Refugee woman, who fled fighting in Laascaanood, Somalia, waiting to receive the food ration in the new refugee settlement in Doqmo, Somali region ©UNHCR/Diana Diaz

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

- Promote and support equitable household Food Security
- Improve/support food security of refugees and host population.
- Ensure General Food Distribution (GFD) for refugees is undertaken per the revised Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs), Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between RRS, WFP and UNHCR, with high levels of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP)

GENERAL CONTEXT

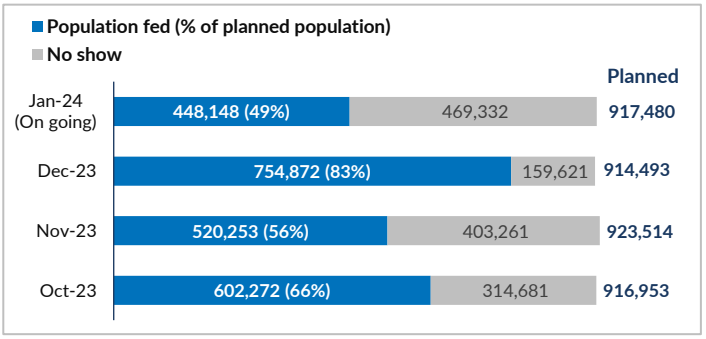
- UNHCR, WFP, its Cooperating Partners (CPs) and Ethiopia's Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) continue to prioritise in kind General food distributions (GFD)
- GFD is conducted in Ethiopia as per the roles outlined in the revised Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on food assistance in refugee camps, sites, and settlements signed by RRS, UNHCR, and WFP, and in the WFP cooperating partners Field level Agreements (FLA).
- There are 31 refugee locations targeted by the GFD, including twenty-one camps, five settlements, three sites, and two transit centers, where 917,480 refugees are dependent on food assistance out of the total refugee population of 996,352 in the country.
- In refugee operations, there will likely be ration cuts as of the March distribution cycle.
- Strengthened partnerships with private sector and development actors are needed to support food distribution systems in refugee hosting areas, which are not implemented to scale.

PROGRESS / MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Coordination Food aid and Food Assistance operations

- Monthly quadripartite (WFP, RRS, UNHCR & CPs) sessions are prioritised. The latest meeting was held on 24 January 2024.
- Regular coordination on food security is led by WFP at all locations and in collaboration with UNHCR and RRS.
- UNHCR WFP technical workstreams on communication with communities, visibility and simplification of context are meeting weekly.
- WFP and UNHCR technical discussions, including on AAP, are ongoing.

Beneficiaries reached in General food distributions | October 2023 – January 2024



Emergency Food assistance Sudan Situations

- In Kumer site in Metema, 3 round of GFD were successfully completed reaching 7,760 refugees in October, 7,859 in November and 7,872 in December 2023.
- In Kurmuk transit center in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region (BGR), GFD covering one round was completed reaching 14,639 refugees. Two cycles were missed due to insecurity limiting access. GFD for January cycle is on-going.
- WFP has taken over food assistance at entry and transit centres in Kumer, whilst Plan International is winding down the hot meal and cash assistance programs end of March 2024.

Community engagement through Communication with Communities

- To ensure harmonised communication across locations and to minimise reported emanating risks; UNHCR and WFP in conjunction with RRS, CPs and key stakeholders have readjusted and update the messaging for communication to communities based on feedback from the community. The new versions will ensure: (i) accurate information on the background and the causes of the food aid pause, and (ii) include innovative communication methods utilizing audio visual and other modes of communications to reach more people.

- UNHCR and parties have developed a dissemination plan for all locations that also factors in feedback from refugee leaders on the message before further dissemination to the wider refugee community.
- The main forum for dissemination of these messages will be at the pre and post distribution meetings held with the community and UNHCR, WFP and RRS.
- UNHCR and WFP are working to harmonise on Accountability to Affected Population (AAP) Feedback and Response Mechanism tools and ensure interoperability.
- UNHCR, WFP and partners very much appreciated and recognized refugees' feedback and gratitude on the enhanced engagements with the refugees on food and other issues, through the different community engagement platforms.

