UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

MABAN STRATEGY 2026-2028
UPPER NILE STATE, SOUTH SUDAN

The Maban Journey – Won Mabaano

Acknowledgements

This strategy represents a joint agreement between the Maban County Authorities, humanitarian and development actors, and relevant stakeholders to support and implement the strategic objectives outlined below. These objectives form the foundation for guiding Maban's transition toward greater peace, inclusion, and self-reliance.

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COVER PHOTOGRAPH:
Doro refugee camp coordination meeting, Maban County, Upper Nile State
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Executive summary

Strategy vision

To build a peaceful, inclusive, and self-reliant Maban County, where refugees, returnees, and host communities live harmoniously, access quality, climate-resilient services integrated into national systems, and thrive through sustainable economic opportunities that foster dignity and resilience for all.

The strategy reflects an agreement between the County Authorities of Maban, humanitarian, development and different relevant actors to support and implement the below strategic objectives, which will be the base to transfer Maban to a **peaceful, inclusive, and self-reliant Maban County.**

1. **Transition to sustainable settlements:** Promote a voluntary a secure transition from camps to integrated settlements that uphold refugee rights and dignity, promote inclusion in national systems, and ensure safety throughout the process.
2. **Improve infrastructure and services:** Upgrade roads, water, sanitation, energy, health, and education with climate resilience and integration into government systems. Develop shared facilities to foster income generation and social cohesion.
3. **Strengthen livelihoods and economic resilience:** Promote self-reliance and inclusion through access to documentation, work, education, and finance. Prioritize vulnerable groups and support climate-resilient livelihoods, with security measures enabling continuity.
4. **Foster social cohesion and peacebuilding:** scale-up conflict-sensitive inclusive peacebuilding and dialogue platforms to promote cooperation and peaceful coexistence.
5. **Localize service delivery and strengthen inclusive governance:** handover leadership to national authorities, refugee-led and host community structures. Build institutional capacity for inclusive, accountable services and support sustainable return, reintegration, and local ownership.
6. **Humanitarian and Emergency Response for new arrivals:** ensure that Maban County, humanitarian partners and communities maintains strong, locally led capacity to deliver rapid, coordinated and protection-sensitive and emergency humanitarian assistance for any new emergency or influx of refugees, returnees or other displaced populations.

The strategy is aligned with the South Sudan United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), the primary framework guiding collaboration between the Government of South Sudan and United Nations agencies. In 2026, the UN and the Humanitarian Country Team (UNCT-HCT) will prioritize five collective outcomes aimed at breaking down silos across the humanitarian–development–peace nexus and sharpening strategic focus. These outcomes are: (1) peace and governance, (2) food security, (3) essential services, (4) durable solutions, and (5) rapid response.

Therefore, the strategy will broadly anchor the five-pronged focus areas with emphasis on strengthening durable solutions, reduce reliance on a humanitarian-led response, amidst reduced funding environment and have sustainable responses.

Timeframe

2026 to 2028 with phased approach for the implementation of the agreed strategic objectives, based on the implementation progress and availability of funds.

Purpose of the strategy

The strategy for Maban County aims to transform the region from a dependency on humanitarian aid to a development-oriented framework over a three-year period (2026–2028). The vision is to create the conditions for a peaceful, inclusive, and self-reliant community where refugees, returnees, and host populations coexist harmoniously, accessing quality services that are integrated into national systems and are climate resilient.

The strategy seeks to dissolve traditional refugee camps by establishing integrated settlements that promote self-reliance and are included in national systems. The conditions for the success of this transition process and the strategy are based on holistic action aimed at promoting integrated social and economic development of the territory and including host and refugee communities at all levels. In this regard, this transition is supported by strategic objectives that focus on improving infrastructure, enhancing livelihoods, fostering social cohesion, and strengthening governance. The strategy emphasizes the importance of voluntary transitions, infrastructure upgrades, economic resilience, social cohesion, and local governance. It aims to empower communities through sustainable economic opportunities and inclusive governance, ensuring that services are accountable and responsive to the diverse needs of the population.

Additionally, it highlights the importance of including vulnerable groups and exploring resettlement and complementary pathways for those whose protection needs cannot be met locally. Overall, the strategy is designed to foster dignity and resilience for all, promoting a sustainable and inclusive future for Maban County.

