

## **HUMANITARIAN IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (HIP)**

### **UPPER NILE BASIN**

#### **Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda**

**AMOUNT: EUR 176 174 673**

The present Humanitarian Implementation Plan (HIP) was prepared on the basis of financing decision ECHO/WWD/BUD/2022/01000 (Worldwide Decision) and the related General Guidelines for Operational Priorities on Humanitarian Aid (Operational Priorities). The purpose of the HIP and its annexes<sup>1</sup> is to serve as a communication tool for DG ECHO<sup>2</sup>'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**

### **Fifth modification as of 01 December 2022**

Humanitarian needs across **Sudan** are at record levels one year after a military takeover. Inter-communal conflict in the periphery, and particularly in the Darfur states, West and South Kordofan, and recently in Blue Nile, has intensified. The number of incidents is on the rise since the beginning of the year, generating widespread displacement and hundreds of casualties. In October 2022 alone, at least 258 people were killed, another 385 injured and more than 55 000 people displaced in parts of Blue Nile and West Kordofan due to inter-communal violence. Since the beginning of 2022, about 265 273 people have been displaced, 829 people were killed and another 973 were injured due to inter-communal localised conflict and violence. Unprecedented spikes in acute food insecurity due to dry spells and erratic rains, high inflation for food, fuel and other commodities, floods and persistent disease outbreaks resulted in record numbers of people in need of humanitarian assistance for the third year in a row. There are significant needs linked to food, non-food items, health, protection and WASH services.

To respond to these additional needs in Sudan, an additional **EUR 10 million** have been mobilised from DG ECHO's Operational Reserve. This additional funding will cater for the humanitarian consequences of internal conflicts and violence and cover unmet needs of newly displaced populations and host communities, with a focus on protection (in particular as regards GBV and specifically for children) and access to basic services, including health, emergency WASH and Non Food Items. Moreover, this additional funding will also contribute to registration and documentation of refugees, the majority of whom reside in the states affected by the inter-communal clashes, which further increases their vulnerability and hampers their access to socio-economic and protection services. Further specifications are provided in the Technical Annex to the Humanitarian Implementation Plan.

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<sup>1</sup> Technical annex and thematic policies annex

<sup>2</sup> Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

#### **Fourth modification as of 3 October 2022**

South Sudan and Sudan are amongst the hardest hit countries in terms of food security impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. The war is affecting both the price and availability of food, fuel, fertilisers and other commodities, and is projected to have potentially devastating consequences in both countries, particularly on internally displaced people (IDPs) and refugees, and comes on top of an already dire situation exacerbated by conflicts and climate shocks. This allocation comes in complement of the reinforcement made available through the EDF decision for both South Sudan and Sudan.<sup>3</sup>

##### ***Part one: South Sudan***

Economic and political instability, combined with increased conflict in the country as well as the compounded effects of climate change, notably with recurring unprecedented floods that destroyed crops, are exacerbating the food security crisis in South Sudan, which is bracing for the worst humanitarian crisis since its independence in 2011. The Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is adding additional significant pressure on an already severe and deteriorating economic and humanitarian situation in South Sudan, exacerbating even further food insecurity. The August 2022 Food Security Outlook Update shows that Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes spread significantly amid funding shortfalls and assistance delivery constraints. This growing food insecurity is aggravating other humanitarian needs, in particular in the sectors of health, protection, nutrition, WASH and Shelter/NFI.

To respond to these additional needs in South Sudan, the European Commission has mobilised an additional **EUR 6 million** from the European Union's Solidarity Emergency Aid Reserve. The purpose of this additional funding will be to scale-up the humanitarian emergency response as well as replenish core pipelines on WASH and S-NFI, in order to maximise the outcomes of the food and nutrition response. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

##### ***Part two: Sudan***

Sudan is facing a deepening hunger crisis as a result of the combination of a resurgence of conflict since the military coup, the climate shocks including floods and localised dry spells, protracted displacement and a rapid increase of food prices. Considering the size of wheat demand and overreliance on imports from Russia and Ukraine, Sudan is also severely affected by the fallout of the Russian war of aggression against Ukraine. With this combination of factors, the humanitarian needs are at their highest in a decade and over 18 million people are likely to be facing acute hunger during the lean season and need urgent humanitarian assistance. This comes in a context of drastic reduction in the financial capacity to respond to growing needs following the coup.

To respond to these additional needs in Sudan, the European Commission has mobilised an additional **EUR 9 million** for Sudan from the European Union's Solidarity Emergency Aid Reserve. The additional funding will strengthen the response to populations affected by the critical food security situation through the delivery of emergency lifesaving basic services and protection assistance; and provide a multi-sectoral response to prevent and/or reduce

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<sup>3</sup> ECHO/-FA/EDF/2022/01000

excess mortality and morbidity. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

### **Third modification as of 5 August 2022**

This modification is intended to transfer EUR 5 474 673 to be allocated to the IFRC pilot Programmatic Partnership action ‘Accelerating local action in humanitarian and health crises’.

