PROTECTION BRIEF

ETHIOPIA

SUDAN SITUATION

OCTOBER 2023

Asylum-seekers receive assistance at the Metema border.

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Operational Context & Analysis

Figure 1: Map of the situation overview

Following the eruption of armed clashes in Khartoum and other parts of Sudan on 15 April 2023, thousands of people have fled to neighboring countries and beyond. According to the joint UNHCR-IOM screening and verification exercise, thousands of individuals from over 19 nationalities, including Ethiopian involuntary returnees, Sudanese refugees, Eritrean and South Sudanese who were refugees in Sudan and other third country nationals have arrived in Ethiopia mainly through the Metema border crossing point, Amhara region, while others have entered via the Kurmuk border point in Ethiopia's Benishangul Gumuz region. There have also been new arrivals at the Pagak/Bubieyr border crossing in the Gambella Region. Due to the nature of the displacements, Sudanese nationals entered Ethiopia on different types of visas but are believed to be in need of international protection. As of 27th October 2023, over 37,702 people (Eritreans, Sudanese, and South Sudanese) have sought international protection in Ethiopia. As a result of the new armed clashes which erupted in Blue Nile region since 15 April 2023, arrivals have also been reported through Gessan border crossing point, Yabus/Abrahamo, Almahal and Guba in Benishangul Gumuz region. Many of the Sudanese nationals who had been previously registered as refugees in Ethiopia before and returned home have now fled back into Ethiopia again in search of safety.

A state of Emergency (SOE) was declared by the Council of Ministers on the 4th of August 2023 in response to the widespread conflict that erupted in Amhara region between federal forces and rebel fighters. The federal parliament approved the SOE on the 14th of August 2023. Even though the SoE was declared in connection with the conflict in Amhara region, which hosts the majority of the new refugees and returnees from Sudan, its applicability extended to other regions including Addis Ababa depending on exigencies of the situation. The declaration of the SoE extends the federal government powers to suspend many human rights and fundamental rights, including the authority to conduct arrests and detentions without a warrant.

Armed conflict in Amhara region quickly intensified and spread to many areas including Gonder, Shewa, Gojjam and Wollo resulting in loss of human lives, property destruction and violation of rights. Movement has been restricted in many areas due to insecurity and suspension of road and air transport, limiting also humanitarian access. The Kurmuk border remains closed on the Sudanese side. Internet connectivity was disrupted throughout the region including the termination of phone connectivity in some areas. According to the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC), the security measures taken in connection with the SoE in Addis Ababa, Amhara, Oromia, and other areas sought the arrest and detention of several politicians including parliamentarians, political activists which triggered mass arrest including refugees and other persons we serve under UNHCR mandate. It was projected that some 92,000 persons in need of international protection and refugee returnees will enter Ethiopia by end 2023 given the flow of refugees and returnees from Sudan during the early stage of crisis. This figure includes 62,000 Sudanese refugees,

26,000 refugees of other nationalities hosted by Sudan (estimated 10,000 South Sudanese and 16,000 Eritreans), and around 2,000 Ethiopian refugees returning from Sudan.

Key Trends & Figures as at 27 October 2023

Key figures

37,702
Total new arrivals in need of international protection

35,737
Sudanese and Non-Sudanese refugees/asylum seekers

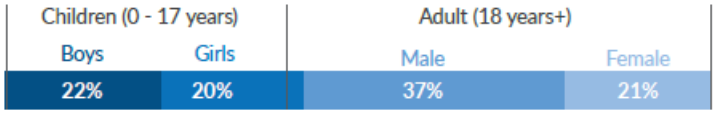
1,965
Ethiopian refugee returnees

Relocation

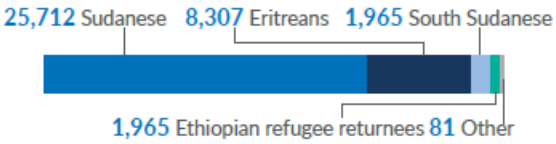
9,383
Individuals relocated from Metema TC to Kumer site

1,364
Individuals relocated from Kurmuk TC to Sherkole camp

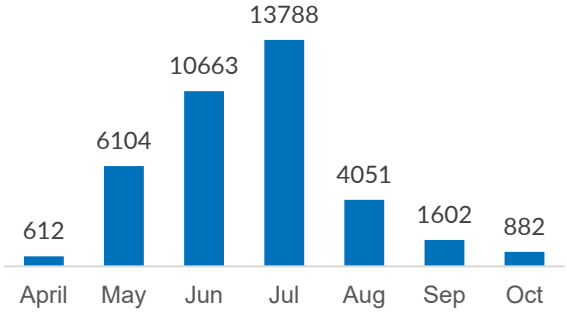
Gender breakdown



Nationality breakdown

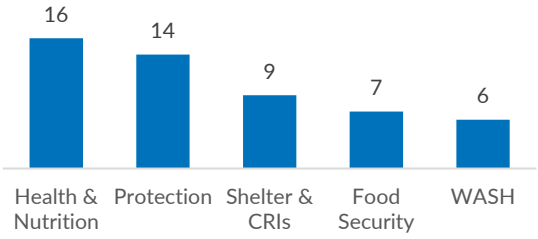


Monthly arrival trends | April - October 2023



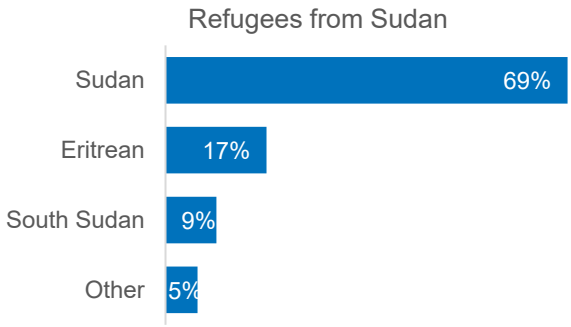
Partnership

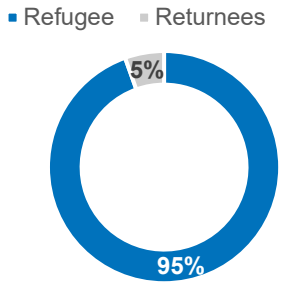
26 Organizations responding to the emergency

