



## **Migration Profile**

### **SOUTH SUDAN**

#### **A. Executive summary**

The Republic of South Sudan is the youngest nation in the world; it gained independence from Sudan on 9 July 2011 following the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005 and the referendum and independence process in 2011. Its history is, therefore, connected to that of Sudan. Both countries have historically been places where different ethnic groups, tribes, religions, and cultures have converged and lived alongside one another. In 1899 a condominium (joint rule) government was established in Sudan by the United Kingdom and Egypt. This colonial arrangement ended in 1956, giving self-determination to a unified Sudan. Since then, social, economic, and political issues have escalated into conflict and civil war. The more acute phases of the conflicts occurred in 1956-1972 and 1983-2004. The second phase led to more than 2 million deaths and more than 4 million people displaced, mainly in the South of Sudan. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) of 9 January 2005 ended the conflict between North and South Sudan and paved the way for the creation of a transitional Government of National Unity (GoNU), the formation of the Government of Southern Sudan (GoSS), elections in 2010, and a referendum on self-determination in 2011.

The Human Development Index (HDI) ranked South Sudan 187<sup>th</sup> out of 189 as of the end of 2017. Extreme levels of food insecurity persist across the country, and more than half of the population was in need of humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020.

In 2013, following a period of economic disparity resulting from the closure of oil production plants in South Sudan, a civil war erupted, pushing millions of South Sudanese into a humanitarian crisis. War broke out as the Sudan People's Liberation Movement broke into two main factions - Sudan's People Liberation Army (SPLA) and Sudan's People Liberation Army-in Opposition (SPLA-IO) - and conflict began between them. With both past and current factors, the refugee situation in South Sudan then reached an unprecedented level. An internationally mediated peace agreement was achieved in 2015 and a transitional government composed. However, heavy fighting broke out in the capital, Juba, in July 2016 and is still occurring to a certain extent today. The gradual implementation of the September 2018 peace agreement, including the formation of the unity government in February 2020, provided for a positive economic outlook earlier in 2020.

South Sudan is a country of origin and destination for refugees and internally displaced people (IDPs) as well as a transit country for irregular migrants. Gathering data on

migration in South Sudan is complicated due to ongoing conflict and the constantly changing patterns of migration in the region.

## **B. Country Profile**

### **I. Basic Information**

South Sudan's land area is 644,329 km<sup>2</sup>. Its population is 11,302,338 in 2021, according to projections of the latest United Nations data. South Sudan's capital city is Juba. South Sudan is bordered by the Central African Republic, Sudan, Ethiopia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda, and Kenya.

The largest ethnic group in South Sudan is the Dinka, who constitute about 2/5 of the population, followed by the Nuer (1/5). Other groups include the Shilluk, Azande, Bari, Kakwa, Kuku, Murle, Mandari, Didinga, Ndogo, Bviri, Lndi, Anuak, Bongo, Lango, Dungotona, Acholi, Baka, and Fertit. English is the official working language. South Sudan's population tends to adhere to Christian or animist beliefs, with Christians, primarily Roman Catholic, Anglican, and Presbyterian, accounting for about three fifths of the population. The rest of the population is animist or, to a lesser extent, Muslim.

South Sudan remains in a serious humanitarian crisis due to the cumulative years of conflict and ethnically motivated violence which has destroyed people's livelihoods. The country is underdeveloped despite having available natural resources.

### **II. International and Internal Migrants**

In 2020 the international migrant stock stood at 882,600, registering a slight increase from 845,000 in 2017. In 2020 49.7% of immigrants were female, 34.4% were under the age of 20, and 3.4% were aged 65 and older. Substantially more migrants leave South Sudan than those who come into the country; in 2019, emigrants outnumbered immigrants by 871,000.

