

Influx from Central African Republic to South Sudan

1 - 25 January 2026

5,052 
Total Arrivals

2,699 
Refugee Arrivals Registered

2,353 
Returnee Arrivals Recorded

0 
Transit/Reception Sites

11 
Refugees relocated to Makpandu
refugee camp

1 
Primary Health Care Centre



New arrivals fleeing the conflict in Bambouti, Central African Republic, waiting to be registered at the Source Yubu Payam office. © UNHCR/ Reason Moses Runyanga

Highlights

- UNHCR has noted the arrival of **5,052 individuals** (2,699 refugees and 2,353 returnees) from **Bambouti, Central African Republic (CAR)**, between **1–25 January 2026**, following election-related tensions and clashes between armed groups and government forces.
- Most arrivals entered via the Source Yubu/Ri Yubu border crossing in Tambura County, Western Equatoria State, and are currently sheltering within host communities due to the absence of transit or reception facilities at the border.
- This influx compounds a pre-existing, protracted CAR refugee situation, with nearly 2,900 CAR refugees already residing in South Sudan prior to the latest arrivals, primarily in Western Equatoria, where access to services remains limited.
- Humanitarian response capacity in Source Yubu is extremely constrained, with only one primary health care centre serving refugees, returnees and host communities, and no established WASH or shelter infrastructure, heightening public health and protection risks.
- Urgent assistance is required to stabilise conditions, relocate vulnerable refugees to Makpandu Refugee Settlement, complete emergency registration and shelter/NFI support, and assist overstretched host communities while longer-term solutions are assessed.

Situation Overview

- Since late December 2025, intensified clashes between militias and government forces in Bambouti, Central African Republic, have triggered a new influx into South Sudan, with **5,052** refugees and returnees identified and registered to date, primarily entering through the Source Yubu/Ri Yubu border area in Tambura County, Western Equatoria State.
- Given the absence of transit and reception facilities in the Source Yubu area, new arrivals are sheltering with local host communities. The nearest UNHCR-supported Makpandu Refugee Camp in Yambio, is located approximately 300 kilometres away, making immediate relocation challenging under current security and accessibility constraints.
- New arrivals report exposure to significant insecurity and violence during their flight, including widespread shelling, looting, armed robbery, and intimidation by armed groups operating along key routes in southeastern CAR. Many families were forced to divert from main routes to avoid security hotspots, resulting in prolonged journeys, heightened fear, and considerable psychological distress. Some households managed to pay for transport however, others were compelled to walk long distances, leading to physical exhaustion and increased vulnerability upon arrival.

Arrival and settlement patterns indicate that:

- This movement reflects primary displacement into South Sudan, with most refugees seeking temporary or longer-term settlement rather than onward transit and relocation.
- Host communities are absorbing arrivals with extremely limited capacity, creating urgent protection and assistance gaps. WASH and safe water infrastructure are non-existent in settlement areas, significantly increasing the risk of waterborne disease outbreaks.
- Some 700 refugees have indicated a desire to relocate to Makpandu Refugee Settlement, however, most prefer to remain near the Source Yubu/Ri Yubu border, either in anticipation of return to CAR when conditions allow or to pursue local integration. Immediate short-term community-based assistance is required in Source Yubu while longer-term solutions are identified.

Humanitarian Response and Outlook

- The humanitarian response remains severely constrained. The Commission for Refugee Affairs (CRA), UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP, World Vision and partners have conducted initial assessments; however, emergency assistance in host community locations has not yet been operationalized due to limited infrastructure and operational capacity in Source Yubu. MSF Spain and UNHCR are preparing to distribute NFIs and limited medicines in the coming days.
- UNHCR has prioritised rapid registration and profiling in coordination with partners and local authorities. As of 25 January, 2,699 refugees have been registered, and 2,353 returnees profiled. However, the delivery of emergency shelter, NFIs and other life-saving assistance is still pending.
- Critical service gaps persist, particularly in health and protection. Source Yubu has only one operational Primary Health Care Centre serving refugees, returnees and host communities. There are also heightened protection needs for separated and unaccompanied children requiring urgent child protection, family tracing, reunification and psychosocial support.
- Most refugees prefer to remain near the Source Yubu border, limiting onward movement to established sites such as Makpandu Refugee Settlement (approximately 300 km away) and necessitating immediate short-term assistance in host communities. Where relocation is pursued, additional emergency funding, coordination with UNMISS and partners is required to ensure safe passage and adequate reception.
- UNHCR's capacity to scale up the response is constrained by chronic funding shortfalls and limited partner presence, particularly in Yambio and surrounding areas. Additional donor support is urgently required to strengthen monitoring, expand emergency response capacity, support registration and protection services, and enable transportation assistance, while closely monitoring community dynamics to mitigate potential tensions.



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