Sudan Situation: Surge in Arrivals to South Sudan

New arrivals and the host community collect water in Bebnis, an informal border crossing between South Sudan and Sudan. ©UNHCR/Reason Runyanga

110,000+
estimated **new arrivals into Renk** since surge

12
New arrival locations identified

6
Entry points, **five** of which are unofficial.

82,516
individuals **recorded** (headcounts)

35
humanitarian **partners**

Key Highlights

- Daily arrivals from Sudan have decreased to an average of 1,100 a day, including through the informal border crossings, compared to an average of 1,500 days the preceding week. New arrivals continue proceeding onward from the official and unofficial border locations, some reaching Renk.
- The Rapid Intention Survey conducted at the Wunthou-Joda border on December 27-28, 2024, indicates that in the short-term both refugees and returnees prefer to remain in South Sudan, while 35% of refugees and 6% of returnees intend to return to Sudan. In the mid-term, the preference for integration in South Sudan grows, with 32% of refugees and 6% of returnees intending to return to Sudan, while 30% of returnees plan to stay at their current location.
- The partners have scaled up WASH, and mobile services for health, nutrition, and protection assistance in the communities hosting new arrivals. The assistance targets the entire community to promote peaceful coexistence. However, the resources remain limited and not sufficient to meet the needs of increasing population. Additional funding is urgently required to continue the provision of life-saving services like protection, WASH, health and nutrition.

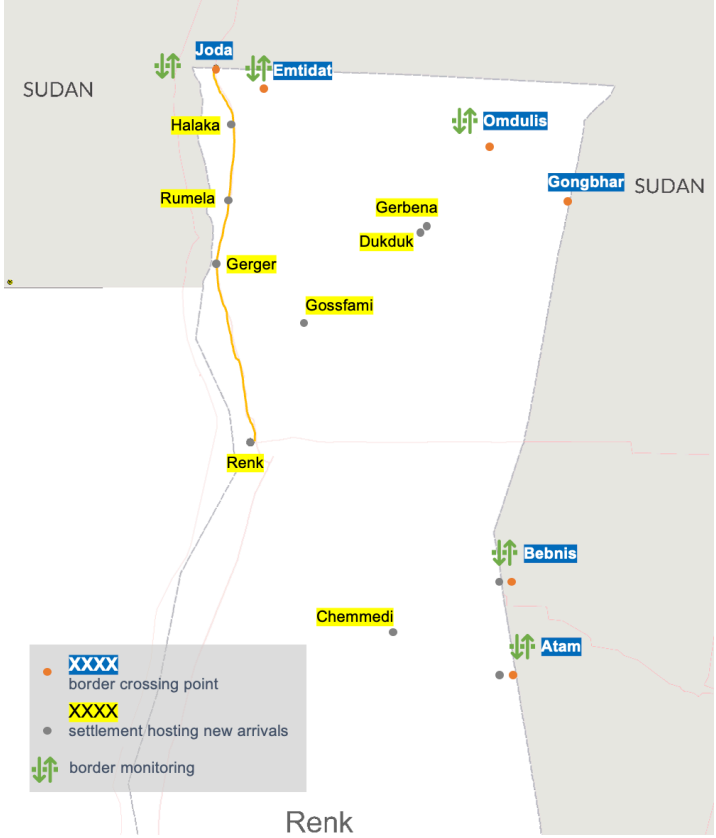
Situation Overview

The number of new arrivals per day has declined over the past week, averaging approximately 1,100 individuals daily. Conversely, the outflow to Sudan via the Wunthou-Joda border has risen, driven primarily by food distributions in refugee camps in Sudan. Due to inadequate water and other essential services in border communities east of Renk County, new arrivals are moving to Chemmedi, Gossfami, Halaka, Rumela, and Gerger. Meanwhile, the number of returnees and refugees arriving through informal border crossings and seeking registration in Renk has also increased over the past week.

Returnees and refugees report challenges in travelling back to Sudan, as only those heading to specific locations—such as Rabak, Kosti, and Jebelyn—are permitted to cross, provided they possess travel documents issued by authorities. These documents cost 10,000 SSP for South Sudanese citizens and 5,000 SSP for individuals on the Sudanese side, further complicating mobility.

Local authorities and host communities continue to demonstrate commendable generosity by providing community land for temporary settlement. However, this support is increasingly strained by resource shortages, including limited water, health, protection, and nutrition services.

Border crossings and communities hosting new arrivals



The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations. Final boundary between the Republic of Sudan and the Republic of South Sudan has not yet been determined.

In Gerbena, reports indicate an increase in protection incidents among new arrivals, including intimate partner violence. Many newcomers turn to Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) methods, such as those facilitated by Sheikhs and Umdas, to address Gender-Based Violence (GBV) and child protection cases. Law enforcement struggles with a lack of investigators and overcrowded detention facilities. Consequently, community-based dispute resolution mechanisms led by the Boma administrator, Sheikhs, and Umdas continue to handle minor crimes, family disputes, and domestic violence through ADR approaches.

Health centres in Gerbena and Chemmedi remain overwhelmed by high caseloads of malaria and chronic illnesses, compounded by a shortage of medical personnel and persistent supply shortages. The maternity ward in Gerbena is severely overstretched with minimal capacity. Meanwhile, access to water around the Wunthou-Joda border crossing, where over 30,000 returnees and refugees have settled, remains inadequate, exacerbating health risks such as cholera and tensions with host communities over limited resources.

In Gerbena, cases of malnutrition among children and pregnant and lactating mothers have increased, further straining available services.

This evolving situation underscores the urgent need for enhanced partner presence and resource mobilisation to scale up essential services, including WASH, health, nutrition, and protection while addressing critical gaps to meet the needs of new arrivals and their host communities.

Response

- 2,155 returnees and refugees were relocated from the Joda border to the Renk Transit Centre and 347 returnees were supported with onward transportation from Renk to Malakal via river transport (boats) to their destinations within South Sudan. No refugee relocations were conducted during the reporting period.
- Partners provided protection services and information to 3,031 vulnerable returnees and refugees at the Joda border and Renk Transit Centres, including awareness on key protection messages, cash assistance for protection, expedited service access, and referrals to specialised support and community-based psychosocial support to 710 individuals. 500 persons with specific needs were identified through protection monitoring, screenings, and community outreach across various locations, with referrals made for medical support and family tracing.
- 18,629 new arrivals received 12.811 metric tons of fortified biscuits, bringing the total to 53.862 metric tons distributed to 75,937 individuals.
- 7,189 returnees, refugees, and host community members received medical services, including immunisations for children under 15, cholera response, fit-for-travel medical screenings during onwards transportation assistance registration and departure, medical consultations, risk communication and community engagement, reproductive health care at the Joda border, Transit Center 2, and river/port points.
- Mobile health response, in combination with scaling up nutrition services in communities hosting new arrivals, continued. Water trucking commenced in several communities hosting new arrivals like Jerbena and Bebnis.

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 2024 is only 24% funded, while the South Sudan 2024 Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan is funded at 64%.
- South Sudan Country Refugee Response Plan 2025 was launched on 20 December, appealing for $468 million to meet emergency needs and longer-term solutions for refugees and to support host communities.

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