

MULTI-YEAR STRATEGY 2023 - 2025 SOUTH SUDAN



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1. Strategy

1.1 Executive Summary

The UNHCR 2023-25 vision in South Sudan is oriented towards solutions grounded in the life-saving humanitarian response and protection needs for forcibly displaced and stateless populations. This vision recognizes all refugees, IDPs, returnees and stateless populations as powerful agents of change and as contributors to peace alongside vibrant and diverse host communities.

UNHCR supports individual and community empowerment to build on the foundations of a young and developing nation. UNHCR works alongside refugees, IDPs, returnees, people at risk of statelessness, government authorities, and both new and existing peace, development, and humanitarian partners to strengthen solutions-focused, peacebuilding, and climate-adapted programming while further promoting South Sudan's exemplary refugee protection model.

The 2023-25 strategy reaffirms UNHCR's commitment to working alongside refugees, IDPs, returnees and people at risk of statelessness as well as with development, peace, and humanitarian partners to improve emergency response, human development; promote gender equality; support women and youth empowerment; and ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met. The 2023-25 planning period will see a strategic shift toward empowering activities to ensure that forcibly displaced people and host communities achieve greater self-reliance and gender equality. The 2023-25 strategy aligns UNHCR activities with the Global Compact for Refugees (GCR) and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).

UNHCR will maintain a strong emergency and coordination posture whilst strengthening community resilience mechanisms. UNHCR will continue to respond quickly to the influx of refugees and returnees following the Sudan conflict and life-threatening localized crises such as flooding and sub-national violence.

UNHCR will also support area-based approaches for solutions in coordination with

other actors, including such initiatives as the Area-Based Coordination model, the implementation of the National Durable Solutions Strategy, and the ‘Pockets of Hope’ initiative, to further displacement and foster resilience. They will contribute to collective outcomes supported by multiple actors to enhance protection and promote safe, dignified, and comprehensive solutions for refugees, IDPs, returnees and wider displacement-affected communities.

Planning assumptions anticipate that flood-related climatic shocks and sub-national violence are likely to persist. Internal population displacement is expected to remain high but relatively stable. The impact of the crisis in Sudan is likely to worsen, putting at risk the economy and security of South Sudan. Elections and a peaceful transfer of power could increase refugee and IDP returns, but there is a high risk of further instability and displacement in case of a difficult transition. Moreover, progress towards implementing crucial elements of the Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS), following a 24-month extension, will be crucial for realizing UNHCR’s vision for South Sudan for 2023-25.

1.2 Situation analysis

South Sudan has approximately two million internally displaced persons (IDPs), and 2.3 million of its citizens have sought refuge in neighbouring countries. Additionally, the country hosts close to 440,000 refugees, primarily from Sudan. Since the start of the Sudan conflict in April 2023, over 640,000 new arrivals have been recorded, including 141,595 Sudanese refugees as of April 2024.

Before the conflict in Sudan, South Sudan was still grappling with the aftermath of its brutal civil war and a deep humanitarian crisis fueled by the effects of climate change, conflict, and food insecurity. Over three-quarters of the population requires humanitarian aid. The country has experienced four years of historic flooding, with water inundating homes, farmlands, and the traditional transhumance routes of cattle herders. This has adversely affected crop yields and livestock and exacerbated the country’s economic and food crises. Several communities have been permanently displaced due to ongoing severe weather events. Extreme weather patterns brought forth by El Niño in East Africa throughout 2023 are expected to continue in 2024, potentially causing further devastating impacts in South Sudan.

The conflict in Sudan has exacerbated South Sudan’s already severe humanitarian crisis. Many new arrivals are reaching inaccessible border areas with limited connectivity and infrastructure, making humanitarian aid delivery costly and complicated. Disrupted supply lines, dependent on cross-border trade with Sudan, have led to skyrocketing prices and a scarcity of basic items.