### **Second modification as of 27 July 2022**

#### ***Part one: Uganda - refugee crisis***

Spiralling violence and an overall stark deterioration of the security situation in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo since March 2022, have forced more than 30 000 Congolese refugees to cross the border into Uganda. The new influx of refugees forced UNHCR to declare a “level-2” emergency. With over 1.5 million refugees, the country hosts the highest refugee population in Africa, though the country’s hospitality towards refugees is increasingly tested as over 60 000 new refugees have arrived since the beginning of the year. Transit and holding centres can no longer cope with such a large and constant influx, and tens of thousands more people remain with local communities along the border.

In order to provide support for refugee services, including in reception, transit and holding centres, the European Commission will mobilise an additional amount of **EUR 2 million** from the DG ECHO’s Operational Reserve. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

#### ***Part two: Uganda - food security crisis in Karamoja***

After the last IPC analysis of Karamoja released at the end of May revealed that over half a million people are food insecure, the situation continues to worsen with the region experiencing the worst acute malnutrition in a decade and hundreds of people dying from starvation since May. The last IPC analysis of Karamoja (May 2022) revealed that approximately 518 000 people (40% of the population) are in urgent need of food assistance, while 91 600 children under the age of five and 9 500 pregnant women will be acutely malnourished. In addition to structural problems, food insecurity and malnutrition levels are higher in Karamoja, one of the poorest regions in Uganda, as the prolonged drought entailed two consecutive below-average yields during the only harvest season in the region. The normal lean season is expected to last two additional months, delaying the annual harvest until September-October.

In order to address the food security and malnutrition in Karamoja, the European Commission will mobilise an additional amount of **EUR 2 million** from the DG ECHO’s Emergency Response Reserve. These additional resources will contribute to the integrated response by WFP and UNICEF to procure essential nutrition needs and child protection. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

## First modification as of 17 February 2022

The humanitarian prospect for South Sudan in 2022 looks worse than initially described and South Sudanese people are faced with the highest level of food insecurity since the conflict in 2013. The latest available figures show a number of 8.7 million People In Need (PIN) in-country, in addition to 334,000 refugees in-country. This represents an increase of almost ten percent from the 2021 figures. In addition, 8.4 million people, or 75% of the total population, are expected to experience severe food insecurity, a ten percent increase compared to the already historically high figures of 2021. The number of counties in catastrophic situation is expected to considerably increase, while food security and WASH needs are assessed with highest severity levels in those counties. Ration cuts applied in 2021 due to the lack of funding continue, with rations now at 50% in most areas, and further ration cuts will likely be enforced in 2022. A further deterioration of the nutrition situation is expected in the lean season as of April 2022.

The situation is even further impacted by the growing effects of climate change, notably with worsening levels of flooding in parts of the country. Those floods generate large-scale displacement, directly affect the health situation and trigger water-borne diseases and epidemic outbreaks. In this context, an immediate scale-up is required to respond to the specific needs in the counties facing the most acute food insecurity and famine like situations but also to enhance the WASH and protection response capacity, especially for IDPs and children.

To respond to these additional needs in South Sudan, the European Commission has mobilised an additional EUR 30 million for South Sudan from the European Union's Solidarity Emergency Aid Reserve. Further specifications are provided in the Humanitarian Implementation Plan Technical Annex.

### 1. CONTEXT

The Upper Nile Basin<sup>4</sup> is affected by several humanitarian crises, both protracted and new, with devastating consequences. An estimated 19 million people are severely food insecure, nearly 7 million people are displaced from their homes, of whom 2.9 million are refugees. Though facing different types of challenges, the three countries have very high scores in the INFORM<sup>5</sup> index.

	South Sudan	Sudan	Uganda
<b>INFORM Risk Index</b>	8.4/10	6.4/10	6.0/10
Vulnerability Index	8.8/10	7.0/10	6.7/10
Hazard and Exposure	7.2/10	5.7/10	4.6/10
Lack of Coping Capacity	9.5/10	6.7/10	7/10
Severity Index	4.6/5	4.5/5	3.2/5

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

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

<b>Global Crisis Severity Index<sup>6</sup></b>			
Projected conflict risk	10/10	10/10	6.7/10
Uprooted People Index	10/10	9.7/10	8.8/10
Humanitarian Conditions			
Natural Disaster Index	4.0/10	4.1/10	4.5/10
<b>HDI Ranking<sup>7</sup> (Value)</b>	0.433	0.510	0.544
<b>Total Population<sup>8</sup></b>	11.193 million	42 million	47.1 million

These humanitarian crises are triggered by unresolved conflicts at national and sub-national level, including spill over effects from conflicts and dynamics in neighbouring countries, recurrent natural induced disasters, mainly floods and droughts and disease outbreaks all compounded by climate change and poor disaster management capacity, as well as by decades of economic mismanagement and corruption. The frequency and severity of floods and droughts have increased in recent years, and subsequently, leading to further conflicts over resources and to population displacement. The COVID-19 pandemic, very limited progress in vaccination and the measures adopted to curb transmissions, have exacerbated the dire humanitarian situations. Hyperinflation and currency depreciation limits access and maintenance of basic services. These main drivers of humanitarian needs are expected to continue in 2022 across the region.

