

## **REGIONAL CHILD PROTECTION BRIEF**

### **SUDAN SITUATION - JUNE 2024**



*Hawida, a former teacher in Sudan and mother of six children in front of her new shelter in Chad's Kerfi refugee settlement © Eugene Sibomana/UNHCR*

## KEY FIGURES

**8.6M**

People displaced by the conflict in Sudan since April 15, 2023.

**1.9M**

Sudanese who have fled to neighboring countries.

**51%**

Proportion of displaced individuals are children.

**44K**

Children at risk.

**41%**

Children supported through the best interests procedure/ case management

**131,604**

Children accessed psychosocial support through static and mobile services.

This brief highlights the regional and country-specific child protection situation, the overall achievements of UNHCR and partners, the challenges, and recommendations for comprehensive and sustainable child protection programming.

## Impact of the Sudan Situation

As of 15 June 2024, over **8.6 million** persons were forcibly displaced including **1.9 million** who have fled to Chad, Central African Republic, Egypt, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda. Children constitute approximately **51 percent** of the displaced people making Sudan one of the world's largest child displacement crises. Countries have been able to screen and register some **44,105** children at risk.

Children face a wide range of protection risks at every stage of their displacement - before, during, and after their flight. These include grave violations of children's rights<sup>1</sup>, restricted access to safety, separation from families, gender-based violence (particularly sexual violence and child marriage), psychosocial distress, immigration detention, trafficking, and limited access to child protection services, including along the route to safety.

Displaced parents, older siblings, and families face a multitude of protection risks that impact the well-being of children, including lack of access to protection and basic services, abuse, harassment, and exploitation.

Protection monitoring and assessment reports conducted in Chad, Ethiopia, and South Sudan reveal increasing incidents of trafficking and smuggling of Sudanese children and adolescents, particularly youth aged between

<sup>1</sup> Killing and maiming, child recruitment, sexual violence, abduction, attacks on schools and hospitals, denial of humanitarian access.

19 and 27 years old from Khartoum, West, and Central Darfur, as well as Blue and White Nile States. Most of them are enroute to the Gulf States, Europe, and other destinations.

Countries of the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes (EHAGL) and other regions are coping with pressure of hosting a combination of new emergencies and protracted refugee situations, straining reception, and national services. This pressure is compounded by persistent economic, political, climatic shocks, and security challenges, alongside the pressing needs of internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees. Therefore, Sudanese refugees rely on UNHCR and partners' lifesaving assistance and protection to enhance their self-reliance and facilitate integration into national systems, which are pivotal for preserving social stability and cohesion within communities.

**In South Sudan, 56 percent** of Sudanese refugees are under the age of 18. Many of them have witnessed or experienced violent events, including attacks and sexual assaults. Additionally, many children travel or arrive at border crossing points unaccompanied and too often arrive weak and malnourished.

**In Uganda, 43 percent** of the **40,268** registered individuals by the government are children of whom **37 percent** are children at risk. Many of these children have witnessed and experienced violence, including bombing, looting, and occupation of their homes, hospitals, playgrounds, and schools. Some of them have endured unspeakable acts and lost loved ones due to the violence.

Since the onset of the Sudan conflict and as of 27 June 2024, UNHCR Egypt has provided registration appointments to **631,424** persons forced to flee Sudan, of which **325,140** (51%) individuals have been fully registered. Of those registered with UNHCR, the number of children constitutes approximately **42 percent**. UNHCR and partners have identified **18,196 children at risk**, including **7,485 unaccompanied and separated children**. Only **41 percent** were supported through the Best Interests Procedure/ case management due to limited capacity. UNHCR has boosted its registration capacity to ensure that persons seeking international protection are provided with documentation that protects them against arrest and deportation. However, due to the constrained capacity of immigration authorities, there has been an ever-increasing wait time for the asylum-based residence permit, which is **576 days** as of 30 June. This underscores the urgent need for increased support for refugees. The State has made some attempts to enforce a stronger immigration regime over irregular foreigners. This has been seen in stricter security measures regarding security checkpoints, a rise in related arrests, cautioning foreigners on the necessity of obtaining residence permits, and the suspension of State services to any foreigner unless they hold a valid residence permit. These attempts have also led to unusual crowds at the UNHCR offices seeking registration and documentation. The visa regime applied for Sudanese since June 2023 continues, resulting in long wait times at the Egyptian Consulate in Sudan for those seeking entry visas.

