

# South Sudan

COVID-19 Update

20 April – 03 May 2020



*Sudanese refugees listen to COVID-19 awareness raising messages while waiting to wash their hands before entering the general food distribution site in Ajuong Thok refugee camp. © UNHCR/Elizabeth Marie Stuart*

## Key Developments

- There are 46 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in South Sudan, last cases were confirmed on 2 May and one on 29 April.
- On 1 May, the High-Level Task Force waived the COVID-19 testing requirement for humanitarian workers travelling inter-state. All travellers must observe 14 days of quarantine prior to travel. Justice institutions and UNMISS are working together on the decongestion of prisons and detention centres in the framework of the response to COVID-19. [\[LINK\]](#)
- On 30 April, the High-Level Task Force requires all staff from diplomatic missions, UN, and international organizations are to observe the 14 days of quarantine before international flights into South Sudan or produce a certificate of negative testing. In addition, 14 days of quarantine must be observed by all travelers after arrival back into South Sudan. [\[LINK\]](#)
- On 29 April, the High-Level Task Force approved the use of locally produced cloth face masks and the wearing of face masks in public. [\[LINK\]](#)

- After the announcement of an additional 28 confirmed cases on 28 April, the High-Level Task Force on COVID-19 pandemic issued a statement tightening the restrictions already in place. Notable was the review of the curfew 19:00 to 06:00 (previously 20:00 to 06:00) effective 29 April 2020. Measures include suspension of international and national passenger flights, closure of borders, night-time curfew, suspension of passenger public transport system, both private and public, restrictions on local taxis and operations of non-essential shops and small businesses and prohibition of all social, political, private gatherings and hawking. [\[LINK\]](#)
- On 26 April 2020, the High-level Task Force on COVID-19 suspended all public transportation between Juba and other towns in Central Equatoria state and between Torit and all other towns in Eastern Equatoria state. The Task Force reiterated its past directives of closures of schools and health institutes, suspension of religious and socio-cultural events, extension of curfew until further notice. Those found to be violating these orders will be arrested, arraigned, and their facility closed or confiscated.
- On 25 April 2020, the High-level Task Force on COVID-19 directed the government to form the State level COVID-19 Task Forces and their county COVID-19 committees to streamline prevention and response activities.

## 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). UNHCR is working to ensure that refugees, internally displaced persons and other persons of concern are included in the national preparedness and response plan. In refugee hosting areas, the local COVID-19 Task Forces are co-chaired by local authorities and UNHCR.
- Any suspected case is immediately reported to the COVID-19 National Steering Committee through the MoH Public Health Emergency Operation Incident Manager and WHO, who deploys the Rapid Response Team. In support to national preparedness and response efforts, UNHCR and partners developed a 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.



*UNHCR and partners are engaging IDPs in Malakal Protection of Civilian site through current initiatives to make cloth face masks. © UNHCR*

- UNHCR is a part of the UN COVID-19 Contingency Planning Working Group, the Inter-Agency COVID-19 Operations Group, the Humanitarian Country Team and the Inter-Cluster Working Group. The UN COVID-19 preparedness plans and guidelines build on the resources and facilities established as part of the ongoing UN Ebola preparedness, which include UNHCR's persons of concern.

UNHCR is working closely with its partners to share information, adapt and enhance the delivery of activities to refugees, IDPs and host communities. UNHCR, partners, and

local health authorities are adapting the national plan to the local refugee contexts which includes mass communication and community engagement (including refugee hosting communities).

