UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes Region

January – March 2024

Nyauke, 18, sits with her one-year-old sister, Kuoli, and mother Naya, at the UNHCR transit centre near the Joda border point in Renk, South Sudan, after fleeing the conflict in Sudan.. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell

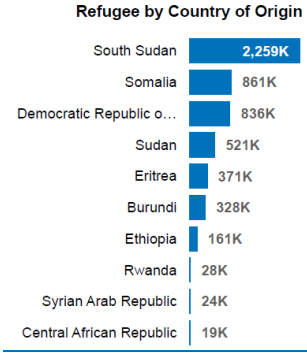
KEY FIGURES (AS OF 31 MARCH 2024)

5.3M Refugees and Asylum-seekers

18.5M Internally Displaced Persons

123K Refugee Returnees in 2024

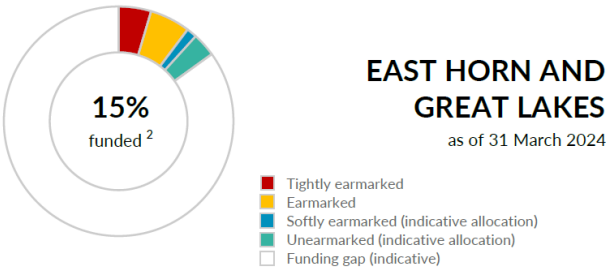
REFUGEES BY COUNTRY OF ORIGIN



FUNDING UPDATE (AS OF 31 MARCH 2024)

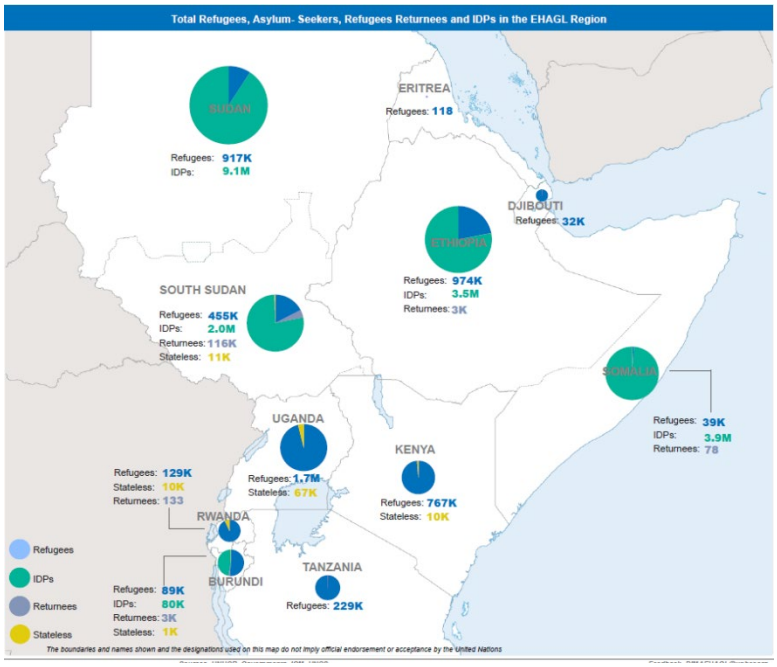
USD 2.1 Billion

2024 financial requirements for the EHAGL region



OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT

The East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (EHAGL) region is currently hosting 5.3 million refugees and asylum-seekers, as of the end of March 2024. Additionally, a further 18.5 million people are internally displaced in the region as a result of conflict and natural disasters. Some 123,000 refugees have been documented as having returned to their countries of origin in the first quarter of the year.



One year since the start of the conflict in Sudan, the humanitarian situation continues to get worse, with the displacement figures growing week after week and spreading throughout the region and beyond. The displacement caused by the war is now at more than 8.5 million people, including 6.6 million new IDPs and at least 1.8 million refugees and returnees in neighbouring countries, constituting a complex protection crisis and the largest humanitarian emergency in the region.

After the Horn of Africa experienced a long and devastating multi-year drought period, the region is now facing the extreme effects of the El Niño phenomena, with increased rainfall. Displaced people continue to be on the frontlines of the climate emergency with limited resources for emergency response and recovery programs. The IGAD Climate Prediction and Applications Centre and the World Meteorological Organization forecast indicate wetter than usual conditions between October 2023 and April 2024 across most parts of the Greater Horn of Africa. This may contribute to further displacements, damage of infrastructure, disease outbreak, food insecurity and deaths. These climatic conditions are anticipated to also move inwards to the Great Lakes region.

The region continues to deal with a difficult protection environment with protracted and ongoing conflicts and displacements that have resulted in mixed movements across the region and beyond. As of January 2024, all new UNHCR multi-year strategies at country level will incorporate route-based activities in countries along the two key routes identified for the region, including to North Africa and via the Central Mediterranean route to Europe.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

SITUATIONAL UPDATES

SUDAN SITUATION: Since the conflict erupted in Sudan on 15 April 2023, about 8.5 million people have been forcibly displaced as of 31 March 2024. Of the forcibly displaced, 1.8 million are refugees, asylum seekers and returnees while 6.6 million are internally displaced and over 200,000 are self-relocated refugees in Sudan. They have sought refuge in neighbouring countries of the Central African Republic (CAR), Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia, Libya, South Sudan, as well as Uganda. The majority of the outflows consist of Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers, with some refugees of other nationalities that had been hosted in Sudan. CAR has received nearly 23,300, Chad nearly 565,000, Egypt 500,000, Ethiopia 43,000 and South Sudan 138,000 Sudanese refugees and refugees from other nationalities. Some 496,000 returns have been recorded, primarily to South Sudan. Ethiopia and CAR have reported nearly 8,580 and 6,160 refugee returns, respectively. The latest figures are available here.

