

Sudan Situation

UNHCR Emergency Response in South Sudan



Lushia has just arrived at the Transit Centre by bus from the border. Lushia came with her husband who is in a wheelchair. They had great difficulty getting out of Khartoum and to the border. Her children are still at the border, they have not yet managed to secure transportation. Renk Transit Centre, April 29, 2023.

Regional & Country Update

In response to the Sudan crisis, the Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) was launched on 4 May 2023, outlining the preliminary inter-agency response and activities in the region to support Sudan's neighboring countries' efforts to protect and assist refugees and refugee returnees, and others, coming from Sudan. It includes initial financial requirements for six months for 134 partners (including UN Agencies, national and international NGOs and civil society actors), to respond to the crisis, working alongside host governments.

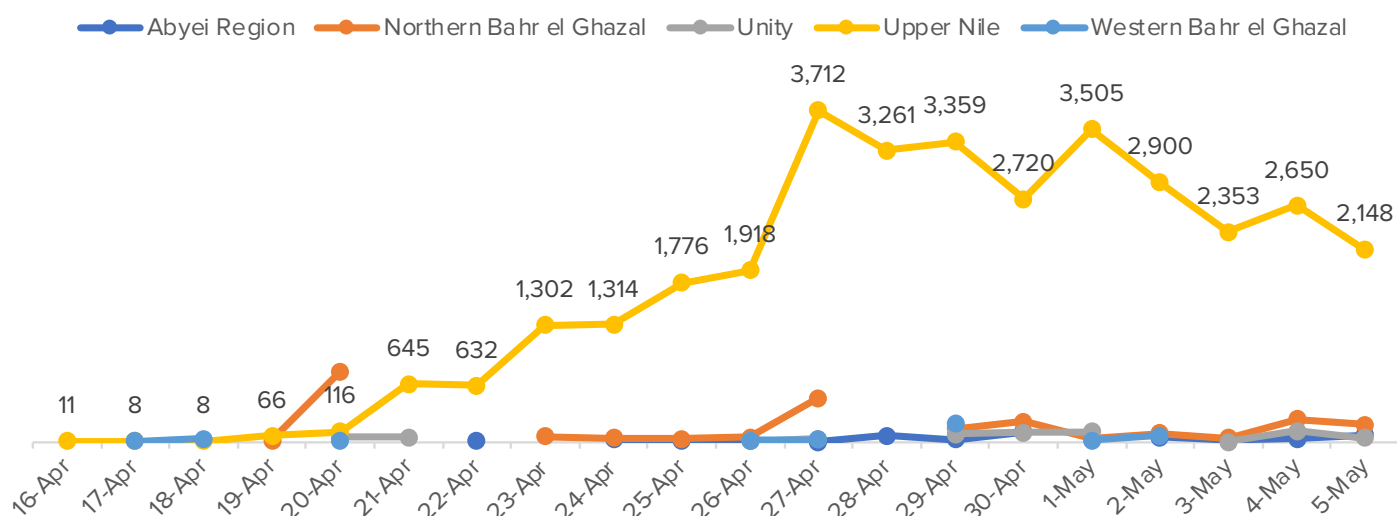
In South Sudan, the inter-agency South Sudan Emergency Response Plan for the Sudan Crisis was also launched on 4 May 2023. The plan is based on a scenario of 180,000 South Sudanese returning and 10,000 third country nationals in the next three months and 60,000 refugees arriving in six months. A total of 65 partners are involved, including 7 UN agencies, 19 international NGOs and 39 local and national NGOs. The funding requirements involve US\$96.1 Million for all participating organizations who will be focusing on supporting the reception and transit of the most vulnerable returnees and the assistance to refugees in camps.

Arrivals Trend

In the past week (29 April – 5 May), over 21,700 individuals arrived at the Sudan-South Sudan border. Most of them reached the Joda border point in Renk County, Upper Nile state, with an average influx of 2,900 daily. Families are arriving with increasingly greater level of vulnerability.

