Food assistance in Dolo, Somali region
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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 implemented as per the revised Standard Operational Procedures (SOPs) and Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Refugee and Returnees Services (RRS), World Food Programme (WFP) and United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), with high levels of Accountability to Affected Populations (AAP).

GENERAL CONTEXT

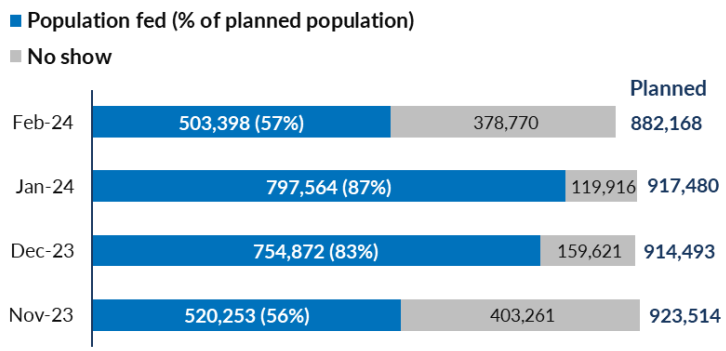
- General Food Distribution for the refugees in Ethiopia is conducted according to the roles outlined in the new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) on food assistance in refugee camps, sites, and settlements signed by RRS, UNHCR, and WFP and in the WFP Cooperating Partners' (CPs) Field level Agreements (FLA).
- UNHCR and WFP in collaboration with partners are planning to expand hybrid modalities (In-Kind combined with Cash-based Transfer), based on the lessons learned from the successful digital pilot of Cash Transfer directly to the refugees since the resumption of GFD at Jijiga camps in Somali region.
- **UNHCR and WFP Representatives/Country Directors held a strategic meeting on 14 February 2024 and agreed to work together through the technical food security, resilience, and livelihoods working groups** to address the immediate and medium to long-term food security needs. The gaps in food pipeline, logistics, non-retroactive food distribution and CPs' capacity to complete distributions in one calendar month were acknowledged.
- **Refugee households' food security has deteriorated in 2023**. Food security outcomes have indicated a deterioration and occurrence of undernutrition with weighted Global Acute Malnutrition prevalence of 14.2%, which is high. WFP's Post Distribution Monitoring conducted in December 2023 points towards a worsening food security situation whereby **65% of households are moderately food insecure and 11% severely food insecure much higher (compared to 43% and 11% recorded in 2022 respectively)**. These results indicated that refugee families may not have recovered from the impact of the food pause; and protection risks continue to be used and affect food security. Analysis of food security indicators between June and September 2023 shows that refugees used severe coping strategies to cater for household food needs during the food pause with between 75.5% to 98.2% of households using one or more negative coping strategies. To cope, families skipped meals, relied on less preferred foods, and reduced general expenditure, with adults eating less so that children could eat. Families also lived in debt and took out new loans, while engaging in irregular and risky activities like theft, early marriages, child labour, mining in some locations, and transactional sex to meet food needs.
- **UNHCR and WFP are exploring vulnerability-based targeting considering the high levels of food inadequacy in refugee settings and resource shortfalls to address all needs by status-based targeting.** They are seeking support from the joint WFP and UNHCR regional targeting hub after completing the analysis of available data on food and nutrition security from previous large-scale surveys, assessment, and food monitoring.
- **On 7 March 2024, UNHCR and WFP convened a high level technical strategic session on food security, livelihoods and resilience** that has been tasked to advance strategies and actions on i) food security, livelihoods, and CBI; ii) joint food security and livelihoods solutions concept note; and iii) vulnerability-based targeting based on review of available secondary level data.
- **There are 31 refugee locations targeted by the GFD, including twenty-one camps, five settlements, three sites, and two transit centres, where 919,586 refugees are dependent on food assistance out of the total of 996,352 refugees in Ethiopia.**
- **WFP has indicated a shortfall of USD 128 million to provide food assistance to refugees in the next 9 months with an estimated 100% shortfall from July for both food and cash. Although this is being temporarily addressed through transfer of In-Kind resources, assistance will still be at a reduced 60 percent of required rations. Furthermore, the funding outlook for the second half of the year still looks bleak.** Partnerships with private sector and development actors to support food systems in refugee hosting areas should be further strengthened to ensure sustainable support for refugees suffering from the consequence of food insecurity.

PROGRESS / MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

Coordination of food aid and food assistance operations

- Strategic multidisciplinary food security working group reconvened with expertise representation from food, development, livelihoods, Cash Based Initiative, monitoring and evaluation and data management to drive the medium to long-term food solutions. First session was conducted on 7 March 2024. WFP livelihoods and changing lives section will lead a team of 6-8 representatives from protection, livelihoods, development, and data sections with members invited from vulnerability analysis and mapping, evaluation, food security, and nutrition, and CBI as needed.
- The monthly quadripartite (WFP, RRS, UNHCR & CPs) session was conducted on 29 February 2024.
- Regular coordination on food security is led by WFP in all locations, in close collaboration with UNHCR and RRS.
- UNHCR WFP technical workstreams on communication, visibility and simplification of context activated weekly.
- WFP UNHCR technical discussions, including protection and AAP, is ongoing.

