

HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)

UPPER NILE BASIN

Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda

The full implementation of this version of the HIP is conditional upon the necessary appropriations being made available from the 2021 general budget of the European Union

AMOUNT: EUR 173 635 588,85

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2021/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes¹ is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO²'s partners and to assist in the preparation of their proposals. The provisions of the Worldwide Decision and the General Conditions of the Agreement with the European Commission shall take precedence over the provisions in this document.

0 MAJOR CHANGES SINCE THE PREVIOUS VERSION OF THE HIP

Third modification as of 13 December 2021

Part one: Sudan

Following the coup that occurred on 25 October, Sudan is facing yet an additional threat to the already very worrying food insecurity of its population. In October 2021, the average cost of the local food basket reached 102 Sudanese pounds, an increase by 221% compared to the same month of the previous year. While on 21 November the military reinstated Mr Hamdok as Prime Minister in a contested political agreement to overcome the political crisis, it remains unclear how the political situation will evolve. These developments also opened the door to further instability in several states, with various groups using this instability to advance their interests, notably in Darfur. This political instability also led to the suspension of development cooperation projects by most donors, thereby increasing considerably the need for humanitarian assistance to people in need. While there are ongoing discussions to relaunch development assistance following the political agreement of 21 November, programmes currently remain paused and their resumption will depend on uncertain political developments and, if decided, take time to materialise.

In order to address the food security issues generated by the combined consequences of the economic crisis, conflict and civil unrest, the European Commission will mobilise an additional amount of **EUR 10 135 588,85** from the DG ECHO's Operational Reserve. These additional resources will fund the WFP for its in-kind and vouchers food assistance, and cash distribution programme throughout the country. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

¹ Technical annex and thematic policies annex.

² Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO).

Part two: Uganda

Due to funding shortfalls, over the last 18 months WFP food rations distributed to the 1.5 million refugees present in Uganda was reduced three times. The last reduction was introduced in November 2021. It further decreases the food ration to 40% of the food component of the Survival Minimum Expenditures Basket (SMEB) in one group of settlements mostly located in South West while the settlements located in Central and Northern Uganda are receiving respectively 60% and 70 % of what they were receiving at the beginning of 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic. The third cut of food ration came when the first and second lockdown measures and the loss of livelihoods had already exacerbated pre-existing needs and vulnerabilities.

In order to address the food security issues generated by those ration cuts, the European Commission will mobilise an additional amount of **EUR 3 000 000** from the DG ECHO's Operational Reserve. These additional resources will contribute towards avoiding an immediate deterioration of food security situation in refugee settlements through the reinforcement of WFP and partners food assistance response, supporting the provision of cash grants enabling refugees' access to diversified food available in local markets. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

Second modification as of 4 May 2021

As a result of ongoing violence, devastating floods, and the COVID-19 pandemic, South Sudan is facing the highest levels of food insecurity and malnutrition since its independence 10 years ago.

According to the 2021 Humanitarian Needs Overview (HNO), over 8.3 million people need multi-sectoral humanitarian assistance. This represents an 800 000 increase in absolute values compared to 2020. The 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) targets 6.6 million people, a one-million increase compared to the 2020 HRP.

The latest Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) report published in December 2020 estimates that 33 000 people are currently facing famine-like conditions in Western Pibor, Jonglei State. The number of people living in 'catastrophe' (IPC 5), i.e. 108 000 people across six counties (Pibor and Akobo in Jonglei State, Aweil South in Northern Bahr-el-Ghazal, Tonj East, Tonj North and Tonj South in Warrap), has doubled compared to 2020.

The number of people in food 'emergency' (IPC 4) will reach 2.42 million during the 2021 lean season, an increase of 34% compared to 2020. Overall, 7.2 million people, or 60% of the population, are facing high levels of acute food insecurity ('crisis'/IPC3, or worse) from April to July 2021, a significant increase from 6.5 million in 2020. This means that the mid-2021 lean season is projected to be the worst ever in terms of severity. Acute malnutrition has also increased and will affect 1.4 million children under five in 2021—the highest caseload since the start of the crisis.

To respond to the worsening needs in South Sudan, the European Commission will mobilise an additional **EUR 33 million** from European Union's Solidarity Emergency Aid Reserve, after approval of the relevant request by the Budgetary Authority, to support an urgent scale-up of the humanitarian response in the counties in famine-like

and catastrophe conditions, as well as areas facing emergency food insecurity. The scale-up will support the delivery of emergency food and nutrition assistance, as well multi-sectoral assistance as needed. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

First modification as of 8 March 2021

Additional funding is urgently needed to address humanitarian needs linked to new displacement affecting several parts of the country.

Since the beginning of November 2020, UNHCR has recorded an influx of more than 68.000 refugees from Ethiopia, following military confrontations in the Tigray region in northern Ethiopia. The majority of them have arrived in the eastern Sudanese States of Kassala and Gedaref but in recent weeks refugees have also arrived in Blue Nile State (arriving from Benishangul-Gumuz State of Ethiopia).

UNHCR is working with the Sudanese Commissioner of Refugees (CoR), local authorities and partners to monitor and respond to the situation, as well mobilizing resources to provide life-saving assistance services to the new arrivals.

On 25 November UNHCR released an inter-agency Refugee Emergency Response Plan for the refugee influx from Ethiopia for up to 200 000 refugees in the next 6 months, with an immediate response plan for 100 000 refugees. The financial needs estimated for this plan amount to USD 147 million. The response plan until May is currently 40 % funded.

In addition, to the refugee influx, more than 120 000 people have been internally displaced in West and South Darfur by clashes between Massalit and Arab tribes in January 2021. This escalation of violence played out in the context of poorly resourced security forces and the withdrawal of the UN peace-keeping force in Darfur (UNAMID), which leaves the civilian population very vulnerable to attacks.

To respond to these additional needs in Sudan, the European Commission has mobilised an additional **EUR 10 million for Sudan**³ from DG ECHO's Operational Reserve. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

1 CONTEXT

The Upper Nile Basin⁴ is affected by several humanitarian crises, both protracted and new, with devastating consequences. An estimated 21.7 million people are food insecure, nearly 7 million people are displaced from their homes, of whom 2.9 million are refugees. DG ECHO's Integrated Analysis Framework (IAF) for 2020-2021 identified high humanitarian needs in Uganda and extreme humanitarian needs in Sudan and South Sudan. The three countries are in the very high INFORM⁵ index category.

