

Regional Overview - Internally Displaced Persons

July-September 2023



Distribution of non-food items to displaced Sudanese in one of the 55 gathering sites of Wadi Halfa, Northern State of Sudan. UNHCR is supporting the displaced population with protection monitoring and distribution of core-relief items to families hosted in the gathering sites.. © UNHCR/Mohamed Rached Cherif

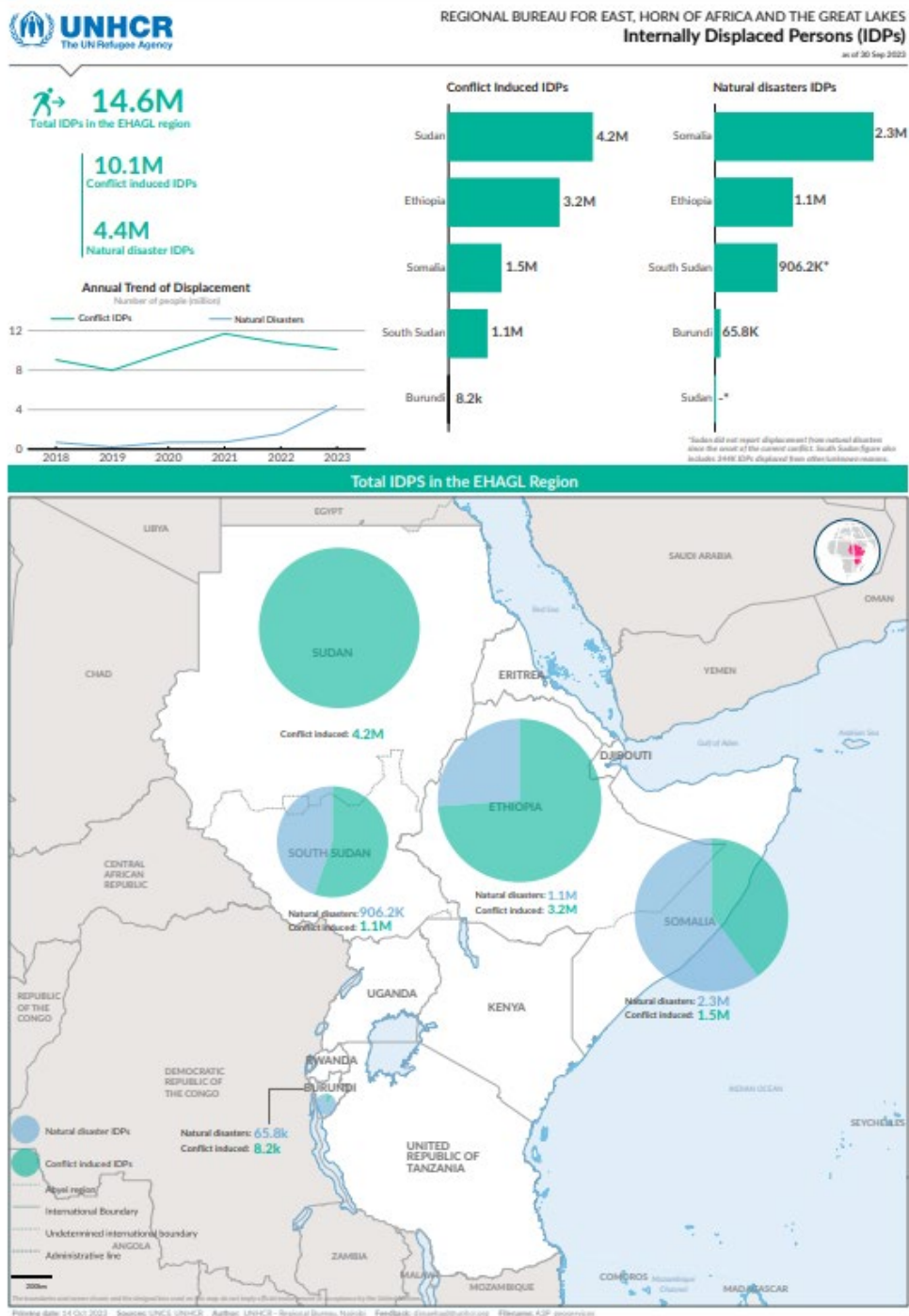
OVERVIEW

As of 30 September, the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (EHAGL) region was hosting around 14.6 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in five countries – mainly in Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. Compared to the last quarterly update, the estimated number has risen by 2.4 million essentially due to the fact that the reporting of IDPs in Tigray, Ethiopia has resumed and the conflict in Sudan continues to generate displacement inside its own borders¹.

