

EAST AFRICA FLOODS

Critical Needs for Displaced and Host Communities Affected by Flooding

June 2024



990,000
forcibly displaced
people and
host community
affected since
January 2024



5.6 MILLION
forcibly displaced
people and host
community anticipated
to be affected by
December 2024



\$39.6 MILLION
required for
critical needs
until December
2024

Within the current financial requirements of operations in floods-affected countries, UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, urgently requires **\$39.6 million** to prioritize the delivery of assistance and protection services to forcibly displaced individuals and host communities already affected by floods and to mitigate future impacts expected by the end of 2024.¹

Areas affected: vulnerable communities in Burundi, Ethiopia, Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan are particularly impacted, with record flooding expected in regions along the White Nile and River Nile.

Humanitarian needs: flood-affected families urgently require shelter, protection, non-food items (NFIs), and water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) services.

UNHCR response: UNHCR is on the ground across the region working with government authorities, partners, and communities to save lives and provide assistance and protection to those affected. More support is urgently required to respond to growing needs and ensure proactive preparedness for forthcoming rains.

¹ UNHCR has been actively responding in several countries since the beginning of the year. In June 2024, recognizing the escalating situation in the region, UNHCR decided to launch an appeal to raise funds for ongoing and increasing needs.

REGIONAL OVERVIEW

El Niño-triggered heavy rains and severe flooding have devastated East Africa and the Great Lakes region, triggering mass displacement and impacting hundreds of thousands of refugees, internally displaced persons (IDPs), and host communities. Even though flooding is an annual phenomenon, this year is particularly challenging. With above-normal rainfall forecasted from June to September 2024, the situation is expected to dramatically worsen, posing a grave risk to millions more by year's end. Displaced populations are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of these extreme weather events, exacerbating their already precarious living conditions. This crisis unfolds amid ongoing conflict

in Sudan, compounding instability and suffering across the region and beyond.

UNHCR has maintained a decades-long presence in the region, assisting governments in coordinating multi-sectorial refugee responses and supporting IDPs through the UN Cluster System.

While emergency coordination platforms and contingency plans are in place to prepare for and respond to the floods, securing resources is crucial to sustain the current response and activate contingency plans in anticipation of further flooding in the second half of 2024.

AFFECTED POPULATIONS

Country	Location	Population affected since January 2024 (refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities)	Population anticipated to be affected in June-December 2024 (refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities)	Total population affected in January-December 2024 (refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities)
Burundi	Bujumbura Municipality and Rural, Makamba, Rumonge, Bubanza, Cibitoke	117,000	Continued support for the same affected population	117,000
Ethiopia	Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Tigary, Oromia, Amhara, Afar and Somali region (Melkadida)	590,000	1,012,000	1,602,000
Rwanda	Nyabiheke, Mugombwa, Kigeme and Kiziba	15,000	Continued support for the same affected population	15,000
Somalia	Hirshabelle, Jubaland and Puntland states	268,000	700,000	968,000
South Sudan	Juba, Jonglei, Unity, Warrap, Upper Nile, Northern Bahr el Ghazal, Central Equatoria	-	2,500,000	2,500,000
Sudan	Gedaref, Kassala, Blue Nile, White Nile, Sennar, River Nile, Al Jazeera, Darfur and Kordofan	-	400,000	400,000
Total		990,000	4,612,000	5,602,000

BURUNDI

Heavy rainfall has caused severe flooding, landslides, violent winds, and hail due to river overflows and rising water levels in Lake Tanganyika. Over 48,000 people have been displaced, with over 600,000 across six provinces needing humanitarian assistance. Around 32,000 refugees – nearly half of the country’s refugee population – are in flood-affected areas. In Bujumbura, refugee families and Burundians have relocated multiple times due to rising water levels, with access to food and necessities hindered by high canoe fees. Flooded classrooms have halted education. Outside Bujumbura, doubling rent prices make relocation unaffordable for many, forcing them to stay in water-logged homes. Burundi hosts 89,000 refugees and asylum-seekers and 241,789 returnees since 2017.

Response

As part of the interagency response led by the Government, UNHCR has been providing

emergency shelter kits, non-food items, child protection, gender-based violence services, and cash assistance to displaced families and refugees in urban areas. Relocation to safer areas is also supported, prioritizing former Burundian refugees who have returned.

