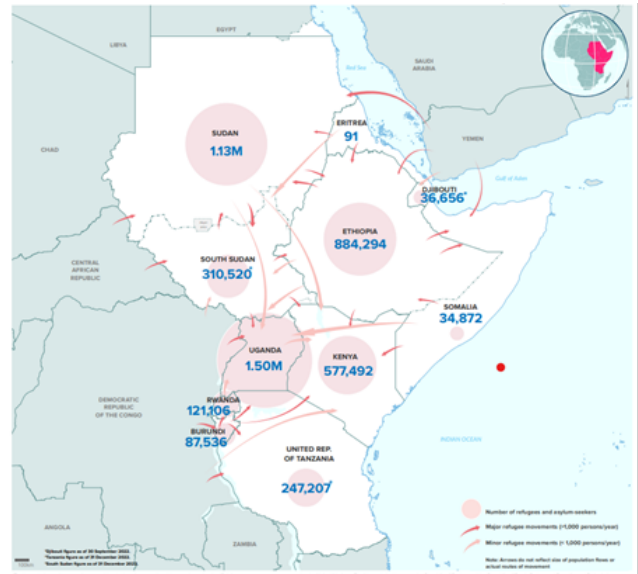


Refugee Crises: South Sudan

South Sudan represents the largest refugee crisis in Africa.¹ It has sadly been a major issue since 2013 and as of February 2023, there were 2,282,402 total refugees and asylum seekers from South Sudan.² This is compounded by the presence of 2 million internally displaced persons within the country itself.³ On the human development index, South Sudan is ranked 186th of 189 countries.⁴ This highlights how dire the situation is for its citizens and how urgently the country needs to be supported. South Sudan is surrounded by several countries facing their own significant socio-economic woes which has rendered the East African region particularly unstable. Despite this, the region has lacked sufficient government and media attention and help.



Causes

Due to the longevity of the refugee crisis in South Sudan, it has been influenced by a number of factors. It ultimately stems from the Civil War which began in 2013 as a result of President Salva Kiir's removal of his deputy Riek Machar.⁵ The former belonged to the Dinka tribe and the latter to the Nuer tribe, which meant that tensions evolved along ethnic lines. Significant violence has been perpetrated by both government and rebel forces – the fear or experience of which is often cited as a major cause of fleeing the country.⁶ Slow intervention by Security Council Members and Ugandan backing for Kiir has exacerbated the conflict and ensuing numbers of refugees.⁷ Despite a peace agreement in 2018 between the conflicting parties, violence and ineffective governance has continued. Between August and December 2022, escalating armed conflict in the Upper-Nile state displaced 20,000 people.⁸ The refugee crisis is however also a product of natural disasters. South Sudan is one of the most vulnerable countries to the impact of climate change in the world.⁹ As a result, flooding and drought have been widespread. These have led to food shortages and the

¹ <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/south-sudan/>

² <https://data.unhcr.org/en/situations/southsudan>

³ <https://reporting.unhcr.org/situation-reporting?sitcode=126>

⁴ <https://www.trocaire.org/news/south-sudans-crisis-explained-5-things-you-need-to-know/>

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<https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2021/07/10/south-sudans-second-decade-may-be-as-trobled-as-its-first>

⁶ <https://borgenproject.org/bidi-bidi-refugee-settlement-the-worlds-largest/>

⁷

<https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2018/02/16/how-the-international-community-has-failed-south-sudan> ; <https://www.economist.com/middle-east-and-africa/2014/03/01/back-with-a-vengeance>

⁸

<https://www.unhcr.org/uk/news/press/2022/12/63905eca4/thousands-displaced-escalating-conflict-south-sudans-greater-upper-nile.html>

⁹ <https://www.nupi.no/nyheter/climate-peace-and-security-fact-sheet-south-sudan2>



destruction of property – two additional reasons to leave the country. The onset of the war in Ukraine has limited food and aid deliveries to South Sudan which has only worsened the food insecurity crisis and thus refugee crisis there.¹⁰

