UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | ETHIOPIA

OPERATIONAL UPDATE
January 2025

KEY FIGURES:

1,075,476
Refugees & Asylum seekers in Ethiopia
(as of January 2025)

+2,600 new arrivals

70,355
Refugees and asylum seekers fleeing conflict in Sudan to Ethiopia
(as of December 2024)

3.3M*
Internally displaced people in Ethiopia
(IOM/DTM May 2024)

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

In 2025, UNHCR, Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) and partners stay committed to supporting forcibly displaced people in Ethiopia amid persistent challenges and funding constraints.

- Over 300 shelters were completed, alongside critical infrastructure like access roads and water systems, for **Sudanese refugees** living in the Benishangul-Gumuz and Amhara regions.
- Over 27,000 refugees received **IDs** under the National **Fayda** Program, enhancing protection and access to services.
- **Water** supply remains below standards at 14 liters per person per day, and sanitation coverage lags at 33%, far from the 85% target.
- Over 700 refugees departed from Ethiopia through **resettlement** or private sponsorship.
- **Funding shortfalls** force us to focus on life-saving measures over prevention, risking long-term setbacks in nutrition and WASH infrastructure strained by aging equipment and growing demand.
- **US funding freeze has disrupted critical services,** including medical referrals, community-based Sexual and Reproductive Health programs, mental health and psychosocial support, staff training, and the procurement of essential health facility supplies.
- More support is needed to bridge gaps in **health**, **livelihoods**, and basic services—ensuring refugees and IDPs not only survive but thrive.
- A joint **donor briefing** with RRS on January 23 outlined priorities for 2025.
- The Ethiopian Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) introduced a landmark **Refugee Status Determination (RSD) Directive** to ensure fair and consistent processes for refugees—heralding a significant step forward.
- **UNHCR-UNFPA-KOICA joint project**, with a $10 million budget, advances following an in-depth survey in SNNP and Afar, targeting youth resilience against conflict and climate crises through initiatives on GBV, health, and livelihoods—set to launch by March-April 2025.
- A meeting with Norway's Minister of Justice and Security on January 15 underscored donor support, with Norway considering backing for **Machine-Readable Convention Travel Documents**, advancing Ethiopia's 2023 Global Refugee Forum pledge.
- Ethiopia is committed to forging pathways to stability and **inclusion for refugees**. However, sustained **international support** remains critical to turning commitments into lasting impact.

SECTORAL HIGHLIGHTS:

Protection
+29,554 IDPs received their physical ID cards with Fayda numbers in 2025.

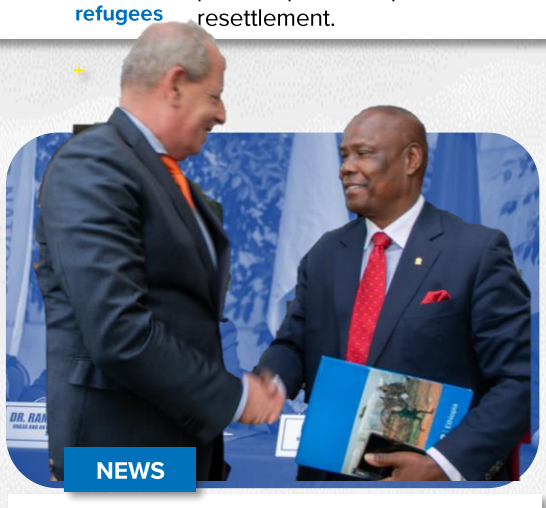
Education
177,386 refugees have registered and enrolled in schools across the country.

Health
+24,000 refugees have received medical consultations across refugee sites in January.

Food security + Nutrition
+9,000 refugee Children under five were enrolled in the Blanket Supplementary Feeding programme.

Livelihoods
355 refugee Youth received a training in Business and market access through our partner Inkomoko.

Resettlement
+700 refugees have departed from Ethiopia on private sponsorship and resettlement.



NEWS

Germany commits additional 50 million Euro for cross-country humanitarian responses.

UNHCR works with **45 implementing partners** as well as the Ethiopian Government Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), UN Agencies, international and national NGOs, universities, and other legal entities.

*The Humanitarian Response Plan 2024 estimated that the figure of 4.4M IDPs would be reached at the end of the year.