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 has been very slow. The 588 elected parliamentary members swore on 2 August 2021 but a number of contentious issues still persist (notably, graduation of a unified military force, creation of a command structure, and transitional security arrangements). Additionally, the security situation in the country is deteriorating, sub-national and localised violence is further spreading within the country and tension remains high in traditional conflict zones, resulting in civilian casualties, new displacements and a very insecure environment for aid workers.

In March 2021, the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) extended by a year the mandate of UNMISS to protect civilians, deter violence, create conditions conducive to humanitarian assistance, support the implementation of the peace process and monitor and report about violations of International Humanitarian Law and human rights abuses.

**Sudan** had embarked on a complex political transition since August 2019, with the creation of a joint military/civilian Sovereign Council and a transitional government led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok. Following weeks of tensions between the military and civilian leaders of the transition, a military coup on 25 October 2021 led to the dissolution of the transitional government and the sovereign council and to the instauration of a nationwide state of emergency, which puts at risk the country's path of peace, democratic governance and economic recovery. The country remains also marred by multiple internal and external challenges, which continued throughout 2021 and are likely to remain in 2022. To provide support during this political transition, the UNSC established the UN Integrated Transitional Mission in Sudan (UNITAMS), a special political mission, in June

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.inform-index.org/Global-Crisis-Severity-Index-beta>

<sup>7</sup> UNDP, 2020 Humanitarian Development Index (HDI) report.

<sup>8</sup> Source: World Bank September 2020.

2020<sup>9</sup>. The mission started to set-up its teams in 2021 but, overall, protection of civilians, one of its main objectives, remains challenging.

2021 was marked by a rise of security incidents and tensions in several parts of the country. In Darfur and the Kordofans there were several new large-scale displacements linked to fighting. The political and security situation in Sudan is also affected by the Tigray conflict in neighbouring Ethiopia, and border tensions between the two countries that resurfaced in 2021. The end of the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), in December 2020, and lack of progress in the establishment of the nation-wide Joint forces (as foreseen by the peace agreement) is a major obstacle for the protection of civilians.

President Museveni, who has ruled **Uganda** since 1986, has been re-elected in 2021, after a contentious constitutional change in 2018 lifting the presidential age limit and giving the President the potential for life-long rule. Uganda is expected to continue its active engagement in regional security. As the country hosting the largest number of refugees in Africa, the government pursues a progressive and inclusive policy towards refugees and has signed-up since 2018 to the UN Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF), for which its policies are the inspiring model. The inclusion of refugees in the government 2020/21 – 2024/25 National Development Plan (NDP III) is a highly positive sign towards the provision of longer-term solutions for refugees.

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<sup>9</sup> UNSC resolution 2579 (2021) extended the mandate of UNITAMS for a further 12 months, until 3 June 2022.

## 2. HUMANITARIAN NEEDS

### 2.1 People in need of humanitarian assistance

	South Sudan			Sudan			Uganda		
<b>Registered refugees / asylum seekers</b>	327 451 <sup>10</sup> 51.9% female / 48.1% male			1 113 286 <sup>11</sup> 53% female / 47% male			1 503 601 <sup>12</sup> 52% female / 48 male		
<b>Disaggr.by age in %</b>	0-17	18-59	60+	0-17	18-59	60+	0-17	18-59	60+
<i>Female</i>	29.6	21.3	1.3	22	27	4	29	21	2
<i>Male</i>	30.4	16	1.4	20	24	3	29	18	1
<b>IDPs<sup>13</sup></b>	1 710 000 <sup>14</sup>			2 552 174			20 107 <sup>15</sup>		
<b>Refugee returnees</b>	403 555 <sup>16</sup>			2 060			Not applicable		
<b>People in need of food assistance (in millions)</b>	7.5 <sup>17</sup>			9.8 <sup>18</sup>			1.69 <sup>19</sup>		
<b>Children &lt; 5 MAM<sup>20</sup></b>	1 008 700			2 500 000			46 303 <sup>21</sup>		
<b>Children &lt; 5 SAM<sup>22</sup></b>	313 000			522 000			10 257 <sup>23</sup>		

#### 2.1.1 Forcibly 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 - IDPs). 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. 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

<sup>10</sup> Mainly from Sudan - UNHCR, 31 May 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/ssd>

<sup>11</sup> Mainly from South Sudan - UNHCR, 31 August 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/sdn>

<sup>12</sup> Mainly from South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of Congo - UNHCR, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/country/uga> 31 August 2021)

<sup>13</sup> The IDP figures does not include the number of people displaced by natural disasters (floods, droughts) on a recurrent basis.