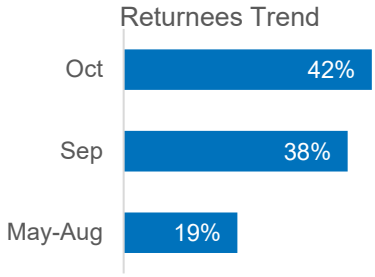


As part of tracking population migration out of Sudan, a household-level questionnaire completed at border entrance points indicates that 99% of respondents are either non-Sudanese or Sudanese refugees and asylum seekers, with the remaining 1% being Ethiopian refugees returning from their country of origin. 72% of the recently arrived Sudanese refugees are from Sudan, 18% are from Eritrea, 9% are from South Sudan, and the other individuals are of various ethnicities. Seventy percent of the new entrants come from Khartoum, twenty-four percent are from Blue Nile, and the remainder from other states. June and July saw the greatest number of reported arrivals.

However, in September it is noticed that there is unexpected increase in the number of returnees with returnees' figure jumping from **392** to **1,247** and showing continuous increase in October reaching **2,000** by 27th October. It is foreseen to have gradual increase in the number of returnees in the coming months.







Of the total number of arrivals, 41% are women and 59% are men. Women and children make up about 63% of all new arrivals; this figure includes children who are separated and unaccompanied. Nine percent are found to have particular needs. 30% of people are single or have never married, 65% are married, and the remaining people are widowed, separated, or divorced.

Most of the new entrants stated that they were traveling to Ethiopia in order to wait for things to settle down. Most desire to apply for asylum in Ethiopia.

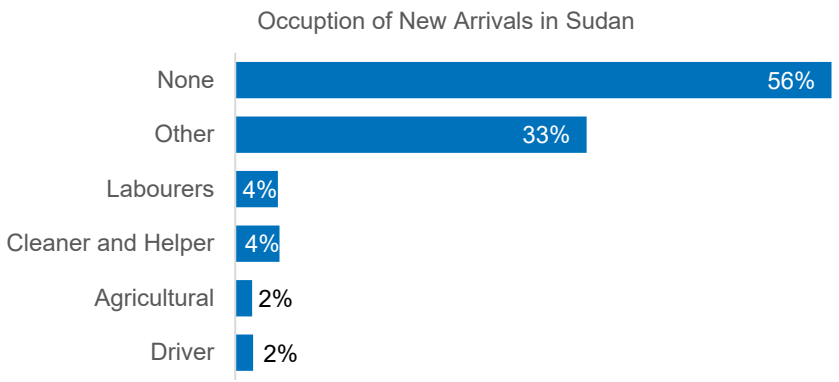
One percent have stated that they plan to relocate to a third country in order to be with their family.

Of the 28% of non-Sudanese refugees, 43% had official refugee status in Sudan while the remaining 57% did not.

The Refugee Returnee Services (RRS) and UNHCR jointly perform household level registration, which collects ongoing household information such as information on the household's origin, ID card possession, status of displacement in Sudan, and special needs.

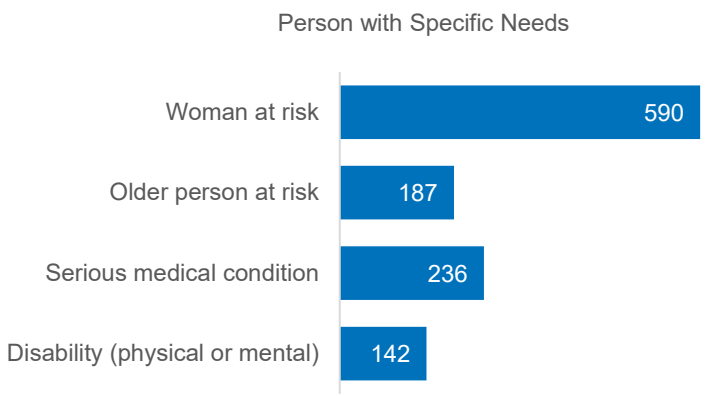
Among recent arrivals, 14% possess an identity document of some form. Of those with documentation, forty percent have national ID cards and the remaining sixty percent have refugee documents or UNHCR proof of registration.

56% mentioned that they were not engaged in any occupation in Sudan, 4% were labourers, 2% were drivers, 2% were involved in agricultural produce, 1% were sales workers and remaining mentioned different other occupation like student, artist, barber, salesman, businessman, carpenter, architect, etc.



Four percent of people are having specific needs.

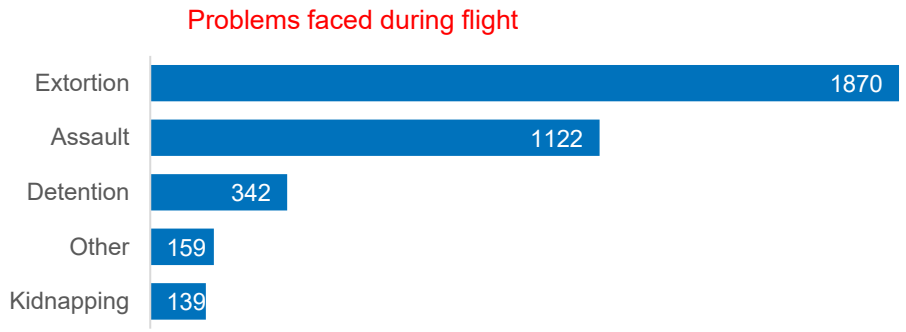
Of the individuals with specific needs, 165 are elderly people at risk, 132 have reported serious medical conditions, 108 have a physical or mental handicap, and 560 are women who are at risk.