Beneficiaries reached in general food distributions | Nov 2023 – Feb 2024



Emergency Food assistance - Sudan Situation

- In Metema, Kumer, and Awlala in Amhara region, monthly food assistance continued in March for 9,252 new arrivals from Sudan who have been assisted since the resumption of GFD in October 2023.
- In Kurmuk transit centre in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region (BGR), two rounds of GFD were completed reaching 15,932 refugees in January and 16,546 in February 2024.

Community engagement through communication with communities

- UNHCR protection sector in conjunction with the information management data teams led partners in undertaking the annual participatory assessment with refugees. The feedback on several themes, including food assistance, is being analysed.
- WFP and UNHCR teams have mainly engaged with refugees at pre-distribution meetings. Feedback from refugees relates to delayed food logistics and non-retroactive food policy. These issues remain a key trigger of tension, particularly in Melkadida.

Accountability to Affected Populations and strengthened feedback and response mechanisms

- UNHCR and WFP data technical teams have discussed and agreed to a local solution in the harmonization of interoperability of the data systems using WFP MoDA (mobile operational data acquisition) with UNHCR's Complaint and Feedback Response Mechanism (CFRM) data dashboard.
- WFP and UNHCR have received 106 complaints/feedback from beneficiaries through the toll-free hotline and 424 through the protection desks.
- Ninety percent of the reported cases through the protection desk have been resolved. The majority of the cases were biometric/biodata data issues, and complaints about the quality of rice in Melkadida and maize in Mirqaan.
- Eighty-four percent of the reported cases have been resolved, with communication provided to users. The remaining 16% of cases are awaiting resolution.
- On the feedback related to complaints/feedback, 56% comprised of complaints related to delays in cash disbursements; 8% were requests for information, primarily concerning assistance timing; 8% were direct requests for assistance; 18% expressed gratitude to WFP for its aid; and 9% consisted of requests for non-WFP activities, such as psycho-social support, medical assistance, or non-food items like mosquito nets, blankets, and soap.
- In coordination with UNHCR and CPs, WFP continued coordination through the Communication Working Group.
- To facilitate community engagement, WFP has been developing key messages on Food and Cash Management (FCM) and food assistance, addressing topics like how to report misconduct, including prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA), beneficiaries' rights, entitlements, duration of assistance, distribution dates, and eligibility. These messages have been translated and tailored for refugee audiences and disseminated through community meetings, public address systems, and printed materials at distribution sites.

Monitoring

- WFP field monitors have conducted routine beneficiary contact monitoring activities in 29 refugee camps/sites, in all seven regions (Afar, Amhara, Somali, Benishangul Gumuz, Gambella, Oromia and Southern Ethiopia).

Monitoring activities involved interviews with the beneficiaries at distribution sites as well as CP's staff members. The monitoring activities, among others, collected data on quality perceptions, beneficiary satisfaction levels, utilization of food assistance, safety as well as issues of accountability to affected populations (AAP) and the utilization of the CFRM.

- WFP together with partners continue to prioritize beneficiary contact monitoring. Findings indicate that most beneficiaries are receiving their entitlements, including the full food basket, although there were concerns about the quality of the food provided from a small number of beneficiaries. In terms of satisfaction with the food distribution processes, most beneficiaries expressed full satisfaction despite experiencing extended waiting times, a challenge that was notably more prevalent in the Somali region.
- No safety issues were reported by the beneficiaries, suggesting that the distribution environment was generally safe. However, the helpdesks, which are crucial for addressing beneficiary concerns, were reported as inadequate in a few food distribution points (FDPs). This inadequacy is due to several FDPs not having the helpdesks set up, leading to underutilization of the CFRM system. This situation potentially hinders the effective resolution of issues and improvement of the distribution process; WFP and partners are actively engaged to address this challenge.
- Efforts to monitor the markets, mills, and warehouses have not shown signs of potential food assistance misuse. This lack of significant findings suggests that while there may not be evidence of large-scale misuse, continuous monitoring is essential to ensure the integrity of the food aid distribution system.

