EXTERNAL UPDATE #4

SOUTH SUDAN SITUATION

September 2025

Chol Tut Deng poses with her children in their upgradable shelter in Luakdong site, Gambella region of Ethiopia after fleeing conflict in South Sudan. © UNHCR/Sona Dadi

Highlights

- A total of 164,000 South Sudanese have sought refuge in countries neighboring South Sudan, including an estimated 33,000 in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 35,000 in Ethiopia, 70,000 in Sudan, and 26,000 in Uganda. In addition, over 131,000 Sudanese refugees have returned from South Sudan in recent months.

- Inside South Sudan, where some 200,000 people have been displaced by escalating localized conflict since February, humanitarian access remains severely restricted in conflict-affected regions where large numbers of displaced people are settled. These constraints continue to pose significant challenges to the timely and effective delivery of life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable communities. There are also access challenges related to conflict, extreme weather and remote locations in several of the neighboring countries.

- As of 30 September, heavy rainfall and rising levels of the River Nile have caused widespread flooding across South Sudan, affecting over 639,000 people in 26 counties across six states; Jonglei and Unity alone account for 88% of those impacted.

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SOUTH SUDAN SITUATION

Displacement Overview

as of 08 Sep 2025

Context

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 armed conflict concentrated in Upper Nile State and Jonglei State, there are pockets of fighting in other parts of the country, triggering population movements both within South Sudan and across its borders.

Since March, some 164,000 people have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, including an estimated 33,000 in the DRC, about 35,000 in Ethiopia, 70,000 in Sudan, and around 26,000 in Uganda. Within South Sudan, DTM reports that approximately 200,000 people have been newly displaced in all locations affected by the conflict since February 2025.

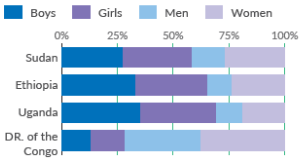
Key figures

164K
New arrivals from South Sudan

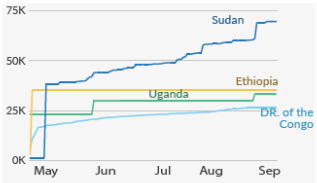
55%
of new arrivals are children

200K
Estimated new IDPs

Age and gender breakdown of new arrivals

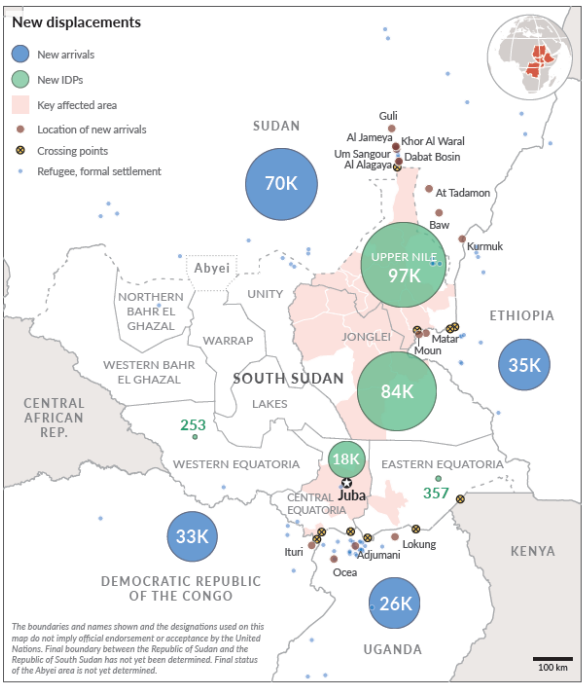


Cumulative new arrivals in neighbouring countries



Number of partners per country and sector

Sector	DRC	ETH	SDN	UGA
Coordination		2		2
Education	1	2	1	2
First Aid			4	
Food Security		2	2	2
Health/Nutrition		4	3	3
Livelihood	1			
Protection	1	4	5	3
Registration	1			
Shelter/NFI	1	1	2	2
Site Management			1	
WASH	1	5	3	2