<sup>14</sup> OCHA, South Sudan Humanitarian Snapshot August 2021, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88297>

<sup>15</sup> <https://uganda.iom.int/sites/uganda/files/publications/dtm/Uganda%20Hazards%20Infographic%2C%20August%202021.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Number of refugee returnees reported between November 2017 and June 2021, Joint UNHCR and Relief & Rehabilitation Commission, <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/documents/details/88297>

<sup>17</sup> As per IPC projection until July 2021, 7,189 million people in IPC 3+, and in addition refugees are added in the table

<sup>18</sup> IPC analysis projection until September 2021, includes already refugees in the IPC analysis

<sup>19</sup> IPC analysis for Karamoja includes 0,19 million people in IPC 3+, and in addition 1.50 million refugees are added

<sup>20</sup> Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM)

<sup>21</sup> IPC AMN Karamoja (Feb 2021-Jan2022)

<sup>22</sup> Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM)

<sup>23</sup> IPC AMN Karamoja (Feb 2021-Jan2022)

IDPs, could further feed tensions between the refugee populations and their host communities.

**The closure of borders introduced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 has severely impacted refugees and asylum seekers** looking for international protection in the region; movements of refugees continued nevertheless<sup>24</sup>. Preparedness to host refugees is crucial as the lifting of the border closures will result in new refugees to settle and new influxes from South Sudan and DRC to **Uganda**<sup>25</sup> and from Ethiopia to **Sudan**. Border closures and other movement restrictions have also disrupted livelihoods and coping mechanisms.

In **Sudan** as in **South Sudan**, localised tribal clashes, sometimes fuelled by local and/or national politics, have triggered new internal displacements that come on top of some protracted displacements caused by conflict or floods that occurred during the past years.

DG ECHO considers that, in light of the extremely fluid situation in the country, conditions are not yet conducive for large-scale facilitated returns of refugees and IDPs. However, refugees and IDPs are of course free to return of their own accord. Small-scale spontaneous returns are taking place, both among refugees returning from neighbouring countries and IDP populations. Whenever these take place, returns must be voluntary, safe, dignified, informed and sustainable.

In **South Sudan**, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), jointly with the government of South Sudan's Relief and Rehabilitation Commission and partners, report an estimated 403 555 South Sudanese refugees have returned on their own from neighbouring countries of asylum between November 2017 and June 2021. From January to end July 2021, 51 847 refugees have reportedly spontaneously returned in a self-organised manner. The vast majority of returns have taken place from Uganda and Sudan, with smaller numbers arriving from Ethiopia, DRC, Kenya and the Central African Republic (CAR). Meanwhile, UNHCR and humanitarian actors have facilitated the return of 6 000 IDPs, since January 2021. Many others have returned on their own, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) reporting over one million IDP returns within the country, including 250 000 between January and September 2020. However, there is a lack of data on returns monitoring<sup>26</sup>, to assess the degree to which conditions on the ground comply with guiding protection principles.

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

There are close to 19 million people acutely food insecure and in need of humanitarian assistance in the three countries, and more than 4.3 million children under 5 acutely malnourished. South Sudan and Sudan are amongst the ten biggest food crises in the world. The scale and intensity of food insecurity has grown in 2021, exacerbated by the COVID-19 related restrictions.

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<sup>24</sup> In Uganda, the backlog of registration is 68 000 individuals (as of September 2021), divided in between new arrivals, birth registrations and changes in family composition/location

<sup>25</sup> On exceptional basis, the President has allowed access to the territory after new influx of asylum seekers

<sup>26</sup> Monitoring provides an opportunity to systematically collect data on satisfaction with the decision to return, returnees' perceptions of conditions in areas of return (in relation to safety, security, basic services, infrastructure, livelihoods etc.) and the stability of returns – the latter with the aim of analysing trends in onward or pendula movements, which can serve as a proxy indicator to determine the success of returns and reintegration support.



In **South Sudan**, the findings of the Integrated Food Security Phase (IPC)<sup>27</sup> estimated that 7.2 million people (60% of the population) would face acute food insecurity (> IPC 3+) between April-July 2021 with a significant increase in people facing catastrophic/ famine conditions (108 000 people, twice as many as in 2020). The mid-2021 lean season is the worst ever in terms of severity since the country's independence, with 20% of the population in Emergency (IPC Phase 4) and 1% of the population in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). The 2021 floods, which affected larger areas than previous years, continued conflict and the economic crisis have increased the number of people estimated in need for the second half of the year. The most severe acute food insecurity conditions were in counties where chronic vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by a combination of shocks, including floods, insecurity incidents, the macro-economic crisis, and the effects of COVID-19 measures.

In **Sudan**, the findings of the IPC<sup>28</sup> report a further deterioration (+2%) of food insecurity (IPC 3+) in the country compared to 2020, now affecting 9.8 million during the lean season (June-September 2021), which represents 21 % of the total population (46.5 million) and a significant increase since the Sudanese revolution. The most affected groups are internally displaced people (IDPs), returnees, those stranded in conflict-hit areas, refugees from neighbouring South Sudan, Ethiopia and other countries; poor groups from agro-pastoral and pastoral communities in rural areas of Western, Eastern and Northern Sudan, whose livelihoods are directly affected by the impact of lean season and macroeconomic crisis.

