making** since this is often not done after they have been assessed or consulted.



*Figure 17: Feedback from refugee FGD participants on the consultation process itself. The percentages indicate the share of FGD sessions in which a certain issue was mentioned.*