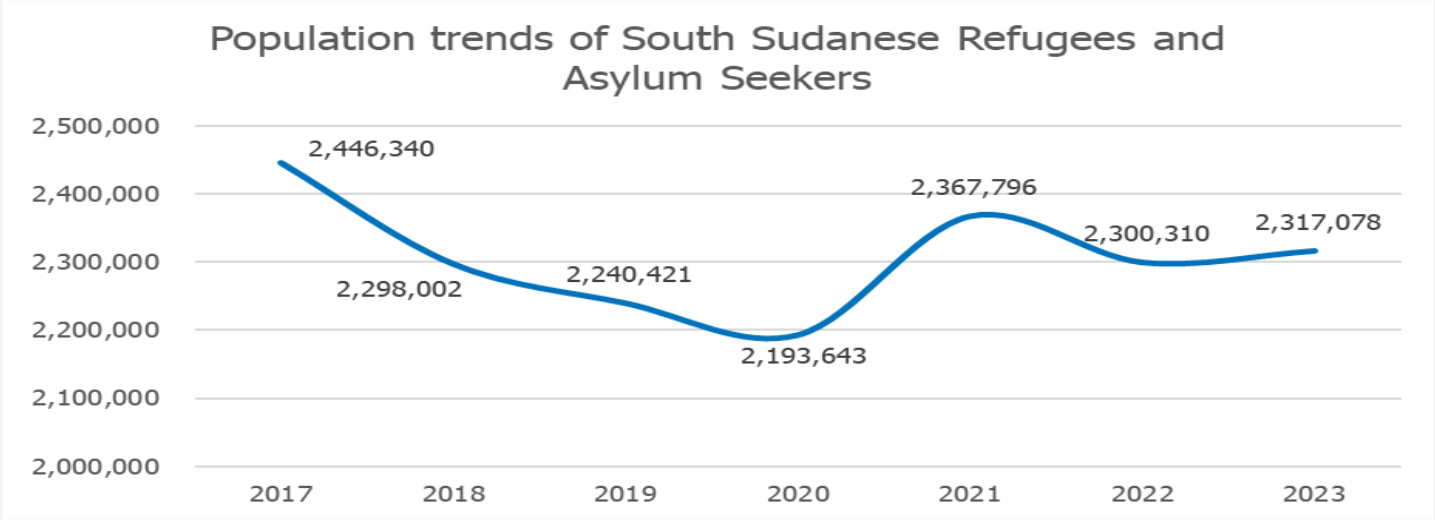
SOUTH SUDAN
Regional Refugee Response Plan
2023 Year-End Report

30 year-old mother of three, Limiya David and her daughter share funny stories as they sit down to prepare fresh vegetables for dinner at their home in Doro Refugee camp, South Sudan. © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno

POPULATION TRENDS

By the end of 2023, South Sudan's displacement crisis was one of Africa's most significant humanitarian situations, with at least 2,278,420 refugees scattered across the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda. Additionally, another 2.2 million individuals were internally displaced within South Sudan. Mass displacement of South Sudanese goes back more than five years with the protracted displacement caused by the humanitarian situation in South Sudan, characterized by generalized violence, insecurity, and inter-communal violence, in addition to adverse weather conditions, in particular flooding, plus the weak infrastructure and lack of access to livelihood opportunities, education and healthcare for the majority of the population.



Source: Global Trends 2023 / unhcr.org/global-trends

The Regional Refugee Response Plan (RRP) of 2023 covered the five main hosting countries. Uganda hosted the largest number of South Sudanese refugees, accounting for 41 per cent of the region's South Sudanese refugee population, approximately 915,000 individuals. Sudan hosted 30 per cent of the refugees, some 706,720 persons; Ethiopia hosted 18.5 per cent of the refugees, some 424,550 persons; Kenya hosted 8 per cent of the refugees, approximately 173,350 individuals; and the DRC with 2.5 per cent of the refugees, some 58,800 persons.

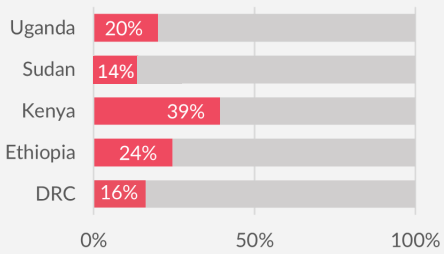
USD 279 M

FUNDING REPORTED

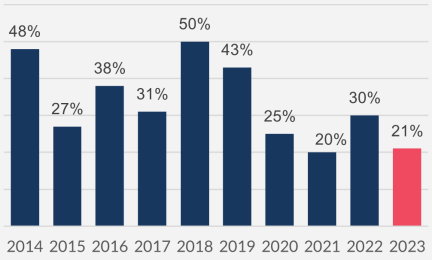
USD 1.33 B

FUNDING REQUESTED IN 2023

2023 funding level reported by response country



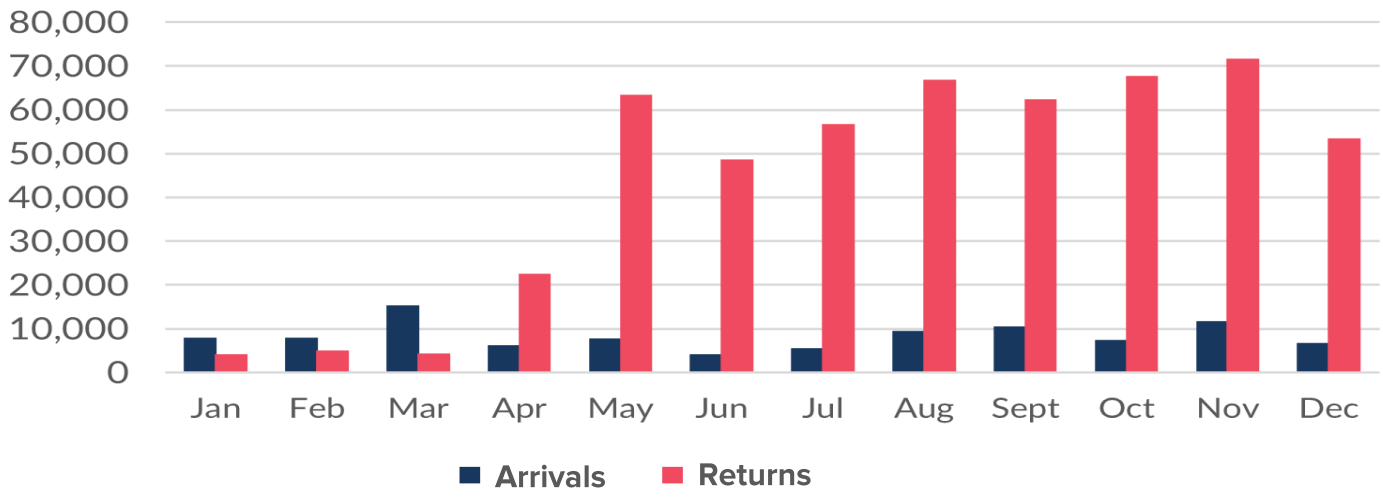
Annual reported funding



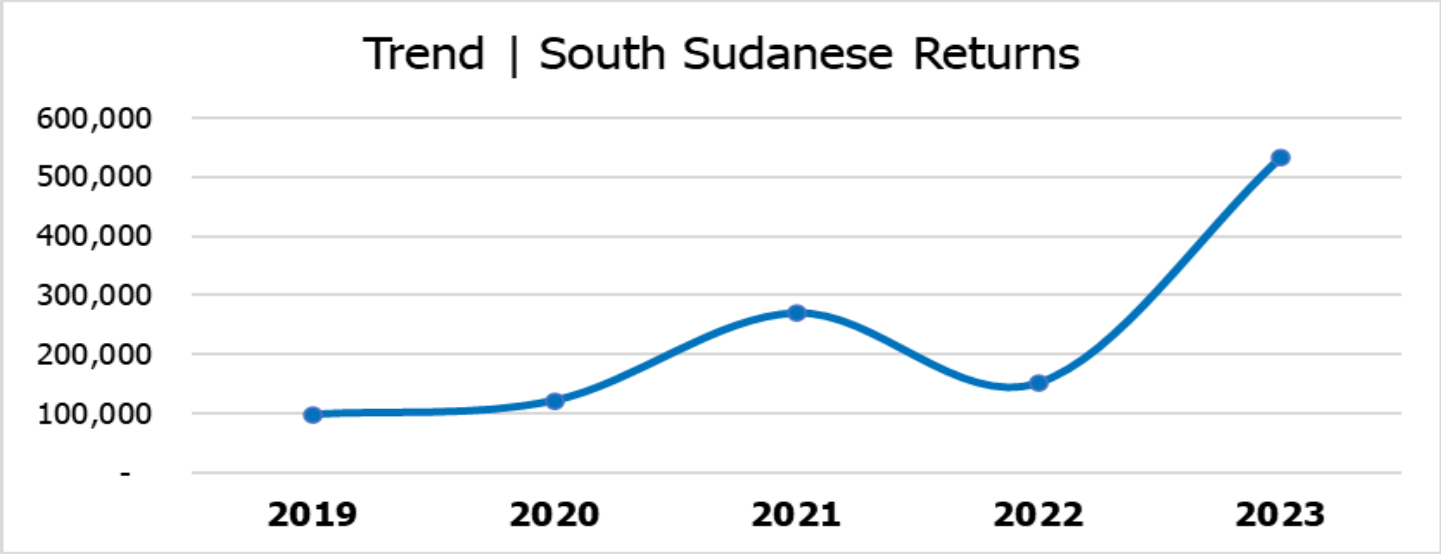
Arrivals and Returns of South Sudanese refugees

