Fig 1: View of the Abukadra settlement, Renk County @UNHCR/Renk

Renk County Area Based - Durable Solutions Strategy for Refugees, Returnees, Internally Displaced and Host Community

(2026-2028)

Acknowledgement

Hon. Diing Deng Lueth, Commissioner Renk County

On behalf of the Government of Renk County, I hereby express my full endorsement of the Renk Area Based Durable Solutions Strategy, which represents a critical and timely framework to address the evolving humanitarian and development challenges facing our county.

Renk continues to host a significant number of returnees, refugees, and internally displaced people, placing immense pressure on already limited infrastructure, basic services, and community resources. The protracted nature of displacement, combined with recurrent shocks, requires a strategic shift from emergency response toward sustainable, long-term solutions that promote self-reliance, social cohesion, and resilience.

The Renk Area-based Durable Solutions Strategy provides a comprehensive and integrated approach that aligns with state level and national priorities on local development plans. It emphasizes safe, voluntary, and dignified solutions, including local integration, access to basic services, livelihood opportunities, and strengthened community systems. Importantly, the strategy recognizes the need to support both displaced and host communities, ensuring equitable access to services and reducing potential sources of tension.

THANK YOU.

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Executive summary

Since April 2023, Renk has become the primary entry point for people displaced by the Sudan conflict, receiving over 1 million people (80 percent) of arrivals into South Sudan. With increased number of new arrivals in 2024, Renk Inter-Agency RoadMap was initiated which followed an HCT-endorsed three-phase approach: (1) life-saving assistance at entry and transit points; (2) integration of emergency support in areas of destination; and (3) longer-term, integrated solutions for host communities, returnees, and IDPs.

While initial efforts focused on transit-based life-saving assistance, the situation has evolved. Thousands of refugees and returnees remain in Renk for extended periods far beyond the intended two weeks stay due to reluctance to relocate and limited onward transport capacity. As of December 2025, over 10,000 individuals were still in transit centers, creating pressure on overstretched services and increasing protection risks.

To address the needs of refugees and returnees, options include continued onward transport for those willing to return to areas of origin and those registered to move to refugee camps and settlement. Local integration for those choosing to remain in Renk as their destination will remain an advocacy based on the recent land allocated as key priority assistance remain the access to basic services.

Objective

This strategy combines immediate and durable solutions with three key objectives:

1. **Align** with the State-level Durable Solutions Strategy and Action Plan for refugees, returnees, IDPs, and host communities, while sustaining a life-saving emergency response.
2. **Maintain long-term** peace, coexistence, and social cohesion among refugees, returnees, and host communities.
3. **Enhance solutions** for refugees and returnees by safeguarding protection and promoting self-reliance.

The goal is to reduce prolonged stays and dependency in transit centers, prevent the establishment of transit camp nature in Renk, and foster inclusive, peaceful integration. Achieving this requires investment in public services, conflict-sensitive planning, and community cohesion initiatives. Implementation will be led by local authorities and humanitarian partners, aligned with the Upper Nile Durable Solutions Roadmap, and structured as a multi-year plan that adapts to evolving dynamics.

Timeline & Deliverables (2026-2028)

Year 1 – 2026: Stabilization of Mid-Longterm solutions build on the Inter-Agency RoadMap

Transit Decongestion & Exit Plan: Reduce prolonged stays in Transit Center (TC) through continued advocacy for onward transport, and integration.

Additional Land & Site Identification: Advocate for second phase of land allocation and secure government-approved land documentation for integrated settlements; initiate site planning while maintaining a conflict-sensitive assessments.

HLP Program: Strengthen the Operationalization of the HLP desk for title verification and plot demarcation; documentation for households reclaiming land with shelter and legal aid.

Start-Up Support: Provide one-off SNFI/WASH kits and basic livelihood packages for phase two integration cases.

Profiling & Intention Surveys: Update caseload for 2026 segmentation (refugees vs. returnees; relocation vs. integration).

Quick Impact Investments: Enhance the capacity of rehabilitation of critical public services (water points, health, schools, roads) while maintaining a peaceful dialogues and communication with community to ease tensions.

Year 2 – 2027: Scale-Up the Integration

Settlement Development: Strengthen the integrated settlement and host community area with durable shelter designs; strengthen neighborhood governance structures.

Livelihoods Expansion: Scale agricultural inputs, micro-grants, and vocational training; link to local markets and value chains.

Public & social protection Services Upgrade: Broaden rehabilitation of schools and health facilities; ensure government budgeting for salaries and maintenance.

Social Cohesion: Institutionalize peace committees and youth engagement programs; embed trauma and psychosocial support while maintaining the communication with communities' initiatives.

Year 3 – 2028: Consolidation & Sustainability

Full Integration: Achieve significant reduction in TC dependency; majority of refugees and returnees integrated into settlements or reclaimed land.