The Sudan crisis emergency response has prioritized assisting new arrivals with onward transportation from border areas, providing life-saving assistance at transit and reception sites. Onward transportation is complicated and limited due to poor

infrastructure and climatic conditions, resulting in a significant backlog of populations stranded in border areas. More new arrivals are projected as the Sudan conflict worsens, contributing to alarming situations at transit sites with dire humanitarian needs. New arrivals who can travel onward to their areas of origin or destinations of choice are likely to go to communities that are already extremely fragile. As such, the operation is faced with increased population groups with heightened protection risks, necessitating targeted interventions to address specific needs, including for LGBTQI+ individuals. Severe WFP food cuts in 2024 will result in complex protection vulnerabilities, with an increased number of refugees with acute needs arising from limited livelihood options. Evolving risk factors such as discrimination, violence, displacement, and socioeconomic and political instability will also impact the protection context.

With its progressive 2012 Refugee Act and GRF pledges, South Sudan has also recently acceded to the international conventions on the reduction of statelessness. Nevertheless, refugees, IDPs, returnees, and people at risk of statelessness across South Sudan face protection challenges, including access to justice and the legal system, documentation, and housing, land, and property (HLP).

The outcome of the upcoming 2024 South Sudanese general election is anticipated to significantly impact political and security dynamics across the country.

1.3 Vision and strategic orientation

The UNHCR 2023-25 vision in South Sudan is oriented towards solutions while grounded in the life-saving emergency response and the protection needs of the forcibly displaced and stateless population. In line with the High Commissioner's strategic objectives for 2022-2026, UNHCR's protection and solutions strategy aims to protect, secure, and defend the rights of displaced people and stateless persons; respond to emergencies and situations rapidly and effectively; empower people to increase their resilience and build their futures; and solve problems by addressing the consequences of displacement.

The 2023-25 strategy affirms UNHCR's commitment to putting refugees, IDPs, returnees, and people at risk of statelessness at the centre of its work and actions through enhanced accountability to affected populations and working alongside development, peace, and humanitarian partners to achieve timely response, peace and development outcomes, and promote gender equality; support women and youth empowerment; and ensure the needs of the most vulnerable are met.

UNHCR will work to strengthen accountability, especially for women and children, to reinforce efforts to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, and mainstream development engagement in responses from the outset, especially by building coalitions with development actors. Further, there will be an increased focus on solutions for refugees, internally displaced people, returnees, and stateless persons in light of the National Durable Solutions Strategy in South Sudan.

In response to recent funding cuts and heightened humanitarian and protection needs anticipated for 2025, UNHCR will support the Government of South Sudan in implementing its progressive laws and policies, including the GRF pledges, the 2012 Refugee Act, and the endorsed 2023 National Durable Solutions Strategy. Emphasis will be placed on enhancing the national asylum process and promoting the domestication of the recently ratified 1954 and 1961 Statelessness Conventions.

The operation will also strengthen information management and data sharing systems to enable timely protection analysis and boost coordination and collaboration with relevant stakeholders to align priorities and maximize resource use. UNHCR will ensure RSD cases are addressed on time, advocate for comprehensive case consideration, and maintain high processing standards.

Given the emergency response to Sudan, UNHCR will work with partners and government authorities to promote life-saving assistance, protection, and solutions for new arrivals. Returnees will be empowered to reach their areas of origin or their choice to re-establish their lives as early as possible through area-based solutions. UNHCR will further support the good practices in South Sudan, where refugees and asylum-seekers are granted access to territory and protection and benefit from the assistance and services in the refugee-hosting areas. Self-reliance and resilience will be key priorities to guide UNHCR's emergency response, protection, and intervention solutions.

UNHCR will continue to build on its community-based approach, further strengthening community-based protection mechanisms and supporting community-driven initiatives for their solutions and resilience. UNHCR will work alongside affected communities, government authorities, and humanitarian, development, and peace-building partners to overcome a lack of basic services, dependence on humanitarian aid, economic instability, insecurity, and vulnerability to environmental shocks, likely worsening with climate change.