People commonly migrate in South Sudan for reasons of marriage and kinship, livelihood opportunities, to build communities, and to escape violence or insecurity. Semi-nomadic pastoralists, like the Misseriya and Rizeigat, engage in large annual migrations between South Sudan and Sudan, and this has been a trigger for conflict in the northern parts of the country. Seasonal migration is driven by weather conditions and corresponding water availability. Distribution of community and ethnic groups across officially demarcated boundaries contributes to the high levels of irregular migration across porous borders. The pursuit of education and employment is a major driver for internal and international migration, particularly among the youth population. The South Sudanese also increasingly migrate to join families abroad.

South Sudan hosts immigrants from Sudan, Uganda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, and Kenya. South Sudan was a popular destination country, especially for irregular migrant workers, because of its porous borders and weak border management. The popularity of South Sudan as a primary destination country for migrant workers from neighbouring countries was connected to a growing demand for goods and services and the lack of a local skilled workforce. Additionally, the oil-driven economic boom attracted

immigrants who sought better opportunities. This migration trend existed before the civil war, but most migrants returned home or moved onwards when war broke out; others left later due to a resurgence of violence in 2016. The war gave rise to over 50,000 deaths, 2.2 million refugees, 1.84 IDPs, and 5.3 million people facing severe food insecurity.

In some instances, the pursuit of international protection is prevented by insecurity in neighbouring countries, especially the DRC, the Central African Republic, and Sudan. International migration to countries in the region is increasingly being chosen above internal displacement, and there are growing informal settlements in border areas reflecting people's attempts to remain close to their properties and, simultaneously, remain close to safety in the event of heightened conflict.

South Sudan is also a transit country for migrants from Eritrea, Ethiopia, and Somalia who are trying to reach Europe or Northern Africa. Migrants transiting South Sudan are mixed groups of refugees, migrant workers and their families, unaccompanied migrant children, and victims of human trafficking. Throughout the journey they often resort to the services of smugglers to help them follow the migration route and facilitate their irregular movements. These transit journeys tend to originate in refugee camps, with Eritreans and Ethiopians usually relying on members of their country of origin to guide them.

### **III. Emigration and Skilled Migration**

South Sudanese migrants tend to stay in the region instead of engaging in irregular migration to Europe. This is due to the lack of resources to finance journeys to Europe and to a strong sense of identity and attachment to their cultural lifestyles. Data on emigration is scarce and does not provide precise information on why the South Sudanese leave their country, apart from protracted conflict displacement. As of the end of 2017, the European Union reported a total 1,752,000 migrants from South Sudan worldwide, which amounted to approximately 13.9% of the South Sudanese population. These South Sudanese migrants are mainly situated in Uganda, Ethiopia, Sudan, Kenya, and the United Arab Emirates. According to some estimates, in 2018 South Sudan received 131.1 million USD in personal remittances.

### **IV. Forced Migrants (internally displaced persons, asylum seekers, and refugees)**

Forced migration is the most important migration trend in South Sudan. There are currently 4.3 million displaced people from South Sudan, including refugees, IDPs, and asylum seekers. Children account for 63% of South Sudanese refugees, the majority of whom reside in Uganda and Sudan (over 800,000).

According to the Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC), as of 31 December 2019 there were 1,352,000 IDPs due to conflict and violence and 246,000 due to natural disasters. IDPs are found throughout the country but are mostly concentrated in the Upper Nile, Jonglei, and Unity states. Dire conditions and conflicts between local groups often lead to an increase in IDPs and the secondary displacement of refugees. Indeed, camps and settlements are constantly in need of resources and assistance, while access to these locations by humanitarian agencies and international organizations is difficult due to a lack of infrastructure, insecure conditions, and heavy rainfall.

South Sudan gives group status determination and prima facie refugee recognition to refugees from the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Sudan. However, persons from the Darfur region of the Sudan do not appear to obtain refugee status in South Sudan.

