

SOUTH SUDAN

Conflict-related displacement

KEY FIGURES

+57,000
DISPLACED PEOPLE

3,000
DAILY REFUGEE
REGISTRATIONS

66%
OF THE POPULATION
FACING IPC 3+
LEVELS OF ACUTE
FOOD INSECURITY

8.5
INFORM CLIMATE
CHANGE RISK SCORE

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

- UN agencies (WHO, UNICEF, IOM)
- Initial response activities of several INGOs
- Current operations of GOAL in Renk
 - Aid delivery by IFRC
- The transport of new arrivals of returnees to their homes in South Sudan through the assistance of the Catholic Church in Upper Nile state

CRISIS IMPACT OVERVIEW

As at 14 May 2023, the conflict that began on 15 April in Sudan had displaced more than 57,000 people to South Sudan (UNHCR 16/05/2023). 90% of this number were conflict-displaced South Sudanese returnees. The majority of the displaced are settling in border towns, such as Malakal, Paloch, and Renk in Upper Nile state (AP 10/05/2023; Oz Arab 05/05/2023). In the northern town of Renk, as at 10 May, an average of 3,000 new daily arrivals were registered since 16 April, but only 6,000 of the displaced population were hosted in makeshift transition centres, with thousands more scattered throughout the town. 2,000 people had also travelled by boat from Renk along the Nile River to the state capital Malakal (AP 10/05/2023; IFRC 08/05/2023).

Prior to the escalation of conflict in Sudan, as at the end of 2022, there were 308,374 registered refugees and asylum seekers in South Sudan, the majority of whom (94%) were from Sudan. South Sudan also hosted 2.23 million people internally displaced by conflict, insecurity, and the impact of climate change (UNCHR accessed 15/05/2023). As at 23 March 2023, up to 66% of the population in South Sudan faced Crisis (IPC Phase 3) or worse acute food insecurity levels (FAO 23/03/2023). Prior to the current conflict in Sudan, the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan estimated 9.4 million people in South Sudan to need humanitarian assistance. Projections showed that more than 11 million people were in need of health, food, and livelihood assistance. These figures are expected to increase as the conflict in Sudan continues and displacements increase (OCHA 14/12/2022).

As at 2 May, UNHCR had set up a transit centre for newly displaced people to receive essential protection services, family reunification and telecommunication services to contact family and plan onward travel, and emergency relief items (UNHCR 02/05/2023). As at 9 May, 54% of the new arrivals were women and girls, while men and boys comprised 46%. More than 53% of new arrivals were below the age of 18, while 9% were older than 60 (IFRC 08/05/2023). Children below 18 and older people likely have additional needs and vulnerabilities aggravated by their displacement and affected by conflict. According to aid workers, the returnees do not have the means to get to their homes, while some do not want to return to their villages because of security concerns (Africanews 11/05/2023).

Intercommunal conflict in Upper Nile state, unrelated to the conflict in Sudan, has also led to internal displacement, made worse by the new arrivals. Multiple crises are overstressing the humanitarian capacity to address the needs of displaced people. Climate shocks, such as floods that have been recurrent over the past years, have also led to displacement and increased humanitarian needs across South Sudan (HRW accessed 15/05/2023; IFRC 08/05/2023).

South Sudan has one of the highest INFORM Climate Change Risk scores at 8.5 as at 2022. An increased exposure to floods, droughts, and epidemics is also expected through 2050 (EC accessed 16/05/2023).

Anticipated scope and scale

- As at May 14, at least 57,000 people, of whom 90% were South Sudanese returnees, were displaced to South Sudan from Sudan. Humanitarian responders project more than 240,000 people (180,000 returnees and 60,000 refugees) crossing the border into South Sudan by the end of May 2023 if the conflict continues (IFRC 08/05/2023; UNHCR 16/05/2023).
- With over two million people internally displaced in South Sudan or hosted in neighbouring countries as at 8 April, and almost 75% of the country's 11 million people in need of aid, the recent displacements will worsen an already dire humanitarian crisis (UNHCR accessed 16/05/2023; AP 10/05/2023).