Sources: UNHCR, Governments

UNHCR Comprehensive Overview of Response to Emergencies | dimehagl@unhcr.org

Published 11 September 2025

Situation and Operational Response

SOUTH SUDAN

Highlights

- Since February 2025, escalating localized conflict has led to the internal displacement of approximately 200,000 people across Upper Nile and Jonglei states, as well as Central and Eastern Equatoria states. The total number of newly displaced individuals within the country in 2025 has risen to 337,930. This figure includes people displaced by extreme weather events and localized conflicts since the beginning of the year.
- Ongoing violence in Western Equatoria and Upper Nile states continues to impact humanitarian access, with clashes in Mundri East, Tambura, Nagero, Nasir, and Maiwut displacing over 60,000 people in September. The conflict exacerbates South Sudan's broader humanitarian crisis, already impacted by flooding, food shortages, and political instability. Civilians face dire conditions without access to basic services.
- In the Greater Pibor Administrative Area, Pibor County, more than 69,500 people have been impacted by floods, including 1,000 displaced households in Pibor town. Flash floods have submerged communities, destroyed homes and crops, and pushed thousands from Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) Phase 4 (severe food insecurity) toward Phase 5 (catastrophe). Authorities warn of an escalating humanitarian crisis, and UNHCR continues to support flood and conflict-affected vulnerable populations with relief items to reduce their exposure to protection risks, such as gender-based violence, exploitation, and family separation, particularly among women, children, and persons with specific needs.

Population Movements

Since February 2025, intensified conflict has led to the displacement of approximately 200,000 people across Upper Nile, Jonglei, Central Equatoria and Eastern Equatoria states. This brings the total number of new internally displaced persons (IDPs) in 2025 to 337,930.

In Western Equatoria, over 52,000 IDPs have fled Tambura County to Ezo County, prompting local authorities to appeal for urgent humanitarian assistance. By the end of September, approximately 2,812 households had been registered, with new arrivals continuing daily.

Relocation

The Renk County Commissioner has approved the relocation of South Sudanese returnees to the integration site, where returnees will be accommodated and reintegrated into the local communities, starting 13 October. Partners are preparing essential services ahead of the move, which will initially involve 200 households. This relocation is part of a broader strategy to support integration, improve living conditions, and address urgent needs amid rising arrivals from Sudan and ongoing resource constraints.

Protection

UNHCR and partners are currently conducting protection monitoring and assessments across the Upper Nile State, including in Malakal, Nasir, Ulang, Maiwut, Longechuk, and Fashoda (Kodok), with support from local authorities and communities. These efforts will help identify the most vulnerable individuals and the delivery of targeted assistance, such as cash to address protection risks and enhance safety, dignity and the well-being of vulnerable individuals, as part of a broader protection response.

Escalating protection needs persist for approximately 8,000 people in Yei, Central Equatoria State, including IDPs, returnees, host community members, and refugees, displaced by armed clashes in May 2025. Many initially fled to Uganda but returned to Khor-Kaya due to camp restrictions, seeking farmland to meet both protection and livelihood needs. The area remains underserved, with limited humanitarian access and capacity for consistent border monitoring and verification at key crossing points.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

UNHCR conducted targeted GBV and protection awareness sessions in Women and Girls' Friendly Spaces and the wider community, reaching 154 participants (100 women, 26 girls, 15 boys, and 13 men). Integrated into psychosocial support programming, the sessions covered GBV risks, access to support services, and community accountability, aimed at strengthening protection mechanisms and support to survivors and individuals at-risk.

UNHCR's team in Bor conducted a monitoring visit to conflict-affected populations at the transit center within The Excel Empowerment Centre (TEEC) compound. During the visit, focus group discussions (FGD) were held with returnees, and participants were sensitized on GBV and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Returnees requested UNHCR's support for livelihood activities, including vegetable farming within the fenced compound.

Core Relief Items (CRIs)

UNHCR is finalizing the prepositioning of CRIs to support the flood response in Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Unity States. In Upper Nile and Jonglei, 7,140 flood-affected and conflict-displaced individuals have been identified for cash assistance.

UNHCR's team in Bor supported 150 vulnerable individuals identified through general protection monitoring at a center hosting persons affected by leprosy and distributed items included plastic sheets, solar lamps, kitchen sets, blankets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, and soap. The center, located in an isolated area with limited access to essential services, hosts over 150 individuals.

ETHIOPIA

Highlights

- The number of new South Sudanese arrivals in Ethiopia is estimated at 35,000 people.

Population Movements and Registration

Household (Level 1) registration and relocation activities resumed in September following a suspension in August due to access constraints and operational challenges in areas receiving large numbers of new

arrivals, particularly from South Sudan. These constraints affected the ability of UNHCR and the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) to safely and effectively conduct registration and relocation activities.

