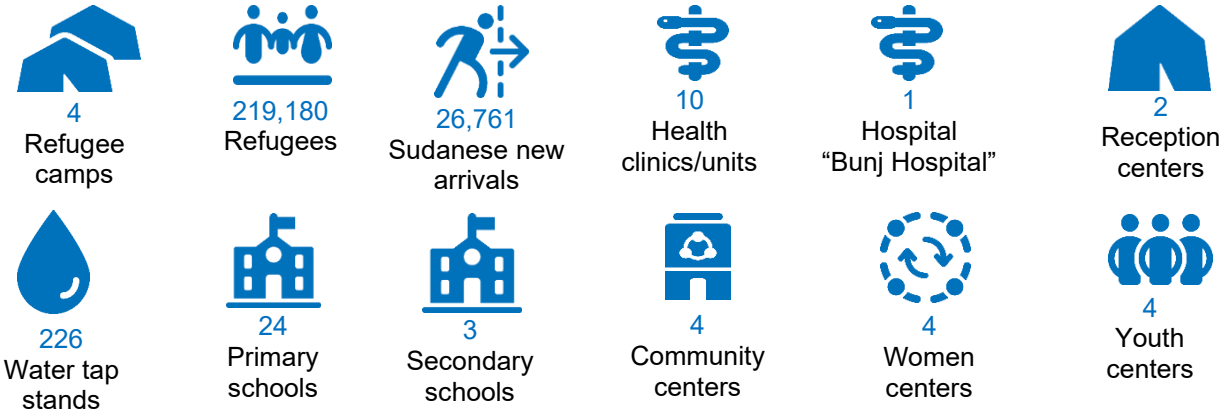
Snapshot of the sectoral response in Maban County, Upper Nile, South Sudan



Background and Population Figures

Maban County in South Sudan hosts the largest refugee population in the country. It is home to four major refugee camps, Doro, Gendrassa, Kaya and Yusuf Batil, which together shelter approximately 219,180 refugees and asylum-seekers, comprising 44,456 households, primarily from Sudan's Blue Nile and South Kordofan State. These camps were established following the outbreak of conflict between the Sudan People's Liberation Army/Movement-North (SPLA/M-N) and the Sudanese Armed Forces, particularly after South Sudan's independence in 2011. Two of these camps have been designated for the reception of new arrivals (Doro and Kaya), helping to manage the ongoing influx of displaced individuals seeking safety and support.

Since April 15, 2023, over 26,761 refugees and asylum-seekers fleeing the ongoing Sudan conflict have arrived in Maban County's camps. They receive protection and assistance from UNHCR and its partners. Key entry points into South Sudan include Renk, Al Foj, Shatta/Yabus, Khortumbak, and Guffa, with most refugees relying on personal transportation to reach the camps.

According to the local authorities, there are approximately 84,000 people living in host communities surrounding the four refugee camps in Maban, Upper Nile State.

Maban Strategy 2026-2028

The Maban Strategy (2026-2028) outlines a three-year transition to shift Maban County from humanitarian aid dependency toward a development-oriented and sustainable approach. Led by local authorities, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, and partners, the strategy envisions a peaceful, inclusive, and self-reliant community where refugees, returnees, and host populations coexist and access quality, climate-resilient services integrated into national systems.

A central objective is the gradual and voluntary transition from traditional refugee camps to integrated settlements that promote self-reliance and inclusion within national service systems. The strategy adopts a holistic, area-based approach to strengthen infrastructure, expand livelihood opportunities, enhance economic resilience, promote social cohesion, and strengthen local governance and institutional capacity.

It further emphasizes inclusive and accountable service delivery, with attention to vulnerable groups, while exploring resettlement and complementary pathways for individuals whose protection needs cannot be met locally. Overall, the strategy aims to restore dignity, build resilience, and support a sustainable and inclusive future for all communities in Maban County.

Read the new Maban Strategy for 2026–2028 here.

Local Government Support and Responsibilities

The Maban County Authority plays an active role in supporting the refugee response, contributing to stability and service continuity across the camps. The County Authority provides agricultural land for refugee cultivation, enabling households to supplement their food needs and strengthen self-reliance. It also ensures security within and around the camps, working closely with CRA, UNHCR, partners, and community structures to maintain a safe environment and facilitate smooth implementation of humanitarian activities. In addition, the County Authority regularly engages in coordination and administrative support, including resolving land use matters, participating in joint assessments, and supporting peaceful coexistence efforts between refugees and host communities.

With support from UNHCR and partners, refugee women at the Gendrassa Women's Center are baking bread using a newly installed oven and participating in skills-building activities that are creating new income-generating opportunities for them.