Self-Reliance: Transition from humanitarian start-up to development-led livelihoods and income-generation programs.

Infrastructure Strengthening: Complete major water systems, education facilities, and health service upgrades; improve rule of law and governance.

Peace & Stability: Mature community cohesion mechanisms; early warning systems operational; reduced risk of displacement recurrence.

Monitoring & Handover: Establish MEL systems for durable solutions indicators; progressively hand over responsibilities to local authorities and development actors.

1. Purpose

Provide a coherent, county owned and area-based durable solutions strategy for Renk that integrates humanitarian, development and peace actions. The strategy will seek to clarify pathway solutions for refugees and returnees; and sets out coordination, implementation, risk management and monitoring arrangements consistent with Upper Nile Area-Based Roadmap for durable solution, National level Durable Solutions Strategy and Action Plan for South for South Sudan.

The strategy as a reference document: The document will be a government-led initiative, and the evolving dynamics in Renk outlined in this strategy will be monitored and reviewed on a biannual basis (every six months) to assess progress and inform updates to the action plans.

2. Context and Problem statement

Interventions contributed to better public health, reduced waterborne disease risks, and greater community resilience.

- **Situation:** Since April 2023, Renk has been the main gateway for people fleeing the Sudan conflict, accounting for over 1 million arrivals cumulatively, 80 percent of all entries into South Sudan. Most cross through the official Joda/Wunthou border (59 Percent), through unofficial routes of where they are profiled and transported by International Organization for Migration (IOM) to the Renk transit center, located 60 km from the official border.

- **Entry points:** Border monitoring partners RRC, IOM, and UNHCR track movements across six recognized entry points: one official crossing at Joda/Wunthou and five unofficial points (Emtidad, Omdulis, Gongbar, Atam, and Bobnis), confirmed in January 2025. These unofficial routes account for about 41% of total arrivals from Blue Nile, White Nile, and Sennar States, while the official border handles the remaining 59%. Movements are dispersed across the four Payams of North Renk, South Renk, Gerger, Jalhak and Chemedi, placing significant strain on transit centers and local services within host communities.

- **Transit Center:** From April 2023 to May 2025, Renk operated two transit centers to accommodate new arrivals. Following the closure of Transit Center One requested for use by Upper Nile University the response has relied on a single transit center since May 2025. Designed for a capacity of 3,000 individuals, the center remains under severe strain due to continuous daily arrivals, prolonged stays, and limited services. By December 2025, more than 10,000 people were still residing in the facility, resulting in persistent congestion and overstretched resources.

- **Population Group:** The Transit center hosts 8,000 individuals made up of 85 percent of the returnees and 15 percent of the refugees far beyond the intended capacity of 3000 and expected short-term duration of two weeks prior to registering onward transport and relocation acceptance posing major constraints to decongestion.

- **Underlying risks:** As Renk continues to receive large numbers of new arrivals fleeing the Sudan conflict, significant protection risks persist. These include widespread gender-based

violence, particularly against unaccompanied women and girls; elevated child protection concerns with cases of family separation and unaccompanied children; and severe psychological impacts such as acute mental distress. Additional risks involve theft, extortion, forced labor, and exploitation prior to flight. Vulnerable groups such as elderly individuals, adolescents without caregivers, and separated children face heightened risks, compounded by slow family reunification processes and negative coping mechanisms like child labor and transactional sex. Limited access to basic services, including shelter, water, sanitation, and healthcare, especially in remote areas, exacerbates these vulnerabilities. Large-scale, fluid movements have also triggered secondary risks such as disease outbreaks, congestion in transit centers, and worsening food insecurity.

- **Contingency planning:** While Renk will continue to remain unpredictable and sudden inflows of people across the border, there are several anticipated crises which can and will be prepared for by humanitarian partners. The Inter-sector coordination will therefore ensure it plans strategically with local authorities for external shocks which have the potential to result in increased humanitarian needs. This includes engaging in the annual worst case scenario planning, climate change actions and health related outbreak to support new emergency response planning.

These situations underscore the urgent need for a comprehensive strategy combining life-saving emergency response with durable solutions, while addressing protection risks and promoting peaceful coexistence among refugees, returnees, and host communities.

Displacement within Renk County

Refugees: Since April 2023, over 150,000 refugees have been registered at the Renk Transit Center, with over 15,000 individuals relocated to the refugee camps in Maban, Aweil, Yambio, and Jam Jang.

Returnees: Since April 2023, over 500,000 returnees have been registered at the Renk Transit Center, and over 590,000 have received Onward Transportation assistance from Joda/Wuntau border to Renk since April 2023.

Host Community: Based on the Renk County survey conducted in 2011, an estimated 137,751 people resided across the seven payams that make up the county: Renk, Amolbok, Momding, Dokdok, Gerger, Jalhak, and Chemedi.