In **Uganda**, the worsening food security situation affects particularly refugees, who rely on humanitarian aid to meet their food needs. It also affects refugee-hosting communities, the Karamoja region (subject to chronic food insecurity), and increasingly the urban population (as COVID-19 restrictions continue).

## **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 violations and abuses against civilians, sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), grave violations against children's rights, restriction of movement, and housing, land and property (HLP)-related issues, as well as violations of International Humanitarian Law (IHL) and International Human Rights Law (IHRL) (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. Refugees, in particular refugees from Tigray in Sudan, are facing specific vulnerabilities that require particular attention and interventions. The COVID-19 pandemic has further exacerbated protection risks in all three countries; in particular, it has resulted in increased reports of SGBV, as well as the increased use of negative coping mechanisms (e.g. early marriage, child labour and transactional sex) in order to survive. Mental health and psychosocial issues faced by affected communities remain insufficiently identified and addressed, although more widely acknowledged. Moreover, humanitarian responses remain insufficiently informed by

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<sup>27</sup> December 2020

<sup>28</sup> May 2021

sound protection analysis, with the risk to cause further harm, through both protection specific or other sectorial interventions.

### *2.2.2 Food Security and Livelihoods*

The number of people in need of food assistance in the region remains persistently high. Food insecurity is mainly driven by conflict, climate events affecting livelihoods (floods, drought) and the economic crises in South Sudan and Sudan with hyperinflation and currency depreciation affecting capacities to access food of already vulnerable households. Conflict-affected populations have also seen their livelihoods disrupted, looted, purposely destroyed and sources of food depleted, with high protection risks in their access to land of pastures for renewing their production activities. In the three countries covered by the HIP, the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) has been facing very dire limited funding for its food distribution operations in 2021, leading to food rations cuts in Uganda (40% cuts since February 2021) and in South Sudan (ration cuts applied since April and suspension of food assistance for over 100 000 IDPs and refugees for the last three months of 2021) and prioritisation of some areas in Sudan. The high level of needs requires to ensuring adequate targeting and prioritisation processes and regular and sufficient assistance to be provided. In addition, food security information systems should be reinforced, with more regular and quality data collection by the different actors, and active participation in analysis fora (as the IPC).

### *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, Hepatitis E 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 (including SGBV survivors) 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 to expand networks to new arrivals and link them with longer term options. 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 displacements. The need for emergency/temporary shelters 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 4.2 million children in South Sudan and 4.2 million in Sudan<sup>29</sup>, while there are more than 600 000 school-aged refugee children out of school in Uganda<sup>30</sup>. In South Sudan, excessive flooding for two successive years have destroyed schools and aggravated the already dire education needs. In Sudan, flooding, increased conflict and non-availability to ensure teachers' salaries' payment are strongly worsening access to education.

The vast majority of out of school children are in need of non-formal education programmes (such as Accelerated Education Programmes), in order to later transition to formal education. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has major implications on the education sector as schools were closed from March 2020 to April 2021<sup>31</sup> and, while various distance learning modalities have been developed, only a minority of children benefited from self-learning packages. Due to the long closure of schools, the number of children who drop out of school is expected to increase, particularly among girls, and catch-up programmes will be needed. Closure of schools is substantially increasing

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<sup>29</sup> This figure does not include the refugee children that have fled the Tigray conflict

<sup>30</sup> This figure considers refugees and local children in refugee hosting districts. Reference document: Education Response Plan for Refugees and host communities in Uganda – One-year state of play September 2019.

<sup>31</sup> In Uganda schools closed again in June 2021 due to a new COVID-19 infection wave.

protection risks for children as witnessed since with increased child labour, child marriage, early pregnancies etc.

Overall, it is challenging to integrate refugees and IDPs in schools due to poor infrastructure, lack of adequate resources as well as other barriers (language, finance, gender).

International Humanitarian Law violations in the form of attacks on schools and military occupation of schools continue to be reported in South Sudan.

#### *2.2.8 Disaster Preparedness and Resilience*

Despite the high exposure to multiple risks, including on-going conflicts, epidemic diseases in humans and livestock, crop infestation and natural hazards, the overall regional capacity to prepare and respond remains insufficient. Inadequate and under-resourced Disaster Risk Management systems and weak institutionalisation of disaster preparedness hampers the capacities of countries, communities and individuals to adequately prepare, anticipate and respond to crises. Alerts by existing early warning systems most often fail to trigger early action and response at the necessary level.

### **3. HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE AND COORDINATION**

#### **3.1 National / local response and involvement**

Regionally, the capacities of governments to respond to both natural and human induced 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 2<sup>nd</sup> phase of IDDRSI, 2019-2024<sup>32</sup>, 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), transboundary disaster preparedness coordination and overall resilience strengthening, which results in delayed and inadequate anticipatory or early response. Other IGAD initiatives include the Regional Food and Nutrition Response Strategy launched by IGAD in 2020 and the Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action of 2017, which 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). 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) while a thematic meeting on Health is planned in the future.