Sectorial Response

Protection

Lead: UNHCR | Partner: Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

- Protection services across the four Maban refugee camps in 2026 are delivered through a coordinated effort led by UNHCR and its partner, the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), using a community-based protection approach applied consistently across all sectors. Thirty outreach volunteers play a central role in identifying and referring vulnerable individuals, ensuring dissemination of information, and comprehensive support for refugees. Services include functional Protection and Legal Desks, which received 11 appeals for inclusion into targeted food assistance in January 2026, addressed protection concerns of 263 individuals including cases involving persons with specific needs, and facilitated referrals to available services. The Feedback and Response Desk received and addressed more than 14 feedback entries, and the Child Protection Desk provided child protection services to 18 children. In addition, 16 new Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases received appropriate GBV services.

- The team also oversees Resettlement processes. In August 2025, UNHCR successfully facilitated the resettlement of 41 refugees to Australia. Currently, there are 53 cases being processed for Canada, while 5 cases await final procedures for Australia. The remaining steps include medical examinations and departure arrangements. Refugee Status Determination procedures are undertaken for asylum seekers by the government with the support of UNHCR to determine their status to be considered for resettlement, among other considerations.
- In 2025, UNHCR worked with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) to deliver protection services. With the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) joining as a new protection partner in 2026, UNHCR is also directly implementing the most critical/sensitive protection interventions directly (i.e. GBV and Child Protection referrals to services, provision of emergency shelter, cash for protection, and other interventions as needed).

Community-Based Protection (CBP)

- In 2026, CBP activities are implemented directly by UNHCR with the support of community-based structures, for both refugees and host communities. These include the Camp Executive Committee with five members in each camp, two Peace Committees (one in each Payam covering the camps' geographical areas), and eight sectorial committees in each camp. In total, these structures comprise 272 members across committees such as ***Community Watch, Social Welfare, Women's Committee, Education, Youth, Resilience and Development, Diversity and Inclusion, and Health and Hygiene***. Women currently represent **40% of all committee members**, with ongoing efforts to improve balance.

Refugee-Led Organization (RLO) / Women-Led Organization (WLO)

- Refugee-Led Organizations (RLOs) play a vital role in strengthening community resilience and leadership across the camps in Maban. Currently, five RLOs are active in Maban with new projects planned to start in 2026 covering community participation, livelihoods and agriculture, education and life skills, gender-based violence, and health. Collectively, these organizations ensure refugee voices are represented, and community-driven solutions are prioritized in camp governance and development. UNHCR supports the establishment and growth of these organizations by promoting their formation, building their capacity to manage projects and providing seed funding to implement them.

Due to significant operational challenges including reduced health and food services, the closure of child-friendly spaces, and limited access to livelihood opportunities resulting from funding shortages, only essential protection services remain accessible to refugees in the camps. This situation is further compounded by limited resettlement opportunities for those refugees for whom staying in the camps is not a viable option, due to their specific needs.

Education

Lead: UNHCR | Partner: Lutheran World Federation (LWF)

- UNHCR and LWF support education across Maban's four refugee camps. Together, UNHCR and LWF operate 24 primary schools (Doro: 8, Gendrassa: 4, Kaya: 5, Yusuf Batil: 7) and 3 secondary schools, including 2 located within the camps and 1 within the host community, serving both refugee and host community learners, with UNHCR directly implementing selected education activities. LWF plans to re-open some ECD centers across the camps with funding from another donor. An assessment is ongoing to establish the total number of centers that will be supported, in close collaboration with the community.
- Current enrolment stands at 32,123 learners (15,965 females, 16,158 males), which is 54 percent of the annual target. Primary education accounts for 29,568 learners (15,078 females, 14,490

males), reaching 77 percent of the target. Secondary education enrolls 2,499 learners (864 female, 1,635 male), while accelerated learning programs (ALP/AEP) enroll 56 learners (13 percent of target).

- DAFI scholarship support for higher education remains limited. In 2025, 20 students received DAFI scholarships, including 1 student supported to study abroad, and 14 DAFI scholars graduated during the year.
- Early Childhood Development (ECD) services remain unavailable, with 37 centers across Batil, Doro, Gendrassa, and Kaya closed due to funding cuts. In 2026, implementation of ECD services will be carried out jointly by LWF and the refugee community to address critical service gaps and ensure continuity of essential support. This joint approach is intended as an interim measure, with the objectives of gradually transitioning responsibilities to the local authorities.

Sustained support is urgently needed to restore Early Childhood Development services and to expand access to secondary and tertiary education opportunities, including higher education scholarships.

