

Regional Overview - Internally Displaced Persons

January-March 2023



"Now that we have peace here, I'm happy to return home", said Helen, a mother of two who is among some 2,500 IDPs who returned home in northwestern Tigray, after 2 years of displacement in Abi Adi. © UNHCR/Ethiopia

OVERVIEW

The East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes (EHAGL) region is host to a significant number of internally displaced persons (IDPs). As of 31 March 2023, there were approximately 11.71 million IDPs in the region – mainly in Burundi, Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan. The drivers of displacement are complex, including conflict, persecution as well as climatic and natural disaster factors, often in situations where one factor compounds the others.

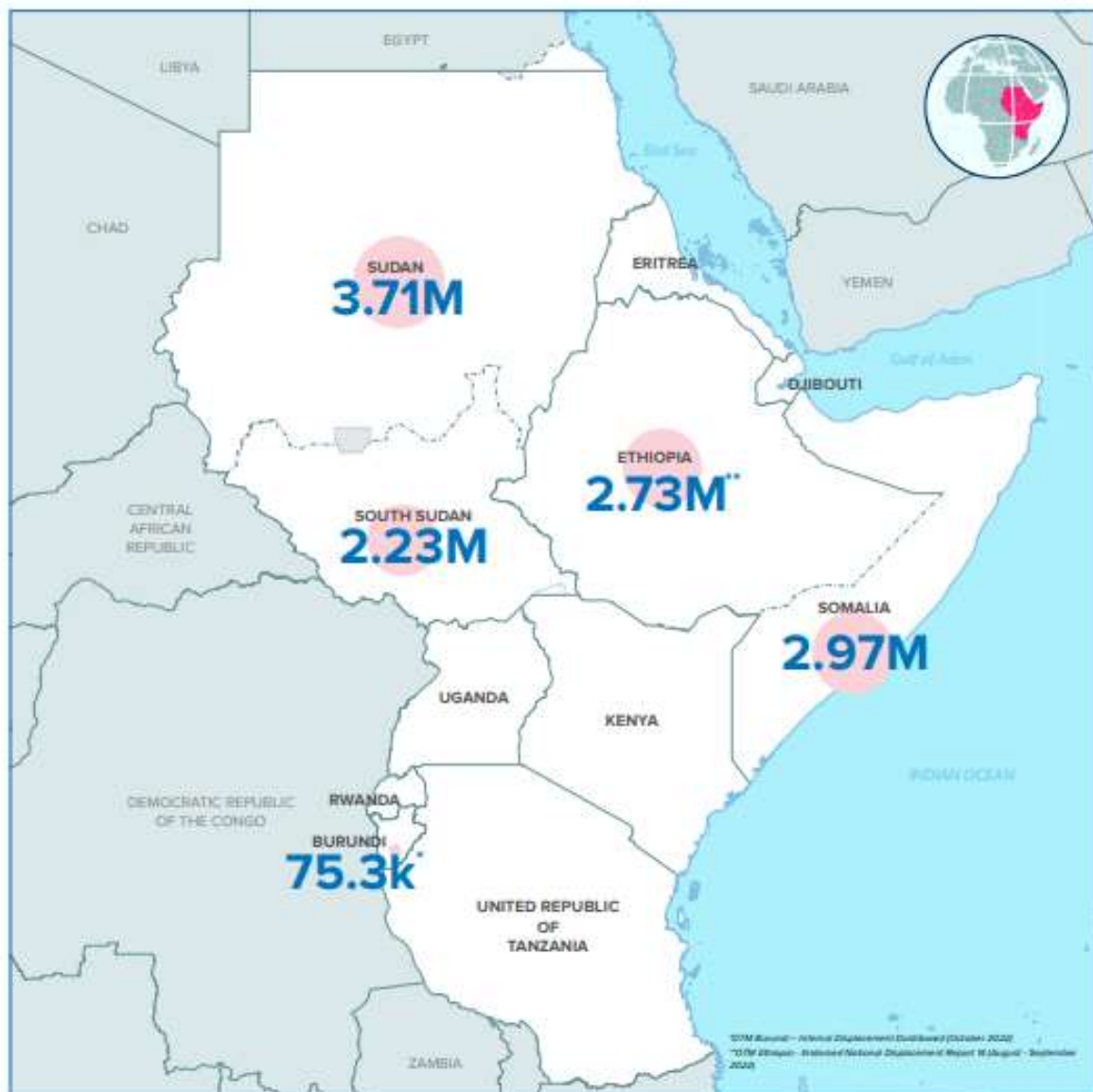
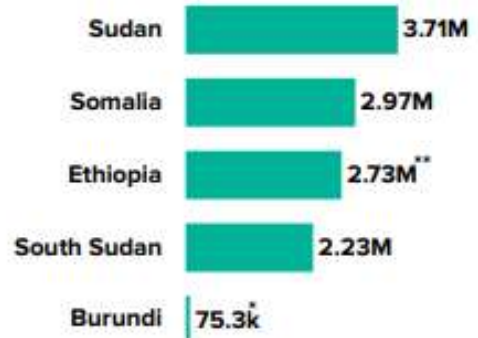
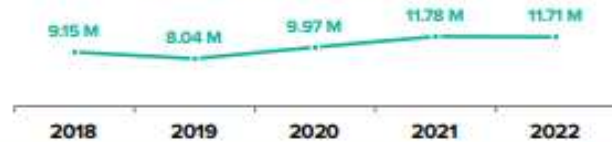
Considering that a significant proportion of displacements in the region stem from conflicts, and many conflicts remain active in a very fluid context, the protection focus is mainly on life-saving activities through protection monitoring and ensuring the provision of shelters and core relief items (CRIs). At the same time, there is a strong focus in the region on the pursuit of durable solutions. Despite numerous returns in the region, most are not facilitated and therefore difficult to quantify. The number of those displaced remains high. While each country in the region has different contextual factors around durable solutions, a more coordinated approach is being taken by UNHCR together with other actors – including development actors and donors – to promote and realise durable solutions initiatives in the region.