At the one-year mark since the start of the conflict in Sudan, the operational context remains complex and challenging with a combination of ongoing armed conflict, increased criminality, economic crisis, and complex forced displacement movements taking place concurrently. Armed clashes between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces are widespread but are particularly prevalent in Khartoum, Darfur, and Kordofan States. The impact is significant, with high humanitarian needs, and large numbers of deaths and injuries reported among civilians, including forcibly displaced people.

UNHCR and its partners are responding in this challenging context but regularly encounter obstacles to deliver assistance effectively such as access constraints, security risks and logistical challenges, especially in areas most affected by the conflict.

The United Nations and partners launched their annual humanitarian appeals requesting a total of USD 4.1 billion to meet the most urgent humanitarian needs inside Sudan and in the region. The Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan, coordinated by OCHA, calls for USD 2.7 billion to reach 14.7 million people in Sudan, while the Regional Refugee Response Plan, coordinated by UNHCR, calls for USD 1.4 billion to reach nearly 2.7 million people who have fled Sudan to neighbouring countries.

Civilians caught up in Sudan's civil war have given graphic accounts of rape, ethnic violence and street executions as reported by the BBC Famine looms in Sudan as civil war survivors tell of killings and rapes. Top UN officials have said the conflict has plunged the country into "one of the worst humanitarian nightmares in recent history" and could trigger the world's largest hunger crisis. There are also fears that in Darfur, in the west of the country, a repeat of what many called genocide 20 years ago may be unfolding.

The conflict is driving a hunger crisis in Sudan, with some areas likely to experience catastrophic levels of food insecurity by the lean season in May, the UN Security Council heard at a meeting on 20 March, that was convened following OCHA's submission of a white paper on food insecurity in Sudan. The conflict has had a devasting impact on agricultural production leading to acute food insecurity, malnutrition rates are soaring, and the obstacles to aid delivery are many. Conflict driving hunger crisis in Sudan, UN officials tell Security Council/UN News

From April 2023 to February 2024, UNHCR and its partners reached over 630,000 internally displaced people in a very challenging and complex operational environment. Of those, 88 per cent were supported since April 2023. With variations in scope, UNHCR responds in 15 of Sudan's 18 states. Despite the significant conflict impact on the Darfur region, UNHCR has retained a sizeable response where humanitarian space is available and access is permitted. The most notable expansion of UNHCR's IDP response took place across all the eastern states and in the North, where the response is largely new. Read more on UNHCR's response to the Internally Displaced here.

Countries neighbouring Sudan impacted by this new emergency were already hosting large refugee, migrant and internally displaced populations before the crisis (about 800,000 in the five neighbouring countries that are part of the RRP). Humanitarian programmes in these countries remain severely underfunded. Hosting governments, who have taken the lead in responding to this crisis, need additional support to provide protection and critical life-saving assistance.

- In the Central African Republic, where insecurity at the border has complicated access, there has been a significant increase in the number of people moving from border areas to the newly established refugee site at Birao in the first quarter of 2024 (from 2,800 at the end of 2023 to more than 10,000 by March).
- In Chad, despite great efforts to extend existing refugee camps and establish five new sites in record time, many services remain inadequate, with refugees having access to only 8 litres of water per person per day in some locations. Over 160,000 people are still living in overcrowded and unsanitary conditions in spontaneous sites along the border and at least three additional settlements must be urgently established with shelters, water and sanitation, health centres and other essential services.
- In Egypt, entry restrictions have led to an increase in irregular crossings. New arrivals as well as Sudanese who had been living in Egypt before the crisis are placing a high demand on UNHCR registration services, the capacity of which has been vastly increased in the last year. The urban refugee setting means an emphasis on housing support, education grants and multi-purpose cash assistance for the most vulnerable.
- In Ethiopia, UNHCR and the government are taking a "solutions from the start" approach, whereby partners are working to reinforce existing national systems (education, health, water and sanitation) for the benefit of both refugees and the communities hosting them, aiming to avoid setting up parallel service provision and build sustainability. Nevertheless, these efforts are hampered by underfunding as well as the volatile security situation in the refugee hosting areas.
- In South Sudan, while significant investments have been made in establishing and upgrading reception and transit centers and facilitating onward movement in an extremely difficult logistical and security context, urgent needs include further improvements to the transit center at Renk where some 84 per cent of arrivals have been received, and expansion of existing refugee sites.
- In Uganda, most of the Sudanese arrivals are from Khartoum and many have a university level education. Specialized attention is required to ensure those who can be self-reliant are provided with the relevant support, for example livelihood opportunities, scholarships to complete university, and access to jobs based on previously obtained qualifications.

SOUTH SUDAN SITUATION

By the end of March 2024, countries in the Great Lakes Region were host to 2,260,000 South Sudan refugees. 41.4 per cent are hosted in Uganda, 29.6 per cent in Sudan, 18.6 per cent in Ethiopia, 8 per cent in Kenya and 2.4 per cent in DRC.

