



Focus on the operation

An insider look to the #GambellaEmergency

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"When we started running, we went in different directions. I don't know where my parents are."

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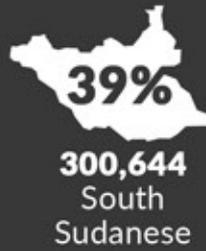
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"I was extremely terrified. I held my children close, crying, screaming."

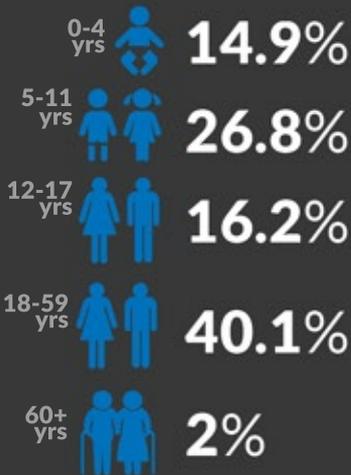
REGIONAL OVERVIEW

To 30 September 2016

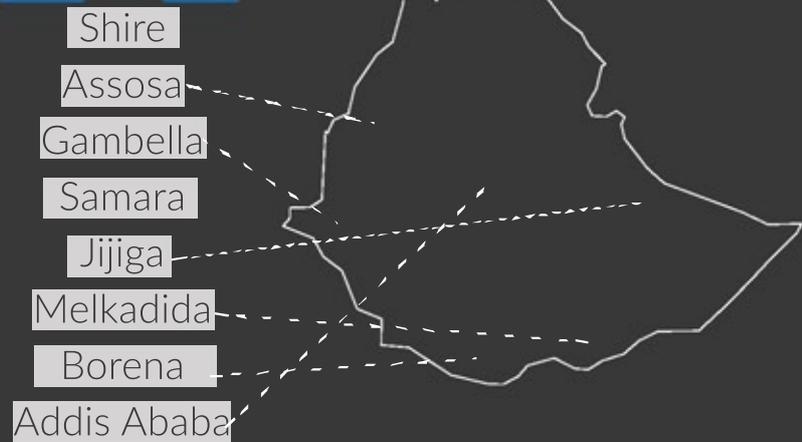
761,302
registered refugees
and asylum-seekers
in Ethiopia



58%
below the
age of 18



24 Camps



20,025 new arrivals
registered in
September

18,443 in Gambella

42,474 new arrivals
in 2016

920 in Shire

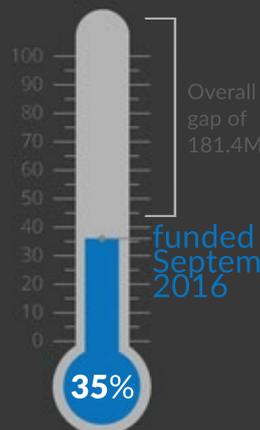
303 in Melkadida

196 in Assosa

134 in Samara

29 in Addis Ababa

PROVIDING PROTECTION,
ASSISTANCE AND FACILITATING
DURABLE SOLUTIONS FOR REFUGEES
IN COLLABORATION WITH **ARRA**,
UN AGENCIES & NGOs



35% of the refugees' needs in Ethiopia have been covered through the regular programme and through the following situations: Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen and the Crisis in Europe.

*81,078 (10.9 percent) The Shire refugee population decreased by 81,078 refugees in September 2015: these refugees no longer reside in the Shire Camps and are believed to have spontaneously settled elsewhere in Ethiopia, subject to verification

FOCUS ON THE OPERATION

Responding to the #GambellaEmergency: Children on the run

South Sudan, in the verge of its fifth anniversary, was thrown back into conflict in mid-December 2013, when clashes between opposing parties spread violence to homes and villages as well as food insecurity nation-wide. Since 3 September 2016, a new influx of new arrivals from South Sudan has been recorded in Ethiopia's Western region of Gambella; some 65 percent are below the age of 18. UNHCR and partners have been responding to the emergency in the midst of funding shortfalls.

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Sitting on the floor patiently waiting, thousands of people stare back at the place they call home from Ethiopia's western Pagak Transit Centre. They are mostly mothers, children, youth and a few men who escaped the war-torn South Sudan. Tired from days of walking and the fright of becoming another count in the victim rate, they are amongst the over 32,000 South Sudanese refugees who arrived to Ethiopia since 3 September; some 4,000 of them are children who either fled alone or got separated from their families along the way. "When we started running, we went in different directions. I don't know where my parents are," said one of the Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC) who have thus far found safe haven in Ethiopia.