The majority of the South Sudanese refugees have been in asylum for over a decade. The displacement trends in the past five years indicated a dip in South Sudanese refugee arrivals in the region in 2020, followed by a sharp increase in 2021. In 2023, the rate of returns outpaced the rate of arrivals particularly between May and December. In Ethiopia, in September 2023, the Gambella region received a new influx of South Sudanese refugees due to violence in Pochalla County in South Sudan and as of 31 December 2023, 7,049 households had been registered as asylum-seekers by the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) pending a decision on prima-facie recognition. Based on a head-count exercise by the Refugee Central Committee, a refugee leadership structure, there were an additional 19,000 unregistered individuals in the Gambella camps who came from South Sudan before the Pochalla incident. In Kenya, the number of South Sudanese arrivals to Kakuma and Kalobeyei steadily increased since 2021, with 9,047 new arrivals in 2021, 13,279 new arrivals in 2022, and 17,906 new arrivals in 2023. There were also 5,659 new births within the camp population. In Uganda, in 2023, there were 99,052 new arrivals, 24,629 from South Sudan. In Sudan, while refugees fled from Khartoum and some returned to South Sudan, many fled towards the White Nile camps in Sudan, and even those who were not previously registered as refugees sort to be registered. In 2023 alone, an estimated 145,200 South Sudanese refugees arrived in the White Nile camps. 70 per cent of South Sudanese refugees in Sudan are hosted in the camps in White Nile.

2023 Monthly Arrivals and Returns of South Sudanese refugees



Over the last five years, the slight decline in South Sudanese refugee numbers has been mainly due to returns to South Sudan from neighbouring countries. Between 2019 and 2023, a total of 1,174,137 South Sudanese returned home. The first four years had a low pace of returns, which surged in 2023 due to the outbreak of the crisis in Sudan, with 527,206 returnees recorded. A large proportion of returns were premature and hasty, motivated by the instability in Sudan with many of them losing their possessions during the war. They arrived home to be confronted by the dire humanitarian and development challenges in South Sudan, further complicated by insecurity and climate shocks such as floods.



Source: Global Trends 2023 / unhcr.org/global-trends

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC): In the DRC, South Sudanese citizens seeking asylum have had unrestricted access to the territory and asylum procedures according to Congolese legislation. The DRC hosted 53,487 South Sudanese refugees concentrated in conflict-affected regions of Ituri and Haut-Uele. The government's "*State of Siege*" imposed in 2021 continued in 2023 with militarized administration. There were concerns about human rights abuses, including restriction of movement and the prevailing sense of insecurity. The absence of humanitarian partners in these zones and underfunding remain critical issues affecting the capacity to provide adequate multi-sectoral assistance to the refugee population. The limited funding limited the prospects of a comprehensive approach to meeting the complex needs of protracted displacement despite the comparatively small refugee population. While the refugees practiced agriculture, they continued to rely heavily on support from RRP partners to access healthcare, education, clean water, sanitation, shelter, and food, with limited opportunities for livelihood and resilience.

Ethiopia: The South Sudanese refugees were the largest refugee population in Ethiopia accounting for 44 per cent of the refugees as of 31 December 2023. Over 92 per cent of them were hosted in seven camps and one settlement in the Gambella region, while 6.5 per cent were hosted in three camps in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, and the remaining located in Kangaten refugee settlement located in the South Omo zone (South Ethiopia region) and Addis Ababa. The Government of Ethiopia maintained an open-door policy and continued to welcome individuals in need of international protection. The unstable security situation in both Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz resulted in movement restrictions which affected the delivery of humanitarian assistance to several sites where refugees were hosted. It also reduced employment opportunities and production capacity for the refugees and the host community. Between October and November 2023, flooding and mudslides from heavy rainfall and river overflows affected thousands of people in the Gambella region. In addition, from June to September 2023, Ethiopia was affected by a country-wide pause of food assistance announced by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Food Programme (WFP), which significantly affected refugees. Most South Sudanese refugees remained dependent on humanitarian assistance, with limited opportunities to gain employment and self-reliance in the camps.

Kenya: Kakuma refugee camp in Turkana West sub-County of Turkana County was established in 1992 and with the growing population and the protracted displacement, the camp developed to include Kalobeyei Settlement. As of 31 December 2023, the camp and the settlement hosted 274,816 multinational and multilingual individuals. 59 per cent of the refugee camp population are South Sudanese refugees. The refugee response to the South Sudanese refugees was based on the vision set out in the Kalobeyei Integrated Socio-Economic Development Plan (KISEDP II) led by the Turkana County Government, which is a 15-year plan that aims to bridge the gap between humanitarian

assistance and development. This was consistent with the government's Shirika Plan, which aimed to promote socio-economic inclusion of refugees in Kenya. In March 2023, Kakuma was conferred municipality status, which was expected to boost transformative change, attract investors and create employment opportunities, thus facilitating economic inclusion and self-reliance, including expanding access to financial institutions, microfinance and inclusion in national and country development plans in line with the Kenya Refugees Act, 2021 and the pledges that the Government of Kenya made during the Global Refugee Forum.

Sudan: Since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in April 2023, the situation for South Sudanese refugees in the country dramatically deteriorated, with many opting to return to South Sudan and others fleeing from Khartoum to live in the refugee camps in White Nile. With limited funding, the camps in White Nile were already struggling with shortages of food, healthcare, and protection and then had to absorb an influx. Humanitarian agencies were stretched thin, trying to respond to the escalating needs amidst the conflict. The security situation caused restricted movement and limited partners working in the refugee camps in White Nile. The conflict heightened protection risks, with increased criminal activities, such as theft, assault, and kidnapping affecting refugees. Women and children also reported incidents of sexual violence, exploitation, child recruitment by armed groups, and family separation. Movement restrictions, curfews, checkpoints, and roadblocks limited mobility, complicating service delivery and the transportation of essential supplies. The conflict also disrupted livelihoods, increased dependency on aid, and led to economic instability for refugees and their host communities.

Uganda: Since 2015, the Government of Uganda granted prima-facie refugee status to South Sudanese asylum-seekers. The Uganda Refugee Act (2006) and Refugee Regulations (2010) allow refugees freedom of movement, the right to work, own a business, and access to national primary and secondary education, health care and other basic social services. Approximately 96 per cent of the refugee population require supported access to life-saving protection, assistance, and essential social services. However, the refugee response in 2023 was underfunded. The country also experienced climate disasters with increased temperatures, erratic rainfalls, droughts, floods, and landslides. In September 2023, floods devastated the central market area and displaced 5,000 people in Nyumanzi Refugee Settlement in Adjumani District. Climate disasters were a significant risk to Uganda's agricultural economy which is employed 68 percent of the working population.

In December 2023, the Government of Uganda co-convened the second Global Refugee Forum (GRF) and it took stock of achievements in the refugee response, enabled the exchange of ideas between governments across the sub-region and a reflection on the development of pledges and contributions towards the refugee response. In Uganda, the preparation for the GRF, led by the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Secretariat, centred around five priority areas; transitional management and pathways to sustainable responsibility sharing, acting against climate change, environment, and energy, increasing resilience and self-reliance, localizing the refugee response by strengthening the role of national and local responders and building lasting achievable and impactful solutions for refugees which culminated into the key government pledges. The 2023 GRF pledges formed the key policy and strategic priorities for the Government of Uganda and its partners in delivering protection and solutions for refugees.