UNHCR launched the South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) on 28 March 2024. The 123 partners in the response appealed for US$1.4 billion to provide life-saving assistance and protection to 2.3 million South Sudanese refugees in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan. Of the 123 partners, 34 are national NGOs. The Plan prioritizes the inclusion of refugees and asylum-seekers into national systems like healthcare and education and supports initiatives that will boost people's self-reliance through livelihoods. The various speakers at the event provided useful insights into the dynamic nature and adaptability needed in responding to the decade-long South Sudan situation. The South Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan complements the South Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan launched earlier this year which aims to reach 5.9 million people inside South Sudan in 2024.

A report released by the Human Rights Division (HRD) of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMIS) has detailed that South Sudan is bearing the brunt of lawless community-based militia groups that perpetrate intercommunal violence in the states at will. According to the report, most security disruptions at the end of 2023 were attributed to these militia groups and their actions affected 86 per cent of the total number of victims of inter-communal violence. It documented 233 incidents of violence across the country with 862 victims affected (406 killed, 293 injured, 100 abducted, and 63 subjected to conflict-related sexual violence). The report is available here.

With general elections scheduled for the end of 2024, various parties have expressed concern that the timeline for necessary preparations is lagging. Speaking during the National Constitutional Review Commission validation workshop in Juba on 18 March, the senior legal advisor to the IGAD special envoy to South Sudan said parties need to urgently initiate meetings to reach a pre-poll consensus as the clock is ticking.

Sudanese refugee child Maha 10, looks through a curtain at her shelter in the Kurmuk transit centre in the Benishangul-Gumuz region of northwestern Ethiopia. Her mother, Hawa, 40, fled the violence in Sudan with her ten children and 80-year-old mother in June last year. © UNHCR/Tiksa Negeri

COUNTRY UPDATES

BURUNDI: As of 31 March 2024, Burundi was host to 335,000 forcibly displaced people. This includes 237,300 returnees mainly from the region and a further 88,600 registered refugees and asylum-seekers. Of the 88,600 refugees and asylum seekers 98.8 per cent are from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), 1.1 per cent from Rwanda and 0.1 per cent from other countries of origin. 32,900 reside in urban areas and 55,700 in the camps.

By the end of March 2024, countries in the Great Lakes Region were host to 326,000 Burundian refugees. UNHCR and partners have been facilitating the voluntary repatriation of Burundian refugees since 2017. More than 237,300 Burundian refugees had been recorded as having returned by the end of March 2024. Most are returning from Tanzania, Rwanda, the DRC, Kenya, and other countries. These returns take place under the framework of the Tripartite Agreements between the Government of Burundi, the Governments of countries of asylum, and UNHCR, with all parties having committed to respect the voluntary nature of these returns.

Upon the arrival of returnees in their province of return, UNHCR and its partners conduct follow-up activities to review their level of reintegration. Despite efforts by the Government of Burundi with support from humanitarian and development actors, access to housing, land, and employment remains a significant challenge. For example, over 69 per cent of returnees are not satisfied with their level of food security. Nevertheless, there have been improvements in the security and justice sectors (land dispute resolution) compared to previous years.

UNHCR's partner *Commission Episcopale Justice et Paix* (CEJP), assisted by members of voluntary community structures, conducted protection monitoring activities of Burundian returnees in areas of return (Gisagara, and Mishiha -Cankuzo Province; Bugabira and Murore in Kirundo Province, Giteranyi / Muyinga Province). Focus group discussions with returnees revealed that repatriated children find it difficult to adapt to the Burundian school system, as they have studied in the English-speaking system mainly in Rwanda and Uganda. 57 per cent of returnee children were registered in school in March 2024. In addition, parents lack funds to buy uniforms for their children and schools have neither sufficient teaching materials and equipment nor teaching staff which compromises reintegration in the education system. Some initiatives are implemented by other humanitarian actors on catch-up classes, classroom building, school canteen, kit distribution to support households and students maintaining attendance to school.

During the month of March, UNHCR and partners continued the construction work at Burundi's first integrated refugee site in the Rutana Province, located in Giharo. Giharo integrated refugee site is a new model for Burundi that will enable refugees and host communities to live together, sharing infrastructure, facilities and services. The site will improve the living conditions of refugees with greater freedom of movement, promote their integration into national programs and strengthen peaceful cohabitation.

The first neighborhood of 48 houses at the site is completed as well as 4 latrine blocks and 4 showers blocks. UNHCR and its partner completed the construction of the water source, which is less than 50 meters from the site and will benefit refugees and members of the host community to access clean water. In addition, a primary school is under construction to strengthen the existing primary school's capacity. Refugee children and those of the host community will be able to study together in better learning conditions.

DJIBOUTI: As of 31 March 2024, Djibouti hosts nearly 32,000 refugees and asylum seekers mainly from Somalia, Ethiopia, Yemen and Eritrea. 85 per cent live inside the refugee villages of Ali-Addeh and Holl-Holl.

UNHCR participated in the Strategic Prioritization and Theory of Change Workshop for the (UNSDCF) 2025-2029 Djibouti. The workshop was held from 19 to 22 February and was attended by senior officials from several government institutions, as well as representatives of the United Nations system and its technical teams. Discussions focused on the analysis of challenges and the design of appropriate solutions, with the aim of jointly developing a theory of change that will provide the basis for consensus on the actions needed to achieve the goals set for the end of the UNFCCC 2025-2029 cycle. The launch of this process comes in the same year that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) is expected to come to an end, although the cycle was originally planned for 2018-2022 (and extended by two years to align with the "Djibouti ICI 2020-2024" National Development Plan).