Monitoring

- Between December 2023 and January 2024, WFP field monitors conducted routine monitoring in 27 refugee camps spanning seven regions - Afar, Amhara, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, Oromia and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (SNNPR).
- The monitoring activities included beneficiary contact monitoring (BCM) through interviews with refugees at distribution sites, distribution monitoring in collaboration with partners, and warehouse monitoring to evaluate the readiness of food distribution points. In total, 1,142 households (70%) were reached through BCM, and 33 partner staff members were interviewed by WFP field monitors to gather feedback on the overall distribution process and the food commodities distributed.
- All households confirmed receiving in-kind food assistance, with no beneficiaries reporting receiving cash assistance. The comprehensive food basket consisted of cereals, pulses, CSB+, oil, and salt. Notably, 91% of households reported receiving cereals, 96% pulses, 97% CSB+, 97% oil, and 96% salt. Furthermore, 99% of households reported being informed about the distribution date in advance, while 90% adhered to the planned schedule. However, 12% expressed dissatisfaction with the overall distribution process and the assistance they received, primarily citing inadequate amounts of food (reported by 90%) and lengthy waiting times (5%).

  Concerning the quality of distributed food commodities, no major issues were reported for pulses, CSB, and oil. However, 4% of households reported receiving poor-quality cereal. Additionally, 3.3% of the interviewed households observed WFP food assistance (cereals and pulses) being sold in nearby local markets, mainly originating from Gambella and Amhara regions.

Accountability to Affected Populations and Strengthened Feedback and Response Mechanisms

- WFP and UNHCR have received a total of 626 complaints/feedback from beneficiaries through the toll-free hotline and the Protection desks.
- Fifty-eight (58%) of the reported cases through WFP hotline have been resolved, with closed loops and communication provided to the users regarding the response. The remaining 42% of cases are still pending resolution.
- 90% of the reported complaints at the Protection desk are also resolved.

KEY CHALLENGES FOOD ASSISTANCE

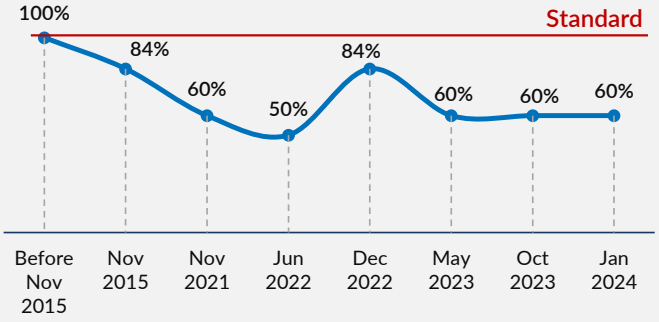
- High global acute malnutrition prevalence weighted at 14.2 % against 15.5% weighted prevalence in 2022; higher reports of worsening negative coping strategy, range between 75.5% to 98.2% (Weighted 87.4%) prevalence of households that employed one or more negative strategies in 2023 retrospectively during the food aid pause higher than prevalence ranges of 41.0 to 90.1 (51.7%) recorded in 2022, from surveys conducted in 2023.
- The impact of food aid pause on refugees' food and nutrition security and overall protection environment where in some locations such as Afar and Melkadida extremely high stunting prevalence respectively were recorded 42.0% and 45.7%.
- Due to funding shortfalls, refugees are currently receiving only 60% of the minimum standard of 2,100 kilocalories per person/day, while there is also a lack of robust food security value chains and food security livelihood programs for Refugees.
- Refugees have shared concern over irregular distribution cycles coupled with the lack of retroactive distribution, based on WFP's policy.
- The warehousing capacity remains inadequate for stockpiling in locations where the routes for delivery of food are insecure.
- Limited number of staff members for CPs does not enable multiple distribution at the food distribution points.

The halt and delays in registration in some of the locations prior to the pause and resumption of food assistance are affecting the inclusion of new entries to the beneficiary list, such as newborn.

