

<b>A. Project details</b>	
Organisation	Women Children and Youth Initiative
Project title	Mainstreamed protection Initiatives (MPI)
Implementation location(s)	Palorinya
Budget	–
Type of report	Quartely Report – Q1
Reporting period	January-March

### **B. Situational Context in Area of operation**

In this section, summarise the situational context across all areas of operation. Include main demographic overview, emerging humanitarian needs and services, challenges and trends.

Palorinya Refugee Settlement in Obongi District, located in Uganda's West Nile region, continues to be one of the largest refugee-hosting settlements in the country. As of February 28, 2026, the settlement hosts an estimated 142,945 refugees, the majority originating from South Sudan, alongside vulnerable Ugandan host communities. The demographic composition reflects the protracted nature of displacement, with a population largely made up of women, children, and youth. According to the Uganda Population Dashboard settlement profile, women and children constitute approximately 77% of the population, youth account for about 28%, and older persons represent around 4%. There is also a notable presence of persons with disabilities, as well as increasing numbers of female-headed and child-headed households, all of whom face heightened vulnerability.

This demographic structure has significant implications for service delivery and humanitarian programming. The high proportion of women and children underscores the urgent need for targeted protection services, while the growing youth population highlights the importance of investing in youth-focused interventions such as education, skills development, and employment opportunities. At the same time, older persons and persons with disabilities often remain underserved, requiring more inclusive and accessible support systems.

Despite Uganda's progressive refugee policy framework, humanitarian needs in Palorinya remain high and, in some cases, continue to increase due to funding constraints and the prolonged nature of displacement. Protection services are in particularly high demand, including gender-based violence (GBV) prevention and response, child protection interventions, and psychosocial support. Access to quality health services, especially sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services for adolescents and young women, remains limited. In the education sector, overcrowding in schools, high dropout rates particularly among girls and limited access to secondary education continue to pose significant challenges. Meanwhile, livelihood opportunities are constrained by limited access to land, weak market linkages, and declining humanitarian assistance, contributing to widespread economic vulnerability. Social protection systems also remain insufficient, particularly for high-risk groups such as older persons and persons with disabilities.

Although basic services such as primary healthcare, water, and education are available through government and humanitarian partners, these systems are overstretched and under-resourced. This has resulted in gaps in both the quality and accessibility of services, especially for those with specialized needs such as mental health and psychosocial support.

Several key challenges continue to shape the protection environment in Palorinya. Gender-based violence remains pervasive, with high incidences of domestic violence, early marriage, sexual exploitation, and increasing cases of defilement and rape, particularly affecting women and girls. These cases are often underreported due to stigma, fear, and weak reporting mechanisms. Child protection risks are also on the rise, including child labor, neglect, school dropout, and child marriage, largely driven by poverty and negative coping strategies. Economic vulnerability has been exacerbated by reduced food rations and limited livelihood opportunities, increasing dependency and stress among households. Additionally, deeply rooted harmful social norms continue to hinder progress toward gender equality and improved protection outcomes.

Environmental pressures, including the overuse of natural resources such as firewood and water, are also contributing to tensions between refugee and host communities. At the same time, gaps in specialized services particularly in mental health and psychosocial support further limit the ability of affected populations to cope with ongoing stress and trauma.

Several important trends are emerging within the settlement context. There is a clear shift from an emergency response phase to a protracted crisis, necessitating a transition toward resilience-building and sustainable, development-oriented approaches. However, declining humanitarian funding is placing increasing strain on already overstretched services, leading to reductions in food assistance and other critical support. The growing youth population presents both a challenge and an opportunity, emphasizing the need for targeted investments in youth empowerment and economic inclusion. Underreporting of protection cases remains a concern, although there is a gradual strengthening of community-based approaches, with grassroots organizations and community structures playing a more central role in service delivery and case identification.

### C. Performance Summary

In this section, summarize overall performance, including performance against proposed indicators and targets. Include key changes in the set indicators and any challenges encountered over the month/quarter.

During the reporting period, Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAYI) demonstrated **steady and impactful performance** across its core thematic areas, including protection (GBV and child protection), adolescent SRH, youth empowerment, and community engagement. The organization made **notable progress toward planned indicators and targets**, despite operating within a resource constrained humanitarian setting.