In Gatumba, near the DRC border, UNHCR is helping families, many of whom are internally displaced, relocate voluntarily. So far, 936 households have moved to Mubimbi, with plans to relocate 2,000 households in total. In coordination with authorities, national identity cards lost in the flooding are being reissued to displaced people and the host community.

An inter-agency emergency team, including UNHCR, is on the ground ensuring effective child protection responses in Gitaza, Gatumba, and Mubimbi, conducting awareness-raising sessions on human trafficking.

2024 prioritized activities



Protect

- ◆ Provision of multipurpose cash assistance
- ◆ Prevention and response to gender-based violence, including mainstreaming mitigation measures across all sectors
- ◆ Child protection monitoring and mitigation measures for child victims of abuse and exploitation
- ◆ Relocation of affected individuals to safer areas
- ◆ Communication with communities (CwC) activities
- ◆ Protection monitoring



Assist

- ◆ Provision of NFIs and emergency shelter to new arrivals and other flood-affected populations
- ◆ Coordination and monitoring interventions

ETHIOPIA

Many areas of Ethiopia hosting refugees and displaced people, including Amhara, Afar, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Tigray, and Somali regions, have been severely impacted by heavy rains and flooding in April and May, affecting over 590,000 people. Nearly 57,000 have been displaced, and over 1.2 million are at risk. Houses, infrastructure, and croplands have sustained significant damage, limiting access to services. Roads and bridges have been washed away, disrupting essential goods movement and local businesses. Flood-affected communities lack access to basic services and markets, facing serious health risks from unsafe drinking water, collapsed latrines, overcrowding, and sanitation shortages, potentially leading to disease outbreaks amid existing crises like drought, conflict, and food insecurity affecting 15.8 million people in 2024.

Ethiopia hosts over 1 million refugees and asylum-seekers, primarily in flood-affected regions. Around 40 per cent are from South Sudan and 9 per cent from Sudan.

Response

In the Afar region, interventions include supporting the Government's early warning activities, assisting in drainage system construction and maintenance, facilitating logistics, and establishing an emergency response team. In the Amhara region, UNHCR coordinates a preparedness and contingency plan for climate-related emergencies. In the Gambella region, a regional early warning division ensures swift alerts for potential floods. Joint inter-agency rapid assessments are initiated upon flood incident reports to the Disaster Prevention and Food Security Agency's early warning team to identify the extent and nature of flood-related losses.

In the Somali region, the national flood contingency plan presented by the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission in April estimates over 1.2 million people at risk, with 773,000 likely to be displaced. A preparedness and response plan is in place.

2024 prioritized activities



Protect

- ◆ Relocation of affected people to safer areas
- ◆ Environmental Impact Assessments and flood simulation studies
- ◆ Provision of multipurpose cash assistance
- ◆ Construction of new classrooms and rehabilitation of damaged learning structures



Assist

- ◆ Provision of NFIs and emergency shelter to flood-affected populations
- ◆ Provision of sustainable, climate-resilient settlements, shelter and housing
- ◆ Provision of emergency WASH services in reception centres, temporary accommodation sites, and upon transfer of new arrivals to the settlements
- ◆ Improvement to existing water pumps and solar systems



Empower

- ◆ Road and drainage system rehabilitation/construction, including flood control and soil erosion mitigations
- ◆ Community engagement to preserve and rehabilitate the environment and mitigate protection risks

RWANDA

Rwanda is experiencing above-normal rainfall, with 17 districts receiving heavy rains and warnings for further rainfall in the northern, western, and southern provinces. Severe flooding of rivers, swamps, and low-lying areas, landslides, lightning strikes, and infrastructure damage are expected. Shelters, roads, classrooms, and farmlands have been severely impacted, with significant damage to rice and banana plantations. In refugee camps, ongoing rains have devastated infrastructure due to the hilly terrain and aging facilities. Drainage systems and water supply networks are particularly affected, with communal sanitation facilities at risk of wall cracks, inaccessibility, and mudslides. There is a risk of faecal sludge overflow during heavy rains, potentially leading to disease outbreaks. The

conditions of shelters in the camps have worsened, with some already collapsed and others leaking.

Rwanda hosts around 135,000 refugees and asylum-seekers registered with UNHCR, of whom 42 per cent are from the DR Congo and 37 per cent from Burundi.