Following community consultations conducted by the African Development Bank (AfDB) at the refugee villages of Ali-Addeh and Holl-Holl in December 2023, a high-level "Public-Private Dialogue" workshop was held from 30 to 31 January 2024 in Djibouti city. The aim of the workshop was to explore and promote initiatives to improve the investment climate for the economic empowerment of refugees and host communities in Djibouti, and was jointly organized by the AfDB, UNHCR, IGAD and the Tutwa consultancy firm. The workshop brought together members of government, representatives of the private sector, civil society, diplomats, and other dignitaries. The expected outcome of this dialogue was to identify suitable solutions for including refugees in local and regional economic value chains.

During the first quarter of the year, UNHCR's partner in integrating refugees into the national education system Ministère de l'éducation nationale et de la formation professionnelle (MENFOP), assisted 158 refugee teachers from Ali Addeh and Holl-Holl to open bank accounts at East Africa Bank. Paying salaries through bank transfers is a major step forward in the financial inclusion of refugees.

ETHIOPIA: As of 31 March 2024, Ethiopia hosted nearly 1,060,000 refugees and asylum seekers — mainly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea and Sudan. Along with partners, UNHCR is providing protection counselling, healthcare, and lifesaving humanitarian assistance to new arrivals in need of international protection. UNHCR continues to support and advocate with the Government of Ethiopia for the full resumption of registration across the country.

The general food distribution (GFD) is ongoing in all 25 refugee camps/sites. WFP has been able to procure the provision of 60 per cent of the basic food ration, with changes in the food basket, to support refugees until the end of June. However, the lack of adequate warehouses, insecurity, and flooding in some of the refugee locations have led to missed monthly rations impacting families. To facilitate the coordination of general food distribution, UNHCR meets with WFP and partners every month. Find our latest report here.

Along with Action for the Needy Ethiopia, UNHCR is providing vital shelter support to those fleeing conflict in Sudan. In Benishangul Gumuz region, 5.7km of road was cleared to build 1,800 emergency shelters in Ura and core relief items (CRIs) provided to 2,401 people in Kurmuk Transit Center. In Awlala site, Amhara region, shelters for 453 families were built. Additionally, shelter and CRIs items were provided to 14,000 internally displaced people.

Gebeya Inc., a leading Pan-African tech leadership company that specializes in Saas-enabled custom Talent Cloud innovation, and UNHCR officially launched a digital platform that will help refugees better market their skills and talents, unlocking professional opportunities in the digital economy. Press release.

The Government of Ethiopia, through its Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) in partnership with National ID Program (NIDP) and UNHCR launched an initiative to include refugees and asylum seekers into the Ethiopian Digital ID system. Press release.

KENYA: As of 31 March 2024, Kenya was host to nearly 767,000 registered refugees and asylum-seekers including over 382,000 in Dadaab, 283,000 in Kakuma Refugee Camp and Kalobeyei Integrated Settlement and nearly 102,000 in urban areas.

UNHCR's Deputy High Commissioner (DHC), together with senior management from the private sector (Equity and Safaricom), visited Kakuma on 4 March. The delegation visited Okapi Energy, a refugee-led and operated mini-grid providing clean energy to 250 households and businesses. This model was discussed as an example of successful refugee-led development and potential for replication. The businesses demonstrated compliance with the Energy and Petroleum Regulatory Authority (EPRA) and proper documentation and supplies WIFI connectivity to the Kakuma 3 environs.

The delegation also visited Angelina Jolie Girls Primary School in Kakuma and participated in an edtech classroom supported by Vodafone in partnership with Safaricom (Instant Network Schools). In addition, the mission visited Vision Secondary School where they attended an offline virtual laboratory classroom. Safaricom confirmed support to equip the school with laboratory supplies and equipment through their Ndoto Zetu program run by the Safaricom Foundation.

The delegation visited the Equity Bank branch in Kakuma to witness firsthand the transformative journey of refugees engaging with banking services. This unique visit allowed the delegates to observe the procedures for account opening, card issuance, and biometric

data collection, highlighting the inclusive financial strategies. at the site, the DHC, CEO Equity Group and other delegates also met over 200 scholars who are benefiting from the Government-led Elimu scholarship with facilitation support from Equity Group Foundation.

From 29 February to 2 March, the Government of Kenya (Department for Refugee Services) organized a workshop to finalize the Shirika zero-draft plan based on the inputs from the Government Technical Committee meeting with line Ministries, Departments, and agencies. The workshop participants included the Government Consultant and Shirika joint secretariat (represented by the DRS team and UNHCR). The zero-draft Shirika Plan was presented to the DRS Commissioner and UNHCR's Representative and the consultant is currently fine-tuning the final zero-draft.

The Ministry of Education officials from Nairobi Headquarters visited Kakuma/Kalobeyei to assess the enrollment of refugee children in the Government-led Elimu Scholarships program. The team was able to visit and interact with scholarship students supported under the Jomo Kenyatta Foundation and Equity Group Foundation in schools around Turkana West Sub-County. The team also met the Community leaders and partners sensitizing them on Government's commitment to support learners access quality education without leaving behind refugee children.

The Kenya National Examinations Council (KNEC), in partnership with UNICEF, undertook a research study on Competency Based Assessment (CBA) in pre-primary and primary schools in Kalobeyei and Kakuma as part of a broader data collection across the country. The purpose of the study was to assess the impact of CBC assessment following a training for the teachers which was conducted last year. The outcome of this exercise will be shared as soon as the government and UNICEF complete the report.