Considering that a significant proportion of displacements in the region stem from conflicts - 10 of the 14 million - and many conflicts remain active in a very fluid context, the protection focus is mainly on life-saving activities informed by protection monitoring and ensuring the provision of shelters and core relief items (CRIs). At the same time, there is a strong focus in the region on the pursuit of durable solutions. While numerous IDP returns are taking place in the region, most are self-organized rather than facilitated, and therefore difficult to quantify.

In line with the Global tri-cluster leadership approach and revised UNHCR Policy on Engagement in Situations of Internal Displacement (2019), UNHCR is leading or co-leading the Protection, Camp Coordination and Camp Management, and Shelter/NFI clusters in most countries.

¹ At the time of issuance of this update in late November 2023, the IDP figure in Sudan had risen to over 5 million, due to the conflict that began in April 2023.



Durable solutions are highlighted as a core priority in the [UN Action Agenda](#) and are a critical element of the IDP response in the EHAGL region. UNHCR pursues a coordinated approach alongside other actors - including development actors and donors - to promote and realize durable solutions initiatives in the region. Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia have been identified as priority countries by the Secretary General’s Special Advisor on Solutions for IDPs.

On 18 July, UNHCR facilitated a stakeholder consultation in Garissa, Kenya, to discuss the findings of the UNHCR report on “[Human Mobility and Climate Change in the IGAD Region in the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Joint Programme on Addressing Drivers of Human Mobility in the context of Climate Change in the IGAD region](#)”. Consultations stressed protection risks associated with forced displacement that are aggravated by climate related issues such as drought and floods affecting livelihoods. Climatic factors aggravate sexual exploitation and abuse, family separation, mental health and breakdown of social structures affecting forcibly displaced persons, in particular women.

COUNTRY UPDATES

ETHIOPIA

As of 30 September, it was estimated that 4.3 million people were internally displaced across the country. Most of the internal displacement is due to localized conflicts, most recently in the Amhara region.

Due to the ongoing confrontation between Unidentified Armed Groups (UAGs) and government security forces since 4 August 2023, the Amhara region is currently under a state of emergency. The security situation impacted humanitarian coordination and communication and made it difficult for aid workers to enter certain areas. Nevertheless, the main regional coordination systems, such as the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG), Protection Cluster (PC), and Emergency Coordination Committee (ECC), have been restarted after a brief interruption and are currently operational. The biggest incidents during the reporting period were a cholera outbreak and a drought that devastated numerous zonal districts. However, given the unpredictability of the current security conditions in several regional areas, humanitarian partners that had been active in various woredas have already curtailed or discontinued their activities. Additionally, due to access problems, the situation had a big impact on how well government interventions were delivered. In general, very few General Protection (GP) and Mine Action (MA) operations were reported in North Shoa, North Gonder, South Wollo, Waghemra, and North Wollo.

UNHCR and partner response

Amhara

Despite the challenges, 802 IDP women were provided with warm clothes at the Gerado and Kutaber IDP sites. A total of 2,880 IDPs benefited from the maintenance of emergency shelters at Jara, Woldia, Gerado, Kutaber, Jari-2, and Mekaneyesus IDP sites. Cash assistance of 3,000 ETB (approx. USD 53) was provided to the most critical gender based violence (GBV) survivors in need of medical and safety services. Capacity building through training was provided to a total of 120 community structures (GBV support groups, community leaders, youth, and women groups in Jara, Merssa, Jarri 2, and Kutaber China camp IDP site). The training topics covered basic concepts, GBV prevention and response, safe disclosure, Psychological First Aid, and referral pathways. Through our partners, Wollega University, 77 persons received legal advice. In Jara camp in North Wollo, Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) training was provided including ways and techniques of reporting PSEA concerns using different mechanisms.