Ethiopia, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan are priority countries for the Secretary-General's [Special Adviser on Solutions to Internal Displacement](#). In these countries, UNHCR has worked with UN teams on implementing the [Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#), where durable solutions and data are the main priorities. UNHCR leads clusters on Protection, Camp Coordination and Camp Management, and Shelter/ Non-Food Items, and helped address internal displacement through community-based protection responses. However, limited funding hampered these efforts.

11.71M

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDPs)

Annual Trend of displacement | IDPs



The numbers presented above and the distribution map for the map are indicative of approximate displacement by the administrative boundaries. The population density by Region of Sudan and the Region of East Sudan are based on the 2011 census data for Sudan.

The numbers above should be considered provisional and subject to change. Refugee registrations are UNHCR monthly statistical reports as of 31 March 2023 or most available. IDP Statistics (2016, 2018-2022). Government reports.

**10M Burundi – Internal Displacement Data (Burundi) (October 2022)

**10M Ethiopia – Statistical National Displacement Report (Ethiopia) – September 2022

COUNTRY UPDATES

BURUNDI

As of 31 March 2023, the IDP population in Burundi was estimated at 75,300 persons across all provinces, according to the last IOM DTM publication of November 2022. The majority of the displacements (66,805) were due to climate related incidents (violent winds, torrential rains and flooding).

UNHCR response

UNHCR handed over shelters constructed for 106 IDP (85) and host community (21) households in Rumonge commune. The ceremony was presided by a representative of the Ministry of Social Affairs and attended by the UN Women Country Representative delegated to represent the UN Resident Coordinator. In addition, multifunctional solar lamps were provided to these households. Through these portable lamps, the exposure of those households to protection risks, including Gender Based Violence (GBV), will be reduced. Moreover, these lamps allow for the charging of electronic devices such as phones, which will improve those households' connectivity and access to information.

ETHIOPIA

In Ethiopia, conflict, inter-communal violence, natural disasters and other impacts of climate change continue to drive people into displacement. Some have lived in displacement for several years, while others have fled their homes more recently.

As of 31 March, it was estimated that 2.73 million people were internally displaced across the country¹. Most of the internal displacement is due to localized conflicts, including inter-communal violence, instrumentalized and tied to the Northern crisis, notably in Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia and Somali regions. However, several regions have also seen climate-related shocks and ensuing natural disaster-related displacements, such as drought and flooding. This is prevalent for example in Afar, Gambella, Oromia, Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's Region (SNNPR) and Somali regions.