Refugees in South Sudan numbered 314,443 (67,537 households) by the end of 2020, the majority coming from Sudan (92%). Other refugees come from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, the Central African Republic, and Eritrea. The ratio of refugee adults to children in South Sudan is approximately 1:1, and, in terms of age groupings, the largest proportion (45.3%) of refugees in South Sudan are aged 18-59, and the second largest proportion (25.8%) are aged 5-11. In terms of gender, approximately 53.5% of refugees are female and 46.5% are male. Refugees are hosted in Upper Nile (52.2%), Unity (38.6%), Central Equatoria (5.2%), Western Equatoria (3.4%), and Jonglei (0.7%). Additionally, in January 2021 there were 3,769 asylum seekers (2,993 households) in South Sudan. Some reports highlighted competition over resources between refugees and host communities. As of 31 December 2020, South Sudanese refugees globally amounted to 2,316,738 people. South Sudanese refugees are mainly found in Uganda (40.4%), Sudan (33.4%), Ethiopia (16.5%), Kenya (5.6%) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (4.1%). Many South Sudanese men elect to remain in South Sudan and tend to their cattle and belongings, while women and children flee the fighting. Thus, 85% of South Sudanese refugees are women and children. In some instances, South Sudanese refugees have been resettled in Western countries, mainly the United States, Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Neighbouring countries (which host the bulk of South Sudanese Refugees) have shown support and understanding by granting the South Sudanese prima facie refugee status.

## **V. Victims of Human Trafficking**

South Sudan is a source and destination country for forced labour and sex trafficking of men, women, and children. According to the 2020 trafficking in persons' report by the U.S. Department of State, South Sudan has been a Tier 3 country since 2015 as it "does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking and is not making significant efforts to do so". There is a lack of data on human trafficking in South Sudan.

It was estimated that between 7,000 and 19,000 minors were in combat roles within South Sudan as of February 2020, with both government and opposition forces known to recruit child soldiers. Children are also coerced to work in construction, market vending, shoe shining, car washing, rock breaking, brick making, delivery cart pulling, begging, and cattle herding. South Sudanese women and girls, mainly from rural areas, are vulnerable to domestic servitude throughout the country. National citizens and foreign business owners recruit men and women from neighbouring countries, including Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, and Uganda, as well as South Sudanese women and children, with false promises of employment in hotels, restaurants, and construction. It is reported that some traffickers operate in organized networks within South Sudan and transnationally.

South Sudanese who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries and IDPs are at high risk of trafficking, especially unaccompanied minors who are particularly vulnerable to abduction by sex or labour traffickers. Migrants transiting through South Sudan, from East to North Africa, are also vulnerable, particularly across the borders with Uganda, Kenya, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Social stigma and fear of corrupt law enforcement discourage victims from reporting human trafficking crimes.

## **VI. National Legal Framework**

South Sudan is a rather young nation. Having inherited a limited number of laws and policies related to migration, the country faces many challenges in responding to migration issues.

Legislation on migrants and migration includes the 2003 Nationality Act, which provides for matters related to nationality and naturalization; the 2012 Refugee Act, which outlines the country's duties and responsibilities towards refugees; the 2008 Child Act, which protects the children of refugees and IDPs; and the 2011 Passports and Immigration Act, which provides for matters related to nationality, identity documentation, and immigration (including entry, departure, registration, and deportation). The 2008 Penal Code, the 2008 Child Act, and the 2018 Labour Act all criminalize some forms of sex and labour trafficking, but they are not properly implemented. The authorities have not reported investigating or prosecuting any forced labour or sex trafficking crimes since 2012.

South Sudan does little to identify and protect trafficking victims separately from smuggling clients. Corruption and official complicity in trafficking crimes remain significant concerns. There is still a government policy or pattern of employing or recruiting child soldiers, as government security and law enforcement officers continue to use them with impunity. The authorities continue to arrest and imprison child sex-trafficking victims and individuals for prostitution violations without screening for indicators of trafficking.