Ahead of the holy month of Ramadhan, Muslim religious and business leaders from Kenya were in Dadaab where they held talks with Somali refugees and host community members to understand their needs in the camp.

On 28 March, UNHCR was part of the launch of PROSPECTS Phase II programme which was held in Nairobi by the Embassy of the Netherland. Part of the agenda was a panel discussion titled "*Kenya's pioneering development imperative in refugee hosting: Lessons and Opportunities".* The PROSPECTS partnership comprises UNHCR, ILO, UNICEF, IFC and the World Bank. The programme seeks to enhance socio-economic integration between refugees and host communities in Kenya.

RWANDA: Rwanda hosted 135,109 refugees and asylum-seekers as of the end of March 2024.

Since the inception of the Emergency Transit Mechanism (ETM), 2,242 people have been evacuated from Libya in 18 evacuation flights to the ETM. They came from 10 countries**,** including Cameroon, Chad, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Nigeria, Guinea, and Mali.

While 667 people are still waiting at the ETM, 1,623 people have departed through resettlement to third countries including Belgium, Canada, Finland, France, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, and the USA. The ETM remains a life-saving mechanism to allow critical life-saving assistance and protection, as well as case processing for durable solutions.

Through the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed in 2019, UNHCR in collaboration with the Government of Rwanda (GoR) and the African Union (AU) established an ETM Centre in Gashora Sector, Bugesera District, Rwanda. The capacity of ETM is 700 refugees and asylum seekers at any given time. Its main aim is to temporarily host refugees and asylum seekers who have undertaken voluntary evacuation from Libya. While in the ETM, the asylum seekers go through refugee case processing undertaken by UNHCR to determine if they meet the requirements for durable solutions. Three durable solutions of return to their countries, integration within Rwanda and resettlement are on offer to refugees at the ETM. To date, all refugees have opted for resettlement from the ETM.

From 11 – 15 March, the OHCHR Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights situation in Burundi visited Rwanda and met with UNHCR in Kigali and conducted a two-day visit to Mahama refugee camp and to Burundian urban refugees living in Huye. The aim of the visit was to better understand the current situation of Burundian refugees and to gather information on the human rights situation back in Burundi.

As part of the Rwandan government's policy to expand Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) schools and colleges, a Technical Secondary School opened this year at GS Paysannat LD school in Mahama and has now enrolled 176 refugee students who are studying electricity technology and building construction. Despite this, the school lacks some equipment to enable practical lessons in these areas.

SOMALIA: At the end of March 2024, Somalia hosted some 39,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, of whom 67 per cent are women and children; 30 per cent are school-age children (6-17 years); and 26 per cent are women and girls (13-49 years). Majority of the refugees and asylum-seekers (66 per cent) are from Ethiopia, followed by Yemen (29 per cent), Syria (4 per cent), and other countries (1 per cent). Most of the refugees and asylum-seekers (74 per cent) reside in urban or peri-urban settings across the Woqooyi Galbeed and Bari regions, both of which are in the northern part of the country.

Since January 2020, a total of 9,056 former refugees have returned to Somalia from their countries of asylum, mostly from Yemen, followed by Kenya. From the total number of refugee returnees, 3,652 individuals have been directly assisted by UNHCR, mainly through the Voluntary Repatriation Programme from Kenya and the Assisted Spontaneous Returns (ASR) Programme from Yemen.

UNHCR in Somalia continued to operate in a highly complex environment, largely characterized by insecurity, political tension, and climate change. The humanitarian crisis in Somalia is severe. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA), 6.9 million people in Somalia will need humanitarian assistance in 2024. Recurrent shocks, including climatic events, conflict, insecurity, and disease outbreaks, continue to exacerbate needs. About 4.3 million people remain acutely food insecure, and malnutrition rates among children under five remain high.[1]

The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between Ethiopia and Somaliland on 1 January 2024 continued to cause political tension. This agreement grants Ethiopia, a landlocked country, access to the sea in exchange for Somaliland recognition as an independent country. Despite the majority of international responses supporting Somalia's sovereignty and territorial integrity, there is a looming risk of this situation escalating into a regional conflict in the Horn of Africa.

In Puntland, UNHCR and partners completed the verification of refugee and asylum-seeker students using ProGres V4. A total of 3,427 students at the primary level and 807 students at the secondary level were accounted for. The verified data will be utilized to determine payments for refugee and asylum seeker students, ensuring efficient allocation of resources. Data from the exercise suggests that there is a noteworthy achievement in gender equality, indicating progress in closing the gender gap in education.

Above-average rainfall is forecasted for the next rainy season, posing a risk to agro-pastoral livelihood. Moreover, the impact of the 2023 floods continues to be felt. About 4.3 million people remain acutely food insecure, and malnutrition rates among children under five remain high.

The biometric IDP enrolment in Baidoa was completed in February for 2,000 flood-affected households. After the enrolment, plastic tarpaulins and mosquito nets were provided to 1,900 out of the 2,000 households using the Global Distribution Tool (GDT), which was rolled out for the first time in Somalia. This enrolment ensures accountability through biometric authentication at the point of service acquisition and mitigates the risk of aid diversion. GDT allows users to extract assistance distribution lists, authenticates the identity of beneficiaries through biometric verification, and tracks the admission, verification, and collection of assistance by beneficiaries.