1.4 Age, gender and diversity

The 2023-25 strategy affirms UNHCR's commitment to putting refugees, IDPs, returnees and people at risk of statelessness at the centre of its work and actions through enhanced accountability to affected populations. UNHCR takes meaningful inclusion and diversity regarding age, gender, and people with diversity, including disability, as paramount priorities. At the core of UNHCR's Age, Gender and Diversity (AGD) policy stands the Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP). UNHCR values the communication and feedback from diverse voices from the affected communities as they inform UNHCR operational decision-making and restore agency to affected communities by listening and responding to their needs, perspectives and priorities.

Communication with communities (CwC) and community empowerment will be key protection priorities in 2025. UNHCR will enhance AAP activities through the enhanced quality of UNHCR CWC. The communication channels, including focus group discussions, participatory assessments, and community dialogues, ensure transparent, two-way communication mechanisms whilst household surveys provide vital insights into refugee populations' living conditions. UNHCR works closely with the Government to offer technical guidance and build capacities on gender equality and the eradication of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). In collaboration with partners, prevention, risk mitigation, and response activities are in place to identify and register cases of abuse, neglect, GBV and violations of children's rights. Child Protection community support mechanisms, child-friendly spaces and educational activities increase skills and reinforce positive behaviors. UNHCR and partners have undertaken specialized services for GBV and child protection cases, enhancing multi-sectoral referral and coordination. A clear feedback mechanism is in place, alongside efforts to collect and utilize quality data, facilitate data sharing and optimize resources during programming implementation.

At the policy level, UNHCR will continue to work closely with parliamentary members to promote the mainstreaming of gender equality in government programmes. South Sudan has a National Gender Policy (2012) and the Strategic National Action Plan (SNAP) to End Child Marriage in South Sudan 2017-2030. UNHCR advocates and supports the plan for an Anti-GBV Bill to reform and consolidate the law relating to GBV and establish a specialized Court and the One Stop Centre to enhance the quality of the multi-sectoral response offered to survivors.

2. Impact statements

By 2025, forcibly displaced and stateless persons enjoy more favourable rights to access territory and documentation.

Impact area: Attaining favourable protection environments

Outcome statements

Persons of concern exercise their rights and duties associated with access to territory and possession of documents.

Outcome area: Access to territory, registration and documentation

Persons of concern have improved access to justice by 2025.

Outcome area: Safety and access to justice

Asylum seekers have access to fair and efficient national Refugee Status Determination procedures.

Outcome area: Refugee status determination

More deserving and vulnerable refugees have access to third country solutions through resettlement and complementary pathways.

Outcome area: Resettlement and complementary pathways

Affected populations are increasingly resistant to shocks.

Impact area: Realizing rights in safe environments

Outcome statements

Urgent humanitarian needs are addressed for all persons of concern.

Outcome area: Well-being and basic needs

Persons of concern have improved access to clean and safe water, sanitation and hygiene facilities by 2025.

Outcome area: Clean water, sanitation and hygiene

Persons of concern have improved access to healthcare by 2025.

Outcome area: Healthy lives

Support to operations provided for the timely and efficient delivery and management of supplies

Outcome area: Operational support and supply chain

By 2025, communities achieve greater self-reliance and gender equality.

Impact area: Empowering communities and achieving gender equality

Outcome statements

Youth and children are well-integrated into their communities and able to assume effective roles in them.

Outcome area: Child protection

The majority of persons of concern gain access to sustainable livelihoods by 2025.

Outcome area: Self-reliance, economic inclusion and livelihoods

Communities adopt structures and practices for the improvement of self-reliance and freedom of choice.

Outcome area: Community engagement and women's empowerment

By 2025, children and youth have enhanced access to education opportunities.

Outcome area: Education

National authorities and communities are able to strengthen gender equality and respond to/prevent GBV.

Outcome area: Gender-based violence

By 2025, persons of concern have access to sustainable shelter solutions.

Outcome area: Sustainable housing and settlements

Forcibly displaced and stateless persons can freely choose amongst durable solutions pathways.

Impact area: Securing solutions

Outcome statements

By 2025, national policy supports a more favourable protection environment for persons of concern.

Outcome area: Protection policy and law

By 2025, persons of concern have access to durable solutions.

Outcome area: Local integration and other local solutions