

South Sudan

April/May 2020

POPULATIONS OF CONCERN

301,490

Number of **refugees in South Sudan**. 93% come from Sudan, 5% from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, 1% from Ethiopia, and 1% from the Central African Republic.

1.67 million

Number of **internally displaced persons (IDPs)** in South Sudan, 11% of which are staying inside five UNMISS Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites and one area adjacent.*

168,964

Number of **South Sudanese refugees who have spontaneously returned** since the revitalized peace agreement was signed in September of 2018. **2.2 million remain in neighbouring countries.**†

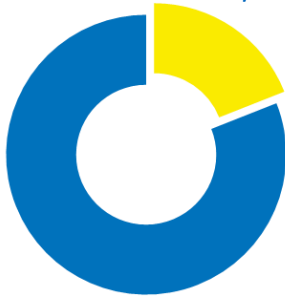
FUNDING

\$179.4 million

requested for the operation in 2020

81% unfunded
\$145.9 M

19% funded
\$33.5 M



UNHCR encourages newly displaced IDPs to maintain physical distance as a precautionary measure against COVID-19 during a core relief item distribution in Yei, South Sudan. © UNHCR/Doris Poni

In this issue

- UNHCR ramps up **COVID-19 prevention activities** in refugee and IDP areas. (Pages 03 & 11)
- South Sudan **continues to grant asylum** to civilians fleeing violence in DRC and CAR despite closing the borders as a precaution against COVID-19. (Page 06)
- UNHCR and partners **support more than 8,720 IDPs with core relief items**, such as blankets, mosquito nets, buckets, collapsible jerricans and soap. (Pages 14-15)
- UNHCR and partners **construct a maternity ward** to support the Agoro community in Eastern Equatoria, which **recently welcomed 5,500 refugees and 6,000 IDPs home**. (Page 18)

Operational Context



Marie Moses cuddles her new son, who was born less than a week after she claimed asylum in South Sudan from the DRC. The family walked five days without food or safe water. © UNHCR/Aisha Jummai Abdulsalam

South Sudan's warring parties reconciled to form a unified government in February. However, the peace agreement signed in 2018, ending a five-year civil war, has yet to be fully implemented and millions remain displaced inside and outside the country. Politically motivated conflict continues in the Equatorias. Meanwhile, tenuous rule of law and easy access to arms has resulted in an increase in inter- and intra-communal violence that has forced tens of thousands from their homes in 2020 alone. Still, the South Sudanese are hopeful and, despite UNHCR's non-return advisory for refugees, many displaced persons are heading home.

At the same time, South Sudan continues to host more than 300,000 refugees from more than five countries.

UNHCR South Sudan supports refugees in 21 camps and settlements across the country and is engaged in aiding IDPs and IDP returnees through the country's protection and camp management clusters. UNHCR is also working with South Sudan's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) and other partners to monitor spontaneously returning refugees' protection needs, and advocate for the vulnerable among them to be included in existing aid mechanisms.

Key Updates

- During the reporting period, the COVID-19 response dominated South Sudan's political focus. The first case was reported in Juba on 5 April. By 31 May, the Government had confirmed 998 positive cases.
- The parties to the R-ARCSS continued to debate how states would be allocated amongst them. By the end of May, state governors had still not been appointed. The lack of local governance contributed to deteriorating security in many parts of the country.

Refugee Response

COVID-19 response

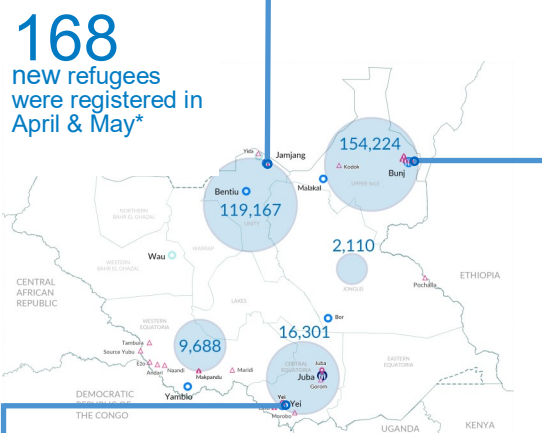
As the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in South Sudan climbed in to reach a total of 994 in May, UNHCR worked with the government to ensure refugees were included in its national response plan while, simultaneously, pressing forward with awareness raising activities in refugee sites and the surrounding communities using a variety of different modalities, such as radio broadcasts, mobile billboards, and door-to-door campaigns. Risk communication materials, such as posters and information leaflets were translated into four languages spoken by refugees in South Sudan – English, Arabic, French and Annuak – as well as some local, host-community languages, such as Mabanese. In collaboration with refugee artists, pictorial materials were produced to reach children, the illiterate and the hearing impaired.