Protection Incidents

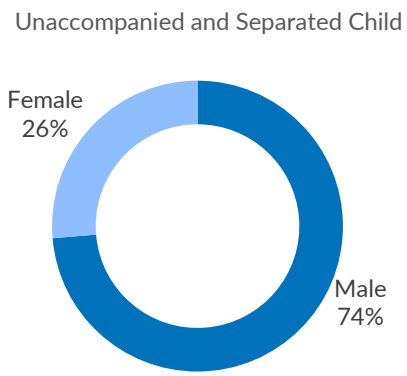
Safety and security

Eleven percent of the respondents stated that the protection incidents occurred during their flight from Sudan to Ethiopia, either at the border or while traveling. Along the trip, 31% reported being assaulted, 51% reported being subjected to extortion, and the remaining individuals reported being detained and having seen some of the new arrivals abducted.



Child Protection Risks

During profiling at the border in Ethiopia, 676 children at risk have been identified as unaccompanied and separated child. Out of them, 26% are female unaccompanied children. Despite the ongoing distribution of High Energy Biscuits to young children and lactating mothers, instances of acute malnutrition have been identified in different localities of Kurmuk calling for immediate attention. A major challenge that has been noted is insufficient quantity and lack of nutritious feeding for lactating mothers and babies during wet feeding.



The community is actively engaged in the identification of unaccompanied children who are placed in foster care arrangements following best interest procedures, as necessary. A child protection risk assessment was conducted in Benishangul Gumuz which revealed an increase of child labour and sexual violence especially for girls who joined gold mining, domestic labour, engaging in agriculture in host community farms, transporting goods, selling alcohol and cigarettes among others as a negative coping mechanism of the food aid pause. Report of unaccompanied children spontaneous return to Sudan due to lack of registration was also noted.

Gender-Based Violence

GBV remains severely under-reported due to fear of reprisal, shame, stigma and survivors finding difficulties accessing services due to volatile security issues and floodings. With the limited funding UNHCR and its partners continue to implement community based GBV prevention activities, mainstreaming GBV risk mitigation activities across sector response plans where possible and response activities for the reported incidents of GBV. The prolonged suspension of food distribution and lack of livelihood opportunities has disproportionately affected women and girls, in turn exacerbating their vulnerability and exposure to different forms of GBV including resorting to harmful coping mechanisms to meet their basic needs and those of their families (sale or exchange of sex, early/forced marriage, physical and sexual violence while searching for food etc.)

With prolonged period at the border sites and in transit centers, women and girls remain at heightened risk of being exposed to GBV and sexual exploitation and abuse.

Access to territory

In Metema area bordering Sudan, the security situation escalated, and sometimes impeding UNHCR and partners' ability to conduct field missions and continue with screening/pre-registration activities. However, the Metema border point remains open. Though movement restrictions for staff have been lifted in Metema border area, the disruption of mobile internet connectivity is greatly impacting communication, access to online resources and business continuity in general. The number of new arrivals has significantly reduced, only 591 newcomers were recorded in September 2023. UNHCR and partners have limited access to refugees and asylum-seekers in the Gessan and Almahal areas of the Benishangul-Gumuz, due to rains, flooding and the volatile security situation, with activities resuming in all three sites.

Recording of new arrivals at point between Aqendayo and Dul-Shatalo Kebeles (Benishangul-Gumuz)

Key Elements of the Protection Response

Access to Asylum: Registration and Asylum Procedures

The Federal Government and regional authorities ensured presence at border entry points to facilitate access to territory and to the asylum system. UNHCR supported strengthening of the capacity of the local authorities, especially immigration and other Government actors at border points on international protection, with emphasis on access to territory/asylum and non-refoulement.

The Government, through the RRS, together with UNHCR, conducted household level registration in the first instance using the Kobo Tool which has been the practice in Ethiopia at the border points of Metema, Gambella and Kurmuk. UNHCR supports RRS to conduct individual level registration for all new arrivals in need of international protection in Kurmuk and Metema.

On 11 September 2023, RRS issued its operational guidance to pave the way for access to asylum through registration of individuals fleeing Sudan into Ethiopia. Implementation of that guidance commenced at the end of October. Based on the guidance, Sudanese coming from conflict affected areas will benefit from prima facie refugee status. Other Sudan nationals coming from non-conflict affected areas and former refugees (other nationalities) will go through a simplified RSD process.

Relocation to transit centers

In Metema, in the Amhara region, which has seen the largest population inflows, a transit center (TC) was set up and it accommodated some 2500 refugees, and a settlement was established in Kumer, where over 9,000 refugees were relocated to. In Benishangul Gumuz, more than 17,904 refugees and asylum seekers are currently hosting in Kurmuk's transit center reception while efforts to increase reception capacity in Sherkole refugee camp are on-going. With new arrivals crossing through Gessan and Yabus/Abrahamo border, UNHCR and RRS continue to strengthen reception arrangements through the establishment of a joint desk for recording of new arrivals and new reception center. Together with RRS and Gumuz regional government, UNHCR is working to identify a location for a new refugee site. The Kurmuk transit centre reception capacity has been expanded from its original capacity of 2,000 to accommodate 9,000 individuals. Continuous construction of transitional shelter, arrangement of drinking water, improvement of latrines is ongoing as a part of overall response.