NOTE: While the overall population of Renk is estimated to be over 400,000, the registered figures for refugees and returnees do not represent the full population. Notably, many Sudanese nationals entering through the Eastern corridors in the area with the highest influx are not fully accounted for due to secondary movement, and some returnees choose to integrate directly into host communities without passing through the transit center registration desk.

Durable Solutions Framework for Upper Nile

The Renk Area-based durable solutions strategy aligns its framework with that of Upper Nile state strategy. The framework for the solutions will ensure that key emphasis within its actions will adopt the its key objectives in line with the South Sudan Durable Solutions Strategy and Plan of

Action for Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons, Returnees and Host Communities; The Government's Solutions Strategy in South Sudan (2021 and updated in 2023) which aims at;

1. Creating secure and safe environment for achieving durable solutions;
2. Providing basic services to support and sustain durable solutions;
3. Supporting integration of refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities including livelihoods assistance;
4. Strengthening government institutional capacities and relations; and
5. Bolstering Government ownership and capacity, partnership arrangements and coordination mechanisms.

Other Key Frameworks

The Renk County Area-Based Strategy will coordinate its implementation efforts with key government stakeholders, the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), United Nations agencies, International and National Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs and NNGOs), Local NGOs (LNGOs), and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs), including Refugee- and Returnee-Led Organizations (RLOs).

Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS): The plan for Action will ensure the importance of durable solutions for displaced persons and returnees is implemented as per the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) paragraph 2.1.1 is adhered to for enhanced social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.

Upper Nile State Development Plan (2021-2024): The National Development Strategy (NDS) for South Sudan, which is aligned with the provisions of the R-ARCSS and other frameworks, requires all States within South Sudan to develop and implement State Development Plans. Specifically linked to displacement, the State Development Plan has the Strategic Objective 1.3: To establish a conducive environment for repatriation, resettlement and reintegration of displaced persons, calling for;

Allocation of land to resettle displaced persons; Create dialogues to enable acceptance of returnees; Provision of basic services at the return areas and integrated community locations; Provision of livelihood skills, and; Reception centres to register refugees, returnees and IDPs.

International Framework for Durable Solutions for IDPs: According to IASC Framework on Durable Solutions for Internally Displaced Persons (2010), "A durable solution is achieved when IDPs no longer have specific assistance, and protection needs that are linked to their displacement and such persons can enjoy their human rights without discrimination resulting from their displacement." A durable solution can be achieved through:

(1) Sustainable reintegration at the place of origin (hereinafter referred to as "return");

(2) Sustainable local integration in areas where returnees and refugees have integrated

(3) Sustainable integration in another part of the country ("settlement elsewhere in the country").

Position on Return

The Renk response will continue to recognize the position on returns in accordance to the Upper Nile state Area Based Coordination strategy and the Renk response guidelines on Returns which is implemented to ensure full support, safe, dignified, and sustainable return and reintegration of South Sudanese and other displaced persons arriving in or transiting through Renk and onward areas. This applies to all humanitarian actors responding to the needs of the displaced population in Renk County.

Government Leadership and Ownership: The reintegration process will be led by the government, reinforcing the ownership of the implementation on position of return in line with the South Sudan Durable Solutions Strategy, and contextualized guidelines for Renk county implementation process.

SIX STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS FOR RENK RESPONSE

One: Implement the Transit Center Exit Plan

The implementation will be undertaken in three distinct phases from June to December 2026, subject to the formal confirmation of the Phase Two land extension in Abukadra for settlement, which will determine the sequencing and scale of activities. The exit plan will further include a structured handover phase from January to June 2027, during which the Transit Center will be gradually transferred to local authorities, ensuring its integration into county-led social protection and service delivery systems.

Phase 1: Decongestion of Transit Center (July -Sept 2026)

The prolonged stay of displaced populations in the Renk Transit Center driven by intentions to remain in Renk and delays in phase II land allocation by local authorities has resulted in sustained congestion, particularly among individuals with no intensions to leave Renk. The transit center is currently hosting over 8,000 individuals, almost three times its capacity. The decongestion plan will ensure it maintains its intended capacity of 3,000 individuals.

This phase will prioritize decongesting the Transit Center while reinforcing its temporary function. The response approach will shift the flow of new arrivals toward rapid registration and provision of immediate cash-for-food assistance upon arrival from border. Clear and consistent messaging from border entry points will promote targeted onward transportation assistance (OTA) for those willing to relocate, alongside one-time integration support packages (including NFI, cash for shelter and MPCA) to facilitate immediate settlement or reintegration.

At the same time, the Transit Center will be restructured to restrict long-term stays, with additional measures on access ensuring that only individuals with specific protection or specific needs are temporarily accommodated for a maximum of one week.

