

Development Partners Group for the Sudan Regional Refugee Crisis – Dedicated Meeting on Sudan

September 18, 2025

Outcomes Document

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) convened a regional virtual meeting on 18 September 2025 of the [Development Partners Group for the Sudan Regional Refugee Crisis](#) focused on returns to and within Sudan amid ongoing conflict.

Established in September 2024 to attract and highlight early development support in response to the Sudan crisis, the regional DPG organizes two Senior Officials meetings a year on the Sudan regional crisis, and *ad hoc* additional meetings. While conflict persists across much of Sudan, pockets of relative safety have emerged, and to date over 1 million internally displaced Sudanese have made their way home. A further 340,000 people have crossed back into Sudan since last year, mainly from Egypt and South Sudan, some to assess the current situation in the country before deciding to return. An estimated 230 people joined the discussion.

Objectives of this meeting:

1. Present the latest trends on returns to and within Sudan.
2. Facilitate an exchange between development actors on the role they play in supporting voluntary and safe return and on the investments needed in areas of return.

Key take-aways:

1. **Return Trends and Displacement Overview:** Sudan faces protracted conflict, displacement, famine risk, and infrastructure collapse. Over 2.2 million Sudanese IDPs and refugees have returned to their areas of origin, with monthly return rates increasing by 12-15 %. Additionally, more than 405,000 refugees have returned from neighboring countries, primarily through the South Sudan and Egypt corridors. These figures reflect a growing movement of people seeking to rebuild their lives despite ongoing conflict and instability in parts of the country.
2. **Key drivers of return:** Improved security was cited by 97 percent of returnees as the primary reason for returning. Economic motivations, such as access to employment, land, and basic services, also played a significant role. Policy incentives, including free transportation and waived fees, particularly in Egypt, further encouraged returns. For many, the decision to return was driven by survival needs, including food, shelter, and family reunification.
3. **Protection concerns:** Despite the positive trends, 71 percent of returnees reported facing protection risks. These include lack of documentation, child protection issues, gender-based violence, and exposure to smuggling and trafficking. Vulnerable groups such as women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities were particularly affected, highlighting the urgent need for targeted protection services. Other challenges include fragile

infrastructure, lack of health, water, education, UXO contamination in Khartoum and other areas.

4. **Reintegration Potential:** The reintegration potential among returnees is high, with 82 percent expressing a desire to resume their previous jobs. Many also requested financial support such as cash grants, to rebuild their livelihoods. The data suggests a strong willingness among returnees to contribute to their communities and restore a sense of normalcy and dignity.
5. **Development Partner Commitments:**
 - **UNDP** emphasized the importance of principled, voluntary, and safe returns, focusing on basic services, livelihoods and mines clearance.
 - The **African Development Bank** has various operations across Sudan and neighboring countries affected by the Sudan Crisis: \$19 million grant implemented by UNHCR and Government of South Sudan; \$11 million for the Lake Chad basin implemented by UNDP. The Bank strategy for Sudan is accompanied by a pipeline of projects, both new and restructured operations, that will ensure that the bank remains engaged in Sudan, especially in supporting food security, livelihoods and the provision of basic social services (health, water, sanitation and education). This includes \$62 million for integrated social sector infrastructure rehabilitation targeting education, health, water and sanitation - implemented by IOM; \$55 million for health sector recovery implemented by WHO; \$93 million to support Wheat production; \$67 million jointly financed by ICRC and AfDB. Pipeline projects under preparation include a \$50million water and sanitation project to support the related emergency needs (approval expected in November 2025) and a second one aimed at boosting agrifoods resilience, developed in collaboration with various UN agencies, WFP, FAO, UN Women and the private sector.
 - The **World Bank** expanded its portfolio from \$170 million to \$540 million across five projects, targeting community development, health, and education. These include \$240 million Community Development Foods security project and \$80 million health project.
 - The **Qatar Fund for Development** pledged \$50 million in 2023, supporting over 270,000 beneficiaries and committing to resilience and women's empowerment.
 - The **Kuwait Fund** approved \$17 million in grants for Sudan and Chad, reinforcing its long-standing partnership and commitment to durable solutions.
6. **Key Action Points & Recommendations: Community-based approaches** were highlighted as essential for sustainable reintegration.
 - **Basic Services Restoration:** Rehabilitate health facilities, water systems, and schools in return areas. Provide cholera prevention and WASH interventions.
 - **Livelihoods & Economic Recovery: Youth engagement and women's empowerment** emerged as key priorities in recovery efforts. **Agriculture** was identified as a key stabilizer - critical sector for job creation and food security. Launch cash-for-work programs for debris clearance and community projects. Support smallholder agriculture and local value chains. Facilitate access to markets and job creation for youth and women.
 - **Protection & Governance: Strengthening governance and local institutions** was deemed vital to sustaining recovery efforts. Protection services for children and vulnerable groups must be scaled up to address ongoing risks. Strengthen child