#### Community outreach and awareness sessions

**Participants reached through awareness sessions**

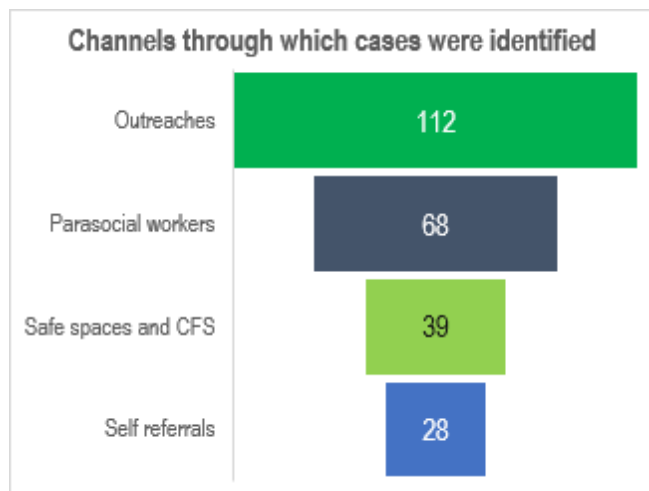


Community outreach and awareness activities were largely implemented as planned, with sensitization sessions reaching a wide cross-section of the community, including women, men, youth, and local leaders. WCAYI reached a total of 1,121 (Female – 703, Male – 418) inclusive of 1,009 refugees and 112 host community members during this reporting period. These awareness sessions focused on Gender-Based Violence (GBV) prevention, child protection, and sexual and reproductive health (SRH). This has contributed to wider information dissemination within

the communities we serve, more open discussions on previously sensitive topics, and a growing willingness among community members to seek support. In terms of protection case identification and referrals, there has been a

noticeable upsurge in the number of GBV and child protection cases identified and referred, issues identified, documented, referred and escalated for further action. Community members, including children and caregivers, are becoming more proactive in reporting cases, suggesting reduced stigma and increased confidence in confidentiality and response systems. The rise in identified cases is not necessarily indicative of increased incidence, but rather improved detection and reporting, which is a positive sign of program effectiveness. Youth engagement and participation have also increased, with more young people actively involved in peer education, community dialogues, and outreach initiatives.

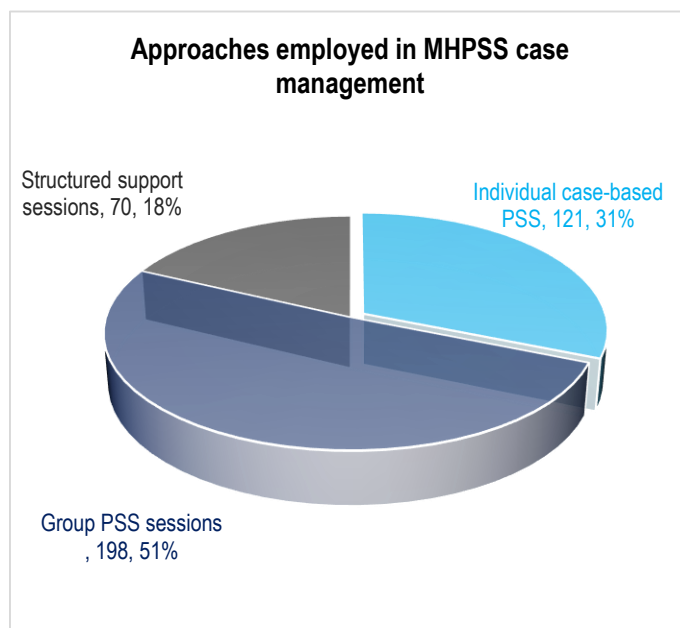
### Child protection case management



During the reporting period, WCAYI strengthened community-based mechanisms for the early identification of vulnerable children through outreach activities, safe spaces, and the engagement of para-social workers. A total of 247 Child Protection (CP) cases were identified. The majority of these cases were reached through community outreach and home visits (112 cases, 45%), followed by para-social workers and community structures (68 cases, 28%), while safe spaces and child-friendly activities accounted for 39 cases (16%). Notably, 28 cases (11%) were identified through self-referrals by children and caregivers, demonstrating growing community trust and awareness