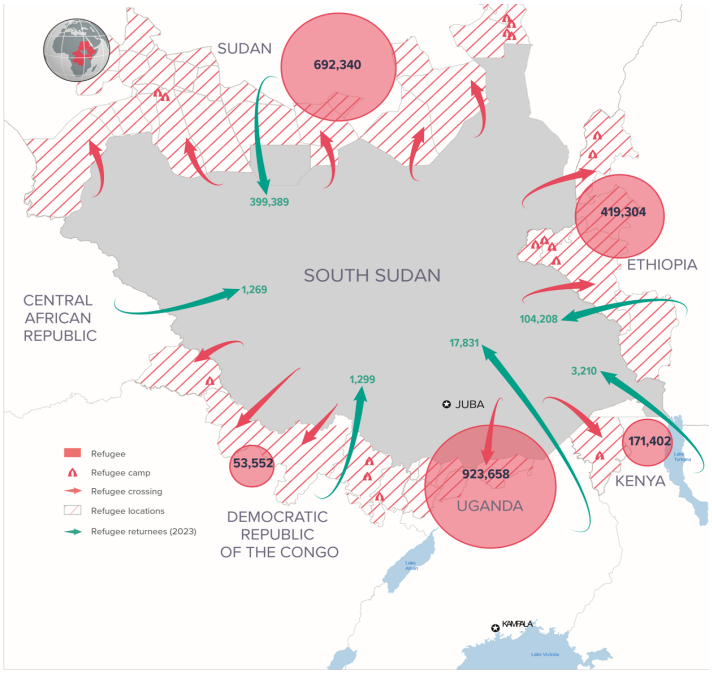


***PHOTO**: Population figures of returnees in the South Sudan situation.*

PROTECTION

DRC: In 2023, 140 South Sudanese asylum applications were submitted to the National Commission for Refugees (CNR) in Kinshasa, all of which were approved, granting prima facie refugee status. The UNHCR and CNR maintained a mechanism to ensure effective access to asylum, involving border monitoring with state service participation to identify protection needs and uphold the principle of non-refoulement, and no pushbacks were recorded. Despite a limited number of humanitarian organizations involved in the Gender-based Violence (GBV) and the child protection response, 600 GBV prevention and response awareness-raising sessions were conducted, including door-to-door and group sessions. The awareness raising benefited close to 30,000 people. Access to GBV services increased from 57 per cent to 87 per cent compared to 2022. Additionally, 292 at-risk children were identified, and 53 benefited from Best Interests of the Child Procedure. Community engagement included 48 focus groups with 480 refugees and individual surveys with 662 refugees. Refugee committees and sectoral committees were established at each site, with women representing 24 per cent of these structures. The response faced challenges with the low state involvement including civil registry system failures, impunity of GBV perpetrators, non-functioning child-friendly spaces, discriminatory socio-cultural norms against women and girls, and weak engagement with the community complaint and feedback mechanisms.

Ethiopia: Legal aid services were available to refugees in both Gambella and Assosa camps and 1,656 refugees accessed formal justice through mobile court services facilitated by the Gambella Regional Supreme Court. Most of the cases were civil while nine were criminal cases. The refugee leadership in the seven camps also attended legal awareness-raising sessions in addition to 60 refugees from the Benishangul-Gumuz region camps being engaged in transitional justice policymaking consultations. RRP partners implemented GBV and child protection activities including individual case management for a total of 14,267, children. In addition, 42,724 children accessed recreational and sports activities in child-friendly spaces. 6,209 newborn babies were registered, and birth certificates were issued to 80 per cent of them. Capacity development and community awareness sessions on child protection were provided to 2,055 case workers as well as 17,358 members of community-based structures. 162 refugee youth mentors were trained in conflict mediation and peacebuilding. Non-specialized psychosocial counselling was also made available for child protection cases and GBV survivors. All 955 GBV survivors and persons at risk of GBV accessed one or more services which included medical, legal, counseling or material support. Up to 59,167 women and girls were engaged in the recreational and empowerment activities in the women and girls' safe spaces. Community-Based Complaint Mechanisms, including protection help desks and complaints boxes, were operational in Gambella and Assosa refugee camps. Panel discussions and mass awareness campaigns were held with the Refugee Committee and the women and youth advocacy groups to promote protection for sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA). Through the SASA! GBV programme, awareness raising reached 17,698 (9,688F; 8,010M) refugees. At least 600 (300F; 300M) were engaged in the Engaging Men through Accountable Practice (EMAP) sessions.

On the search for durable solutions, of the 634 refugees were submitted for resettlement consideration, 135 refugees departed Ethiopia to the USA (58), Sweden (35), France (39), and Canada (3) while support. In terms of complementary pathways, a number of refugees were assisted to lodge applications for graduate studies in third country universities and others to apply for in third countries.

There were several protection challenges, which included the suspension of registration for new arrivals and the suspension of issuance and renewal of refugee ID cards. In addition, the food pause imposed due to aid diversion caused anxiety among refugees contributing to, harmful coping mechanisms such as child marriage, transactional sex, forced marriage, and child labour. As services for the refugee population in the Gambella region were already stretched due to limited funding, the arrival of more people was anI additional strain on services in particular child protection and access to legal justice.

Kenya: Throughout 2023, South Sudanese communities in Kakuma and Kalobeyei reported a higher number of GBV incidents in comparison with other nationalities. 26 per cent of GBV cases reported in 2023 among the 24 nationalities in the camp, were reported by South Sudanese. Most of the GBV incidents reported (physical assaults, rape, emotional violence, sexual assaults, denial of resources and child/forced marriage) occurred within the households mainly perpetrated by intimate partner and or former partners. The GBV Working Group met monthly and supported the referral mechanisms and the production and dissemination of GBV and PSEA Information, Education and Communication materials. Survivors had access to GBV Safe Haven to shelter survivors throughout 2023 with eight dedicated staff and volunteers (four Matrons, one Psychosocial Officer, two volunteers and one Protection Coordinator). Additionally, the programme supported 15 GBV community-based safe homes to respond to the urgent and short-term needs of GBV survivors. RRP partners also strengthened community-based structures including the Council of Elders with its 60 members, Village and Block leaders with 120 members, Faith and Religious Leaders with 120 members, and SASA-Start Awareness and Support Activist with 40 members.

On Child Protection, in 2023, 4,092 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) were identified among the new arrivals. The majority of the UASCs were successfully reunified with their families while 2,604 were placed in kinship care, 100 in foster care, and 343 remained in supervised child-headed households. Child protection coordination

held monthly meetings to discuss and coordinate refugee child protection. On Child Protection staffing, the Government Department of Children's services deployed one full-time 'Children's Officer's for refugee child protection services while the RRP partners deployed 97 child protection staff and volunteers. Nine (9) Child Friendly Spaces were operated throughout 2023 providing children with recreation, protection and psychosocial services. The functional community-based child protection structures included the Child Rights Clubs, Child Parliament, Foster Parents Committee, Child Protection Committees, Caregivers of Children with Disability Group, CFS Committees, Child Mother's Peer Support Groups to mention but a few. However, with limited funding, the child protection programme faced challenges with limited support to foster families and a caseworker-to-child ratio of 1:116 instead of the Child Protection Minimum Standards of one caseworker to 25 to 30 children.

Sudan: In 2023, despite the ongoing conflict in Sudan, RRP partners made efforts to provide protection interventions for South Sudanese refugees, identifying and addressing protection risks, and needs. From May to July, emergency pre-registration was conducted for the unregistered secondary movers and to identify those initially registered in Khartoum who had recently joined the camp. In August, an individual biometric registration exercise began for verified secondary displaced refugees and new arrivals due to the armed conflict. However, this exercise was halted by the Commissioner for Refugees in September 2023. Many refugees also struggled to obtain or renew documents due to the breakdown of government services. RRP partners expanded the work with community-based protection networks across the camps and were able to identify individuals with specific needs, and disseminate information on services. The conflict had a significant impact on South Sudanese refugee children with many fleeing Khartoum to the refugee camps in White Nile. Those who fled missed school, face increased child protection risks and arrived in the camp where services were already stretched. Out of 1,068 South Sudanese refugees received individual case management services, meaning only 22 per cent of the total cases received the necessary child protection assistance. Of 7,210 cases of unaccompanied and Separated South Sudanese Children, 7,057 are in interim or long-term alternative care. In White Nile, efforts focused on managing cases of 3,000 South Sudan refugee children, including access to assessments and services. These services included support for children with disabilities, referrals for GBV survivors, family tracing, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), cash or in-kind assistance, and placement with alternative care.

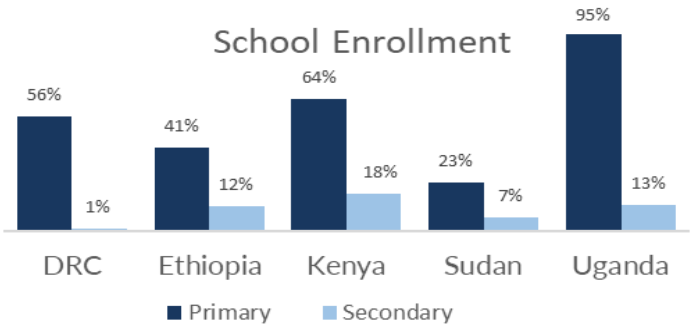
The community-based networks provided invaluable support to their communities in addition to what was provided by the staff of RRP partners and staff of the government. This support included awareness-raising door -to-door visits and sharing information on food, health, nutrition and hygiene, Core Relief Items (CRIs), and other areas. These networks improved communication channels for complaints and feedback, as well as dissemination of information on available services including referrals for GBV services. Additionally, there was an active interagency hotline through which refugees could lodge complaints and get referrals. Despite the conflict in Sudan during the reporting period, efforts were made to strengthen GBV prevention, mitigation, and response. A total of 332 GBV disclosures were recorded among South Sudanese refugees, and of those76 per cent) survivors received GBV services. The main forms of the recorded GBV incidents included sexual assault, physical assault, rape, forced marriages, and emotional and psychological abuse. Due to the recent conflict in Sudan, direct GBV interventions have been suspended in Darfur, Kordofan, and Khartoum, while in the Nile region, the GBV interventions continued. The conflict affected the overall quality of GBV prevention, risk mitigation, and response interventions in Sudan operations and the recorded GBV cases for South Sudanese were collected only from accessible locations. The need for GBV support remained high during the period, but the resources provided were limited due to funding cuts and staff turnover.