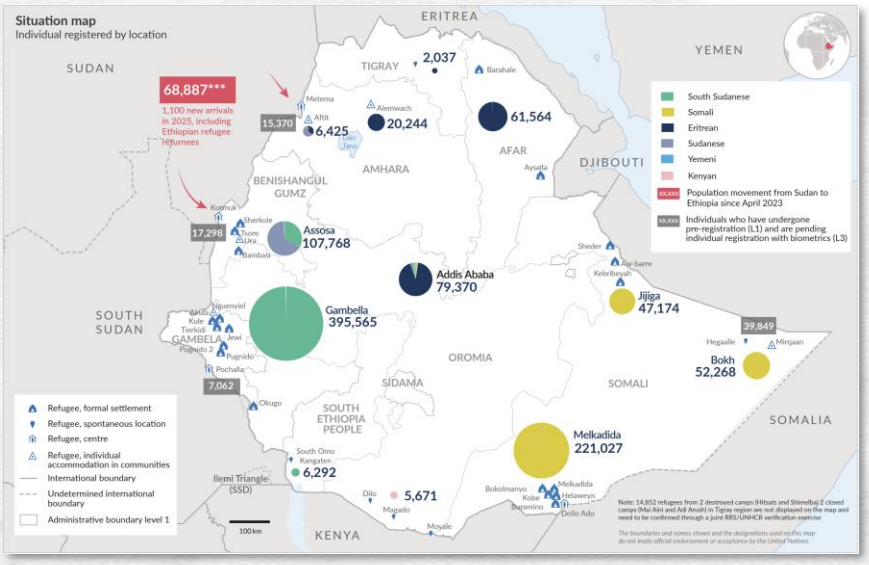
RESPONSE AT A GLANCE

1,075,476
Total Refugees and Asylum-seekers
(1,011,669 refugees | 63,199* asylum-seekers)

289,830
Households
(average family size: 4)

- **78%** Women & Children
- **52%** Children (0 -17 years)
- **46%** Adults (18 - 59 years)
- **3%** Elderly (60+)

Country of origin	Total Individuals	Percentage
South Sudan	430,037	40%
Somalia	361,535	34%
Eritrea	179,584	17%
Sudan	93,416	8%



Protection

2,569 new refugees and asylum seekers have arrived in Ethiopia from Sudan, bringing the number of people in need of protection arriving from Sudan to 70,355 since April 2023. Along with partners, UNHCR is providing protection counselling, healthcare, and lifesaving humanitarian assistance to new arrivals in need of international protection. UNHCR continues to support and advocate with the Government of Ethiopia for full resumption of registration across the country.

Gender Based Violence

In January, UNHCR and partners have made significant strides in providing **holistic care** to survivors and those at risk of gender-based violence (GBV) . All survivors received client-centered **psychosocial support**, while around 63 women were informed about available services at our Protection Desks. Across sites, 1,736 refugees accessed **women and girls' safe spaces**, where 210 adolescent girls received **life skills training**. Additionally, we've reached 1,442 refugees through **home-to-home visits** focusing on GBV prevention, early marriage, and available resources. In Ura, Benishangul Gumuz region, 1,098 refugees participated in **awareness sessions**, with 12 women and girls joining focus group discussions. Finally, 243 women and girls at risk received **dignity kits**, 714 survivors and at-risk individuals got **cash and in-kind assistance**, and 11 incentive workers were trained on **GBV prevention**, safeguarding, and a code of conduct to ensure ongoing support and protection.

Child Protection

In January, UNHCR and partners identified and registered 168 **unaccompanied and separated children** (UASC) and other **vulnerable children**, ensuring they received alternative care arrangements, psychosocial support, best interest assessments, follow-up care, and referrals. Additionally, 782 children benefited from **in-kind and cash assistance**, while 4,639 children participated in **recreational and psychosocial activities** through Child-Friendly Spaces. We also conducted **home visits** for 176 UASC, referred 24 vulnerable children for **medical and nutritional services**, and provided **alternative care arrangements** for 92 children following best interest assessments. Furthermore, 522 children engaged in group psychosocial support sessions, and 252 parents participated in a **child protection awareness session**, with 32 parents and caregivers receiving 10-day **parenting skills** training to enhance their ability to support their children effectively.

Registration / Documentation

IDPs. So far, over 29,554 IDPs (95%) have successfully received their physical ID cards in Tigray. These IDPs had enrolled in the National Fayda Program since end of December. We are working to ensure that IDPs who have not collected their cards yet are reached. This includes contacting them directly by phone and posting their names at each IDP site to facilitate a thorough and inclusive distribution process. In the Borena settlement in Oromia region, the verification and documentation exercise was successfully completed. As a result, 5,671 IDPs were verified and issued with necessary documentation, including Proof of Registration (POR) and refugee IDs.

