

Sudan: Voluntary Repatriation Update 2018

31 December 2018

1,759

Sudanese refugees assisted to return to places of origin in West and North Darfur in 2018

4,804

Chadian refugees assisted to return to places of origin in eastern Chad in 2018

505

households received USD400 for shelter construction and USD200 for livelihoods*

3,855

Refugee children assisted to return to Sudan and Chad in 2018

1,047

Refugee men assisted to return to Sudan and Chad in 2018

1,661

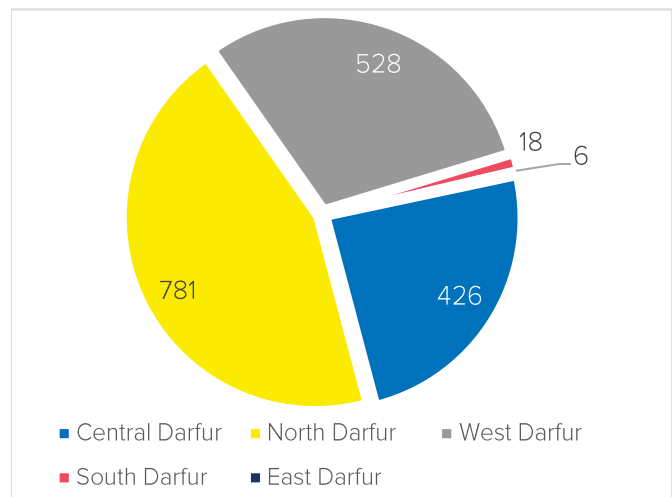
Refugee women assisted to return to Sudan and Chad in 2018

One camp closed

Following volrep of 475 Chadian refugees, Mukjar Camp in Central Darfur closed in May 2018

REFUGEE RETURNEES' FINAL DESTINATIONS

Returnees in 2018

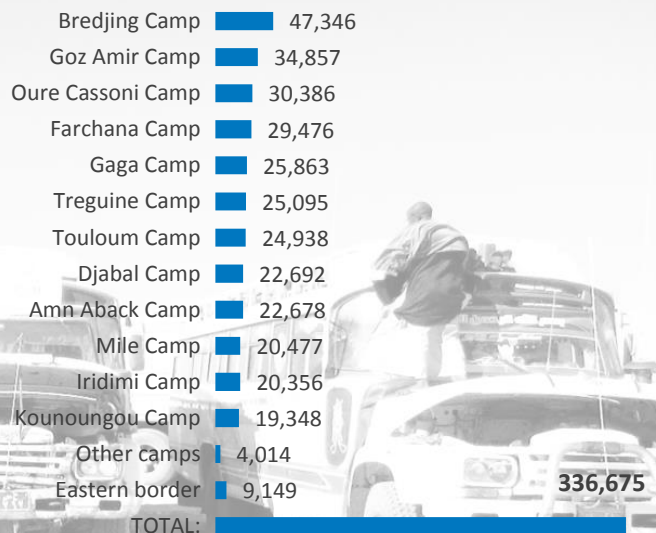


POPULATIONS OF CONCERN

Chadian refugees in Sudan



Sudanese refugees in Chad



* This assistance for 180 vulnerable households was provided based on a contribution from the UN Darfur Fund.

** At the end of 2018 following the completion of 18 voluntary repatriation convoys from Sudan to Chad, and the repatriation of 475 refugees from Mukjar Camp, that camp was closed.

Overview of voluntary repatriation in 2018

In 2018, UNHCR together with Governments of Sudan and Chad assisted the voluntary repatriation (volrep) of 1,759 Sudanese refugee returnees (505 households) from Chad to a number of areas in the five Darfur states. The refugee returnees included 1,043 children (520 girls and 523 boys), 422 women and 294 men, among whom 177 persons were identified to have specific protection needs.

The returnees were coming home after more than a decade in exile, living in difficult conditions in some 19 refugee camps scattered across eastern Chad.



Convoy from Chad approaching Tina Reception Centre in North Darfur.
© UNHCR/Ubaid Ullah



Verification of Sudanese refugee returnees at the Tina Reception Centre way station. © UNHCR/Ubaid Ullah

The 2018 volrep activities followed from the signing of Tripartite Agreements between the Governments of Sudan and Chad with UNHCR in May 2017. The Agreement for Sudanese refugee returns outlined the legal framework, as well as the related outreach and communication needs to ensure that the returns activities were achieved with voluntary participation, as well as in safety and dignity. In line with the Agreement, information campaigns were conducted in six camps in Chad mutually agreed between the parties, to enable refugees to make informed decisions regarding repatriation to Sudan while emphasising on the voluntary nature of the repatriation.