UNHCR, in collaboration with its shelter partner, conducted a vulnerability assessment exercise that aimed to identify 4,000 of the most vulnerable households in Beletweyne, Hiran region, and 1,800 of the most vulnerable households in Bardheere, Gedo region. The primary goal of the exercise was to identify and respond to the shelter and CRI needs of the most vulnerable households, who were displaced by the rains and floods in the last quarter of 2023.

[1] https://reliefweb.int/report/somalia/somalia-2024-humanitarian-needs-and-response-plan-hnrp-summary

A Sudanese refugee sits in her shelter in Kurmuk transit center in Benishangul-Gumuz region, Ethiopia. Alsora Alsadik Jobir, 80, left her home in Sudan after the outburst of the fighting in April 2023. © UNHCR/Tiksa Negeri

SOUTH SUDAN: South Sudan hosted 455,000 refugees and asylum-seekers by the end of March 2024, mainly from Sudan and the DRC and has 2 million IDPs. Additionally, about 2.3 million South Sudanese are refugees in the neighbouring countries of Uganda, Sudan, Ethiopia, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

UNHCR, with the support of IOM**,** started relocating Sudanese refugees from Renk to Jamjang. The exercise intends to support family reunification for new refugee arrivals with preexisting familial ties to camps in Jamjang. The refugees were transported by barge from Renk to Malakal and airlifted by flight from Malakal to Jamjang.

The Deputy Commissioner of the Commission for Refugee Affairs (CRA) and UNHCR visited Renk and Maban to scale up engagement with refugees and local authorities on refugee relocation to Maban refugee camps. Numerous community engagement discussions with refugees were held, including awareness raising on available services in Maban refugee camps. The CRA mission also accompanied a refugee convoy from Renk to Maban and facilitated a go-and-see visit to Kaya and surrounding refugee camps.

The African Development Bank's Vice President for Regional Development, Integration and Business Delivery, and UNHCR's Assistant High Commissioner for Operations were in South Sudan for a three-day official visit. This visit was in the context of deepening partnership between the two institutions, strengthened collaboration among humanitarian and development actors globally, and an influx of more than 500,000 people fleeing the war in Sudan including both Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese returnees. While in South Sudan, they met with Government officials and visited a reception centre and refugee camp, where they heard from people forced to flee as well as members of the host community.

The United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) has reported increased tensions amid a generally volatile situation in the southern area of the Abyei Box following a series of incidents, including an ambush by Ngok youths against suspected armed Nuer youths heading towards Rumamier, which resulted in one Nuer killed. A UNISFA patrol team responding to the clashes was ambushed by an unidentified armed group at Jitak, with damage to UN vehicles but no injuries to personnel. On 5 February, the President and First Vice President of South Sudan called for an end to the sub-national violence in parts of the country during a meeting, which centred on the land-related conflict between the Ngok and Twic communities. Read more here.

SUDAN: Sudan has historically hosted one of the largest refugee populations in Africa. Prior to the conflict, Sudan hosted 1.1 million refugees, majority of whom resided in Khartoum State. As of end-March 2024, an estimated 917,000 refugees and asylum seekers remain in Sudan.

As at the beginning of 2024, more than 70 per cent of refugees and asylum-seekers are from South Sudan, followed by Eritrea (12 per cent), Syria (8.2 per cent), Ethiopia (6.3 per cent), CAR (2.1 per cent), with smaller numbers from Chad, Yemen and other nationalities.

When the conflict in Sudan erupted in April 2023, individual registration of refugees and asylum-seekers was halted; registration has since resumed albeit at a slower pace and only in some locations. UNHCR is undertaking registration, data cleaning, verification in Gedaref, Kassala and White Nile states, monitoring secondary movements and new arrivals across Sudan and shall commence registration in Port Sudan in the coming months.

Over 120,500 refugees, asylum-seekers and host community members received outpatient consultations in the States of Gedaref, East Darfur, Kassala, Kordofan, and White Nile since the beginning of 2024. Additionally, over 2,250 refugees received ante-natal care services and over 720 births were facilitated at health facilities supported by UNHCR in East Darfur, Kordofan and White Nile States. Also, over 600 people received mental health and psychosocial consultations in Gedaref State and another 100 refugees and asylum-seekers were referred for secondary health care in East Darfur, Gedaref, Kordofan states, and White Nile.

Since January 2024, more than 3,500 refugee children were vaccinated against Tuberculosis, Measles, Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Hepatitis B through routine immunization programme in East Darfur, the two Kordofan States, and White Nile by UNICEF, a key partner in the inter-agency refugee response.

UNHCR together with WASH partners provided a range of services including water treatment, water quality monitoring, operation and maintenance of the water supply system in refugee camps in Gedaref, Kassala, Kordofan, White Nile and Blue Nile states and upgraded five solar systems for water supply in five camps in White Nile State in January and February 2024. These activities have enabled over 600,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, and host community to access an average of 16 litres of potable water per person a day. This is above the minimum SPHERE standard of 15 litres per person per day in emergency settings but just under the 20-litre standard for stabilized situations.

In January, 500 internally displaced households in Blue Nile State received USD 300 through UNHCR's Cash for Shelter programme which provides vulnerable families with financial assistance to meet their shelter needs. Also in January, over 500 refugee households in Gedaref State refugee camps received emergency shelter kits which contain wooden poles, grass mats, rush reed, rope, plastic sheets and tool kits. Refugees can use these items to set up or repair their shelters in the refugee camps.