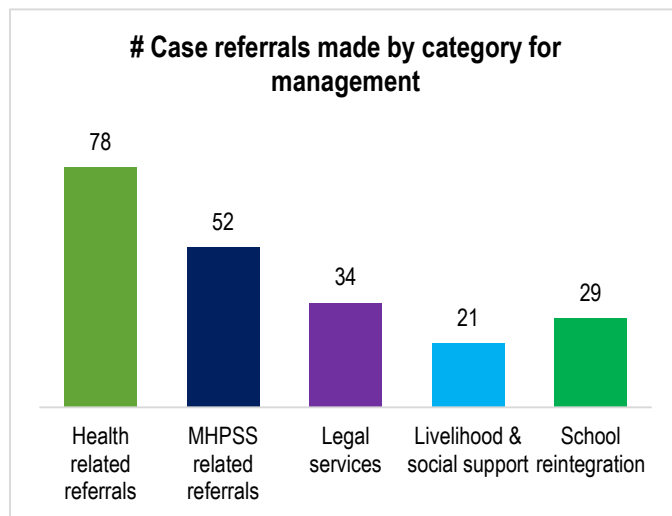
of available protection services. The most common child protection concerns identified included child neglect and abuse, child marriage and teenage pregnancy, school dropout, psychosocial distress, and child labour.

### Mental health and psychosocial support



In response to the identified needs, WCAYI provided layered psychosocial support (PSS) services to both children and caregivers to address emotional distress and promote wellbeing. A total of 389 individuals were reached through various PSS interventions. This included 121 beneficiaries receiving individual case-based PSS, 198 participants engaged in group PSS sessions through child-friendly spaces and peer support groups, and 70 caregivers participating in structured support sessions. These interventions focused on strengthening trauma coping mechanisms, enhancing emotional resilience, building social support networks, and improving caregiver-child relationships, thereby contributing to improved mental and social wellbeing among beneficiaries.

### Case Referrals for further management and support



To ensure that children and families accessed comprehensive and specialized services beyond WCAYI's direct support, a total of 214 referrals were made across multiple sectors. The majority of referrals were directed towards health and medical services (78 cases), followed by specialized PSS/MHPSS services (52 cases), child protection and legal services (34 cases), education support including school reintegration (29 cases), and livelihood and social support services (21 cases). These referrals highlight the multi-sectoral nature of vulnerabilities faced by children and the importance of coordinated service delivery.

A notable proportion of referrals were initiated directly by beneficiaries themselves, with 36 cases (17% of total referrals) categorized as self-referrals. These were primarily driven by adolescent girls seeking support for gender-based violence (GBV) related concerns, psychosocial distress, and risks of early marriage. Caregivers also increasingly sought assistance for issues such as child neglect and school reintegration. The rise in walk-in cases at WCAYI safe spaces and offices further reflects increased community confidence in the organization's services. This trend underscores improved awareness, strengthened trust in confidentiality and support systems, and the effectiveness of ongoing community engagement efforts.

#### D. Requested changes to the project.

Summarise any key changes to the project and budget or locations either agreed during the reporting period or requested as part of this report.

We had no budget attached to these activities since no funding has been received

#### E. Finance narrative

Briefly explain the extent to which you are spending according to plan, and the overall plans until the end March 2026. Please include any exchange gains realized during the reporting period.

We have no expenditures attached to this particular reporting period because most of the activities conducted and achievements stated herein have been largely on voluntary basis.

#### F. Risk

Explain the risk trajectory, how the risks have been monitored in the month/quarter and whether increased or reduced. Report any new risks identified during the period. Specifically report on safeguarding and fraud risks.

No operationally threatening risk was identified in this period, especially those regarding safeguarding.

#### G. Fraud

### Annex 1: Success Stories/ Humanitarian impact stories from the project

How many frauds involving have been reported to you during the period, what action has been taken and what general details can you provide?

WCYI have not registered any cases of fraud within this period but we remain committed to our principle of zero tolerance to fraud in all we do and all the volunteers and management are highly encouraged to uphold this principle in the way we act, operate and involve with all our beneficiaries and partners.

### **H. Safeguarding**

How many safeguarding incidents have been reported to you during the period, either relating to your organization or downstream partner operations, and what action has been taken as a result.

No safeguarding incidents were identified and documented in this reporting. However, we remain highly vigilant while maintaining an all the time presence on the ground/within the communities we work with to identify such incidents.

### **I. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Describe how you have applied the project monitoring tools and ensured good performance, and how you have used beneficiary and key stakeholder's feedback in project delivery.

During the reporting period, the Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAYI) demonstrated strong performance across its core program areas of child protection, GBV prevention and response, girls' education, and women's economic empowerment including advocacy, peacebuilding and social cohesion. This progress is largely attributed to WCAYI's commitment to community-centered programming and continuous integration of beneficiary and stakeholder feedback into project design and implementation.