³ 6 MEUR for the humanitarian response in South and West Darfur and 4 MEUR for the humanitarian response to the Tigray refugee crisis.

⁴ For the purposes of this HIP, the Upper Nile Basin comprises South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda.

⁵ INFORM is a global, open-source risk assessment for humanitarian crises and disasters.

These humanitarian crises are triggered by unresolved conflicts at national and sub-national level, recurrent natural disasters, compounded by climate change and poor disaster management capacity, as well as by decades of economic mismanagement and corruption. In 2020, several acute crises hit the Upper Nile Basin, further aggravating the pre-existing protracted crises and creating an unprecedented humanitarian situation: a desert locust upsurge, the worst in several decades, several episodes of flooding, and the COVID-19 pandemic.

These factors will remain key drivers of severe humanitarian needs in 2021 across the region. Whilst the political transition in Sudan and the peace process in South Sudan offer opportunities for positive developments, they are unlikely to result in an improvement of the humanitarian situation in 2021, even in a best-case scenario. In Uganda, presidential elections are planned in 2021 and may become a destabilising factor.

The mandate of UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID) is scheduled to end on 31 December 2020. The UN Security Council established a United Nations Integrated Transition Assistance Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS) on 3rd June 2020 that is not yet operational. There are concerns that the withdrawal of UNAMID will have negative implications on the protection of civilians and on the capacity of humanitarian partners to deliver aid in areas affected by violence. The presence of UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA) and of the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) remains crucial in the current context.

In **South Sudan**, despite the signature of a Revitalized Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in the Republic of South Sudan (R-ARCSS) and the establishment of a Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity on 22 February 2020, political progress in the country has been slow and a number of contentious issues still persist (notably, the formation of a national army and security arrangements). Additionally, the security situation in the country is deteriorating and the conflict is now broadening beyond communal clashes. The second half of the year has seen recurring local conflict in Jonglei State, a resumption of armed skirmishes in the Equatorias and intercommunal fighting in Lakes and Warrap States, all resulting in important civilian casualties and displacements.

Sudan has embarked on a complex political transition since August 2019. This was preceded by sustained popular protests, which ultimately led to the ousting of the International Criminal Court-indicted President Omar al-Bashir – in power for 30 years. The country is led by the Sovereign Council (composed of 6 civilians and 5 military) and the Government led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. The deal represents a major step towards civilian-led rule and potential democratic transition, which could become a blueprint for the wider Africa/Arab world. The transition is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to put Sudan back on the path of peace, democratic governance and economic recovery but marred by multiple internal and external challenges. The Tigray conflict in neighbouring Ethiopia is an additional risk for the fragile political transition and has already resulted in massive influx of refugees fleeing the Tigray region.

President Museveni who has ruled **Uganda** since 1986 is again running for President in the 2021 general elections, after a contentious constitutional change lifting the presidential age limit in 2018 and giving the President the potential for life-long rule. Uganda is a key player for regional security and is the leading refugees hosting country in Africa (see section 2.1.1 Forced displaced populations). Uganda pursues a progressive

refugee policy and has signed-up to the UN the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) rolled out in the country.

| | South Sudan | Sudan | Uganda |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| INFORM Risk Index | 8,0/10 | 6,8/10 | 6,5/10 |
| Vulnerability Index | 8,5/10 | 7,2/10 | 7,0/10 |
| Hazard and Exposure | 6,4/10 | 6,5/10 | 5,5/10 |
| Lack of Coping Capacity | 9,5/10 | 6,7/10 | 7,1/10 |
| HDI Ranking⁶ (Value) | 0,413 | 0,502 | 0,528 |
| Total Population⁷ | 11 062 113 | 43 849 260 | 45 855 954 |

2 HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance

| | South Sudan | Sudan | Uganda |
|---|---|--|---|
| Registered refugees/ asylum seekers | 302 137 (mainly from Sudan) | 1 074 061 (mainly from South Sudan) | 1 425 040 (mainly from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo) |
| Disaggregated by gender & age | 49.8% female/50.2 % male 0-17: 44.8% 18-59: 50.8% 60+: 4.4% | 49% female/ 51% male 0-17: 48% 18-59: 46% 60+: 6% | 52% female/ 48% male 0-17: 58% 18-59: 39% 60+: 3% |
| IDPs⁸ (in millions) | 1.6 | 2.4 ⁹ | Not applicable |
| Refugee returnees | 284 957 | 320 000 | Not applicable |
| People in need of food assistance¹⁰ (in millions) | 8.9 | 9.6 | 3.7 |
| Children under 5 affected by MAM¹¹ | 1 008 700 | 2 100 000 | 32 800 |
| Children under 5 affected by SAM¹² | 292 300 | 522 000 | 15 100 |
| Out-of-school children¹³ | 2 million | 3 million | 600 000 ¹⁴ |

⁶ Humanitarian Development Index (HDI) developed by UNDP.

⁷ Source: World Bank September 2020.

⁸ The IDP figures does not include the number of people displaced by natural disasters (floods, droughts) on a recurrent basis.

⁹ Huge difference between 2019 and 2020 partly explained by new methodology used by OCHA for the calculation.

¹⁰ The 2020 figures take into account IPC analysis, and post-COVID assessments; all figures include refugee caseload.

¹¹ Moderate Acute Malnutrition.

¹² Severe Acute Malnutrition.

¹³ Figures recorded prior to school closures and disruption in education due to COVID-19.

¹⁴ This figure considers refugees and local children in refugee hosting districts.

2.1.1 *Forced displaced populations*

Protection of civilians remains a major concern in the wider region; conflict and violence have resulted in massive displacement, both cross-border (with an estimated 3 million refugees and asylum seekers) and internal (with 4 million Internally Displaced Persons (IDP)). Displaced people continue to be completely dependent on external assistance for their survival. Unaccompanied minors and separated children are among the most vulnerable categories requiring specific attention and tailored assistance.

