

South Sudan

COVID-19 Update

05 - 20 May 2020



Newly displaced IDPs observe COVID-19 measures as they receive core relief items in the Yei area.
© UNHCR/Tumaini Sango

Key Developments

- As of 20 May 2020, there are 481 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in South Sudan, 6 recoveries and 5 deaths. The majority of cases are linked to local transmission.
- On 15 May, President Salva Kiir dissolved the High-Level COVID-19 Task Force and replaced it with a National Task Force on COVID-19. This newly formed task force will be led by Abdelbagi Ayii Akol – Vice President for Service Cluster, with the majority of members comprising of undersecretaries.
- On 09 and 11 May, the High-level Task Force reiterated directives for physical distancing, handwashing and mandated wearing of face masks in public.
- Incidences of inter-communal violence, cattle raiding, revenge killings and armed violence throughout the country has created serious security challenges to humanitarian operations

and COVID-19 preparedness and response. Humanitarians are unable to reach these communities and those internally displaced. The ability for those newly displaced to access health and WaSH facilities are limited and observing physical distancing difficult.

- On 7 May, the 4th Meeting of the Presidency relaxed previous COVID-19 directives included moving curfew to 10pm from 7pm; opening of restaurants, bars and non-essential shops while observing physical distancing; resumption of motorbike taxis, domestic and regional travel by air and land. [\[LINK\]](#) The High-level Task Force (8th May, [LINK](#)) and Civil Aviation Authority (11th May) confirmed the reopening of the airspace and precautionary measures in place for travels, including a certificate of negative COVID-19 test or a certificate of self-quarantine taken 14 days immediately before the departure date of passenger.
- Violence at the border with the Democratic Republic of the Congo lead to almost 200 Congolese to see asylum in South Sudan. UNHCR is working with the government to continue ensuring access to asylum despite movement restrictions in place to combat COVID-19.

COVID-19 Coordination

- UNHCR is participating in the National COVID-19 Steering Committee and its various technical working groups, headed by the Ministry of Health (MoH) and the World Health Organization (WHO).
 - The National Steering Committee endorsed a Protection Reference Group that will be led by the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare and co-led by UNHCR.
 - A review of the South Sudan National COVID-19 Response Plan is ongoing acknowledging the rapid increase in the number of confirmed cases. It is being done through the National COVID-19 Steering Committee and its Technical Working Groups. Key focus areas include addressing the increasing local transmission; surveillance and response; duties of States and Counties; standard operating procedures for points of entry, and camps and camp like settings. UNHCR and partners are advocating for protection considerations and ensuring guidelines include forcibly displaced persons and their hosting community contexts.
- In support to national preparedness and response efforts, UNHCR and partners are implementing its contextualized COVID-19 contingency plan focused on refugee-hosting areas as well as operations continuity plans to ensure the continued delivery of critical life-saving activities and protection interventions. In refugee hosting areas, the local COVID-19 Task Forces are co-chaired by local authorities and UNHCR.
- UNHCR is working closely with its partners to share information, adapt and enhance the delivery of protection and services to refugees, IDPs, returnees and host communities. UNHCR, partners, and local health authorities are adapting the national plan to the local contexts which includes mass communication and community engagement (including hosting communities).



"It is not easy for us not to have any contact with our neighbours, but if this is going to help stop the disease from spreading, we should stay in our homes," says Pathey Kuley, a POC resident.
 © HDC/Igor Latluk

COVID-19 Preparedness and Response

- Healthcare centres increased their capacity to 61 beds in Jamjang. Repair and rehabilitation of treatment and isolation wards continue in Maban's refugee camps. Locations for expansion of health wards in Lasu, Gorom (Central Equatoria) and Makpandu (Western Equatoria) have been identified and refugee housing units installed to expand capabilities.

- Bunj (Upper Nile State) and Pariang County hospital (Unity State) are both major hospitals serving refugees and host communities. Treatment and isolation units have installed, and tents put up for triage and observation.

- Refugee council leaders in Ajuong Thok and Pamir refugee camps formed refugee COVID-19 Task Force groups consisting of refugee

council leaders, area block leaders, women leaders, youth leaders and community watch team leaders. The refugee task forces coordinate with and support the County level COVID-19 Task Force to identify the needs of different refugee groups and ensure extended reach of awareness raising activities at community level including to persons with specific needs.

- UNHCR undertook an analysis of the existing water sources in Maban's four refugee camps. Due to the damage from the 2019 floods, six solar systems will be repaired and a gap of fifteen generators and thirteen submersible pumps are needed to maintain global levels of water.
- In Jamajng, to support the host community in COVID-19 preparedness and prevention, UNHCR and partners are support the drilling and rehabilitation of a boreholes, construction of latrines at health facilities, a distribution of soap, and the provision of health and nutrition services.
- Risk communication and community engagement activities continued with the use of nationally approved information materials. Awareness raising was done door to door, through small community level meetings respecting social distancing measures, and talk shows on local radio stations. During these activities, UNHCR and partners are also addressing rumours and misinformation about COVID-19.
- UNHCR and partners finalized camp level COVID-19 preparedness plans in line with the



Mission to Alleviate Suffering in South Sudan (MASS) is in 99.9 Spirit FM studio in Yei, talking about COVID-19 prevention.
 © UNHCR/Doris Poni

National and State COVID-19 preparedness and response actions.