#### **Program Performance Overview**

WCAYI recorded steady improvements in case identification, referral, and follow-up systems, particularly in child protection and GBV response. Increased community awareness and engagement contributed to a rise in reported cases, reflecting improved trust and accessibility of services. Referral pathways became more functional and timelier, enabling beneficiaries to access multi-sectoral services including psychosocial support, health care, and legal assistance.

In girls' education and empowerment, WCAYI facilitated targeted dialogue sessions with adolescent girls, which enhanced understanding of the barriers affecting school attendance and participation. Similarly, in the economic empowerment component, VSLA groups demonstrated increased participation, savings, and internal accountability, contributing to improved household resilience.

Across all sectors, WCAYI maintained consistent follow-up and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring that services delivered translated into tangible improvements in safety, well-being, and livelihoods.

#### **Use of beneficiary feedback**

WCAYI actively created and utilized multiple feedback channels to ensure that beneficiary voices directly informed project delivery. These included:

- Community dialogue sessions (especially with women, girls, and youth)
- Focus group discussions and informal consultations

- Feedback and complaint mechanisms (face to face complaint Response and direct reporting through community structures)

Feedback gathered from adolescent girls ahead of school reopening, for example, directly influenced program priorities. Concerns related to menstrual health, safety, and lack of scholastic materials informed the need to scale up dignity kit distribution, strengthen protection messaging, and advocate for education support.

Similarly, feedback from VSLA members highlighted challenges in financial literacy, record-keeping, and income generation, prompting WCAYI to integrate additional support in business skills training and group management strengthening.

Beneficiaries also emphasized the importance of confidentiality, respectful engagement, and timely follow-up, which WCAYI reinforced across its case management and referral processes.

### **Engagement with key stakeholders**

WCAYI maintained close collaboration with key stakeholders, including:

- Community leaders and protection committees
- Schools and teachers
- Health and psychosocial service providers
- Local government and settlement authorities (e.g., OPM structures)
- Partner organizations

Regular coordination and feedback from these stakeholders contributed to improved referral pathways, better service coordination, and identification of service gaps. For example, engagement with schools and community leaders strengthened case identification and supported reintegration of children into education. Coordination with service providers improved follow-up and accountability in case management.

### **Adaptation and learning**

Feedback from both beneficiaries and stakeholders was systematically used to adapt programming in real time. Key adjustments included:

- Strengthening community sensitization approaches to address underreporting
- Enhancing focus on adolescent girls' specific needs
- Improving follow-up systems to ensure no cases were lost
- Integrating economic strengthening with protection interventions

## **J. Collaboration and partnering**

How have you collaborated and maintained relationships with the key stakeholder in the project sector.

Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAYI) has prioritized strong, consistent collaboration with key stakeholders to ensure effective delivery of protection and empowerment interventions in Palorinya Refugee Settlement and surrounding host communities. Our approach is rooted in transparency, community ownership, and partnership-building at multiple levels.

At the community level, WCAYI works closely with local leaders, including Refugee Welfare Councils (RWCs), Local Council (LC) structures, religious leaders, and cultural leaders. These stakeholders are engaged from the planning stage through to implementation and monitoring of activities. Regular community dialogues, feedback meetings, and participatory assessments ensure that interventions are responsive to community needs while strengthening trust and accountability.

WCAYI has also maintained strong relationships with sector actors such as protection partners, child protection committees, and GBV service providers. We actively participate in coordination platforms and sector working groups where we share updates, align activities with broader response strategies, and contribute to joint planning. This has helped avoid duplication of efforts and strengthened referral pathways for survivors of violence and vulnerable children.

Collaboration with government stakeholders, particularly district local governments and relevant line ministries, has been central to our work. WCAYI engages technical officers in areas such as community development, probation, and gender services to ensure compliance with national policies and to enhance sustainability. We also seek guidance and approvals where necessary and involve them in key events and monitoring visits.

In addition, WCAYI partners with other grassroots and national organizations to leverage complementary strengths, especially in areas such as livelihoods, psychosocial support, and advocacy. These partnerships have enhanced our technical capacity and expanded our reach within both refugee and host communities.

To maintain these relationships, WCAYI emphasizes regular communication, joint field engagements, timely reporting, and mutual accountability. We also invest in capacity sharing, where we both learn from and support partners, reinforcing long-term collaboration and trust.