South Sudan signed most regional conventions and treaties in 2013. These include the 2009 African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala Convention); the 1969 OAU Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa; the Abuja Treaty establishing the African Economic Community (AEC), which states that freedom of movement of persons is a *sine qua non* condition for the establishment of an African common market; and the 1981 African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which authorizes free movement and choice of residence within a member state of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and prohibits the collective expulsion of foreigners. South Sudan is also part of a European Union-Horn of Africa interregional forum on migration known as the Khartoum Process which has led to the creation of a shared political platform among EU, North, and East African countries along the migration route between the Horn of Africa and Europe. In December 2018 South Sudan also officially adopted the Global Compact for Migration.

However, South Sudan is not a signatory to most international conventions regarding migration. South Sudan has not signed the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, the 2000 UN Convention against Transnational Organized

Crime and its related protocol, the 1954 UN Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons, or the 1961 UN Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness. Sudan is the state party to seven International Human Rights Treaties; neither Sudan nor South Sudan has signed the 1990 International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

Overall, South Sudan's legislative framework fails to adequately address migration, to protect vulnerable individuals, and to provide basic services. The IOM recommends that South Sudan strengthen its border management system, improve its infrastructure and the capacities of its relevant authorities, and create a partnership with the diaspora.

## **VII. Main Actors**

### *The State*

A key national actor in migration in South Sudan is the Directorate of Immigration, Passport, Nationality and Identification. It is mandated with facilitating the legal movement of persons across the country and other national borders to foster economic growth, while also dealing with security concerns. Other government ministries and agencies that play a role in migration governance include the Ministry of Labour, Public Service, and Human Resource Development (MOLPSHRD); the Commission for Refugee Affairs; the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Management; the Relief and Rehabilitation Commission; the Ministry of Gender, Child, and Social Welfare; the Ministry of Culture, Youth, and Sport; the Ministry of Higher Education, Science, and Technology; and the South Sudan Investment Authority. All of them fall under the National Coordination Mechanism. In December 2019 the Technical Task Force on Anti-Human Trafficking and Smuggling of Persons of the Republic of South Sudan was established but is suffering from a lack of funding.

### *The Catholic Church*

South Sudan forms one ecclesiastical province, consisting of one archdiocese and eight dioceses. Main Catholic Church Actors in South Sudan include Caritas, the Salesians, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and the Catholic Relief Service.

Caritas South Sudan was founded in 2011 following the independence of South Sudan, and is an official organization of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Sudan (which covers both Sudan and South Sudan). Caritas South Sudan's main office is in Juba and has a staff of around 15 employees; it runs humanitarian activities from water supply to HIV/AIDS relief in partnership with other Catholic organizations, such as the Catholic Relief Service.

The Salesians of Don Bosco have been working in the region of South Sudan since 1982, providing marginalized youth (including IDPs, refugees, and unaccompanied minors) in Juba, Maridi, Tonj, and Wau with educational opportunities, housing, food, youth centres, parishes, health services, and other services. Salesian programs include a primary school in Tonj for 1,200 students, a Salesian-run health centre in Tonj assisting approximately 250 patients per day, and the Don Bosco Vocational Training Centre in Wau where the Salesians train youth in general mechanics, carpentry, agriculture, and plumbing. The Salesian

missionaries assist the displaced people in Tonj and those of the western state Bahr-el-ghazal, especially in the areas of Bap-Chok, Kapara, Dakum, and Kuelcok, providing education and social development services for poor youth and their families. In addition to this type of assistance, in 2020 the Salesian missionaries carried out a COVID-19 initiative, offering help and basic necessities to those internally displaced and lacking food, water, shelter, sanitation, and medicine. In the Gumbo refugee camp in particular, Salesian missionaries have a parish, a technical-vocational training centre, elementary and middle schools, a women's promotion centre, and a youth centre. The Parish of St. Vincent de Paul provides hygiene facilities, basic necessities, medicines, and primary goods and has been involved in the "Emergency Intervention at IDP Camp - Gumbo during Covid-19 Pandemic" project that in 2020 provided food support for 275 families.