This prolonged process adds to the already challenging situation faced by Sudanese refugees, calling for our collective empathy and understanding. For most refugees and asylum seekers, both entering and residing in Egypt is becoming increasingly difficult, especially for unaccompanied and separated children, GBV survivors, the elderly, and those in serious need of medical attention. As the Sudan conflict continues, various factors are at play that contribute to their vulnerability, including increasing challenges to access basic services, decreasing resources within the humanitarian community and refugee-led organizations (RLOs), and insufficient means for the refugees and asylum seekers to support themselves.

In Chad, with increased ethnic conflicts the number of new arrivals from Sudan has tripled since the beginning of the year with children representing **54 percent** of the total registered refugee population. UNHCR, in collaboration with the Government of Chad, has identified over **10,479 children at risk**, including **3,154 unaccompanied and separated children**. Although the government is currently relocating refugees from the borders to refugee sites, access to refugee camps and provision of child protection and other services remains a challenge.

The Central African Republic (CAR) has received and registered approximately **31,649** Sudanese refugees, most of whom are women and children. Refugees find themselves dispersed in highly insecure and remote areas. With the dry season looming, armed group activities and associated protection risks remain prevalent, and lack of access to the new Sudanese refugee arrivals, especially in the South-East, remains a significant challenge for humanitarian actors.

The horrors of conflicts like Sudan's most certainly creates a detrimental and long-lasting impact on the mental health of children unless they receive the urgent support they need. Socio-economic hardships, unaffordable rents, scarce jobs, and limited access to comprehensive child protection services are prevalent across all the countries hosting Sudanese refugees.

## Key Achievements of UNHCR and Partners (January – June 2024)


**125,527**

children and caregivers reached through information sessions and outreach activities.


**1,603**

children at risk and caregivers participated in life skills and socio-economic empowerment livelihood opportunities.


**408**

child protection case workers and social workers trained on child protection prevention and response including Best Interest Procedure/ Case Management, child-sensitive interviewing skills, and care.


**2,067**

children at heightened risk supported through Best Interests Procedures.


**1,425**

frontline workers and community-based child protection network members trained on child protection prevention and response including parenting and community-based reintegration models.


**326**

local actors trained and supported to provide Best Interest Procedures/Case Management to child survivors and children at risk of violence, abuse, and exploitation.


**1,185**

children referred for family tracing and reunification services undertaken in collaboration with ICRC and other partners.


**112**

child-friendly safe spaces established and functional.

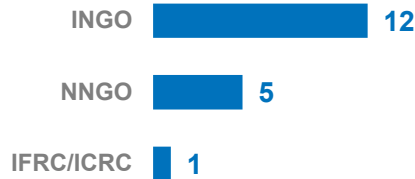


## Child Protection Funding (January – June 2024)

 **\$1.8 Billion**

Total Sudan RRP Budget Requirement

 **18**  
partners



 **\$35.7 Million**

Total Requirement for Child Protection

 **\$3.8 M**

 **\$31.9 M**

Received (11%)

Gap (89%)



Sudanese refugee children fetching water in El Nimir Refugee Camp, East Darfur © Sabah El Basha/UNHCR

### Child Protection Strategic Priorities

- 1. Strengthen inclusive child protection systems:** UNHCR will continue working with national authorities, UN agencies including UNICEF, and other relevant actors to assess capacities of national CP systems and services, identify key barriers, gaps, and opportunities, and develop interventions to address gaps.
- 2. Support children, families, and communities to protect children:** UNHCR will integrate child protection within community-based protection programming, and together with partners, support interventions that reinforce the capacities, resilience, and participation of children in their own protection, support families, and communities in their efforts to protect children, and promote protective social and gender norms related to the protection of children.