The closure of borders that was introduced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted refugees and asylum seekers, looking for international protection in neighbouring countries. However, the Government of Uganda has reiterated its commitment to opening asylum space when conditions for safe reception are in place. Preparedness to host refugees is crucial as the lifting of the border closures could result in new influxes, especially to Uganda, from South Sudan and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). Border closures and other movement restrictions have also disrupted livelihoods and coping mechanisms.

Across the Upper Nile Basin, **existing camps/settlements and hosting capacities in local communities are overstretched**. Host populations often face the same risks and vulnerabilities as displaced persons and should therefore also be considered for humanitarian assistance depending on their needs and vulnerabilities. The growing economic difficulties, which particularly affect refugees and IDPs, could further feed tensions between the refugee populations and their host communities.

Despite COVID-19 related restrictions, **forced displacement in the region is expected to continue in 2021**. Although cross-border movements to and from Sudan have been recorded, there is little prospect for return at scale in the short term as the **conditions in South Sudan are not conducive for large-scale voluntary, safe, informed, dignified and sustainable returns of refugees or IDPs**. Security, access to natural resources (land and water) and provision of basic services remain critical issues to initiate sustainable return programmes¹⁵. In Sudan, although the signature of the Peace Agreement by some –but not all- armed groups on 3rd October is encouraging, the situation remains fragile and volatile in a number of States. With the persistence of the economic crisis and continued negotiations for the last two armed groups to join the Peace agreement, there is little hope that return at scale will be possible as soon as 2021.

2.1.2 *Populations affected by food insecurity and under-nutrition*

According to WFP, 50% more people in the region have become food insecure, including slum dwellers in urban areas, as a result of COVID-19 and related governmental restrictions¹⁶. Both South Sudan and Sudan face worsening food insecurity and structural under-nutrition situation above emergency thresholds. In Uganda, the worsening food

¹⁵ In South Sudan, a relatively small but increasing number of spontaneous refugee and IDP returnees has been recorded over the past few months, linked to the government's and/or UNMISS pressure to reduce the number of IDPs hosted in in Protection of Civilians (PoC) sites. UNHCR reports almost 285,000 returnees to South Sudan; however, these movements are yet to be further analysed to ensure that these returns are voluntary, safe, informed, dignified and sustainable.

¹⁶ <https://www.wfp.org/publications/east-africa-impact-COVID-19-livelihoods-food-security-nutrition-urban-august-2020>

security situation affects particularly refugees, who rely on humanitarian aid to meet their food needs, and 35% of them are in crisis despite this ongoing support. It also affects refugee-hosting communities, the Karamoja region (subject to chronic food insecurity), and increasingly the urban population (as COVID-19 restrictions continue). To respond to these additional needs, Sudan and Uganda (Karamoja region only) have put in place food assistance response schemes through the World Food Programme and the World Bank, which are supported by the EU. In addition, supported by the international community, the Uganda government agreed to a one-off food assistance distributions targeting urban refugees, despite its policy to only provide food assistance to camp refugees.

2.2 Description of the most acute humanitarian needs

2.2.1 Protection

Armed conflicts, violence and overall insecurity linked to criminality and the breakdown of the rule of law expose communities in Sudan and South Sudan to killings and abuses against civilians, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), grave violations against children's rights, restriction of movements, and housing, land and property (HLP)-related issues, as well as violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) (especially in South Sudan). Although some improvements have been observed in Sudan over the last year, the willingness and capacities of duty-bearers to protect communities in Sudan and South Sudan remain limited, leaving them extremely vulnerable to protection violations. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated protection risks in all three countries; in particular, it has resulted in a spike of SGBV, as well as negative coping mechanisms (e.g. early marriage, child labour and transactional sex). Mental health and psychosocial issues faced by affected communities remain insufficiently identified and addressed, although widely acknowledged. Moreover, humanitarian responses remain insufficiently informed by sound protection analysis, with the risk to cause further harm.

2.2.2 Food Security & Livelihoods

The number of food insecure people in the Upper Nile Basin region has increased, reaching 21.7 million overall. This is due to the existing complex situation combining conflict, economic crisis, weather-related disasters such as floods, further intensified by climate change and the locust outbreak, in addition to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on food prices and livelihoods of already-vulnerable households. The additional caseload includes populations living in urban areas, displaced populations who have been affected by the reduction in access to livelihoods, and rural populations traditionally not targeted by humanitarian assistance but who are now in need of food assistance, such as Ugandan local populations in refugee-hosting areas.

2.2.3 Nutrition

Under-nutrition rates remain very high in South Sudan and Sudan, due to food insecurity, limited access to basic services (such as healthcare and safe water), poor sanitation and hygiene, and inappropriate child-feeding practices. National systems and institutions, when functional, do not have the capacities and resources to manage such large caseloads. The COVID-19 pandemic has further worsened the nutrition situation due to the disruption/suspension of routine health/nutrition programming, lower attendance to health facilities (due to restrictive measures, fear, negative coping strategies), whilst food

insecurity has increased significantly. In Uganda, undernutrition remains below emergency levels in most of the country, with seasonal peaks in some areas (Karamoja region) and pockets of undernutrition in refugee settlements.

2.2.4 Health

Health is a major concern in all three countries. The region is prone to epidemic outbreaks, including haemorrhagic fevers such as the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), Marburg, Yellow Fever, measles and cholera. Surveillance and reporting mechanisms are weak and under-resourced in all three countries. The COVID-19 pandemic has put additional pressure on already weak healthcare systems, which are largely unable to offer sufficient access to basic health services especially for the most vulnerable. Additionally, COVID-19 has disrupted the delivery of maternal health services, vaccination/immunisation services, nutrition programmes, the prevention and treatment of curable diseases like malaria, tuberculosis, diarrhoea and pneumonia, and has resulted in stigmatisation of the affected people. As in neighbouring countries, lack of adequate compliance with quality assurance of available medicines and medical equipment remains a major public health concern, more likely to occur in humanitarian settings. Mental health and psychosocial support needs across the most vulnerable population groups are numerous, but not adequately addressed by the very fragile health systems.