To note, L1 registration refers to the initial or pre-registration process conducted jointly by the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) and UNHCR for newly arrived asylum-seekers and refugees. It captures basic personal information and initial data about individuals seeking asylum. A total of 20,550 individuals (3,456 households) have successfully completed L1 registration.

UNHCR, Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), and Wanthoa Woreda/District authorities discussed the relocation of asylum-seekers who were temporarily staying in Matar school, and the registration centre nearby. Following a technical assessment conducted by UNHCR, Wanthoa Woreda/District authorities relocated all asylum seekers from Matar school to Gade village on 28 September. The protection team is expected to assess conditions in Gade shortly; no services are currently available at the site.

Protection

Participants in two focus group discussions with women and children in Luakdong identified the absence of a grinding mill as a major contributor to child labor especially among unaccompanied and separated children in foster care, and gender-based violence within households, significantly heightening risks for women and children. Although UNHCR's partner, ZOA, has secured funding to procure a grinding mill and construct a shelter for it, access to the site has been restricted, delaying installation.

A meeting was held in Luakdong to review four Best Interest Assessments (BIAs) and to enhance case workers' understanding of the Best Interest Procedure (BIP). As part of community outreach, eight focus group discussions on PSEA and reporting mechanisms were conducted with community leaders, the women's association, and adolescent girls, highlighting the importance of timely rape reporting, GBV prevention and legal provisions under Ethiopian civil law. Two additional awareness sessions were held with refugee groups on available support services.

A Camp Coordination Meeting was held in Luakdong with all operational partners, including the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC). Partners shared activity updates and challenges, while the RRC raised concerns about the insufficiency of the current assistance. The meeting highlighted refugee safety and protection from rights violations as key priorities.

Shelter and Core Relief Items (CRIs)

In Luakdong, 926 emergency upgradeable shelters have been completed, with 531 more under construction. A joint UNHCR and RRS site assessment identified a suitable location between Matar and Luakdong for a temporary registration center, where new arrivals can settle and build makeshift shelters.

UNHCR's team in Gambella has been making efforts to improve the process for and pace of CRI distribution, including training for partners.

Health & Nutrition

During the reporting period, Development for Peace Organization (DPO) conducted outpatient consultations in Luakdong, bringing the cumulative total to 5,000. Emergency cases continued to be referred to Nyinyang Primary Hospital, with 99 transfers recorded since the clinic's establishment in July. The total number of cholera cases has reached 408, with one death reported since the onset of the influx.

Vaccinations and the provision of supplements for new arrivals continued in collaboration with the local Woreda/District Health Authority, with support from UNICEF. Nutritional screening as well as infant and young child feeding (IYCF) activities were sustained across all sites, including individual and group counselling sessions on health practices, and breastfeeding. GOAL continued to provide hot meals twice a day to targeted beneficiaries.

The prevalence of General Acute Malnutrition (GAM) among children is declining in Luakdong, as most identified cases have already been enrolled in treatment programs. However, GAM rates remain high in Matar (10.8%) and Muon (14%), primarily due to newly identified cases following the resumption of registration. Among pregnant and lactating women (PLW), GAM prevalence remains elevated: 24% in Matar, 25.5% in Luakdong, and 30% in Muon.

A total of 4,083 individuals were reached through health and nutrition education sessions under the IYCF in emergencies programs. On 25 September, the Public Health Working Group conducted a monitoring mission to the emergency locations to assess ongoing health interventions and service delivery.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

Oxfam increased daily water treatment from 150 m³ to 240 m³, with a full capacity of 440 m³. Water quality monitoring confirmed free residual chlorine and turbidity levels remained within acceptable ranges. To boost supply, Oxfam added a water truck to the two trucks operated by Action Against Hunger (AAH) and Norwegian Church Aid (NCA). Since 18 September, NCA increased daily trips to Luakdong from three to four, raising the supply rate to 15.38 liters per person per day, meeting the SPHERE minimum of 15 liters per person per day.

A total of 50 latrine blocks have been completed, including 33 by Oxfam, 11 by NCA, two by ZOA, and four by Plan International Ethiopia (PIE), improving coverage to one latrine per 58 people, still below the Sphere standard of 1:20. Of the 60 planned shower facilities, 29 are complete, while the rest are under construction.