Since the beginning of the Sudan crisis on 15 April, over 38,300 arrivals have been recorded arriving at border points into South Sudan, with nearly 34,100 (89%) registered at Joda border crossing. Among them, over 35,100 (92%) are South Sudanese returnees who previously sought safety in Sudan.

of Individuals arrivals at border by state (16 April -5 May 2023)

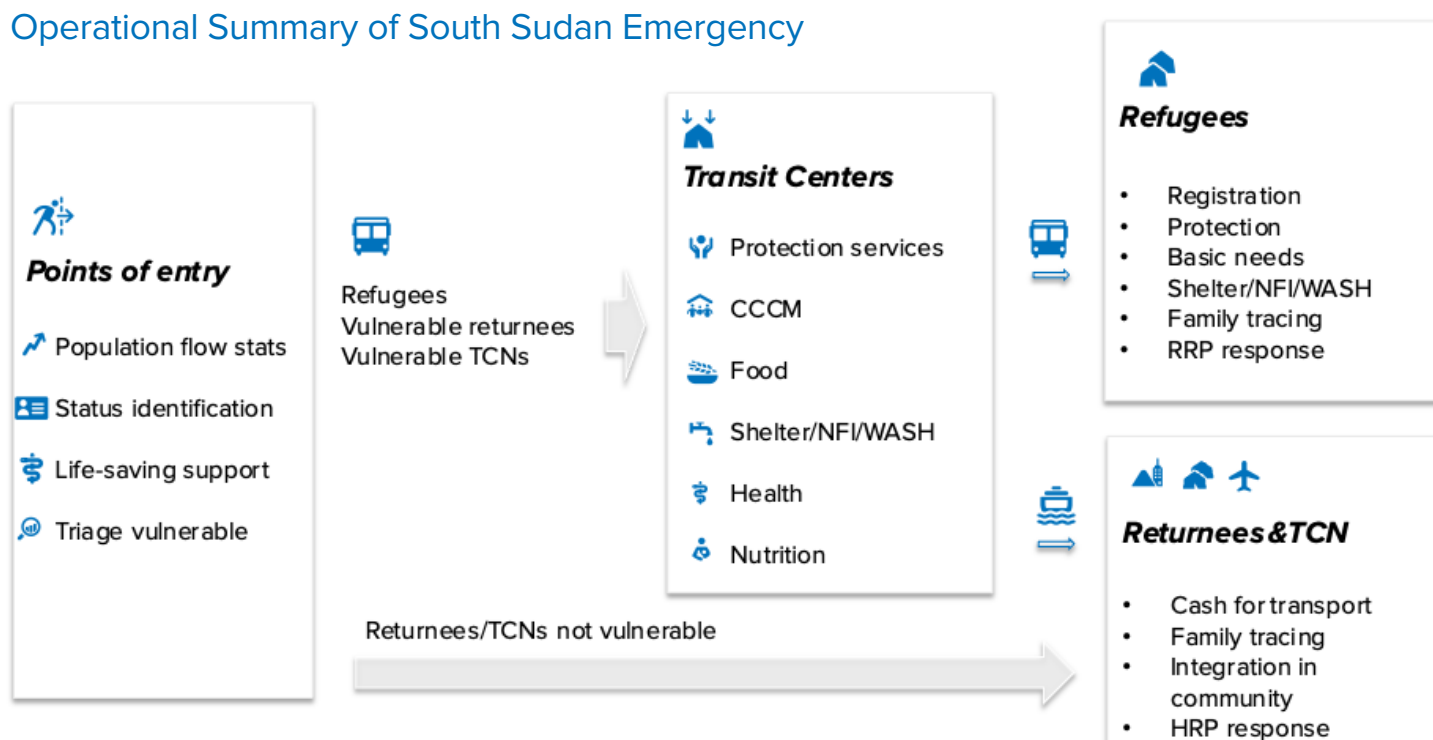


Emergency Response

The inter-agency emergency response is prioritizing flow monitoring at the border, identification and assistance to vulnerable and facilitating onward movement of South Sudanese returnees to their communities to avoid a build-up of vulnerable individuals in border areas that are extremely remote, difficult to access, and lacking basic infrastructure. Refugees and asylum seekers are being identified and moved to existing refugee camps.

At the border, the Response Plan outlines prioritized assistance to an estimated 20% of the most vulnerable returnees, although the percentage is quickly increasing due to the conditions in which people arrive after several weeks caught in the fighting in Khartoum. The emergency response for returning South Sudanese only cover assistance at the border and to travel in their communities, where their needs will be integrated into existing assistance programmes through the HRP, local authorities and community-based support systems.

