

# SUDAN FLASH UPDATE

## REFUGEES FROM CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

### Darfur: UNHCR takes CAR refugees away from border to a new site with better assistance

UNHCR stays and delivers despite COVID-19. With fewer CAR refugees per bus, their relocation to Al Mashaga, South Darfur, a newly established settlement, is underway. The first 800 men, women and children arrived safely.

#### HIGHLIGHTS

Some **800 CAR refugees relocated** to a new site with better assistance and health services in Darfur.

**1 million bars of soap** delivered to refugees, vulnerable Sudanese families and IDPs to prevent **COVID-19**.

**30,000 text messages** sent to refugees on **coronavirus** risks.



*CAR refugees finally board a bus at Um Dafoug to be relocated to a safer settlement in Al Mashaga. ©UNHCR/Suleiman Ahmed*

## AWAY FROM DIRT TRACKS, CLOSER TO HEALTH SERVICES

**Some 14,000 men, women and children who fled the Central African Republic (CAR) for Um Dafoug in South Darfur in recent months are finally relocated to a better site, further away from the border. Having endured harsh living conditions near the CAR border, exposed to the elements in an area difficult to reach for any humanitarian actor, the first about 800 refugees travelled to a new site in Al Mashaga. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, together with COR, the government's Commissioner for Refugees, and other partners, including World Vision International, had prepared the new site over the past weeks, and refugees will participate in making it a habitable place....**

Al Mashaga has water supply and is located closer to basic services such as health facilities, in addition it is easier to reach for humanitarian actors in the rainy season when dirt tracks closer to the border cannot be used. operation had to be temporarily suspended after four convoys due to security concerns.

Meanwhile, UNHCR continued to hand out non-food items (NFIs) in some other parts of the country: On 19 and 20 April, UNHCR and the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) distributed blankets, kitchen sets, sleeping mats, mosquito nets, plastic sheeting and rigid jerry cans to some 230 refugee families newly relocated to Abu Ellikri in West Kordofan. COVID-19 guidelines such as physical distancing and related distribution procedures were applied and risk communication posters were used. In El Geneina, West Darfur, 3800 IDPs, too, received NFIs, including jerry cans, in partnership with SRCS.

## COVID-19 PREVENTION CONTINUES

As **some asylum-seekers cross into Sudan** despite the official closure of the border, it is important they are quarantined for 14 days. Across the country, several facilities have been adapted for this purpose, including in Joda and El Magen in White Nile State.

UNHCR's tons of soap delivered across Sudan in recent weeks nearly reached the one million piece mark, including 164,000 in Abuda, Wad Sharifey, Um Gargour, Shagarab, Kilo 26 and Girba camps in the East. To avoid large gatherings, the distribution method was undertaken door-to-door with donkey carts. The number of soaps handed out totals over 950,000, including 600,000 pieces delivered to WFP to be included in packages for vulnerable families in Khartoum. In East Darfur, a total of 139,000 pieces of soap has been distributed in recent weeks. UNHCR and its NGO partner AIManar also distributed about 32,000 pieces of soap to South Sudanese refugees in Bantiu, one of the underserved sites of Khartoum State called "Open Areas", and to the most vulnerable locals in mid-April.



*UNHCR staff and volunteers and a donkey distribute soap in Kassala State*

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## MORE WATER FOR BETTER HANDWASHING

**Proper handwashing requires enough water.** In South Kordofan's largest refugee settlement Dar Batti, enough supply of safe water to refugees and locals has long been a major concern forcing women and girls to walk kilometers to fetch water. To address this, UNHCR recently completed the upgrading of a haffir, an artificial lake of 40,000 m<sup>3</sup>, along with pipes leading to 32 taps close to host and the refugee homes. This is an extension of a project initially built by Care International Switzerland (CIS) with financial support from UNHCR in 2018.

In addition, UNHCR delivered hundreds of handwashing facilities in Sudan, including 450 in all camps, entry points and health facilities in White Nile. The hand-washing facilities are regularly re-filled.

So far, COVID-19, while spreading fast in Sudan, has not infected any refugee or asylum-seeker, according to documented cases. UNHCR keeps on raising awareness in camps and settlements so that IDPs and refugees are aware of symptom, get to know how to protect themselves and seek treatment from health personnel as appropriate.

In order to be prepared for the day when the infection might spread to densely populated areas hosting refugees or IDPs, UNHCR, in close contact with health authorities and partners has helped identify isolation facilities. In North, South and West Kordofan States, for instance, the State Health Ministry has dedicated a range of rooms for this purpose, including in University Buildings. In White Nile State, eight isolation facilities were identified to serve the nine refugee camps, if needed. In El Geneina town, West Darfur, a two-story building meant to be a library is being equipped as an isolation centre. It will serve any confirmed cases among locals, IDPs or refugees. Health authorities report gaps in equipment across the country, from beds to oxygen or personal protective gear.

To boost preparedness in the Eastern Corridor of South Kordofan, UNHCR provided AIManar, its health partner, with a brand-new ambulance and an additional 4WD vehicle to overcome logistical challenges.

## ENGAGING COMMUNITIES AT RISK

UNHCR sent out **text messages on coronavirus to 30,000 households** mainly in Khartoum since 21 April. To enhance the engagement of communities, AlManar, UNHCR's health partner trained community health promoters on COVID-19 mitigation measures.

In White Nile, UNHCR produced and distributed 48 giant billboards with COVID-19 prevention messages to the nine refugee camps and several entry points. In Kordofan, 4,500 posters on risk communication and community engagement were distributed in Arabic in late April, more are in the pipeline.

## COVID-19 CHALLENGES

**Movement restrictions**, COVID-19 prevention measures and their effects on the economy keep on hampering or slowing down the operation, including the important relocation of CAR refugees (see above) as only fewer individuals can take a bus at the same time.

The pandemic has exacerbated the economic crisis and its effects include fuel shortage limiting movements of NGOs to the communities for awareness raising campaigns on COVID-19 preparedness, prevention and response measures. The supply chain and logistics are hard hit, too, including for soap bound for West and South Kordofan

The fluctuating national currency, hyperinflation and sanctions resulted in major shortages of goods and services which, in turn, hampered UNHCR's procurement of vital material in the first place. Across the country, but especially in the Kordofans, authorities, partners and UNHCR staff report a lack of personal protective equipment, including facial masks, gloves, gowns and aprons, urgently needed for preparedness for and prevention of COVID-19.



*A refugee washing hands after COVID-19 sensitization session in White Nile State*

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## COVID-19 COORDINATION

In line with a national contingency plan, developed by the Refugee Consultation Forum, UNHCR, together with authorities, UN and NGO partners developed local response plans in areas with refugee camps or settlements. They define roles and responsibilities in the event of an outbreak and cover the areas of coordination, risk communication and community engagement, surveillance, case investigation and management, infection prevention and control along with agreements on which services would continue and how.

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