Following the signing of a cessation of hostilities agreement in November 2022 between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigray People's Liberation Front, the overall situation in Northern Ethiopia continued to improve in the first quarter of 2023. The delivery of humanitarian services as well as access to cash, fuel and communication services resumed, and some internally displaced persons in Tigray and neighbouring Afar and Amhara have been returning to their homes. However, conflict in the Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia and Somali regions of Ethiopia is continuing in 2023, and the Oromia region is seeing increased levels of internal displacement due to intercommunal violence.

Generally, in the North, the situation on the ground has greatly improved with access to some basic services readily available including banking, communication, electricity, and fuel. Access to health, water, nutrition, and education services are slowly but steadily improving. Still, the situation in some areas like in western Tigray remains dire, due to limited access for humanitarian partners as well as for the newly established local administration.

UNHCR response

Ethiopia Protection Monitoring and Solutions Tool (PMS)

UNHCR has been working to set up a protection monitoring system to deliver quality analysis to inform the humanitarian response. Pilot roll outs were conducted in five regions (Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia, SNNP and Tigray) and 9 protection monitoring reports were published throughout 2022, based on the harmonized Ethiopia Protection Monitoring Tool (E-PMT). The initial feedback has been promising, and the reports and analysis produced so far have provided inputs for informing the broader response as well as advocacy.

¹ DTM Ethiopia – Endorsed National Displacement Report 14 (August-September 2022). Due to operational constraints, IDP figures for the Tigray region are not included. In addition, limited access in parts of the Afar and Benishangul Gumuz regions affected information collection there.

A stocktaking exercise to finetune, adjust and contextualize the tool for a country wide roll-out, was organized in December 2022, to finalize the tool following the consultations and set a way forward for 2023.

The establishment of a protection monitoring system helped to deliver quality analysis to inform the wider humanitarian response and development interventions.

The revised Ethiopia Protection Monitoring, and Solutions (PMS) encompasses four different tools namely the Key Informant Questionnaire, Focus Group Discussion, Mapping of Facilities and Direct Observation Checklist. Three woredas in the North-eastern Zone of Tigray were selected for the pilot roll out of the new PMS tools due to their high population of IDP returnees. The first PMS report was published in February 2023 with the aim to assess the durability of the returns, social cohesion amongst communities and Housing, Land and Property (HLP) issues. Currently, the PMS is conducted in different areas and the package is being translated into five major languages of the country, for a country wide roll-out throughout 2023.

The Kampala Convention Domestication Process

UNHCR in Ethiopia was part of a technical committee under the Inter-Ministerial Taskforce (IMTF) and provided technical and financial support, including support for drafting an IDP Proclamation which took place from 10-15 October 2022 with the Government and all relevant stakeholders. In December 2022, the Ministry of Peace, in coordination with the Refugee and Returnee Service (RRS), organized a 5-day consultation with the aim of discussing comments provided from all stakeholders and provide further remarks on the first draft IDP Proclamation. In addition, the team drafted a National IDP Handbook which is intended to provide operational guidance and tools to support the effective protection and assistance of IDPs in Ethiopia. The purpose of the handbook is to ensure that all actors involved in IDP protection are familiar with the core concepts, principles, and international, regional, and national legal standards that form the framework for protection work and assist actors in IDPs protection in operationalizing these in carrying out their protection responsibilities. UNHCR was part of a 5-day technical meeting (18-23 March 2023) to further review the draft IDP Proclamation.

Northern Ethiopia Response

UNHCR continues its efforts to expand access to much needed assistance to the IDPs in the northern regions and facilitates voluntary returns when the situation allows it. In 2023, UNHCR has continued to provide protection counselling, reaching over 20,000 households of 100,000 IDPs willing to return to their places of origin. Moreover, UNHCR resumed facilitation of voluntary returns on 28 March, for the first time after the peace agreement.

IDPs had access to protection and solutions services, including through protection desks, and received CRIs and emergency shelter support. In Tigray, UNHCR and its partners worked with the government and other organizations to help IDPs in the Western Tigray Zone obtain identification cards. This has allowed for them seek assistance more easily, feel safer and to move freely.

UNHCR trained local authorities and IDP leaders in a Durable Solutions Working Group on the significance of the protection component of durable solutions, as well as return counselling and processes. Similarly, in Amhara region, under the coordination of UNHCR and IOM, the Durable Solutions Working Group has been activated, and UNHCR is currently aiding more than 40,000 IDPs in collective sites in Debre Birhan, South Wollo, and North Wollo. Shelter is a major issue in Debre Birhan, and UNHCR is coordinating the development of a newly allocated site for the relocation of IDPs.