Refugees have rallied to support efforts to spread the word about COVID-19 prevention, volunteering by the hundreds to distribute leaflets throughout their neighbourhoods, tracking rumours to ensure targeted and responsive risk communication, writing songs and producing dramas to be broadcast on the radio – and more. With support from UNHCR and partner International Rescue Committee (IRC), refugees who are enrolled in tailoring programmes at Women and Girl Wellness Centres in Ajuong Thok and Pamir refugee camps, Unity, also started sewing up cloth face masks to be distributed to the most vulnerable among them. Notably, refugee leaders in Upper Nile, Unity, and Western Equatoria States also established local COVID-19 taskforces or

ONGOING CHALLENGES

Maintaining the civilian character of asylum

When refugees first fled conflict in Sudan's South Kordofan State in 2011, they spontaneously settled in Yida. Because of Yida's proximity to the border – just 20 km from Sudan – and the associated protection risks, South Sudan's government has been encouraging refugees to relocate to Ajuong Thok and Pamir camps since 2016. 42,193 refugees remain in Yida; however, UNHCR has temporarily suspended assisted relocations in light of COVID-19.



Armed conflict

Fighting is ongoing between government forces and armed groups that didn't sign the 2018 peace deal.

Insecurity

As fighting heats up in Sudan's Blue Nile State, tension is rising among supporters of two SPLA-N factions in Maban County.

COVID-19

As of 31 May, the Government of South Sudan had confirmed 998 cases of COVID-19.



Staff member from UNHCR partner Mission to Alleviate Suffering in South Sudan (MASS) shares hand sanitizer during a door-to-door cash distribution in Yei, Central Equatoria. © UNHCR/Doris Poni

community surveillance committees to coordinate with UNHCR and the South Sudan Commission for Refugee Affairs (CRA) on prevention and response. The community groups' key tasks included identifying refugees who travelled and returned to the camps, referring them to hygiene promoters for screening, and advocating for a 14-day quarantine to be observed.

To support refugees in their efforts to protect themselves during the pandemic, UNHCR distributed soap to all, and provided persons with specific needs with targeted support. For example, in Lasu refugee settlement, near Yei, Central Equatoria, UNHCR and partner Humanitarian and Development Consortium (HDC) provided 102 vulnerable persons cash grants, enabling them to prioritize their most urgent needs. In Makpandu refugee camp, near Yambio in Western Equatoria, UNHCR and partner World Vision International (WVI) conducted household level

training on sanitation, hygiene and disease prevention.

UNHCR also continued work expanding healthcare centre capacity in refugee camps, bringing the total number of additional beds available to 222, and ramped up virtual COVID-19-specific trainings to prepare healthcare and sanitation staff for a potential outbreak. Topics covered included surveillance, case management, infection prevention and control, continuity of services, referral and triage – and more. Staff needs were assessed and, in some cases, additional healthcare and sanitation workers were brought on. When possible follow up actions were taken, such as in Upper Nile State, where UNHCR partner WVI hired 14 staff, including nurses, community mobilizers, and cleaners.

Meanwhile, UNHCR and partners took steps to adjust regular programming to ensure con-

tinuity of essential services amidst physical distancing and movement restrictions put in place as precautionary measures against COVID-19.

- **Protection.** While the government has temporarily suspended refugee registration activities at reception centres across the country to limit physical interaction, it upholds its open border policy to asylum seekers, accepting new refugee arrivals and assisting persons with specific needs. Protocols have been established to register newborn babies remotely, guaranteeing their asylum status and enabling them to receive assistance. To maintain communication with refugees and asylum seekers in need, UNHCR scaled up its protection helplines. Community outreach workers are being trained to receive child protection cases while following COVID-19 preventative measures.
- **Education.** To ensure continuing education amidst school closures, primary and secondary school teachers began recording lessons to be broadcast on the radio in refugee-hosting areas on an ongoing basis. Homework packets were distributed. In Ajuong Thok and Pamir refugee camps, UNHCR mobilized the Parent-Teacher Association, School Management Committees and Board of Governors to raise awareness among parents about their role in ensuring learning continuity, and, with partner Lutheran World Federation (LWF), shared ideas for indoor, educational games with 956 families. Recipients of the DAFI (Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative) scholarship continued their university studies online using UNHCR computer labs in shifts, to enable physical distancing.
- **Nutrition.** UNHCR conducted weekly webinar trainings with all nutrition partners on maintaining continuity of care in the COVID-19 context, including adaptations the management of at-risk mothers and infants under six months, community outreach programming, child wasting, and infant and young child feeding during the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, in collaboration with



KEY PROTECTION ACHIEVEMENTS

SGBV PREVENTION

124 survivors of sexual-and-gender-based violence (SGBV) received psychosocial counseling

25 SGBV survivors received medical assistance

324 SGBV survivors and refugee women and girls at risk received basic material support

16,119 refugees were reached through advocacy activities to improve knowledge of SGBV prevention and response

ACCESS TO JUSTICE

97 refugees received legal assistance or counseling

258 detention or court monitoring visits were conducted

CHILD PROTECTION

29 unaccompanied or separated children were identified and referred for case management

43 separated children were visited and supported



A Sudanese refugee heads home after a UNHCR core relief item distribution. Items distributed included blankets and mosquito nets.
© UNHCR/Mary-Sanyu Osire

UNICEF, UNHCR prepositioned enough supplies in most areas to support supplementary feeding programs for children 6-23 months and pregnant and breastfeeding women for two to three months.