2.2.5 Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

Availability of and access to safe water for drinking, cooking, personal and domestic hygiene, and livestock present a major challenge in South Sudan and Sudan, as well as in refugee settlements in Uganda. Combined with prevalent inadequate hygiene and sanitation practices partially caused by very low access to sanitation facilities, this is one of the main underlying causes of high mortality, under-nutrition and fast-expanding outbreaks. The lack of adequate water and sanitation infrastructures is a key challenge to overcome, particularly in the COVID-19 context and especially in urban, cramped areas and areas that receive an influx of IDPs and refugees. Preparedness and response to water-borne or diarrheal diseases should be strengthened across the region, together with effective barriers to transmission routes. The increasing demand for natural resources in densely populated areas, exacerbated by climate change and the ongoing influx of newly arrived refugees, IDPs and returnees, continues to challenge the sustainability of water resources and their exploitation. In such contexts, access to water can be a source of conflict between communities.

2.2.6 Shelter and settlements

The Upper Nile Basin continues to experience new displacement that is likely to increase when borders re-open. The needs for emergency/temporary shelter and non-food items were already high due to new displacements and returns as well as floods across the three countries prior to the virus threat. COVID-19 has exposed the vulnerability of those who live in highly populated areas such as urban centres, refugee camps/settlements, informal settlements and – in South Sudan – Protection of Civilians sites, where physical distancing is difficult to implement due to scarcity of available land.

2.2.7 *Education in Emergencies (EiE)*

Conflict, displacement and economic shocks have disrupted the education of approximately five million children in South Sudan and Sudan, while there are more than 600 000 school-aged refugee children out of school¹⁷ in Uganda. The vast majority of these children are in need of non-formal education programmes (such as Accelerated Education Programmes (AEP)), in order to later transition to formal education. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has major implications on the education sector as schools have remained closed since March 2020 and, while various distance learning modalities have been developed, only a minority of children benefited from self-learning packages. There is a real danger of increased drop-out once schools reopen. Closure of schools has also increased protection risks for children. Overall it is challenging to integrate refugees and IDPs in schools due to poor infrastructure lack of adequate resources as well as barriers (language, finance, gender).

2.2.8 *Disaster Preparedness and Resilience*

Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda face recurrent man-made and natural disasters and are not equipped to effectively prepare for and respond to such situations.

3 HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION

3.1 National / local response and involvement

Regionally, the capacities and/or willingness of Governments to respond to both natural and man-made disasters remain limited. In 2013, the **Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)** launched the Drought Disaster Resilience and Sustainability Initiative (IDDRSI) to "end drought emergencies in the Horn of Africa" by building sustainable livelihoods. The 2nd phase of IDDRSI, 2019-2024¹⁸, has been launched and all IGAD Member States have updated their country programming papers. However, the recurrence of droughts across the region and the absence of a corresponding regional intervention on floods preparedness indicate that much remains to be done, namely continued investment in multi-risk Early Warning Systems (EWS) and overall resilience strengthening, which results in delayed and inadequate anticipatory or early response. In August 2020, IGAD launched the Regional Food and Nutrition Response Strategy, which outlines emergency, as well as medium to long-term interventions required to safeguard livelihoods, sustain gains made so far in relation to food availability and access, treat and prevent acute and chronic malnutrition and ultimately save lives.

IGAD's Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action 2017, initially specific to the Somali refugee situation, was subsequently extended to the whole IGAD region. It represents the regional application of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) Uganda has committed to. These initiatives, subsumed into the Global Compact for Refugees (end-2018) aimed at bringing together humanitarian and development actors, including host governments, to contribute to a more holistic and predictable response to refugee situations; to support host populations and local authorities; and to facilitate a

¹⁷ Education Response Plan for Refugees and host communities in Uganda – One-year state of play September 2019.

¹⁸ <https://resilience.igad.int/>

transition to local integration and durable solutions. The Nairobi Action Plan has so far translated into the **Djibouti Declaration / Action Plan on Refugee Education** (December 2017), and the Kampala Declaration / Action Plan on Jobs, Livelihoods and Self-Reliance for Refugees, Returnees and Host Communities (March 2019). A thematic meeting on Health is planned in the future.

The **East Africa Desert Locust Control Organization** has seen its capacities overwhelmed by the size and scope of the 2019-20 Desert Locust outbreak; its technical and operational reinforcement is included in the FAO appeal.

In **South Sudan**, the R-ARCSS¹⁹ commits to ensuring access to civilian populations in need and developing a recovery and returns framework. However, the government is unable/unwilling to provide basic services to the vast majority of its people. The South Sudan National Development Strategy (SSNDS) 2018-2021, “Consolidating Peace and Stabilizing the Economy”, was drafted during the war in 2017 and adopted in 2018, when only one of the parties to the peace agreement was represented in Government. The Revitalised Transitional Government of National Unity formed in February 2020 has not yet adopted its own National Development Strategy. The SSNDS highlights peace and stabilisation of the economy as priority areas; however, the SSNDS priorities are not used in budgeting decisions.

The country has no functioning Disaster Management structures at state or local level. Progress in implementing the National Disaster Risk Management Plan (2018) has proved challenging due to limited financial resources, inadequate staff capacity and support, and limited capacity to develop risk assessment and risk profiling tools and to carry out monitoring and evaluation of the envisioned activities.

In **Sudan**, disruptions in the functioning of line Ministries in 2019 and 2020 have had serious implications for humanitarian partners’ response. The previous regime’s restrictive framework on humanitarian aid has substantially improved under the Transitional Government; however, a number of bureaucratic impediments and interferences from security services remain, worsened by COVID-19 related restrictions. In June 2020, a Joint Communiqué on Humanitarian Access was agreed upon between the EU and its Member States and the Transitional Government, in which the latter reiterated its commitment to facilitate the access and the work of humanitarian organisations and announced the setting up of a working group with representatives of the humanitarian community to address outstanding challenges that still needs to materialize. The recent floods have reactivated discussions with the Government on the setting up of an Emergency Operations Centre. For the time being, the situation is handled by the Flood Task Force chaired by the Humanitarian Affairs Committee.

In **Uganda**, the growing economic hardship is undermining the Government’s commitment and capacity to implement a progressive policy towards refugees²⁰ whilst humanitarian funding for the refugee response in the country is dwindling, resulting in cuts in assistance (including food assistance). The scale of the refugee crisis continues to overwhelm national and local capacities and still requires support for reinforcing district

¹⁹ Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, Chapter 3.

