

ON THE BRINK

The devastating toll
of aid cuts on people
forced to flee



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Introduction

People forced to flee are among the hardest hit by the global humanitarian funding crisis. Across the world, families who fled war, persecution, or violence are now seeing the support they relied on vanish, leaving them dangerously exposed. UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is being forced to suspend critical protection, assistance, and support for solutions, even as needs continue to rise.

Compared to 2024, when [UNHCR supported 36.4 million people](#), around 11.6 million¹ people forced to flee are at risk of losing direct assistance this year. These are not just numbers on a spreadsheet: they are refugees stranded in border areas awaiting relocation to safety, families unable to afford food, medicine or shelter, and pupils deprived of education and their opportunity for a better future.

Despite generous and early contributions of \$2.5 billion by June 2025² – covering 23 per cent of UNHCR’s global requirements – the projected shortfall of \$8.1 billion against a budget of \$10.6 billion still makes the situation untenable. UNHCR anticipates closing the year with \$3.5 billion in available funding – roughly the same level as a decade ago, even though the number of people forced to flee has nearly doubled to 122 million.

In light of this grim financial reality and anticipated funding constraints, UNHCR has had to reduce the overall scale of its activities and workforce by around one-third. We have made the deepest cuts to headquarters and regional offices in an effort to safeguard field programmes as much as possible, but even these substantial reductions are not

enough to fully sustain operations on the ground. Of over 550 operational locations globally, some 185 have been impacted. Altogether, \$1.4 billion of essential programmes are being cut, severely weakening UNHCR’s ability to provide support and solutions for those who need it most.

In making these cuts, UNHCR has prioritized protection and solutions, life-saving interventions and emergency response, and is working with host governments, UN agencies and NGO partners to mitigate the damage. Yet, the rapid funding decline has already impacted every sector – from financial aid to health, education, and clean water. Importantly, UNHCR’s ability to provide protection by presence, to identify and advocate against rights violations affecting forcibly displaced and stateless persons, and to uphold the trust established with displaced and host communities over many years of engagement, is steadily eroding.

Our reduced presence on the ground – combined with fewer opportunities and platforms to engage directly with affected communities through consultations, monitoring, and support to local and national actors – not only limits our protection outreach, but also poses a fundamental risk to our ability to support and pursue lasting solutions for people forced to flee.

UNHCR’s commitment remains unwavering. We have the expertise, systems and reach to deliver protection and assistance where it is needed the most. But without urgent international solidarity and flexible funding, decades of gains could disappear.

¹ This figure and those on the map on page 8 are based on a mathematical extrapolation and reflect the gap between the number of people assisted with 2024 funding and the projected number of people who can be assisted under current 2025 funding levels. In some contexts, funding cuts may affect service quality or frequency rather than coverage, while in some sectors and areas of intervention – including protection, financial aid, shelter, and non-food items – funding gaps may directly result in fewer people being assisted. This estimate does not imply a one-to-one reduction in assistance, but serves as a proxy indicator to illustrate the scale of impact.

² Global, regional and country funding levels cited throughout this report are as of 18 June 2025.

At a glance: Cuts across thematic areas



60%

cut to financial aid & non-food items



44%

cut to resettlement programmes



40%

cut to shelter programmes



35%

cut to child protection programmes



35%

cut to health programmes



34%

cut to education programmes



32%

cut to water, sanitation & hygiene programmes



25%

cut to registration & refugee status determination & legal counselling programmes



23%

cut to gender-based violence prevention & response programmes



7%

cut to safe & voluntary return programmes

Key gains in refugee protection at risk

Overall, UNHCR's protection services reached over 18.4 million people in 130 countries in 2024 and UNHCR made tangible, measurable progress in protecting people forced to flee, despite challenging operating environments and rising displacement needs. These life-saving efforts did not only address and mitigate protection risks, especially for women and children – they were foundational, providing a stable basis required for access to health care, education, food assistance, and national social protection schemes. But these advances are now at serious risk of being lost due to deep cuts.

By the end of the year, 91 per cent of refugees and asylum-seekers had been individually registered across 98 countries, up from 89 per cent in 90 countries in 2023. UNHCR supported the registration of 2.96 million individuals in its proGres system, marking a significant increase from 2.55 million in 2023. This progress is vital to ensuring access to protection services, rights, and durable solutions. UNHCR also helped 4.6 million people obtain civil, identity or legal status documentation. These documents are critical tools for preventing statelessness and enabling access to essential services, education, and employment opportunities.