Transitional Justice Consultations

A multi-sectoral team within UNHCR supported consultations on transitional justice policy options in Ethiopia, to ensure that the process is inclusive of affected refugees and internally displaced populations. The support includes providing technical and financial support for the Technical Working Group (TWG) to organize IDPs and refugee-focused consultations to ensure that the needs, priorities, and voices of affected displaced persons will shape the drafting of the policy and post-drafting tasks.

In this regard, the Refugee and Returnee Services (RRS), UNHCR, and the TWG drafted an action plan that provides the general guidelines and the required resources for the facilitation of IDPs and refugees-focused consultations on transitional justice policy options in Ethiopia. Through the action plan, the team identified 4 IDP locations in Amhara, Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia, and Somali regions and 3 refugee locations in Afar, Benishangul Gumuz and Tigray regions.

The first consultation was rolled out in Benishangul Gumuz region which was selected due to the presence of IDPs and refugees that were affected by conflict. Hence, 60 IDPs and 60 refugees affected by the past and current conflict in Ethiopia were reached for consultation to gather inputs to feed into the policy options of transitional justice measures. The second consultation was held in Mekelle with 60 IDPs from Abi-Adi, Adigrat, Maychew, and Mekelle for the IDP-focused consultation.

The outcome of the IDP-focused consultation in Assosa was informative; IDPs expressed appreciation for the event as many had never before been consulted about their needs, priorities, and most importantly on how to deal with serious violations they have experienced. Doubts and skepticism remained with some of the participants on how the transitional justice system would function properly when there is ongoing conflict throughout the country, and when a return is impossible.

In Mekelle, the participants raised the issue of the impact of the food assistance pause and that transitional justice is not their priority as many were dying due to hunger. They further stated that with ongoing conflict and their home occupied by foreign and other forces, the idea of transitional justice aiming for a durable solution is void. In addition to the reality on the ground, participants questioned the independence of the TWG, and emphasized that the team should involve experts from Tigray regions.

SOMALIA

According to the [UNHCR-led Protection and Return Monitoring Network \(PRMN\)](#), which tracks internal displacement trends, protection risks and violations across Somalia, 200,744 displacements occurred between July and September 2023. 103,691 displacements were caused due to drought and 74,438 were caused by conflict and insecurity. UNHCR leads/co-leads the Protection, Shelter, and CCCM clusters for the IDP response.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) partners continue recording large numbers of displaced populations arriving at IDP sites in Kahda, Daynile, Baidoa, Kismaayo, Afmadow, Belet Weyne and Jalalaqsi along with other districts due to the impact of drought, conflict and flooding in their areas of origin. In the month of September, at least 46,565 new arrivals were displaced. The majority were received in Khada, Baidoa, Deynille, Kismaayo and Baardheere districts.

UNHCR and partner response

The Protection Cluster – with UNHCR’s logistical and financial support – is partnering with the Protection Cluster Explosive Hazards (EH) Area of Responsibility to set up a response in Las Caanood. UNHCR through the protection cluster collaborated with United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) to facilitate training on Mines/Explosive Remnants of War (ERW), which are threatening the safe return of the displaced population and the restoration of social services in Laascaanood; 50 individuals were involved in the training. In Garowe, the state-level protection cluster and the Explosive Hazards AoR organized an Explosive Ordnance Safety training with 20 GBV/CP actors working in Sool/Laascaanood.

CCCM Partners continued to closely work with nutrition partners to conduct screening across sites, with severe acute malnutrition (SAM) and moderate acute malnutrition (MAM) cases referred to nutrition partners for assistance.

Since the beginning of the year, the Shelter Cluster has reached 767,843 individuals (66%) of 1,146,660 targeted with CRI assistance, and 362,840 individuals (31%) of the 1,146,660 targeted with shelter assistance.