Focused and determined, students in Maban take the South Sudan Certificate of Secondary Education exams. December 2025.

© UNHCR/ Philip Lukudu

Health

Lead: UNHCR | Partner: Relief International (RI)

- All ten health facilities in the 4 camps, including Bunj Hospital, have been handed over to the government-led Health Sector Transformation Project (HSTP).
- While the facilities continue to operate with government-recruited staff, the health sector faces significant challenges. These include lack of ambulances, inadequate staffing levels relative to population numbers, inability to cover night shifts, frequent stockouts of medicines

and medical supplies, delays in incentive payments, and gaps in critical services such as clinical mental health, HIV/TB, and general nutrition, as well as a referral system. Additional constraints also affect support services for the clinics, including unreliable power supply, limited security, and insufficient cleaning services.

- In 2025, UNHCR through partner Relief International addressed several critical gaps, supporting reproductive health services, referral mechanisms, clinical mental health care, HIV/TB services, and general nutrition services at Primary Health Centers (PHCCs) and Bunj Hospital. UNHCR also provided essential medicines and medical supplies.
- UNHCR supported the HSTP in Maban by providing ambulances, fuel allocation for hospital generators, essential medical equipment, repairs for 120 solar panels at Bunj Hospital, and support for community engagement and coordination efforts.
- In 2026, Relief International will provide limited but targeted support to the Maban health system, focusing on improving maternal and neonatal health outcomes, strengthening the referral system, and building the capacity of government health staff to enhance sustainable service delivery. If funding is available, UNHCR will continue to provide critical complementary support, including ambulances, fuel, essential medical equipment and supplies, and logistical support, to ensure continuity and effectiveness of health services.

Urgent support is needed to sustain the basic operational capacity of the Health Sector Transformation Project (HSTP) and enable a smooth, sustainable handover to government authorities—ensuring continuity of care and long-term impact.

UNHCR delivers over 20 metric tons of essential medicines and medical supplies to Maban County Hospital and other camp-based health facilities, helping reduce stockouts and improve patient care.

© UNHCR/ Philip Lukudu

Food Security and Nutrition

Lead: WFP | Partner: Samaritan's Purse

- In Maban's refugee camps, targeted food assistance is delivered through a mix of in-kind and cash-based transfers, depending on seasonal conditions.

- Each camp has a designated distribution site, managed either by WFP (primary site) or UNHCR (secondary site), ensuring a safe and organized environment during distributions. Food assistance follows a targeted approach prioritizing the most vulnerable, including children at risk, older persons, individuals with chronic or serious illnesses, women at risk, and persons with disabilities. This targeted approach began in September 2024 with a scale of 50 percent ration, providing 1,050 Kcal per person per day instead of the recommended 2,100 Kcal. The food basket includes cereals (mainly sorghum), yellow split lentils, vegetable oil, salt, and cash for milling.
- In 2026, the targeted food assistance approach will continue, with the transfer value determined monthly by WFP. In addition, WFP is planning to transition from in-kind assistance to fully cash-based aid in 2026 and is coordinating with UNHCR to ensure careful planning and mitigation measures are in place to reduce potential risks and operational complications, including challenges related to market capacity, inflation, and security during cash distribution.
- New arrivals: Two reception centers in Doro and Gendrassa camps host newly arrived refugees for about one week before relocation to designated plots in Kaya and Doro camps. All new arrivals receive hot meals twice a day, prepared by Relief International (RI), until they are registered by UNHCR and enrolled in the WFP monthly cash-for-food program. However, this intervention is currently at risk due to funding shortfalls.

Water Hygiene and Sanitation (WASH)

Lead: UNHCR | Partner: Relief International (RI)

- These interventions aim to meet basic needs and improve safe access to sufficient quantity and quality water, while also enhancing sanitation and hygiene practices of WASH services in institutions such as health facilities, nutrition centers, and schools.
- Water supply across the four Maban refugee camps relies on multiple systems, including hand pumps, and boreholes powered by hybrid energy systems (solar-generator systems).
- There are 226 tap stands distributed throughout communities and institutions in the four camps. However, daily water consumption per person remains below the minimum standard of 20 liters per person per day (20 l/p/d). This gap is mainly due to funding constraints to upgrade and solarize the water supply infrastructure, as well as climatic impacts causing long-term lowering of the water table, which limits water extraction. To ensure water safety, UNHCR conducts daily monitoring, including aquifer checks, chlorination, and Free Residual Chlorine (FRC) testing. Hygiene promotion activities are carried out both at water points and within communities.
- Sanitation improvements include the construction of 1,340 Household latrines across the camps by June 2025, implemented through a community-led approach with suppport from with RI, UNHCR WASH implementing partner has also constructed emergency shared family latrines and bathing shelters for newly arrived refugees. At the Doro and Gendrassa reception centers, AIRD built 6 blocks of VIP latrines to strengthen sanitation conditions.