Phase 2: Transition and Service Decentralization (Oct-Dec 2026)

The second phase will center on the orderly scale-down of the Transit Center and the relocation of remaining residents through targeted support packages, including land allocation and one-off cash assistance for shelter construction and livelihood start-up. The availability of resources will determine the Onward Transportation Assistance (OTA) for individuals requiring relocation support, while service delivery shifts decisively toward community-based systems.

At this stage, the Transit Center will be repositioned into a temporary reception facility with the intended capacity of approximately 3,000 individuals and below, designed to accommodate only short-term stays for newly arriving persons with specific needs awaiting specific and case by case

settlement support. Essential services will be fully transitioned to host communities and designated settlement areas, supported by continued engagement with local authorities to confirm the second phase of land for settlement. This approach will enable a gradual transition toward area-based solutions, strengthening self-reliance, social integration, and reducing dependency on centralized transit support.

Phase 3: Handover - consolidation and systems integration (January-June 2027)

The final phase will transform the Transit Center into a lean transit and coordination hub, fully handed over to the state and county systems. All life-saving services will be embedded into local social protection service delivery structures, ensuring continuity through government and community mechanisms. Emphasis will be placed on sustainable settlement, social cohesion, and economic integration, supported by strong linkages with recovery and development actors. This phase ensures a complete transition away from dependency on transit assistance, aligning humanitarian efforts with long-term stabilization and durable solutions for refugees, returnees, and host communities in Renk.

Two: Provision of Land for Settlement for Refugees, Returnees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)

The Renk County government has already allocated 2,000 hectares of land to accommodate the majority of returnees (85 percent) currently residing in transit centers. The successful relocation and initial settlement have begun in Abukadra, covering 44 hectares, which now hosts over 5,000 returnees who have chosen not to register for or proceed with onward transportation. Securing the second phase of settlement is essential to guide the next phase of implementation and enable the planned relocation of both refugees and returnees, supporting long-term self-reliance and fostering peaceful coexistence within the community.

Sustained engagement with county authorities is vital to advance durable solutions for refugees and returnees currently residing in the Renk Transit Center. Securing additional land through the Renk County Government is essential to enable safe settlement, planned relocations, and meaningful socio-economic integration for households choosing to remain in Renk. Expanding land allocations will not only reduce overcrowding and protection risks but also support community stability, self-reliance, and peaceful coexistence between displaced populations and host communities.

Proposed directions

I. The county government and host community leadership play a primary role in land allocation, leading decision-making processes, and providing necessary support and coordination.

II. The county government should take the lead in promoting afforestation efforts and advocating for environmental protection.

- The government will ensure that land is allocated for both settlement and agricultural use, while returnees and refugees will be expected to follow existing community-led and county-led mechanisms in land-leasing and rental policies for agricultural activities.
- Led by Lands department, RRC and CRA, implement safe, dignified, and voluntary transportation for households relocating from the transit center to newly allocated settlement areas.
- Facilitate refugee level two registration that will further grant more rights to movement, work, and socio-economic opportunity.

Transportation Support from Transit Center to Allocated Land for settlement and for agricultural production

- Humanitarian partners to ensure a pre-verification of refugees and returnees prior to relocation
- Humanitarian partners to coordinate movement schedules with county authorities (office of the commissioner, land department, RRC, CRA, and host community to ensure site readiness and availability of basic services e.g Health, Education, Access to Clean water
- Prioritize persons with specific needs, including older persons, persons with disabilities, female-headed households, and unaccompanied children.
- Provide transportation for household belongings and core shelter materials to support immediate settlement.
- Monitor movements to prevent family separation and mitigate protection risks during relocation.

III. Provision of Shelter and NFI Support (One off Assistance)

- The Lands department will work with the HLP Working Group on site planning and settlement layout in coordination with local authorities and communities.
- Support the lands department on the construction of transitional and semi-permanent shelters using locally appropriate and durable materials while promoting safe construction practices and community-based shelter initiatives.
- Provide Shelter, NFI kits and Cash Assistance (e.g., household items, mats, kitchen sets, dignity kits) to newly relocated households.

IV. Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Assistance Programme

A coordinated HLP intervention will facilitate organized relocation, secure tenure, and sustainable integration of refugees, returnees, and host communities in Renk. These efforts will be implemented through. The coordination will be strengthened between the protection sector, shelter/NFI sector, and government departments of Lands, RRC, and CRA to ensure secure tenure and equitable access to land to refugees and returnees.

Proposed direction

- In coordination with the Lands department, provide legal information and counseling on land tenure rights, occupancy agreements, and documentation.
- Support issuance or formalization of land allocation agreements in coordination with county authorities.
- Lands department will lead the coordination of the HLP meeting scheduled on weekly, monthly or quarterly basis.
- Lands department will coordinate with the department of irrigation on land allocation to the returnees and refugees.
- Strengthen community-based dispute resolution mechanisms to address land-related conflicts.
- Conduct awareness sessions on HLP rights and responsibilities to prevent disputes and secondary displacement.
- Conduct HLP legal counseling on rights to documentation and provision of title deeds
- Humanitarian partners continue to advocate for civil documentation and legal identity for returnees and refugees residing within host communities.