Finding durable solutions for IDPs in collaboration with the Federal Government of Somalia (FGS), Federal Member States (FMS), and development and humanitarian partners remains one of UNHCR’s top priorities in Somalia. Moreover, UNHCR, in collaboration with authorities and partners, continued to provide vital protection assistance to vulnerable IDPs and host communities affected by conflict, flooding, and drought.

In pursuit of durable solutions for IDPs in Bossaso, Puntland, UNHCR, through its partner, has completed 92 out of the planned 150 permanent shelters at Gribile 2. The construction approach is based on the owner-driver model, in which beneficiaries actively participate in the construction process and UNHCR’s partner’s technical team provides ongoing advice to ensure quality requirements are met.

UNHCR, IOM, UNDP and UN Habitat collaborated to develop and submit a proposal to the Internal Displacement Solutions Fund (IDSF) which aims to support strategic, collaborative, and coherent engagement of UN Country Teams through joint programmes led by Resident Coordinators and implemented by participating UN entities at the country level. The joint proposal’s focus is to support IDPs in finding durable solutions to their displacement through ensuring that national authorities and the UN collect, analyse, and report data on displacement in a multi-sectoral and SDG-aligned way. The proposal proposes to strengthen and improve data, tools, and normative frameworks to inform integrated and inclusive solutions pathways for IDPs and their host communities and government capacity for coordinating solutions data.

SOUTH SUDAN

As of 30 September, there were over 2.26 million IDPs in South Sudan, displaced by both conflict and climate related factors.

So far in 2023, an estimated 350,000 South Sudanese from Sudan and 70,000 South Sudanese from Ethiopia have

returned to the country due to conflict in Sudan and insecurity in Ethiopia, with a further 520,000 estimated to arrive by the end of 2024.

The vast majority have crossed into the country in areas of Upper Nile State; some are currently congested in transit areas due to the lack of onward movement opportunities. While some returnees originate from the area and have dispersed in Upper Nile State's counties seeking shelter and support, others chose to remain in the area and seek short-to-mid term integration solutions as they are unable or unwilling to travel to other areas.

No research is currently available on the distinction between the two groups, however, recently acquired consensus among humanitarian actors and some government structures in Upper Nile State speak about some 90 -100,000 South Sudanese returnees in the state and in need of (re)integration support including food security, security of tenure on land, basic shelter, livelihood support and linkages to protection specific and targeted services.

At national level, the CCCM Cluster estimates that around 20% of all returnees will settle in existing IDP sites throughout the country looking for support and shelter, often with relatives already in those places. In time this ratio is likely to increase due to the shrinking humanitarian and development space in the country.

Greater Yei continued to face several challenges in the third quarter of 2023, primarily related to a border dispute in Kajo-Keji County and ongoing armed conflicts in Yei River County, Central Equatorial State. A longstanding border dispute between the Kuku community in Kajo-Keji County and the Aringa community of Yumbe Districts in Uganda, which began in 2022, persisted into this quarter. Between 9-11 September, violent conflict erupted between these two communities, resulting in the displacement of 766 households, affecting approximately 3,830 individuals in several villages. Displaced individuals reported incidents of looting, house burnings, torture, and theft of household items and livestock during their displacement. Mainly women and children were among those displaced, seeking refuge at the Meruwa border crossing point. An interagency Rapid Needs Assessment conducted by protection agencies in Kajo-Keji identified pressing needs for humanitarian intervention, particularly in the areas of shelter (due to the ongoing rainy season), WASH, education, food, and healthcare.

UNHCR and partner response

During the reporting period, UNHCR conducted training sessions for 64 IDP leaders, comprising 17 females and 47 males, across Juba IDP Camps, Mangala IDP Camps, and Mangateen IDP sites. The primary focus of this training was on protection mainstreaming and peacebuilding, with the objective of enhancing the capacity and knowledge of IDP leaders. The training provided IDP leaders with a better understanding of the concept of protection, enabling them to identify key protection concerns and issues within their respective communities. It also emphasized the importance of fostering peaceful coexistence with the host communities.