Ethiopia. Relocation of new arrivals from Metema border to Metema transit center

Child Protection:

In Metema, the Innovative Humanitarian Solutions (IHS) conducted home-to-home monitoring for 465 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and provided psychosocial first aid, while 331 (149 girls ,182 boys) children were engaged in recreational and outdoor activities at the transit center and 33 (15girls ,17boys M) at the Kumer site. 30 Best-Interest Assessments (BIAs) were conducted; foster care arrangements were made for 21 children at the Metema.TC.

More than 2,000 children benefitted from education and sport activities, including alphabet learning, indoor and outdoor activities in child- friendly spaces at the Metema TC and Kumer site. 250 (220boys, 30girls) displaced youths, between the age of 18 to 25, participated in three focus group discussions at the transit site and identified the need for recreational grounds and sports activities, for education and vocational training as the most pertinent issues. In Kumer, 120 children from the host community with specific needs received in-kind support.

The total number of identified and registered UASC and Orphans and Vulnerable children compounds to 521 (224 girls) in Kurmuk. Of those, 443 (191 girls) were separated), 35 (9 girls) were unaccompanied minors, and the remaining 43 (24 girls) are orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) are orphans. These children are provided with comprehensive child protection case management services. As part of coordination efforts through referral mechanism, Plan International Ethiopia referred a total of 158 (122 female) parents and caregivers of UASC and OVC children reached through multi-purpose cash assistance provided by NRC. 288 children participated in activities in the child-friendly space in Kurmuk. UNHCR provided protection and

assistance to 200 unaccompanied children in Kurmuk. Foster families and custodians received CRIs and nutrition assistance. Plan International Ethiopia is working to assess children's health, risks of GBV, and child labor.

Protection monitoring:

In Metema, 17 persons with multiple vulnerabilities, including health-related issues were identified. Home visits were paid to 44 individuals, who were referred to RRS for CRI support. So far, 657 persons with specific needs have been registered in the data base.

UNHCR, RRS and partners including International Rescue Committee (IRC), GOAL International, Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE), Plan International Ethiopia (PIE), and Rehabilitation and Development Organization (RaDO) conducted a visit to the Kurmuk TC, to assess the assistance provided so far and extend technical support. 300 individuals were counselled at the protection desk in Kurmuk Transit Center. Key concerns expressed by refugees are delay in registration, relocation to Sherkole camp, food, shelter, health, and Core Relief Items (CRIs). In Kurmuk, 3,600 most vulnerable individuals have so far been identified by UNHCR protection team and given priority for food and CRIs distributions. UNHCR has been ensuring protection presence in Kurmuk transit center. Access to basic needs and health services were provided. Food (hot meal) and shelter among other needs were prioritized. Roving protection desk with capacity to counsel 80-100 individuals per day was established in Kurmuk transit centre under direct implementation of UNHCR with involvement of partners and gradual handing over to RRS in September 2023.

In collaboration with the Zonal Office for Women, Children and Social Welfare, and all protection partners, UNHCR held a meeting of the protection working group in Metema. Partners were requested to provide materials including dignity kits, child-friendly tents and recreational kits to the one-stop center at the Metema referral hospital.

Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC) distributed dignity kits and provided psychosocial support to 55 women-at-risk in Kumer. Protection counselling was provided to over 590 refugees at Metema entry point, Transit Center and in Kumer site, around issues such as registration and documentation, family reunification, resettlement, and other alternative pathways, as well as food and shelter assistance.

Prevention of, risk mitigation, and response to Gender-based violence:

GBV remains severely under-reported due to fear of reprisal, shame, stigma and survivors finding difficulties accessing services due to volatile security issues and floodings.. UNHCR and its partners continue to implement GBV prevention, mitigation, and response programming. Under UNHCR's leadership, an Inter-Agency Protection Working Group has been established and contributes to coordinating the GBV response. Referral pathways are in place and Women and Girls Safe Space (WGSS) are being constructed In Kumer to offer women and girls psychosocial support, information on available services and provide them with empowerment activities, while a similar space ("wellbeing centre") also functions as a WGSS in Kurmuk.. Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church Development and Inter-church Aid Commission (DICAC) provided psychosocial first aid to at the new refugee site in Kumer. To reduce GBV risks, and promote safety and dignity for women and girls, 4,871 dignity kits were distributed in Kurmuk TC and in Kumer site. Awareness raising sessions were conducted on GBV including where to access services, PSEA and Child protection in partnership with RRS, DICAC, PIE and IRC at Metema and Kurmuk transit centres and at the new refugee site in Kumer during which 1600 persons were reached. More than 1000 flyers with GBV and PSEA-related messages in Arabic and Tigrinya were distributed to refugees and asylum-seekers. In Sherkole refugee camp, the Sudanese new arrivals also benefit from existing GBV prevention, mitigation, and response activities.

Accountability to affected people and Gender equality

In person communication approaches have been largely preferred due to challenges with connectivity in the areas. While the establishment of community-based structures is in progress to ensure effective community sensitization, participation, and mobilization, focus group discussions, household visits, individual interviews and community dialogue and feedback forums have been undertaken to promote two-way communication and feedback management. Protection help desks are operational and rapid Protection Assessments were conducted in an AGD sensitive manner in Kumer and Transit centers. 14 Focused Group Discussions (FDGs) reaching a total of 586(351M,235F) and 7 Key informant interviews were conducted with key partners operating at Metema transit center.