AAH continued hygiene promotion activities in Matar. Oxfam and NCA sustained awareness and cleaning campaigns, engaging 57 hygiene promoters (45 from Oxfam and 12 from NCA) and 31 latrine attendants (20 from Oxfam and 11 from NCA), highlighting Oxfam's expanded role in WASH programming.

Food Security

The September general food distribution (GFD) reached 50,000 individuals, using L1 registration and previous food lists to include unregistered persons across Muon, Matar, and Luakdong. This distribution also included internally displaced Ethiopians and/or host community.

SUDAN

Highlights

- As of 5 October, over 131,000 Sudanese refugees had returned from South Sudan. Many are residing in gathering sites or have returned to their places of origin, where access to essential services remains limited.
- Since mid-September, flooding from the White Nile River has severely impacted South Sudanese refugees in Jouri and Al Redis 1 camps, as well as nearby host communities in White Nile State. The floods have caused major access constraints, limiting both population movement and humanitarian operations.

Population Movement

Over 3,000 South Sudanese refugees arrived in Sudan during the reporting period, bringing the total for 2025 to 72,809. Most are hosted in White Nile State (44%), with others in Blue Nile (21%), South Kordofan (14%), West Kordofan (12%), East Darfur (6%) and smaller numbers in South and North Darfur.

New arrivals into South and West Kordofan also continued to be reported, but at relatively lower levels.

Registration and Relocation

Following the temporary suspension of registration across Sudan in September, border monitoring at Joda, Al Megenis, and Um Jalala were also halted. This has impacted the ability to accurately track new refugee arrivals, leading to a noticeable decline in reported figures.

WFP continues to rely on paper-based systems to provide food assistance to new arrivals and refugees. However, this approach poses challenges to the effective and accountable delivery of food and services, particularly for new arrivals and those relocated from Khartoum. UNHCR and partners are conducting household verification and registration for Sudanese returnees, while continuing advocacy at both national and state levels to resume refugee registration, underscoring the importance of reliable data for effective protection, planning of assistance, and coordination with partners.

Protection

In East and South Darfur States, newly arrived South Sudanese refugees have either been integrated into existing camps and settlements or have settled in nearby towns and cities, seeking improved livelihood opportunities. Efforts are underway to enhance protection outreach to those settling in urban areas.

Health

Cholera outbreaks continue to be reported in areas hosting new arrivals and surrounding communities. UNHCR, in coordination with the Ministry of Health, WHO, UNICEF, and other partners, continue to respond; however, critical gaps remain in both health and WASH services. Across the Darfur states, 453 cholera cases and 21 associated deaths were recorded among refugee populations from the onset of the outbreak through the end of September.

A downward trend in cases was noted in East Darfur following the launch of a cholera vaccination campaign, an encouraging sign, particularly in locations such as Abu Jabra and El Firdous, which are also receiving newly arrived South Sudanese refugees.

Food Security

Throughout September, partners continued gathering data on new arrivals to support their inclusion in WFP food distributions, with a primary focus on those residing in established camps and settlements.

In White Nile, during the September 2025 General Food Distribution (GFD), WFP slightly increased food rations compared to previous months, which had witnessed significant reductions, specifically 40% for oil, 40% for lentils, and 50% for salt. A total of 338,670 South Sudanese refugees across White Nile State refugee camps were targeted for food assistance.

Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

In White Nile State, UNHCR and partners provided access to safe drinking water for South Sudanese new arrivals, refugees, and host communities, reaching an estimated 497,000 individuals. This was achieved through maintaining 10 existing water systems and supplementing with water trucking in Al Jamyia camp to address the increased demand from newly arrived and relocated secondary movers.

In South and West Kordofan States, UNHCR, in coordination with WASH partners, facilitated the chlorination and disinfection of three water yards, serving a total of 32,224 individuals. Additionally, the ongoing monthly water voucher system continues to be implemented for refugee camps in Ghebeish (West Kordofan) and Tayiba (North Kordofan), supporting approximately 5,000 people.

UGANDA

Highlights

- Uganda continues to receive large numbers of refugees from South Sudan, driven by persistent conflict, insecurity, and limited access to essential services such as education and healthcare in their country of origin.
- New arrivals are primarily hosted in Rhino, Palabek, Palorinya, Imvepi, and Adjumani settlements.

Registration

As of 30 September, Uganda had registered a total of 42,385 South Sudanese refugees, comprising 11,749 households, since the beginning of the year. The vast majority were granted refugee status upon registration.