Uganda: Uganda remains a model for refugee protection based on its open door and settlement-based protection policy, anchored on the Refugee Act 2006 and the Refugee Regulations 2010. To fulfil its Global Refugee Forum commitments and in collaboration with partners, the government ensured access to individual documentation, including identity cards, electronic conventional travel documents, and birth certificates. All the South Sudanese refugees who arrived in 2023 were individually registered.

In 2023, up to 96 per cent of survivors reporting GBV incidents accessed at least one service - medical (18 per cent), legal (19 per cent), safety and security (13 per cent), livelihoods (8 per cent), and a safe house or shelter (2 per cent). Survivors disclosed various types of GBV, with the top three incidents recorded being psychosocial/emotional abuse (33 per cent), denial of resources (25 per cent), and physical assault (22 per cent). However, fear of reprisal, stigmatization and harmful traditional norms resulted in late and underreporting of GBV incidents.

By December 2023, children made up 60.6 per cent of the South Sudanese refugee population, with 41,356 identified with specific protection needs, including unaccompanied or separated children (UASC), those at risk of child labour, teenage pregnancy, and child-headed households. A total of 23,102 children at heightened risk had Best Interest Procedures initiated, an achievement of 55.9 per cent of the total number of children at heightened risk being assessed. By the end of 2023, 88 per cent of UASC were in interim or long-term alternative care. However, the ratio of caseworkers to child protection cases remains high with 1 case worker attending to a minimum of 75 child protection cases, which is high and above the standard of 1:25. This has compromised the quality of care provided to children.

EDUCATION



DRC: In 2023, efforts to support the education of South Sudanese refugee children in the Democratic Republic of Congo continued with notable initiatives. A total of 5,551 school-age children (2,291 girls and 2,524 boys) were supported and registered in local schools. Additionally, over 500 children and teachers began benefiting from the "Instant Network Schools" (INS) project, supported by the Vodafone Foundation, which enables access to digital education for students and teachers in secondary schools. Despite these efforts, 17,782 school-age children remained unenrolled, highlighting the ongoing challenge, as only 5,551 out of 23,333 refugee children are enrolled in the national school system. At the primary school level, UNHCR, through its partner ADSSE, assisted 2,885 students (1,391 girls and 1,494 boys), including 2,269 refugees and 616 vulnerable host community children, with school kits, fees, and student support. An additional 2,546 refugee children (1,212 girls and 1,334 boys) were enrolled by their parents, increasing the primary school enrollment rate to 56 per cent, while the secondary school rate is 1 per cent. At the secondary level, 80 refugee students and host community members were assisted with school fees. The INS project launched in the Aru Sub-Delegation area opened two multipurpose rooms with internet and tablets at the Biringi and Belé sites. Through these initiatives, the RRP support aimed to strengthen refugees' resilience, empowerment, and preparation for durable solutions.

Ethiopia: Education for refugees has been provided in camp-based schools administered by RRP partners and in governmental public schools located in the host community. RRP partners administered 36 pre-primary schools where 23,180 children were enrolled. The overall enrolment in the 24 existing primary schools and the 5 camp-based and 1 host community secondary schools were recorded as 50,313 and 5,290, respectively, which translates to 41.99 per cent of refugee children enrolled in pre-primary education, 40.60 per cent in primary education and 11.95 per cent in secondary education. The number of secondary schools is inadequate to meet the needs of the increasing number of students transitioning to secondary schools. Other challenges included overcrowding in classrooms, low girl attendance with only 33 per cent in pre-primary, 30 per cent in primary, and 18 per cent in secondary schools. Most critical was that for some months of the year, the lack of funding was so dire that it resulted in the drastic action of premature closing of schools.

Additional capacity is required for the Regional Education Bureau and Woreda Education Offices in the refugee hosting areas to facilitate a faster integration into national schools in addition to that fact that refugee schools also did not meet the government's standards. In 2023, the management of two secondary schools at Jewi and Pinyudo 1 refugee camps was transferred from RRP partners to the Regional Education Bureau, effective October.

Kenya: By the end of December 2023, a total of 59,331 South Sudanese learners (41 per cent female) were enrolled across 19 pre-primary, 27 primary, and nine secondary schools in Kakuma refugee camp and Kalobeyei settlement. Additionally, nearly 2,000 over-aged learners (39 per cent female) were supported through accelerated education programs in both the camp and host community schools. In 2023, a cumulative total of 12,008 refugee learners were facilitated to sit for the Kenyan national examinations, including 39 percent female candidates. Refugee learners the improved performance in the national primary-level examinations, with over 60 per cent scoring above average in the examinations. 82 new classrooms were constructed, and 23 existing ones were rehabilitated. Procurement and distribution of teaching and learning materials, along with the acquisition of 203 assistive devices, helped enhance the educational experience for children in the camps and learning in host community schools. 682 desks were repaired, and an additional 40 latrines were constructed in schools, contributing to improved infrastructure and fostering a conducive atmosphere for learning. Additionally, the recruitment and maintenance of 1,435 teachers, with 82 per cent being refugees, facilitated the implementation of the curriculum, ensuring that refugee children were not left behind.

Despite achieving greater access to education, close to 50 per cent of school-age children remain out of school. The significant growth in school enrolments has been occasioned by high demand for education and a growing influx of refugees in the camp and settlement, resulting in overcrowding in schools, putting pressure on available resources. Approximately more than 110 children shared a classroom on average, with a teacher to pupil ratio 1:93, textbook to pupil ratio 1:4, and desk to pupil ratio 1:4.

Efforts were made to support the educational aspirations of refugee children beyond primary school. A total of 1,830 refugee children, including 811 females, who graduated from camp-based primary schools were enrolled in various scholarship programs. Notably, 1,554 of these students, with 641 being female, received support from the Ministry of Education through the Elimu scholarship.

Tertiary education programs played a crucial role in empowering refugee youths. A total of 1274 youths, including 412 females, benefited from scholarships, TVET programs, and online or onsite accredited courses. These initiatives provided opportunities for skill development and academic advancement within or outside the camps, contributing to the long-term self-reliance and resilience of refugee communities.

UNHCR and its education partners continued to collaborate closely with the Ministry of Education (MoE) to advocate for the inclusion of refugee children and schools in national education systems and programs. The MoE conducted a comprehensive assessment for 36 camp-based primary and secondary schools for registration, which is a critical step towards integrating these schools into national programs, plans, and systems.

In collaboration with the county and national government, a fully equipped girls' boarding school was constructed by UNHCR and handed over to the Ministry of Education. This school, now benefiting from government support and resources, will provide secondary education opportunities to over 400 needy and vulnerable girls from both refugee and host communities annually at a 50:50 ratio. A major gaps in the response due to lack of funding is that the low enrollment rates South Sudanese refugee children 20 per cent were enrolled in primary and secondary schools. 0.16per cent were enrolled in the tertiary education. Disruption of the mainstream education system due to the conflict. An estimated 76per cent of primary and 93 per cent of secondary school age going children are out of school.

In 2023, integrating refugee education into Sudan's national system was a major focus, with 20 per cent of refugee children enrolled in formal primary and secondary education. UNHCR, in partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE), tertiary institutions, and other partners, targeted education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. Programmes included teacher capacity building, salary payments, infrastructure rehabilitation, parent-teacher training, provision of teaching materials, uniforms, and cash for education. Over 76 per cent of primary and 93 per cent of secondary school-age refugee children remain out of school. The conflict has severely disrupted education services across the country, halting enrollment data collection in states hosting refugees.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Education was unable to conduct the Sudan Secondary Certificate national examination due to the conflict, posing challenges for schools upon reopening. As of December, data for 2023 remained inconclusive. The prolonged closure of schools nationwide for over eight months has exposed children to protection risks and forced many into negative coping practices like child labour. Data collection challenges persist for refugee children in urban centres and those integrated with host communities, as many prefer not to be identified as refugees.

The MoE's inclusion agenda enabled refugee children to access national examinations and curricula, but the ongoing conflict threatens to undo these achievements. The displacement of MoE staff responsible for refugee education has further exacerbated the situation, rendering Sudan's federal education system non-functional by the end of the year. Many locations lack substantive education staff, relying on focal points without the technical expertise to advocate for refugee inclusion and resource mobilization.

There is a critical need to intensify efforts to advocate for the integration of refugee education into local and state-level education plans. Addressing the challenges facing the mainstream education system is crucial, especially considering that over 19 million children have been affected one year after the crisis began. This entails increased advocacy and resources from the MoE, partners, donors, and other stakeholders in new education initiatives for Sudan, including education for refugees.

Sudan: In 2023, integrating refugee education into Sudan's national system was a major focus, with 20% of refugee children enrolled in formal primary and secondary education. In partnership with the Ministry of Education (MoE), tertiary institutions, and RRP partners, targeted primary, secondary, and tertiary levels programmes included teacher capacity building, salary payments, infrastructure rehabilitation, parent-teacher training, provision of teaching materials, uniforms, and cash for education. The MoE provided indirect financial support to some refugee camp-based schools. The conflict has severely disrupted education services across the country, halting enrollment data collection in states hosting refugees. The Ministry of Education was unable to conduct the Sudan Secondary Certificate national examination due to the conflict, posing challenges for schools upon reopening. The prolonged closure of schools nationwide for over eight months has exposed children to protection risks and forced many into negative coping practices like child labour. Data collection challenges persist for refugee children in urban centres and those integrated with host communities, as many prefer not to be identified as refugees. The displacement of MoE staff responsible for refugee education has further exacerbated the situation, bringing Sudan's federal education system to near collapse by the end of the year.

