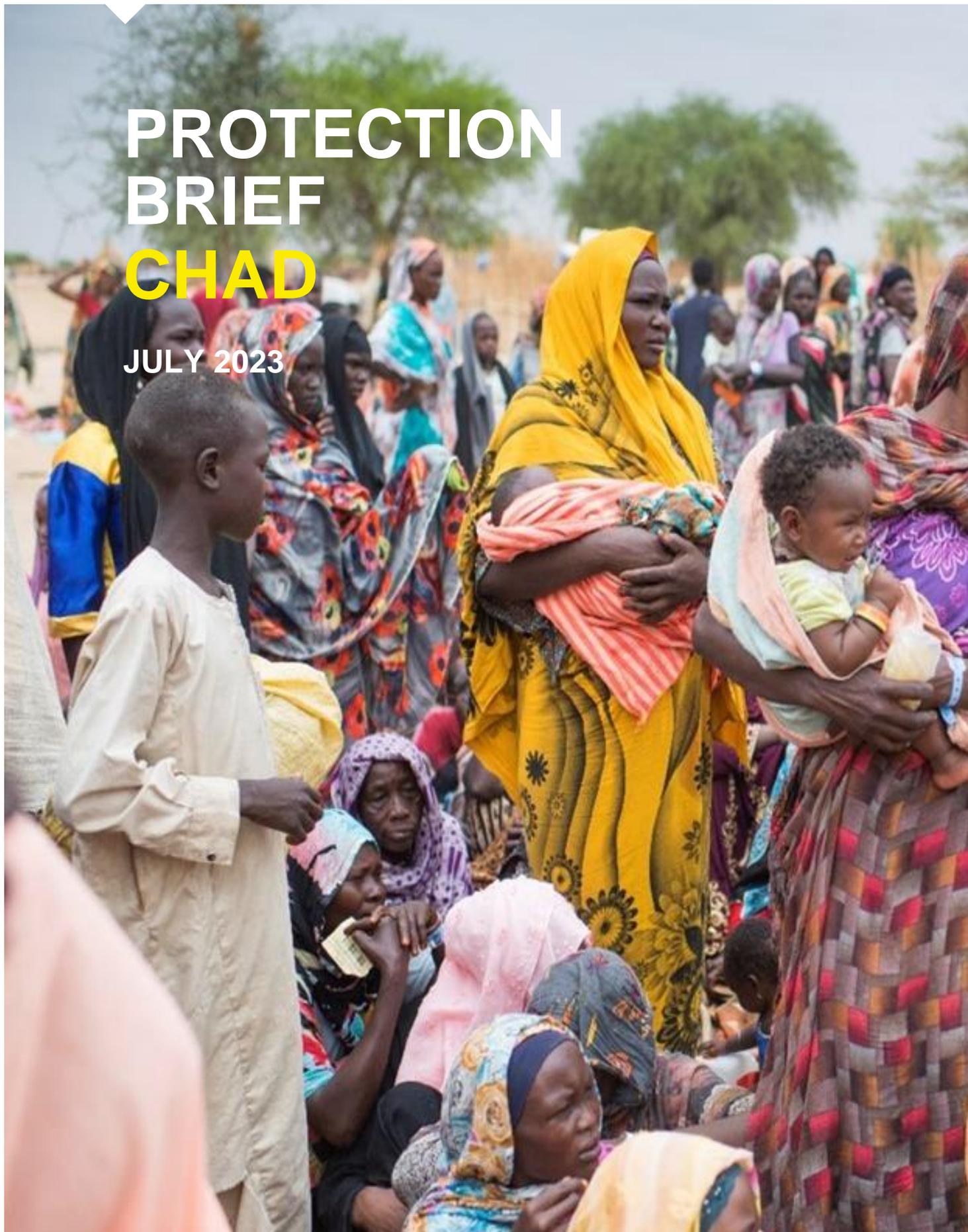


PROTECTION BRIEF CHAD

JULY 2023



Operational Context & Analysis

The ongoing fighting in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) and the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) triggered displacement of almost two and half million people, both within Sudan and to neighboring countries. As of 30 June, UNHCR and the Government of Chad have identified almost 180,000 Sudanese refugees in Chad seeking safety, who have fled the conflict in Sudan. 92 percent of the refugees population consist of women and children, hosted in spontaneous sites and in managed camps in three provinces of Ouaddaï, Sila and Wadi Fira in eastern Chad. The overwhelming majority of the arrivals are from the Darfur region, which has been deeply impacted by violence for decades and where the rivalry between the RSF and the SAF has unleashed a parallel inter-communal conflict between Arab and Masalit tribes. The killing of the West Darfur state governor in mid-June, immediately after he had publicly denounced the ethnic violence in the State, marked a new escalation in the conflict. Focus group discussions with refugees in Chad attested to human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings, rapes, deliberate destruction of property. Refugees arriving in Chad report that entire towns in West Darfur no longer exist due to the level of destruction and the mass exodus of the population.

The serious challenges in gaining humanitarian access to Darfur from Sudan, particularly to West Darfur, has prompted the humanitarian community to seek alternative ways to deliver assistance to people in need, through cross-border operations from Chad. At the same time, options of safe passage of civilians into Chad are being pursued, thanks to a favorable border policy maintained by the Chadian authorities. In mid-June, UNHCR coordinated with Arab leaders controlling the El Geneina-Adre route to facilitate the transportation into Chad of older persons, children and persons with specific needs fleeing West Darfur. These movements, together with other sporadic arrivals of civilians taking advantage of an intermittent lull in fighting, have determined a steady increase in the influx of refugees during the month of June, particularly in the northern part of the Ouaddaï region. As a result, the estimated planning figure for the humanitarian response, initially set at 100,000 individuals is anticipated to swiftly increase to 250,000 individuals by the end of 2023. The establishment of additional camps has emerged as a compelling need. The refugee population numbers add to the more than 407,000 Sudanese refugees who have been hosted since 2023 in 14 camps in Eastern Chad before the latest crisis in Sudan broke out.