²⁰ Uganda recognise the rights of refugees to work, establish businesses and move around freely within the country. A plot of land is allocated to each family, the size can be variable. This engagement towards refugees from the Authorities is also reflected in initiatives such as the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) rolled out in the country

and local Government capacities, notably in view of operationalising the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework. Involvement of sectorial line ministries to better integrate refugees in national policies has started, but concrete implementation relies on support from the international community. The National development Plan-III covering the period 2020-2025 aligns to the CRRF on three points: (i) Water, Climate Change and Environment and Natural Resources Management, (ii) Human Capital Development and (iii) Regional Development. For broader disaster management, the Office of the Prime Minister Disaster Relief and Management Department is in charge, as mandated by the “National Policy for Disaster Preparedness and Management”. However, this policy is not operationalised due to poor capacities and limited national budget allocations to preparedness, especially at district level. Due to this there no comprehensive and functional early-warning/surveillance systems.

3.2 International Humanitarian Response

| | South Sudan | Sudan | Uganda |
|--|----------------------------|--|--------------------------------|
| 2020 funding appeals (HRP, Refugee Response Plan, COVID appeal), in Billion USD | HRP: 1.5 COVID-19: 0.39 | HRP : 1,63 RRP: 0.506 COVID-19:0.283 | RRP : 0.797 COVID-19: 0.065 |
| % funded as of September 2020 | HRP 32,6% | HRP: 43,8% COVID: 32,7% | RRP: 30% |

Coordination and advocacy are key to address the protracted complex emergencies affecting the Upper Nile Basin and protect humanitarian space from undue interference by authorities and parties to the conflicts. This is a particular concern in South Sudan and Sudan. Continued advocacy on the Nexus approach in Sudan and Uganda, and specifically on the CRRF in the latter, should be sustained. Moreover, due to the regional nature of the displacement crises in the Upper Nile Basin, the need to strengthen cross-country/regional coordination and political analysis is evident.

In **South Sudan**, the full cluster coordination architecture is in place. Donors are included in ad-hoc Humanitarian Country Team meetings (HCT + meetings). The top EU MS donors are Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. The other main humanitarian donors are the US and the UK. DG ECHO chairs the Donor Coordination Group. Additionally, Civil-Military Coordination in the country is crucial to guarantee dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in order to protect and promote humanitarian principles.

In **Sudan**, full sector coordination is in place, with a specific monthly Refugee Consultation Forum (RCF) led by UNHCR. Donors are included in ad-hoc Humanitarian Country Team meetings (HCT + meetings). Key EU MS donors include Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. The other main donors are US and the UK. DG ECHO is chairing the donor coordination group.

In **Uganda**, the refugee response is led by Office of Prime Minister (OPM)/UNHCR following the Refugee Coordination Mechanism, with sector coordination supported by line ministries and the relevant UN agencies playing a co-lead role. Key EU MS donors include Denmark, Germany, Sweden and the Netherlands. The main other donors to the Refugee Response Plan are the US and the UK.

3.3 Operational constraints

3.3.1 Access/humanitarian space

Security remains a major constraint for humanitarian operations throughout the region.

The situation in South Sudan remains of particular concern, as threats and attacks against humanitarian staff, infrastructure and supplies have once again increased in 2020 along with the spike in subnational violence and armed clashes. Political instability and the drawdown of UNAMID increase safety and security risks in Sudan.

Such situations call for enhanced and coordinated safety and security awareness, as well as strictly neutral, impartial, and independent action.

Administrative requirements put in place by authorities, as well as context-specific difficulties, affect DG ECHO's and partners' capacity to undertake proper assessments of needs and monitoring of operations, especially in South Sudan, as well as partners' capacity to deliver aid in a timely, effective and accountable manner.

3.3.2 Partners (presence, capacity), including absorption capacity on the ground

DG ECHO has an **extensive partner network** in the three countries with an overall good response capacity. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has constrained the deployment, presence and movement of humanitarian workers and goods, both within countries and across borders, pushing many partners to adapt their ways of working. This may lead to a less efficient supervision of Implementing Partners, among other risks. On the other hand, these same restrictions have also provided opportunities to work more intensively with local partners and apply new ways of interacting with communities.

3.3.3 Other

DG ECHO partners continue to face risks of **instrumentalisation of humanitarian aid and/or aid diversion**. This impacts the timeliness and quality of their programmes (see below), especially in Sudan and South Sudan. DG ECHO partners must also ensure that all activities are properly monitored and supported by strong accountability mechanisms. Any irregularities, in particular nepotism, aid misappropriation and theft, likely to hamper or delay the implementation of the action and resulting in financial loss, should be reported to DG ECHO.

Logistics challenges are very high across the Upper Nile Basin. South Sudan is one of the most challenging operating contexts in the world, and the cost of the humanitarian response has increased with the COVID-19 situation. Support to common logistical services therefore continues to be crucial.

4 HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

DG ECHO Country Teams across the region have involved counterparts of other EU services (DEVCO, FPI, EEAS and EU Delegations) in the elaboration of the 2021 HIP priorities and identification of Nexus opportunities; likewise, EU Delegations across the region have included DG ECHO in their identification of priorities under the 2021-2027 multiannual financial framework (MFF), in accordance with EU priorities.

4.1 Nexus opportunities for Sudan

As a pilot country for the nexus, Sudan has established an EU Nexus Action Plan in 2017 identifying strategic areas (nutrition and protracted forced displacement) for a more complementary engagement from the EU and its Member States. Concrete implementation was difficult given limited development funding during the previous regime but the ongoing democratic transition provides an opportunity for increased engagement of development donors in Sudan and for a more ambitious triple Nexus approach, in particular in the social sectors. The priorities identified in the 2017 EU Nexus Action Plan remain valid, but given the transformed political context, the increase in humanitarian needs and the changes in EU programming priorities, new opportunities have been identified, which should where possible be applied in newly accessible areas. The purpose of a successful nexus approach for Sudan should be to ensure durability of quality supply beyond crises, especially related to basic social services such as health care or education, social care and direct (cash/ voucher/ food) transfers to households.