The South Sudanese conflict has been for far too long disproportionately affecting the lives of children and disrupting their chances of a normal childhood, forcing thousands from their homes, involving many in hostilities and leaving them without access to education and food. 64% of the newly arrived refugees are children whose dreams for the future are to go back to school, eat and reunite with their families. And whilst the hopes of those considered the future of South Sudan continue to be shattered by war and hunger, an average of 1,000 persons continue to flee the Upper Nile, Jonglei and Unity states every day to anxiously seek help.

UNHCR in collaboration with ARRA, UN Agencies and national and international NGOs, are responding to emergency, providing protection and assistance to cope with the increasing needs, including those faced by children and youth who are at heightened risk of abuse and exploitation.

"Save the Children (SCI) has established a Child Protection Desk at the registration point to identify vulnerable children, register them and identify care modalities," mentioned Valerie Svobodova, UNHCR's Child Protection Officer in Gambella.

SCI alongside Plan International have been vamping their efforts to prevent child separation and neglect through the dissemination of basic messages and the installation of child and youth friendly spaces. "Community education for children and youth is being conducted in child friendly areas to mitigate child abuse and violence, the recruitment of children into armed forces, SGBV and to increase hygiene and sanitation amongst the population whilst the conditions are set to allow the relocation to refugee camps," Svobodova adds.

Over 22,000 newly arrived refugees have been relocated to Jewi, Tierkidi and Kule camps thanks to the support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) as well as from DRC, SCI, Plan International, NRC, ANE, ADRA, DCA, IRC, Oxfam, UNICEF, WVI, MSF-H, ACF, IMC, RHB, WFP and Goal.

"When we started running, we went in different directions. I don't know where my parents are"

-Separated child at Pagak

FOCUS ON THE OPERATION

All partners have been supporting a joint and comprehensive response, including shelter construction, ensuring all refugees have access to WASH and health facilities, to education and food, paving the way towards finding a solution to their plight. Gaps, however, remain.

“The congestion in Pagak implies that the overstretched staff lack capacity and time to conduct an in-depth screening, provide individual psychosocial support, case management, family reunification, needs identification and a more intensive community mobilisation,” explains Svobodova. Upon arrival at the camps, families are sheltered either in emergency shelters, tents or hangars made available to them; UASC are assigned the care arrangement that supports her or his best interest. “Further support is paramount for UNHCR, ARRA and partners to fully provide assistance to the newly arrived as well as to those who have been in Ethiopia for over two years, the majority of whom comprise a very young population,” she adds. To 31 August 2016, 68 percent of the refugee population in Gambella [not including the new arrivals] is below the age of 18.

The Child Protection Working Group in Gambella has developed a strategy to respond to the youth and children’s needs, whilst boosting the response capacity at Pagak and the receiving camps in a coordinated and accountable manner.

“The members of this forum are investing all efforts in providing suitable and timely attention to the increasing number of youth and children by hiring more case and social workers, installing more child friendly spaces with counselling rooms, facilitating recreational activities, and increasing foster parents pools, etc.,” finalizes Svobodova.

In the meantime, almost 10,000 new arrivals from South Sudan remain at Pagak in need of urgent relocation, looking into the memory of their beloved who were left behind. “My parents were killed before I left; I was really scared,” said an unaccompanied child. With a 10 percent funded budget for the South Sudanese refugees who arrived in previous years, UNHCR and partners are struggling to find resources to provide sustainable and quality services to all.

**“My parents
were killed
before I left;
I was really
scared”**

- Unaccompanied child at Pagak



FOCUS ON THE OPERATION

Fleeing renewed violence and food insecurity, South Sudanese family finds safety in Ethiopia

In the muddy crowded Pagak Transit Centre, Gatkek Biel, 28, his wife Nyanban Pal, daughter Nyabil, and a sibling found safe haven after a seven-day journey by foot from their hometown Nasir. Gatkek Biel and his family are amongst the over 30,000 South Sudanese refugees to have crossed the border into Ethiopia's Gambella region since 3 September.

The upsurge of the violence began in July, when peace efforts were set back amidst the country's upcoming fifth anniversary. At a daily average of 1,200, many South Sudanese nationals reportedly fled renewed violence, the recruitment of children, attacks against women and girls and food shortages in the Jonglei, Upper Nile and Unity states. For Gatkek and his family, the story was no different.