- **Health.** Health programming, including a children's polio vaccination campaign and malaria prevention activities, continued as usual with additional precautions put in place to protect patients and doctors. In case of inter-state movement restrictions, enough supplies were prepositioned in most refugee-hosting areas to support ongoing medical needs for at least three months. Patients with chronic medical needs, including HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis, were provided with medication to last them two to three months.

For more detailed information, see UNHCR's bi-weekly COVID-19 response updates, which are posted on [UNHCR South Sudan's online data portal](#).

Ensuring the right to asylum

South Sudan's borders were closed as a preventive measure to tackle the spread of the new coronavirus; however, the government continued to extend protection to newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers while putting measures in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

In May, 198 people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo and 163 people from the Central African Republic fled to South Sudan in fear for their lives. The new arrivals were sensitized on the new coronavirus and the measures put in place to tackle it under South Sudan's National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. They voluntarily agreed to quarantine for 14 days, as is mandatory for all national and internationals arriving to South Sudan. UNHCR South Sudan praised the government for its response in a statement to the press, calling it an example of how COVID-19 preventative measures

can be managed while preserving the right to asylum for persons in fear for their lives.

COVID-19 has slowed down official refugee application process. Refugee Status Determination activities have been put on hold to limit physical interaction and the Refugee Eligibility Committee (REC) has suspended the last few meetings. However, despite challenges, UNHCR continued to support CRA in reviewing pending cases and providing guidance for interviews and assessment. In April and May, 32 cases were reviewed.

Wildfire response

In April, UNHCR and its partners Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) provided emergency support to refugees who lost their homes to fire in Upper Nile and Western Equatoria, respectively. Core relief items were distributed in Batil (9 households, 60 individuals), Gendrassa (2 households, 7 individuals) and Kaya (11 households, 66 individuals) refugee camps, Upper Nile. A total of 22 households (133 individuals) were assisted. Items distributed included family tents, kitchen sets, collapsible jerry cans and used clothing. In Kasia and Nambara, Western Equatoria, blankets, sleeping mats, solar lamps and soap were given to 37 households (153 individuals).

Preparing for planting

It's planting season in South Sudan, so UNHCR and partners got busy allocating farmland and distributing seeds and tools to refugees to enhance their efforts to support themselves.

Across the country, 692 new farmers were allocated farmland (677 Unity, 15 Western Equatoria). UNHCR mobilized lead farmers in



UNHCR and ACTED rebuilt this essential bridge in Upper Nile after it was destroyed by flooding. © UNHCR/Joseph Wani



Sudanese refugee Hama Mocha makes fuel efficient stoves in Upper Nile. © UNHCR/Matthew Khamis



A Sudanese refugee at a seed and tool distribution in Maban County, Upper Nile. © UNHCR/Alex Kilong



UNHCR Representative a.i. Adan Ilmi speaks to journalists after donating two ambulances to the government to support the COVID-19 and Ebola responses. © UNHCR/Gift Friday Noah

Unity camps (313 Ajuong Thok, 240 Pamir) to train 553 of their peers on best practices in land preparation and seed sowing. As a precaution against COVID-19, trainings were conducted in groups of 10 or less. Meanwhile, in Upper Nile camps, UNHCR partner ACTED provided land tillage support and mobilized refugees and local South Sudanese residents to rebuild a bridge that was destroyed by flooding in 2019 to ensure access to agricultural land during the rainy season.

More than 3,300 farmers in Upper Nile camps and 4,000 in Unity camps were registered to receive seeds. Notably, in Unity, UNHCR, with UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and IRC purchased all the seeds that will be distributed in Pamir and Ajuong Thok camps from refugee farmers for the first time. This not only ensures refugees income, but also reduces costs because there were no transportation expenses. The savings were used to purchase additional seeds.

Boosting entrepreneurs

UNHCR and partners supported refugee entrepreneurs with training, equipment, and cash for stores. In Western Equatoria's Makpandu camp, for example, UNHCR provided sewing materials and equipment to three SGBV survivors who recently completed a skills training course at the Sobe Women Friendly Space in Yei town, and helped ten refugee shop keepers top up their stock with \$3,000 worth of assorted grocery items. Similar support was provided to refugees in Upper Nile camps, where \$2,000 worth of retail goods were provided to six refugee retailers.