The governments of Sudan and South Sudan, with the support of the IGAD, UNHCR and the EU, launched an IGAD Support Platform<sup>33</sup> called the “**Two Sudans**” initiative in October 2020 to develop a durable solutions initiative for refugees, IDPs, returnees and

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<sup>32</sup> <https://resilience.igad.int/>

<sup>33</sup> The IGAD Support Platform launched during the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019, which consists of humanitarian and development organisations, donors, private sector and other partners committing to show solidarity by providing concrete technical, financial and development support to refugees in the IGAD region.

host communities in Sudan and South Sudan. A regional plan of action will be presented for endorsement at a High-Level Meeting that is foreseen to take place during the IGAD follow-up Heads of State Special Summit on the Nairobi Declaration at the end of November 2021.

The region faced over the past three years the worst Desert Locust (DL) infestation in decades and the East Africa Desert Locust Control Organization needs to be further supported to face that challenge. The June 2021 conference on DL produced a framework of actions for improving capacities to control DL in the region which was endorsed by IGAD countries and international donors (including EU).

In **South Sudan**, the R-ARCSS<sup>34</sup> 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. It did not contain a meaningful strategy or a costing and financing plan. The Revitalized Transitional Government of National Unity formed in February 2020 has not yet adopted its own National Development Strategy although a draft NDS is currently in the process for adoption. It remains to be seen whether it will be sufficiently owned by government, and credible. The SSNDS highlights peace and stabilisation of the economy as priority areas; however, the SSNDS priorities are not used in budgeting decisions.

The country’s disaster management structures are weak and not enforced by a strong legislative framework, either at state or local level. This heavily impacts effective communication and coordination of disaster preparedness and response. 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 multi-risks assessment and risk profiling tools and to carry out monitoring and evaluation of the envisioned activities.

In **Sudan**, recurrent disruptions in the functioning of line ministries continue to have serious implications for humanitarian partners’ response. The previous regime’s restrictive framework on humanitarian aid had improved under the transitional government, though several bureaucratic impediments and interferences from security services and several Ministries remained and worsened due to COVID-19 related restrictions. The coup of October 2021 may impact the June 2020 Joint Communiqué on Humanitarian Access which 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 materialise. Political developments may also affect the ongoing discussions with the government on the setting up of an Emergency Operations Centre, relaunched following the 2020 floods. For the time being, the situation is handled by the Flood Task Force chaired by the Humanitarian Affairs Committee.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Revitalised Agreement on the Resolution of the Conflict in South Sudan, Chapter 3.

In **Uganda**, the government's commitment and capacity to implement a progressive and generous policy towards refugees<sup>35</sup> is undermined by the growing economic hardship, 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 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. The Uganda Country Programming Paper (CPP) on ending drought emergencies (EDE), under the regional IGAD strategy is being aligned to the NDP-III, a move to ensuring that the CPP initiatives are integrated within the government planning and developmental frameworks. 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 lack of legislation, hence limited national budget allocations to preparedness and response, as well as poor capacities, especially at district level. As a result, there are no comprehensive and functional early-warning / surveillance systems, nor operational government-driven emergency response capacities, which continue highly reliant on external support.

### 3.2 International Humanitarian Response

	South Sudan	Sudan	Uganda
<b>Funding appeals 2021</b> (in billion USD): Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) 2021 Country Refugee Response Plan (CRRP)	HRP: 1.68	HRP: 1,9 CRRP: 0.57	CRRP: 0.77
<b>% funded as of September 2021</b>	HRP 57%	HRP: 24% CRRP: 10%	CRRP: 36%

**Coordination and advocacy** are key to address the protracted complex emergencies affecting the Upper Nile Basin and, in South Sudan and Sudan, protect humanitarian space from undue interference by authorities and parties to the conflicts. Moreover, due to the regional nature of the displacement crises in the Upper Nile Basin, the need to strengthen cross-country/regional coordination and 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 Member States (MS) donors are Germany, Netherlands and Sweden. The other main humanitarian donors are the US and the UK. DG ECHO facilitates the Humanitarian Donors Group (HDG) coordination meeting. Additionally, civil-military coordination (with UNMISS) in the country is crucial to guarantee dialogue and interaction between civilian and military actors in order to protect and promote humanitarian principles. The HCT recently agreed (Mid July 2021) to have an IASC peer to peer review in South Sudan in order to support

<sup>35</sup> Uganda recognises 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

the Humanitarian Country Team to strengthen the ability to deliver assistance effectively and collectively. However, the Humanitarian Coordinator/Resident Coordinator (HC/RC) position remains vacant since May 2021, the vacuum being filled in by three rotating heads of UN agencies.