JRS services in South Sudan include training for teachers, supply of school materials, daycare for disabled children, home visits, counselling, and emergency assistance in Maban. JRS Maban organizes social centres for refugee women while providing them opportunities to learn tailoring, life skills, and gain psychosocial support. In Yambio JRS provides education scholarships to girls attending secondary school, sanitary kits to young women attending school, and teacher-training scholarships. JRS provides a community and school-based peace building initiative that uses mediation and workshops to encourage reconciliation rather than violence.

The Catholic Justice and Peace Commission (JPC) is proactively working to support peace and reconciliation processes in the country while advocating for community dialogue. JPC carries out programs for sustainable development, peace and national reconciliation, and humanitarian relief to promptly respond to disasters such as droughts, famines, and conflicts.

Peacebuilding and reconciliation are also supported by Catholic Relief Services operating in South Sudan since 1983. In addition, CRS helps people displaced due to drought and poor rains, focusing on areas such as agriculture, water and sanitation, and disaster response. CRS also engages vulnerable communities to meet their livelihood needs, helping create markets for farmers, distributing seeds and tools, and providing food and nutritional supplements to the most vulnerable. To empower those communities to care for their water supply and sanitation systems, CRS offers training aimed at improving people's hygiene practices.

Finally, there are many female congregations assisting refugees, IDPs, and victims of human trafficking in South Sudan. The Missionary Sisters of the Blessed Virgin Mary, founded in Sudan in 1980, have three communities in dioceses of South Sudan - Juba, Yambio, and Tombura - where the sisters work with refugee families and youth. The Comboni Missionary Sisters are also proactively working in eight different towns in South Sudan, including Malakal, the capital of Upper Nile State, which recently suffered an internal conflict resulting in many cases of violence and sexual abuse.

### *International Organizations*

Most activities in the field of migration are governed by international bodies such as the International Organization for Migration. The IOM has been present in South Sudan since

2004 and has recently offered extensive training to the South Sudanese government and the Directorate of Immigration, Passport, Nationality, and Identification to increase their capacities. The IOM currently implements a range of humanitarian assistance, transition and recovery, border management, and migration health initiatives in cooperation with government and humanitarian partners, as well as local communities.

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is also involved in the protection of refugees and IDPs. In 2021 UNHCR South Sudan is planning to assist 860,000 refugees, asylum seekers, returnees, IDPs, and people at risk of statelessness. It will offer primary health-care services to 320,000 refugees, protection services to 300,000 IDPs, and core relief items to 65,000 refugee households. It will also enrol 90% of refugee children in primary education and help run 175 peaceful co-existence projects. In Juba, the Norwegian Refugee Council also provides humanitarian assistance to IDPs, refugees, and returnees.

### **VIII. Other Issues**

South Sudan's economy relies heavily on oil revenue; it is the most oil dependent country in the world, with oil constituting about 60% of the GDP and nearly all national exports. Oil exports travel through a pipeline to Port Sudan, keeping the country's economy inextricably tied to Sudan for the foreseeable future. Outside the oil sector, livelihoods are primarily based on low productive, unpaid agriculture and pastoralist work.

Besides conflict, South Sudan's serious humanitarian crisis has been impacted by a series of shocks that include flooding in parts of the country, locust infestation, the Covid-19 pandemic, and low oil prices. These have also exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and humanitarian needs. The Human Development Index (HDI) ranks South Sudan at 187<sup>th</sup> out of 189 as of the end of 2017. Extreme levels of acute food insecurity persist across the country and more than half of the population is in need of humanitarian assistance and protection in 2020. About 82% of the South Sudanese population is poor according to the 2011 purchasing power parity (PPP) poverty line of \$1.90/day recognized by the World Bank. Women and children continue to be the most affected and vulnerable.

**February 2021**



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