Supporting girls' education

Girls in Upper Nile refugee camps and the surrounding community are significantly less likely than boys to enrol in secondary school and, when they do, they often have worse attendance rates. The gender disparity can be attributed in large part to the sociocultural practice of early marriage, which, because of traditional dowry practices, is often used as a means for families to cope with economic challenges. The closure of schools coupled with the economic hardship brought on by COVID-19 has made girls even more likely to drop out. To mitigate the risk:

- UNHCR, in partnership with the National Ministry of General Education and Instruction, Food for Hungry, and LWF, provided 107 girls at Yusuf Batil Secondary School, Upper Nile, with cash grants to help their families meet basic needs.
- UNHCR and LWF conducted gender mentorship sessions with 200 adolescent girls across the four camps (46 in Gendressa; 37 in Batil; 20 in Kaya; 156 in Doro). The purpose of the sessions was to encourage the girls to continue with their studies despite challenges presented by school closures, follow up with the progress made in their assigned at-home work, and discuss challenges.

Ensuring Access to Basic Services

Enabling refugees to meet their basic needs is an integral part of protection as it decreases the risk for negative coping mechanisms. As such, UNHCR employs a multi-sector response, working with government and partners to ensure refugees are sheltered and fed, and have access to education, health care, and adequate water and sanitation services. Key sectoral highlights are listed below.*

(UNHCR strives to strengthen inter-communal bonds, so numbers include both refugees and host community members unless specified.)



Sudanese refugees in Upper Nile's Gendrassa refugee camp are aiming to raise and transplant 13,000 tree seedlings in 2020. © UNHCR/Amias Aryampa Ampurire

ACCESS TO ENERGY

4,411 fuel efficient stoves produced

40,955 tree seedlings produced in refugee-run nurseries

25,678 tree seedlings distributed to communities for planting

EDUCATION

The Government of South Sudan has **temporarily closed schools** to facilitate physical distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, working with the Ministry of General Education and Instruction, **UNHCR and partners continue to provide students with distance learning opportunities**, including radio lessons and homework packets.


FOOD SECURITY & NUTRITION

11,243 counseling sessions conducted on best practices in infant and young child feeding

12,486 children aged 6-23 months benefitted from a supplementary feeding programme to prevent malnutrition

2,462 individuals received care through the Community-based Management of Acute Malnutrition programme


HEALTH

97,003 people consulted with healthcare professionals at UNHCR-supported facilities (20% and 27% came from the host community in April and May, respectively)

3,720 patients were admitted for inpatient care (35% and 44% were from the host community, respectively)

74 pregnant women received treatment to prevent the transmission of HIV/AIDS from mother to child

529 patients living with HIV/AIDS received anti-retroviral treatment

189 patients received treatment for Tuberculosis

1,600 babies were delivered at UNHCR-supported obstetric and newborn care facilities

62,064 persons of concern were reached through health education initiatives

78 COVID-19 trainings conducted for frontline workers.


SHELTER & NON-FOOD ITEMS

5,262 households received core relief items, such as plastic tarpaulins, blankets, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, and kitchen sets

1,346 households received tents or shelter materials, such as plastic tarpaulins, corrugated metal roofing or other materials

231,140 individuals received water and sanitation related items, such as soap, jerricans or buckets


WATER & SANITATION

269 household and community latrines were constructed, bringing the ratio of persons per drop hole to 1/16

59,104 people were reached through hygiene promotion and safe-water chain campaigns

IDP Response

Protection context

Ongoing armed conflict in southern Central Equatoria between the government and non-signatories to the 2018 Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan displaced more than 7,000 IDPs in April and May. Meanwhile, intercommunal violence – often in the form of violent cattle raids – continued to intensify in the wake of the dissolution of state governments in February. Since the beginning of the year, more than 80,000 civilians have been displaced as a result of intercommunal violence in more than [300 reported incidents of intercommunal violence](#). Notable mass displacements during April and May included:

- **Central Equatoria.** A total of 1,398 households with a population of 7,226 IDPs sought refuge in Yei town, Central Equatoria, amid ongoing armed conflict between government forces and non-signatories to the 2018 peace agreement.
- **Jonglei.** An estimated 300 people, including two humanitarian aid workers, died and many more were displaced in intercommunal clashes between the Lou Nuer and Murle youth in Jonglei state in April.
- **Upper Nile.** Incidents of cattle raiding and revenge killing in Maiwut county displaced 3,000 individuals within South Sudan and forced at least 1,500 to seek refuge across the border in Ethiopia, where they were registered with the UNHCR Gambella Office.
- **Western Bahr El-Ghazal.** Cattle raiding, and intercommunal continued in April between cattle keepers and farmers in

areas of Jur River County, triggering a new wave of displacement. Between 16 and 24 April, 41 households of 149 individual sought refuge in the Masna IDP collective site. From January to May, conflict in Tonj South has reportedly displaced 1,325 households in Jur river country from January to May. UNHCR and partners assisted them with core relief items.

- **Western Equatoria.** In Yambio cattle herders from Yirol County of Eastern Lakes State attacked cattle herders in Mvolo County, killed 10 people and headed away with more than 400 heads of cattle.

COVID-19 response

The perception that COVID-19 is for foreigners and those in UNMISS Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites was still common among the local community in April and May. That has resulted, in some areas, in restrictions of movement in and out of displacement sites and verbal aggression toward humanitarian volunteers conducting COVID-19 sensitization. Awareness of the risks and preventative measures did appear to be improving, as exhibited by hand washing behaviour in public places; however, crowding in communal areas remained prevalent.