Under the leadership and the coordination of the Government of Chad and of UNHCR, humanitarian actors have provided an emergency response since the first weeks of the conflict to the forcibly displaced persons in multiple spontaneous sites and camps emerging along the border areas, where refugees were arriving in desperate conditions and were received by the local communities. Since the inception of the humanitarian response, main interventions evolved around three main objectives:

i) maintain a rapid response with basic reception capacity and protection services in the arrival areas along the border; ii) ensure a safe and dignified process of relocation of refugees further away from the border to guarantee their safety and security; iii) develop and/or strengthen protection services and assistance delivery, as well as improving shelter and infrastructures in existing and newly created sites in Ouaddaï, Sila and Wadi Fira.

Considering the volatile situation at the border and with the objective of strengthening the delivery of protection and assistance, UNHCR and its partners have been supporting since May the safe relocation of refugees from the insecure border areas to existing managed camps in Ouaddaï (Gaga and Farchana), Sila (Djabal and Goz Amir) and Wadi Fira (Milé, Kounoungou and Iridimi). Due to the continuous arrivals, and the limited space in the pre-existing camps, two additional camps have been identified and are being set up in Ouaddaï (Arkoum) and in Sila (Zabout) to accommodate the new refugees.

The start of the rainy season and the deteriorating conditions of the roads affect the pace of the relocation activities. It is therefore expected that a significant number of refugees may not be relocated on time and be compelled to remain in border areas. Consequently, in parallel to the ongoing relocation exercise, humanitarian agencies have pre-positioned assistance items, and maintain some basic health services, WASH [water, sanitation and hygiene] facilities as well as basic protection services in border

locations, particularly in three 'hub sites' for new arrivals in Adré and Borota in the Ouaddaï province and in Ademour in the Sila province. This will guarantee life-saving support to those refugees who may not be immediately relocated and for new arrivals during the rainy season.

Despite the official border closure, the Government of Chad continues to allow Sudanese refugees and third country nationals fleeing Sudan to seek refuge and safety in Chad. The vast majority (86%) of households that UNHCR teams consulted upon arrival, indicated that they did not encounter any difficulty in accessing the country, while episodes of violence, assault, extortion, were experienced in Sudan on the way to the border. In addition, households generally indicated that they feel welcome by the Chadian host community thanks to ethnic and cultural affinity.