Guiding Principles

- **Government ownership:** Ensure the government will take the leadership for this strategy and align with national policies and empower local authorities.
- **Inclusivity:** serve refugee, returnees and host populations equitably to promote unity and shared prosperity.
- **Do No Harm:** apply conflict-sensitive approaches to all interventions to prevent exacerbation of tensions.
- **Accountability & participation:** engage communities as active partners in planning, implementation, and oversight of the strategy.
- **Environmental sustainability:** integrate climate adaptation and environmental protection into all programming
- **Protection Mainstreaming:** The strategy document outlines protection mainstreaming as a critical component across all strategic objectives, ensuring that protection considerations are integrated into every aspect of the implementation process. A standardized framework for protection and monitoring is established, incorporating tools and indicators that are sensitive to age, gender, and diversity. This framework facilitates data-driven decision-making and policy formulation, ensuring that services are responsive to the needs of refugees and host communities. The strategy emphasizes the importance of formalizing coordination with local authorities, achieving legal recognition for community organizations, and securing financial independence to lead service referrals and initiatives. By embedding protection mainstreaming into the transition to sustainable settlements, infrastructure improvements, livelihood strengthening, social cohesion, and localized governance, the strategy aims to uphold the dignity and rights of all individuals involved, fostering inclusive governance and service delivery that comprehensively and sustainably meets protection needs.
- **Cross-border:** strategy for Maban County, emphasizing sustainable development and integration into national systems, offers significant benefits for cross-border interactions between South Sudan and Sudan. By promoting self-reliance, economic resilience, and inclusive governance, it facilitates smoother transitions for refugees and returnees who may move back and forth across the border. The integration of climate-resilient infrastructure and services into government systems ensures that these communities can access consistent and reliable support, regardless of their location. Additionally, the focus on fostering social cohesion and peacebuilding strengthens community ties, crucial for maintaining stability and cooperation in cross-border regions.

The strategy's emphasis on legal documentation, access to education, and economic opportunities further supports individuals in navigating cross-border movements, enhancing their ability to thrive in both countries. As these communities become more self-reliant and integrated, the strategy could serve as a model for regional cooperation, encouraging collaborative efforts between South Sudan and Sudan to address shared challenges and opportunities. The impact of this strategy on cross-border interactions can be measured through indicators such

as the number of individuals successfully accessing services in both countries, improvements in economic activity and self-reliance among cross-border communities, and enhanced social cohesion as evidenced by reduced conflict and increased cooperation. Regular monitoring and evaluation, involving both South Sudanese and Sudanese stakeholders, will ensure that the strategy remains responsive to the evolving needs of cross-border populations.

Government ownership

The process of developing the strategy was inclusive and collaborative, reflecting existing Government priorities and objectives concerning solutions for refugees, returnees and host community, and building on these efforts with inputs from humanitarian, development and peace actors, and affected communities themselves. This included involving the host community, national and international NGOs, UN agencies, private sector, and most importantly, the displaced population.

Context in Maban

Maban is home to 218,000+ Sudanese refugees who arrived with the Sudan crisis starting from 2011, alongside vulnerable host populations numbering around 85,000 people. Maban has a unique context with the refugees make up a population roughly three times to one, resulting in considerable demographic pressure on already limited resources Both communities face significant challenges including under-developed infrastructure, lack of essential service and heavy dependence of humanitarian aids to meet basic needs.

Socio-economic indicators in Maban reflect high vulnerability, poverty rates among host households often exceed 60%, while labor market opportunities remain scarce for both hosts and refugees. Maban is one of the Counties that maintained their IPC AFI Phase 4 (Emergency) classification and exhibit a severity deterioration within the IPC June 2025 report Food insecurity affects nearly 60% of families, with malnutrition rates persistently above emergency thresholds for children under five. Many households also lack stable income sources with livelihood options constrained by poor roads, limited market access, and frequent flooding and climate shocks. The county is marked by low literacy levels, gender disparities in education, and high youth unemployment.

Following over a decade of displacement and compounded by recent funding cuts, refugees and hosts face strained service delivery gaps, limited livelihoods, and increasing climate shocks. Despite enormous humanitarian investment done during the past years, the impact on sustainable development has been limited, as most interventions have prioritized emergency response and short-term relief over longer-term solutions. The scale of need far exceeds the coverage that humanitarian aid can provide, underscoring the urgency for integrated resilience-

building, inclusive social protection, and livelihood strategies tailored to Maban's complex socio-economic landscape.