SOMALIA

Internal displacement in Somalia is characterized by complex and often interlinked conflict and climatic drivers. As of 31 March 2023, Somalia had about 3 million IDPs. According to the [UNHCR-led Protection and Return Monitoring Network \(PRMN\)](#), some 830,000 displacements were reported in Somalia between 1 January-31 March 2023, primarily associated with conflict/insecurity (52%), drought (31%), and flooding (16%). Since the start of the year, an estimated 148,000 persons have been internally displaced in Galgaduud region following clashes between government forces and Non-State Armed Groups (NSAGs), and estimated 190,000 persons have been internally displaced from Sool region following armed conflict

centred in Laas Caanood district. While drought continues to affect the whole country, Bay region continues to receive the highest number of drought-displaced persons, while Gedo region has experienced the highest number of persons displaced by floods.

The recent drought has [surpassed the 2010–2011 and 2016–2017 droughts](#) in duration, severity, and impact, exacerbating growing humanitarian needs. The combined impact of the drought, widespread insecurity, and increasing economic pressures have been driving the country to the brink of catastrophe. Not only are there more people in need, but the severity of those needs is much more pronounced. In

2023, an estimated 8.25 million people, nearly half of Somalia's population, will need immediate lifesaving humanitarian and protection assistance. At the same time, immediate responses to save lives and avert famine must be accompanied by investments in long-term solutions and climate adaptation to ensure those affected can adapt and thrive in the future.

Within the framework of the [Secretary-General's Action Agenda on Internal Displacement](#), and with the active support of the Resident Coordinator's Office (RCO), the Special Advisor to the UN Secretary-General on Solutions to Internal Displacement undertook a support mission to Somalia 12 – 15 February 2023. The visit was aimed at advancing ongoing efforts to provide a structured approach to resolving displacement and included meetings with key members of Federal and State-level Government including the Prime Minister, UN Mission and Agencies, local and international NGOs, donors and discussions with IDPs themselves during a field mission to Baidoa, South-West State.

In the 15 February Core Group discussion chaired by ASG Piper, a key next step is to support resource mobilization efforts for flexible solutions funding to be made available to the UN Country Team under RCO leadership, which will be channeled through the Somalia Joint Fund via a combination of UN agencies, with the possibility of being allocated on a rolling annual workplan basis to allow for repurposing of these funds as needs arise. To initiate this process, a Somalia National Level Steering Group (on Solutions to Internal Displacement) has been activated and formalized as outlined in the Action Agenda. This Steering Group comprises a UN inter-agency Group at technical Level including DCO/RCO, IOM, OCHA, UNDP,

UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Habitat, and the World Bank (observer) in Somalia. The first meeting of the Steering Group meeting took place in early March.

UNHCR response

In Beletweyne, UNHCR, in collaboration with the World Food Programme (WFP), started a pilot project of the biometric enrolment of IDPs using proGres v4 and Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS). The goal of the exercise is to improve accountability by better collecting and managing IDP data, while also ensuring that humanitarian assistance is prioritized to reach the most vulnerable people in need, reduce duplication of assistance, and capture IDPs with specific needs, such as female-headed households, unaccompanied and separated children, and people with disabilities. While the pilot's target population is 2,500 households, UNHCR plans to expand the exercise to include additional IDPs in areas such as Baidoa and Banadir. In preparation for the exercise, UNHCR had trained 20 enumerators and procured the necessary laptops and equipment.

In Kismayo, UNHCR through its partner completed the construction of the planned 88 permanent shelters and latrines at the Luglow durable solutions site with support from UNHCR's internal IDP Boost Funds. Due to the war in Ukraine and other global drivers, the high inflation rate directly impacted the project reducing the targeted number of shelters from 100 to 88 as the unit cost of the shelter increased from USD\$ 3,000 to USD\$ 3,400. The site will be used to locally integrate IDP families in protracted displacement situations to find durable solutions for them. UNHCR is working with the authorities to finalize the list of IDPs who will move into the completed shelters and complete the handover process. This is the first phase of developing the Luglow durable solutions site and the next phases of the project will apply owner-driven approaches to the shelter construction.