The assisted volrep of Sudanese refugee returnees has taken place in two phases. Some 353 refugees (202 female, 151 male) in 105 households were assisted to return from Iriba in eastern Chad in six (6) convoys from 14 April until 8 June 2018. The volrep programme was then halted from 9 June to 20 November due to the accessibility of roads in Chad and Darfur, during the rainy season. Volrep resumed from 22 November and until the end of the year, repatriated 1,406 individuals (718 women, 688 men) in 400 households who were assisted to return from Iriba and Goz-Beida in Chad in three (3) convoys.

The volrep exercise in 2018 faced operational challenges in its implementation, including scarcity of fuel and liquidity crisis for CBI. UNHCR and COR managed to take exceptional measures to overcome these challenges particularly in the first half of 2018.

Assistance provided to refugee returnees

Refugee returnees in Sudan were provided core relief (non-food) items at the way stations in Chad before departure. Upon arrival at the reception centres in Darfur, UNHCR and COR verified the returnees, and provided them with reintegration packages, and provided transportation up to their final destination for them and their household effects.

The reintegration package included cash-based assistance (CBI) to help rebuild shelters (USD 400 per family), and one-time support to for income-generating activities (USD 200 per individual). They received food assistance from the World Food Programme for three months upon arrival, to help them to settle down in their return areas. The distribution of reintegration packages for 180 households (900



Sudanese returnees from East Chad received in Tina reception center in North Darfur before heading to their home. © UNHCR)

individuals) out of the total 505 households was supported by the UN Darfur Fund's FaST project, sponsored by the Qatar Development Fund.

Projects implemented in return areas

UNHCR has undertaken community-based projects to ensure the sustainability of returns. In coordination with COR, UNHCR planned projects in various return villages to ensure equitable access for Sudanese refugee returnees many of whom were returning after more than a decade, to a very changed and unfamiliar context.

UNHCR's interventions focused on essential services delivery, livelihoods support, security, and peaceful coexistence between communities. In these sectors, UNHCR engaged hydro-geological capacity to survey and establish two deep boreholes in Um Barou locality in North Darfur, upgraded three water points in return villages of Tina and Kornoï localities, established five village water management committees and hygiene promoter groups, constructed a primary school in Kebkabiya locality, constructed one police post each in Kebkabiya and Kutum localities, distributed livestock support to 60 most vulnerable returnees, and installed six (6) grain milling machines in schools selected by the community to promote peaceful coexistence. UNHCR also organised a conflict resolution and peace-building workshop and community protection committee trainings in Tina, Kornoï and Um Barou localities.

UNHCR works with the Return, Recovery and Reintegration sector chaired by the Government of Sudan's Voluntary Return and Reintegration Commission (VRRC), UNDP and IOM to mobilize further support for reintegration assistance for the refugee returnees.

Information campaigns in eastern Chad

To sensitize Sudanese refugees in Chad regarding the availability of the voluntary repatriation support, and address their concerns and queries surrounding repatriation UNHCR, the Government of Sudan's Commission for Refugees (COR), and the Chadian Commission Nationale d'Accueil et de Réinsertion des Réfugiés et des Rapatriés (CNARR) that is responsible for refugees, conducted information campaigns in six selected camps in the Farchana and Goz Beida areas of Chad from 28 October to 5 November 2018.

During this campaign refugees raised questions pertaining to security, availability of infrastructure and basic services, food security, land and the disarmament campaign.

UNHCR and COR shared information that would enable refugees to make decisions regarding return to Sudan, and underscored the importance of voluntary and informed decision. This was the second high-level mission of the Sudanese government to the refugee camps in Chad since the signing of the tripartite agreement in May 2017.

The information campaigns in the camps were followed by the stipulated ‘Go-and-See’ visits of a number of the Sudanese refugee leaders from Kerfie settlement in Chad, to their home villages in Central Darfur on 7 November 2019 to assess the prevailing conditions in their areas of origin, before deciding to opt for assisted volrep.

Returnee Monitoring

UNHCR and COR implemented additional clauses of the Tripartite Agreement by conducting 15 monitoring missions in areas where refugee returnees have settled, to periodically assess the return conditions, and to actively engage with local authorities, host communities and the community-based structures to assess the socioeconomic stability of the communities and the sustainability of the returns, generally a month after the repatriation has taken place.

