

South Sudanese Refugees
South Sudan and Uganda
Photographs By: Ilana Rose – Australia

Since civil war broke out in South Sudan in December 2013, as many as 50,000 people have been killed, 1 in 3 people in South Sudan have been displaced. More than 4 million citizens have been forced to flee their homes. Around 6 million people are currently at risk of going hungry, and 70 percent of schools have been closed due to the fighting. Around 2.3 million people have escaped to neighbouring countries in search of safety, and 1.8 million are trapped inside the warring nation. South Sudan is one of the most fled countries in the world alongside Syria and Afghanistan.

I travelled to South Sudan and Uganda documenting the plight of the women and children displaced by the conflict that erupted in the world's youngest nation. Of most concern was the high numbers of unaccompanied children that I met, many of whom had witnessed the violent deaths of their family members.

The women and children had walked for days to the relative safety of the PoC (Protection of Civilian) UN refugee camps in Juba and Malakal in South Sudan or walked to the Ugandan border. Most had not eaten for days and had no idea what the future held for them

Aid worker Andrew Iraguha at the Nyumanzi refugee transit centre told me "Some refugees have travelled many kilometres on foot and are extremely weak. As they cross they are registered in coordination with the United Nations. We initially give them high-energy biscuits that have a lot of calories, to help them regain energy. Then they are put on trucks or buses to go to the transit centre.

Once they reach the transit centre, a partner agency prepares hot meals for them. They are generally in the transit centre for between two and four weeks while the Ugandan Government is negotiating to get land for them to settle on.

When the refugees get to their plot, they can build a home. Seeing people trying to put up rudimentary shelter can be very emotional. Sometimes you ask yourself, what if it was you. You spend your entire life trying to make a home and here you've been displaced"