In 2024, although global asylum numbers went up, the average time to process claims went down to 369 days, a notable improvement from 432 days in 2023. At the same time, UNHCR expanded support to 100 national asylum systems, helping improve fairness, efficiency, and inclusion. UNHCR also made progress in addressing gender-based violence and child protection. In 2024, gender-based violence prevention and response reached 1.7 million people in 86 countries, and child protection efforts supported 1.5 million children and caregivers in 78 countries.

Legal aid services were provided to 1.4 million displaced and stateless people. In support of durable solutions, UNHCR counselled more than 353,000 individuals on voluntary return, and assisted more than 690,000 refugees returning to their homeland and 288,000 internally displaced people (IDPs) making a return to their home areas.

Despite efforts to shield protection activities, cuts are already delaying documentation, straining asylum systems, and reducing legal assistance – leaving vulnerable populations exposed to exploitation, detention, and forced returns.

Regional impact

An estimated 11.6 million people forced to flee are at risk of losing direct assistance in 2025 due to cuts to UNHCR's programmes worldwide. This section offers a region-by-region overview of the impact.

Asia and the Pacific



17.3 million people
forced to flee



7 million people
assisted in 2024



26% cuts to
UNHCR's programmes



30%
funded

In Asia and the Pacific, Afghanistan and Myanmar remain the largest displacement crises – and Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh face deteriorating conditions in the overcrowded Cox's Bazar camps. Across the region, reductions in programmes for basic needs, financial aid, education, health and nutrition are deepening hardship and pushing families to adopt harmful coping strategies, including child labour and child marriage. Without adequate assistance, more Rohingya refugees may risk dangerous onward journeys by sea in search of stability elsewhere. These cuts coincide with rising forced returns of Afghans from Pakistan and Iran, with 1.9 million people returning or forced to return to Afghanistan from the two countries so far in 2025.

East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes



27.5 million people
forced to flee



7.7 million people
assisted in 2024



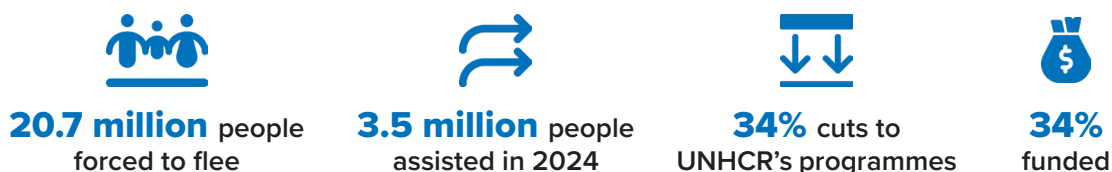
31% cuts to
UNHCR's programmes



24%
funded

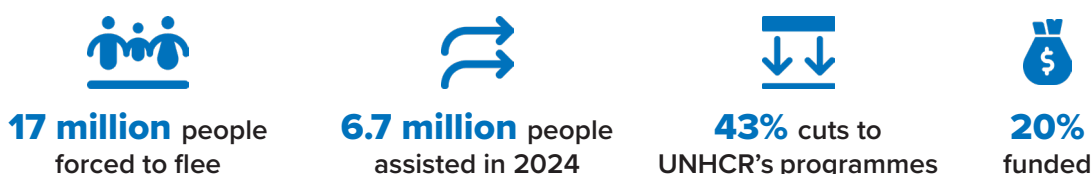
In the East and Horn of Africa and the Great Lakes region, conflict in Sudan and renewed violence in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continue to drive forced displacement – compounded by extreme weather events and food insecurity. UNHCR and partners are prioritizing protection, life-saving aid and shelter; however, these services are stretched beyond capacity in border locations and displacement sites. This increases the risk of disease and malnutrition, particularly during the rainy season. Response capacity to new refugee influxes across the region is severely stretched, with support for survivors of sexual violence significantly reduced. Education assistance has been slashed dramatically, with 65 schools set to be closed in 2025 in Ethiopia and South Sudan, affecting over 92,000 children. Over half of the children at risk in the region will not have access to specialized services, increasing their vulnerability at a time when other assistance and services are also being cut. Without additional support, worsening conditions may trigger further displacement and undermine regional stability.

Europe



In Europe, the full-scale war in Ukraine and over a decade of conflict in Syria remain the main sources of displacement. Spillover from instability in regions such as the Sahel and the Horn of Africa also continues to prompt sea arrivals in southern Europe. Reductions to legal and protection assistance in countries like Greece means that thousands of people risk losing access to asylum. Cuts to livelihoods and education programmes in Türkiye are affecting tens of thousands of refugees who are already struggling to meet their basic needs. Financial aid in Ukraine and across the region has also been slashed, leaving families unable to afford rent, food or medical treatment.