Operational Summary of South Sudan Emergency



Upper Nile State | Renk

The majority of arrivals at the border are South Sudanese refugees returning home, entering through the Joda border point in Renk. Cumulatively, 33,952 individuals have arrived and been recorded at the Joda border point as of 4 May 2023.

UNHCR's emergency response is ongoing, together with partners, focused on the Joda Border Reception Center and Renk Transit Center for new arrivals.

Border monitoring

Joda Border Reception Center, by HDC, IOM, UNHCR

UNHCR together with the Humanitarian Development Consortium (HDC) and IOM are monitoring the Joda border and collecting statistics on the population crossing into South Sudan.

A newly developed UNHCR-IOM data collection tool will be rolled out in the coming days to gather more granular data about the profile, status, and destination of those crossing the border.

WaSH

Joda Border Reception Center – Renk Transit Center, by ACTED, IOM, UNHCR

UNHCR is providing water-trucking to both the Renk Transit Centre and Joda Reception Centre, providing over 100,000 litres of water since 5 May. At the reception centre, a 5,000-litre water tank is installed, and 10 emergency latrines were constructed. At the Renk Transit Centre, two 5,000 litre water tanks and a 10,000-litre water bladder were installed. 16 latrines were rehabilitated, while ACTED and IOM are constructing an additional 20 latrines. IOM is expected to take on WaSH service delivery at the Renk Transit Centre.

At the Joda Reception Centre, UNHCR has constructed 10 emergency latrines which are currently operational. Construction of 10 emergency latrines at the Transit Centre has begun through UNHCR implementing partner ACTED. 16 existing latrines within the structure of the Renk Transit Centre have been temporarily rehabilitated. IOM have also begun the construction of 10 additional latrines.



Transit Centre, Renk. UNHCR has trucked over 100,000L of water to the Transit Centre and Border Reception Centre, providing treated water to the thousands of new arrivals. © UNHCR/Charlotte Hallqvist

Core Relief Items

Renk Transit Centre

UNHCR started the distribution of emergency core relief items to populations at the Transit Centre on April 26. In total, four distributions have been conducted. The distribution consists of blankets, sleeping mats, and buckets. Cumulatively 823 households have been provided with core relief items, serving over 4000 individuals. IOM are expected to also distribute core relief items this week.

Shelter

Border Reception Center - Renk Transit Center

UNHCR is currently constructing 12 communal shelters to house the most vulnerable, 6 of which have been completed. The shelters are 8 by 20 and will serve 540 individuals. The communal shelters are planned to serve the most vulnerable. At the Reception Centre, construction of 34 x 8 m temporary structure including waiting area, and screening area, is completed. In addition, UNHCR has erected Refugee Housing Units to facilitate the work of partners.

Protection, GBV, Child Protection

Border Reception Center - Renk Transit Center, by ACTED, HDC, JRS, LWF, RI, SCI, UNICEF, UNHCR

Protection is mainstreamed across all sectors, with particular focus at points of entry where refugees and returnees with specific needs are identified and transferred to the Transit Centre (TC). A protection desk has been set up at the TC where protection concerns are documented and those in need referred to relevant partners.

As of 5 May, 98 protection cases have been identified, documented, and referred for further services. UNHCR partner Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS) is providing psychosocial support to vulnerable individuals.

Clinical GBV case management is ongoing by UNHCR partner Relief International (RI). Save the Children (SCI) opened a child-friendly space in collaboration with UNHCR partner ACTED, where 734 (288 boys, 446 girls) children and adolescents were engaged in child-friendly activities 4-5 May.



Distribution of core relief items, Renk Transit Centre. So far, over 800 households have been provided with relief items. © UNHCR/Charlotte Hallqvist

Health

Joda Border Reception Center – Renk Transit Center, by ARDF, Relief International, International Medical Corps, UNICEF, UNHCR

Two facilities have been established at the Joda Border Reception Center and Renk Transit Centre to provide primary health care services and emergency referrals to Renk County Hospital. Two ambulances provided by UNHCR Sub Office Maban are currently transporting more critical cases. As of May 5, a total of 1137 consultations have been conducted across the two clinics. 17 urgent medical cases have been referred to Renk County Hospital.