In the Amhara region, community feedback sessions were conducted at Metema entry point, transit centre, and Kumer to respond to key issues such as roles of different stakeholders in refugee protection at Metema Border, registration and documentation, security, social services: health, education, and food Household questionnaires were also administered using a Kobo tool. As of October, the findings and recommendations from refugees include the following:

Safety and Security Needs

- For the men, safety means protection from militias, good health, sanitation, and the presence of authoritative police. Women defined safety as unrestricted movement, peaceful environments, and the reassuring presence of police. Both genders yearn for a secure environment free from threats and stress. Boys associate safety with comfort, good health, undisturbed sleep, and freedom from the impact of war and gunfire. For girls, safety is synonymous with being at ease and comfortable. The well-being of children is closely tied to a peaceful and secure atmosphere.
- Safety concerns arise from armed militia and civilians, wildlife, and hazardous bathing and shelter conditions. Key unsafe areas include the main road with armed individuals, tents prone to flooding and snake intrusion, and general insecurity due to land disputes with militias. The Kumer settlement faces multiple challenges compromising the safety of the refugees and asylum seekers.
- Some of the informants welcomed the increased police presence for safety, while others oppose it due to language barriers (Arabic, English, and Amharic dynamics). Divergent opinions on whether more policing can guarantee safety reflect the complexity of the situation and varying perspectives among refugees.

Relationship with the Host Community

- The majority of the population faces significant challenges in interacting with host communities, primarily attributed to a language barrier that fosters a perception of threat and problem by the hosts. Exploitation has occurred, notably with inflated commodity prices. Older women and men express fear, citing the ubiquitous presence of guns among the host communities. To navigate these issues, refugees and asylum seekers resort to using sign language when purchasing essential items due to language barriers and the economic strain imposed by elevated prices.

Child Protection

- Most of the boys interviewed feel their opinions are valued, this was also confirmed by the girls. However, the women expressed frustration at being unable to fulfil children's needs, particularly for those under six who may not grasp the displacement situation. Adult men share similar sentiments about challenges in meeting children's needs, while older women hold a contrary view, stating that children's opinions are not respected.
- Child-friendly spaces are inadequate, leading to concerns about the lack of places for children to spend time during the day and night.
- Safety concerns involve restrictions on river access due to crocodile presence and dangers near roads. Women emphasize risks such as sharp edges of iron sheets in toilets, the high potential for kidnapping in marketplaces, and the general insecurity in host community areas where men carry guns. Men highlighted dangers from snakes and wild animals in specific zones, especially around

toilets, indicating a broader issue of physical safety for children. Older women confirm that marketplaces are not safe for children due to the presence of armed men in host community areas.

Access to Services

- Men are aware of the location of the health facility but express uncertainty about where to seek information. Women also face challenges in accessing information about available services. Both boys and girls share the sentiment of not knowing where to obtain information.
- According to both men and women, accessing health services poses safety concerns due to dangerous routes, particularly after 5:00 pm, impacting emergency cases.
- The Eritrean community reports no experiences of stigma or discrimination while accessing services. Sudanese men, however, highlight discrimination in the distribution of family tents and food (wet feeding). The perception is that Eritreans receive more food, with each person given three pieces of bread compared to one for Sudanese. Discrimination extends to local health facilities, where host community members are prioritized even if refugees arrived first.
- While accessing food and water is generally safe, occasional fights between refugees occur at service points and water sources.

Livelihoods

- Some of the boys engage in activities such as cobbler and phone charging, though the majority are not currently involved in any income-generating endeavours. Eritrean men are active in various pursuits including phone charging, small-scale businesses, barber shops, money transfers with a certain percentage, and the operation of small coffee restaurants. The women in the community contribute to household income through endeavours such as selling cookies and participating in small-scale businesses.

- In contrast, the Sudanese men express their financial constraints as a barrier to engaging in any income-generating activities. Unfortunately, these limitations hinder their ability to participate in economic pursuits, reflecting the challenges faced by this group in pursuing livelihood opportunities within the settlement.

MHPSS

- The current challenges faced by men due to forced displacement encompass various social issues, including poor hygiene and sanitation, the presence of snakes, concerns about potential attacks from militias, shootings in the neighbourhoods by militias, and the absence of a sustained UNHCR office to address their complaints. Additionally, the unsettling presence of armed men within the settlement contributes to the overall stress experienced by the male population.

- Food-related concerns emerge as a prominent issue among all interviewed groups, encompassing worries about the quantity, quality, hygiene of the cooks and kitchen, delays in serving food, and discrimination between Sudanese and Eritreans. The need for nutrition and supplementary feeding for children under 5 years further compounds the stress related to food security.

- The stressful problems manifest in various symptoms affecting men, women, and boys. Sleep disturbances, fear, worries, and nightmares are prevalent, with significant impacts on both genders. Other symptoms include depression, loneliness, and weight loss, with women expressing hot-temperedness and lack of appetite. Coping mechanisms vary, with a majority engaging in prayer and reading holy books (Quran and Bible for men and women). Coping mechanisms reflect the diverse ways in which the population attempts to navigate and mitigate the adversities of forced displacement in both positive and harmful ways.

Recommendations from the Community

- The community's response to discussions with UNHCR varies. Women express gratitude for the organization's attentive listening, providing psychological relief and hope for prompt solutions. Men

find the discussions productive and desire concrete solutions from higher UNHCR authorities. Boys consider the topics essential for their well-being and eagerly anticipate more meetings.

- In the focus group discussion, the community highlights key issues, including concerns about refugee status, registration, and documentation. There's a pressing need for education facilities, especially for youth. Other identified needs include a health facility, an ambulance, clothing for those with minimal attire, and a Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) partner. Additional concerns involve rights and obligations information, tokens for food distribution, addressing missed Non-Food Items (NFI), and improving lighting and recreational facilities. Essential needs highlighted include a burial ground, dislodging toilets, general soap distribution, overcoming language barriers with police through interpreter assistance, and specific provisions like sanitary materials for women and girls, nutrition for children under 5, and cash assistance for vulnerable older individuals. The community stresses the importance of constructing more toilets for sanitation needs.

In order to promote gender equality, the needs of Men, women, boys and girls are being analyzed and measures taken to address them. Data is collected individually, vulnerabilities assessed, and protection measures taken accordingly. RRS, UNHCR and Refugee Central Committee has established a Peace Committee including host community, Eritrean and Sudanese communities' members with delegated roles and responsibilities.

