UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Preparedness and initial response

Displacement in South Sudan and neighbouring countries

May - October 2025

South Sudanese refugee women and girls, recently arrived to Rhino Camp Refugee Settlement in Uganda, line up to receive dignity kits containing underwear, soap and sanitary pads. © UNHCR/Yonna Tukundane

KEY FIGURES

~100,000 arrivals in South Sudan's neighbouring countries since February 2025

343,000 IDPs and refugees targeted for assistance in South Sudan and neighbouring countries

$36.25 million required for preparedness and initial response for six months

24.5% current average funding level of UNHCR's operations in South Sudan and neighbouring countries[1]

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is seeking **$36.25 million** to strengthen preparedness to deliver life-saving protection and assistance to **40,000 targeted internally displaced persons (IDPs)** in South Sudan, as well as an influx of up to **303,000 refugees, asylum-seekers, and returnees** in neighbouring countries of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda over a period of six months from May to October 2025.

This appeal comes in response to escalating violence and conflict in South Sudan since February 2025, which has triggered renewed displacement and growing humanitarian needs across the region. Flexible funding is essential to ensure a timely and effective response—particularly at a moment when critical activities are being scaled down due to funding shortfalls, even as needs continue to rise.

Overview

UNHCR is closely monitoring the displacement and protection situation in South Sudan, following a sharp escalation of violence and insecurity since February 2025. While the conflict initially intensified in Upper Nile State—particularly in Nasir, Ulang, and Baliet Counties—and in Fangak County, Jonglei State, it has since spread to other parts of the country, triggering population movements both within South Sudan and across its borders.

Since February, approximately 100,000 people have fled to neighbouring countries, including an estimated 23,000 to the DRC, over 21,000 to Ethiopia, 41,000 to Sudan, and 18,000 to Uganda. Within South Sudan, OCHA reports that some 65,000 people have been newly displaced in Upper Nile State alone.

Recent armed clashes in Central and Western Equatoria States have further contributed to displacement, with local partners reporting that women, children, and the elderly are among the most affected. Across the country, a growing number of conflict hotspots continue to destabilize the situation, now compounded by the onset of the rainy season, which is expected to further restrict humanitarian access to affected areas. The overall situation is rapidly deteriorating, driven by a combination of escalating violence, surging food and commodity prices, recurrent extreme weather events, and declining humanitarian funding.

In early May, an airstrike hit a hospital in Old Fangak, Jonglei State, resulting in civilian deaths and injuries and the destruction of critical medical supplies. The attack forced the suspension of essential health services for over 100,000 people and prompted the temporary withdrawal of humanitarian staff. Similar incidents followed in Nasir and Ulang, where the only functioning health facilities were also targeted—further undermining access to care in areas already facing displacement, disease, and severe food insecurity. Access to many affected communities remains difficult due to ongoing conflict and movement restrictions, though protection monitoring continues through local actors.

In neighbouring countries, UNHCR and partners are conducting assessment missions in areas where new arrivals have been reported—including the DRC, Ethiopia, Sudan, and Uganda—to evaluate needs and inform response planning. Preparatory measures are underway to respond to potential large-scale refugee movements, including the revision of contingency plans in collaboration with governments and humanitarian actors. Prioritization exercises focus on life-saving interventions in the event of further escalation. Broader response strategies will emphasize inclusion, ensuring displaced populations can access national services.

The countries included in this appeal host significant displaced populations, comprising over 13.1 million IDPs and more than 4.56 million refugees and asylum-seekers.

[1] *Average funding level of UNHCR's operations in South Sudan and neighbouring countries that are part of this appeal (DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda and Sudan) as of 31 May 2025 (total overall needs, including emergency preparedness and response: $1.9 billion; total overall funds, including emergency preparedness and response $451.9 million).*

Planned response

South Sudan

Population targeted for assistance: 40,000
Financial requirements for preparedness: $5,000,000

In South Sudan, UNHCR is exploring ways to scale up its presence and activities in Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity States as well as other conflict hotspots, to protect and assist new internally displaced people (IDPs). Key activities will focus on:

- **Protection**: Documentation; protection monitoring; vulnerability screenings and assessments; targeted protection support to vulnerable individuals including survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), children and older people; assessments of collective sites; community-based approaches and peaceful co-existence.
- **Well-being and basic needs**: Pre-positioning of non-food items.
- **Security**: Risk mitigation measures to enable safe and sustained access to affected populations.