Uganda: There has been an overall increase in gross enrolment (GE) in the Education Sector from 53per centin 2022 to 55per centin 2023 within the refugee population. The gross enrolment rate (GER) for pre-primary and secondary remained at 43.46 per cent and 12.75 per cent respectively. In primary, there was an increase from 94 per cent to 95%. At 95 per cent, the Gross Enrolment Rate in primary education for refugees compares favourably with the national context as well as the global refugee average.

Government-led coordination of the refugee education response is ensured through the second Education Response Plan for Refugees Host Communities (ERP II). The ERP II has been cascaded at the district level to assist in refugee-inclusive planning in district plans at the sub-national level. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MOES), OPM and UNHCR have signed an MoU on the interoperability of their data systems. This has opened an opportunity for refugee inclusion in the revamped national EMIS system, facilitating refugee inclusion in national planning processes and national tracking of refugee learners' educational attainment.

Among the main challenges are the continuous funding reduction has affected the partners' ability to meet the required efficiency ratios. The current teacher-pupil ratio stands at 1:70, pupil classroom ratio stands at 1: 132 and pupil-latrine ratio stands at 1:65. Secondary enrolment remains below both national and global refugee averages (GER 10 c/f 23 per cent GER in Uganda 23 per cent)

South Sudan. African Development Bank, UNHCR urge more support for forcibly displaced

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FOOD SECURITY

Ethiopia: An average of 362,462 South Sudanese refugees received general food rations monthly in the Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regions camps. The food basket met 84 per cent of the recommended dietary allowance in the first half of the year (January-May 2023) and 60 per cent from October to December 2023 in camps hosting South Sudanese refugees. Due to incidents of food mismanagement, food distribution in the refugee camps was put on hold from May to October 2023. In addition, in the Benishangul-Gumuz region, due to challenges with road access, food distribution only resumed in December.

Following donor requirements for agencies to meet fraud mitigation standards, WFP, UNHCR, and RRS collaborated to implement actions that ensure that food assistance reaches the intended beneficiaries. A new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on food assistance in refugee camps, sites, and settlements was signed by RRS, UNHCR, and WFP.

The retrospective analysis of food security indicators between June and September 2023 shows that refugees employed several coping mechanisms to cater for the household food needs during the pause in food distribution. The 2023 survey findings show a 82.2 per cent prevalence of households employing one or more negative coping strategies while the prevalence recorded in 2022 was 41 per cent, pointing towards a worsening food security situation in the refugee setting further aggravated by a lack of sustainable food security options and a dependency on aid despite the efforts made by different stakeholders to enhance household food security. Refugees remain dependent on in-kind food assistance. The lack of investment in food security systems contributed to refugees engaging in negative coping strategies to meet household food needs.

Kenya: Refugees face significant challenges due to increasing vulnerabilities and reduced funding which included food ration cuts. From January to June 2023, the rations were at 80 per cent, but dropped to 60 per cent from July to December. A total number of 161543 received food assistance by end of 2023.

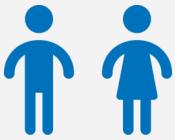
Sudan: The worsening food security situation was driven by intensified conflict, growing intercommunal violence, economic crisis, soaring prices of food, fuel, and essential goods, along with below-average agricultural production. The influx of refugees into the camp put severe pressure on already scarce resources, WFP reached at least 1,068,593 refugees including South Sudanese with food assistance. Of these, approximately 201,739 were persons with disabilities. The Distribution was affected by security risks and access issues including the looting of facilities and the need to establish new supply corridors.

98%

South Sudanese refugees **individually registered** in the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda

3,168

identified **GBV survivors assisted with appropriate support**



39,924

South Sudanese refugee children with specific needs received **individual case management** (62%, against a target of 55%)

77,798

Refugee children **enrolled in Early Childhood Development programmes** (33%, against a target of 53%)

345,744

Refugee children **enrolled in Primary School programmes** (56%, against a target of 55%) down from 63% in 2022

33,202

refugee children enrolled in **secondary school** (11%, against a target of 17%)

1.7 million

South Sudanese refugees received **food assistance** (75% of refugees targetted for food assistance, against a target of 99%).

31,809

refugee women **delivered babies with assistance** from qualified health personnel (90%, against a target of 93%)

Uganda: By June 2023, 795,711 South Sudanese refugees were provided with in-kind food and cash-based transfers. However, owing to the prioritization exercise conducted in July 2023, there was a reduction to 531,854 individuals benefiting from in-kind and cash assistance. The proportion of beneficiaries who received cash assistance increased from 60 per cent to 63 per cent from the first quarter of 2023 to the last quarter of the year, with refugees preferring cash over in-kind assistance. The reduced food rations have resulted in increases in malnutrition among children. The severe acute malnutrition (SAM), global acute malnutrition (GAM) and stunting prevalence rates for children 6-59 months stood at 1.6 per cent, 9.8 per cent and 15 per cent respectively against the target of less than 1 per cent, 5 per cent and 8 per cent respectively. While these are within the national threshold, they represent a negative trend in achieving the nutritional situation for the South Sudanese refugees. Efforts to mitigate malnutrition include building the capacity of health workers, Village Health Teams (VHTs), and other community structures in providing Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) knowledge to promote better household nutrition. Similarly, active case findings have supported the management of the nutrition situation in the settlements. Currently, the recovery rate remains above the threshold with an average of 93 per cent discharged as cured from the programme within the reporting period. 33.2 per cent of refugees were deprioritized from food assistance in July due to funding shortage. The reduction of food rations also increased the risk of child labour, and school dropouts, and notably led to self-relocations of refugees from Uganda to Kenya where refugees were receiving between 80 and 60 per cent of food rations.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

DRC: Refugees had access to primary health care in the three sites, the patients requiring secondary care were transferred to the general referral hospitals in Aba and Biringi, and tertiary care was provided by provincial hospitals with adequate technical facilities and trained staff. Preventive health care was provided through a community-based approach by training and sensitization of the community on various topics such as malnutrition and water-related diseases. The management of moderate acute malnutrition in the Biringi health zone supported 78 children, including 31 refugees. In addition, 3 vaccination campaigns, including 1 against measles and 2 against polio, were organized by the Ministry of Health but technically and logistically supported by RRP partners, with a coverage rate of 98 per cent for measles and 81.3 per cent for poliomyelitis. Measles vaccination coverage has increased from 89 per cent to 91 per cent through the deployment of mobile clinics and the strengthening of community health management through revitalising community animation units. The response attained 99.8 per cent of births attended by qualified personnel.

Ethiopia: RRP partners provided primary health care and referral services, community-based Sexual and Reproductive Health, Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, and clinical care despite limited resources and impeded access due to insecurity. The comprehensive primary health care services were delivered through health centres and facilities operated by RRS. 526,082 health consultations were made in 2023 with 29 per cent of the patients being from the host community. Additionally, Skilled birth attendants attended 90.3 per cent of 9,935 deliveries. The top three causes of morbidity and illness were Upper Respiratory Tract Infections, Lower Respiratory Tract Infections (LRTI) and Malaria. The response to malaria outbreaks was affected by interruptions in medication supplies and rapid diagnostic tests. Unfortunately, in July 2023, there was a measles outbreak in Gambella refugee camps with 524 reported cases with a case fatality rate of 6.5 per cent. The RRP partners responded to contain the measles outbreak.

Nutrition programs for South Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia were provided by RRP partners at 19 functional nutrition sites in the Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. The analysis from the Nutrition Survey conducted in 2023 reported one out of two refugee children between the ages of 6 to 59 months are malnourished. In Assosa Camps, GAM prevalence was the worst in the past five years. Among the contributing factors was the food pause, insecurity which hampered access to food even after general food distribution resumed in October 2023, new arrivals and inadequate resources. Towards the end of the year in Gambella, there was a notable improvement, enabling a decrease of GAM from 17.3 per cent to 10.3 per cent, which can be attributed to improvements in the quality of nutrition programs and the resumption of general food distribution. Nutrition Preventive Programs for children and pregnant and lactating women reached 18,042 children (6-23 months) and 17,875 pregnant and lactating women. By the end of 2023, 31,501 persons (17,503 children aged 6-23 months, 13,977 PLW, and 1,614 persons with medical conditions) were still enrolled in the Blanket Supplementary Feeding program and continued receiving Super Cereal Plus. The Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM) programme reached 21,118 U5 children with program performance indicators being within the WHO's SPHERE standards. Unfortunately, due to funding shortfalls, children between the ages of 24 to 59 months were not supported in the nutrition preventive program in 2023.