Response

As part of the interagency response, UNHCR is collaborating with local partners to rehabilitate basic infrastructure affected by the floods. This includes the reconstruction of refugee shelters, rehabilitating drainage systems, sanitation facilities, access roads, and bridges.

2024 prioritized activities



Assist

- ◆ Rehabilitation and reconstruction of basic infrastructure for water supply
- ◆ Supporting households to rehabilitate shelter and sanitation facilities impacted by the floods
- ◆ Facilitating communities to rehabilitate access roads and bridges



Neziya Nsanikiye, a Burundian woman from the Kajaga neighbourhood of the capital Bujumbura, is living with her daughter-in-law after her home was destroyed by flooding. UNHCR / Bernard Ntwari

SOMALIA

Heavy rainfall has triggered flash floods, displacing 23,000 people in Dhobley and Afmadow, Lower Juba, which hosts many IDPs. Similarly, Shabelle River flooding has displaced 8,000 people in Beletweyne, Hiran, while heavy rains have affected 925 households in Gardo and 203 households in Garowe. IDP settlements are particularly vulnerable due to limited resources for building shelters. Urban areas face higher flood risks due to poor planning and inadequate drainage, potentially worsening the outbreak of acute watery diarrhea and triggering new vector-borne diseases. Urgent needs include food, emergency shelter, NFIs, WASH, and protection support for child protection and gender-based violence prevention and response. The demand for emergency and transitional shelter is rising, especially with ongoing Gu rains causing further displacement, mainly in the South-Central regions.

In total, around 3 million Somalis are displaced within the country, which also hosts 39,000 refugees and asylum-seekers, mostly from Ethiopia and Yemen.

Response

UNHCR's response to the rainfall and floods includes monitoring changing conditions, addressing immediate needs, and coordinating with partners and interagency mechanisms to enhance response capacity. The primary focus is on protecting vulnerable populations, providing essential services, and advocating for additional support to mitigate the impact of these natural disasters on displaced communities.

With over 46,000 IDPs in five southern locations forced to relocate due to flash floods, UNHCR is ensuring critical protection assistance and essential items are delivered to affected families. In Kismayo, UNHCR's response involves collaborating with partners to implement protection measures, coordinating requests for and distributing additional NFIs, and providing cash assistance to vulnerable IDPs in Luglow. Monitoring is conducted through partners to ensure effective aid delivery.

2024 prioritized activities



Protect

- ◆ Provision of multipurpose cash assistance
- ◆ Child protection for unaccompanied and separated children
- ◆ Psychosocial support
- ◆ Engaging the affected population through effective mechanisms



Assist

- ◆ Provision of cash assistance for NFIs
- ◆ Provision of emergency shelter to flood-affected populations
- ◆ Construction of transitional shelters
- ◆ Coordination and monitoring interventions

SOUTH SUDAN

UNHCR has declared an internal Level 1 emergency for the flooding in South Sudan, projected to put two-thirds of the land at risk and displace 2.8 million people. Starting in June and peaking in September, the floods will initially impact Central Equatoria and Juba, then progressively affect Jonglei, Lakes, Warrap, Unity, and Upper Nile states. Many of these areas have not yet recovered from the historic floods of 2019. Predictions indicate that floodwaters will not recede for another three years, necessitating proper planning and sustainable programming for long-term solutions.

The UN and partners, led by the Humanitarian Coordinator, are working closely with the Government to implement immediate measures to mitigate flooding impacts and provide a multi-sectoral response. The Information Management Working Group has formed an inter-agency sub-group of technical experts for data analysis and flood modeling to inform preparedness and response planning.

Preparedness and response

UNHCR is actively monitoring developments, updating contingency plans, and preparing to respond to the protection and humanitarian needs of populations likely to be affected by upcoming floods. In coordination with national authorities and humanitarian partners, UNHCR's interventions will focus on assisting the most affected communities in Maban, Aweil, Bentiu, Bor, Renk, and Malakal (refugees, returnees, IDPs, and host communities).

Preparedness measures include pre-positioning essential NFIs, supporting shelter and site infrastructure, and implementing flood mitigation measures such as constructing dykes and culverts in refugee camps, transit centres, and IDP sites. Additionally, communities will be relocated to safer areas as part of inter-agency efforts. UNHCR will prioritize protection and conflict prevention, as flood-induced displacement has traditionally been a source of conflict in South Sudan.