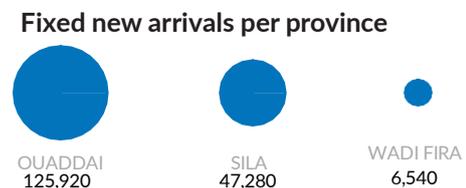
In May, the Government signed the Application Decree of the Law on Asylum in Chad, which was adopted in December 2020, in line with the commitments made by the country during the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019. This law and its application decree are expected to improve the protection regime provided to the nearly 600,000 protracted and newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers currently hosted in the country, representing more than 3% of the Chadian population. The application of the law is expected to strengthen the national framework for the protection of refugee and asylum seekers, favoring the respect for their civil and socio-economic rights, including freedom of movement, access to justice, the right to work, access to healthcare, education, land, amongst others¹.

Moreover, the sustained new arrivals and the halting of the main commercial routes between Sudan and Chad due to the conflict are having a catastrophic impact on the socio-economic situation of the country and particularly on its eastern regions. Just before the eruption of the conflict in Sudan, the World Food Program (WFP) had projected that nearly 1.9 million people in Chad would be in severe food insecurity from June to August 2023, while more than 1.3 million children would suffer from acute malnutrition. The arrival of almost 180,000 individuals as of end June, with the resulting pressure on already scarce resources, has further aggravated the humanitarian situation of the population at large. In turn, the severe socio-economic conjuncture negatively impacts the overall protection environment, with concerns for the possible rise in child labour, under-aged marriage, recruitment into armed groups and other harmful coping strategies.

Key Trends & Figures

As of 30 June 2023

Given the prevailing **instability**, persistent armed violence, and inter-communal clashes in Sudan, it is anticipated that as many as **250,000*** refugees could arrive by the end of 2023

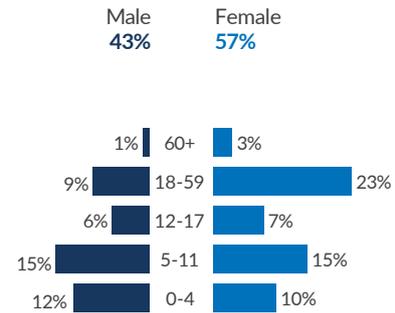


¹ At the end of May, the Government of the Republic of Chad also domesticated the Kampala Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, becoming the second African country, after Niger, to take this important step.

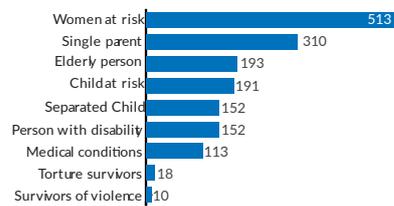
Individual biometric registration (Gaga camp)



Age and gender breakdown of registered persons



Registered persons with specific needs



*Source: Refugee Response Plan

** Source of estimation: Government, UNHCR based on influx alerts received from the field

***Source of estimation: OIM/DTM, Chad – Sudan crisis response: Flash update 8 (30 June 2023)

Protection risks

Since the onset of the crisis in Sudan, UNHCR staff has been present in areas of arrival to consult the arriving population and detect their main protection issues and risks. A systematic monitoring is currently undertaken through the interagency and cross-border protection monitoring systems (*Project 21*), which was initially launched in 2021 in the Lake Province in Chad. At the inception of the crisis and with the first arrivals of refugees into Chad, the system was quickly adapted and extended to the eastern part of the country to identify the protection needs of the new arrivals and inform the humanitarian response. As of 27 June, almost 2,700 households in 12 localities in all three provinces have been interviewed (91% women), revealing serious human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law committed by armed groups in Sudan.

Gender-Based Violence. Consultations with refugee women in eastern Chad have shed light on the worrying trends of physical, including sexual, and psychological violence experienced by refugee women and girls in Sudan during their flight to reach safety. Following focus group discussions held in the emergency sites next to the border points of Borota, Koufroun, Goungour and Wandalou, and in the refugee camp of Gaga, women and girls reported numerous incidents of sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) occurring in Sudan. Incidents included abduction, rape, sexual assault, sexual exploitation and other forms of physical and psychological violence allegedly perpetrated by fighters, but also by criminals groups in Sudan. This situation currently determines the need for immediate GBV responses, particularly medical and psychological support. A *Project 21* survey highlighted that 63% of interviewed households expressed that they feel unsafe due to the risk of exposure to GBV in areas of arrival, especially during firewood collection and around latrines at night.