South Sudan has some 500,000 refugees and asylum-seekers (mainly from Sudan), 1.9 million IDPs due to conflict, insecurity and climate related-shocks, and over 700,000 South Sudanese refugee returnees.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Population targeted for assistance: 30,000
Financial requirements for preparedness: $3,290,000

Preparedness activities in the DRC will focus on settlements and host communities in Haut-Uele and Ituri provinces, targeting the following sectors:

- **Protection**: Procurement of equipment for screening, first-level registration, and documentation of new asylum-seekers; support for state services involved in the security and judicial screening processes; joint rapid needs assessment missions; establishment or strengthening of community structures for protection, coordination, prevention and holistic response to GBV; rehabilitation of socio-community infrastructures.
- **Shelter**: Pre-positioning of emergency shelter kits; distribution of materials for the construction of emergency shelters and community infrastructure.
- **Well-being and basic needs**: Pre-positioning of non-food items; the provision of cash assistance; distribution of dignity kits to women of reproductive age.
- **Water, sanitation and hygiene**: Purchase, transport and supply of specific WASH equipment including pumps, generators, construction of latrines, showers and drainage, bladders, water analysis kits and treatment products, and waste management.
- **Health and Nutrition**: Expansion and rehabilitation of health centers; supply of medicines, emergency health kits and reproductive health kits; HIV prevention; epidemic prevention; food supplements for pregnant and lactating mothers.
- **Community**: Setting up and strengthening community protection structures, including community infrastructures contributing to peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities.

The DRC faces one of the world's most protracted and complex humanitarian crises, with 7.3 million IDPs and over 1 million Congolese refugees in neighbouring countries. Additionally, the DRC hosts more than 500,000 refugees mostly in the eastern part of the country, which is among the most remote and least developed areas, marked by multiple emergencies including conflict and disease outbreaks.

Ethiopia

Population targeted for assistance: 50,000

Financial requirements for preparedness: $4,800,000

In Ethiopia, the targeted scale-up location is Gambella, where UNHCR has an existing presence to receive new arrivals of refugees and Ethiopian refugee returnees from South Sudan. Key activities will focus on:

- **Protection**: Protection monitoring; emergency registration; establishment of reception facilities; support to people with specific needs; establishment of child-friendly spaces; provision of GBV prevention, mitigation, and response services.
- **Shelter**: Establishment of transit and reception centres; provision of individual and family tents, and accommodation; development of supporting infrastructure, including road construction and rehabilitation, drainage and solar streetlights.
- **Well-being and basic needs**: Pre-positioning of essential supplies and cooking fuel.
- **Health**: Cholera response; provision of primary health care, including nutrition support, mental health and psychosocial support, and disease surveillance; provision of hot meals and food rations.
- **Water, sanitation and hygiene**: Water trucking; the establishment and management of hand-washing stations, emergency latrines and bathing shelters.

Ethiopia hosts over 1 million refugees and asylum seekers, of whom South Sudanese are the largest population. The majority reside in camp settings where limited access to livelihoods and employment opportunities leaves them heavily reliant on humanitarian assistance.

Kenya

Population targeted for assistance: 25,000

Financial requirements for preparedness: $1,780,000

Preparedness and scale-up activities will concentrate in Kakuma, with a focus on interventions in:

- **Protection**: Updating referral pathways to specialised services; capacity-strengthening for authorities on protection standards and asylum processes; enhancing communication with communities (CwC) mechanisms.
- **Well-being and basic needs**: Pre-positioning of non-food items, including medicines, medical supplies and shelter materials for reception centres.

Kenya hosts over 830,000 refugees and asylum-seekers in camps and urban areas. Kenya has taken steps toward strengthening institutions that serve refugees and facilitating the progressive inclusion of refugees in national programs relating to education, health care and social protection. At the same time, reception facilities in Kakuma for new arrivals are overcrowded.

Sudan

Population targeted for assistance: 148,000

Financial requirements for preparedness: $14,480,000

Preparedness efforts will concentrate in White Nile, Blue Nile, West Kordofan, South Kordofan, East Darfur and South Darfur, in close coordination with partners, given access restrictions in the current operating environment. Key activities will focus on:

- **Protection**: Rehabilitation of registration centres; preparation of GBV case management processes, tracking systems, referral mechanisms and awareness materials; pre-positioning of post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP kits); establishment of child-friendly spaces.
- **Shelter**: Identification, assessment and development of sites; pre-positioning of shelter items, including family tents.
- **Well-being and basic needs**: Pre-positioning of non-food item kits; pre-positioning of food rations and arrangements for the provision of hot meals.
- **Water, sanitation and hygiene**: Pre-positioning of water storage tanks, tap stands, hygiene items, and shower construction materials; improvement of WASH facilities at reception centres.
- **Health**: Pre-positioning of medicines, medical supplies, and therapeutic and supplementary foods.

Sudan hosts 842,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, half of whom are hosted in White Nile State. Since the start of the Sudan's conflict, over 267,000 refugees and asylum-seekers have been secondarily displaced by the ongoing

violence in Sudan, which has also internally displaced over 8.5 million Sudanese since April 2023. Combined with the pre-existing population of IDPs and taking into account some recent IDP returns, there are currently some 10.5 million IDPs in Sudan.