Kenya: UNHCR and partners provided comprehensive primary health care and nutrition services to refugees across the 8 health facilities in Kakuma and Kalobeyei. This was supplemented by a network of over 280 community health promoters. Refugees continued to access 24/7 emergency services within the camp and settlement. UNHCR supported access to specialized services in tertiary facilities through a coordinated referral mechanism and 13,920 refugee and host community households enrolled in the national health insurance fund. Key health and nutrition indicators remained within acceptable standards. The under-5 mortality rate was 0.8 1000/month, which is within the standard of 1.5 1000/month. The program achieved a 94

per cent skilled delivery rate. The recovery rate for the Outpatient Therapeutic Funding and Supplementary Feeding Programme for acutely malnourished children aged below five years was above 90 per cent against a standard of 75 per cent. A robust community health program and integrating nutrition assessments into routine outpatient services contributed to achieving these targets.

Only 20 per cent of households had access to mosquito nets, leading to a surge in malaria cases in the second quarter of the year. Simultaneously, a measles outbreak affected both refugees and the host community, posing a significant risk—particularly to newly-arrived individuals who had not yet been vaccinated. Responding to these health crises placed an enormous strain on the already limited resources, with clinicians handling 90 consultations each, nearly double the standard of 50. This burden was further compounded by poor infrastructure and an inadequate supply of essential medical commodities.

Sudan: Health and nutrition efforts aimed to address the acute needs of the population, achieving key milestones such as providing skilled delivery assistance to 4,360 pregnant women, which improved maternal health outcomes. Despite ongoing crises, both the Crude Mortality Rate (CMR) and Under-5 Mortality Rate (U5MR) in camps remained within SPHERE standards. In White Nile, the U5MR notably decreased from 3.0 to 1.5 per 10,000 population per day, highlighting the impact of health interventions for 442,154 South Sudanese refugees. Comprehensive sexual and reproductive health services continued, though antenatal care coverage at 60 per cent and only 73 per cent of childbirths were attended by skilled health personnel. Immunization rates hovered around 75 per cent due to vaccine stockouts. Nutrition services included therapeutic and supplementary feeding for children under five, pregnant and lactating women. However, limited health facility capacity caused overcrowding, impacting essential services. The conflict has weakened the national health system and disrupted the supply chain were causing shortages of essential drugs and medical supplies.

Uganda: In 2023, the crude mortality rate was maintained within standards at 0.06 deaths per 1,000 population while U5MR at 0.12 deaths per 1,000 live births against the standard of 1.5 deaths per 1000 live births. GAM rate was at 9.8 per cent among children under 5 years which was within the limits of <10 per cent. Mosquito net distribution, Indoor Residual Spraying as well as Integrated Community Case Management ensured that mortalities are contained. Measles vaccination coverage was (83 per cent) against the standard of 95 per cent mainly due to vaccine stockouts affecting the new arrivals. There were 1,571,291 consultations in 2023 of which 73 per cent were South Sudanese refugees and 27 per cent were host community patients. Each clinician had on average 45 consultations per day, which was within the acceptable standard of 50 consultations per clinician per day. 96.6 per cent of refugee women delivered with assistance from qualified personnel. Partners continued to engage with the Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development, Ministry of Local Government, and the Office of the Prime Minister (OPM), to support health facility upgrade, transition and integration. Districts were supported to develop district transition plans as an important process in realizing the transition and integration of health services. Multiple stakeholders, including RRP partners and the MoH, undertook a joint monitoring and evaluation mission to evaluate progress on the implementation of the Health Sector Integrated Refugee Response Plan, identify gaps in service delivery and collective actions to improve service delivery. Unfortunately, by the end of the year, 15 per cent of the health facilities serving the South Sudanese population still have temporary structures and are not yet accredited and coded in government systems, hence sole reliance on support from partners.

127,729

refugees received productive assets, training and / or business support in 2023 (14% of refugees 18 - 59 years)

35,169

refugees reported to be employed or self-employed in Ethiopia, Kenya & Uganda (4% of refugees 18 - 59 years)

71, 618

refugees households live in semi -permanent shelter (20%, against a target of 27%)

192,414

refugees households have a household latrine (50%, against a target of 61%)

16.1 L

regional average litres of water per person per day (against the standard of 20L)

26,070

refugees households have energy saving stoves, (7%, against a target of 8%)

LIVELIHOOD AND RESILIENCE

DRC: 100 households in Bélé and Biringi were supported in agriculture with tillage tools, seeds, and access to land. 17 hectares of land in Biringi and 12 hectares in Bélé were used for agroforestry. Technical support to the income generation in fish farming, piggery, duck farming, and carpentry was provided in Biringi and Bélé. Among the challenges in livelihoods and resilience building are that refugees struggle to have bank accounts because of the procedures, the distance of banks from the sites, and the lack of microfinance services in the settlement.

Ethiopia: Livelihood activities were coordinated by RRP partners, RRS, government institutions, and local administrations, benefiting over 14,500 individuals through farming and financial services. Other key achievements in 2023 included 14,513 refugees and host community members accessing livelihoods and self-reliance programs, such as farming and business development services. Three health centres were solarized, benefiting over 141,000 people with clean, reliable electricity. Environmental efforts included planting 430,000 fast-growing tree seedlings and rehabilitating 45 hectares of degraded land. Additionally, 2,736 resident permits and 3,775 work permits were issued, enabling refugees to pursue employment and business opportunities. However, funding constraints and unstable security posed significant challenges, particularly for crop production and small businesses, contributing to community tensions. In Gambella, 295 refugees, including 44 per cent women, completed skills training in mobile repair, agribusiness, and tailoring, followed by apprenticeships. Employment opportunities for 2,113 refugees included work in cafeterias, transport, tailoring, and waste recycling. Village savings and loans associations were also established to support small businesses, and refugees jointly cultivated 517 hectares of land with host communities, growing crops such as maize, sorghum, and okra. These programs fostered peaceful coexistence, though budget constraints and security challenges, particularly in Gambella, limited their broader impact.

Kenya: A total of 5,000 South Sudanese refugees aged 18 and older were provided with livelihoods and economic Inclusion interventions focusing on agriculture, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET), microfinance access, and business development services and training. However, this was less than 20 per cent of the refugees with access to livelihood support due to multiple challenges, including limited funding, flooding and, in contradiction, a shortage of water for manufacturing and production, and limited access to entrepreneurial documentation and opportunities. There was an urgent, unfulfilled need to connect more households and businesses to electricity to improve livelihood opportunities. 97 per cent of the energy consumed is still traditional biomass (firewood and charcoal) which contributes to deforestation around Kakuma and Kalobeyei.

Sudan: In January 2023, the Government of Sudan launched the National Durable Solutions Strategy, benefiting the forcibly displaced and host communities by integrating them into state and national planning frameworks and systems. This strategy provides opportunities for implementing durable solutions, allowing the forcibly displaced to rebuild their lives in safety and dignity, break cycles of dependency, and strengthen social structures within host communities. The Minister of Agriculture Production and Economic Resources committed more than 3,000 acres of land in the Goda irrigation scheme in White Nile State to support agricultural production for forcibly displaced individuals, contingent on repairing the irrigation canal. Refugees in White Nile received seeds (sorghum, millet, and groundnuts) for agricultural production. The main challenges were limited funding, soaring prices of food and essential commodities, lack of income-generating activities for the refugees and host community with restrictions on movement and the risk of arrests. The host community is experiencing strain on the local economy due to the increasing number of refugees, which has intensified competition for resources such as water, food, healthcare, shelter, and livelihood opportunities.

Uganda: To strengthen livelihood and resiliency, partners facilitated 39 per cent of refugee households refugee households, 60 per cent of which were female-headed households to access 44,360 acres of farmland in West Nile and Northern Uganda. Partners supported the households in the production of crops such as cassava, maize, and sorghum in Adjumani, Madi Okollo, Obongi, Yumbe, and Lamwo districts. Rice, sunflower, sesame, and groundnuts were promoted mainly as commercial crops. The Food Security and Nutrition Assessment (FSNA) 2023 reported that 39 per cent of the refugee households utilized land to produce mainly food crops such as maize, beans, and sorghum. About 19 per cent of refugee households earned incomes from sales of food crops, while about 30 per cent reported earning incomes from casual labour related to agricultural production activities. The 51 per cent reduction in funding to the sector between 2022 and 2023 resulted in reduced livelihood support to households. Food insecurity increased from 37 per cent in 2020 to 55 per cent in 2022 and 67.7 per cent in 2023. For refugees engaged in agriculture, the effects of climate change (El-Nino) – result in poor crop harvests, often depleted within 1-2 months, thus reducing incomes. The effects of climate change (El-Nino) resulted in poor crop harvests, often depleted within 1-2 months, thus reducing incomes for families in agriculture, including the host community.

South Sudanese refugee Sanna Mabiel Reth, 33, with her seven children at their shelter in the UNHCR-supported Alagaya refugee camp, Al Jabalain, White Nile St ate, Sudan. © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno

ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

DRC: In 2023, 65 solar-powered public lighting poles were installed (35 in Biringi, 20 in Bélé and 10 in Meri). The refugees helped identify areas where women and girls did not feel safe, including the blocks' entrances, around water points and churches. The community reported using public lighting in the evenings allowed students to study in groups and for social and petty market activities. In addition, 23 household solar energy lamps were provided to people with specific needs in Biringi. The energy needs by far outpace the capacity of the RRP partners and will, unfortunately, have long-term negative impacts on the refugee camps and surrounding lands.