The Middle East and North Africa



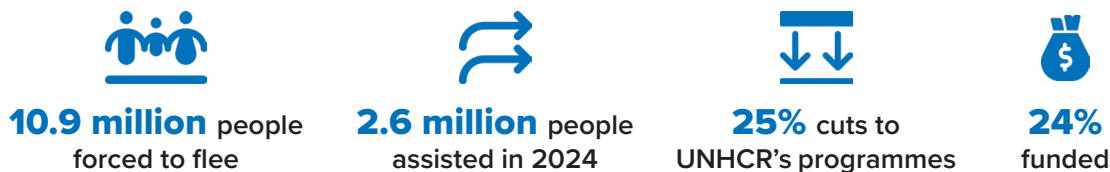
In the Middle East and North Africa, protracted crises persist and new shocks have emerged. In Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, severe cuts to financial aid, shelter assistance and health care are forcing families to choose between food, medicine, and rent. Key protection services for children and survivors of sexual violence are also being suspended, with others at risk. Cuts to support returnees in Syria means that families will struggle to rebuild their homes, find paid work and restart their lives.

Impacts on Local and National Partners

Cuts to UNHCR's programmes have deeply affected local and national partners across operations globally. Preliminary figures from June show a temporary decrease of \$230 million in funding allocated to these partners compared to 2024. Nevertheless, UNHCR has increased the share of overall funding directed to these actors, with 62 per cent of available funds allocated to them in 2025 – up from 58 per cent in 2024 – relative to international partners. Organizations led by refugees, IDPs, and stateless people have been especially hard hit. The number of grant agreements – UNHCR's simplified funding tool for such groups – has dropped from 251 in 43 operations in 2024 to just 70 in 17 operations and global programmes as of June 2025, a figure we will seek to increase by year's end.

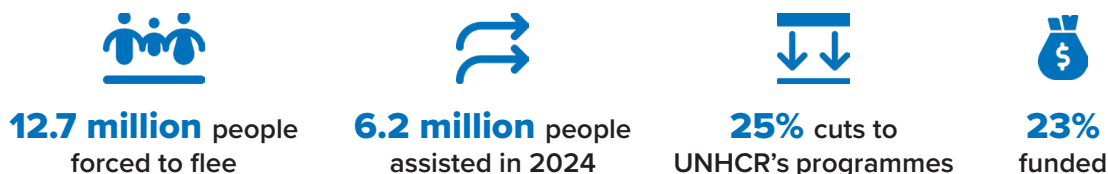
UNHCR remains strongly committed to supporting local organizations and continues to prioritize forcibly displaced and stateless-led organizations.

Southern Africa



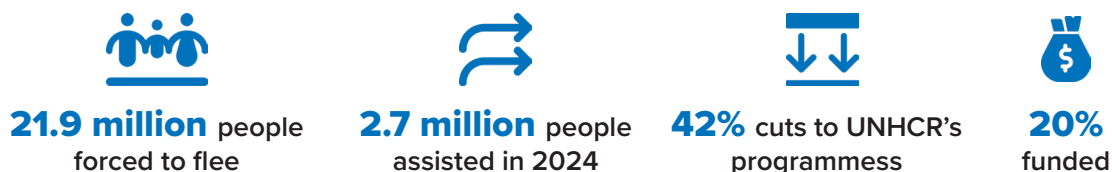
In Southern Africa, displacement is driven by armed conflict in the DRC and Mozambique. An increasing number of people forced to flee will not have access to shelter or clean water, support to survivors of sexual violence is decreasing, and livelihoods and education are under threat. Displaced populations face mounting protection risks, including exposure to trafficking and onward movement in search of security and opportunity. In Angola, Mozambique, and Zambia, support for survivors of sexual violence has been reduced or halted, leaving vulnerable women and children without psychosocial care, legal aid, or safe spaces. In Malawi, the ability to identify and assist unaccompanied children is increasingly limited. In the DRC, cuts to UNHCR's health programmes have pushed services to the brink.

West and Central Africa



In West and Central Africa, multiple crises are spurring displacement – from conflict in the Sahel and Lake Chad Basin to the fallout of the Sudan war. Registration and documentation capacity is being reduced, increasing displaced people's risk of detention, exploitation and forced return, and undermining their right to asylum. Essential services, including education and health care, are being scaled back, with schools closing and health centres understaffed. In many areas, the breakdown of assistance is forcing families into negative coping strategies, risking further displacement and instability.