Despite challenges, humanitarian organizations continued working together to disseminate information about the virus among IDPs in PoC sites and collective sites using a variety of methods, such as using megaphones in public places, hanging posters, distributing flyers, and campaigning door to door. In the



UNHCR staff checks in with a group of IDP women in Wau, Western Bahr El-Ghazal, who are making reusable face masks to be distributed to vulnerable people to protect against COVID-19. © UNHCR/Doris Poni

Malakal Protection of Civilians site, for example, UNHCR recruited IDP artists to create a mural, organized a COVID-19 themed drawing contest for IDP children, and supported IDP musicians in recording a song about the virus. In Wau, UNHCR worked with the government, International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNMISS, International Medical Corps (IMC), WFP, and FAO, to train and mobilize women IDP leaders to sensitize their communities on preventative measures, and supported IDPs in producing COVID-19 songs and dramas in five languages (English, Arabic, Dinka, Balenda, and Jur).

Handwashing stations were installed in communal areas of PoC and IDP sites in Jonglei and Upper Nile, and in some high-return areas, such as Bazumburu, Western Equatoria. Soap and buckets were distributed to persons with specific needs to support hygiene efforts in Malakal town and PoC site (1,079 individuals) and in Baliet County (300 households) in Upper Nile.

UNHCR also mobilized graduates from its

tailoring courses to produce face masks to be distributed to community health workers and IDPs with specific needs. In Malakal, Upper Nile, where the project was implemented in collaboration with DRC, HDC, and the UNMISS Civil Affairs Department, 10 IDP tailors sewed up 6,500 masks. UNHCR provided 10 sewing machines to support the project. As part of a similar project in Wau, Western Bahr El-Ghazal, IDPs produced 4,000 masks.

Meanwhile, UNHCR worked closely with national authorities in developing a national COVID-19 contingency plan, ensuring the inclusion of IDPs and returnees, and participated in national and state COVID-19 steering committee meetings and various technical working groups. To support the government's response efforts, UNHCR in April donated two ambulances, two 4x4 vehicles, personal protective equipments (PPEs), bedding and other essentials to the Ministry of Health and Humanitarian Services.

Durable solutions

UNHCR and partners, in close collaboration with local interagency Solutions Working Groups, continued to register IDPs requesting assistance in returning to their areas of origin across the country during the reporting period. However, since South Sudan confirmed its first COVID-19 case on 5 April, most humanitarian assisted returns have been put on hold as the government introduced measures to restrict interstate travel.

- Central Equatoria.** UNHCR registered requests for assisted returns from the Juba PoC sites from 1,111 Households (4,754 individuals). Most requests were related to the fear of the spread of COVID-19 within the sites, which are heavily congested.
- Jonglei.** UNHCR's protection desk in the Bor PoC site registered 25 households (52 individuals) requesting transport, food, and non-food assistance to facilitate their return.
- Unity.** UNHCR through its partner DRC registered 132 IDP households (580 individuals) to return from the Bentiu PoC site to their areas of origin.
- Western Bahr El-Ghazal.** In April, four sites hosting IDPs in Wau, including the Cathedral, Nazareth, St. Josef, and Loko-loko collective sites, were closed by the landowner to mitigate the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak. UNHCR supported 42 of the most vulnerable persons with core relief items. Meanwhile, in coordination with the Wau Solutions Working Group, UNHCR assisted 555 households (1,663 individuals) in returning home from the Wau PoC site. Cash for transport was provided along with food and core relief items.



Core relief item distribution for IDPs with specific needs, Unity.
 © Hope Restoration South Sudan/George Ouma



IDPs pitch in to make masks in the Malakal UNMISS PoC site, Upper Nile. © UNHCR/Igor Latluk



UNHCR partner MASS records COVID-19 risk communication messages for the radio in Yei, Central Equatoria © MASS



Finalist in a COVID-19 themed drawing contest UNHCR organized for IDP children in Malakal, Upper Nile. © UNHCR

Protection monitoring

UNHCR and its partners revised their protection monitoring approach to adhere to infection prevention and control measures amidst COVID-19. The IDP unit worked with the National Communications Authority to secure a toll-free protection hotline, which is expected to be fully operational in July, and strengthened community-based protection networks and communication with community leaders to identify protection needs and refer vulnerable groups for services. Training was provided to community focal points in IDP sites, including the Mahad and Don Bosco collective sites in Central Equatoria and Baliet and Malakal PoC sites in Upper Nile (70 individuals), to ensure protection activities, such as reporting and response to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV). In Juba, protection partners were supplied with 43 bicycles to facilitate their work.