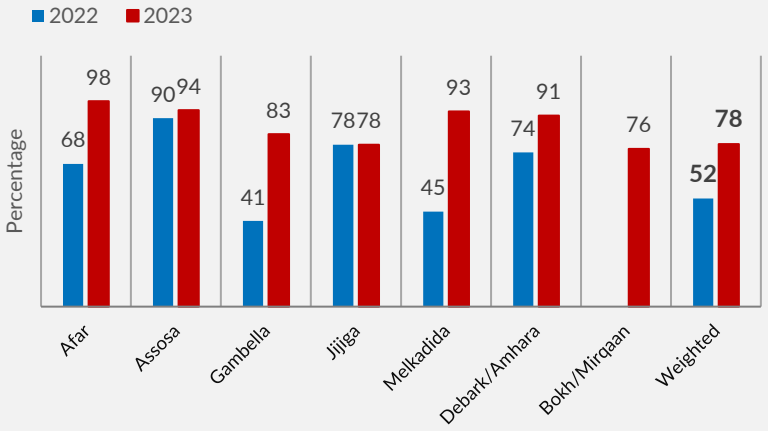
WAY FORWARD

- UNHCR and WFP will disseminate jointly harmonised messages on the non-retroactive distribution policy.
- UNHCR and WFP to consider implementation of Protection prioritization for targeted assistance.
- UNHCR and WFP to consider scale up investment in sustainable food security whilst prioritising lifesaving humanitarian funding for food assistance such as climate smart food security programmes.
- UNHCR and WFP technical teams will work on enabling interoperability of complaints and feedback response mechanisms (CFRM) platforms.
- UNHCR and WFP will continue collaboration on the feedback and protection communication systems as relates to GFD.
- UNHCR and WFP will collaborate to review the protection aspects of the data sharing agreements with inclusion of WFP Cooperating partners.
- Food batch quality checks will be conducted to ensure quality standards of food fit for consumption to beneficiaries.

Trends in food ration to standard of 2100kcal/p/d for refugees in Ethiopia | 2015 – 2024



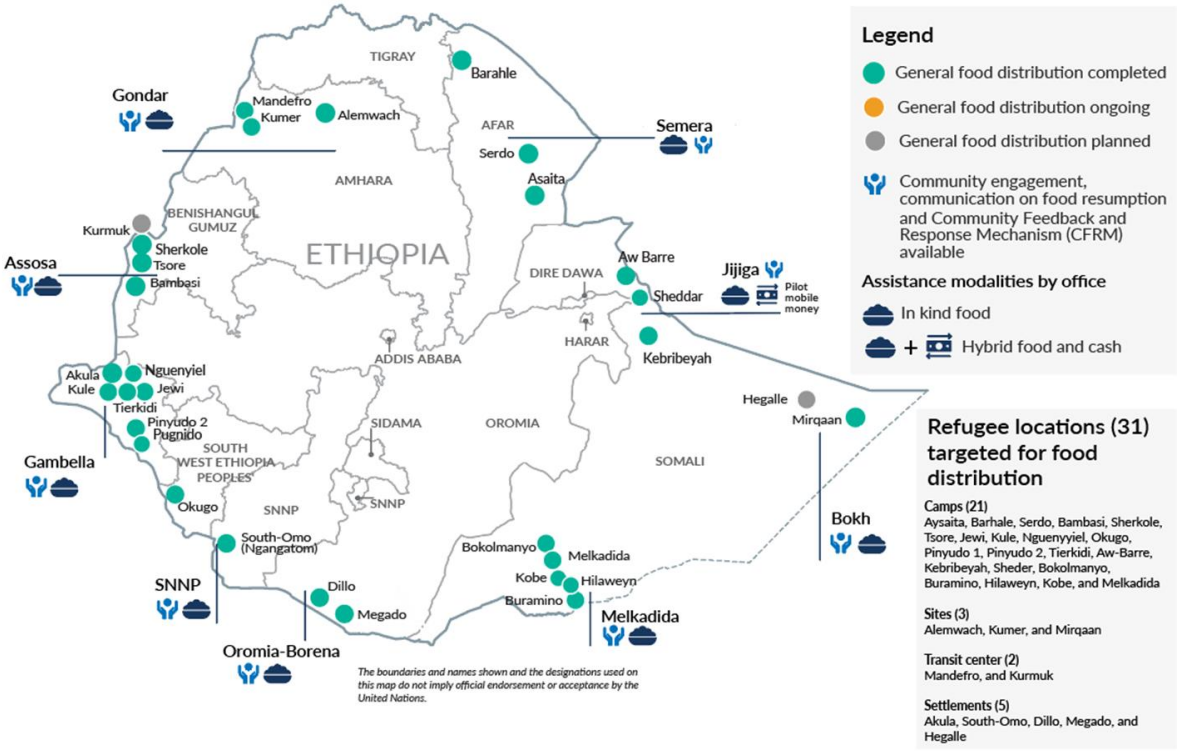
Proportion of housholds that used one or more negative coping strategy 2022 vs 2023