Displaced, Refugee and Returnee Population Groups (December 2025)

- **Maban County population:** according to the National Bureau of Statistics Projections, Maban County has an estimated host community population of 84,290.[1]
- **Refugees in Maban County:** according to UNHCR data there are over 218,612 refugees and asylum-seekers, located in 4 refugees camps Doro, Gendrassa, Yousif Batil and Kaya.
- **Returnees in Maban County:** prior to the Sudan crisis, there were few spontaneous South Sudanese refugee returnees to Maban over several years. However, since April 2023 this has increased with several thousand South Sudanese returnees arriving in the country, and most are intending to stay in the county. According to IOM DTM data, between April 2023 and December 2025, 27,042 returnees were recorded to have returned to Maban County due to the Sudan Conflict of which 1,033 arrived in 2025.[2]

Coordination and partnerships

Maban County Coordination Forum (MCCF): The MCCF will be established in 2026 as the main mechanism to formally coordinate work on strategy implementation, durable solutions for displacement in Maban County between humanitarian, development, peace and Government actors. The forum is chaired by County Commissioner and UNHCR.

Maban Partners Coordination Forum (MPCF): The MPCF brings together heads of UN agencies and partners on regular basis to coordinate the partners works in Maban, chaired by UNHCR

Specific Coordination Task force and Working Group: A range of specific coordination task force and working group exist or will be established to complement the above and be responsible on coordination specific sectors and technical groups.

[1] *South Sudan: IPC Acute Food Insecurity and Acute Malnutrition Analysis, April 2025 – July 2025. ReliefWeb. https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-ipc-acute-food-insecurity-and-acute-malnutrition-analysis-april-2025-july-2025-published-12-june-2025.*

[2] *International Organization for Migration (IOM). (n.d.). Event Tracking: Displacement and Return Dashboard. Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM). https://dtm.iom.int/online-interactive-resources/event-tracking-displacement-and-return-dashboard [dtm.iom.int]*

Maban strategy

The strategy in one sentence

To build a peaceful, inclusive, and self-reliant Maban County, where refugees, returnees, and host communities live harmoniously, access quality, climate-resilient services integrated into national systems, and thrive through sustainable economic opportunities that foster dignity and resilience for all.

Common Goals

The strategy reflects the agreement between the County Government of Maban and humanitarian, development and relevant actors to support durable solutions, building on each other's activities towards common goals.

Maban Strategic Objectives

Strategic Objective 1: transition from camps to sustainable settlements

> *Promote a voluntary and secure transition from refugee camps to integrated settlements that uphold the dignity and rights of displaced and host populations. This transition aims to foster inclusion in national and local service delivery systems, encourage community participation, and support self-reliance through sustainable development approaches, with a medium-term perspective, a better integration of settlements into local economic and social dynamics. It also emphasizes the importance of conducting these transitions in an orderly manner, ensuring the safety and well-being of refugees, host community and humanitarian staff throughout the process.*

Strategic Objective One aims to transition refugee camps into sustainable settlements through a holistic approach that integrates multiple sectors into a cohesive strategy where each sector contributes for the overall strategic objective of shifting to settlement approach.

This transition is centered on promoting voluntary and secure the transition of the current camps to integrated settlements, ensuring the dignity and rights of displaced and host populations.

The approach emphasizes inclusion within national and local service delivery systems, fostering community participation, and supporting self-reliance through sustainable development. It seeks to integrate settlements into local economic and

social dynamics, ensuring an orderly transition that prioritizes the safety and well-being of refugees and host communities.

The implementation strategy involves securing land and services through participatory planning, which includes land tenure mapping and formal agreements with authorities and host community. This ensures sustainable housing arrangements and infrastructure development that cater to diverse needs, promoting legal awareness and dispute resolution mechanisms.

Community-led accountability systems will be strengthened to enhance trust and transparency, integrating feedback mechanisms into local governance frameworks. Education will be seamlessly integrated into national systems by ensure that the schools in the camps are under the MoE education network, with inclusive models and governance structures that represent both refugee and host communities.

Livelihood opportunities will be advanced through legal access to farmland, vocational training, and cash-for-work initiatives, fostering economic cooperation and self-reliance.