### **Stakeholder engagement and management**

On the 13th March 2026, the Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAYI) held a successful stakeholder engagement meeting with Reaching Africa's Unreached (RAU) in Moyo District. The engagement focused on exploring collaborative approaches to strengthen support for women and youth, particularly through sustainable and mainstreamed livelihood initiatives within refugee and host communities. During the discussions, stakeholders emphasized the importance of moving beyond short-term assistance and avoiding dependency through handouts. Instead, highlighted the need for interventions that build skills, strengthen resilience, and enable refugees and host community members to become self-reliant. The dialogue also stressed the importance of aligning livelihood initiatives with existing faith-based structures, recognizing the role of churches and community institutions in promoting long-term development. As Reaching African's Unreached (RAU) mercy ministries include Agriculture and others, integrating faith-based platforms was identified as a strategic approach to reaching communities more effectively. The meeting concluded with a shared commitment to strengthen coordination, collaboration and develop joint initiatives that empower women and youth through sustainable Agriculture opportunities.

### **Strengthening strategic partnerships for improved service delivery**

During the reporting period, the Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAYI) actively strengthened its strategic partnerships and coordination efforts by participating in key coordination platforms aimed at improving humanitarian response effectiveness. A key highlight was WCAYI's participation in the 2026 Operational Updates Partner Meeting convened by the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) on 5 February 2026 in Adjumani Refugee Settlement. The meeting brought together key stakeholders including UNHCR, WFP, implementing partners,

community-based organizations (CBOs), and refugee-led organizations (RLOs), reinforcing a multi-stakeholder approach to service delivery.

The meeting focused on enhancing coordination and operational clarity among partners. Key objectives included formal introduction of operational priorities for 2026, and strengthening coordination by clearly defining roles, responsibilities, and geographical areas of operation within the refugee settlement response framework. This approach aimed to reduce duplication of interventions, improve efficiency, and ensure more equitable coverage of services across communities.

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Participants also engaged in critical reflection on programmatic challenges experienced in 2025, including limited resources, coordination gaps, and operational constraints affecting service delivery. These reflections provided an important learning opportunity for partners to identify practical solutions and strengthen resilience in programming for 2026. The discussions emphasized the need for improved coordination systems, stronger information sharing, and more efficient use of available resources to maximize impact for refugee and host communities.

During the engagement, WCAYI underscored the importance of inclusive partnerships that recognize and meaningfully engage local actors, including community-based organizations and refugee-led structures. The organization emphasized that sustainable impact can only be achieved when grassroots organizations are actively involved in planning, implementation, and decision-making processes. WCAYI further reaffirmed its commitment to advancing its core mandate areas, including gender equality, child protection, and youth empowerment, through community-driven and participatory approaches.

WCAYI's engagement in this coordination platform reflects its broader commitment to strengthening partnerships for impact, enhancing accountability, and ensuring alignment with national and humanitarian response frameworks. The organization continues to work closely with government structures, UN agencies, and implementing partners to ensure harmonized and effective service delivery.

### Commemoration of International Women's Day – Aliba Sub County, Obongi district

On 11th March 2026, the Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAYI) joined the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the Prime Minister of Uganda (OPM), Obongi District Local Government, humanitarian partners, and community members to commemorate International Women's Day at Rodo Primary School in Aliba Sub-county, Obongi District. The event brought together leaders, refugees, host communities, and development partners to celebrate the achievements of women while reflecting on the work that remains to achieve gender equality. WCAYI was represented by the Team Lead, who reaffirmed the organization's commitment to advancing the rights, leadership, and wellbeing of women and girls within both refugee and host communities.

*Key messages from dignitaries and speakers are quoted below;*

Leaders and partners highlighted the **remarkable progress made by women** in community leadership, education, and entrepreneurship while acknowledging the persistent challenges that continue to affect women and girls.



Success Story -  
Menstrual Periods V

A representative from **UNHCR** emphasized the strength and resilience of refugee women:

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*“Refugee women continue to demonstrate strength and leadership in their communities. Our collective responsibility is to ensure they have equal access to protection, education, and livelihood opportunities.”*

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District leaders also underscored the importance of women’s participation in decision-making processes:

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*“We celebrate the milestones women have achieved from leadership in community structures to entrepreneurship but we must continue breaking barriers that limit their full participation.”*

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### Milestones of Women Celebrated

Speakers recognized several important milestones achieved by women over the years, including;

- Increased participation of women in community leadership structure
- Expanded access to education for girls
- Growth of women-led livelihood initiatives and small businesses
- Strengthening of women’s advocacy groups addressing gender-based violence and social protection
- These milestones reflect the growing influence and leadership of women in both refugee and host communities.

