

Sudan Situation: Surge in Arrivals to South Sudan



New arrivals at the Joda border following two days of pause in relocations from the border. / © Silva Alkebeh UNHCR

13 December 2024

25,000

New arrivals to Renk county in the past week

6

Active border crossing points, including Joda and **five** informal crossings

35

Humanitarian partners responding to the emergency

893,430

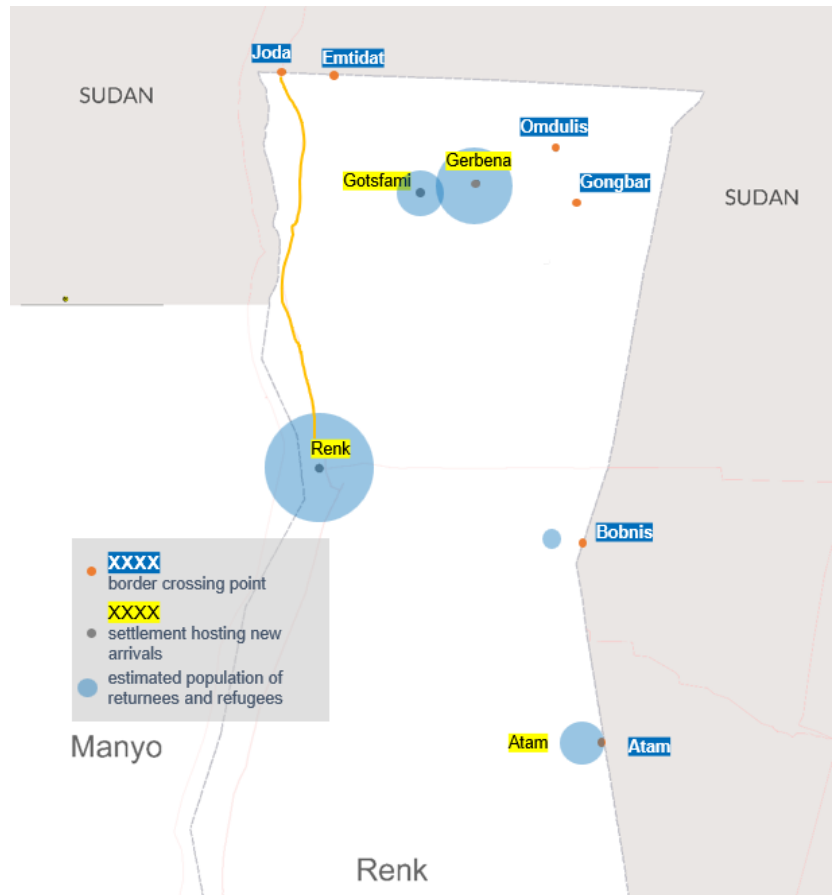
New arrivals from Sudan to South Sudan since April 2023

Key Highlights

- The escalation of fighting in Sudan's White Nile, Sennar, and Blue Nile States has led to a surge of new arrivals into South Sudan, averaging **5,000** people per day.
- Over **25,000** new arrivals have been identified in Gerbena, Gosfami, Atam, Chemmedi and Bobnis Boma border areas in Renk county.
- While most returnees and refugees previously had entered through the Joda border, **an increasing number are now crossing via informal routes** east of Renk — which are remote and hard-to-reach.
- Insecurity near Sudan's Joda border has led to intermittent border closures, disrupting crossings. **Humanitarian partners temporarily paused operations at Joda on 8 and 9 December** due to heightened security risks but have since resumed activities.
- In response to the influx, **humanitarian partners have completed rapid inter-agency assessments and are scaling up protection and assistance efforts**. This includes boosting monitoring capacities at the Joda border, identifying land for a new reception centre south of Joda, expanding the existing transit centres, and coordinating assistance for new arrivals entering via informal border crossings.

Immediate Priorities

1. **Enhance Security Measures:** Strengthen security protocols for missions to border areas, including informal crossing points.
2. **Improve Registration and Protection Monitoring:** Organise headcounts and accelerate registration of new arrivals. Carry out intention surveys to guide immediate priorities. Enhance nutrition screening and identification of people with specific needs.
3. **Expand Health and WASH Services:** Scale up cholera screening, clean water supply, and sanitation services across Joda, Renk town, informal border crossings, and settlements.
4. **Expedite Relocation:** Accelerate relocations and onward transportation from Renk county to other refugee- and returnee-receiving locations across South Sudan, prioritizing river transportation via Malakal. Establish temporary waystations along transit routes to ease congestion at the border.



Overview of locations of new arrivals from Sudan

Situation Overview

JODA BORDER

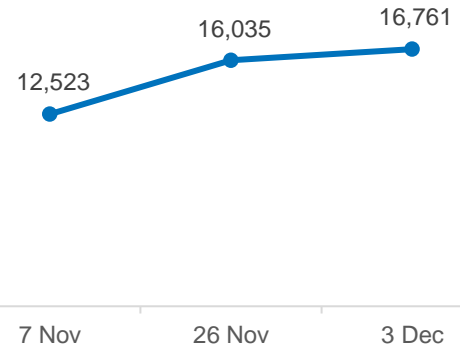
- The Joda border crossing is the primary entry point from Sudan’s White Nile into South Sudan’s Upper Nile State, accounting for 80% of arrivals from Sudan. Humanitarian partners, in collaboration with local authorities, manage a reception centre at the border, providing essential life-saving services, health services, and protection screening. Many new arrivals bring their belongings, trucks, and livestock with them, and most new arrivals are women and children. The border area is congested, with over **5,000** people settled around the reception centre. Many are reluctant to move onwards, hoping for a swift return once the security situation improves.
- Nevertheless, the security situation at Joda border remains unstable, prompting several intermittent and temporary border closures between 1 and 10 December. As a result, partners were unable to access the Joda Reception Centre on 8 and 9 December, forcing its temporary closure. During this period, border monitoring and life-saving services were suspended, leaving arrival estimates to be based on key informant reports. Partial activities resumed on 10 December, with full operations restored on 11 December.