Shelters constructed by UNHCR at the Luglow durable solutions site in Kismayo district, Jubaland. © UNHCR/Somalia

SOUTH SUDAN

As of 31 March 2023, there were over 2.23 million IDPs in South Sudan dispersed around the country, displaced by both conflict and climate related displacement. Between January and March 2023 around 150,000 individuals were forcibly displaced in South Sudan by conflict and intercommunal violence. The arrival of the dry season in South Sudan (December-May) has escalated forced displacement in the country owing predominantly to an increase in the mobility of actors engaged in various conflicts around the country as well as cattle grazing and raiding. This is distinct from the displacement during wet season, which predominantly relates to flooding.

Despite the volatile humanitarian situation in South Sudan, in the year 2022 a total of 151,256 refugee returns were recorded of former South Sudanese refugees from neighbouring countries spontaneously returning home. Over 636,000 refugee returnees have been reported since the signing of the revitalized peace agreement in October 2018 to date. UNHCR is increasingly working with area based approaches to solutions for IDPs and refugee returnees through the Pockets of Hope initiative.

UNHCR response

Emergency response

In September 2022, UNHCR declared an internal Level 1 Emergency in South Sudan due to the combined impact on the civilian population of the Tonga conflict and the unabated flooding. This enabled UNHCR to quickly inject additional emergency resources for the needs of the growing number of displaced and other affected communities, in Upper Nile, Unity and northern parts of Jonglei, and to proactively prepare for further response measures.

As a part of the Level 1 Emergency response (September 2022 -March 2023) the UNHCR Field Offices in Bor, Malakal and Bentiu responded to the situation in the Northern areas of South Sudan through the rapid deployment of emergency response staff to support the responding offices and allowed for the procurement of CRIs and boats to facilitate river access to flooded areas.

Consultations with IDPs, Refugees and Returnees on Constitution making and Election processes

In March 2023, UNHCR, UNMISS, UNDP and UN Women in collaboration with the South Sudan Relief and Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) conducted consultation workshops with IDPs and returnees in Bor, Bentiu and Malakal on the constitution making and election processes. The consultations are planned to be conducted in 9 locations across South Sudan (Yambio, Yei, Torit, Magwi, Wau, Malakal, Bor, Bentiu,

Juba) and in four neighbouring Countries hosting South Sudanese Refugees (Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan). The consultations workshops were attended by over 300 IDPs and Returnees. Topics covered during the sessions were on the outline of the Revitalized Peace Agreement and the Roadmap, outline of the Constitution Making Process, updates on the Election Process and gender considerations in the constitution making and election processes. Group discussions were held with the participants on gender considerations, role of displaced persons in constitution making and election processes and their priority areas and concerns regarding both processes. Communiqués were drafted after every workshop in each location on the resolutions made by the participants, which will be shared with key stakeholders for advocacy in a review workshop later in the year.

Digital inclusion project

On 20 February 2023, UNHCR launched the Digital Inclusion project in Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre. The project is funded by UNHCR HQ Innovation Service and is designed to facilitate access to digital connectivity for refugees, IDPs and host community. The project seeks to build their digital capacity and facilitate safe digital access through addressing real and perceived digital risks to enable safe, inclusive and responsible engagement online. The project will consider specific risks and barriers faced by different refugees and IDPs groups based on age, gender and specific vulnerabilities. The project targets 180 IDPs and refugees living in Juba as well as the host community. The one-year project is expected to run from February to December 2023. In March, a project monitoring visit was conducted to the training site and the feedback received from instructors and observations from the team revealed good and consistent attendance of classes by the beneficiaries.

Pockets of Hope and Returnees in Western Bahr El Gazal

Raja County in Western Bahr El Gazal State has recorded an increased trend in refugee and IDP return during the first quarter of 2023, with over 1,400 individuals voluntarily returning during 2023. This brings the total number of returnees to Raja County between 2018 to 2023 to 33,940 individuals. To support these returnees, UNHCR has a range of activities under the Pockets of Hope initiative, an area-based collaboration between returning IDPs and refugees, return communities, government, and partners to ensure access to basic services, create sustainable livelihood opportunities, and promote economic self-reliance in areas of return, including in Raja.

Assessing Security and IDP Spontaneous Returns Western Equatoria

The intercommunal conflict between June 2021 and June 2022 led to the displacement of over 60-70,000 individuals in Tambura County of Western Equatoria State. However, the security situation in Tambura County has improved greatly and UNHCR and partners noted that in early 2023, IDPs are returning in large numbers, leaving the collective sites and returning to their areas of origin. UNHCR has been assessing the security situation and conducting focus groups discussions and key informant interviews in the areas of return to review support, and facilitated return to enable the most vulnerable who voluntarily wish to return, to do so in safety and in dignity (e.g. those without the capacity to do so on their own). During the first quarter, UNHCR was able to support the most vulnerable of the IDP returnees, as well as those remaining in the collective sites, with targeted protection services and material assistance, including CRI and Shelter, reaching over 15,000 individuals.