Moreover, the strategy incorporates climate-resilient shelter and infrastructure solutions, leveraging locally available materials and traditional building practices to enhance sustainability and self-reliance. Water, sanitation, and hygiene systems will transition to integrated, community-led models, emphasizing solar-powered solutions and sustainable maintenance. Health services will be improved, ensuring continuity of inclusion within the local health system and alignment with local health planning.

Governance structures will evolve from camp-based coordination to inclusive settlement-level systems, fostering collaboration between refugee and host communities through joint organizations and shared service delivery plans. This comprehensive approach ensures that the transition to sustainable settlements is inclusive, effective, and aligned with national development goals, promoting long-term sustainability and community ownership.

Strategic Objective 2: improve infrastructure and access to basic services and education

> *Upgrade infrastructure (roads, water, sanitation, energy, health, education) with a focus on integration into government-managed systems and climate resilience and develop multipurpose shared facilities that generate community income and foster social cohesion*

This strategic objective focuses on enhancing infrastructure and access to essential services and education by upgrading roads, water, sanitation, energy, health, and education systems. The aim is to integrate these improvements into government-managed systems, ensure climate resilience, and develop

multipurpose shared facilities that generate community income and foster social cohesion.

To achieve these objectives, a comprehensive approach will be adopted across various sectors. Empowerment of refugee-led organizations will be prioritized, promoting inclusive service delivery by transitioning the management of community spaces to capable Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs). This includes integrating services traditionally provided in camps into host community systems and vice versa, fostering shared access and reducing parallel systems.

Investments will be made to upgrade and expand learning spaces, ensuring they meet climate-resilient and inclusive design standards. This involves new construction, rehabilitation, and sustainable resource integration, such as solar power and rainwater harvesting, to create safe, accessible, and adaptable learning environments. Digital infrastructure will be expanded to support remote tertiary education, equipping learning hubs with solar-powered internet and devices, and partnering with universities for accredited online programs.

Construction of climate-resilient infrastructure will enable market access, protect farmland, and sustain livelihoods. Partnerships with private businesses will ensure infrastructure serves both economic and community needs, while market centers will be developed to promote small business initiatives among refugees, returnees, and host communities.

Shared water points, health centers, and schools will be constructed and rehabilitated for joint use by refugees, returnees, and host communities. Climate-resilient public works, such as roads, dykes, schools, health facilities, and airstrips, will be developed to support local sustainability.

Efforts in WASH will focus on building durable and accessible infrastructure for both settlements and host communities. This includes rehabilitation and maintenance of water points and sanitation facilities, construction of solar-powered water systems, and introduction of low-cost, locally managed waste management systems. Health facilities will be upgraded and solarized to ensure uninterrupted, climate-resilient services. Priority health facilities will be solarized, and infrastructure will be upgraded to withstand climate challenges.

Strategic Objective 3: strengthen livelihoods and economic resilience

> *Foster self-reliance and socio-economic inclusion of refugees, returnees, and host communities by ensuring access to documentation, work, education, and financial systems. It prioritizes support for vulnerable groups, fosters sustainable and climate-resilient livelihoods through local financing models, and leverages resettlement where needed. Security support will be provided to enable uninterrupted livelihood and resilience activities.*

This strategic objective aims to promote self-reliance and socio-economic inclusion of refugees, returnees, and host communities by ensuring access to documentation, work, education, and financial systems. It prioritizes support for vulnerable groups, fosters sustainable and climate-resilient livelihoods through local financing models, and leverages resettlement where needed. Security support will be provided to enable uninterrupted livelihood and resilience activities.

The strategy seeks to expand complementary pathways for refugees by identifying individuals with unmet protection needs and mapping opportunities in education, labor mobility, and family reunification. Advocacy for increased quotas through evidence-based profiling is essential.

Strengthening protection and resilience through cash-based assistance involves defining clear vulnerability criteria, launching longer-term multi-purpose cash programs, and linking recipients to education, vocational training, and other support services. Monitoring the impact of cash assistance on economic recovery and protection outcomes is crucial, alongside advocating for sustained funding and policy recognition.

Efforts will be made to enhance refugee registration and data management by launching information campaigns, fully utilizing ProGres modules, and mapping existing skills to inform livelihoods and service targeting. Training community focal points for data updates and referrals, linking registration to vocational training, financial inclusion, job placement, education, and documentation, and providing refugee law and protection training to authorities are key components.