Community sensitization session before the start of beneficiary verification for planned multi-purpose cash support

Durable solutions:

Approximately 2,500 persons have been identified with an existing pathway to admission to at least 12 countries. Out of this total, around 80% are in resettlement processing while remaining are under private or self-sponsorship or family reunification process.

UNHCR is taking proactive efforts toward their protection and solutions to avoid lengthening the duration of stay of refugees longer than necessary, decongest the transit sites, at a time when UNHCR is grappling with cholera and many other protection issues. As a mitigating measure and to respond to some of these protection solutions, UNHCR in collaboration with RRS, plans to engage various embassy representatives from the 12 countries, immigration authorities and IOM to jointly discuss the most effective and efficient ways to realize the departure of the new-arrivals from Sudan with third-country solutions.

Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA):

UNHCR Ethiopia continues to work with partners and government counterparts in operational states, ensuring that the IASC's Six Core Principles Related to SEA and Secretary-General's Bulletin ST/SGB/2003/13, Special Measure (2003) are adhered to. All activities have been upholding UNHCR's

integrity standards, also ensuring all personal and professional conduct is at the highest standard. PSEA awareness raising sessions were organized jointly by UNHCR, RRS, IRC and Plan International in Kurmuk transit centre. In addition to the awareness sessions, flyers on PSEA and SEA reporting mechanisms were distributed among the community while posters and pull up banners were utilized around different services. UNHCR regularly provides capacity building to staff and partners for them to be able to prevent and respond to SEA. In order to mitigate the SEA risks, PSEA is mainstreamed in partners' interventions throughout.

Education:

Education focal points in Gondar and Assosa have organized Joint Education Needs Assessment (JENA) for both refugee settlements in Metema and camps in Assosa (Tsore and Sherkole). The JENA has identified immediate education needs to kick start Education in Emergencies (EiE). The assessments were coordinated by UNHCR and RRS where the Regional Education Bureau (REB) for Amhara Regional State UNICEF, DICAC, and Plan International have taken part. The JENA reports have been shared with Education Unit in UNHCR Representation Office in Addis for review. Furthermore, UNHCR has submitted a proposal of 2 million USD to Education Cannot Wait (ECW) from the First Emergency Response (FER) funding window for both Somalia and Sudan situations.

Coordination:

In response to the emergency, the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), the lead agency within the Government of Ethiopia mandated to provide protection to refugees and returnees, including emergency preparedness, had a joint monitoring mission, which included humanitarian partners to the border crossing areas in Amhara, Tigray, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Gambella to monitor possible inflows of refugees and returnees. The Inter-Agency coordination structures for the emergency response were also activated in the field and at Addis Ababa level, co-led by UNHCR and RRS. Preparedness measures and early actions, including protection monitoring at border crossings, prepositioning of relief items, review of partner presence and capacity, review of the supply chain and rapid response to the new arrivals, amongst others were considered in response to the ongoing and anticipated influx. The Government and partners provided assistance such as high energy biscuits, emergency clinical services, core relief items and water to support the new arrivals at the border areas.

26 partner organization are responding to the Sudan crisis. Out of them, 11 are INGOs, 6 are NGOs, 5 are UN agencies, 3 are state actors and 1 is Red Cross Movement. Government and UNHCR has been having continuous meetings with partners on how to respond to the crisis in more effective ways.

The national Refugee Protection Working Group (RPWG) was reactivated. It is an inter-agency coordination platform co-chaired by UNHCR and RRS that takes place every month with different agencies working on Refugees to provide a fast, effective, and coordinated refugee protection response in Ethiopia. The national RPWG is Ethiopia's principal national protection coordination forum, directing inter-sector strategic concerns and facilitating collaborative planning processes to provide a fast, effective, and coordinated refugee protection response.

Co-chaired by UNHCR and RRS, the National Child Protection and Gender-Based Violence (CP/GBV) Sub-Working Group is a monthly platform that intends to strengthen coordination and improve the overall CP and GBV response, as well as reduce duplication of efforts, while encouraging information exchange and learning from best practices and guaranteeing a strong relationship between CP and GBV programming.
UNHCR and Refugees and Returnees Services (RRS) senior management meet regularly to decide on critical issues related to the Sudan emergency.

UNHCR conducted various advocacies to facilitate the access to asylum for the new arrivals from Sudan, which led to the prima facie recognition of Sudanese asylum-seekers and expedite procedures for other nationals in need of international protection, the provision of land for the establishment of transit centers and settlement sites in Kumer and Assossa and the inclusion of refugees in the regional cholera response.

Shelter/ CRI:

Together with RRS and Benishangul Gumuz regional government, UNHCR is working to identify a location for a new refugee site. In Benishangul Gumuz Region, 80 tents and 20 hangars have been built in the Kurmuk TC, while as at 31 October 2023, 256 emergency shelters have been erected in Sherkole camp with 144 still yet to be completed. Five tents were also set up at Gessan entry point. In Kumer site, 12 (out of 20 planned) hangars have been completed, while 1.8 km road and two culverts have been finalized. Sandbags were distributed to 447 families to strengthen their tents against rain and storm and prevent rainwater penetration. To date, 1,600 tents have been pitched in Kumer site. CRIs were distributed to 2,240 individuals in Kurmuk.

Ethiopia. CRI distribution to relocated families in Kurmuk

Health & Nutrition

UNHCR and partners, together with the Ethiopian Red Cross, provided two ambulances to ensure timely transportation of patients to Sherkole health center. Gende Wuha hospital provided an ambulance to transport critically ill patients from Kumer settlement to the hospital.