Ethiopia: The energy and environment interventions aimed to mitigate the impact of deforestation and climate change from the sustained overuse of natural resources. In partnership with the Regional Natural Resource Development and Environmental Protection Bureau, 430,000 multipurpose tree seedlings were planted in and around the refugee camps in Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz. The seedlings were fast-growing species, including eucalyptus and bamboo trees, which can be used for household energy consumption and shelter construction. This practice reduces the deforestation of indigenous tree species and contributes to the longer-term reforestation and rehabilitation programs in refugee settings in Ethiopia. Some 45 hectares of degraded land were also rehabilitated through proper water and soil conservation programs. In 2023, some 700 refugee families in Assosa refugee camps received woodlot-based firewood as a transitional cooking solution, and 60 vulnerable families received fuel-saving stoves. Three health centres in Gambella, Nguenyiel refugee camp, and in the host community (Itang woreda) were solarized, which benefited 140,000 refugees and host community members accessing improved health services with clean and reliable electricity supply. A multi-purpose energy kiosk with a cafeteria, charger shop, barber, and entertainment centre was established in Nguenyiel refugee camp, demonstrating an innovative solution for livelihood and energy interventions. The kiosk benefits the families running the units, an associated women's self-help group, and the refugees accessing the services. In addition, in Sherkole refugee camp, Benishangul-Gumuz region, communal kitchens were connected to the electricity grid and now service up to 300 families.

Kenya: RRP partners supported environmental protection and mitigation measures within the Camp and Settlement with 108,400 tree seedlings propagated in the tree nurseries within the Settlements and 133,926 seedlings planted by refugees, the host community, and institutions. Twelve meetings were held in Kalobeyei Settlement to raise awareness about sustainable environmental practices. However, due to limited funding , only 21,631 refugee households received cash assistance for cooking fuel covering January and February 2023. 118.8 metric tonnes (MT) of firewood were distributed to 1,980 child-headed households that were targeted to receive in-kind assistance, and 2,019.21 MTs were distributed to schools, hospitals, and reception centres. Additionally, 1500 energy-saving cookstoves were distributed to new arrival households and 30,360 cookstoves. 2,700 households and businesses in Kalobeyei Settlement received power through the solar PV 541kWp mini-grid. The overreliance on biomass-based fuels placed a huge environmental burden on an already fragile ecosystem and, over time, exacerbated tensions between the host and refugee communities.

Sudan: In 2023, energy and environmental activities were implemented in only two states, East Darfur and White Nile State, due to resource constraints. These efforts reached only 4,300 targets with energy-efficient stoves. Nine hundred households, including South Sudanese refugees, received fuel assistance as ethanol fuel could not be delivered to the target beneficiaries due to shortages. The ongoing war caused the cost of firewood and charcoal to rise, limiting support to only a few households with specific needs. Three training centres were established to facilitate capacity building and the production of energy-efficient stoves. Additionally, 25,000 tree seedlings were distributed to both refugees and host communities. However, the limited energy support forced more families to spend their meagre resources on cooking fuels. The majority resorted to foraging for firewood, which increased the risk of intercommunal conflicts and took time away from school and other productive activities.

Uganda: In 2023, 8 million trees were planted across refugee hosting districts to restore 1,025 hectares of woodlots and maintain 673 hectares of woodlots to protect natural resources and provide sustainable firewood solutions for cooking. Due to budget constraints, only 87 per cent of seedling requirements for 2024 from beneficiaries were satisfied. The seedling planning for 2024 was convened in mid-2023, as some of the seedlings require 6-9 months of pre-growth before they can be transplanted in 2024. 30,546 refugee households were supported with energy-efficient cookstoves and only one out of three refugee households (36 per cent) had access to improved cookstoves. Cash-based interventions for cooking energy covered only two months, leaving eight months during which refugees had to supplement their needs by firewood collection, in-advertently driving deforestation.

SHELTER & NON-FOOD ITEMS (NFI):

DRC: All the refugee households had access to some form of shelter, however, since 2021, the shelters have been deteriorating with many in poor condition. Unfortunately, with the increasingly declining funding, only limited improvements were made, including 11 transitional shelters and 85 emergency shelters in 2023 in Ituri and Haut-Uele provinces. The situation of shelters for people living off-site is not known because of the constraints of accessibility to their living areas.

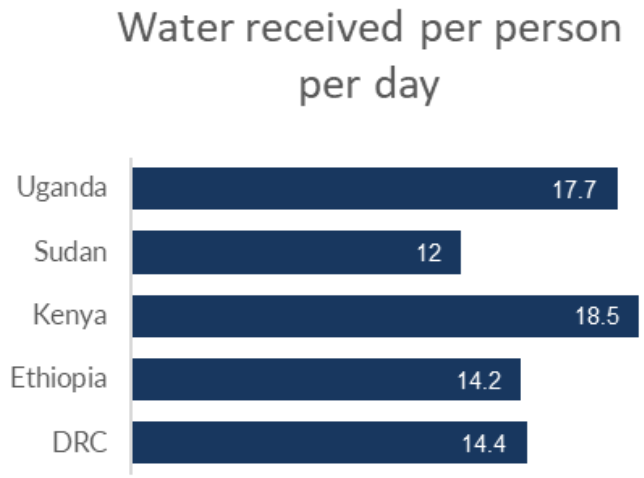
Ethiopia: Despite funding constraints and the volatile security situation in the Gambella region, RRP partners made significant progress with 57 per cent of shelter needs met across camps hosting South Sudanese refugees. In the Gambella region, 2.3 km of road and six culverts were also improved to ease accessibility within the camp and to service facilities, and four service facility blocks were established. Nevertheless, the deteriorated inter-camp roads, the inadequate drainage systems, and the ageing of the camp facilities affected the delivery of essential services to the refugees in the Gambella and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. In the Benishangul-Gumuz region, 86 per cent of South Sudanese refugees are living in inadequate shelters. Many refugees live in overcrowded or deteriorated shelters, with increased protection risks, including GBV. In response to the refugee influx from Pochalla, the government allocated additional land for the Pinyudo 1 camp in the Gambella region, permitting the construction of 500 new emergency shelters for 3,414 individuals. New arrivals also received NFIs.

Kenya: 25,251 households received non-food items, and 2,406 households had access to soap monthly. The number of households accessing soap reduced in 2023 due to the discontinuation of cash-based interventions for soap and in general, reduced funding for the programme. Emergency shelters and NFIs were prioritized for 100 per cent of the 12,345 new arrivals, but the protracted refugee caseload required replenishment of non-food items were not supported due to lack of funding.

Sudan: UNHCR has reached out to 91,809 secondarily displaced South Sudanese Refugees, providing NFIs to 11,629 households/59,311 individuals and clothing to 26,307 households/91,809 Individuals. Emergency shelters in the form of family tents were provided for 1,333 households. The majority of those in need of shelter assistance did not receive adequate support due to lack of funding.

Uganda: Despite low funding for the shelter and NFI sectors, all eligible refugee households received non-food items in 2023. 60 per cent of new arrivals received assorted shelter and NFI. This assistance was monetized to allow newly arrived refugees freedom of choice and dignity and to embark on the path towards financial inclusion. By the end of the year, only 0.22 per cent of refugee households lived in semi-permanent shelters, and 2.6 per cent of refugee households lived in emergency shelters.

WATER SANITATION AND HYGIENE (WASH)



DRC: Access to a clean water supply was at an average of 14.4 litres with the gradual solarization of 10 water points and the effective community management policy of water points. This included solarization of two water points at the Bélé Health Centre and Nyalanya Health Centre. 30 emergency latrines and 110 family latrine blocks were constructed across the three sites, 61 transitional latrine blocks were built for people with special needs, however, sanitation coverage only covered 35 per cent of family latrines. The management of medical waste in hospitals and health centres (latrines and showers, waste areas, handwashing stations, hygiene kits, garbage cans, etc.) was maintained throughout the year despite the limited resources.

Ethiopia: Despite efforts by RRP partners, the WASH sector faces significant challenges in refugee camps hosting South Sudanese refugees. Sanitation coverage remains low, with only 30 per cent in Gambella and 40 per cent in Benishangul-Gumuz camps, and soap distribution reaching less than 2 per cent of households. Low sanitation coverage has resulted in widespread open defecation, exposing refugees to health risks. The community was engaged in constructing latrines and delivering hygiene education. Water access remains below the standard of 20 litres per person per day, with refugees in Gambella receiving 13.9 litres and those in Benishangul-Gumuz receiving 17.5 litres. 2023 saw a positive development in Tsore camp, where two deep boreholes were connected to the national power grid, improving water supply sustainability and reducing costs.