At the Doro borehole, UNHCR WASH Focal Point repair a leaking water pipe, safeguarding access to safe water for families.

Shelter and NFIs Lead: UNHCR | Partner: Action Africa Help International (AAHI)

- Shelter interventions across the four camps focus on constructing emergency family and communal shelters for new arrivals in the camps and reception centers, along with targeted shelter rehabilitation for older refugee caseloads with identified protection vulnerabilities. Emergency shelter construction is ongoing in Doro, Gendrassa, and Kaya, while Batil is excluded due to limited space.
- Newly arriving refugees stay at reception centers in Gendrassa and Doro until shelter allocation and other relocation processes are finalized. In practice, most refugees remain longer than the initial reception period, as the duration depends on operational arrangements rather than individual protection concerns. During this time, emergency family shelters are constructed, adapted when required to persons with disabilities, and core relief items are distributed in preparation for relocation to designated shelters within the camps.
- UNHCR applies site management interventions across all camps to improve accessibility to shelters, facilities, and service areas. This includes enhanced site planning and rehabilitation of key infrastructure, such as dykes, internal roads, and drainage systems. These improvements aim to strengthen inter-camp connectivity, improve movement within residential blocks, and reduce flood-related risks. Despite floods causing major damages across South Sudan, due to the investments in dykes in 2025 the water levels did not overflow host communities and refugees, preventing additional displacement.
- Protracted refugees have independently upgraded many of their shelters, reinforcing walls and roofs with locally available materials like thatch, straw, and mud, and expanding their homes with makeshift extensions. While efforts continue to transition households from emergency shelters

toward more durable solutions, funding limitations leave significant gaps in achieving widespread improvement.

- Refugees receive Core Relief Items (CRIs) to support their initial settlement. The new arrival CRI kit includes a sleeping mat, mosquito net, blanket, bucket, jerrycan, kitchen set, soap, and a solar lamp. The sanitary kit for women and girls of reproductive age includes sanitary pads, soap, underwear, and a bucket or jerrycan.

© UNHCR/ Philip Lukudu

With support from generous donors, UNHCR has completed over 400 emergency shelters, while work continues to provide families affected by the conflict in Sudan with safer and more dignified living conditions.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management

Lead: UNHCR

- UNHCR works closely with the Commission for Refugee Affairs (CRA) and implementing partners to ensure the physical safety of refugees and asylum seekers through community-based mechanisms.
- In 2026, UNHCR assumed responsibility for Camp Management and Camp Coordination, while Camp Administration remained under the responsibility of the CRA. UNHCR works with 10 established and trained community structures, which enhance coordination of camp activities, information dissemination, community mobilization, and the protection of refugees and asylum seekers.
- Monthly camp coordination meetings are maintained across all camps, strengthening information sharing, improving responsiveness to feedback, and enhancing overall coordination among all actors involved.

Peaceful Coexistence

Lead: UNHCR

- In 2026, UNHCR will directly implement peacebuilding activities with the support of operational partners. These initiatives are led by peace committees, which play a central role in promoting peaceful coexistence between refugees and host communities. Two peace committees have been established under Jiknwata and Khor Al Amer Payams, both covering the geographical areas where the camps are located. The joint committees, composed of refugee and host community members, are guided by the Payam Administrator.
- Peace committees conduct peace tours and campaigns in camps and surrounding host areas, sharing messages on peace, social cohesion, and cooperation. These activities help communities build practical skills in conflict prevention, mediation, and peaceful resource sharing, contributing to reduced tensions and smoother access to land, services, and shared resources.

- The committees meet regularly to address disputes, including livestock theft, farm destruction, cultivation and boundary disagreements, and tree-cutting incidents. They mediate conflicts, facilitate dialogue, manage rumors, and provide early warnings on emerging tensions to prevent escalation.
- When funds are available, peace committee members receive training on peacebuilding, conflict resolution, mediation, and dialogue facilitation. Out of the 55 peace committee members, 12 members (22%) are newly elected and have never attended any peacebuilding training before. These trainings strengthen the committee's capacity to identify emerging issues, analyze root causes, and resolve conflicts in ways that support long term peaceful coexistence.

CONTACT

Head of Sub-Office, Silva Alkebeh
alkebeh@unhcr.org

Scan me and get to Maban´s Operational Data Portal: https://data.unhcr.org/en/working-group/491?sv=0&geo=259