So far in 2024, UNHCR and its partners have distributed non-food items kits to over 15,500 IDP and refugee households (over 77,000 individuals) across Sudan. Non-food item kits comprise plastic sheets, blankets, sleeping mats, kitchen sets (pots, pans, utensils), among other basic items and they support forcibly displaced people replace lost or damaged basic items enabling them to live in dignity in displacement. In February, over 14,700 refugee and asylum-seeker households in Gedaref refugee camps received clothing items provided by USA for UNHCR.

Since January, close to 700 IDP and refugee households in Gedaref and Red Sea states received multi-purpose cash assistance to support their needs. This type of response is crucial in the context of Sudan, as it provides essential financial support to vulnerable people, enabling them to meet their immediate and urgent basic needs including food, shelter, and health care.

TANZANIA: As of 31 March 2024, Tanzania hosts 241,883 refugees and asylum-seekers, mainly from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Most reside in the Nyarugusu and Nduta refugee camps while some refugees from the 1972 Burundian population live in villages and three old settlements in Kigoma, Katavi and Tabora. Since the start of the voluntary repatriation exercise in September 2017, UNHCR facilitated returns of more than 167,000 to Burundi from Tanzania as of 31 March. 2,700 Burundian refugees are recorded to have returned to Burundi from Tanzania between January and March this year.

In coordination with the Government, UNHCR and partners have been receiving asylum seekers fleeing violent clashes in DRC since March 2023. As of 31 March 2024, a total of 14,614 Congolese new arrivals were in Tanzania.

On 26 March 2024, the Kigoma Regional Commissioner met with Burundian refugees in Nduta and Nyarugusu camps to promote voluntary repatriation to Burundi.

A town hall meeting was held on 21 March with the Burundian refugee community in Nyarugusu camp. The refugees were given an opportunity to ask questions on the issues affecting them, and UNHCR, Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA), and other service providers in the camp provided answers and feedback. The most common issues raised were the need for a verification exercise, individual sessions for the affected population who do not want to repatriate to Burundi, and access to medical referrals.

UGANDA: By the end of March 2024, Uganda was hosting 1.7 million refugees and asylum seekers. New arrivals have continued to enter the country mainly from Sudan, South Sudan and the DRC. Since the beginning of the year, Uganda has received 43,549 refugees from Sudan (16,841), South Sudan (8,458), Eritrea (8,312), DRC (7,986) and others (1,952). The number of new arrivals has led to overcrowding at some of the collection and transit facilities with 5,986 individuals in the transit centers and collection points (3,838 in West Nile and 2,148 in the South and Mid-West).

UNHCR collaborates with the Government to protect refugees and asylum-seekers in Uganda through a Multi Partner Protection and Solutions Strategy (MYMPSS) 2021-2025. UNHCR supports the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) in registration and documentation.

Kampala hosted 146,254 refugees and asylum seekers by the end of March 2024, many living in crowded and difficult conditions in urban settings. Despite government expectations for self-reliance, urban refugees face socioeconomic challenges including limited funding, insufficient livelihood opportunities, language barriers, academic qualification accreditations, mental health issues and inadequate healthcare. The urban field unit is dedicated to addressing these issues.

On 19 March, the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and UNHCR discussed the Uganda Urban Refugee Strategy. An action plan with timelines was developed, including the establishment of a joint taskforce, strategy dissemination to key stakeholders, policy-level engagement, and presentation at coordination meetings.

With UNHCR and OPM support, WFP maintains general food assistance for refugees in Uganda, delivered as in-kind (38 per cent) and cash (62 per cent). Due to funding shortfalls, a needs-based targeting approach by WFP prioritizes food assistance to vulnerable refugees, allocating 60 per cent rations to the most vulnerable households and 30 per cent to moderately vulnerable households. Only new arrival refugees receive 100 per cent rations and for only the first 6 months.

With assistance from the Joint Data Center and in partnership with UNFPA, UNHCR facilitated the inclusion of refugees in the Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) 2023/2024.

The Shelter, Settlement, and Non-Food Items Working Group (SSNFI WG) adopted a novel 'self-help' model where standard shelter kits are provided to refugees, enabling them to construct emergency shelters that can be upgraded later to semi-permanent structures, with qualified external labor available for non-abled vulnerable households. Similarly, UNHCR is progressively monetizing the Non-Food Items (NFI) package to empower refugees and contribute to the local economy.

In line with the Global Strategy for Sustainable Energy (2019-2025), and the Strategy for Climate Resilience and Environmental Sustainability (2022-2025), UNHCR and its partners are committed to facilitating access to clean, safe, and affordable energy sources for cooking and lighting. By the end of March, 5,802 households received energy-efficient cookstoves and 287 heat-retaining baskets, increasing access to clean cooking solutions to 37.56 per cent.

REGIONAL UPDATES

Development Partnerships and Fundraising

From 20 to 22 March, UNHCR in Brussels and the Regional Bureau for East Horn and Great Lakes organized a training on EU funding. The 3-day training equipped colleagues who develop proposals, reports and coordinate with ECHO and EU delegations in country operations with tools to facilitate those processes. The workshop took place in Kigali, Rwanda and was attended by 35 participants from 11 countries and the Regional Bureau for East Horn and Great Lakes.

Social Protection

The deep dive process with the World Bank began in Djibouti in March, with the first meeting on 12 March 2024. The country representatives were joined by technical colleagues based in Djibouti, Nairobi, and Washington, DC, to officially begin the deep dive process between our agencies/organisations. The first meeting covered the context of refugees in Djibouti, including the policy and protection environment. It also saw sector leads present an overview of progress, challenges, and opportunities for us to work together to advance the inclusion of forcibly displaced populations.