Nutrition screening conducted in Kurmuk indicated children requiring urgent intervention. In addition, numerous malaria cases were registered at the Akendayo health post, with no adequate medication or test kits available. Linked to severe malnutrition, one child who had been referred to the health post at Kurmuk TC, eventually died.

In Metema area, Medical Teams International (MTI) conducted Outpatient Department (OPD) consultations for 512 patients, including 91 children under the age of 5. Out of 148 children screened for malnutrition, nine (9) Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM), and two (2) Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) cases were identified. Kumer health post staff conducted antenatal care visits (ANC) of 21 mothers; 23 women were educated about family planning.

As of 21 September 2023, some 451 cholera cases have been admitted at the CTC, of these 351 were treated and discharged. 7 deaths have been recorded. A standard Cholera Treatment Centre has been established with the support of MSF-H. 26 staff mainly from Woreda Health Office are conducting the case management. Supplies and cholera kits from MSF-H, UNICEF and OMS were for case management. 64 cholera beds were being utilized for treatment.172 shelters in the affected zones were disinfected.

One ORP (Oral Rehydration Point) was established for management, screening and linking of patients to the CTC. No Cholera case has been recorded in the Transit site. An ORP with 3 beds have been prepared in the

transit site as part of preparation for the cholera response. Due to limited stock, refugees in Kumer are not prioritized by the Metema Woreda health office for cholera vaccination.

The outbreak of cholera has ended since there were no reported cases starting from September 21st marking two weeks since then. As a result, the cholera treatment center is closed thereafter.

WASH:

In Kumer, an average 8.5 liters are distributed per person/day (l/p/d), while in Kurmuk TC, it is 20 l/p/d. The considerable distance between the water trucking source and both sites pose challenges in meeting the current needs. To increase the current sanitation level, three additional latrine blocks are being built in Kumer site, with four additional blocks planned. Currently, the site has 15 functional latrine blocks. In Kurmuk TC, six latrines and showers have been constructed so far. The person-to-latrine ratio in Kumer settlement is 1:158, and in Kurmuk TC 1:100, both being below the emergency standard. A total of 16 hygiene promoters in Kumer settlement and 4 in Kurmuk TC are disseminating hygiene messages and facilitating campaigns.

Challenges & Opportunities

Security and other constraints for humanitarian operations:

UNHCR remains extremely concerned about the humanitarian impact of the influx of refugees from Sudan as well as refugee returnees in adverse circumstances, on an already dire humanitarian situation in Ethiopia. The deterioration of the security situation in the Amhara region has made access to refugees and host communities challenging. Regular movements restrictions are declared preventing UNHCR and partners to access to the person in needs.

Return under adverse circumstances:

Ethiopian refugees are returning in adverse circumstances and are faced with exacerbated vulnerabilities. However, as of 19 September 2023, UNHCR had recorded only 395 returnees using a Kobo tool in Metema even though the actual returnees are believed to be much higher. Several reasons are attributed to this low level of registration such as absence of return support package at the border, limited coordination with RRS, immigration and IOM, and lack of interest by the returnees (particularly Tigrayans) to identify themselves as former refugees in Sudan.

Similarly, spontaneous returns from Sudan have been ongoing since the outbreak of the conflict in Sudan. Most of the returnees are pre-1991 Ethiopian refugees from Khartoum who have returned mostly to Humera, Dansha and other areas in Gonder. Most of the returnees organized their own transport and proceeded to their destinations without registering with UNHCR. UNHCR does not have access to their areas of return to monitor their protection and assistance needs. Attempts to access the areas have so far been unsuccessful.

UNHCR also received reports that Tigrayan refugees are returning to Tigray from Sudan including through Metema and Kurmuk entry points and other unofficial entry points using smugglers. IOM indicated that in Metema, it registered 2002 Ethiopian returnees who have reported their intended places of destination as Tigray, meaning that they may be former refugees in Sudan.

In addition, in the first week of August 2023 following the start of the conflict in Amhara, 250 Tigrayans were evicted by Amhara forces from Western Tigray and transported to Sheraro, Tigray. Along the way, they were intercepted by Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF). Among these, 41 individuals decided to stay in Tigray while the rest returned to Western Tigray. Among those who remained in Tigray, 4 were refugee returnees from Sudan. Triggered by this, further assessments were conducted in various areas in Tigray, which identified refugee returnees from Sudan. These includes 21 households in Sheraro, 6 households in Hitsats, 1315 individuals in Shire IDP site, 24 households (97 individuals) in Abi Adi, 82 households in Adigrat and 55 individuals in Mehoni. Most of the returnees used Metema and Kurmuk (Assosa) entry points. The Mekelle City Administration also informed UNHCR that 700 households of refugee returnees approached them for support. Some of them travelled through Western Tigray while others transited through Addis to reach their areas of return in Tigray.

Main reasons for return, among others, include fear of the conflict approaching refugee camps in Sudan, absence of services and information that the situation in Tigray has improved. They reported human rights violations including demands of bribes, confiscation of personal property and documents, detention, beatings, and denial of basic services.

The returnees require assistance to restart their lives as many are joining IDPs and relatives who are already in difficult situations due to food shortages and limited services, including cash and non-food items. The regional government lacks capacity to support the returnees, thus many are relocating from town to town in search of support and assistance. The lack of food distribution due to the food pause throughout the country created immense challenges for the returnees. In a nutshell, the areas of return (particularly Western Tigray and Amhara region) and the travel routes are not safe, and most returnees end up in difficult circumstances such as joining IDP sites, which requires continued humanitarian assistance.