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 and Sweden. The other main donors are US and Canada. UK and CERF were representing together over 200 million USD in 2020 and now hardly reach 17M USD.

In **Uganda**, the refugee response is led by the 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. The main other donors to the Refugee Response Plan are the US and the UK. Key EU MS donors include Denmark, Germany, Belgium and Sweden. OPM is also in the lead for the National Disasters' Coordination Centre (NECOC) and the National DRR Platform, in charge of dealing with preparedness and response efforts related with disasters caused by natural disasters in the country; however, coordination at operational level remains weak. On epidemics, the Ministry of Health is on the lead of the National Task Force. There is lack of effective coordination between refugees, natural disasters and epidemics coordination platforms.

### 3.3 Operational constraints

#### 3.3.1 *Access/humanitarian space*

**Security** remains a major constraint for humanitarian operations in South Sudan and Sudan.

The situation in South Sudan is of particular concern, as threats and attacks against humanitarian staff, infrastructure and supplies have once again increased in 2021 along with the spike in subnational violence and armed clashes. Humanitarian access is also constrained by the bureaucratic impediments and operational interference including increase in the number of checkpoints and extortion.

In Sudan, the security environment for the population and aid workers has deteriorated in 2021. Serious security incidents have occurred in various locations in Darfur.

In South Sudan and Sudan, 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, as well as partners' capacity to deliver aid in a timely, effective and accountable manner.

The complex operating environment in Sudan and South Sudan calls for sustained humanitarian advocacy and diplomacy to promote principled humanitarian action as well as safe and secure environment for humanitarian organisations.

#### 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 has led 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 Others

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) 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, which was already very high, has increased with the COVID-19 situation. Support to common logistical services therefore continues to be crucial.

## 4. HUMANITARIAN – DEVELOPMENT – PEACE NEXUS

The HDP nexus remains a central element DG ECHO programming, reconfirmed in the new Communication on EU's Humanitarian Action<sup>36</sup>. The new Global Europe - Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument will provide crucial funding for development cooperation but also on food security, resilience and crisis response, offering further opportunities for implementing a HDP nexus approach.

### 4.1 Sudan

As one of the EU pilot countries for the nexus, an EU Nexus Action Plan for Sudan was established 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. While the democratic transition provided 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 coup of October 2021 is likely to further delay the process. 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 identified will have to be looked at again. 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 and nutrition care or education, social care and direct (cash/ voucher/ food) transfers to households. Depending on the evolution of the political and security situation in the country, nexus priorities should where possible be applied in newly accessible areas.

- **Protection, forced displacement and peace related activities:** through its different instruments, notably the EU Emergency Trust Fund (EUTF), the EU is promoting resilience and secure livelihoods through programmes on education, health, food security, nutrition, livestock, and protection for forcibly displaced people. Coordination also took place between the different elements of the EU response to influx of refugees resulting from the crisis in Tigray. There are, however, opportunities

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<sup>36</sup> COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles. Brussels, 10.3.2021 COM (2021) 110 final. <https://ec.europa.eu/echo/files/aid/hacommunication2021.pdf> and Council conclusions on EU's humanitarian action, 20 May 2021: <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-8966-2021-INIT/en/pdf>



for more joined-up advocacy efforts on durable solutions for forcibly displaced persons and for pursuing better linkages between EU humanitarian, development, peace and stability funding instruments to address the underlying causes of conflict.

- **Health and Nutrition:** in most States affected by conflict and displacement, humanitarian and development actors, notably those funded by the EUTF, have *de facto* substituted government services by supporting primary health, including identification and treatment of Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and by providing an integrated essential health/nutrition package, free of charge. Further nexus opportunities may include a reinforcement of the drug supply and disease surveillance system in compliance with the international health regulations (IHR), education and training of staff, universal access to free health care for vulnerable people.
- **Food security:** development and humanitarian donors support the government-owned Family Support Programme (FSP), 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 will be supported.
- **Education:** different programmes supported education in Sudan, notably through the EUTF as well as EiE programmes to promote access to education to children in affected areas in Sudan. Further opportunities could focus on the further reinforcement of joint EU humanitarian and development instruments, aiming at supporting transition between primary and secondary education levels.

## 4.2 South Sudan

All EU development actions have been financed on an *ad-hoc* basis, through special measures channelled through the EUTF and the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP). No EU development funds are channelled through the government and the lack of progress in the implementation of the peace agreement limits opportunities for a partnership with the government on long-term development planning. Significant coordinated humanitarian and development efforts are required to address the overwhelming challenges in South Sudan, lacking the minimum infrastructures that would allow the population to access basic services.

- **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. EU development funds support the provision of primary health care in eight out of ten States through the Health Pooled Fund (HPF). 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 programmes.
- **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) while EU development funding is invested in agricultural development with sustainable food systems. With a shift of EU development funds onto marginalised areas and on opportunities for jobs and growth in the agro-business for better diversification of the economy, 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.