Nutrition Screening

Joda Border Reception Center – Renk Transit Center, by GOAL, UNICEF, WFP

Screening for malnutrition currently ongoing at both the Renk Transit Centre and Joda Reception Centre by GOAL (UNICEF and WFP partner). Provision of Blanket Supplementary Feeding to pregnant and lactating women as well as to children under 5 currently ongoing. Treatment for malnutrition in children ongoing.

Food

Joda Border Reception Center – Renk Transit Center, by GOAL, WFP

Hot meals are provided at the Renk Transit Centre to refugees and vulnerable returnees twice a day. So far, more than 4,000 individuals are served daily. High energy biscuits are procured by WFP and will be dispatched to border points to be provided to new arrivals. Once newly arrived refugees are settled in camps, they will be integrated into the general food assistance.

Humanitarian Transportation

By Government of South Sudan, IOM, Local Church, Private Sector, UNHCR

The Government of South Sudan, IOM and UNHCR are transferring new arrivals from the border point to Renk (70km journey). UNHCR is focusing on the transport of vulnerable South Sudanese and refugees to the Renk Transit Center. UNHCR is organizing the transportation of Sudanese refugees to the camps in the Maban area. From Renk Transit Center, IOM is coordinating the identification of boats and barges for onward transportation of returnees to six identified locations downstream, with the objective of releasing pressure on the transit site. The Government of South Sudan and some private sector actors have flown some of the vulnerable arrivals to Juba in previous days. Local Church groups have supported returnees in their onward movement to Malakal.

Site Management

Joda Border Reception Center – Renk Transit Center UNHCR/ACTED

A headcount conducted by UNHCR and ACTED on 1 May recorded a population of over 4,000 individuals in the center, and many reported a stay of over a week as they lack the means for onward travel. The TC is rapidly filling up. On May 5th alone, 352 HH/1780 individuals were received at the transit center.

The congestion posed a challenge to general service delivery, NFI distributions in particular have become contentious. UNHCR has engaged local police to provide security at the centre.

Upper Nile State | Paloich

UNHCR and the Commission for Refugees Affairs (CRA) have established two registration desks, one at the airport and the other at the Payam site, for over 2,500 arrivals including Eritreans, Sudanese, and other countries. Access to water and food is a challenge and overcrowding at the airport a security risk. UNHCR and partners are transferring refugees who express willingness to go to Maban camps and will rent additional buses for more transportation capacity.

On April 30, UNHCR started preparation with key partners for potential new arrivals from Paloich to Doro and Kaya camps in Maban. On May 1st, UNHCR and partners held several round of discussions with the communities in Kaya and Doro to inform them about the new arrivals. WFP is offering dry rations to the first small group of new arrivals and is looking into scenarios of larger groups of arrivals.

Upper Nile State | Other locations

Between 15 April – 4 May 2023, 123 households/775 individuals of South Sudanese refugee returnees returning through Renk arrived at Melut and Fashoda counties; 117 South Sudanese households/674 individuals arrived to Kodok and Malakal from Sudan (Khartoum) according to UNHCR partner HDC and DRC. All of these returnees came through Joda border point in Renk county. No returnees through border points in Manyo and Fashoda counties were reported.

Reportedly, the returnees were transported by buses from Renk to Melut. From Melut, the Catholic church provided them a boat spending the night in Kodok and the ones heading to Malakal arrived in midday in Malakal town. In Malakal, they were received by the government authorities including the business community, IOM and UNHCR partner DRC. Consultation with returnees to Kodok and Malakal suggested that most of them hope to integrate locally, while some hope to join their relatives in Malakal POC. Currently, the refugees returnees are hosted at the river side at Bulukat river port. The business community in Malakal mobilized donation and food distribution to the refugees returnees.



Deborah was in Khartoum for medical treatment when the fighting broke out. She spent many days on road before reaching South Sudan's border with Sudan. She is now at the Renk Transit Centre, hoping to make her way back to Juba. Renk Transit Centre, April 29, 2023. © UNHCR/Charlotte Hallqvist



Trucks travelling between the Joda Border Crossing and the Transit Centre transporting the most vulnerable from the border. Services at the border are very limited and many have been stuck for days. © UNHCR/Charlotte Hallqvist

Unity State

Between 15 April – 5 May, 968 individuals / 228 households have reported their arrival passing Panakuach and Rotriak border points. With the support of RRC and local authority, UNHCR and IOM are undertaking daily data collection to monitoring the arrival situation.