RENK TOWN – TRANSIT CENTRES

- The two transit centres in Renk currently host **16,761** people – a surge of **4,200** in the past month, exceeding their intended capacity by four times.

- Essential services, particularly WASH, health, and protection, are severely overstretched with Renk county hospital overwhelmed by the arrival of hundreds of wounded individuals in the past week. In response, health partners, including MSF, ICRC, and WHO have scaled up their efforts by expanding bed capacity with additional tents and beds, replenishing medical supplies, and deploying more staff to treat critical patients.
- In the past week, **2,752** refugees from Sudan have been biometrically registered in Renk— an 80% increase compared to the previous week. Of those registered, 52% arrived from Blue Nile State, 31% from Sennar, and 17% from other states, including Darfur, Khartoum, and Al Jazira. However, this figure does not capture all new arrivals, as refugees entering through informal crossings or arriving recently at Joda remain unregistered.

Recent Renk Transit Centre Headcounts



Source: headcounts by ACTED

GERBENA

- New Arrivals:** Approximately **12,000** refugees and returnees, mainly women and children, have arrived in Gerbera Boma, with around 400 new arrivals daily from Sudan’s Sennar, White Nile, and Blue Nile states. Sixty per cent are returnees, many of whom endured a two-week trek, resulting in a number of deaths from hunger, dehydration, and exhaustion, including 12 children.
- Ninety per cent** of refugees recorded expressed their intention to remain in Gerbena, while others plan to return to Sudan when conditions stabilize.
- Nutrition and Health:** Assessments have revealed a Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate of 16% among children aged 6-59 months and 20% among pregnant and lactating women, both surpassing the emergency threshold of 15%. Critical nutrition supplies for treating Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) and Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) are currently out of stock. Food supplies are critically low, with a lack of income-generating opportunities to support livelihoods.
- WASH:** The main water sources in Gerbena are two haffirs: one located 10 minutes and the other two hours away from Gerbena, both supplying untreated water. Due to a lack of latrines, open defecation is widespread, and the poor WASH situation is compounded by severe shortages of essential hygiene items

Response

- Health actors resupplied Gerbena's primary health care centre with medication and deployed additional staff. Humanitarian partners distributed **100 dignity kits, 100 menstrual hygiene kits, 45** cartons of compact food, **25** cartons of **high-energy biscuits**, and essential **WASH non-food items**, and also screened children and pregnant or breastfeeding women for malnutrition.

GOSFAMI

- Situated along the road from Omdulis through Gerbena, the community in Gerbena has been directing new arrivals to Gosfami due to exceeding their hosting capacity. **The exact number of new arrivals remains unverified.**
- Local health facilities are non-functional, leaving critical gaps in essential services such as shelter, WASH, and non-food items.

BOBNIS BOMA

Overview

- Bobnis Boma reportedly hosts **3,700** households (approximately **16,000** individuals), although inter-agency assessments indicate 600 people.

- **Shelter and Market Access:** New arrivals occupy makeshift shelters, often in open spaces, with limited land allocated for temporary housing. Market access is restricted, making essential construction materials scarce.
- **Nutrition and Health:** GAM rates stand at 10% among children aged 6-59 months (below the 15% emergency threshold) but a critical 34% among pregnant and lactating women. There are no nutrition or health services available.
- **WASH:** The only water sources are two haffirs located 2-5 km away, urgently needing desilting and upgrades. Open defecation is widespread due to insufficient latrines. Acute shortages of water collection items (such as jerry cans and buckets) persist, while hygiene supplies remain unavailable in the local market.

Response

- Local authorities have allocated land for new arrivals, enabling some to construct shelters. Humanitarian partners screened children and pregnant/lactating women for malnutrition, distributed fortified biscuits to children and pregnant/lactating women, and provided soap to all households. Oral rehydration sachets were also given to local leaders to manage dehydration and diarrhea cases.

ATAM & CHEMMEDI

- **New Arrivals:** Approximately **5,000** Sudanese refugees from Blue Nile State have settled in Atam, with some moving to Chemmedi and Renk. New arrivals occupy Chemmedi's primary school, increasing community tensions over strained resources, with urgent needs for food, water, and shelter remaining unmet.
- **WASH:** Six haffirs in Atam (three shared with animals) may dry up by March 2025, with one treatment plant broken and limited latrine and sanitation facilities. Water sources in Chemmedi, including four haffirs and pumps, may last until May 2025 but risk depletion due to rising demand.
- **Health:** Atam has no healthcare facilities, forcing residents to travel an hour to Chemmedi.
- **Shelter and Food:** Many arrivals in Atam are sheltering under trees with limited support from the host community.

Working in Partnership and Funding

- UNHCR is leading Inter-Agency Coordination in Renk. A Senior Inter-Agency Coordinator is based in Renk and reports to the Humanitarian Coordinator and UNHCR Representative, due to the mixed nature of the inflows.
- Agencies are very grateful for the financial support provided by donors who have contributed to their activities with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds, and those who have contributed directly to the response. The South Sudan Chapter of the Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan is only 24% funded, while the South Sudan 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan is funded at 64%.

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