### Persistent challenges facing women

Despite these achievements, speakers acknowledged ongoing barriers that continue to affect women and girls. Some of the most dominant challenges women face were highlighted as seen below;

- Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and harmful practices such as child marriage
- Limited economic opportunities and financial inclusion
- Unequal participation in decision-making spaces
- Barriers to education and health services for girls and young women

One community leader while emphasizing the need for continued action, noted that;

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*“Celebrating women must go hand in hand with addressing the injustices they face daily. Equality requires action, not only recognition.”*

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### Women and Climate Justice

The commemoration also explored the intersection between women’s empowerment and climate justice, particularly in refugee-hosting areas experiencing environmental degradation and climate shocks. Speakers

emphasized that women are front line actors in climate resilience, playing a critical role in natural resource management, sustainable livelihoods and community-based climate adaptation strategies.

As one speaker noted;

### WCAWI's commitment

During the commemoration, WCAWI reaffirmed its commitment to promoting women-led initiatives, protection of women and girls, community-based resilience solutions for refugees and host communities and leadership opportunities for women and youth. The organization continues to champion gender equality, inclusive development, and community empowerment, contributing to a future where women and girls can lead, thrive, and shape their communities.

### Community participation

The celebrations were marked by vibrant community participation, including a parade and marching procession led by women from both refugee and host communities at Rodo Primary School in Aliba Sub-county. Leaders from OPM and UNHCR also delivered joint remarks reaffirming their commitment to strengthening protection, empowerment, and opportunities for women and girls across refugee-hosting districts. The event also served as a powerful reminder that empowering women is essential for building resilient, inclusive, and sustainable communities.

### Commemoration of World Water Day 2026

On 26th March 2026, the Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAWI) joined Obongi District leadership and partner organizations to commemorate **World Water Day** under the theme **“Water and Gender.”** The event brought together community members, local leaders, women’s groups, and youth to reflect on the critical link between access to safe water and gender equality. The commemoration highlighted how women and girls are disproportionately affected by limited access to clean water, often bearing the burden of long-distance water collection, which exposes them to risks and limits their opportunities for education and economic participation. Discussions emphasized the importance of inclusive water governance, ensuring that women actively participate in decision-making processes related to water resource management.

WCAWI engaged communities through awareness sessions, emphasizing the role of safe water in promoting health, dignity, and protection, particularly for women and girls. The team also highlighted how access to water contributes to the prevention of gender-based violence and supports community resilience. The event served as a platform to strengthen partnerships and reinforce collective commitment toward improving water access and promoting gender equality. WCAWI remains dedicated to advocating for inclusive, community-led solutions that empower women and ensure sustainable access to safe water for all.

### Community Voicing Dialogue

On 25th March 2026, the Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAWI), in collaboration with Radio Pacis and other partners, participated in a community voicing program held in Orinya Village, Zone 11, Itula Subcounty in Obongi District. The dialogue brought together **109 participants (Female – 64, Male – 45)** from both the refugee settlement and host community members (**Refugees – 83, Host – 26**) to openly discuss key challenges affecting social cohesion and protection. The discussions highlighted several pressing issues, including gender-based violence

(GBV), theft cases, land conflicts for cultivation, and tensions between new arrivals and long-settled refugees. Community members expressed concern over the increasing cases of GBV and the limited reporting due to stigma and fear.

One participant shared;

Another added;

*“The issue of land is causing a lot of conflict, especially between new refugees and those who have been here longer.”*

This dialogue session was facilitated by WCAYI and the key areas of discussions on **GBV prevention, peaceful conflict resolution, and community-based protection mechanisms**. The team emphasized the importance of reporting violence, strengthening referral pathways, and promoting mutual respect between different community groups. WCAYI also encouraged inclusive dialogue and the involvement of both men and youth in addressing these challenges. The engagement provided a safe platform for communities to share experiences, identify solutions, and strengthen collaboration among stakeholders. WCAYI remains committed to supporting community-driven approaches that promote protection, peacebuilding, and social cohesion.