The Americas



In the Americas, violence, persecution, human rights violations, and insecurity continue to drive displacement. In several operations, severe funding gaps have curtailed investments in digitizing and strengthening asylum systems and promoting regularization efforts. In countries like Colombia, Ecuador, Costa Rica, and Mexico, a lack of legal status is not merely a bureaucratic delay — it results in prolonged insecurity, deepening poverty as refugees are excluded from formal employment, and greater exposure to exploitation and abuse. These cuts are undermining efforts made to finding long-term solutions. Cuts to local integration programmes in countries like Colombia and Ecuador also put people forced to flee at a higher risk of xenophobia and increase their likelihood of moving onwards. The suspension of programmes to assist IDPs and reintegrate returnees is putting a strain on local communities and leads to more displacement.

Hyper-prioritized Regional Response Plans

Regional plans³ have been “hyper-prioritized” to ensure that scarce resources are directed to the most urgent needs, focusing on what must be done first to save lives and protect those forced to flee.

While overall needs remain staggering – 33.6 million people targeted across eight regional plans, with total requirements of \$12.3 billion – the hyper-prioritization process puts an immediate focus on 27 million people, with corresponding financial needs of \$8.65 billion.

This process followed a tiered framework of priority:

- Tier 1: Life-saving assistance, including ad hoc food, water, shelter, health care, and registration
- Tier 2: Time-sensitive support to stabilize communities such as education, livelihoods, and community outreach
- Tier 3: Medium-to-long term efforts like integration and inclusion, which have been largely deferred

This approach recognizes that urgency looks different across different contexts, depending on the length of displacement, national policies, and levels of local development, with decisions informed by input of those included in the plans such as refugees, host communities, and partners. As a result, in 2025, partners are making all efforts to ensure that even with fewer resources, the most vulnerable still receive the protection and support they need to survive and rebuild their lives.

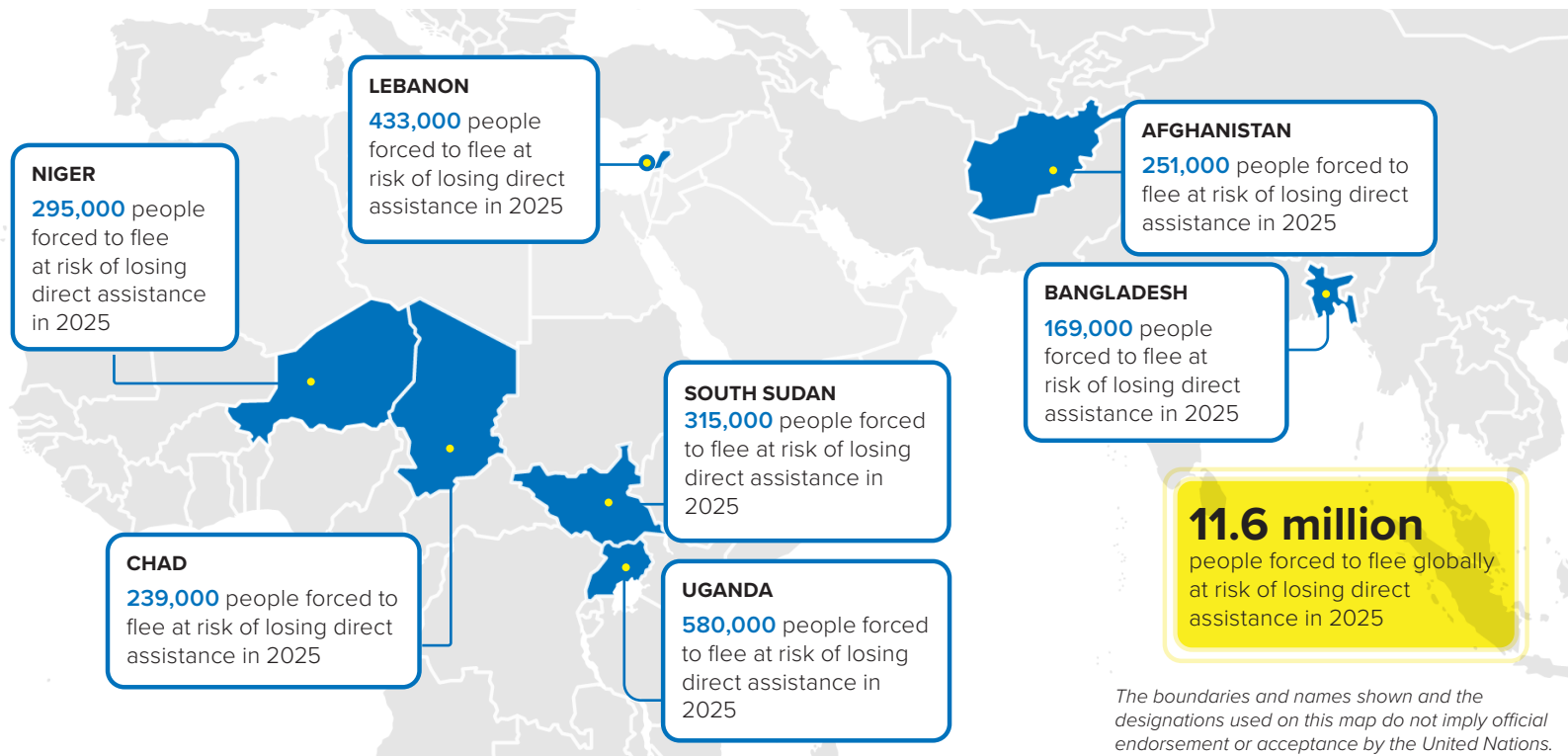
³ Regional Refugee Response Plans (RRP), Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for Syria and neighbouring countries, Regional Refugee and Migrant Response Plan (RMRP) for the Americas, and Joint Response Plan (JRP) for Bangladesh.