- **Protection, forced displacement and peace related activities:** all EU instruments support to a certain extent protection services for forcibly displaced people. There are opportunities for more joined-up advocacy efforts on durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons. In addition, a better linkage could be pursued between EU humanitarian, development, peace and stability funding instruments to address the underlying causes of conflict, especially in geographical areas where it is driven by competition for access to natural resources (water, land, wood).
- **Health/Nutrition:** in most States affected by conflict and displacement, humanitarian and development actors, notably those funded by the EU Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF), have *de facto* substituted government services by supporting primary health, including identification and treatment of SAM, and by providing an integrated essential health/nutrition package, free of charge. Further Nexus opportunities include: reinforcement of the drug supply (procurement, quality assurance) and disease surveillance system in compliance with the international health regulations (IHR), education & training of staff, universal access to free health care (including reproductive health and medical treatment of SGBV) for vulnerable people.
- **Food security:** continued support of both development and humanitarian donors to the Government-owned Family Support Programme (FSP), which aims to deliver support to those families hardest hit by the consequences of the economic reforms and the COVID-19 pandemic. The humanitarian, rapid, component of the FSP is under implementation by WFP (with ECHO support) whereas the development medium-term component is still under development by the World Bank. Under a Nexus approach, priorities include: the establishment of a shock-responsive and preparedness component to the FSP, the improvement of early warning systems, recovery of livelihoods and resilience, and improvement of agricultural outputs.
- **Education:** Sudan signed the Djibouti Declaration on Refugee Education in 2018. Nexus opportunities include: further reinforcement of joint EU humanitarian and development instruments, aiming at supporting transition between primary and secondary education levels.

Overall, more efforts should be made to explore nexus opportunities with Member States funding in a ‘Team Europe’ approach.

4.2 Nexus opportunities for South Sudan

South Sudan did not benefit from the European Development Fund (EDF), which rendered systematic nexus approaches within the EU more challenging. All EU development actions have been financed on an *ad-hoc* basis, through special measures channelled through the EU Trust Fund and the Instrument Contributing to Stability and Peace. No EU development funds are channelled through the government. The lack of progress in the implementation of the peace agreement limits opportunities for long-term development planning and close cooperation with the government. Significant coordinated humanitarian and development efforts are required to address the overwhelming challenges in South Sudan.

- **Health and Nutrition:** EU humanitarian and development funding supports primary and secondary health care services across the country, including by working in government health facilities and by providing incentives to government health workers, who are not regularly paid. The EU development funds support the provision of primary health care in eight out of ten States through the Health Pooled Fund (HPF)²¹. DG ECHO's health strategy has focused on areas not covered, severely under-served, affected by man-made or natural shocks and/or exposed to increased health threats, as well as advocating for the integration of nutrition and GBV care within the HPF and other health programs. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the EU development funds have also complemented DG ECHO-funded actions by covering funding gaps (e.g. funding WHO for laboratory support and contributing to the nation-wide procurement of personal protective equipment). Further nexus opportunities include: adequate implementation of the global programs funded by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunization (GAVI), increased integration of nutrition with health, provision of standard health packages and complementary financing of gaps including investment in early warning systems for disease surveillance.
- **Food security:** in a context where over half of the population is severely food insecure, DG ECHO supports unconditional food assistance in severely food insecure areas (IPC 4 and 5). Opportunities to deliver cash assistance are increasing, but they should be consolidated before any scale-up. EU development funding is invested in agricultural development with sustainable food systems. In the context of the post-2020 country programming, EU development funds will shift their focus also onto marginalised areas, outside of the usual 'pockets of stability'. In the same context, EU development will target opportunities for jobs and growth in the agro-business for better diversification of the economy (currently mainly dependent on oil revenues). If the context becomes more stable, there could be opportunities to step up nutrition, food security and livelihoods interventions in marginalised areas focusing on recovery and resilience, coupled with humanitarian assistance.
- **Protection and peace-related activities:** in terms of response, EU humanitarian funds focus on strengthening the delivery of life-saving assistance to victims of protection violations (e.g. SGBV survivors, children associated with armed conflicts) as well as IHL dissemination. EU development and peace and stability is looking at

²¹ The remaining two States are covered by the WB health programme implemented by UNICEF and the ICRC.

violence prevention through long-term behavioral change interventions, as well as peace-building activities in key areas of the country. Additionally, development funding is aimed at monitoring the ceasefire and progress in the peace process, as well as safeguarding civic space and respect of human rights. For 2021, opportunities could be explored to better link-up EU development and peace and stability with regard to support the protracted refugee crisis in the country, and the increasing case load of CAAC²².

- **Education:** DG ECHO's funding is focused on improving access to quality Formal Education and Non-Formal Primary Education with both static and mobile actions, including Accelerated Education Programs (AEP) in areas with new shocks and in neglected, hard-to-reach, or conflict-affected locations. EU Development funding has been keeping the primary education sector alive by paying monthly incentives to teachers countrywide, providing school feeding programs and complementing other donors' programs including Education Cannot Wait. Further incentives will only target teachers in hard-to-reach areas. In order to better support learners' transition to upper levels of education, opportunities for increased synergies between EU humanitarian and development programmes could be leveraged, especially with Education Cannot Wait and the Global Partnership for Education.
- **Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction:** In 2021, EU humanitarian funding will support the implementation of a Disaster Preparedness strategy in South Sudan, through the establishment of a functional community-based multi-hazard Early Warning System in hotspot areas highly exposed to natural and man-made disasters. Opportunities could be explored with the EU Delegation/DEVCO to support the national level Disaster Risk Management structures and to set the stage for a potential future hand-over of Disaster Preparedness initiatives.

4.3 Nexus opportunities for Uganda

Uganda being both a nexus and a CRRF pilot country, the two processes are interlinked, and the EU nexus is considered to be one EU contribution involving EU services and Members States to address forced displacement challenges and to support the country's roll-out of the CRRF. This engagement is translated into an Action Plan (September 2018) aiming to strengthen self-reliance/resilience, access to basic services, employment and livelihood opportunities of refugees and host communities while tackling the drivers of displacement. Securing a rapid integration of refugees in development programmes in Uganda is crucial to support the government's efforts and reduce refugees' dependence on humanitarian assistance.