The strategy advocates for inclusive economic policies ensuring refugees' access to farmland, movement, and right to work, and their inclusion in local economic policies, business registration, and access to financial services. Development of inclusive local markets within settlements and host communities, including infrastructure improvements and vendor support, is supported.

Education initiatives will link vocational, alternative, and digital learning pathways, equipping youth and out-of-school populations with market-relevant skills to build employability, resilience, and economic inclusion. Structured apprenticeship programs will connect vocational training centers, schools, and graduates with local businesses, supported by curriculum alignment, mentorship, certification, and monitoring systems. Livelihood strategies focus on promoting joint livelihood opportunities for refugees, returnees, and host communities through vocational training initiatives, market access facilitation, and support for refugee and host-led enterprises. Entrepreneurship and market-based livelihoods will be encouraged through business incubation, vocational skills training, and business start-up grants.

Local financing models will be supported, including Village Savings and Loan Associations, digital cash assistance, and partnerships with banks/microfinance providers. Community investment funds with beneficiary reinvestment will be developed. Tailored livelihood pathways for vulnerable groups will be designed, combining asset transfers, training, and coaching. Shelter and infrastructure efforts will stimulate the local economy through infrastructure work using local labor and materials, creating livelihood opportunities through local production of

construction materials and services. Skills development in construction will be prioritized, along with labor-intensive infrastructure works emphasizing gender and youth inclusion.

WASH operations will involve communities directly to create job opportunities and build skills, reducing dependence on humanitarian aid. Community-based WASH committees will be trained for operations and maintenance, supported by local contributions and oversight mechanisms. Health and nutrition strategies will link nutrition, agriculture, and health to create sustainable livelihoods, improve food security, and build resilience. This involves supporting community food production, linking farmers to markets, and fostering income-generating activities connected to nutrition. Camp coordination and management will focus on skills development for CRI production, gradually replacing in-kind distributions with cash transfers, and implementing short-term cash-for-work programs focused on settlement infrastructure.

Strategic Objective (4): foster cohesion and peacebuilding

> *Scale-up conflict-sensitive, inclusive peacebuilding initiatives and expand dialogue platforms that promote cooperation, shared responsibility, and peaceful coexistence*

The objective will be implemented through a comprehensive approach that integrates various community-driven initiatives aimed at promoting cooperation, shared responsibilities, and peaceful coexistence among host and refugee communities.

The strategy emphasizes inclusive peacebuilding by establishing community-led sub-committees and justice desks, selecting leaders from diverse backgrounds to ensure balanced representation.

Skills development in conflict resolution, mediation, and inclusive decision-making is prioritized, alongside formal coordination with local justice systems and regular inter-community dialogues.

Different sport, art and other initiatives will be utilized as a tool for social cohesion, with initiatives to map existing clubs, talents, address participation gaps, and create inclusive committees. These efforts promote girls' participation and pilot mixed host-refugee matches, peace tournaments, and different sport and art activities linking clubs to peace committees and youth centers.

Cultural exchanges through sports tournaments, music, dance, and joint festival celebrations further enhance social cohesion. Media initiatives, such as weekly local-language radio programs, disseminate coexistence stories and conflict resolution tips.

Education initiatives integrate peace education and life skills into educational activities, fostering mutual respect and reducing tensions. School-based peace clubs teach conflict resolution and empathy, while inclusive teacher training and community education committees ensure representation from all groups. Joint

economic ventures and agricultural cooperatives are encouraged to strengthen inter-community relationships and promote economic self-sustainability, with livelihood activities actively including women, youth, persons with disabilities, and older persons.

Infrastructure projects prioritize inclusivity, involving mixed community teams in construction to build trust and cooperation. Shared public works serve as platforms for joint use and mutual benefit, with participatory design workshops facilitating community engagement in decision-making. WASH services are designed to equally serve displaced and host communities, fostering trust and cooperation through community-led hygiene campaigns and inclusive governance.

Finally, health and nutrition services are provided inclusively, involving diverse community groups in program delivery. Community nutrition hubs and outreach activities aim to build trust and cooperation across community groups, emphasizing inclusive recruitment and community-based initiatives. This holistic approach ensures that the strategic objective is implemented effectively, fostering social cohesion and peacebuilding across all sectors.