- 3. Provide supplementary child protection services for children at risk when needed.** UNHCR will also continue working with partners to ensure safe identification and referral of children at risk, establish and enhance child protection case management for refugee children at heightened risk in line with the [UNHCR Best Interests Procedure Guidelines](#). UNHCR will work towards prevention and response to family separation, including identification of unaccompanied and separated children, referrals to child protection case management/best interest procedures, arranging family-based alternative care, and ensuring that family tracing and reunification are undertaken in line with the best interest procedures. Psychosocial support will be provided for children at risk, including those in detention facilities. Prevention and response to child recruitment by armed groups will also be prioritised in collaboration with UNICEF, ICRC, and partners, as well as contribute to the Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism on Grave Violations Against Children. These supplementary services will be combined with system-strengthening efforts, to increase the availability and accessibility of national child protection services over time and reduce the need for supplementary services.
- 4. Strengthen child-friendly protection and solutions.** UNHCR will ensure that child protection is integrated into the planning and implementation of UNHCR-supported solutions and protection interventions. Efforts will promote child-friendly procedures and consider their best interests, centred on needs and capacities, and contribute to their safety, protection, and well-being. Furthermore, ensure that interventions and support are appropriate and accessible to all children.
- 5. Promote children’s safety and prevent harm through sectoral responses:** UNHCR will support displaced refugee children to access essential services, ensuring that these services and programs contribute to the protection of children, especially within the health, education, shelter, and food sectors. In addition, UNHCR will advocate with and provide support to national actors to effectively integrate child protection into the planning and implementation of government-led prevention and response services.
- 6. Strengthen child participation and child-friendly communication and accountability:** UNHCR will work with partners to establish processes that enable children, and families, to participate in program design and decision-making, to access information about their rights, protection, assistance, and solutions in an age-gender and diversity-sensitive manner. UNHCR will also ensure that children have access to feedback and response mechanisms and can access safe and confidential channels to report exploitation and abuse, including sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA), and receive child-friendly, survivor-centred child protection services and assistance.
- 7. Prevent trafficking in children** in collaboration with relevant GBV partners and key stakeholders by ensuring unhindered access to asylum, prevention of detention, and prosecution of survivors of trafficking, and the identification and referral of survivors of trafficking to appropriate specialized procedures and services.
- 8. Prevent and respond to the detention of refugee children,** whether for immigration purposes or when in conflict with the law, by working with hosting States to ensure that children are not detained solely based on their immigration status or that of their parents. UNHCR and partners will promote alternatives to detention and child-sensitive asylum laws and policies, by ensuring unhindered access to asylum procedures in detention and procedural safeguards such as the right to access legal counselling. Protection from refoulement and advocating for fair treatment of refugee children in conflict with the law will be pursued in line with international juvenile justice standards.

## Key Advocacy Points

1. Given the limited funding of the ongoing emergency, most partners lack the resources to support a long-term capacity-strengthening model. UNHCR requests donors to; consider developing modular and scalable funding for programs that can be adapted quickly to changing operational dynamics and needs; and address gaps in funding to increase capacity for comprehensive child protection programs. These include supporting national child protection systems, training government social workers, providing supplementary child protection services, and enhancing community-based child protection prevention and response mechanisms.
2. With the current emergency funding, UNHCR and partners are unable to effectively support long-term investments in government-led child protection systems and yet without financing sustainable child protection programs, vulnerable children and families are likely to revert to harmful coping mechanisms such as theft, child marriage, unsafe migration, exploitative or hazardous labour, gang involvement, substance abuse, and exploitative sexual interactions. These issues have cyclical, deleterious impacts on peace and conflict. Therefore, UNHCR encourages donors to fund sustainable and innovative solutions from the start particularly in Chad, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda, given the high and constant influxes of refugees. Moreover, through multi-year financing, UNHCR and partners will be able to implement interventions that strengthen child protection systems, bridging humanitarian and development peace efforts.
3. UNHCR requests donors to support partnerships with local organizations, universities, and private sector entities to provide comprehensive support, ranging from basic needs to advance-level educational and employment opportunities.
4. UNHCR requests donors to fund initiatives that promote social cohesion and integration between refugees and host communities from the outset of the emergency. This will mitigate potential tensions and boost mutual understanding and cooperation.