protection and GBV services; Establish community governance structures for service delivery; Ensure voluntary, safe, and dignified returns aligned with UN principles.

- **Data & Evidence:** The importance of **data** and **monitoring** was underscored to ensure adaptive programming. Invest in displacement tracking and socio-economic surveys. Share data through existing platforms for coordinated planning.
 - **Flexible Funding:** Mobilize adaptive financing to respond to fast-changing dynamics; encourage pooled funds and joint programming for Nexus interventions.
 - **Partnerships & Coordination:** Scale up collaboration between UN agencies, development banks, and donors. Engage local NGOs and community-based organizations in implementation.
7. **Next Steps:** The Development Partners Group will continue coordination efforts, with an in-person meeting planned in Nairobi in November. Collaboration across humanitarian and development actors will be strengthened, leveraging existing platforms and data to inform strategic investments. The group remains committed to supporting Sudanese communities in their journey toward recovery and resilience.
8. **More information on the response to the Sudan emergency is available on the [Development Action Platform on the Sudan Regional Crisis](#).** The [dedicated Sudan country page](#) contains the latest data and partner updates.

Annex: Agenda of the Meeting

Development Partners Group for the Sudan Regional Refugee Crisis – Dedicated Meeting on Sudan

18 September 2025

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and the UN Development Coordination Office (DCO) are convening a meeting of the Development Partners Group for the Sudan Regional Refugee Crisis focused on returns to and within Sudan.

What are the key objectives of this meeting?

1. Present the latest trends on returns to and within Sudan.
2. Facilitate an exchange between development actors on the role they play in supporting voluntary and safe return and on the investments needed in areas of return.

Agenda

14:00 – 14:05	Introductory remarks – Mr. Mamadou Dian Balde, UNHCR Regional Response Coordinator for the Sudan Situation
14:05 – 14:15	Brief presentation on return trends to Sudan – Mr. Mohamed Refaat, IOM Chief of Mission, Sudan – Mr. Abubakarr Jalloh, UNHCR Representative a.i, Sudan
14:15 – 15:25	<u>Panel Discussion: Sharing of reflections: What role should development actors play in Sudan on issues that are crucial for voluntary and safe return of refugees and IDPs? How can development action be scaled up in areas of return?</u> – Mr. Luca Renda, UN Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Sudan a.i. – Ms. Mary Monyau, Country Manager Sudan, African Development Bank Group – Mr. Yoichiro Ishihara, Country Manager Sudan, World Bank Group – Ms. Muthayel Al-Thani, Acting Head of Humanitarian Programs and Projects, Qatar Fund for Development – Mr. Thamer Al Failakawy, Director of Operations, Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development Moderator: Ms. Fatima Mohammed Cole, Deputy Regional Director, UNHCR Regional Bureau for East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes
15:25 – 15:30	Concluding remarks – Mr. Yacoub El Hillo, Regional Director for Africa, UN Development Coordination Office