Three: Strengthening infrastructure and support basic services (Health, WASH, Education etc)

Humanitarian support to host community in Renk has been consistent with priorities given to life saving basic services such as construction and rehabilitation of Primary and Secondary Health Care systems, renovation and construction of classrooms, rehabilitation of access roads and provision of safe and clean drinking water through rehabilitation of and setting up of SWAT systems in Renk, Chemedi, Gerger and Jalhak Payams.

Facilitating access to basic infrastructure, including communal facilities, drainage, and access roads where feasible will be maintained as part of rebuilding the community's social cohesion and peaceful co-existence.

Proposed direction

Led by the relevant county authorities and departments and informed by community engagement, infrastructure planning and investment prioritization will align with Upper Nile State development plans. The County government of Renk will lead the appropriate legal and security arrangements to ensure safe and compliant implementation of all infrastructure activities.

I. **Government Resource Allocation:** The Renk county, led by the office of the County commissioner, is encouraged to progressively allocate the budget for the expansion, rehabilitation, and maintenance of essential service infrastructure in Renk. This includes health facilities, schools, water systems, justice services, and other public utilities.

II. **Allocation of Salaries for public sector staff:** Enabling the payment of salaries for public-sector staff such as health workers, teachers, and water technicians is critical to ensure continuity and quality of services.

III. **Peace and Security:** Sustainable development in Renk can only advance under conditions of peace. All stakeholders should continue advocating for peaceful resolution of disputes through inclusive processes. The Government should ensure safety and security for all communities, safeguard key infrastructure, and foster an environment conducive to safe investment and long-term planning.

IV. **Enabling Environment for Business:** To promote good and conducive environment for economic activity, efforts should focus on strengthening the management of public resources. Enhancing county-level revenue systems and improving public financial management practices will support more effective budget allocation, disbursement, and expenditure tracking.

V. To improve market access and reduce economic barriers, authorities are encouraged to minimize taxation payments, ensure safety of the access roads along the border areas connecting the border and Renk Market and promote safety of the goods and services along the River and air transportations.

VI. Water and Sanitation

- The County Government supports and develops plan for ensuring access to safe drinking water in hard-to-reach areas, including the Eastern Corridor. This should involve close coordination with development actors to support long-term water solutions for communities.
- Local authorities should advocate for sustainable WASH interventions, such as the rehabilitation and construction of deep hafirs and shallow wells, to reduce dependency on emergency support. The County Government should also collaborate with development partners to provide updated data and information on hafirs and other community water sources to inform durable water solutions.
- Poor sanitation conditions in Renk County continue to increase the risk of disease outbreaks including cholera and HPV. Government-led initiatives should be enhanced to promote behavior change and community ownership of sanitation practices. This includes enforcing the construction and use of household latrines and strengthening household-level sanitation measures to prevent and mitigate cholera risks.
- The County Government will lead efforts to establish safe and well-structured solid-waste disposal sites in Renk County, ensuring proper fencing and management. Additionally, the construction of fecal sludge disposal points across Renk county is essential to support environmental health and safety.

Health facilities: Health facilities across Renk County remain in critical condition and require urgent, coordinated action. Therefore, the County Government to take a central leadership role in driving a comprehensive strategy to improve health infrastructure and service delivery. This includes:

- **Conducting a county-wide assessment of all health facilities** including PHCs and PHCUs to evaluate structural safety, functionality, staffing capacity, and gaps in essential equipment. This assessment should form the basis for a phased and prioritized infrastructure improvement plan.
- **Leading the development and implementation of a long-term infrastructure rehabilitation strategy**, focusing on renovation of damaged or unsafe structures, expansion of overcrowded facilities, and upgrading water, sanitation, and power systems to ensure safe and reliable service delivery.
- **Strengthening the health supply chain system** by improving storage capacity, distribution mechanisms, and routine stock monitoring for essential medicines, reproductive health supplies, and non-consumable items. This includes ensuring regular replenishment of stocks and reducing stockouts that compromise service availability.
- **Coordinating closely with humanitarian and development partners** to mobilize technical and financial resources, align interventions, and ensure that health infrastructure investments are sustainable and integrated within long-term county development plans.
- **Enhancing local ownership and accountability**, with county authorities taking responsibility for oversight, maintenance planning, and routine monitoring of health facilities to prevent deterioration and ensure continuity of quality care.