Child Protection. Within the pre-registered refugee arrivals, 55% have been identified as children of school age (54% girls) with 29% of preschool age, 44% of primary school age, and 27% of secondary school age (middle and high school). Children are also believed to be at significant risk of physical and psychological harm. Aside from the distress of the flight and the traumatic experience of witnessing the conflict, hundreds of children have been involuntarily separated from their families or lost their caregivers, a situation that increases their vulnerability.

According to *Project 21*, 82% of the consulted and pre-registered households includes children who were enrolled in schools in Sudan. There is a concern that the families' dire circumstances, coupled with a prolonged lack of access to education and other forms of childcare, may further expose refugee children to various forms of neglect, abuse, and exploitation, including child labor, recruitment, trafficking, and GBV.

Mental health and psychological needs. The distressing experience of the conflict; the level of violence directly experienced or witnessed, including GBV; the involuntary family separation and the apprehension for the family members left behind², have determined a significant level of distress or even trauma amongst the refugee population. The deprivation faced during the flight and in areas of arrival, the loss of most of household assets, the current dependency on humanitarian aid, contribute to aggravate this situation. Children, survivors of GBV, but also older persons, may be the most exposed and in need of some forms of psychological first aid and psychosocial support.

Lack of documentation. A significant number of new arrivals have reported that they lack proper documentation, including birth certificates. According to the *Project 21* monitoring system, 22% of households reported not having any documents, while 29% possess identification cards or other forms of identification, and 49% have birth certificates. The lack of documentation may expose refugees, especially children, to additional challenges, including more difficult access to registration, as well as essential services such as education and healthcare, besides triggering a potential risk of statelessness.

Key elements of the response

Since the inception of the crisis the protection response followed a three-pronged approach.

Action 1: Count new arrivals in border areas and provide urgent specialized protection services in spontaneous sites in border areas for women, girls, children, and other persons with specific needs and at heightened risk.

Action 2: Increase the structural and service capacity of existing refugee sites away from the border in the three provinces of Ouaddaï, Sila and Wadi Fira, and voluntarily relocate refugees to these safer areas.

Action 3: Invest in individual biometric registration and strengthen delivery of essential and inclusive protection services in the camps, with particular attention to child protection, GBV services.

Preserving the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum and of refugee sites. Considering the proximity to the border, the very volatile security situation, and the risk of infiltration and presence of armed elements amongst the refugee population, UNHCR and another humanitarian partner have invested in advocacy and capacity strengthening for the Chadian authorities to maintain the civilian nature of sites, both at the border and in the relocation sites. While from the onset of the crisis the Chadian authorities have put in place screening and separation procedures, UNHCR has also organized training on refugee law and on the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum for nearly 300 troops from the Chadian armed forces deployed in Adré under the umbrella of the Chad-Sudan mixed-forces established in 2010 with the responsibility of borders surveillance.

² 21% of households interviewed indicated that family members have separated with family members remaining in Sudan, with the intention of joining their family members in Chad, when the security situation allows it.

Registration and documentation. After counting in the border areas, biometric registration is ongoing in the refugee sites, and refugee documentation is issued by the authorities. Registration is essential to capture the profile and specific needs of the refugees to inform programming and interventions. By the end of June, almost 7,031 relocated individuals have undergone biometric registration in Gaga camp and received a refugee certificate and 23% of those registered have been identified with specific needs. In addition, the ANATS agency (*Agence Nationale des Titres Securisés*) in charge of issuing civil registry documents has also deployed its staff to the camps and arrival sites, setting up a mobile team to register births and issue birth certificates. 227 new-borns have been issued birth certificates.