## CHILD PROTECTION

Between January and March 2026, WCAYI made significant progress in strengthening child protection systems within Palorinya Refugee Settlement through a structured approach to case identification, referrals, and follow-up. A key achievement was the strengthening of community-based identification mechanisms. Through continuous community sensitization sessions and dialogues, awareness of child protection risks including abuse, neglect, GBV, and early marriage significantly increased. WCAYI effectively leveraged community-based structures such as child protection committees, peer groups, youth leaders, and trained volunteers to support early detection and reporting of cases. The establishment and facilitation of safe spaces and child-friendly environments further enabled children to disclose protection concerns safely. Engagement with schools, caregivers, and community leaders enhanced the identification of highly vulnerable groups, including unaccompanied and separated children, survivors of violence, and those at risk of school dropout. This community-driven approach led to improved early detection and increased reporting of cases.

WCAYI strengthened referral systems to ensure that identified cases received timely and appropriate support. Functional referral pathways were established and utilized in collaboration with health facilities, psychosocial support services, legal and police actors, and other child protection partners. Immediate support, including psychological first aid, was provided where necessary prior to referral. WCAYI upheld principles of confidentiality and the best interest of the child throughout the process, ensuring safe and ethical handling of cases. Children and caregivers were successfully linked to a range of multi-sectoral services, including medical care, counseling, and formal case management. This contributed to a more coordinated and effective response system for vulnerable children.

Furthermore, WCAYI ensured consistent follow-up and case monitoring, which is critical for effective case management. Regular home visits and follow-ups were conducted to track progress and ensure that referred children accessed the services they needed. Case documentation and tracking systems were maintained to monitor outcomes and prevent cases from being lost within the system. Close coordination with service providers ensured accountability and continuity of care. In addition, WCAYI supported reintegration processes and actively engaged caregivers and community structures to promote sustained child protection at the household level. These

efforts ensured that risks were mitigated, cases were resolved where possible, and children remained safe over time.

### Key contextually aligned challenges

Despite achievements in various areas, a number of challenges still persist and continue to prevail indicating that a more coordinated/integrated effort is required;

- Underreporting of cases, particularly GBV and abuse due to stigma, fear of retaliation, and cultural norms.
- Limited capacity of service providers leading to delays in response and gaps in service delivery.
- Resource constraints (staffing, transport, and logistics) affecting timely follow-ups and outreach coverage.
- Weak documentation systems in some instances, impacting comprehensive case tracking and data management.
- Caregiver-related barriers including lack of awareness, reluctance, or limited support for children to access services.
- High vulnerability levels within the refugee population resulting in recurring and complex cases that require long-term support.

### Restoring joy through play

At Block One, Keguru Zone 1, one of WCAYI's VSLA group centres has become a safe and vibrant space for children. Recently, the WCAYI team organized play therapy sessions as part of its psychosocial support activities for children in the community. Through structured outdoor play, children who were once withdrawn and affected by stress began to open up, interact freely, and express themselves with confidence. Laughter and teamwork replaced silence and isolation, creating a sense of belonging and emotional safety. These sessions not only improved the children's emotional well-being but also strengthened peer relationships and social skills. The initiative highlights WCAYI's commitment to ensuring that children grow in safe, supportive environments where they can heal, learn, and thrive.

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One caregiver shared; *"My child used to stay alone and quiet, but now comes home happy and talks about the games they play."*

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### Women Empowerment through Village Savings and Loans Associations (VSLA)

Across Palorinya Refugee Settlement, women face significant barriers to financial inclusion, including limited income opportunities, low financial literacy, and restricted access to formal banking systems. In response, the Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAYI) has prioritized women's economic empowerment through the establishment and support of Village Savings and Loan Associations (VSLAs) as part of its integrated protection and resilience programming. In March 2026, WCAYI facilitated a progress review meeting with one of its supported women's VSLA groups. This engagement provided a structured platform for members to reflect on their achievements, assess challenges, and identify practical solutions. The meeting demonstrated strong ownership, accountability, and collective commitment among participants - key indicators of sustainable, community-led development. The VSLA initiative continues to play a critical role in strengthening household resilience and financial independence. Through regular savings and access to small loans, women are increasingly able to support their families, invest in small businesses, and contribute to household income. This has had positive spillover effects on child welfare, including improved access to education and basic needs. Importantly, increased

economic stability contributes to reduced protection risks, including gender-based violence and negative coping mechanisms.

Beyond financial outcomes, VSLA groups serve as platforms for social cohesion, peer support, and leadership development. Women reported strengthened trust, mutual accountability, and increased confidence in decision-making both within the household and the community. These outcomes align with WCAYI's broader objective of promoting women's agency, dignity, and participation in community structures.