Education (primary and secondary, higher learning): To improve educational outcomes for refugees, returnees, and host communities, the County Government should take a leading and strategic role in strengthening the education sector. Key actions include:

- **Reinforce and operationalize the policy of free primary and secondary education** for all refugees, returnees, and host communities by issuing clear directives to schools and supporting compliance mechanisms to prevent informal fee collection.
- **Allocate adequate county-level resources for teachers' salaries and incentives**, ensuring that schools do not resort to charging additional or unauthorized fees to cover staffing gaps. This includes strategic budgeting and engagement with State and National authorities to secure sustainable financing for education personnel.
- **Promote access to higher education by engaging with institutions such as Upper Nile University** to expand enrollment opportunities for youth in Renk. The County Government should facilitate dialogue on scholarships, bridging programs, and expanded intake to support youth development and reduce idleness and vulnerability.

- **Collaborate with humanitarian** partners to implement Training-of-Trainers (ToT) programs that strengthen the capacity of teachers. Trained educators will subsequently mentor and upskill other teachers, contributing to a sustainable and locally led professional development system.
- Advocate, in coordination with State-level authorities, for the establishment of county-based offices that support administrative processes for higher learning such as registration, university enrollment, documentation, and outreach making higher education more accessible for youth within Renk County.
- **Improvement of Access Roads and Infrastructure:** To support safe movement, improve service delivery, and stimulate socioeconomic development, the County Government should:
- Allocate resources for the rehabilitation of existing roads, ensuring that priority routes used by communities, service providers, and humanitarian actors are restored to safe and functional condition.

- Lead the construction of new access roads connecting the Eastern and Western corridors, enhancing mobility, market access, and emergency response capacity. This includes integrating road improvement plans into broader county development strategies and coordinating with relevant ministries and development partners for technical and financial support.

Four: Social cohesion & peaceful co-existence

Renk continues to host large numbers of displaced people alongside host communities, placing significant strain on services, land, livelihoods, and infrastructure. While host communities have demonstrated significant generosity, increasing population pressure, competition over limited resources, and diverse cultural dynamics have heightened protection risks, including petty crime and negative coping mechanisms that may trigger cultural sensitivities.

Strengthening social cohesion and peaceful co-existence is therefore critical to stabilizing the humanitarian response and laying the groundwork for durable solutions, recovery, and long-term development. The social cohesion strategy aims to rebuild trust, promote dialogue, and support shared access to services through community engagement, institutional strengthening, and infrastructure-based peace dividends, aligned with government priorities and supported by humanitarian and development partners to foster inclusive, peaceful, and resilient communities.

Proposed Actions

I. Strengthen community dialogue, trust-building, and conflict resolution mechanisms

- Renk County leaders, and local authorities to promote structured platforms where host communities, displaced people, returnees, women, youth, elders, and traditional leaders can collectively address concerns.
- Renk county, community leaders and local authorities to revitalize or establish inclusive community peace committees with clear mandates for mediation, dispute resolution, and coordination.
- Renk County community leaders and local authorities to support traditional conflict resolution mechanisms in alignment with human rights principles.

II. Enhance equitable access to basic services and shared infrastructure

- Renk county ensures that interventions such as water systems, schools, health facilities, roads, and markets facilitated by humanitarian partners and funds from donors benefit both host and displaced populations.
- Renk county authority to facilitate and promote community-led monitoring of shared services to reduce tensions over perceived inequality.
- Renk county leadership to use infrastructure projects as “peace dividends” that reinforce cooperation.

III. Strengthen local governance structures and collaboration with authorities

- Renk county authorities ensure a transparent decision-making and inclusive planning of government infrastructure
- Renk county authorities facilitate joint government–community committees to guide service delivery, land allocation, settlement planning, and community safety.
- The Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) capacitate the local authorities to implement the action plan on promoting accountability and feedback mechanisms across the county.

IV. Advance peace education and social integration

- Renk county in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and relevant departments, implement peace education in schools, youth centers, and community spaces.
- Renk county authorities in collaboration with the humanitarian partners work towards promoting intercultural and intercommunity social events, sports, arts, cultural exchanges, and women-led dialogues.

- The RCCE, in collaboration with the Renk authorities, engaged religious leaders in spreading messages of unity and non-violence.

Five: Self-reliance (livelihoods, agriculture, life skills development)

Renk's evolving humanitarian landscape with continued arrivals of refugees and returnees requires a livelihood strategy that moves beyond short-term relief toward strengthening self-reliance, resilience, and economic inclusion. Despite the first phase of the land allocation to 1008 returnee families, more new arrivals are in need of settlement lands that will promote their self-reliance and dignify living conditions. In addition, Refugees and returnees possess diverse skills, coping capacities, and productive potential that, when effectively supported, can contribute to both household resilience and broader local economic development.

The strategic direction for livelihoods in Renk therefore focuses on creating equitable access to income opportunities, revitalizing market systems, expanding productive assets, and fostering collaboration between displaced populations, host communities, local authorities, and private sector actors. Central to this approach is the recognition that livelihoods are not only a means of survival but a pathway to dignity, empowerment, and social cohesion.