- **Protection:** While DG ECHO contributes to improving child protection, assistance to victims of violence and gender and disability inclusion, more work is required to improve refugee data collection, leading to improved targeting and creating the ground for linkages to Social Protection schemes.
- **Basic needs:** Scaled-up cash-based programming to cover food and non-food needs of refugees and host communities living in rural or urban settings, while exploring longer-term options in order to link up emergency programming to the existing social protection schemes.

²² Children Associated with Armed Groups and Forces

- **Basic services (Health/Nutrition):** More investment in the supply of, and financial/geographical access to quality basic social services is required for both refugees and host communities. Governance at district level needs to be reinforced to ensure supervision, planning, transparent allocation, quality assured drugs and medical equipment, Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights services as well as financial access to an integrated essential health/nutrition package in line with global Universal Health Coverage engagements. Further efforts are also needed to improve nutrition Early Warning, Alert and Response System and data gathering/surveillance, especially in non-refugee areas and to address the basic gaps and challenges in governance.
- **Education:** Ensuring safe and inclusive access to quality formal and non-formal primary and secondary education through Accelerated Education Programmes for all children, including those with disabilities. Tackling the main barriers to education (financial, cultural and language) is key to ensure quality aspects to improve retentions and learning outcomes. Linkages with long-term development Donors and partners' initiatives (World Bank, GiZ, Enabel and the Global Partnership for Education) are essential, notably to ensure learners' transition to upper levels of education.
- **Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction:** DG ECHO programming in the sector adopts a multi-hazard approach aimed at increasing local response capacities to recurrent natural disasters, epidemics and refugee influxes. Efforts focus on improving the Government's leadership on Disaster Management and building local first responders' capacities; EU development programmes contribute to these objectives by supporting Districts in governance and contingency planning.
- **WASH:** Despite the early involvement of development actors in the WASH sector, more is needed to improve the good governance of WASH services, with a focus on enhancing Operations and Maintenance and the willingness and capacity of beneficiary households to contribute.

5 ENVISAGED DG ECHO RESPONSE AND EXPECTED RESULTS OF HUMANITARIAN AID INTERVENTIONS

General considerations for all interventions

The humanitarian response shall be compliant with EU thematic policies and guidelines that are described in detail in the HIP Policy Annex. For instance, mainstreaming of protection, gender (including mitigation of risks of SGBV), age, and disability inclusion should be duly reflected in all proposals.

Furthermore, the increasingly negative consequences of environmental degradation and climate-related challenges and the COVID-19 pandemic will continue to impact humanitarian crises and the provision of humanitarian assistance for the foreseeable future. For these reasons, in their proposals partners are requested to follow an all-risks assessment approach, to contemplate measures to reduce the environmental footprint of operations and to factor in as appropriate the COVID-19 dimension.

5.1 Envisaged DG ECHO response

Humanitarian responses must be compliant with the four **humanitarian principles of humanity, independence, neutrality and impartiality**. The delivery of aid programmes must be based on independently assessed and verified needs.

The humanitarian contexts in South Sudan, Sudan and Uganda require a stronger focus on the **protection of affected communities and individuals**, including through **reinforced humanitarian advocacy** – by all stakeholders – to call upon all parties to the various conflicts and other stakeholders, to remain compliant with relevant international legal frameworks, such as International Humanitarian Law, Refugee Law as well as principled humanitarian action. Humanitarian access to people affected by crises involves a continuous negotiation with parties to the conflicts. The **dissemination of IHL** by specialised agencies is key to improving humanitarian access for humanitarian organisations.

As communities continue to be affected by conflict, violence, food insecurity, climate change and the impact of COVID-19, ECHO will prioritise the most acute needs and most vulnerable communities / households / individuals, whilst continuing to engage with development and political/diplomatic actors towards long-term solutions to protracted situations, according to the respective mandates. A fine balance will have to be found between pure emergency response and the resilience and self-reliance efforts needed to decrease the dependence of the population on humanitarian assistance and, in the long run, to design an exit strategy.

The COVID-19 pandemic will undoubtedly remain a challenge throughout 2021. Therefore, appropriate measures must be put in place to continue to deliver life-saving assistance on the ground in terms of physical protection, duty of care, messaging and communication, as well as creative solutions to ensure the continuity of activities. DG ECHO will prioritise an integrated multi-sectoral or cross-sectoral approach to programming that aims to meet/contribute to the basic needs²³ of affected populations. Designing an integrated programme requires enhanced coordination and coherence across sectors, starting with joint assessments and continuing through the cycle with joint protection-sensitive vulnerability targeting, joint response/delivery and common monitoring and evaluation, aiming at greater effectiveness and efficiency of humanitarian assistance.

The **Basic Needs Approach** embraces a mix of modalities (cash, vouchers, in-kind and services). In order to enhance efficiency, accountability and scalability, the increasing uptake of cash transfers to meet basic needs (for directly-affected plus host populations) should be pursued as the preferred modality, taking into account local and contextual specificities.

In addition to large-scale disasters, the Upper Nile Basin is characterised by smaller but recurrent man-made and natural, rapid and slow on-set crises. DG ECHO will systematically address **Emergency Preparedness & Early Response** through a) Emergency / Rapid Response Mechanisms (E/RRM) as standalone actions b) Flexibility measures (including “Crisis Modifiers”) embedded in other actions and c) Disaster Preparedness (DP).

ECHO programmes will systematically address:

- **Centrality of Protection:** Protection of all persons affected and at-risk must inform humanitarian decision-making and response, including engagement with States and

²³ Basic needs are the essential goods, utilities, services or resources required on a regular or seasonal basis by households for ensuring long-term survival and minimum living standards, without resorting to negative coping mechanisms or compromising their health, dignity and essential livelihood assets.

non-State parties to conflict. It must be central to humanitarian preparedness efforts, as part of immediate and life-saving activities, and throughout the duration of humanitarian response and beyond.²⁴

- **Accountability towards Affected Populations (AAP):** active commitment to engage responsibly by taking account of, giving account to, and being held to account by the people humanitarian organisations seek to assist;
- **Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** in line with the Statement of Commitment on Eliminating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by UN and Non-UN Personnel.²⁵

Considering the existing conflict dynamics and inter-communal tensions in the Upper Nile Basin, DG ECHO will require that all proposed interventions build on a thorough **gender-informed risk analysis** aimed at 1) developing a conflict-sensitive response (i.e. when the main outcome of the intervention is not protection); 2) directly tackling threats, vulnerabilities and capacities of affected populations, hence reducing their exposure to protection risks (i.e. interventions with a protection outcome).

