

SOUTH SUDAN

PROTECTION MONITORING REPORT

CROSS-BORDER MOVEMENT SOUTH SUDAN TO UGANDA

REPORT No. 2

16 DECEMBER 2014

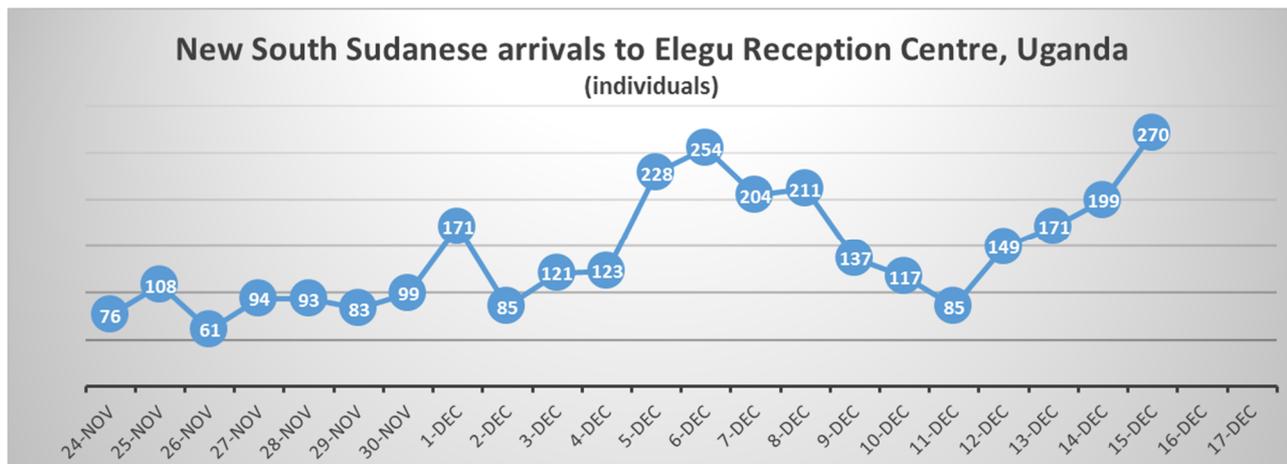
OVERVIEW

This report updates UNHCR South Sudan's Protection Monitoring Report of 10 December 2014

In late November 2014, UNHCR observed and documented a significant increase in the number of South Sudanese crossing at the Nimule border post seeking asylum in Uganda. Media in early December reported an increased presence of army and security forces in Nimule area. Local and state authorities circulated in the area in the past two weeks to assure people that the situation is calm. Displacement however continues today.

KEY FINDINGS

- Between 24 November and 16 December 2014, an unusually high number of South Sudanese have crossed into Uganda at the Nimule border crossing and registering as newly arrived refugees at the Elegu Reception Centre. This trend continues as of 16 December. A total of 3,139 individuals have arrived during the past three weeks, with an average of 143 persons registering each day for this period. The arrival rate remains on the increase, with an average of 180 registering each day in the past ten days alone. This compares to an average 12 persons each day in late October. UNHCR and partners assist those registered at the Elegu Reception Center to be transported to the Adjumani refugee settlement where they are more fully registered and assisted.



- The majority of the new arrivals are women and children. Almost all originate from Nimule, Pageri, Mugari and Ougari areas in the immediate border zone inside South Sudan, and are of the local majority Madi tribe.
- Newly identified in the past few days however are several arriving families who are of Dinka (11 households) and Nuer (4 households) tribes. The Dinka arrivals stated they fled very recent armed conflict in Atar payam, Canal/Pigi county, in northern Jonglei state.
- Limitations: These figures represent only those persons who cross into Uganda and self-approach the Elegu Reception Centre. Because it is possible to cross the border unofficially at other points in the area, and some individuals likely cross into Uganda and directly move to existing family members already in Uganda, these figures cannot reflect the actual total number of persons crossing into Uganda.



Newly arrived South Sudanese, and their household belongings, Elegu Transit Centre, 10 December 2014

Photo: UNHCR Nimule

- Fear of insecurity, rather than actual security incidents, appears to remain the main driver of this localized displacement. As earlier reported, the two most often mentioned fears are anticipation of a military operation amongst South Sudanese parties within the area, or alternatively, anxiety regarding the one year anniversary of the South Sudanese civil war on 15 December. Some freely state that they are fleeing because others are fleeing, and fear that others know more than they.
- There are accounts from numerous new arrivals of unidentified “persons knocking at doors” at night, inconsistently reported either to warn residents to flee, or looking for specific household members.
- Humanitarian staff and local residents in greater Nimule area confirm that certain neighborhoods or boma are largely deserted. One humanitarian staff member has reported a rise in general robberies in the area, provoked not by insecurity, but by greater ease of theft due to properties left unattended.

- One new arrival from Nimule area to Elegu also told UNHCR she was the last woman who stayed in her village until she decided to flee. She mentioned that all other women and children have left her boma. Only men remain behind in the area, returning to their homes only at night to safeguard their belongings. She stated that even though it was just a rumour, she decided she must leave too when she saw all of her neighbors depart.
- UNHCR Uganda partners report a significant but unquantified number of new arrivals who do not approach the Elegu reception centre, preferring to remain at least temporarily in host communities immediately inside Uganda, possibly to allow ease of access to visit and monitor their properties in their home areas.
- The previously reported mission by the Central Equatorial Governor and other officials to the area to reassure residents of security appears to have been short and inconclusive, given that the numbers of those crossing continues to increase.
- UNHCR teams have observed general freedom of South Sudanese to freely cross the border unrestricted by officials on either side. In UNHCR interviews with South Sudanese at the reception center, it is repeatedly stated that South Sudanese immigration officials have warned individuals to avoid carrying significant luggage so as not to appear to be fleeing South Sudan. Cross border flow therefore has partially been diverted to unofficial border crossings, therefore making monitoring additionally difficult. A local NGO has also reported this to UNHCR within South Sudan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

New:

- **UNHCR protection staff on both sides of the border will give particular attention to interviews and analysis of newly identified outflow of non-Madi South Sudanese (eg Dinka and Nuer) from outside the immediate border area, if it continues.** The numbers are small and it is too early to verify whether this reflects a trend of outflow provoked by recent conflict elsewhere in South Sudan.

Unchanged from 10 December 2014 Protection Monitoring Report:

- **All South Sudanese, regardless of tribe or ethnicity, enjoy the right to freedom of movement and the right to seek asylum.** UNHCR will continue to monitor and report confirmed instances in which people are prevented from crossing the border by force, intimidation or arbitrary arrest.
- UNHCR encourages efforts of State and Area authorities to address concerns of communities by providing **open and transparent descriptions of the current security situation.**
- With the trend of new arrivals expected to continue at least temporarily, the newly arrived will require additional humanitarian support and assistance upon arrival at Elegu Reception Centre and the Adjumani Settlement. UNHCR and humanitarian partners in Uganda have undertaken necessary preparations for any humanitarian response necessary.

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