2024 prioritized activities



Protect

- ◆ Protection coordination
- ◆ Monitoring of population movement
- ◆ Communication with communities



Assist

- ◆ Procurement, management, and distribution of NFIs and/or cash
- ◆ Emergency shelters for the most vulnerable in Bentiu, Maban, Renk and Jonglei, including flood mitigation measures in the transit centres in Renk and Malakal receiving Sudanese refugees and South Sudanese fleeing the conflict in Sudan



Empower

- ◆ Construction of dykes and culverts in flood-prone areas hosting existing refugee populations

SUDAN

The rainy season in Sudan typically occurs annually, peaking between July and September, bringing significant flooding that impacts camps, settlements, and vulnerable communities already grappling with armed conflict. Southern, Central, and Eastern regions, which host a considerable number of conflict-affected displaced people, are expected to face medium to high flood risks due to anticipated above-normal rainfall across the country.

South Sudan is also forecasted to experience above-normal rainfall, leading to potential flooding along the White Nile river basin, affecting states such as White Nile, Al Jazeera, Khartoum, and River Nile. Other regions are also vulnerable to riverine

and flash flooding.

Preparedness and response

In anticipation of the 2024 flooding, UNHCR and partners have intensified flood preparedness, taking into account potential needs, diverse population groups, and available access and resources. Preparedness activities involve pre-positioning supplies and machinery (NFIs, tents, shelter kits, hygiene items, medicines, excavators, and tractors), conducting community outreach, desilting drains, constructing and maintaining flood protection dykes, and fortifying multi-purpose shelters in areas expected to be impacted by riverine and flash flooding.

2024 prioritized activities



Protect

- ◆ Expanding the response to gender-based violence and mainstreaming mitigation measures across all sectors
- ◆ Linking displaced people to essential services wherever possible, including water, health and nutrition
- ◆ Analyzing and sharing of protection data with Cluster members and other humanitarian actors



Assist

- ◆ Provision of NFIs (where cash is not feasible)
- ◆ Provision of emergency shelter to flood-affected populations
- ◆ Increasing the capacity of health and nutrition services in and around refugee camps
- ◆ Improvement of water and sanitation facilities

FUNDING THE RESPONSE

UNHCR is urgently seeking **\$39.6 million** to provide assistance and protection services to forcibly displaced people and host communities impacted by the floods in East Africa.

Country	Total populations affected in January-December 2024 (refugees, returnees, IDPs and host communities)	Amount in US\$
Burundi	117,000	1,995,000
Ethiopia	1,602,000	10,343,000
Rwanda	15,000	10,793,000
Somalia	968,000	5,000,000
South Sudan	2,500,000	5,000,000
Sudan	400,000	6,500,000
Total	5,602,000	39,631,000

UNHCR's Climate Resilience Fund

These floods underscore critical gaps in preparedness and early action. Without adequate support to prepare for, withstand, and recover from climate-related shocks, these communities face heightened risks of further displacement and devastation. Scaling up climate finance and action to reach those most in need is crucial to averting worst-case scenarios.

Therefore, UNHCR is adopting a dual approach to addressing climate change: immediate response and climate action.

In addition to addressing urgent climate disaster response needs outlined in this document, UNHCR's newly launched [Climate Resilience Fund](#) is dedicated to enhancing adaptation and resilience among forcibly displaced people and their hosts. This includes initiatives like environmental restoration, sustainable water and energy access, and community preparedness efforts to mitigate the impact of climate hazards before they escalate into disasters. UNHCR aims to raise \$100 million by the end of 2025 for these vital activities.

The importance of flexible funding

Flexible funds help UNHCR to kick-start an emergency response, bolster forgotten or under-resourced crises, and implement programmes to their full extent. They also enable UNHCR to plan and manage resources efficiently and effectively, contributing to the collective success in every life that is transformed and saved. Flexible funding remains vital as an emergency response develops, and as protection and assistance needs become clearer. To all donors, especially those who provide funding that is flexible and not earmarked for a particular use, UNHCR extends its most sincere thanks.

Cover photo: Flooding in Nhier village, Unity State, South Sudan. The floods pictured here in 2023 devastated entire communities, yet the flooding in the second half of 2024 is predicted to be even worse. © UNHCR/Andrew McConnell