## COVID-19 Preparedness

- UNHCR has placed orders of COVID-19 specific medical and WaSH items, personal protective equipment for frontline workers, ambulances and other equipment. With disruptions in the global and regional supply chain, delays and transportation challenges are being experienced and the estimated date of arrival in-country is yet to be confirmed. In the meantime, custom clearance was received for an in-kind donation of 100,000 masks to UNHCR's South Sudan operation, waiting for transportation to Juba.
- UNHCR supported trainings for partners on COVID-19 preparedness and referral pathways focusing on triage system in COVID-19 and actions to be taken for suspected or confirmed case in refugee settings. Trainings also took place on WaSH, Nutrition, and surveillance. 50 UNHCR and partners' staff were trained on infection prevention and control (IPC), and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE) via Microsoft Teams meeting platform.
- In-country prepositioning of various medical, nutrition, WaSH and core relief items from Juba to field locations continued as part of COVID-19 preparedness.
- The distribution of two months' worth of Blanket Supplementary Feeding Program (BSFP) (targeting children aged 6-23 months and Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW) finished in Ajuong Thok, Gorom, Makpandu, and Pamir refugee camps while it is ongoing in Maban's four refugee camps.
- COVID-19 prevention measures are being observed including adjusted flow of activities to ensure physical distancing, increasing the number of distribution days to reduce congestion, provision of multiple hand washing points and key COVID-19 and food utilization messages throughout the distribution process.
- Contextualized messaging on COVID-19 continues in close collaboration with partners. The dissemination of key messages uses various modes of communication such as house to house visit with proper precautionary measures, local FM radios, megaphones, and loudspeakers mounted on cars. Equally important, messaging on critical hand washing practices, maintaining environmental cleaning campaigns at household level, safe water management and safe disposal of human excreta were taken into consideration with adequate measures put in place on physical distancing practices.
- In Jamjang, community outreach volunteers (COVs) adapted COVID-19 messages towards children with child-friendly pictures ensuring messages are fully understood. COVs also demonstrated how to wash hand properly using water and soap.
- UNHCR distributed soap and buckets to 879 households with specific needs in Malakal Protection of Civilian site (POC). Distribution of the same items in remote areas and areas



*Training on preventive measures on COVID -19 of 20 host community leaders including making masks with available materials by HDC.*

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of high return in Baliet, Fashoda, and Panyikang Counties to 600 households with specific needs is ongoing. During the distributions, COVID-19 awareness raising activities are conducted in conjunction.

- UNHCR in cooperation with UNMISS Civil Affairs, Danish Refugee Council and Humanitarian Development Consortium are training tailoring course graduates and current trainees to produce cloth masks under close supervision of professional trainers in Malakal town and POC. The programme was redesigned in consultation with WHO. [Pictured on page 2]. UNHCR and its partners are rolling out similar initiatives in refugee and IDP locations throughout South Sudan

## Protection



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- At the beginning of the week of 20 April and after ensuring their decisions were voluntary, well informed and to safe areas, 555 households (1,663 individuals) registered their intent in the Wau POC site to voluntarily return to their place of origin, within the State. In coordination with the Solution Working Group, they were supported with core-relief items and transportation fare.

- Through the intervention of UNHCR, Commission for Refugee Affairs and the Secretary General of Ruweng Administrative Area, a possible case of refoulement for a refugee family of 6, was avoided.

- At the border entry points, UNHCR is continuing its advocacy with government to ensure access to territory and asylum-

procedures for refugees. UNHCR is collaborating with WHO, IOM and other partners to ensure that border entry points used by asylum-seekers, refugees and refugee returnees are supported with COVID-19 preventative measures.

- In an effort to boost the Government's capacity to monitor spontaneous refugee returns and COVID-19 prevention messaging at 37 common entry points, UNHCR has donated two 4x4 vehicles to the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission on 22 April 2020.
- In Maban, UNHCR and partner Lutheran World Federation are finding innovative ways to ensure that students do not fall behind on schoolwork. Secondary school students are receiving study packages. The students arrive in small controllable numbers, they maintain physical distance, wash their hands with soap, are trained on how to use the package and sensitized about COVID-19. [Pictured]

## Challenges

- Due to the recently imposed restrictions on inter-state movements, the movement of humanitarians between Juba and field locations has been curtailed. Notwithstanding, access to refugee camps and IDP sites has remained permissive in most areas.

- The onset of the rainy season has begun, which will cut off much of the road access and therefore reliance on costly airlifting in the coming months.
- The supply chain is significantly impacted due to restriction on movements and border closures. It should be noted that due to COVID-19, there are a limited number of suppliers and items in country, and the prices of items have significantly increased.

## Business and Operations Continuity Plan

- 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.

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