Refugees are being enrolled biometrically at the Registration Center, Gaga refugees camp

Responding to GBV and addressing GBV risks among newly arrived refugees. Priority has been devoted to address the consequences of the violations experienced by women and girls in Sudan and mitigate GBV risks in areas of arrival. Post-Exposure Prophylaxis kits were provided to survivors of rape, and safe spaces were established at the border, and are now reinforced in the relocation sites. 39 GBV cases have been identified and referred to appropriate services. Awareness campaigns and sessions have been organized at community level, reaching approximately 6,000 individuals. Communication with communities on the available services, training sessions on GBV mitigation and response and on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) have been facilitated for refugees and humanitarian workers, in accordance with UN policies of “Zero Tolerance” (more than 4,000 people reached). 3,950 dignity kits have been distributed in various sites to already relocated women and girls of childbearing age thanks to UNFPA. Efforts were made to enhance coordination among various stakeholders involved in the GBV response. Nonetheless, the GBV response appears to be hindered by several obstacles. This includes a severe shortage of staff with GBV and psychosocial support expertise, able to cope with the large number of newly arrived refugees seeking assistance and effectively address individual cases; the limited number of safe spaces in the various spontaneous reception sites where refugees arrive, which hinders the immediate identification and response; the lack of resources and the insufficient quantity of available dignity kits.

Reinforcing child protection interventions. From the onset of the crisis, UNHCR partners have stepped up child protection activities and services, including the identification and support to unaccompanied and separated children. As of 21 June 2023, UNHCR and its partners have identified 397 children at risk (70 in Sila Province and 327 in Ouaddai). Among them, 215 are separated children, 50 are

unaccompanied minors and 24 are living with disability. 26 children were reunified with their families through collective efforts of Chad Red Cross, HIAS, ICRC and UNICEF.

In Ouaddaï and Sila provinces, community consultations and awareness sessions on community-based child protection were initiated, reaching more than six thousand community members. Psychosocial support and recreational activities have targeted 9,849 children, (more than 50% girls) thanks to UNICEF, and HIAS. Furthermore, 1,300 birth kits were provided in Abéché, Ouaddaï province. As some 55% of new arrivals are school-aged children, classroom construction, teacher recruitment and training, recreational activities, and psychosocial support are critical needs. Assessments conducted by RRP (Refugee Response Plan) partners in nine arrival sites in the Ouaddaï, Wadi Fira, and Sila provinces reveal that refugee families favor the integration of refugee children into the national system. Under the leadership of the education authorities at the local level with the support of UNHCR and JRS, 416 teachers have been identified amongst the new arrivals to reinforce the teaching capacity for emergency education activities.

Relocation and service scale-up in camps. As of 30 June, almost 53,900 refugees have been relocated from border locations to seven existing camps in the three main provinces of East Chad, as well as to new camps at Zabout and Arkoum. UNHCR is working with UN and other NGOs partners to scale up a multisector response in the various sites, to improve services and assistance to the newly relocated refugees and to maintain humanitarian standards in providing continuous assistance to the pre-crisis refugee population. Interventions include food assistance, nutrition screening and programs, health interventions including vaccinations, and protection services.

Challenges & Opportunities

The main priority and challenge relate to the relocation of large numbers of refugees from the border areas to improve their safety and maintain support, before these areas become isolated by rain and flooding. While efforts are ongoing in a race against time, groups of newly arrived refugees may remain in border areas and more may arrive fleeing the conflict. As a result, humanitarian aid must be prepositioned and a minimal level of services should be maintained in those areas, while basic social services will need to be strengthened or maintained in camps and sites to continue providing quality protection response to both the new arrivals and protracted refugees as well as the host community to maintain an environment conducive to peaceful coexistence.

Local communities in Chad have generously supported the newly arrived refugees, sharing resources. However, the current refugee crisis developed in a national and local context of rising food insecurity³, socio-economic crisis triggered by the global context and the disruption of Chad's supply chain, vulnerability to climate change, rapid desertification, and environmental degradation. Newly arrived refugees expressed concerns over access to resources and services, and risks of inter-community tensions due to competition over land, and capacity of critical services such as health and education. While humanitarian support is extended to the newly arrived and protracted refugees, hosting communities should be continuously included for support, and additional resources, including from development actors, should be adequately addressed to refugee hosting areas.

In line with the commitments made by the country during the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, the Chadian government has shown a traditional hospitality vis-a vis the newly arrived refugees, including through landmark legislative developments such as the adoption of the Application Decree of the Law on Asylum. Such developments are critical opportunities to maintain and reinforce asylum space for the protracted and the newly arrived refugees, favoring the respect for their basic rights in line with international refugee law obligations adhered to by the Chadian authorities. This represents an opportunity that should be seized by working closely with the authorities and other humanitarian and development actors.