A snapshot from the ground

The consequences of the funding crisis are being felt across every one of UNHCR's operations. Out of more than 550 operational locations worldwide, some 185 have been impacted. The selected country examples (and the corresponding impact figures⁴) that follow offer a snapshot from the

ground where UNHCR and its partners work daily to protect and support people forced to flee.

These examples reflect a much broader reality: the strain on life-saving protection and assistance is global, and no operational response has been spared.



Afghanistan

In Afghanistan, funding cuts are coinciding with a sharp rise in returns from Pakistan and Iran. In total, 1.9 million Afghans have returned or been forced to return from the two countries in 2025 – including close to 1.6 million from Iran – worsening the already desperate situation inside Afghanistan.

Cuts are hitting women and girls hardest. Protection activities have been slashed by over 50 per cent, undermining programmes on women's empowerment, mental health, and prevention and response to gender-based violence. UNHCR's ability to engage directly with women and girls has dropped sharply, with just 45,000 expected to be reached in 2025 – down from 108,000 in 2024. Protection monitoring now reaches only a

fraction of those in need, and support for survivors of sexual violence, persons with disabilities, and those requiring psychosocial assistance has been suspended in many areas.

Financial aid for refugee returnees has also been cut, now just \$156 per household and \$40 per person for transport – barely enough for food, let alone rent. This limits opportunities for UNHCR to access, engage with and advocate for the rights of returnees. IDPs face similar gaps, heightening risks of harmful coping mechanisms such as child marriage, child labour, and exploitation.

⁴ Please refer to footnote number 1 on page 2.



3.5 million
returnees
since 2023



46% cuts
to UNHCR's
programmes



28% funded

Key priorities

- Delivering protection services and life-saving assistance for the most vulnerable refugee returnees through an area-based approach to ensure reception and integration.
- Maintaining support to women and girls through critical interventions including prevention and response to sexual violence, child protection and legal assistance.
- Sustainable approaches including income generation programmes for shelter construction, and skills training aligned with market needs.

Bangladesh

In Bangladesh, where Rohingya refugees have lived for years in overcrowded camps with few prospects, cuts are severely undermining an already overstretched response. An influx of around 150,000 new arrivals in the last 18 months has further strained limited resources. With no access to self-reliance opportunities, refugees remain fully dependent on humanitarian aid for food, shelter, health care, and education. Any funding reduction is acutely felt.

As overall funding declines, even basic support is being affected. In May, learning centres across the camps were forced to close. Although classes have resumed for grade 6 and above, education for some 230,000 children is at risk of being discontinued.

Food insecurity remains high. News of a planned cut to food rations from \$12 to \$6 in April 2025 sparked panic, though reductions were temporarily postponed.

Limited resources mean that essential services

in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char – like LPG, soap, shelter repairs, and disaster response – are now constrained to just 9–10 months this year, affecting over 500,000 refugees.

Incentives for refugee volunteers in health, protection, and WASH are at risk, threatening continuity of vital services. Community-led initiatives that were crucial to identify and address infrastructural needs within the community have been scaled back.

With health and nutrition services across the entire Rohingya refugee response being scaled back, the rollout of hepatitis C treatment has been reduced across the camps.