In the aftermath of the conflict in Malakal's Protection of Civilians site (POC) in June, which resulted in the further displacement of an estimated 15,000 out of 40,000 IDPs, UNHCR and its protection partners have intensified their efforts in community engagement. This engagement includes interactions with religious and community leaders as a means of advocating for peace and social cohesion.

Malakal

UNHCR coordinated with the government to ensure improved security at the reception area. Routine protection activities are ongoing, and UNHCR's partners the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) and the Humanitarian & Development Consortium (HDC), have been actively collaborating with communities to identify vulnerable elders and individuals with disabilities who may have been left behind and need community support. HDC successfully traced and reconnected 32 persons with specific needs (PSNs) with their relatives. Additionally, UNHCR, DRC, and HDC have been collaborating with UNMISS and ICRC to facilitate the evacuation of individuals whose lives are in immediate danger.

UNHCR and DRC coordinate the protection partner response under the leadership of the Protection Cluster to ensure effective service delivery. They continue to provide case management and individual protection assistance, both in cash and in-kind, to the most vulnerable IDPs. These efforts have resulted in approximately 4,500 individuals benefiting from a range of essential protection services.

One of UNHCR's top priority activities in Malakal town is the reclamation of old properties with the support of government intervention to facilitate ownership and documentation for returning individuals. Many of the houses have either been destroyed or are occupied by illegal/ unauthorized occupants, posing significant challenges for returnees as they seek integration upon their return. This situation has been further exacerbated recently due to the increased

number of returns from Sudan.

UNHCR, in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing, Land, and Property, and combined with community consultations, is actively involved in the process of establishing ownership claims and assessing occupancy. Subsequently, they coordinate with relevant authorities to enable returnees to reclaim their properties.

UNHCR and HDC play integral roles in the identification of individuals, provision of counselling, referrals, capacity building for government entities, and monitoring of the reclamation process to ensure its timely execution. In situations where houses are occupied by unauthorized occupants, solutions are identified with the assistance of community land committees trained by UNHCR. In total, approximately 1,200 individuals have received support through Housing, Land, and Property (HLP) programmes.

UNHCR is actively involved in registering new arrivals and conducting vulnerability screenings at its protection desks, in collaboration with IOM and partner staff. Joint border monitoring with IOM occurs in Renk and at four border entry points with UNHCR partner presence in Magenis, Kaka, Aburoc/EI Fau, and Tonga. Data collected informs the response of UNHCR and partners at return areas, prioritizing those at particular risk. The assistance focuses on PSNs through referrals for services, protection case management, protection/legal counseling, advocacy with the government on addressing HLP issues, and provision of cash assistance for shelter for those choosing to move to their plots in Malakal. Life-saving assistance in the form of cash and CRIs is also extended to PSNs.



Farmers Group weeding groundnuts farm in Morobo County, South Sudan. © UNHCR South Sudan.

SUDAN

Since the outbreak of fighting in Sudan on 15 April 2023, more than 4.2 million people had been newly internally displaced by the end of September 2023 – on average nearly 30,000 people each day. Their stories are stories of loss and trauma, but also of resilience and solidarity among communities. UNHCR responds to this internal displacement emergency in partnership with others, while attending to the urgent needs of secondarily displaced and conflict-affected refugees.

Prior to 15 April 2023, UNHCR’s IDP response reached people in eleven states and centred on the Darfur and Kordofan states, with a smaller response in the states affected by the 2022 Blue Nile conflict. Since April, UNHCR has reinforced and expanded its IDP response in the East and the North of the country, and has reached people in 15 states, including in the Darfur states, South and West Kordofan, Kassala, Gedaref, Al Jazirah, Sennar, Blue and White Nile states, as well as Red Sea and Northern state, with an expansion to River Nile state envisaged before year-end.