Inter-Agency Coordination

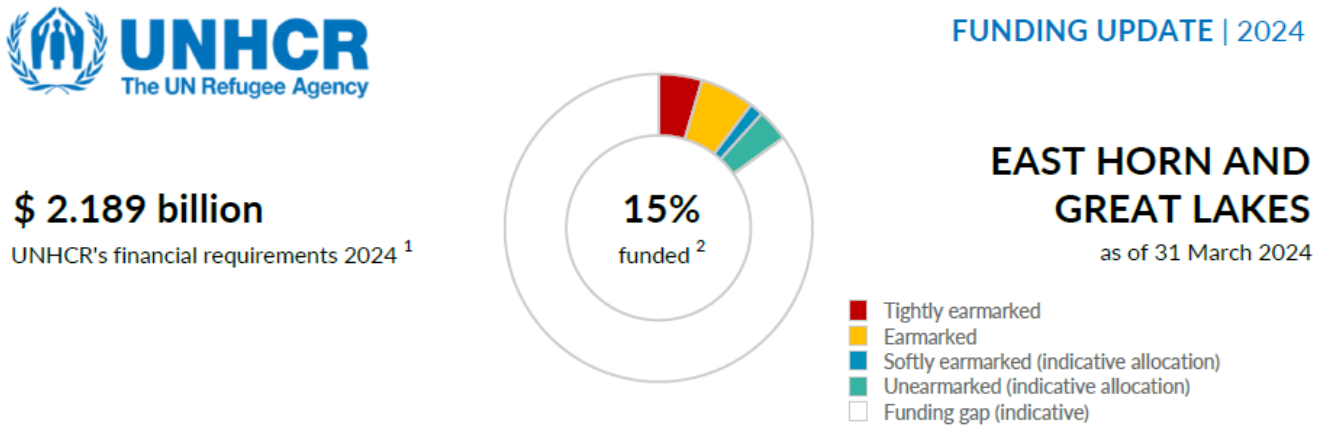
The joint launch of the 2024 Sudan Humanitarian Needs and Response Plan (HNRP), and the 2024 Sudan Situation Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) was held on 07 February in Geneva. The two plans were presented by Mr. Martin Griffiths, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, and Mr. Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees respectively. The 2024 Sudan Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) is projected to cover the needs of **2.7 million people**, including refugees, returnees (both refugees and migrants), third-country nationals, and host communities. The **82 partners** are seeking **USD 1.4 billion**. The plan focuses on resilience and system strengthening, in addition to critical humanitarian and lifesaving activities. The plan complements the 2024 Sudan Humanitarian Response Plan which appeals for **$2.6 billion** to reach over **18 million people** with food, healthcare, cash, and other life-saving assistance in Sudan.

UNHCR in collaboration with the regional level Inter-Agency Working Group (IAWG) convened a meeting on 01 March 2024 focusing on advocacy, visibility, and fundraising for the Sudan crisis. The meeting agreed to identify key events and develop common messaging to bolster communication, visibility, and advocacy efforts. These activities aim to support fundraising, noting **that the Sudan Regional RRP was 38% funded in 2023**. Partners also adopted themed donor briefings as a way forward in 2024.

The End of Year Report Document - End of Year Report Sudan Regional RRP 2023 (unhcr.org) for the 2023 Sudan RRP was shared at the end of March. This was a cumulative report of the activities in the refugee hosting countries –the Central African Republic, Chad, Egypt, Ethiopia and South Sudan. Despite low funding –the 2023 RRP was just 38% funded, achievements included the following: 613,000 individuals received protection services, 1.3 million individuals were provided with food assistance, 209,000 individuals were supported with shelter or housing assistance, 558,000 individuals were relocated or supported with transportation cash allowance, and 299,000 individuals received non-food items. Ten refugee/ integrated settlement sites were established.

Joint Data Centre's (JDC) literature review on the East Horn and Great Lakes

The March 2024 JDC Digest explores the impacts of forced displacement on host communities in the EHAGL region, as well as furthering of opportunities for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons through mobility, assistance and inclusion into national services. The review highlights how refugee presence can spur development and enhance service infrastructure while reshaping local labor dynamics. Central to the findings is the crucial role of economic and social integration in fostering refugee self-reliance. The review also underscores the need for further research, particularly regarding the inclusion of refugees into national systems and the specific challenges facing returnees and internally displaced persons (IDPs). Offering a comprehensive view, this Digest aims to inform balanced policy decisions in the region.
https://www.jointdatacenter.org/jdc-newsletter-march-2024/



Financial Information

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to the **East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes Region,** as well as to those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

NOTES:

1. The financial requirements for East Horn and Great Lakes are for the operations in Burundi, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda and United Republic of Tanzania.

2. The percentage funded (15%) and total funding amount ($329,615,379) are indicative. This leaves an indicative funding gap of $1,859,434,167 representing 85% of the financial requirements.

CONTACTS
Joyce Wayua Munyao-Mbithi, Senior Donor Relations Officer, Regional Bureau for the East, Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes – Region, Nairobi - munyao@unhcr.org
Kabami Kalumiya, Reporting Officer, Regional Bureau for the East, Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, Nairobi – kalumiya@unhcr.org
Evelyne Waikwa, Reporting Associate, Regional Bureau for the East, Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes Region, Nairobi – waikwa@unhcr.org