Strategic Objective (5): localize service delivery and strengthen inclusive governance

> *Gradually shift service delivery leadership from international actors to national and local authorities, refugee-led organizations, and host community structures, ensuring sustainability and local ownership. It emphasizes building the institutional capacity of government and community-based organizations to provide accountable, inclusive, and responsive services while fostering the meaningful participation of refugees and host communities. The strategy also supports safe and sustainable return and reintegration, promotes local ownership of livelihood programs, and strengthens long-term management of shelter and infrastructure through skills development, governance reforms, and coordinated handovers.*

The strategic objective aims to transition leadership in service delivery from international actors to national and local authorities, refugee-led organizations, and host community structures. This approach is designed to ensure government leadership, sustainability and local ownership, emphasizing the development of institutional capacity within government and community-based organizations.

The goal is to provide accountable, inclusive, and responsive services while fostering meaningful participation from refugees and host communities. Additionally, the strategy supports safe and sustainable return and reintegration, promotes local ownership of livelihood programs, and strengthens long-term

management of shelter and infrastructure through skills development, governance reforms, and coordinated handovers.

The implementation of this strategic objective involves a comprehensive and integrated approach across all sectors to ensure cohesive service delivery and governance. The strategy begins with building the capacity of community committees and local authorities through targeted training in project management, legal registration, and sector-specific skills. This foundational step empowers these entities to take on leadership roles in service delivery, protection activities, and community-based initiatives.

Education, livelihood, shelter, infrastructure, WASH, health and nutrition sectors are integrated into national systems through advocacy, policy reform, and capacity building. This integration is supported by securing development financing, establishing governance mechanisms, and promoting sustainable practices within local government systems. The strategy ensures that all sectors work collaboratively to transition service delivery leadership to local entities, fostering local ownership and long-term sustainability.

By harmonizing efforts across sectors, the strategy aims to institutionalize inclusive governance and service delivery within national frameworks, ensuring that all core functions are locally owned and nationally financed. This comprehensive approach not only strengthens the institutional capacity of local authorities and community organizations but also promotes meaningful.

Strategic Objective (6): humanitarian and emergency response for new arrivals

> *Ensure that Maban County, humanitarian partners and communities maintains strong, locally led capacity to deliver rapid, coordinated and protection-sensitive and emergency humanitarian assistance for any new emergency or influx of refugees, returnees or other displaced populations.*

This objective seeks to safeguard life and dignity at points of entry, reception and settlement, while aligning emergency response with the broader transition from humanitarian dependency toward integrated, development-oriented and nationally owned systems. It reinforces government leadership, inclusivity, accountability and environmental sustainability as cross-cutting principles, so that immediate assistance to new arrivals complements, rather than undermines, the longer-term vision of a peaceful, inclusive and self-reliant Maban, with moving from emergency response to solutions.

This objective will be implemented by strengthening the preparedness and response capacity of county authorities, refugee-led and host community structures, and humanitarian partners, to have the required capacity to respond effectively to emergency and influx of new arrival.

Emergency systems will focus on maintaining readiness at key entry, transit and reception locations, including mechanisms for rapid registration, initial screening

and referral to essential services such as health, nutrition, WASH, protection and emergency shelter.

Response modalities will be designed to be inclusive of refugees, returnees and host communities most affected by shocks, and to connect quickly to longer-term services integrated into national systems wherever possible, in line with the strategy's shift from short-term relief to resilience and self-reliance.

Protection mainstreaming will be applied across all emergency interventions, using age, gender and diversity-sensitive tools and community feedback systems to guide targeting, identify risks and adapt assistance.

Coordination with local authorities will be formalized and community organizations supported to play a stronger role in early warning and emergency response, that will also include preparedness and emergency response for natural disaster like flood, rapid information sharing and service referrals, ensuring that emergency responses are accountable, conflict-sensitive and environmentally responsible.

Implementation Framework

Stakeholder Engagement

Map and engage government ministries, local authorities, national and refugee-led NGOs, private sector, development actors, and communities to foster transformative partnerships supporting sustainable solutions.

Ensure that refugees and host communities are actively engaged in all phases of the strategy, with a strong emphasis on the meaningful inclusion of women and youth, enabling them to take on significant and impactful roles in designing and implementing the strategy

Phased Transition

Implement a clear, phased roadmap with readiness criteria and milestones for transitioning sectors and services, based on capacity, sector maturity, and community preparedness.