Refugees. Joint RRS and UNHCR **verification and documentation** exercises are ongoing in six locations across Ethiopia. In January, a total of **70,854 refugees have agreed to participate in the National Digital ID** Program. Among them, we have successfully assisted 27,192 refugees in obtaining refugee ID cards with Fayda ID numbers and QR codes. Additionally, 35,462 refugees have been issued Fayda ID numbers via their family Proof of Registration (POR) documents.

End of January, we launched the Level 3 registration in the Ura settlement, in Benishangul Gumuz region. A total of 106 families (374 individuals) were verified, and simultaneously, 304 individuals were integrated into the national Fayda programme. Despite facing several technical challenges related to user access and network stability, the exercise is progressing smoothly, with the team working diligently to overcome these hurdles and maintain momentum.

Education

At the end of January 2025, students sat for first semester exams and schools were then closed for one week before the second semester starts.

POST OF THE MONTH

Addis Ababa, **Ethiopia**

UNHCR, @RRSEthiopia & partners discuss Makatet Roadmap | ማካተት - the new govt led plan to include #refugees & host communities in ET, ensuring self-reliance, resilience & socio-economic integration through a climate-sensitive and sustainable approach.

Health

In January, UNHCR and partners, provided over 24,000 **outpatient consultations,** facilitated 393 **live births**, and delivered **antenatal care** to 1,633 women. However, the recent US funding freeze has disrupted critical services, including medical referrals, community-based Sexual and Reproductive Health programs, mental health and psychosocial support, staff training, and the procurement of essential health facility supplies.

In collaboration with the Government's Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), Medical Teams International and GOAL, UNHCR conducted a **comprehensive assessment** of the three camp **health centers** in Assosa, Benishangul Gumuz region. Using exit interviews, direct observation of services, prescription analysis, and patient record reviews, the evaluation revealed notable improvements in health service delivery across all three camps.

To enhance healthcare access, a Technical Working Group was established to enroll refugees in Addis Ababa into the community-based health insurance scheme. Coordinated by RRS, ILO, and UNHCR, the group will begin its work in February 2025.

Together with its operational partners, UNHCR is contributing to improving health infrastructure in several regions. Facility upgrades are underway in Amhara (Aftit, Metema General Hospital, and Dabat Health Center) and Gambella (Tierkidi and Jewi). Additionally, in the Ura settlement of Benishangul Gumuz, construction of the Akuda Health Center is 90% to completion, promising improved care for the community.

Shelter & CRIs

In January 2025, UNHCR and partners completed 176 **emergency shelters** for refugees fleeing Sudan. Additionally, we built and maintained a 1.1 km access road at the **Ura** settlement in the Benishangul-Gumuz region. In **Aftit** settlement, Amhara region, 172 emergency shelters and 80 **transitional shelters** were constructed. Continuous access **road construction** resulted in the completion of a 2km road along with two cross-drainage structures.

Food security + Nutrition

In **January**, UNHCR treated 894 refugee children **for severe acute malnutrition**, including 99 with severe cases requiring stabilization due to complications. Additionally, 795 children received **outpatient therapeutic feeding** for severe malnutrition with complications.

To combat malnutrition, UNHCR enrolled 9,020 children under five in a **blanket supplementary feeding program**, while 2,277 children with moderate acute malnutrition were supported through targeted supplementary feeding initiatives.

Funding constraints have shifted our focus to life-saving interventions and the management of existing cases, limiting preventive and nutrition-sensitive activities that demand significant resources. Increased advocacy is essential to secure alternative funding and address malnutrition effectively.

Food security + Nutrition (cont'd)

The World Food Programme (WFP) and its partners continue to provide **food rations** to refugees across the country, maintaining a 60% ration size in protracted sites and 100% for new Sudanese arrivals. A hybrid food assistance model was introduced in nine camps—four in Assosa, three in Jijiga, and two in Afar—reaching 691,845 people with distributions to date.

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

In January, UNHCR and partners provided an average of **14 liters of water per person per day (**l/p/d), falling short of the minimum standard of 20 l/p/d. Additionally, household **sanitation** coverage in refugee camps as of December 2024 was only **33%**, significantly below the target of **85%**. This gap highlights a critical need to improve sanitation conditions, which are vital for preventing disease and upholding the health and dignity of individuals in these settings.

During the reporting period, UNHCR's WASH partner, International Medical Corps (IMC), has been working to finalize the integration of a new borehole in Aysaita (Afar region) into the existing water system. Additionally, IMC constructed a semi-permanent block of 25 **communal latrines** and 25 **showers**, using corrugated iron sheets, to support refugees relocated from Serdo Refugee Camp. Furthermore, the Sherkole water system is now connected to the national grid, while the Kibur Hansa deep borehole and riverside water pumping station have been linked to 50 kVA and 100 kVA electric transformers, respectively, enhancing water access and reliability.