Access to asylum in Addis Ababa

For persons seeking protection in Addis Ababa, Art 15 of the Refugee Proclamation applies, and such claims should be registered at the Port and the Police Station, and RRS for them to be considered as asylum seekers. However, the government has unequivocally decided that, even though many new asylum-seekers landed in Addis Ababa, there should be no registration organized in the capital city. Such persons will receive pass permits and will be required to go to the nearest registration centres such as Metema, Kumer, Kurmuk, Sherkole and Gambella. This implies that some vulnerable families will not be able to access registration. Moreover, responsibility of logistics relies on the asylum seekers. This cost implication and considering socioeconomic situation, can lead to negative coping mechanisms (protection risks such as GBV, child labour etc). It is also important to provide some kind of protection for those who need medical, or food support is required while they wait to access registration.

Number of new arrivals from Sudan who moved onward to Addis Ababa, through Bole international airport and those who were in Addis before the conflict erupted and cannot return to Sudan, may be in hundreds or thousands subject to verification. Lack of access to asylum procedures and other basic protection services in Addis Ababa exacerbated the already dire situation of the new arrivals. Many indicated their reluctance to travel to locations where there is registration. In this regard, staying in the capital without valid documents may expose them to arbitrary detention and forcible return to Sudan in the future.

Health & Nutrition:

Kurmuk TC faces a continuing and substantial shortage in healthcare services and medical supplies. The influx of refugees and asylum-seekers has increased needs for medication and additional capacities to provide adequate health care services. There is a need to establish nutrition center in Kurmuk and prioritize to have ambulances in the transit center.

In addition, food insecurity is exacerbated in Ethiopia following the **suspension of food assistance** to persons in need throughout the country, including new arrivals. UNHCR and partners are using funds which were initially allocated to other services, thus reducing access to basic services for refugees thus depleting the operation's meagre funds.

WASH:

Kumer site and Kurmuk TC are experiencing a shortage of water supply and sanitation facilities. The Kurmuk TC is still in dire need of potable water, despite the recent establishment of a water supply from a nearby pond. In Kumer and Kurmuk TC as described above, the person to latrine ratio falls below emergency standards.In Kumer site, water delivered through trucking is not sufficient, causing long queues at water collection points. In light of the ongoing rainy season, immediate drilling of a borehole is vital to reduce the cost of water trucking. There is resistance from the community to build latrines along the sanitation corridor.

Water Tank in need of reinforcement at Kurmuk transit center

Protection gaps underfunding implications

The initially released Refugee Response Plan has been updated to run until 31 December 2023. The revised plan takes into consideration operational realities related to the response in Sudan, the overall increase in vulnerabilities of arriving populations and their impact on hosting communities, and the developing conflict dynamics in Sudan. On this basis, it is projected that by the end of December 2023, Ethiopia will receive 92,000 people seeking international protection from Ethiopia, which includes 88,000 refugees and 4,000 returnees.

Under-funding is severely hampering the delivery of protection services in Ethiopia. Currently, the Ethiopia chapter of the Refugee Response Plan for the Sudan Situation is only funded at 31%, and at the protection cluster at the Humanitarian Response Plan for Ethiopia at 46%. GBV prevention and response interventions for refugees are particularly under-funded.

Reflected in the Response Plan, once Ethiopian (refugee and migrant) returnees reach their community, the response will be provided through the cluster system as part of the existing 2023 Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP). With 75% of the country's population in need of humanitarian assistance before the crisis, the 2023 HRP is less than 25% funded. This lack of funding is very worrying since the impact of the crisis on Ethiopia goes beyond new arrivals, with local communities impacted by the loss of supplies including food, basic goods, and fuel from Sudan.

Key Messages

1. Acknowledge and support the Ethiopian government's open-border policy for persons fleeing armed conflict in Sudan.

   The government formalized their progressive approach on asylum procedures and status determination of the newly arrived refugees and asylum seekers including those who had been registered in Sudan. However, there is a need to commence implementation including opening registration and documentation procedures in Addis Ababa, to allow asylum-seekers in Addis Ababa access to asylum as guaranteed by the Refugee Proclamation no. 1110 of 2019.

2. Support UNHCR's policy of alternatives to camps for the Sudanese refugee influx, with land availed according to international norms and standards for suitable settlement.

3. After four months of the food aid suspension resulting in deaths in adult refugees, and acute malnutrition in refugee children, UNHCR and partners urge donors to resume financing activities aimed at fostering the self-reliance of refugees and host communities to mitigate GBV risks, preserve livelihoods and avoid exacerbating their economic situation, to mitigate the risk of harmful coping mechanisms to survive, including the sale or exchange of sex, child labour, school drop-out, etc.

4. Humanitarian access is fundamental for the implementation of life saving actions towards persons forced to flee. UNHCR urges the government of Ethiopia to guarantee security of displaced persons and humanitarians, to ensure safe delivery of humanitarians' services to persons in need in Amhara and Oromia regions.

5. Enhance engagement with WLOs, RLOs and other community-based structures to strengthen outreach, awareness raising on GBV and risk mitigation and foster safe disclosure. They have often shown how they may be the first and most effective respondents in constrained situations. This will include strengthening their capacity on project management, accountability and transparency as needed.

6. The Government to prioritize and uphold freedom of movement for refugees who have fled the Sudan conflict, while also taking robust measures to protect civilians, particularly in conflict-affected areas, to ensure their safety and well-being.

7. All stakeholders should work together under the guidance of the government to ensure that protection remains the primary focus during emergency response and integration into strategies for reintegrating individuals from Sudan. such as voluntariness of movement, proper information on areas of return, safety and dignity, all parties should uphold the centrality of protection during the emergency and throughout full cycle of displacement including solutions and advocate early engagement of development actors in support of the refugee hosting and returnee areas throughout Ethiopia. Particular attention should be giving to HLP rights and providing shelter support to vulnerable individuals.

8. The donor community to support partners in the emergency response with sufficient, timely and predictable financial resources without which some of the basic protection responses and services. The donor community should allow for increased flexibility of use of funds.

PROTECTION BRIEF ETHIOPIA

October 2023

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