Proposed Actions

I. Skills Development & Vocational Training

- Humanitarian partners in coordination with the Renk local authorities, to conduct market assessments to identify in-demand skills (construction, tailoring, mechanics, agri-business, ICT, etc.).
- Equip the vocational and learning centers for women, youths to accommodate both refugees, returnees and host community.
- Implement vocational training programs for youth, women, refugees, and returnees.
- Partner with local training institutes and private sector businesses for apprenticeships.
- Provide toolkits or start-up kits upon successful completion of trainings.

II. Agriculture & Livestock Support

- In collaboration with the department of agriculture and livestock, prioritize good agricultural practices and the distribution of climate-smart agricultural inputs: drought-resistant seeds, tools, fertilizers.
- Empower the community through the introduction of small-scale agricultural systems (treadle pumps, drip kits).
- In collaboration with the department of agriculture and livestock, provide livestock support of vaccinations, veterinary services, and restocking for vulnerable households.
- Promote joint host–refugee and returnee agricultural cooperatives to reduce tension and improve productivity.
- County government and private sectors to collaborate in supporting farmers to increase market production.
- In collaboration with the Education department, implement the school based agriculture that promotes backyard/school gardening to address dependency on school feeding Programme

III. Entrepreneurship & Small Business Support

- In collaboration with the county department, conduct business management and financial literacy training.
- In collaboration with the county department, provide start-up grants or low-value business support packages for micro enterprises.
- In collaboration with the county department, strengthen the formation of savings and loan groups (VSLAs) that include host, refugee, and returnee members.
- In collaboration with the county department, facilitate market linkages to local traders, transporters, and suppliers.
- In collaboration with the county department, conduct coaching and mentorship for new entrepreneurs.

IV. Cash-for-Work and Community Asset Creation

- Implement cash-for-work projects focusing on rehabilitating or construction while ensuring the equal participation of women, youth, and vulnerable groups.
- Use community assets to support long-term livelihoods and market access.

V. Market Systems Strengthening

- In collaboration with the county departments, map value chains and identify gaps in supply, transport, and market access.

- Renk county departments to support traders with logistical challenges (storage, transport facilitation, reduced checkpoint constraints).
- Renk county authorities to improve market infrastructure fencing, shading, sanitation, and water access in areas where refugees and returnees have integrated.
- Encourage cross-border trade facilitation with relevant authorities while prioritizing safety and security of community members.

VI. Inclusive Livelihoods for Women and Youth

- In collaboration with the county departments, develop tailored programs such as poultry rearing, tailoring, food processing, and small retail.
- Prioritize and provide safe spaces for women-led business groups.
- Support youth innovation hubs and digital skills programs.
- Ensure gender-sensitive programming to avoid increased protection risks.
- The Gender department to work closely with the department of Agriculture, fishery, forestry, livestock and cooperatives to ensure inclusion of women and youths in the empowerment process.

VII. Access to Finance

- In collaboration with the county departments, establish VSLAs, cooperatives, savings groups etc.
- Facilitate partnerships with microfinance institutions (where feasible).
- Encourage group lending and business networking for women and youth.
- Support market systems development that includes both displaced and host communities.

VIII. Strengthening Coordination & Governance

- Humanitarian partners work with local authorities to integrate livelihood support into the County Action plan.
- Strengthen community committees that link host, refugee and returnees' populations.
- Coordinating with sectors leads to avoiding duplication and maximizing impact.
- Ensure monitoring systems track income gains, market activity, and social cohesion outcomes.
- Encourage partnerships with private-sector actors for longer term employment pathways.

IX. Protection & Do-No-Harm Integration

- Livelihood activities to be designed to minimize GBV risks, child labor, exploitation, or harmful coping strategies.
- Livelihood activities to be equally accessed by persons with disabilities and other at-risk groups.
- The implementation will use conflict-sensitive approaches to avoid increasing tensions over resources.

X. Focus on resilience and empowerment

- In collaboration with HLP, support returnees and refugees with livelihoods related documentation needed for employment.
- Implement livelihoods as an exit strategy with an objective to empower communities to be more self-reliant to reduce dependency
- Facilitate long-term livelihood opportunities linked to government systems.
- Promote public-private partnerships that can sustain employment beyond humanitarian support.
- Encourage self-reliance by gradually shifting from in-kind/cash aid to income-generation pathways.

Six. Community-based Protection

Renk continues to face heightened protection risks due to the scale of refugee and returnee arrivals, overstretched services, congestion in transit centers, limited livelihood opportunities, and growing pressure on community resources. These conditions leave displaced individuals more at risk to GBV, child protection concerns, exploitation and abuse, HLP disputes, arbitrary arrests, family separation, and community tensions. Women, children, older persons, persons with disabilities, and unaccompanied youth are particularly at risk. As humanitarian operations continue, communities increasingly depend on external support, yet humanitarian access, funding, and operational capacities are inconsistent and cannot sustainably meet long-term protection needs.