At the border, UNHCR has erected three tents and one Rakuba with plastic sheets, poles and bamboo. The new erected structures including tents and visibility banner will enable returnees to identify the entry point for registration. UNHCR and Action Africa Help International/AAHI are organizing transportation support to refugees and asylum-seekers who wish to be relocated to the Pamir refugee camp.

Bahr el Ghazal State Region

Between 15 April – 5 May, 2,459 individuals/521 households reported their arrival at Northern Bahr el Ghazal mainly through Majokynthiu & Kiir Adem border points; 403 individuals/99 households have reported their arrival at Western Bahr el Ghazal through border crossing points including Bormadina and Timsah.

Informed by joint border monitoring by UNHCR and IOM, the humanitarian actors at ICCG agreed on a prioritized response in Northern Bahr el Ghazal. UNHCR and partners, together with the local authorities, are assessing existing services and gaps in the border/transit locations. UNHCR and partner World Vision International have proposed a location for the establishment of a transit center awaiting government's approval; WFP is supporting the warehouse facility for pre-positioning and logistical support.

Abyei Administrative Area

Between 15 April – 5 May 2023, 45 individuals, 191 households have reported arrival at Abyei Administrative Area passing Amieth border point.

Challenges

As fighting in Sudan continues, arrivals are expected to increase and there is an acute need to scale up the humanitarian response to meet the needs of the growing number of individuals now at the border areas in South Sudan.

The delivery of humanitarian aid at border areas is extremely challenging due to inaccessibility, poor or nonexistent road infrastructure, limited connectivity, a lack of power supply, and supply lines dependent of cross border trade with Sudan. Prices in Renk have increased sharply since 15 April and there is a generalized lack of fuel throughout Upper Nile. This compounds the difficulties of helping new arrivals move onwards. This is a recipe for a costly and complex humanitarian response, should a population shift from the border be unsuccessful.

As more people keep arriving and onward transportation remains complex, there is a risk that the community in Renk will start becoming hostile to new arrivals.

The rainy season is fast approaching, threatening to cut the only road out of Renk and to add to humanitarian hardship for people waiting in Renk.

Most of those who arrive in Renk travel to Malakal, a city that has its own share of challenges and complex inter-ethnic relations. The possibility that many of those arriving in Malakal will seek to get into the already very over-crowded PoC site for IDPs cannot be excluded.

The wider implications of a large influx of unplanned returnees on South Sudan's already challenging humanitarian situation remain a concern. Many of those fleeing are expected to return to communities that are already very fragile due to conflict, climate change, and food insecurity.

Next Steps

The most urgent priority is to facilitate onward movement of individuals from these border areas where services and infrastructure are limited to avoid congestion and a dire humanitarian situation in Renk. An intention survey was conducted by IOM on May 1 to assess where arrivals may wish to move to. The survey revealed that the large majority of those surveyed (1636/3420) wished to go to Malakal, followed by Aweil (659/3420), Bentiu (359/3420), Paloich (280/3420), Juba (268/3420). Transportation options are being assessed together with the government and responding agencies. Obstacles include poor road infrastructure for road travel, safety and security concerns of transportation by barge, and the cost of air travel.

As people start moving out of Renk, attention needs to turn to Malakal and other communities in Upper Nile that were already suffering from very recent armed conflicts and displacement and where a very fragile security situation prevails.

Humanitarian partners are also assessing the likely impact of the continued crisis in Sudan on the overall humanitarian situation of communities in Upper Nile, Unity State, the Reuwang Administrative Area, Abyie and Northern and Western Bahr el Ghazal States. All these states are heavily dependent on Sudan for food and supplies.

UNHCR is working together with partners to bring in more actors in accordance with the South Sudan Emergency Response Plan for the Sudan Crisis to respond on the ground and rapidly scale up delivery of humanitarian aid. UNHCR, together with partners, is urging the international community to increase support to South Sudan so as to avoid the exacerbation of South Sudan's already dire humanitarian crisis and respond to the needs of the tens of thousands of individuals that are fleeing the Sudan conflict into South Sudan.