Despite the significant conflict impact in the Darfur region, UNHCR has been able to re-establish a sizeable response in parts of the region where humanitarian space and access permitted. Given the remote management of the operation, the response is largely community-based, including support to multi-purpose community centers, professionalization of community-based protection structures as well as protection monitoring, core relief and protection assistance. In the Kordofan states, the operations have remained very limited in the provision of core relief items. The most notable increase and expansion of UNHCR’s response took place across all the Eastern states as well as in the North, where UNHCR’s IDP response is predominantly new.

UNHCR provides a multi-sectoral emergency response, including core relief, cash to address basic needs, shelter assistance and protection support for individuals at risk or with specific needs, alongside protection monitoring and advocacy.

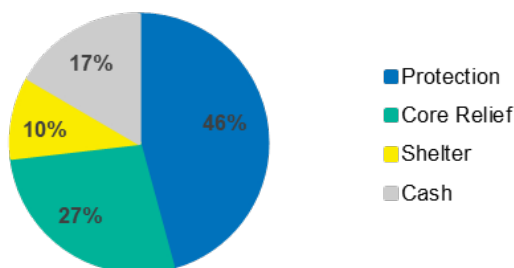
As the majority of new IDPs live in host communities who have similar needs, UNHCR has adopted a community-based approach to its response with the aim of placing the role of the communities at its center. Building on earlier investments in community-based protection networks (CBPNs) and protection desks, UNHCR is expanding this network and continues to professionalize it across the country. CBPNs and protection desks are involved in protection monitoring, community-level early warning and peaceful co-existence, identification of persons with specific needs, referrals, awareness raising, and dispute resolution. In addition, UNHCR is preparing for the roll out of other components of its community-based response, notably in parts of Darfur, Wadi Halfa, Kassala, Gedaref, Al Jazirah and White Nile, including the establishment and support to multi-purpose community centers, support to community-led organizations and first-line responders, and community support activities.

UNHCR response

During this quarter, the focus for the IDP response was on (1) capacity development of UNHCR staff, offices and partners on UNHCR’s role in internal displacement situation; (2) identify and devise the overall IDP operational footprint for the emergency response building on the operation’s roadmap; and (3) to support the roll out of the IDP operational footprint. Throughout the reporting period, mobile field support was provided to all accessible offices and remotely for the Darfurs and the Kordofans.

UNHCR also increased its visibility for the IDP emergency response in Sudan, through a dedicated external relations product: [Document - UNHCR Sudan - IDP Response Factsheet September 2023](#).

Individuals supported in 2023
January to September 2023



- In 2023 so far, UNHCR’s response to internal displacement has reached **over 400,000 people**. Of those, **77 per cent** were supported in the five months since the onset of the armed conflict on 15 April 2023.
- Prior to 15 April 2023, UNHCR’s IDP response centred on the Darfur and Kordofan states, and the Blue Nile situation. Since, it has **reinforced and expanded its IDP response in the East and the North of the country**. UNHCR currently responds in 15 states with an expansion to 16 states envisaged by year-end.
- UNHCR provides a **multi-sectoral emergency response**, including core relief, cash to address basic needs, shelter assistance and protection support for individuals at risk or with specific needs, alongside protection monitoring and advocacy.

Following an initial discussion at the Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) to have an HCT Protection Strategy to guide the system-wide approach with protection at its focus, extensive consultations were conducted with a view to conclude

on objectives and action priorities for the HCT Protection Strategy post 15 April conflict. UNHCR, as the Protection lead has dedicated support to driving the consultation process together with others in the Sudan Protection Sector. The HCT Protection Strategy was endorsed on 19 September with the focus on addressing protection of civilian concerns in three objectives (1) reduce impact of armed conflict on civilians and civilian infrastructure and services (2) raise preventative action on conflict-related sexual violence, GBV, and grave child rights violations (3) increase humanitarian access and ability to provide unhindered protection and other humanitarian assistance and services, in line with applicable principles. After the HCT Protection Strategy was endorsed, the action plan is being devised soliciting concerned agencies for the implementation of the Strategy.