GENERAL KEY CHALLENGES

- **Non retroactive policy on general food distribution** within the current context of insecurity, lack of adequate human resources capacity to distribute food within one calendar month and limitation to in enabling buffer food stock at regions.
- **Food insecurity:** the food basket meets only 60% of recommended dietary allowance with the likelihood of pipeline breaks if WFP does not receive additional funding beyond third quarter of 2024. New arrivals who have no coping systems established also receive reduced rations.
- **Unresolved protection impact:** prolonged impact of food pause remains visible, with the lack of food at household level leading to refugees having to pay debt and continue using negative coping strategies to meet food needs.
- **Delays in synchronization of data by UNHCR for WFP disbursement of cash wallets.** There are around 516 families with cash related complaints going back as far as October 2023. These cases were not resolved due to lack of phone numbers and other technical issues.
- **In some locations, lack of updated proof of registration and delays in registration remains a challenge for refugees' access to food assistance.** The resumption of registrations provides an opportunity to clear the backlogs, though the processes remain slow, and priority is given to the urban refugee population.
- **Insecurity enroute to the camps affecting delivery of food, prepositioning of food and distribution against the planned timeframes,** such as in Gambella where refugees had to miss one month's ration.
- **Challenges in crowd control when RRS security team are not present at FDPs.**
- **Access to sanitation facilities and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) is not in place at most of the FDPs.**

WAY FORWARD

- Joint stakeholder advocacy for funding to WFP to meet the immediate needs for food for refugees whilst large scale engagements are ongoing on food security and livelihoods as medium to long term solutions.
- UNHCR and WFP will disseminate harmonised messages on the non-retroactive distribution policy.
- UNHCR and WFP will consider the implementation of vulnerability based targeted assistance noting resource limitations.
- UNHCR and WFP will consider scaling 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 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 CPs.
- Food batch quality checks will be conducted to ensure the food meets the quality standards for consumption by refugees.

Country-wide General Food Distribution implementation status February 2024 and Monthly refugee distribution WFP food metric tonnage report

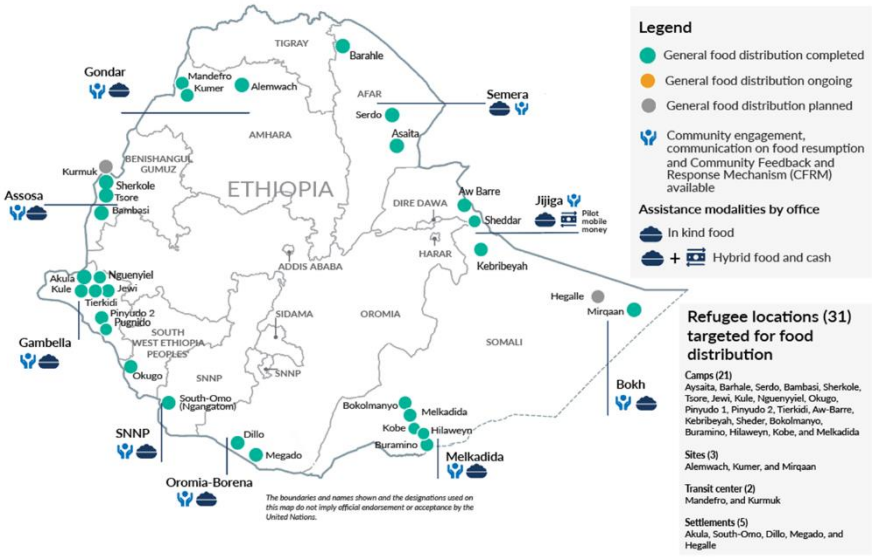


Table 2. Details by Camp

Region	Camp	MT Food (In-Kind) Dispatch	MT %	Delivered	Distributed
Somali (Jijiga area)	Kebribeyah	39.15	97%	39.15	38.08
	Awbare	29.19	96%	29.19	27.97
	Sheder	31.30	97%	31.30	30.34
Somali (Dollo Ado area)	Hilaweyn	619.98	110%	499.98	550.46
	Buramino	385.89	112%	319.42	358.63
	Bokolomanyo	405.43	72711%	0.50	362.10
	Kobe	400.03	108%	399.93	432.87
	Melkedida	453.41	319%	149.95	478.01
Somali (Bokh)	Mirkhan	484.00	0%	-	332.15
	Hagele	-	0%	-	-
Gambella	Pugnido I	439.16	130%	194.71	253.34
	Pugnido II	137.17	277%	34.97	96.80
	Akula	22.08	96%	22.08	21.27
	Kule	-	0%	-	-
	Tierkidi	-	0%	-	-
	Nguenyyiel	-	0%	-	-
	Okugu	98.47	835%	15.35	128.25
	Jewi	7.97	0%	7.97	-
Benishangul Gumz	Sherkole	194.84	108%	163.72	176.31
	Bambasi	222.85	487%	49.03	238.74
	Tsore	206.94	559,483	130.74	391.87
	Kurmuk (new arrivals)	233.78	0%	-	83.53
Afar	Aysayta	373.85	89%	373.85	331.30
	Berhale	309.68	103%	309.68	320.12
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Amhara	Alemwach	179.51	128%	143.06	182.71
	Kumer (new arrivals) metem	129.56	83%	99.56	82.45
Oromia	Dilo	17.79	0%	17.79	-
	Megado	30.43	0%	30.43	-
Southern Ethiopia	Ngangatom	37.78	0%	37.78	-
Total		5,490.23	159%	3,100.11	4,917.29

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