³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/wfp-chad-country-brief-march-2023>

Key messages/Key asks

- The developments in Chad are inexorably linked to the dynamics of the conflict in Sudan. Key advocacy messages and asks made to parties to the conflict in Sudan are critical to the situation in Chad. Those include, *inter alia*, the respect of basic principles of international humanitarian law and human rights law; the protection of civilians and civilian infrastructures, including health facilities and other amenities indispensable for the survival of the civilian population, against deliberate or incidental attacks; and guarantee of safe passage for the civilian population seeking safety, including by crossing the Sudan-Chad borders⁴.
- UNHCR thanks the Chadian authorities for their open doors policy, allowing for the unhindered entry of refugees from Sudan seeking safety from widespread violence and persecution, and exhorts the authorities to maintain this regime and humanitarian approach.
- UNHCR exhorts the authorities in Chad to continue their efforts to maintain the civilian character of asylum and the humanitarian character of sites, including continuous efforts in screening and separation procedures in line with international humanitarian and human rights law.
- UNHCR also welcomes the adoption by the Chadian authorities of the Application Decree of the Law on Asylum, representing an opportunity to maintain and reinforce the asylum space for the protracted and the newly arrived refugees, favoring the respect for their basic rights in line with international refugee law obligations adhered to by the Chadian authorities. UNHCR stands ready to support the authorities to implement measures to improve the situation of refugees in Chad, including their freedom of movement, and their access to documentation and services. UNHCR advocates for humanitarian and particularly for development agencies to robustly support the Government of Chad to step up the capacity of national services to address the needs of both refugees and host communities.
- UNHCR applauds the generosity of the Chadian communities in receiving refugees from neighboring Sudan and in sharing often scarce resources to support their initial survival. In the current socio-economic conjuncture in Chad, it is imperative that hosting communities are included in the response and that additional resources, including from development actors, are adequately invested in refugee hosting areas to support and improve common services, infrastructures, and livelihood opportunities.
- The current humanitarian situation requires both a continuous response at the border to guarantee minimum life-saving assistance and services to newly arrived refugees, as well as a robust response in the camps, where refugees are relocated. Core protection activities need to be amplified, notably the response to GBV survivors arriving in Chad, and mitigation of GBV risks in all refugee-hosting locations; dedicated interventions for children at risk, including best interests procedures for unaccompanied and separated children, issuance of birth certificates, and a variety of activities to improve their psychosocial well-being; support to other individuals with critical protection needs, including older persons, persons living with disabilities and individuals suffering from war-related trauma; registration and identity management; support to community-based protection structures, including those led by women. These activities represent a core part of the RRP strategy. UNHCR calls for continuous donor support to the RRP requirements, which remain severely under-met, thus hindering the capacity of UNHCR and other actors to contribute to a dignified support to the protection needs of the fleeing population.

⁴ See UNHCR Sudan Protection Brief, June 2023 <https://data.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/101097> and UNHCR Press Release - 4 July 2023 - *After 28 refugee deaths in Khartoum, UNHCR urges Sudan's warring parties to allow safe passage for civilians*

Emergency response partners in Eastern Chad

UNHCR project partners

CNARR, IRC, ADES, CRT, INTERSOS, LMI, SECADEV, HIAS, JRS, CIAUD, AIRD.

Operational partners collaborating in the humanitarian response

IOM, OCHA, WFP, UNICEF, WHO, UNFPA, FAO, ANATS, MSF (France, Luxembourg, Holland, Switzerland), ICRC, PUI (Première Urgence Int), ALIMA/Alerte Santé, HELP TCHAD, SIF (Secours Islamique France), QATAR CHARITY, Concern WorldWide, ACTED, SOLIDARITES Int/ACHDR, CARE, FLM, ADRA, WORLD VISION, ACF and OXFAM, COOPI, NIRVANA, ASTBEF (Chadian Association for Family Well-Being), ADRO (Association to Support Development in the Ouaddai Region), AFDI (Women's Association for Integrated Development), ACAFDI (Association for the Promotion of Communication, Animation, Training and Integrated Development), APSELPA (Action to Protect Health, the Environment and Fight Food Shortages), ADRAH (Association for the Development and Reinforcement of Humanitarian Action), AKAD (Association Kari Assoungha for Development) as well as other partners.

PROTECTION BRIEF CHAD



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