Capacity Building

Invest in capacity strengthening for government and local actors, including UNHCR staff, to support the transition and change management.

Collaboration and Coordination

Maintain continuous, inclusive stakeholder engagement with joint planning and coordination mechanisms to ensure coherence.

Implementation phases and progress

Phase (0): Preparation, consultation, advocacy and development of the strategy (2025)

In 2025, the focus will be on laying the groundwork for the strategy through comprehensive preparation, consultation and advocacy efforts. This phase involves raising awareness and ensuring support from different stakeholders, including government entities, humanitarian and development organizations, and community leaders. During this phase the strategy will be developed in consultation and coordination with different stakeholders to have it approved and launched by early 2026.

Start the efforts for fundraising activities will be critical to secure the necessary financial resources, while obtaining approvals from relevant authorities will ensure alignment with national policies.

Phase (1): Concrete implementation and capacity building (2026)

Phase (1) will start with the endorsement of the strategy and the implementation will commence with less complex tasks, such as preparation for establishing coordination forums like the Maban County Coordination Forum and Maban Partners Coordination Forum. These forums will facilitate collaboration among humanitarian, development, peace, and government actors. Advocacy and engagement with local communities will be prioritized to ensure inclusivity and participation. Committees and working groups will be established to oversee specific sectors and tasks, ensuring effective coordination and management. Based on the budget availability implementation of some of the activities can start early 2026.

Based on the budget availability within the year 2026, there will be transition to more concrete implementation, the implementation will be based on a solid work on targeting, identification of needs, sites, with focus on less complex infrastructure projects and the development of soft components. Activities will include upgrading small-scale infrastructure such as roads, water, and sanitation systems, which can be quickly implemented to improve access to basic services. Capacity building will be a key focus, with targeted training programs for local actors, including government officials and community-based organizations, to enhance their ability to support strategy implementation. Continued advocacy and fundraising efforts will be maintained to secure additional resources as needed. Regular reviews will be conducted to assess progress, incorporate lessons learned, and adapt strategies to evolving circumstances. A thorough review of the strategy implementation will be conducted, documenting lessons learned and best practices to inform further implementation in 2027.

Phase (2): Complex implementation and improvement (2027)

In 2027, the strategy will tackle more complex infrastructure and service delivery improvements, building on the foundation laid in previous phases. This phase will involve the enhancement and expansion of existing systems to cover broader areas and populations, addressing more intricate challenges in infrastructure, health, education, and governance. The start of handover processes will be initiated, transitioning leadership and management of services to local authorities and community structures. Strengthening governance will be a priority, with reforms aimed at building institutional capacity and ensuring sustainable service delivery. Activities will include the integration of refugee-led organizations into service delivery frameworks and the promotion of inclusive governance practices. Regular reviews and monitoring will continue to evaluate progress, adapt strategies, and ensure alignment with strategic objectives. A thorough review of the strategy implementation will be conducted, documenting lessons learned and best practices to inform further implementation in 2028.

Phase (3): Finalization and full handover (2028)

The final phase in 2028 and based on the fund's availability will focus on completing tasks and ensuring comprehensive coverage of strategic objectives. This includes the full handover of service delivery leadership to local entities, ensuring sustainability and local ownership. Activities will involve finalizing most of the infrastructure projects, integrating services into national systems, and reinforcing governance structures to support long-term sustainability. A thorough review of the entire strategy implementation will be conducted, documenting lessons learned and best practices to inform future initiatives. Planning for sustained impact beyond 2028 will begin, leveraging the achievements of the strategy to foster continued development and resilience in Maban County. Regular monitoring and evaluation will ensure responsiveness to evolving needs and circumstances, setting the stage for a sustainable and inclusive future.

Alignment with local, national, regional, and global frameworks

UPPER NILE STATE AREA-BASED DURABLE SOLUTION ROADMAP

This strategy is aligned with the Durable Solutions Roadmap for Upper Nile, which has been endorsed and adopted with by Government, humanitarian/development actors and donor community.

STATE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The specific programs that will be expanded tie directly to the Governments priorities as listed in the Upper Nile State Development Plan, namely under the

goal to establish a conducive environment for the repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of displaced persons.