Humanitarian constraints

- IDPs are entering South Sudan through border locations, which present access constraints in the form of poor road conditions and pre-existing insecurity in Upper Nile state, making it difficult for humanitarian responders to set up operations and reach people in need (AP 10/05/2023).
- With the delayed rainy season (April–July) expected to begin by the end of May, roads in certain areas are likely to flood, delaying the distribution of critical assistance to displaced populations (AP 10/05/2023; FAO 23/03/2023).
- South Sudan is one of the most violent countries for humanitarian workers. In 2022, 450 incidents against humanitarian workers were reported, including the killing of nine responders. As at 23 January, conflict in Greater Pibor had killed three humanitarian workers (OCHA 23/01/2023).



CRISIS IMPACT

Food security

As at 10 April, at least 7.8 million people in South Sudan were projected to fall short of their minimum food needs for 2023. This represents a 24% increase from the 6.3 million people who faced food insecurity in 2022. The suspension of WFP food aid distribution in June 2022 because of funding shortages aggravates this situation (IRC 10/04/2023; WFP 14/06/2022).

The conflict in Sudan has led to an increase in food prices in South Sudan border towns. As at 10 May, the cost of a food basket – comprising staples such as wheat flour or rice, lentils, chickpeas or other pulses, vegetable oil (fortified with vitamins A and D), sugar, and iodized salt – had increased by 30% in South Sudanese states along the border since the conflict began (AP 10/05/2023).

Food is a key need for newly arrived refugees and returnees at South Sudan border points.

Health and WASH

In 2021, less than 50% of the South Sudanese had access to health services. Only 2.6% of the South Sudanese Government's 2021 budget was allocated to healthcare, meaning the majority of the population rely on NGOs for their healthcare needs. In 2019, only half of the South Sudanese population had access to safe drinking water, and only 10% had access to basic sanitation (The Borgen Project 28/01/2022).

As at 11 May, most of the displaced population lived in makeshift tents without WASH services in urban areas (Outlook 11/05/2023). Rains expected to begin by the end of the month pose a risk of the spread of waterborne and other communicable diseases, such as malaria.

South Sudan has some of the worst outcomes in the world for key health performance indicators, such as under-five mortality. Between January–May 2023, an average of 75% of all child deaths resulted from preventable diseases, such as diarrhoea, malaria, and pneumonia. Neglected tropical diseases, such as dengue fever, are also endemic in the country (IMA accessed 15/05/2023). Most of the displaced people also arrive at border points physically and psychologically exhausted, sometimes even severely injured (IFRC 08/05/2023).

DRIVERS OF THE CRISIS

Conflict in Sudan

The conflict in Sudan between the Sudanese Armed Forces and Rapid Support Forces, which began on 15 April, had as at 15 May killed almost 500 people and displaced almost one million. Despite the announcement of several ceasefires, both groups continue to fight, especially in densely populated areas such as Khartoum (The Star 15/05/2023).

Prior to the conflict, Sudan hosted at least 800,000 South Sudanese refugees, some of whom have been forced to return to South Sudan and will have dire needs for aid and support (UNHCR 25/04/2023).

COMPOUNDING/AGGRAVATING FACTORS

Conflict and displacement crisis in Upper Nile state

In August 2022, conflict and violence between Kitwang and Sudan People's Liberation Army-in-Opposition forces erupted in Tonga and Panyikang villages of Upper Nile state and spread to other parts of the state, leading to the death and displacement of at least 20,000 people (UNHCR 07/12/2022; HRW accessed 15/05/2023). In November 2022, conflict erupted between the White Army and Shilluk forces in Fashoda county in Upper Nile state and had displaced up to 40,000 people as at 9 December 2022 (OCHA 10/12/2022).

Poverty

Despite having huge oil reserves, South Sudan continues to have high levels of poverty. In 2021, 80% of South Sudanese resided in rural areas and about 82% lived in poverty and survived on less than USD 1.90 per day in 2021 (UNDP accessed 16/05/2023; The Borgen Project 28/01/2022).

Economic crisis and political instability

The civil war in South Sudan has led to a deep economic crisis despite high oil prices enhancing the country's gross domestic product. Between July 2021 and September 2022, the South Sudanese pound lost almost 60% of its value. Oil exports also decreased from 350,000 in 2013 to 150,000 barrels per day in 2022 (IFRC 08/05/2023). The devaluation of the South Sudanese currency makes food purchased in neighbouring countries increasingly more expensive for the local population. Gasoline has also increased in value over the last few years, increasing the price of various goods and their transportation by land (AA 11/08/2022; Central Banking 23/01/2023). The high cost of living could particularly affect the displaced population, with the violence disrupting their livelihoods in Sudan.