To shift away from dependence on humanitarian actors, community-based protection (CBP) offers a sustainable approach by strengthening the ability of both displaced and host to prevent, identify, and respond to protection risks themselves. By empowering communities, improving local structures, and building functional referral and accountability mechanisms, CBP becomes a key exit strategy, ensuring that protective systems remain operational even as humanitarian presence reduces. This approach also fosters resilience, cohesion, and localized ownership of protection responses.

Proposed Actions

The Office of the Gender department and key departments will take leadership in the development of Terms of Reference for the community committees, SOPs, and guidelines for implementation.

I. Implement Community Protection Structures & Leadership

- Strengthen Community Protection Committees (CPCs) with women, youth, elders, minority groups, and persons with disabilities.
- Train CPCs on protection principles, safe referral, conflict mediation, GBV/CP basics, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) and risk monitoring.
- Support CPCs to lead protection risk mapping and develop community action plans that are updated quarterly.
- Promote peer support networks, including mother-to-mother groups, youth peace groups, and disability inclusion networks.

- Local authorities should collaborate with partners to establish multi-sectoral community committees such as water management committees, infrastructure committees, health/MHPSS committees, and shelter committees and provide guidance on exit strategies, community ownership, and the long-term management of existing infrastructure.

II. Community-Led Protection Risk Reduction

- Implement safety improvements identified by communities, such as lighting, safe pathways, fire prevention, watch groups, and protection help points.
- Strengthen community dialogues to address tensions over water, land, services, and resources.
- Support joint host–refugee and returnee committees to manage shared services and prevent inter-community grievances.
- Work with community groups to identify early warning signs of violence, exploitation, or conflicts.

III. Accountability, Information Sharing & Feedback

- In coordination with Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) and Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) implement a community-managed feedback and complaints channels (hotlines, helpdesks, suggestion boxes, outreach volunteers).
- Regularly hold information sessions on rights, services, documentation, referral pathways, and how to report protection issues.
- Train communities on PSEA, appropriate referral processes, and the role of humanitarian actors.

IV. Protection / Case Management & Safe Referrals

- Map community-based service providers and update referral pathways with community involvement.
- Train community focal points on safe and confidential referral of GBV, child protection, and other protection incidents.
- Support community caseworkers to work with local authorities on legal documentation, family tracing, and HLP issues.

V. Strengthening Child Protection at Community Level

- Strengthen community child protection committees and school-based protection clubs.
- Train caregivers and community volunteers on positive parenting, early detection of child abuse, prevention of early marriage, and family separation risks.

VI. Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Prevention & Risk Mitigation Led by Communities

- Support women's committees and community leaders/representatives to conduct GBV risk mapping and implement mitigation solutions.
- Establish women- and girl-empowerment centers facilitated by trained community volunteers and champions.
- Organize men-and-boys engagement groups for behavior change, respect, and non-violence.
- Conduct dialogues and information sharing on GBV referral mechanism.

VII. Housing, Land & Property (HLP) & Civil Documentation

- Train community mediators on handling land disputes, tenancy conflicts, and property occupancy issues.
- Support mobile documentation campaigns in partnership with local authorities.
- Create community committees to manage land allocation transparently in temporary settlements.

VIII. Social Cohesion and Community Safety

- Conduct joint host, returnee, refugee initiatives such as community clean-ups, youth sports, cultural exchanges, and joint livelihoods projects.
- Support community-led conflict resolution and peace committees.
- Engage and work closely with the religious leaders, women, and youth leaders as ambassadors for peace among other structures.

Community-based protection will help communities of returnees, IDPs, and refugees move away from sustained humanitarian dependence by building their own capacity to manage risks and

safety concerns. These interventions will strengthen local skills, structures, and decision-making processes, enabling communities to handle disputes, promote protection, and uphold rights without continuous external support. By fostering collaboration between community members and local authorities, they create locally driven systems that identify risks early, mobilize solutions, and ensure appropriate referrals. Over time, this approach enhances resilience, supports recovery, and contributes to durable solutions that reduce long-term humanitarian caseloads.

Annex 1: REFERENCE

- 2025 Renk Inter-Agency Transition Roadmap (November 2024)
- Upper Nile State, South Sudan – Area-Based Durable Solutions Roadmap (Revised 20-02-2024)
- South Sudan Durable Solutions strategy for refugees, returnees and IDPs
- South Sudan Country Refugee Response Plan

Annex 2: LOGFRAME

RENK AREA BASED DURABLE SOLUTIONS ROADMAP FOR REFUGEES, RETURNEES, IDPS AND HOST COMMUNITY (2026-2028)

RENK COUNTY, UPPER NILE STATE, SOUTH SUDAN