Protection

The displacement remains highly protection-sensitive, with women and children making up 88% of new arrivals, a demographic profile that underscores the vulnerability of the population and the urgent need for targeted interventions in child protection, education, and GBV prevention and response. Children under the age of 18 account for 69% of all new arrivals, while only 2% are elderly, highlighting the overwhelming presence of young, dependent individuals within the incoming refugee population. The vulnerability profile of new arrivals from South Sudan remains significant, with 2,187 individuals identified as having specific needs, representing over 5% of the total population.

<u>Child Protection and Persons with specific needs (PSN)</u>

Unaccompanied and separated children constitute the largest group among individuals with specific needs (1,068), highlighting the critical need for strengthened child protection mechanisms, family tracing, and alternative care arrangements. They are followed by single parents (622) and persons with disabilities (234), both of whom require tailored social support, psychosocial assistance, and livelihood interventions to promote self-reliance.

Gender-based violence (GBV)

GBV prevention and response efforts have been impacted in specific settlements, particularly Palabek, due to lack of funding for partners, which has led to a reduction in case workers and a decline in protection services, including limited access to justice for survivors. These gaps have weakened GBV case management capacity and disrupted essential prevention activities, heightening the risk of underreporting and leaving many survivors without adequate support. Sustained funding and enhanced coordination are urgently needed to restore service coverage and ensure survivors continue to receive timely and comprehensive assistance.

Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Access to water in Rhino and Bidibidi settlements remains at 12.40 litres per person per day, which is below the SPHERE minimum standards of 15 liters per person per day, due to multiple operational challenges such as non-functional water systems, reduced yields from drying wells, inverter failures and vandalized solar panels.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)

Highlights

- The security situation in Morobo District, South Sudan, and along the border with Ituri Province in the DRC remains extremely unstable. This ongoing volatility continues to trigger significant population movements, as civilians flee violence and cross into the DRC in search of safety.
- The humanitarian situation remains alarming, with urgent needs in protection, food assistance, health, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and emergency shelter. The estimated budget required to respond to these needs' amount to USD 5,625,166, yet only USD 109,000 has been received to date, a major funding gap that threatens the ability to deliver a timely and adequate response.

Population Movements and Registration

Due to limited resources, the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) has been unable to continue the profiling exercise initiated in June. In the meantime, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) continue to play an active role in regularly updating population figures, providing medical assistance, and distributing relief items. To date, 6,642 households, representing approximately 33,211 individuals have been registered across several Congolese villages along the border.

The National Commission for Refugees (CNR) has received alerts regarding the arrival of new asylum seekers in at least nine additional localities within the Kaliko and Kakwa chiefdoms located in the Aru Territory of Ituri Province. However, no profiling has yet been conducted in these areas, and the figures remain unverified. MSF estimates that roughly 9,000 new arrivals may be present, pending formal profiling and registration.

Delays in profiling and registration persist due to limited operational capacity and resources.

Protection

Border profiling and monitoring activities are ongoing to ensure accurate data collection, uphold the principle of non-refoulement, and guarantee equitable access to asylum procedures.

On 26 September UNHCR held a coordination meeting with nine partners, during which all organizations pledged to mobilize additional resources towards the response. Coordination efforts with CNR, MSF, and other partners continue to support the response.

Between 26 and 29 September, a delegation from UNHCR's Regional Bureau in Dakar conducted a mission to areas hosting new arrivals, engaged with local authorities and stakeholders, and concluded that an urgent multisectoral response is needed. Key priorities identified include enhanced registration planning, secure relocation arrangements, and strengthened advocacy for additional funding.

As a follow-up, joint assessment missions involving UNHCR, CNR, and partner organizations are being planned to evaluate the situation and engage with local authorities on identifying suitable transit and relocation sites.

KENYA

Kenya has not observed any spike in new arrivals from South Sudan but continues to receive new refugees and to monitor arrival trends.

Response Plans and Funding Situation

South Sudan: Preparedness and Initial Response Needs, May – October 2025

UNHCR is seeking $36.25 million to strengthen preparedness and deliver initial life-saving protection and assistance to up to 40,000 new IDPs in South Sudan and up to 303,000 new refugees, asylum seekers, and returnees in neighboring countries.

Resources

- UNHCR's Operational Data Portal (ODP) for the South Sudan Situation provides weekly updates on the refugee and returnee arrivals in South Sudan's neighbouring countries.
- South Sudan: Preparedness and initial Response needs, May – October 2025