A number of refugee returnees have faced challenges returning to their own land in their places of origin. UNHCR has been working with the relevant government authorities, including locality commissioners and native administration to resolve these issues and prevent further land disputes as the volrep programme continues. Based on the Tripartite Agreement, the Government has committed to providing refugee returnees with land, security and documentation, including national identity cards and health insurance.

A monitoring mission in September 2018 to Kebkabiya locality centre in North Darfur, conducted with COR and VRRC indicated that out of the six localities of Tina, Kornoj, Seref Umra, Kutum, El Fasher and Kebkabiya, returnees going to Kutum and Kebkabiya localities were not able to access their places of origin and remained in Kebkabiya. The mission met with the Commissioner, the native administration and refugee returnees, and agreed to advocate to central government



A family of returnees with their luggage and household effects at the reception centre in Tina, North Darfur. © UNHCR/Ubaid Ullah

to resolve the issues linked to use of land. The leaders of Kebkabiya and Seref Umra also discouraged returns to Jaddara/Amar and Adar, until a proposed peace conference was held there, and requested financial support for it.

Another monitoring mission in October 2018 conducted in Kutum locality to assess the situation of returnees’ reintegration reported that the security situation was calm, that refugee returnees were able to reintegrate in their own communities without much difficulty and that the majority of the returnees were able to access their own land for farming however the return villages of returnees were in need of basic services. The community leaders and authorities requested longer advance coordination prior to the convoy movement in order to be able to facilitate returns smoothly. Additionally many

returnees spontaneously moved to the Kassab IDP camp to live with relatives considering the situation there to be preferable, and the mission recommended for WFP to extend their general food distribution to the returnees in Kassab IDP camp also.

Outlook for 2019

As of 30 April 2017 when the latest Return Intention Survey was concluded, there were 317,219 Sudanese refugees residing in 12 camps and one village in eastern Chad. The volrep operational plan included 24,711 Sudanese refugees from these areas, who had voluntarily expressed their intention to return to North, West and Central Darfur States or other areas in the Sudan. With over 330,000 Sudanese refugees who still remain in asylum in Chad in and outside of camps, UNHCR will continue to assist those

refugees wishing to voluntarily repatriate to Darfur. The Tripartite stakeholders resumed the volrep of Sudanese refugee returnees from Chad on 30 January 2019 and is finalising the planned convoy movement schedule for 2019. The current funding levels will enable the assisted volrep of 5,000 Sudanese refugee returnees from Chad, who would be provided with return and reintegration packages including CBI, three months food ration and transportation up to final destinations.



Refugee returnees in North Darfur reorganise their belongings at the UNHCR-COR way station in preparation for their onward journeys to their places of origin. © UNHCR/Joseph Chege

4,804 Chadian refugees returned home with UNHCR support

In 2018 UNHCR and the Governments of Sudan and Chad had successfully supported 4,804 Chadian refugees (2,737 females, 2,067 males), including 2,812 children (1,498 girls and 1,314 boys) to return to their areas of origin in Chad from refugee camps in Central Darfur in Sudan, where they were in asylum for more than a decade.

UNHCR and COR facilitated the repatriation of Chadian refugees from Sudan in two phases in 2018. Prior to the onset of the rainy season, 12 road convoys were organised to the Moudeina reception centre in eastern Chad, from Um Shalaya and Mukjar refugee camps in Central Darfur. These convoys transported 3,858 (2,200 female, 1,658 men) Chadian refugee returnees, including 2,301 children (1,209 females and 1,092 males). In addition to

transportation support from camps to their final destination villages, refugee returnees received return packages consisting of NFIs and cash based interventions (CBI).

The volrep programme for Chadian refugees living in Um Shalaya refugee camp resumed in December 2018 after the rainy season with some 946 (537 female, 409 males) refugee returnees, including 511 children (289 females and 222 males) assisted to return in three (3) convoys. The returnees in Chad received reintegration assistance provided by UNHCR and the Government of Chad.

Since the outbreak of violence in Chad from 2005 to 2007, UNHCR and partners have worked with the Government of Sudan to provide Chadian refugees with international protection and assistance, including the establishment of two refugee camps in Central Darfur. Refugees have accessed basic services and have also been provided with protection services, NFI, and food with the support of UNHCR, COR and Save the Children, Sweden.

Mukjar camp was closed in May 2018 with the repatriation of the entire refugee population. The land and facilities of Mukjar camp were handed over to local authorities and the host community while services are continuing in Um Shalaya camp for the remaining refugees consisting of 3,365 refugees (911 households).



Trucks loaded with Chadian refugee returnees' luggage ready to depart from Um Shalaya camp in Darfur © UNHCR

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