For **refugees from Somalia and Sudan**, water supply in refugee camps currently stands at **11 l/p/d** below the emergency **standard** of **15 l/p/d**, and **sanitation** facilities fall short, with a latrine ratio of **1:67** in January 2025—far exceeding the Sphere standard of **1:20**. This gap underscores the urgent need for improved infrastructure, resource management, and additional sanitation facilities to prevent disease and ensure dignity.

In the Metema Transit Centre, **Amhara** region, Innovative Humanitarian Solutions is drilling two shallow **wells** to provide water, with one well motorized and the other equipped with hand pumps while Plan International finalized trench latrines. These will support the Afift primary school's temporary learning spaces until semi-permanent constructions are completed.

In terms of **challenges**, limited funds, water source availability, and aging electromechanical equipment hinder water pumping capacity. Similarly, for sanitation, insufficient funding and regional security issues limit latrine construction. Additionally, borehole capacity in Buramino and Helaweyn camps (Somali region) is declining due to increased demand from growing refugee and host community populations.

UNHCR has secured land in Dabat town, Amhara region, for sludge treatment and landfill, but funding and environmental impact assessments are still pending, with follow-up ongoing with local authorities.

Durable solutions

Livelihoods & Economic Integration

In Melkadida, Somali region, the Sahel Agriculture Company, a **private sector collaboration** supported by the World Bank's IFC, is building on the gains by made by IKEA Foundation. The company has begun operations in **Melkadida** and **Helaweyn** settlements, establishing two demonstration sites to test new crop varieties. The demonstration sites have been harrowed and pegged to commence **irrigation**, and the installation and testing of the sprinkler irrigation system for seedling production has been completed.

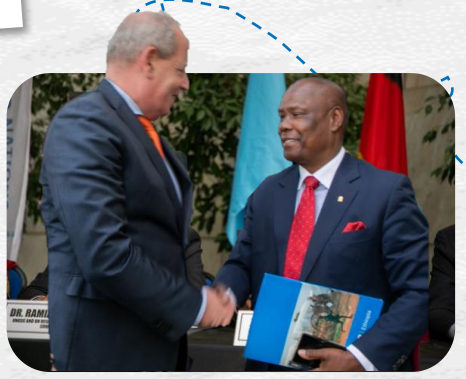
In the **Somali** region's, Kebribeyah camp, our partner INKOMOKO trained refugee and host community entrepreneurs to **enhance their business capacity** and **market access**, with 355 youth participants.

The **suspension of US funding** has become a significant challenge in implementing livelihood projects within the planned periods, impacting livelihood opportunities for refugees.

Resettlement

In January, **707 refugees departed** from Ethiopia, including 611 for **resettlement** and 96 through **private sponsorship** programs. Additionally, 33 individuals were counseled on **family reunification**, **education** pathways, and **labor mobility** helping one refugee secure a **scholarship** opportunity. Furthermore, UNHCR facilitated the issuance of **convention travel documents** (CTDs) to one individual and assisted two refugees in obtaining an **emergency travel document** (ETD).

LATEST UPDATES



New directive on refugee status determination procedure. The Ethiopian Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) adopted a new Directive on Refugee Status Determination Procedure on 24 December 2024. The Directive provides provisions on how refugee status determination is to be procedurally implemented in Ethiopia covering both individual and group recognition approaches with country wide scope of application. Included are provisions designed to ensure a fair and consistent processes in refugee status determination, in line with international standards. The Directive also envisages an accompanying internal guideline for an RSD Appeal Hearing Council which will soon come operational.

Germany commits additional 50 million Euro for cross-country humanitarian responses. This will support cross-country projects implemented by UNHCR, UNICEF, and UN Women. This funding, officially announced at the end of 2024, will strengthen the humanitarian response also in Ethiopia over the coming years and address critical needs in vulnerable communities.

Donor briefing. On 23 January, UNHCR and RRS jointly organized a donor briefing to present the 2025 priorities and provide an advance notice of the key recommendations from the two OIOS audit reports. PRM and Sweden shared appreciation of UNHCR's transparency and recommended for UNHCR to develop regular progress reports including an update on the implementation during the planned bi-monthly donor briefings.

DONOR AKNOWLEDGMENT | 2025

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And Private Donors in Australia, China, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, The Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, UK, and USA

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Together with the Government Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency aims to protect, assist and provide durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers in Ethiopia. UNHCR works to strengthen refugee protection through the expansion of improved community-based and multi-sectoral child protection and programs addressing gender-based violence (GBV).

Visit UNHCR Ethiopia's Operational Data Portal for more information products here.

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