Shelter support and site maintenance continue but with reduced targets. The ongoing monsoon season has heightened the urgency for shelter repairs, while the expansion of the Government-approved Temporary Safer Shelter programme is progressing more slowly than planned due to significant funding shortfalls.



1.1 million
Rohingya
refugees



17% cuts to
UNHCR's
programmes



35% funded

Key priorities

- Provision of life-saving support in close collaboration with partners under the Rohingya Joint Response Plan.
- Reinforcing border monitoring and protection referral systems to address refugee movements from Myanmar as well as onward and mixed movements by land and sea to other destinations.
- A strategic transition toward a more sustainable and streamlined approach to assistance delivery in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char.

Returning to uncertainty: Afghan refugees struggle to rebuild in their homeland

Wali Khan sits in a UNHCR support centre in Jalalabad. Wali endured a long and exhausting journey with his family, returning under duress from Pakistan. Without adequate networks or opportunities in Afghanistan, Wali is concerned about his ability to put a roof over the head of his family and provide for them.

With 1.9 million Afghans returning or being forced to return from Iran and Pakistan so far in 2025, UNHCR is providing refugee returnees with assistance including financial aid, vaccinations,

prevention and response to gender-based violence, and child protection support; however, the level of support available is critically low due to underfunding.

Without additional resources, UNHCR will not be able to provide Afghan returnee families and their host communities with the support they need. However, if donors step in, families will be able to rebuild in Afghanistan, helping to stabilize themselves and their communities in a very fragile situation.



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Media Production

Chad

In Chad, aid cuts are unfolding just as some 239,000 refugees remain stranded in spontaneous sites along the eastern border, with insufficient resources to meet their basic needs.

The strain on security and protection is severe, heightening exposure to violence, exploitation, and other risks in an already fragile environment. The lack of adequate shelter, clean water, and health services is pushing national systems to the brink. Host communities, whose generosity has been remarkable, are increasingly overwhelmed.

In 2025, Chad is projected to receive an additional 250,000 Sudanese refugees, with 145,000 new arrivals already recorded in the first six months alone – further widening the gap between needs and resources. Despite urgent requirements for food, shelter, water, sanitation, and medical care, available funding remains critically low. New arrivals continue to cross daily into Wadi Fira, Ennedi Est, and Ouddaï provinces, including a

growing number of survivors of extreme violence. Sixty-four per cent report human rights abuses during flight – including sexual and physical violence – especially among women and children, who make up 87 per cent of the Sudanese refugee population. Without adequate resources, UNHCR is unable to address their urgent protection and assistance needs, leaving survivors and vulnerable individuals at heightened risk.

Underfunding is also forcing UNHCR to scale back or suspend education, health, and livelihoods support for 177,000 refugees from other countries and 220,000 IDPs.

The cuts not only threaten lives and rights, but also risk fuelling onward movement toward Libya and Europe. In 2024 alone, nearly 2,000 Sudanese crossed into Libya via Chad – exposing them to heightened risks of trafficking and exploitation.



1.4 million
refugees and
260,000
IDPs



23% cuts
to UNHCR's
programmes



29% funded

Key priorities

- Urgent relocation of 239,000 refugees from unsafe, makeshift sites near the Sudanese border to ensure safety, dignity and access to life-saving services.
- Construction of dignified shelters and scale-up of water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure and services to meet critical needs.
- Investment in resilience-building for refugees and host communities, including livelihood support and education vital for fostering self-reliance, reducing aid dependency, and promoting social cohesion in affected areas.

Lebanon

In Lebanon, severe underfunding is taking a devastating toll on refugees and vulnerable host communities. More than 83,000 refugees have lost access to financial aid for shelter, leaving families at risk of eviction and homelessness.

UNHCR's entire health programme in Lebanon is at risk of shutting down by the end of the year. Already, some 40,000 refugees have lost access to primary health care, and if the funding situation

does not improve, a further 45,000 people – including those in need of maternity care – will lose access to secondary health services by year-end. UNHCR is also being forced to fully phase out education support, impacting 15,000 refugee children.

Financial aid has been drastically reduced, with assistance covering less than half of the minimum basic needs of families.

Sudanese refugee arrivals face new hardships in Chad

Latner Hassan Adam (centre) sits with her daughter Abeer and son Myassar in a medical clinic in Adré, Chad. They fled the violence in Khartoum, arriving in Chad exhausted and afraid. Just days after crossing the border from Darfur, UNHCR staff met them – Myassar already burning with fever from malaria. The clinic, run by fellow Sudanese refugee Dr. Mohammed Omer, continues to provide care despite being overwhelmed.