As of 30 September, Site Management Sector through Site Mapping exercise has identified 806 active gathering sites within White Nile, Kassala, Aj Jazirah, Gedaref, Red Sea and Northern States in Sudan, where forcibly displaced persons seek refuge. The present data estimates these active gathering sites are currently hosting a total of 150,220 forcibly displaced persons across 27,751 households 98% of these individuals are Sudanese nationals, with the remaining 2% comprising either refugees or nationals from other countries, displaced within Sudan due to conflict.

A distinction in their positioning reveals that 98% of the gathering sites are situated in urban areas, whereas 2% are found in rural locations. Moreover, while 88% of these sites function as collective centers, the remaining 12% serve as spontaneous settlements. It is observed that 45% of residents are male and 55% female.

A significant majority, specifically 78% of forcibly displaced individuals, find accommodation in schools while 14% seek refuge in public buildings and the remaining (8%) seek shelter in open areas, abandoned private buildings, and mosques etc.

Humanitarian actors are requested to support the government in identifying alternative solutions including their possible relocation as the government is planning to start the 2023-2024 school academic year.

Site management sector continues to explore options to strengthen the coordination both at National and State level through various consultations with all Stakeholders (Government, UN agencies, International and National NGO involved in site management activities). As part of this process, the sector has completed the selection process of its Co-Chair at national level.



UNHCR distributing core relief items to newly displaced people arriving in Dongola, Northern State of Sudan. © UNHCR Sudan

HIGHLIGHTS – GOOD PRACTICES

South Sudan:

Malakal: Under the Area-based leadership framework and in collaboration with the government and the local NGO, Humanitarian Development Consortium (HDC), as well as IOM, UNHCR is currently engaged in the construction of semi-transitional shelters in Malakal town, located in Upper Nile state. These shelters are intended for 266 families who were displaced in June 2023 from the Malakal Protection of Civilians site.

As of the reporting period, 170 shelters had already been completed, and IDP families had successfully settled into them. These shelters have been erected on a plot of land allocated by the government, with the primary goal of providing solutions for IDPs and establishing safe, sustainable settlements. Importantly, these settlements will eventually be integrated into the town's development plans, reducing dependency risks and promoting self-reliance among the displaced populations.

The construction process is community-driven, involving active participation from the IDPs. They have been engaged in the design of shelter layouts and will continue to participate in the mud application on the walls after the rainy season concludes in October. This initiative is an inter-agency response and represents the first pilot project related to land allocation since the last conflict in Malakal town in 2016. There are ongoing plans to expand this initiative throughout the remainder of 2023 and into 2024, with the aim of assisting an additional 500 households.

Somalia:

Inter-Agency Complaints and Feedback Mechanism

UNHCR is in the process of establishing a unified inter-agency complaints and feedback mechanism in Somalia to overcome scattered “siloes” in feedback mechanisms, mitigate the risk of aid diversion, and improve targeting and service delivery. Drawn from good practices of Feedback, Resolution and Referral mechanism (FRRM) in Uganda, the Somalia Inter-agency Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (ICFM) will comprehensively facilitate systematization of procedures to gather, provide response to the community and monitor feedback in a structured manner. The ICFM will deploy a ‘call center’ modality, in which calls will be monitored, and individuals can receive information and referrals.

The ICFM tool was presented to the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) forum for endorsement. The ICCG members agreed that the implementation of ICFM be placed under the Community Engagement and Accountability Working Group. The first meeting of ICFM Steering Committee made up of different humanitarian agencies was held, where the draft Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the Steering Committee, the modalities of sharing data among service providers, and the design of the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) were discussed.

UNHCR is working on a draft Information Sharing Protocol with the Steering Committee for further discussions and draft FAQs. The Information Sharing Protocol provides a framework in which information shall be shared between ICFM partners, humanitarian organizations, development organizations, and government representatives with respect to data sensitivity levels and responding to protection concerns.

CONTACTS

Joyce Wayua Munyao Mbithi, Senior Donor Relations Officer, Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes Nairobi – munyao@unhcr.org

Markus Topp, Senior Protection Officer, Regional Bureau for the East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes Nairobi – topp@unhcr.org