Climate hazards and seasonal flooding

In 2022, South Sudan ranked as the country most vulnerable to climate change and had the lowest level of coping capacity worldwide. In 2021, floods affected about 1.2 million people in the country, displacing more than 300,000 and causing economic damage worth USD 671 million (WB 2023).

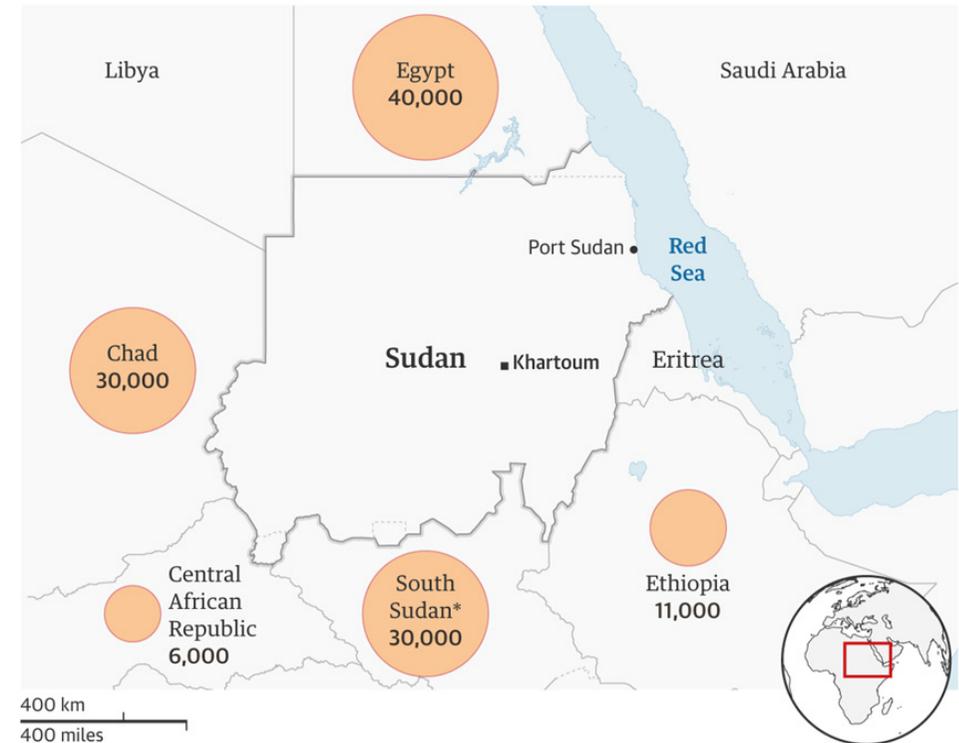
Flooding also affected 900,000 people in late 2022 and early 2023 across South Sudan. It largely affected Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Unity, Warrap, and Western Equatoria, as well as Jonglei and Upper Nile states. The floods destroyed homes and schools, rendered roads impassable, flooded almost 16,500 hectares of farmland, and led to outbreaks of cholera and malaria. The flood impacts have yet to be addressed, as some parts of the state are still submerged. The arrival of newly displaced people settling in the state renders shelter needs more dire (ECHO 13/10/2022; IFRC 08/05/2023).

As at 27 April, humanitarian access into Unity state was still blocked because of flooding, especially in the southern part of the state, including Bentiu, and into Jonglei state. In Rubkona county, flooding displaced at least 7,380 people (WHO 27/04/2023).

FUNDING AND RESPONSE CAPACITY

As at 11 May, the UN had appealed for more than USD 95 million in urgent assistance to respond to the refugee crisis (Africanews 11/05/2023). Only 27% of the 2023 Humanitarian Response Plan for South Sudan had the required funds as at 12 May (OCHA accessed 15/05/2023).

Displacement figures resulting from the Sudan conflict as at 5 May



Guardian graphic. Source: UNHCR. *almost all those going to South Sudan are former refugees returning to their home country

Source: The Guardian (05/05/2023)