Kenya: A new water reservoir was built, and the water pipeline was extended by 3,591 meters in addition to rehabilitating 1,887 meters of existing pipeline. 9,310 kilograms of chlorine was provided for water treatment, and more than 37,066 water samples were tested for Free Residual Chlorine and contamination. However, water access remained below the standard of 20 litres per person per day, with 16.59 and 18.46 litres, respectively. These levels were due to frequent water system breakdowns and increased population. Due to a funding shortfall at the beginning of 2023, cash-based interventions (CBI) for soap were stopped, causing a sharp decline in soap accessibility and availing it to only 2,406 households among the new arrivals and child-headed households. In the last quarter of 2023, in response to heavy rains and flooding, 25,251 households (87 per cent) of the population benefited from a general in-kind distribution of soap, sanitary pads, and mosquito nets to prevent malaria and waterborne diseases. However, the non-food items were sufficient to cover needs for only two months and not all items were replenished during the year.

64-door semi-permanent sanitation facilities were constructed at the reception centre, and 400 households were provided with materials to construct family latrines. The community constructed a total of 758 household latrines. Hygiene promotion reached 28,040 new arrivals. With the hygiene education meetings with over 5,000 community members, 185 latrines were decommissioned and backfilled, 53 blocks were certified open defecation free, and 820 potties for young children were distributed. An additional 619 pit latrines were constructed for new arrivals and those recently displaced by floods. 45 inclusive sanitation facilities were also constructed in both Kakuma and Kalobeyei, bringing the latrine coverage to 51 per cent in Kakuma and 68.5 per cent in Kalobeyei.

Sudan: In 2023, the camps were overcrowded with the influx of close to 140,000 refugees who were secondarily displaced from Khartoum. The average water supply declined to 8.4 litres in the White Nile and aggravated by stagnant water from floods and poor sanitation, the outbreaks of cholera and malaria increased. RRP partners in coordination with the Ministry of Health, scaled up WASH capacity to respond to the influx despite fuel shortages and inadequate funding. The system upgrades included the replacement of three water pumps with higher capacity ones, and the upgrade of five solar systems, and 6.35 km of pipelines. In addition, 74 tap stands were installed and the water pipeline was extended by 175 metres. Two generators and pumps were installed, and three water treatment units were constructed. Daily water trucking was done to two camps and over 90 cartons of water purification sachets were distributed to 6,240 households. By the end of the year, the availability of water had reached 12 litres per person per day. At least 915 latrines were constructed, and most dilapidated latrines were rehabilitated and de-sludged, increasing latrine access from 32 per cent in 2022 to 37 per cent in 2023. Additionally, over 296,500 refugees received soap and 71,150 women and girls received menstrual hygiene kits. To improve environmental health and hygiene promotion activities, 95 vector control campaigns and solid waste management interventions were implemented. The response was impeded by a limited number of sanitation and hygiene workers.

Uganda: In 2023, refugees and the hosting community received an average of at least 19 litres per person per day. The water was supplied through 183 motorized water systems and 822 hand pumps. To address the increasing

needs and reduce the maintenance costs of the ageing - water systems, two new water systems were constructed while six were rehabilitated, and five boreholes were drilled and fitted with hand pumps. A total of 35.5 Km of water pipeline extension was executed during the year (Bidibidi- 15.9 km, Adjumani – 6.7km, Palorinya – 1.3km, – 11.9km and Rhino – 1.8km). In sanitation, despite 77 emergency and 1,321 household latrines being constructed to support the new arrivals, the needs were greater than the capacity to deliver and household latrine coverage declined from 70 per cent in 2022 to 67 per cent by December 2023. In addition, a considerable number of latrines were damaged, and some collapsed during the floods, but they were not replaced due to limited funds.

Partnership & Coordination:

At the end of the year, the implementation of the 2023 RRP for South Sudanese refugees has demonstrated the critical importance of partnerships and coordination. Together with the respective governments, 108 partners, including 65 per cent International NGOs, 24 per cent National NGOs, and 10 per cent UN Agencies, the RRP has leveraged a diverse range of actors to deliver a multisectoral response. Despite the fact that not all partners were adequately funded, they all contributed to the advocacy for South Sudanese refugees. These partnerships also focused on enhancing the resilience and self-reliance of South Sudanese refugees and supporting host communities to foster peaceful coexistence. The RRP has deepened engagement with development and peacebuilding partners, utilizing IGAD-led processes to seek sustainable solutions. Interagency coordination mechanisms at the camp, settlement, national, and regional levels, including sector-specific forums and the Regional Child Protection Network, have been pivotal in providing technical support, guidance, and monitoring, ensuring a comprehensive and effective response.

In 2023, the response faced significant underfunding, with a record low of 21 per cent reported in the Refugee Funding Tracker. Donor resources were stretched thin due to the protracted nature of the South Sudan crisis, compounded by the Sudan crisis and other global emergencies, which diverted attention and funding to more immediate humanitarian needs. Despite this there may be unreported funds contributing to the response. Therefore, UNHCR encourages RRP partners to use the Refugee Funding Tracker to ensure timely and transparent reporting of funding for the regional RRP.

CONCLUSION

The Regional Refugee Response Plan for South Sudanese refugees in DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda continued to address critical humanitarian needs amid significant challenges in 2023. The protracted displacement crisis, compounded by ongoing violence in the country of origin and in Sudan, climate shocks affecting the asylum countries, and underfunding, strained resources and services across the five countries. While progress was made in areas such as health, education, and livelihood support, significant gaps remain in meeting the comprehensive needs of the refugee populations, particularly in shelter, food security, and WASH services. Moving forward, enhanced coordination, increased fundraising, and sustainable solutions are essential to improve the response capacity towards building resilience and well-being of the refugees and host communities. The response must continue prioritizing refugee inclusion into national services and strengthen service delivery.

Photo: Sudanese refugee Intisar, 27, poses for a photograph with her three children, her brother and a friend at the Gendrassa transit centre in Gendrassa refugee camp, Maban, South Sudan © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno

REGIONAL RRP PARTNERS

- Action Against Hunger (ACF)
- Hunger Fighters Uganda
- Action for the Needy in Ethiopia
- International Aid Services (IAS)
- Adventist Development and Relief Agency
- International Committee for the Development of Peoples
- Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA)
- International Labour Organisation
- African Humanitarian Aid and Development Agency
- International Medical Corps
- Agency for Technical Cooperation and Development (ACTED)
- International Organization for Migration
- AIC-K/Johanitter Internal Assistance
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- Al Manar Voluntary Organization
- Islamic Relief Worldwide
- ALIGHT
- IsraAid
- Alsalam Organization for Rehabilitation and Development
- JASMAR
- ARC/ALIGHT
- Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
- Association for Aid and Relief, Japan (AAR Japan)
- KadAfrica
- AVSI Foundation Kenya Red Cross Society Bethany Christian Service Global
- Lotus kenya action for development organization
- BfA
- Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
- Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC)
- Malteser International
- Care and Assistance For Forced Migrants (CAFOMI)
- Medair
- CARE International
- Medical Teams International
- Caritas
- Mercy Corps
- Catholic Agency for Overseas Development
- Mutawinat
- Catholic Relief Services
- National Council of Churches of Kenya
- Center for Victims of Torture
- Norwegian Church Aid CFI
- Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC
- Community Technology Empowerment Network (CTEN)
- Oxfam
- Concern Worldwide
- Peace Winds Japan
- Cooperazione e Sviluppo (CESVI)
- Plan International
- Cooperazione Internazionale
- Practical Action DanChurchAid (DCA)
- Refugee Consortium of Kenya
- Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
- Relief International
- Doctors with Africa CUAMM
- Right to Play
- Don Bosco
- Save the Children International (SCI)
- Ethiopian Orthodox Church Development And Interchurch Aid Commission Refugee And Returnee Affairs Department
- Self Help Africa
- FIDA/FMU
- Street Child
- Film Aid Kenya
- Terre-Des-Hommes Finn Church Aid (FCA)
- Transcultural Psychosocial Organization
- Finnish Refugee Council (FRC)
- Tutapona Trauma Rehabilitation (TTR)
- Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)
- UN Women
- Food for the Hungry (FH)
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
- Friends of Peace and Development Organization
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
- Gesellschaft fuer Internationale Zusammenarbeit
- United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
- Global Aid Hand United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)
- GOAL
- United Nations Human Settlements Programme
- Haileybury Youth Trust
- United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)
- Health and Rights Initiative Uganda
- United Peace Organization
- Healthcare Foundation Organization
- URDMC
- HEKS/EPER (SCA)
- VE
- HelpAge International, UK
- War Child Canada (WCC)
- Hope and Friendship for Development Organization
- War Child Holland (WCH)
- Hope Health Action East Africa (HHA)
- Welthungerhilfe
- Human Appeal
- Windle International
- Humane Africa Mission(HAM)
- Windle International Kenya
- Humanitarian Assistance and Development Services
- World Food Programme (WFP)
- Humanitarian Initiative Just Relief Aid (HIJRA)
- World Health Organization (WHO)
- Humanity & Inclusion (HI)
- World Vision International (WVI)
- ZOA International

REGIONAL RRP DONORS

- United States of America (Gov)
- European Union
- Germany
- Denmark
- Japan
- Italy
- Ireland
- Norway
- United Kingdom
- Republic of Korea
- Canada
- Saudi Arabia
- Private donors
- Others

Source: ***Refugee Funding Tracker***

Photo: 6-year-old Miji Uto was washing clothes outside their shelter in the Kalobeyei Reception Center in Kalobeyei Settlement. © UNHCR/Pauline Omagwa