DG ECHO will support humanitarian advocacy on principled actions as well as strengthen cross-border/regional coordination. These efforts seek to enhance systematic and timely needs assessments, as well as data collection, analysis, presentation and dissemination. Advocacy and coordination help increase the level of understanding about the issues at stake in the region and bridge the gap between emergency relief and rehabilitation, while encouraging more donors to address the crises through a Nexus-oriented approach.

In **Sudan**, ECHO will focus on the following priorities:

1. Addressing critical humanitarian needs through the delivery of emergency lifesaving basic services and protection assistance to populations displaced or otherwise affected by conflict, natural disasters or climate shocks, or epidemics outbreaks.
2. Providing an appropriate response to health, nutrition and food security crises to prevent and/or reduce excess mortality and morbidity, while also reinforcing the humanitarian-development nexus.
3. Supporting coordination, logistics, safety and security, context analysis and conflict sensitivity.

DG ECHO will prioritise displaced populations affected by conflict, insecurity and natural disasters as well as host communities. Given the current context of national economic crisis, support to food insecure populations (IPC 3+) in non-conflict areas will be considered, in complementarity to the government Family Support Programme.

DG ECHO will prioritise new crises where critical humanitarian needs have been identified, including in potential new accessible areas. Sustainable approaches need to be integrated in such actions at an early stage.

²⁴ Statement on the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action, IASC, 2013

²⁵ https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2_statement_of_commitment_on_eliminating_sexual_exploitation_and_abuse_by_un_and_non-un_personnel_2011_0.pdf

DG ECHO will consider programmes supporting durable solutions (returns, relocation and local integration) for protracted displacement situations only if proven to be safe, informed, dignified, voluntary and sustainable.

In **South Sudan**, the EU humanitarian priorities will be:

1. Contributing to the reduction of excess mortality and morbidity in the country, addressing in particular acute malnutrition, severe food insecurity, mother and child health, and epidemics.
2. Providing humanitarian protection assistance to communities affected by violence in the country.
3. Addressing critical humanitarian needs through emergency lifesaving activities in particular in the case of new shocks (conflict-related displacement, epidemic outbreaks, and/or natural disasters / climate shocks).
4. Supporting the humanitarian community's activities in coordination, logistics, safety and security, context analysis, data collection, monitoring and conflict sensitivity.

DG ECHO will respond to critical protection risks including SGBV (sexual and gender-based violence), pursue better integration of Child Protection programming within Education, and scale up protection monitoring and evidence-based advocacy across operations. Finally, DG ECHO may consider reinforcing the role of the Protection cluster, including through supporting a diverse membership as well as pursue a stronger engagement with Civil Society Organisations, jointly with development actors.

On top of unconditional emergency food assistance, opportunities to step up food security and livelihoods could be pursued, if the context allows, in close cooperation and complementarity with development actors. Pooled efforts and/or consortia, which support improved synergies, efficiency, effectiveness and quality, will be considered. Opportunities to deliver digital cash assistance, if supported by a sound market and protection analyses, could be considered.

DG ECHO considers that the situation in the country is still not conducive for large-scale voluntary, safe, dignified, informed and sustainable returns of IDPs and refugees. However, protection and basic services in case of new displacements/spontaneous returns must be provided, based on needs. DG ECHO will pursue a more consistent data collection and monitoring, including in the assessment of the intentions to return within displaced communities across the region.

DG ECHO will look at strengthening Disaster Preparedness, to address multiple risks including rapid-onset hazards and man-made disasters, by introducing community-based Early Warning Systems and preparedness, and strengthening the overall Disaster Risk Management framework.

Considering DG ECHO's budget, mandate and comparative advantage in **Uganda**, its priorities in 2021 will be three-fold:

1. Providing life-saving assistance to the most vulnerable refugees and their host communities. Universal access to quality basic services delivery and the provision of household-level assistance to refugees and host communities will be supported on a multi-sectoral basis, addressing in particular protection, health (including epidemics preparedness), localised peaks of undernutrition, EiE (reinforcing the

education system and addressing multiple access barriers), WASH (addressing new acute gaps while ensuring sustainability of past investments), and multi-purpose cash, including food assistance.

2. Strengthening local Disaster Preparedness to address the multiplicity of crises including epidemics, new refugee influxes and natural hazards by ensuring effective linkages between early warning and early action. DG ECHO will build on the results achieved in the past two years, continuing to support District Contingency Planning in highly vulnerable/exposed Districts, reinforcing local first responders' capacities, pooling Districts' tools and pre-positioned resources and supporting forecast-based financing interventions to improve rapidity and efficiency of emergency responses.
3. Continuing to the operationalisation of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, as reflected in the EU Nexus Action Plan, and aligned to the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework.

DG ECHO will support in priority projects in the **following geographical areas**:

- Areas receiving new influxes of refugees and asylum seekers. In the past two years the focus was mainly on the South West (DRC refugees). For the 2021 funding, this focus has been reviewed to take into account the current vulnerability of South Sudanese refugees in West Nile and the increasing risk of influx from South Sudan.
- Settlements where DG ECHO's previous investment in setting up services requires additional short-term support for effective transition to development programmes or the Authorities.
- Areas exposed to recurrent, multiple and high-risk hazards and epidemics. For the epidemics, attention will be paid to districts at high risk of Ebola Virus Disease and COVID-19 contamination reflecting the priorities of the National Task Force.

Specifically in the food assistance sector, DG ECHO will continue to advocate for a targeting based on a multi-dimensional analysis of economic vulnerability, access to services and protection-related factors, in view of moving from a status-based to a needs-based support in the refugee response. The host communities should also be integrated in the conversation.

5.2 Other DG ECHO interventions

The Emergency Toolbox HIP may be drawn upon for the prevention of, and response to, outbreaks of Epidemics. Under the Emergency Toolbox HIP, the Small-Scale Response, Acute Large Emergency Response Tool (ALERT) and Disaster Relief Emergency Fund (DREF) instruments may also provide funding options.