- UNHCR, partners, and frontline workers took part in various COVID-19 trainings to enhance their capacity such as case management; COVID-19 surveillance; management of malnutrition in COVID-19 positive cases; safe water supply coordination and disinfection techniques and a refresher on the integrated refugee health information system that was rolled out last year. Trainings will be ongoing to ensure all persons are fully equipped to respond to the COVID-19 situation.
- In support to national COVID-19 response efforts in areas hosting refugees, UNHCR donated two ambulances to the Yambio State Hospital (Western Equatoria) and to the Kajo Keji Hospital (Central Equatoria). A donation of hygiene materials, masks, beddings, blankets, mosquito nets, amongst others, was also made on 20 May 2020 to the Juba Teaching Hospital and the El Sabbah Children Hospital in Juba. These are the hospitals where refugees from various locations in South Sudan have been referred to over the years for tertiary care.
- 100,000 masks donated in-kind to UNHCR arrived in Juba in mid-May 2020 and are being dispatched to field locations to support UNHCR and partners' frontline workers.

Protection

- UNHCR is advocating to relevant government ministries on the need for cessation of violence, including cattle raiding, as this negatively impacts COVID-19 response measures currently underway. A global call to lay down arms was released on 30 April [\[LINK\]](#).
- UNHCR is working with the government to continue ensuring access to asylum despite movement restrictions in place to combat COVID-19. 198 people fleeing recent violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, many of whom are vulnerable women and children, have been sensitized on the new coronavirus and preventive measures and received essential food and non-food items. They are completing 14 days of quarantine in a safe location before relocating to Makpandu refugee camp. [\[LINK\]](#)
- UNHCR, partners and refugee leadership stepped up remote registration of new-born babies. This ensures their inclusion for the provision of assistance and necessary documentation.
- UNHCR and partners enhanced SGBV and child protection activities in view of increasing protection concerns. SGBV and child protection activities have been reviewed and adapted allowing for continued assistance while observing COVID-19 precautionary measures at centres, including psychosocial support. In Jamjang, FM radio shows are being used to scale up the spread of messages on SGBV and child protection.

Challenges

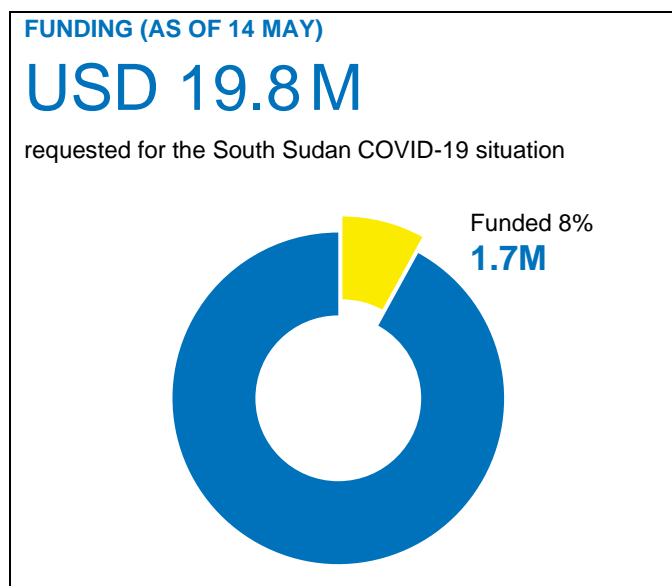
- Insecurity and violence including intercommunal violence, clashes and cattle raiding will limit COVID-19 response measures currently underway and is a threat to the humanitarian space for intervention.
- The regional and international supply chain has been significantly disrupted by border closures and restrictions, including delays in testing at land borders. This is impacting the lead-time for pre-positioning COVID-19 related items.
- Additional medical and WaSH items as well as PPEs are required to boost response in light of the increasing confirmed cases of local transmission currently being observed.

- With the onset of the rainy season, major road access corridors are now cut-off and the vast majority of in-country prepositioning of COVID-related items to operational areas will have to be done by air, increasing the costs of COVID preparedness and response exponentially.

Business and Operations Continuity Plan

UNHCR will be staying and delivering for refugees, asylum seekers, refugee returnees, IDPs and those at risk of statelessness during COVID-19.

- UNHCR, through essential movements and continued coordination with partners and community-based networks, is ensuring the continuation of lifesaving and protection assistance to its persons of concern with necessary COVID-19 precautionary measures in place.
- Following the confirmed cases of COVID 19 in South Sudan, some UNHCR offices including Juba Representation office, are now implementing their Business Continuity Plans. Implementation is tailored to local conditions and situations taking into account staff safety, health and security as well as operations continuity. In locations where national staff live outside UNHCR guesthouses, the unreliability of internet data and power sources remain a challenge.



CONTACTS

Giulia Raffaelli, Communications Officer, raffaalg@unhcr.org, +39 348 728 8351

Gift Friday Noah, Assistant External Relations Officer, noah@unhcr.org, +211 92 265 4219

LINKS

[UNHCR South Sudan Portal](#) | [UNHCR South Sudan FB page](#) | [UNHCR South Sudan Situation Portal](#)