SOUTH SUDAN DURABLE STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION (2024)

IGAD POLICY FRAMEWORK ON REFUGEE PROTECTION

GLOBAL COMPACT ON REFUGEES,

SOUTH SUDAN GLOBAL REFUGEE FORUM PLEDGES OF 2023-2027

Impact on humanitarian assistance and donor dependency

The strategic investments made throughout the implementation phases are expected to significantly reduce reliance on humanitarian assistance and donor dependency. By promoting self-reliance through access to documentation, work, education, and financial systems, the strategy enhances the socio-economic inclusion of refugees and host communities. The development of climate-resilient infrastructure and sustainable livelihood opportunities further supports this transition, enabling communities to thrive independently. As local entities take on leadership roles in service delivery, the need for external support diminishes, allowing resources to be reallocated towards development-oriented activities.

Overall, the strategy sets a transformative path for Maban County, shifting from humanitarian dependence to integrated, climate-resilient, and locally owned solutions. By fostering inclusive development, strengthening governance, and leveraging regional frameworks and partnerships, Maban County is poised to become a regional model of durable solutions and self-reliance. This transition not only reduces the need for humanitarian assistance but also empowers communities to sustain their development beyond 2028.

Monitoring and adaptation

- **Timeline:** Three -year implementation from formal launch.
- **Biannual Review Cycle:** Conduct joint performance reviews with government and community representatives to adapt strategies based on lessons learned and evolving context.
- **Learning & Adaptation:** Lessons learned will guide ongoing improvements and inform post-2028 planning.

- **National Data Systems:** Strengthen collaboration with national statistics offices and ministries to utilize and enhance existing data platforms.
- **Multi-Year Results Framework:** Define incremental yearly outcomes demonstrating a logical progression toward the vision of sustainable self-reliance.

Resources and management

Budget Alignment:

Align resource allocation considering that humanitarian assistance will decrease over time as self-reliance and inclusion increase, progressively shifting funding toward development-oriented activities.

Capacity Investment:

Allocate resources for capacity building of local institutions, refugee-led organizations to support sustainable programming.

Essential conditions for successful strategy implementation

The successful implementation of the transformative strategy for Maban County is strictly linked to effective government leadership, inclusivity of all the stakeholders, efficient coordination and to the availability of funds throughout the entire period, necessitating substantial financial commitments from donors, government and stakeholders. It requires unwavering dedication from all involved parties, including local authorities, community partners, and international organizations, to transition from a dependency mindset to one of self-reliance. This transformation demands a collective willingness to persistently pursue the strategic objectives to fruition, ensuring that the vision of a peaceful, inclusive, and self-reliant Maban County is realized.

Moreover, the strategy's success is contingent upon maintaining a peaceful environment, which is essential for fostering cooperation and enabling sustainable development. The commitment to this strategy must be steadfast, as it is the foundation for reducing reliance on humanitarian assistance and empowering communities to thrive independently.

Conclusion

The Maban Strategy (2026–2028) sets a transformative path from humanitarian dependence to **integrated, climate-resilient, and locally owned solutions**. By fostering inclusive development, strengthening governance, and leveraging regional frameworks and partnerships, Maban County will become a regional model of durable solutions and self-reliance. The strategy lays a strong foundation for sustained impact beyond 2028.

Proposed Annexes

To facilitate the implementation of the strategy, bellow plans and documents will be developed after the strategy launch.

- Sector specific plan, including action Plans per Objective or per Sector.
- Maban Coordination Structure.
- Risk Analysis and Management, and mitigation measures.
- Context Analysis per sector.
- Actors Mapping.
- Funds raising and resource mobilization strategy.
- List of expected projects with description – To give clarity and better overview how Maban will be if we implement the strategy.
- Strategy Timeline and Implementation.
- Staffing required.
- Monitoring, Evaluation, Accountability, and Learning plan.
- Data collection plan.
- Measuring Impact Innovation Project.
- Socio-economic and vulnerability data analysis.

Doro refugee camp, Maban County, Upper Nile State © UNHCR / Philip James Lukudu / 2025

MABAN STRATEGY 2026-2028
UPPER NILE STATE, SOUTH SUDAN

January 2026

"A sustainable strategy for inclusive governance and self-reliance for refugees, returnees, and host communities"

"Icteratigiya yuongida te ḏuat ma waakinda, ɔci jyek tɛlta maka ŋɔlni ṭuaŋ, ɔci maka dɔɔkin baanji, ɔci maka te baanen neeni"tierki waakin pookeny"

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