Despite these gains, several challenges persist. These include irregular savings contributions, delays in loan repayment, limited business and financial management skills, weak record-keeping practices, and constrained access to markets. These barriers continue to affect the growth and sustainability of women-led income-generating activities.

Encouragingly, VSLA members are actively identifying solutions, including strengthening financial discipline, improving record-keeping systems, and pursuing additional training in entrepreneurship and financial literacy. There is also growing interest in diversifying livelihoods through activities such as poultry farming, vegetable cultivation, and small-scale retail. To sustain and scale these outcomes, continued investment is essential. Targeted support in capacity building, mentorship, and access to startup capital will significantly enhance the effectiveness and long-term impact of VSLA groups. Strengthening market linkages and technical support systems will further enable women to transition from subsistence activities to more sustainable livelihoods.

### Community engagements initiatives

As schools in Obongi District particularly within Palorinya Refugee Settlement and the surrounding host communities prepared to reopen, the Women, Children and Youth Initiative (WCAYI) intensified its community engagement efforts with adolescent girls to better understand their concerns and ensure their voices inform programming and advocacy. WCAYI facilitated a targeted dialogue session with girls aged 13–17 years reaching to **300 Female participants**, creating a safe and supportive space where participants could openly share their experiences, fears, and expectations regarding returning to school. This engagement reflects WCAYI's commitment to girl-centered, participatory approaches, ensuring that interventions are grounded in the lived realities of the communities it serves.

The dialogue revealed that while girls strongly value education as a pathway to a better future, many face significant barriers that threaten their ability to return to and remain in school safely, confidently, and with dignity. A major concern raised was the lack of menstrual health and hygiene support. Many girls reported that without access to sanitary pads, they are forced to miss school during menstruation, affecting attendance and performance. As one 14-year-old girl shared, ***"I worry about my monthly period because I don't have pads."*** This highlights the urgent need for sustained investment in menstrual health as a critical enabler of girls' education.

The risk of early and forced marriage also emerged as a pressing issue. Economic hardship within households continues to push families toward negative coping mechanisms, including prioritizing marriage over education. A 16-year-old participant explained, ***"If my parents cannot pay school needs, they may tell me to get married."*** This underscores the intersection between poverty, protection risks, and education outcomes for girls. Concerns around safety and protection were also prominent. Girls expressed fear of sexual harassment and exploitation, particularly on their way to and from school, coupled with limited access to safe and confidential reporting mechanisms.

Additionally, the lack of essential scholastic materials, including uniforms and books, continues to create barriers to school attendance. Feelings of shame and exclusion discourage girls from participating fully in school life. The dialogue also highlighted the often-overlooked issue of emotional and psychosocial well-being. Many girls reported feeling stressed and unsupported, with limited access to counseling or trusted individuals to confide in. A 17-year-old participant stated, *“There is no one to talk to when I feel stressed.”* This reflects the need to integrate psychosocial support into education and protection programming.

Through this engagement, WCAYI not only identified key challenges but also reinforced the importance of creating safe platforms where girls can speak, be heard, and actively participate in shaping solutions. Such community dialogues are central to WCAYI’s approach, strengthening trust, promoting accountability, and ensuring that interventions are responsive and inclusive.

However, these challenges are deeply rooted in chronic underfunding of girl-focused services, including menstrual health, education support, protection, and psychosocial care. As a women-led, community-based organization, WCAYI continues to work closely with girls, families, and community stakeholders to address these gaps. Yet, limited resources constrain the scale and timeliness of support particularly during critical transition periods such as school reopening. This calls for a sustained investment in community-led, girl-centered initiatives is essential. Addressing the barriers identified by girls requires integrated support that combines material assistance, protection services, life skills, and community awareness.

## Annex 2: Activities in Pictures for the reporting period



*Community women joined the parade for matching during International Women's Day celebrations in Obongi district at Rodo primary school Aliba Subcounty*



*Jointly OPM and UNHCR delivering a speech on the International Women's Day Celebrations in Obongi district, Aliba subcounty.*



*Commemoration of the International Women's Day celebrations in Obongi district at Rodo primary school, Aliba Subcounty*

*WCAYI inspired women VSLA groups during one of their meetings/saving sessions. An initiated to uphold the mindset of hard and resilience through a common goal of saving for a purpose.*



*Community voicing dialogue – a session that largely contributes to our community engagement and feedback mechanisms where we identify and register concerns for address, referral and escalation*

*Children in Zone 1, Keguru village participating in a child-led volunteer and parasocial workers guided play session as an approach to restore joy*