"An air bombardment killed my cousin, his wife and left dozens wounded. We were scared for our lives so we ran as quickly as we could," recalls Gatkek. In a group of 30, Gatkek and his family walked exhausting hours during the nights with the fear of being captured along the way. People slept on cold swampy surfaces along the road. However, the fear of armed gun men also forced the family to walk long sleepless nights sometime. As the journey was getting tough, with nothing to eat but green leaves he found in the bushes, they finally reached safety.

Biel and his family, although excited and overjoyed when arriving at Ethiopia's Burbiey crossing point, had a long way to go before reaching the Pagak Transit Centre wherein UNHCR, ARRA and partners have been delivering assistance to the newly arrived.

Services encompass registration, health checks, the provision of food, especially for the malnourished, and emergency shelter, as well as relocation to Jewi, Kule and Tierkidi refugee camps in the Gambella region. "My family and I finally feel safe and we can start a new life," he added. "My wish is for my family to be safe, that we can have food to eat and a roof over our heads, and that my children and myself can go to school so we can one day return to a peaceful South Sudan as an enlightened family", said the 28 year-old who was not able to complete his 12 grade.

Expressing profound gratitude to the Ethiopian government for its open door policy to refugees and to all donors for their continued support, the UNHCR Acting Head of Sub-Office in Gambella Philippe Creppy assured refugees that the UN Refugee Agency will continue to work with its government counterpart, ARRA, and other partners to address their priority needs against the backdrop of the global refugee crisis and funding challenges. With an already underfunded budget, "our first priority is to mobilize resources and decongest Pagak to reduce protection and public health risks," he added.

Responding to the pressing needs of the refugees, UNHCR and ARRA extended the accommodation capacity at Tierkidi, Kule and Jewi camps. Since 3 September, about 22,000 refugees have been relocated to emergency shelters at the camps, including Biel and his family, with the support from IOM. As most sites constitute flat landscape flood-prone areas, the search for durable land solutions continues.

By Reath Riek in Gambella



"An air bombardment killed my cousin, his wife and left dozens wounded. We were scared for our lives so we ran as quickly as we could"

OPERATIONAL UPDATES

ETHIOPIA AT OBAMA SUMMIT

On 20 September, Ethiopia co-hosted US President Obama's Leaders' Summit on Refugees to address the global refugee crisis, which according to President Obama is "one of the most urgent tests of our time". Alongside Canada, Germany, Jordan, Mexico and Sweden, Ethiopia as one of the host countries was recognized for its generous open-door policy in favour of refugees, and therefore made a key facilitator of the event. With currently more than 65 million displaced people around the globe, the Leaders' Summit sought to further draw attention to the crisis. Commitments of participating countries included \$4.5 billion of additional funding to UN appeals and international humanitarian organizations, a doubled number of resettled refugees, improved access to education for one million refugee children globally, and improved access to work for one million refugees globally:

1. Expansion of the Out-of-Camp policy to benefit 10% of the current total refugee population.
2. Provision of work permits to refugees and to those with permanent residence ID.
3. Provision of work permits to refugee graduates in the areas permitted for foreign workers.
4. Increase of enrollment of primary, secondary and tertiary education to all qualified refugees without discrimination.
5. Making available irrigable land to allow 100,000 people among the refugees and local communities to engage in crop production.
6. Allowing for local integration for those protracted refugees who have lived for 20 years or more in Ethiopia.
7. Building industrial parks where a portion of jobs will be committed to refugees.

UNHCR welcomes the pledges and remains committed to providing the necessary support to the Government of Ethiopia so to fully accomplish the above-mentioned pledges, including vamping up efforts to further mobilise donor engagement.

In Ethiopia, the summit came at the time of a sustained and ongoing influx of thousands of South Sudanese refugees into Gambella. The ever growing numbers further add to the more than 740,000 refugees hosted by the landlocked country in the Horn of Africa, making the UNHCR operation in Ethiopia the fifth largest globally.



RESPONDING TO REFUGEES' NEEDS

IKEA FOUNDATION-SUPPORT FOR REFUGEES & HOST COMMUNITIES

The IKEA Foundation, UNHCR's largest private sector partner, has been supporting UNHCR's refugee operation in Ethiopia since 2012, including the more than 200,000 Somali refugees in the Dollo Ado area to have access to education, sustainable shelters, livelihoods and renewable energy, in support of self-reliance activities income generation.