Consequences:

Refugees have been victims of extremely poor living conditions. Many live in over-filled refugee camps or out-of-camp settlements which suffer from diseases such as malaria and HIV/AIDS.¹¹ This stems from poor access to sanitation and clean water. There are few chances for social advancement and being able to leave these settlements or camps. Moreover, 65% of the refugee population are children.¹² These children have suffered major disruptions to their education as well as to their physical development due to malnutrition.¹³ The other large group which constitutes the refugees are women. They have been victims of sexual violence and conditions have meant that South Sudanese women are also victims of the highest maternal mortality rate in the world.¹⁴

It is important to note that refugee conditions differ depending on the host country; for example, Uganda and Kenya offer more rights, protection and stability to refugees whereas Sudan denies South Sudanese refugees citizenship and hence access to education and healthcare.¹⁵ Moreover, the consequences of the refugee crisis on these surrounding host countries must be considered. More than 2.33 million South Sudanese refugees live in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan, and Uganda.¹⁶ In some cases, the presence of refugees has heightened pre-existing tensions over food and inflation, and exacerbated ethnic tensions.¹⁷ Essentially, many of these nations have now become dependent on humanitarian assistance and aid.

Current Action

South Sudan is attempting to encourage refugees to return to the country through more cooperative governance and an open-door policy. Meanwhile, **host countries** are continuing to house refugees in

¹⁰

<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2022/jun/14/millions-at-risk-in-south-sudan-as-ukraine-war-forces-slashing-of-aid-world-food-programme>

¹¹ <https://borgenproject.org/bidi-bidi-refugee-settlement-the-worlds-largest/> ;

<https://www.msf.org/south-sudanese-refugees-sudan-what-you-need-know>

¹² <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-regional-refugee-response-plan-2022-mid-year-report>

¹³ <https://www.concern.net/news/south-sudan-crisis-explained>

¹⁴ <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/02/05/pope-peace-south-sudan-africa-00081218>

¹⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-regional-refugee-response-plan-2022-mid-year-report>

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<https://www.reuters.com/world/africa/south-sudanese-return-sudan-seeking-relief-find-more-hardship-2022-08-25/>

¹⁶ <https://reliefweb.int/report/south-sudan/south-sudan-regional-refugee-response-plan-2022-mid-year-report>

¹⁷

https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/south_sudan_regional_refugee_response_plan_2021.pdf

their territories and some nations, such as Kenya, are focussing on integrating refugee and host communities socially and economically.¹⁸

The **UNHCR** has played an active role in supporting refugees in their host countries whilst also supporting the South Sudan Government in welcoming refugees back. For example, the UNHCR has overseen the specific, targeted rebuilding of communities, the training of border staff and the delivering of vocational skills training. Over 3,800 women and girls have been reached with psychosocial support activities and almost 170,000 households have been reached with gender-based violence prevention/response awareness activities.¹⁹

NGOs and charities have been instrumental in delivering food, health and financial assistance to the refugees in camps and settlements. For example, MSF has set up mobile clinics to treat and test for malaria, provide vaccinations and deliver mental health support.²⁰

Forced to Flee's Call to Action

- Calls upon nation-states to deliver the necessary funding to UNHCR missions
- Encourages citizens and businesses to donate to those organisations supporting the refugees
- Requests that more support is given to the Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity of South Sudan in areas concerning political stability, economic policy and environmental policy

Sustainable Development Goals:



¹⁸

https://www.acaps.org/sites/acaps/files/key-documents/files/south_sudan_regional_refugee_response_plan_2021.pdf

¹⁹ <https://reporting.unhcr.org/situation-reporting?sitcode=126>

²⁰

<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/where-we-work/south-sudan#:~:text=Innovative%20malaria%20treatment,care%20at%20the%20state%20hospital.>