Missions conducted:

- **Unity.** UNHCR through its partner HRSS monitored IDP returnees in Leer, Rupkuey and Tuachriak, 31 households (147 individuals) returned from Bentiu and Juba. UNHCR through its partner DRC also visited Dingding, Unity, to assess the situation after an influx of spontaneous returnees and IDPs in December. UNHCR and protection partners are working to address protection issues identified during focus group discussions, key informant interviews and direct observation.
- **Western Bahr El-Ghazal.** Following reports of intercommunal conflict in Tonj South And Tonj East counties, UNHCR participated in a joint assessment to Tonj South and Tonj East Counties on 12-16 May alongside IOM, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and others. The assessment team

visited nine villages in the Manyang, Ngok, Tonj, and Wanh-alel Payams and confirmed.

- **Jonglei.** UNHCR joined an inter-agency mission to Motot with UNMISS Force protection, following inter-communal violence in Pieri and some parts of Motot County, Greater Uror, on 16 May. More than 300 people, including three humanitarian aid workers, were killed in the clashes. IDPs, who were scattered across eight neighboring villages, expressed interest in returning to their original villages, but lost their homes and essential belongings, such as seeds and tools to facilitate the upcoming planting season. The Protection Cluster, which UNHCR leads, is advocating for support to be provided.

Protection activities

Central Equatoria

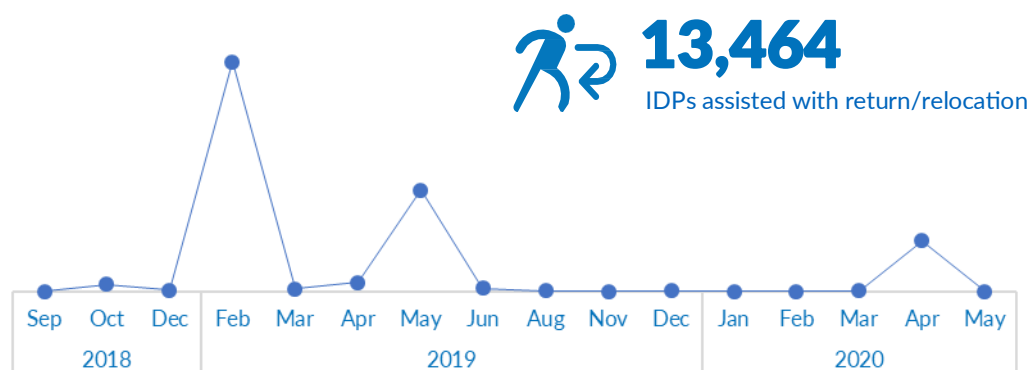
- UNHCR published two key reports supporting IDP protection: (1) [South Sudan: Vulnerability Verification and Return Intentions of IDPs in Wau – March 2020](#), and (2) [South Sudan: Vulnerability Verification and Return Intentions of IDPs in Mangaten – April 2020](#).
- Working closely with local leadership and the Community-Based Protection Network, UNHCR continued to update the Persons with Specific Needs database, identifying 7,944 individuals (4,430 men and 3,514 women) in nine IDP sites in Yei.

Jonglei

- UNHCR partner Nile Hope provided entrepreneurship training to 60 IDPs in Pochalla County to enhance economic empowerment and self-reliance for community members. In Lankien, UNHCR

HUMANITARIAN SUPPORTED IDP RETURNS*

September 2018 - May 2020



partner INTERSOS provided business skills training to 15 women. Areas covered included basic bookkeeping and investment methods.

- To support livelihood development, UNHCR partners HDC and Nile Hope distributed goats to 143 of the most vulnerable households in Twic East, Duk, and Fangak counties.
- UNHCR distributed menstrual hygiene supplies, including sanitary napkins, underwear, soap and buckets, to 188 women and girls in Bor. UNHCR partner INTERSOS distributed similar kits to 630 women and girls in Lankein (230) and Akobo (400).
- In Duk, UNHCR partner HDC supported 1,000 vulnerable households with protection-based non-food items, including plastic sheets, mosquito nets, sleeping mats, soap, kitchen sets, buckets, blankets and solar lamps.
- UNHCR provided solar lamps to 63 vulnerable people (52 women, 30 men) in the Bor PoC site to support their safety

and security while visiting the toilets after dark.

Unity

- UNHCR and partners, including Hope Restoration South Sudan (HRSS) and DRC, distributed relief items to 300 persons with specific needs in Rubkona County (Bentiu, Rubkona, Padiekdiek, and Kuerkuoth), and 3,450 persons with specific needs in Leer and Mayandit Counties (Leer, Thaker, Tocriak, Yang, Dhorbuoy, Payak, and Mayaindit South in Leer and Mayandit Counties). Items distributed included plastic sheets, blankets, mosquito nets, buckets, collapsible jerricans and soap.
- UNHCR through its partner DRC, distributed non-food items to 1,520 people in Nhialdu and Kajak, including 140 people with specific needs.