Source: Standardised Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS)

A refugee, single woman head of household, from Eritrea, sifts cereals outside her shelter in Alemwach refugee site.© UNHCR/Samuel Otieno

Country-wide General Food Distribution implementation status



Monthly Refugee Distribution Report

DECEMBER 2023

Table 1. Dispatch, Delivery, Distribution status per Camp

Region	Camp	Dispatch	MT %	Delivered	Distributed
Somali (Jijiga area)	Kebribeyah	46.17	100%	46.17	45.99
	Awbare	35.74	94%	35.74	33.58
	Sheder	38.76	78%	38.76	30.15
Somali (Dollo Ado area)	Hilaweyn	622.91	89%	622.91	556.42
	Buramino	563.15	96%	563.15	541.46
	Bokolomanyo	341.19	0%	341.10	-
	Kobe	471.58	157%	308.55	484.93
	Melkedida	413.29	129%	413.29	534.51
Somali (Bokh)	Mirkhan	-	0%	-	421.88
	Hagele	-	0%	-	-
Gambella	Pugnido I	591.86	93%	579.11	535.79
	Pugnido II	91.79	0%	-	92.44
	Akula	18.20	116%	18.20	21.15
	Kule	633.44	96%	581.99	561.61
	Tierkidi	897.11	100%	835.25	836.86
	Nguenyyiel	1,332.60	85%	1,332.41	1,134.03
	Okugu	129.49	99%	129.49	128.71
	Jewi	835.61	92%	835.41	770.53
Benishangul Gumz	Sherkole	202.19	141%	123.23	173.19
	Bambasi	234.78	99%	234.78	232.90
	Tsore	564.63	111%	330.08	367.84
	Kurmuk (new arrivals)	197.34	115%	127.55	146.65
Afar	Aysayta	311.18	99%	311.18	308.63
	Berhale	289.33	104%	289.33	299.79
	Serdo	39.15	91%	39.15	35.66
Amhara	Alemwach	101.23	183%	101.23	185.09
	Kumer (new arrivals) meteme	98.96	118%	95.54	112.55
Oromia	Dilo	22.14	0%	22.14	-
	Megado	40.68	0%	40.68	-
Souther Ethiopia	Ngangatom	62.26	0%	62.26	-
	Total	9,226.77	102%	8,458.68	8,592.33

JANUARY 2024

Table 2. Details by Camp

Region	Camp	MT Food (In-Kind) Dispatch	MT %	Delivered	Distributed
Somali (Jijiga area)	Kebribeyah	21.45	175%	21.45	37.44
	Awbare	19.97	157%	17.50	27.40
	Sheder	25.35	116%	25.35	29.54
Somali (Dollo Ado area)	Hilaweyn	616.03	97%	573.53	554.07
	Buramino	718.19	119%	349.23	415.70
	Bokolomanyo	389.85	220%	164.93	362.56
	Kobe	468.89	0%	442.84	-
	Melkedida	505.59	127%	421.61	534.51
Somali (Bokh)	Mirkhan	274.84	0%	-	-
	Hagele	-	0%	-	-
Gambella	Pugnido I	565.83	82%	466.48	380.72
	Pugnido II	63.75	155%	63.75	98.84
	Akula	21.04	106%	21.04	22.21
	Kule	403.67	0%	383.67	-
	Tierkidi	105.00	0%	35.00	-
	Nguenyyiel	706.85	67%	573.01	383.30
	Okugu	128.87	85%	128.87	109.70
	Jewi	271.96	0%	-	-
Benishangul Gumz	Sherkole	-	0%	-	169.75
	Bambasi	-	0%	-	232.89
	Tsore	-	0%	-	350.46
	Kurmuk (new arrivals)	-	0%	-	-
Afar	Aysayta	321.73	103%	303.76	312.68
	Berhale	304.30	100%	304.30	305.70
	Serdo	-	0%	-	-
Amhara	Alemwach	184.27	132%	139.52	184.01
	Kumer (new arrivals) meteme	117.27	0%	-	92.20
Oromia	Dilo	10.23	346%	10.23	35.42
	Megado	13.48	454%	13.48	61.20
Southern Ethiopia	Ngangatom	37.78	201%	37.78	75.76
Total		6,296.20	106%	4,497.34	4,776.06

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