Latner's family are among hundreds of thousands of Sudanese refugees now stranded in makeshift sites along the Chad–Sudan border. There is little clean water, no proper shelter, and health-care services are stretched beyond capacity. Each day brings growing risks of disease and malnutrition. UNHCR is on the ground, but without additional resources, we cannot scale up to meet the mounting needs. The situation is critical, but not hopeless. With international solidarity and urgent support, we can make a difference.



© UNHCR/Nicolo Filippo Rosso

UNHCR has already had to discontinue just under 350,000 people from their assistance under the UNHCR-WFP cash programme, and support for an additional 200,000 vulnerable individuals is now at risk — leaving them increasingly exposed to risks of abuse, exploitation, and eviction.

Since the fall of the Assad regime in Syria in December 2024, over 100,000 people have crossed into Lebanon. There is limited capacity to provide these new arrivals with even the most basic shelter, protection assistance and life-saving items. Conversely, Syrian refugees wishing to

return to Syria may not be able to receive support to do so. Durable solutions for this group will be hurt by the inability to provide support on their return.

Cuts have also led to the discontinuation of community support projects designed to bolster overstretched Lebanese institutions and foster social cohesion — undermining fragile stability in host communities as Lebanon continues to grapple with the lasting effects of the recent conflict.



1.4 million
Syrian refugees,
including
722,000
registered with
UNHCR



47% cuts
to UNHCR's
programmes



22% funded

Key priorities

- Monthly multi-purpose financial aid for 200,000 refugee families, enabling them to meet their most urgent needs — such as food, rent, and other essentials — while preserving their dignity and safety.
- Continued provision of secondary health care, including urgent, life-saving interventions and safe deliveries in hospitals, through to the end of the year.
- Support for refugees choosing to return to Syria, including pre-departure counselling, assistance with documentation, and individual return financial aid to facilitate their reintegration.

Niger

In Niger, ongoing insecurity and conflict in the regions of Tillabéri, Diffa, Maradi, and Tahoua continue to drive forced displacement, compounding the hardship of refugees, IDPs and the communities that host them.

More than 212,000 refugees are losing access to essential health-care services, including maternal care and mental health support, due to the suspension of mobile clinics and the dwindling supply of essential medicines. Cuts to water, health and sanitation programmes are leaving over 100,000 people without access to sufficient clean water or basic hygiene support, heightening the risk of waterborne and communicable diseases.

More than 114,000 vulnerable individuals are no longer receiving critical multi-purpose financial aid, leaving them unable to cover basic needs like

food, hygiene supplies, and transport. More than 260,000 people are going without essential relief items such as blankets, mattresses, and cooking sets, which are vital to survival and dignity. Blanket food assistance at the Humanitarian Centre in Agadez will be phased out by July 2025, to continue for only the most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers.

Shelter needs are particularly urgent as more than 209,000 people forced to flee are no longer receiving shelter assistance. Families are left in overcrowded, dilapidated structures or completely exposed to the elements, increasing risks of recruitment into armed groups, violence, and exploitation, particularly for women, children and people with disabilities. Without privacy or physical safety, women and girls face heightened risks of sexual violence, including sexual assault and child marriage.

These cuts are not only compromising protection and assistance but also eroding the humanitarian space. As resources dwindle, so too is UNHCR's

ability to negotiate access, monitor protection trends, and deliver services with partners in areas destabilized by violence.



432,000 refugees and **507,000** IDPs



30% cuts to UNHCR's programmes



25% funded

Key priorities

- Sustaining critical protection services and strengthening access to registration, documentation, quality health care and adequate shelter for displaced people and vulnerable host communities.
- Supporting inclusion of displaced people in national service delivery systems to enhance their access to essential services.

South Sudan

In South Sudan, UNHCR has been forced to scale back its response to solely life-saving interventions, despite a worsening humanitarian situation driven by continuing arrivals from Sudan and renewed clashes between government and opposition forces in Upper Nile, Jonglei, and other areas.

Since May, some 100,000 vulnerable people have lost access to shelter and essential relief items such as sleeping mats, blankets, cooking sets, and hygiene supplies, leaving them struggling to survive in undignified, unhygienic and overcrowded conditions.

Meanwhile, 75 per cent of safe spaces for women and girls supported by UNHCR have closed, leaving up to 80,000 refugee women and girls (including survivors of sexual violence) without

access to medical care, psychosocial support, legal aid, material support or income-generating activities. Without these services, survivors remain isolated, at risk of further abuse and without a path to recovery.