Western Bahr El-Ghazal

- On 28 May, UNHCR and its implementing partner Women Development Group (WDG) conducted a joint mission to

Supporting IDPs through the Protection Cluster

Key achievements of the South Sudan Protection Cluster, which UNHCR co-leads with the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), during the reporting period included:

- The Protection Cluster continued multi-lateral advocacy calling for a halt to inter-communal violence across the country.
- South Sudan's National Steering Committee appointed the Protection Cluster to co-lead of the newly established Protection Reference Group for COVID-19 alongside the Ministry of Gender, Child and Social Welfare. The group will ensure that protection principles are mainstreamed in all preparedness and response plans.
- The Protection Cluster is remotely monitoring COVID-19 related activities undertaken by protection partners across the country to better understand emerging protection concerns and the response required.
- The Advisory Group on Solutions, chaired by the Protection Cluster, issued an Advisory Note to the HCT on ensuring the cardinal principles of safety, voluntariness, dignity and information is preserved in all humanitarian supported returns from PoC or displacement sites. The Note, endorsed by the HCT, stress that in the current situation of COVID-19, critical and preparedness and planning measures are necessary, including supporting IDPs who want to leave PoC or displacement sites, respecting the freedom to choose their place of residence in South Sudan, which includes either returning to their areas of origin or relocating elsewhere.

For more detailed information, see the Protection Cluster's [April](#) and [May](#) updates.

(Continued from page 15)

Greater Baggari to follow up with IDPs who had recently returned to their homes in the area. COVID-19 preventive items such as face masks, hand washing buckets, soap, local face masks production materials, mobile phones and radios for the community to get information on COVID-19. Areas served included: Mboro, Fanjar, Ngisa, Farajalla and Ngodakala.

- To support government efforts to clear backlogged cases and decongest deten-

tion facilities, UNHCR last provided Wau's judiciary with office supplies, including desks, chairs, solar lamps, pens and paper. To improve living conditions for inmates, UNHCR also delivered hand washing buckets, soap, disinfectant, and bedding to enable prisoners to spread out at night. In Wau Prison in Western Bahr El-Ghazal, 608 inmates are packed together in a space designed for 300. This means inmates share meals, washrooms, bedrooms – and even sleeping mats – putting the prison at high risk for a COVID-19 outbreak.

Refugee Return Monitoring

Return overview

Since the first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in South Sudan in April, 9,681 refugees returned to South Sudan in a self-organized manner (5,077 in April, 4,693 in May). This brings the total of spontaneous refugee returnees in South Sudan to 168,964, since the signing of the revitalized peace agreement in (October 2018), and 289,650 since November 2017.

Because official border crossing points – with the exception of two return corridors into Greater Bahr El-Ghazal from Sudan – have been closed as a precaution against COVID-19, the majority of the returnees crossed informally.

The most active return routes in April and May were from Ethiopia – with 3,515 returns through the Pochalla, Boma, Akobo and Me-genis border crossing points, and from Sudan with 2,840 returns mainly via Abyei,

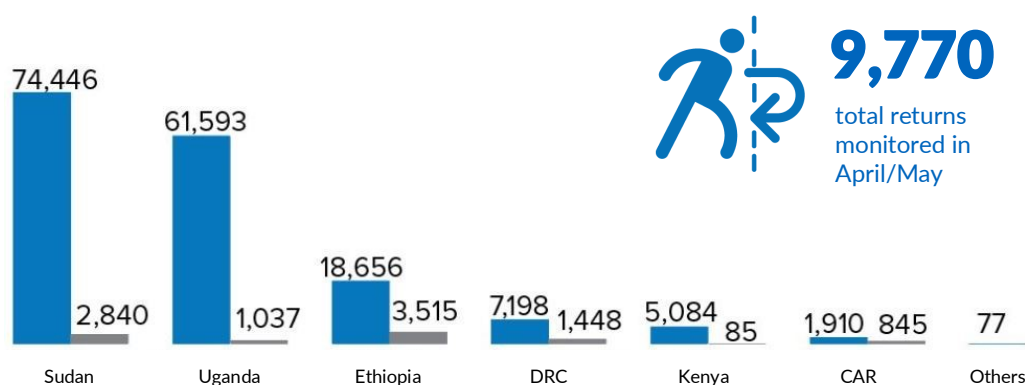
Kieradem-Gokmachar, and Raja into the Greater Bahr El-Ghazal area, and via Panakuach, Wadakona, Kodok, and Renk into Unity and Upper Nile states.

Other corridors with high returns were Gangu and Source Yubu in Western Equatoria, where 1,448 South Sudanese refugees returned from CAR and DRC following armed attacks along South Sudan’s border by the Lord’s Resistance Army and the Séléka coalition. Returns from Uganda reduced due to heightened security deployment and cross border COVID-19 restrictions, with 1,033 returns mainly to Eastern Equatoria via Owinykibul, Mugali, Nimule River port, Iko-tos, and Tseretenye crossing points.

As key factors for their return, the refugee returnees cited family reunification and fear of a COVID-19 outbreak in countries of asylum, citing South Sudan’s relatively low number of confirmed cases. Many of the returning refugees were students seeking to re-join

RETURNS BY COUNTY OF ASYLUM

■ October 2018 - May 2020 ■ April & May 2020



their families after schools were closed in countries of asylum as a precaution against COVID-19. Returnees also identified insecurity in countries of asylum, coupled with a perception of improved security in South Sudan as major drivers.