Uganda

Population targeted for assistance: 50,000

Financial requirements for preparedness: $6,900,000

Preparedness will concentrate in settlements in Adjumani and Arua in the following sectors:

- **Protection**: Upgrade and set-up of reception and transit centres, including connectivity infrastructure; procurement of materials for screening, profiling, and documenting new arrivals; preparedness for community-based protection and identification of people with specific needs, including referrals and case management services for child protection and GBV prevention and response.
- **Shelter**: Pre-positioning of emergency shelter kits.
- **Well-being and basic needs**: Pre-positioning of non-food items and cooking fuel; preparations for the provision of cash assistance.
- **Water, sanitation and hygiene**: Supply and installation of emergency water tanks for water trucking; rehabilitation of boreholes and establishment of new water points; construction of communal latrines, showers, and drainage; installation of hand-washing stations; provision of laundry soap and waste management systems in receiving transit and reception centres and settlements.
- **Health and Nutrition**: Enhancing health and nutrition screening at entry points for new arrivals; strengthening healthcare systems for integrated services; provision of technical support to health workers; rehabilitating and expanding existing health facilities, where feasible; pre-positioning of medicines and medical supplies; support to nutrition interventions, as necessary.

Uganda hosts a large number of refugees, with over one million South Sudanese among the 1.89 million refugees and asylum-seekers in the country. Nearly one million of these refugees are children, highlighting significant vulnerability within the refugee population. Existing resources in Uganda have been reprioritized to address the ongoing emergency. While Uganda offers a favourable protection environment for refugees and asylum-seekers, the Government faces challenges in continuing to absorb such a large number of new arrivals, with many transit and reception centres already overcrowded.

Financial requirements

This appeal seeks **$36.25 million** to strengthen preparedness and deliver initial life-saving protection and assistance for up to **303,000 potential refugees, asylum-seekers and returnees** in neighbouring countries, namely the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda, as well as **40,000 targeted IDPs** in South Sudan.

Budget breakdown by country (US$)

Country	Total population targeted for assistance	Total requirements (US$)
South Sudan	40,000	$5,000,000
DRC	30,000	$3,290,000
Ethiopia	50,000	$4,800,000
Kenya	25,000	$1,780,000
Sudan	148,000	$14,480,000
Uganda	50,000	$6,900,000
Total	**343,000**	**$36,250,000**

Budget breakdown by sector (US$)

Country	Protection	Well-being and basic needs	Shelter	Health	Water, sanitation and hygiene	Total requirements ($)
South Sudan	$2,240,000	$2,760,000	-	-	-	$5,000,000
DRC	$620,000	$680,000	$960,000	$520,000	$510,000	$3,290,000
Ethiopia	$130,000	$1,500,000	$990,000	$670,000	$540,000	$4,800,000
Kenya	$10,000	$1,770,000	-	-	-	$1,780,000
Sudan	$250,000	$8,280,000	$3,920,000	$880,000	$1,150,000	$14,480,000
Uganda	$2,700,000	$1,500,000	$900,000	$1,200,000	$600,000	$6,900,000
Total	$5,970,000	$16,510,000	$6,770,000	$3,150,000	$2,610,000	$36,250,000

Coordination

In neighbouring countries, the respective government and UNHCR co-lead the refugee response, as outlined in the regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) for South Sudan and in line with the Refugee Coordination Model (RCM). The RRP includes country-level plans, managed by UNHCR, to coordinate the inter-agency response in collaboration with national authorities, UN agencies, NGOs, and partners.

Inside South Sudan, UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster to enhance the protection of populations affected by the humanitarian crisis and co-leads the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster, ensuring a multi-sectoral response to assist and protect populations residing in displacement sites.

In line with the Global Compact on Refugees and sustainable response approach, UNHCR advocates with development partners to ensure that IDP, refugee-hosting, and return areas are prioritized in their programmes. In addition, UNHCR is striving for a 'solutions from the start' strategy whereby preparedness and response activities in neighbouring countries aim to strengthen existing systems that can both serve new arrivals and host communities through a humanitarian-development nexus approach, rather than establishing parallel systems for forcibly displaced populations.

Flexible funding

Flexible funds help UNHCR to prepare for the unpredictable, to kickstart an emergency response, and to bolster support to forgotten or under-resourced crises. They also enable UNHCR to plan and manage resources efficiently and effectively. Without flexible funding, UNHCR would not be able to properly prepare for any new emergency that may arise or deliver emergency supplies, essential shelter and protection assistance in the first phase of the response. Flexible funding also remains vital as the emergency response develops, especially for crises that fall out of the spotlight and remain neglected. Flexible support to specific emergency situations, and especially flexible donations to general emergency preparedness and response, are a lifeline for people forced to flee.