SUDAN

As of 31 March, there were over 3.7 million IDPs in Sudan – mainly in the five Darfur states as well as South Kordofan, White Nile and Blue Nile states. They are spread across the country in settlements and camp like situations and in urban areas. IDPs in Sudan are mainly displaced due to the long standing conflict in Darfur since 2004. In addition, seasonal floods also cause mass displacements in the country every year.

In January 2023, UNHCR in Sudan conducted a deep dive with UNHCR's Principal IDP Advisor with the participation of the Regional Bureau and various Headquarters divisions. The operations subsequently followed up on several of the recommendations coming out of this deep dive, including in relation to its engagement strategy, the operational footprint, coordination commitment, and the visibility of the IDP engagement in Sudan, building on many good practices and achievements of the response in 2022.

Building on the deep dive and ensuing steps taken, UNHCR Sudan convened a two-day event on IDP engagement, bringing together all offices involved in the IDP response in Sudan (Darfurs, Kordofans and the Blue Nile Situational response involving the offices in Damazine and Kosti) and relevant units at the Representation Office in Khartoum, as well as donors and other humanitarian responders for a part of the event. This has allowed the operation to refine its Multi-Year Strategy for the IDP response, discuss a few of the operation's more challenging issues, review and clarify the operational footprint and affirm its coordination commitments, notably also considering the need to optimize the capacities and resources. In addition, a multi-functional team for the IDP response was created at the Representation Office for a more concerted institutionalized focus on the IDP engagement.

UNHCR response

In Sudan, UNHCR is leading the Protection and Shelter/NFI clusters, and working in coordination with partners in protection monitoring (including remote protection monitoring), responding to individual protection needs through protection desks, distribution of NFIs, cash for shelter, psychosocial support, legal assistance and information counseling.

Blue Nile Situation Response: Blue Nile, Sennar, White Nile states

UNHCR, through its offices in Damazine and Kosti, has started to build on the foundations set for the IDP response during the 2022 emergency triggered by the conflict that erupted in Blue Nile state in July 2022. UNHCR, one of the few multi-state responders, was one of the first to respond to the new displacement, and due to its presence, networks and relationship with authorities was well positioned as a leader in the response. In White Nile, due to the contestation of the data of new arrivals, including following their relocation to Khor Ajwal IDP site, UNHCR started an IDP enrollment exercise to confirm the number of households and individuals, as well as the PSN among them. The data from this exercise, completed in early March 2023, was leveraged both to inform UNHCR's own response moving forward, but also for coordination purposes to leverage other responders to contribute to this under-served displacement situation.

The conflict in Blue Nile remains unresolved, with increasingly stark inter-ethnic divisions between communities and a deep trust deficit. UNHCR in Damazine is identifying opportunities to build on the community support project mechanism successfully commenced last year, to gradually bring the communities together, re-build trust and peace through conflict-sensitive community-based engagements.

Revitalization of the Protection Sector & Process for HCT Protection Strategy

The foundations for the running of the Protection Sector were put in place in the first quarter of 2023, including basic governance documents, restoration of links between the protection coordination at capital and sub-national levels, stronger cohesion within the sector across the areas of responsibility, inclusion of Housing, Land and Property (HLP) rights as a core area of the sector, the constitution of the Strategic Advisory Group, and the revitalization of the sector's membership. Through a consultative process, the Sector determined the priorities for 2023 within the Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) and the Sector's multi-year strategy for a clearer focus on deliverables.

The Protection Sector also took the lead, following the conclusion of the Peer-to Peer (P2P) assessment mission in February 2023, to revitalize the process for a new Humanitarian Country Team (HCT) Protection Strategy. Following a stakeholder workshop held in Khartoum on 2 March 2023, the Sector prepared an options paper with 6 priorities to inform an HCT discussion and decision. This step aims at enabling a stronger engagement of the HCT itself in the process of developing this strategy.



Members of the Women's Protection Network in the women's centre in Abu Shouk camp for internally displaced people in North Darfur, Sudan.
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