- **Disaster Preparedness and Disaster Risk Reduction:** In 2021, DG ECHO supports the implementation of a disaster preparedness strategy in South Sudan, including 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/INTPA to support the national level disaster risk management structures and to eventually set the stage for a potential future hand-over of such Disaster Preparedness initiatives.

### 4.3 Uganda

Uganda being both an EU nexus and a CRRF pilot country, the two processes are interlinked, and the EU nexus is considered to be a ‘one EU’ contribution involving EU services and Members States to address forced displacement challenges and to support the country’s roll-out of the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF). This engagement is translated into an Action Plan (September 2018) and is expected to continue in the new programming the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe, aiming at strengthening 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.

- **Basic needs:** Scaled-up cash programming to cover food and non-food needs of refugees and host communities living in rural or urban settings, while exploring longer-term options will allow to link up emergency cash programming to sustainable access to basic services as well as with longer-term livelihoods’ reinforcement initiatives. The inclusion of social protection among the thematic focus of interest for EU development programming 2021-2027, prioritising refugee hosting areas is an enabler to operationalise the nexus.
- **Education:** Different actions supported education and concrete linkages are established between ECHO and INTPA programming. Further opportunities and priorities will be explored to further improve access to education, in particular for vulnerable learners group.
- **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 hazards, or human-induced disasters, epidemics and refugee influxes. Efforts focus on improving the government’s leadership on disaster preparedness and building local first responders’ capacities; EU development programmes contribute to these objectives by supporting districts in disaster risk governance including contingency planning and effective natural resources management, including risk mitigation measures. DG ECHO and DG INTPA actively contribute collectively with relevant stakeholders to joint advocacy efforts towards the government and the parliament concerning the approval of an adequate legal framework for disaster risk management in the country, which is essential for the sustainability of supported efforts.

## 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.

### 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 and International Human Rights Law (IHRL), 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, in contexts where IHL is applicable.

As communities continue to be affected by conflict, violence, food insecurity, climate change and the impact of COVID-19, DG 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 2022. 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 needs<sup>37</sup> of affected populations. DG ECHO prioritises multipurpose cash (MPC) to meet basic needs, complemented by other modalities, and timely referrals, to meet specific sectoral outcomes.

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 human and natural, rapid and slow on-set crises. DG ECHO will systematically

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<sup>37</sup> 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.

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).

DG 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 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.<sup>38</sup>
- **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.<sup>39</sup> All interventions must adhere to a strict zero tolerance policy in regard to sexual exploitation and abuse, and all partners must ensure prevention mechanisms are in place and accessible to all community members.

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.

#### *5.1.1 Sudan*

**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, including through Rapid Response Mechanisms.
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.

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<sup>38</sup> Statement on the Centrality of Protection in Humanitarian Action, IASC, 2013

<sup>39</sup> [https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2\\_statement\\_of\\_commitment\\_on\\_eliminating\\_sexual\\_exploitation\\_and\\_abuse\\_by\\_un\\_and\\_non-un\\_personnel\\_2011\\_0.pdf](https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2_statement_of_commitment_on_eliminating_sexual_exploitation_and_abuse_by_un_and_non-un_personnel_2011_0.pdf)

3. Providing safe access to quality formal and non-formal primary education of children and responding to children's protection needs in schools, including psychosocial needs, as well as supporting their resilience amidst a crisis.
4. Supporting coordination, logistics, safety and security, context analysis and conflict sensitivity.
5. Strengthen national/sub-national state level disaster preparedness systems by working on the development of specific competencies, coordination and a systematic early response mechanism that can meet urgent needs in flood crises.

DG ECHO will prioritise displaced populations (refugees or IDPs) 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 newly accessible areas. Sustainable approaches need to be integrated in such actions at an early stage.

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, including a link to development funding.

#### *5.1.2 South Sudan*

**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. Static and mobile education in emergencies interventions, focusing on reaching newly displaced and out-of-school boys and girls with relevant primary formal or non-formal education, including accelerated and catch-up programmes
4. 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).
5. 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), as well as ensure support to children affected by armed conflicts. Further integration of child protection within education is well received but standalone programming for children will also be supported. Additionally, DG ECHO will support the 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 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.

### 5.1.3 *Uganda*

Considering DG ECHO's budget, mandate and comparative advantage in Uganda, its priorities in 2022 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, adopting a people-centred approach, using multi-purpose cash alongside sector activities addressing in particular food, protection, health (including epidemics preparedness), localised peaks of undernutrition, EiE (reinforcing the education system and addressing multiple access barriers, including those created by COVID-19), WASH (addressing new acute gaps while ensuring sustainability of past investments), and shelter.
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 three 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 anticipatory action and/or emergency responses.
3. Continuing to the operationalisation of the humanitarian, development and peace nexus, adapting the EU Nexus Action Plan to the new MFF priorities, 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 Southwest (DRC refugees). In 2021, this focus was reviewed to take into account the current vulnerability of South Sudanese refugees in West Nile and the increasing risk of influx from South Sudan. This approach will be continued in 2022.
- 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.