Key protection concerns

The arrival of a large number of refugee returnees to Gangura Payam, in Western Equatoria, as a result of violence in CAR and DRC, has created tension with the host community. Ambororo pastoralists have worsened the situation by invading farmlands and affecting the agricultural activities in the area.

In Kajo Keji, Morobu, and Lainya the confrontation between the warring factions has led to the displacement of 1,069 people including spontaneous refugee returnees in the areas of Kala 1&2, Giwaya, Dogoro, Lumuro Woro, Khor kaya, Biringo and Loka.

In Fashoda County, Kodo, and Aburoc, in Upper Nile, and Jonglei States many of the spontaneous refugee returnees from Sudan's Khor Woral, Sangor, Redis 1&2, Kashafa, and Jura Camps faced stigma, segregation, and harassment upon confirmation of six COVID-19 cases in Sudan. UNHCR continued advocating for spontaneous refugee returnees to be included in the national COVID-19 response.

As most official border crossing points remain closed, returning refugees, particularly women and girls, are exposed to violations by criminal and armed elements along irregular crossing points.

Protection response in return locations

Maternity ward constructed. UNHCR and partner South Sudan Older People's Organization (SSOPO) constructed a maternity ward in Agoro Payam, Eastern Equatoria, in April. The ward is expected to improve health service delivery and strengthen peaceful co-existence among some 5,500 refugee returnees, 6,000 IDP returnees, and the existing community.

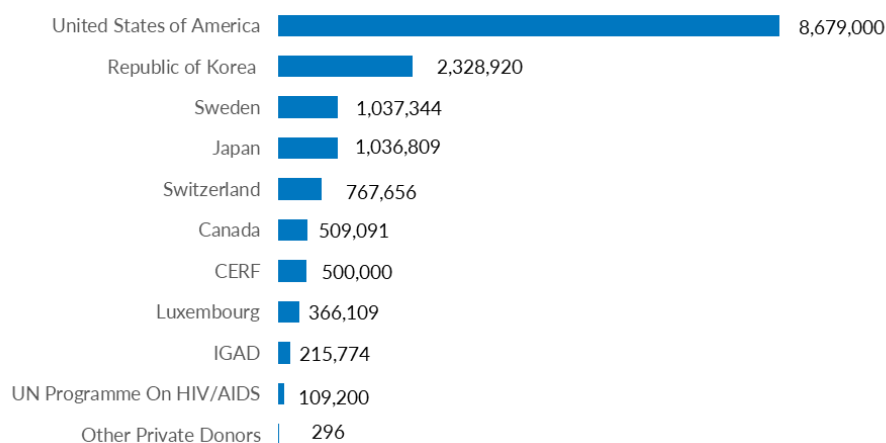
Humanitarian access road rehabilitated. In Unity State, the local community, with support from UNHCR partner Hope Restoration South Sudan (HRSS), rehabilitated an access road, which opened the way for WFP and others to deliver essential humanitarian assistance to Leer County.

Capacity building to improve data management. On 29 April, UNHCR conducted a one-day capacity training for partner staff from CARE International on Kobo data management tools.

Refugees advised not to return amidst pandemic concern. Throughout the reporting period, UNHCR continued risk communication efforts with refugees in Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia and Kenya to caution against returning to South Sudan and inform them of government restrictions on cross border movement. Meanwhile, to support the COVID-19 response inside South Sudan, UNHCR staff continued to facilitate inter-agency technical discussions on cross border and in-country population movement.

Financial Update

2020 funding for the South Sudan Operation in USD: Total recorded contributions directly to the operation amounted to US \$15,550.199, as of 28 May 2020.



Contributions earmarked for the South Sudan Situation (including neighboring countries hosting refugees): Germany 38 million | United Kingdom 24.8 million | United States of America 21.8 million | Denmark 14.6 million | Private donors USA 12.6 million | Canada 10.2 million | Sweden 5.9 million | Private donors Japan 3.5 million | Private donors Australia 3.4 million | Ireland 3.3 million | Private donors Germany 2.7 million | Norway 2.4 million

Iceland | Italy | Jersey | Liechtenstein | Luxembourg | Morocco | Spain | UN COVID-19 MDTF | Private donors

Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR's global operation: Sweden 76.4 million | Norway 41.4 million | Netherlands 36.1 million | Denmark 34.6 million | United Kingdom 31.7 million | Private donors Spain 26.6 million | Germany 25.9 million | Switzerland 16.4 million | Private donors Republic of Korea 13.9 million

Australia | Belgium | Bulgaria | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Indonesia | Ireland | Kuwait | Liechtenstein | Lithuania | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Peru | Portugal | Qatar | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Saudi Arabia | Serbia | Singapore | Slovakia | South Africa | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Turkey | United Arab Emirates | Uruguay | Private donors

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