Conditions are deteriorating at the Renk transit centre near the border with Sudan, where over 10,000 people remain, about 9 per cent of whom are refugees. Cuts have forced UNHCR to pause efforts to move new arrivals from transit centres to return locations or refugee-hosting settlements, leading to increased congestion in Renk and other border locations as arrivals continue. The onset of the rainy season will compound health and protection risks, increasing the likelihood of disease outbreaks amid limited sanitation and overstretched medical support.



572,000 refugees and **2 million** IDPs



30% cuts to UNHCR's programmes



28% funded

Key priorities

- Resumption of onwards transportation of refugee arrivals from border locations to refugee-hosting settlements to alleviate congestion at transit centres.
- Provision of acceptable level of life-saving services in health, water, hygiene, shelter and non-food items, which have been scaled down to the bare minimum.
- Provision of essential support to vulnerable populations, including registration, prevention and response to gender-based violence, child protection services, livelihoods assistance, financial aid, and flood mitigation measures.

Uganda

In Uganda, cuts are unfolding against a backdrop of surging new arrivals. Since the start of the year, the country has received over 115,000 refugees – primarily from the DRC and South Sudan – marking a 173 per cent increase compared to the same period last year. While the response has so far been well-managed, UNHCR can no longer scale up service delivery in areas hosting new arrivals and is now forced to divert resources from underfunded settlements to cover life-saving emergency response.

While two-thirds of UNHCR's education budget in Uganda previously went to teacher salaries, cuts mean that over 2,000 teachers and assistants are no longer supported. The pupil-teacher ratio now stands at 117:1 – more than double the national standard – undermining the protective role of education, particularly for girls and children with disabilities, and increasing protection risks like child labour and child marriage.

Over 200,000 women at risk of sexual violence and 95,000 vulnerable children may be left without the specialized care they need. Cuts have also reduced mental health services for 23,000 refugees. The caseworker-to-child ratio is now 1:143, well below minimum standards.

Cuts to health services have led to the loss of 438 health workers since the end of 2024, undermining primary health care and emergency response capacity. In Nyumanzi reception centre, the global acute malnutrition (GAM) rate has exceeded the emergency threshold. In settlements like Kiryandongo and Nakivale, water access has dropped to just 8–10 litres per person per day – well below emergency standards – raising serious public health concerns amid concurrent outbreaks of cholera, mpox, and measles.



1.9 million
refugees
and asylum-
seekers



32% cuts
to UNHCR's
programmes



25% funded

Key priorities

- Reinforcing border response efforts and scaling up health, water and education services in areas receiving new arrivals, to prevent the collapse of emergency response efforts.
- Strengthening community protection initiatives by increasing support to community-based organizations and scaling up training for community-led protection initiatives.
- Expanding the role of development partners in assuming the operational costs for health, education, and water services in refugee settlements.

Flexible funding: Supporting needs where they are greatest

The examples in this report offer just a glimpse into the wider impact of underfunding of UNHCR – scaling back life-saving assistance, delaying critical interventions, and leaving more people without protection. But the full picture is even more urgent. UNHCR faces difficult choices – not only about what to prioritize, but also when, where, and how fast.

Flexible funding is a lifeline. It enables UNHCR to respond across the full spectrum of needs – not just those in the spotlight. Every dollar of flexible funding spent is weighed against needs, gaps, and urgency to maximize its impact. Because it is not tied to a specific country or sector, it allows us to:

- Respond rapidly to new and unforeseen emergencies, including those not covered in this report.
- Sustain essential services in underfunded and forgotten crises.
- Redirect resources dynamically to where needs are greatest, including preparedness measures in anticipation of larger crises.

This ability to act before needs escalate and reach the most vulnerable is only possible through flexible funding from public and private donors. Without it, UNHCR's capacity to fulfil its protection and solutions mandate is severely constrained. Yet, flexible contributions are shrinking. In 2024, softly earmarked funding declined for the second year in a row – down 26 per cent. By June, UNHCR had received only \$746 million in flexible contributions – insufficient to sustain even the most essential activities globally.

We thank donors – including Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America – whose support accounts around half of all flexible funding received so far this year. Growing private sector contributions also remain a critical source of flexible funding, particularly unearmarked funding. The leadership of public and private sector donors in providing flexible funding is vital.

Now more than ever, broader and bolder support is essential. At this critical moment, flexible funding is not only efficient – it is strategic, enabling protection and assistance where they are needed most.

Cover photo: A woman and child who fled from Sudan wait at Renk Transit Centre in South Sudan. © UNHCR/Reason Moses Runyanga