Innovation is key, which has led to the installation of 300 parallel solar panels to help pump water from the river to a treatment centre, as well as of 400,000 litres of treated water from the plant to Kobe camp. This has allowed the reduction of operational costs by 50 percent.

With support from IKEA Foundation, UNHCR is supporting both refugees and host community members, thereby contributing to strengthening peaceful co-existence.



A SAFE PLACE FOR WOMEN

At Ethiopia's Tsore refugee camp, a few hundred women meet everyday at the IRC-run Women Wellness Centre (WWC); a place where women and girls can discuss issues of concern as well as provide support to each other during challenging times. The women also keep themselves busy through several activities, including knitting, manicure, coffee ceremonies, hair dressing, amongst others, as an excuse to find solutions to their problems.

"Women and girls need a safe place in which we can confide in each other. Refugee women often face SGBV-related incidents, and here we help them to have access to health care and psychological support," mentioned the refugee leader who coordinates the activities.

For UNHCR and its partners in Ethiopia, responding and preventing all forms of SGBV against refugees is of paramount importance so to address the needs of all survivors, who can be women and girls, as well as men and boys.

Through community-led initiatives like the WWC, survivors can access various means of support fitting their cases. In addition, as women are often the sole caregivers of their children, the WWC counts with a space in which girls and boys can play and entertain themselves.

A day in the life of a UNHCR Field Associate in Barahle camp

“These are some of the good tools and mechanisms we employ to engage refugees”

Every single working day, UNHCR's Field Associate spends four hours on the road and another seven hours in the remote Barahle refugee camp, at Ethiopia's north-east where UNHCR and partners care for some 10,000 ethnic Afar Eritrean refugees.

“The 115km stretch from Mekele (capital of Tigray State) to Barahle takes two hours one way and I normally hit the road at 7:00 AM and start working in the camp by 9:00 am,” said Zelealem Bekele, 38, who has worked for UNHCR in Ethiopia for 12 years in different capacities and locations.

As UNHCR's main man in the camp, Zelealem starts his day by making sure that all services are in order so that refugees do not face additional challenges in this dusty and hot environment where temperatures can go up as high as 40 degree Celsius. “It is a very hostile environment and the interruption of key services such as water poses unimaginable difficulties.”

Working alongside UNHCR's main government counterpart, ARRA, and six NGOs and UN partners, he oversees the different activities and services in the camp and adds his inputs as needed. His seven hours in the camp are normally very busy. If he is not attending a coordination meeting with partners, he may be monitoring implementation or having discussions with representatives of the refugees. “These are some of the good tools and mechanisms we employ to engage refugees and partners in the day to day running of the camp,” he said.

The father of two clearly has a soft corner for children in particular and is eager to see them exercise their right to play and education like his own children. “School-age children make up 65 per cent of the camp population, but, unfortunately, only a portion of them attend school as the dropout rate is very high”. According to Zelealem, many of the children drop out either because they no longer want to walk to school under the harsh climatic conditions or they are kept at home to help with domestic work. UNHCR and partners are doing regular sensitization activities to encourage parents to send their children back to school as there is no future without education.

In spite of the limited income-generation and skills training schemes , as well as youth-friendly facilities, UNHCR and partners seek alternate solutions to maintain the youth engaged in activities that will contribute to their future. However, there's nothing for the younger children to entertain themselves with and Zelealem believes, with some support, a child-friendly facility can be established to keep the children active.

There are lots of gaps and unmet needs in the camp, but for Zelealem, shelter is the single most troubling challenge that needs be addressed as a matter of urgency. “Shelters do not last long in Barahle as they are either blown away by the torrential wind or get damaged by the harsh weather,” he said.

When the clock hits 4:00 PM, it is time for Zelealem to leave the camp and embark on the two-hour journey back to Mekele where he and his colleagues under UNHCR Field Unit Mekele live in separate private houses.

But Zelealem's day does not end here; he takes some of the work and the worries home. “Rains in Mekele wake me up in the middle of the night as they come with mental images of leaking roofs and soaked floors back in Barahle,” he noted. “We have to do something about the shelter situation in Barahle camp.”

Barahle is one of two camps in the Afar Regional State that are sheltering more than 33,000 ethnic Afar Eritrean refugees, mainly originating from parts of the South of the Red Sea. Some 128,000 others live in the four camps near Shire as well as in different urban areas in Ethiopia.



REFUGEE VOICES

“I was extremely terrified. I held my children close, crying, screaming”

Between hope and uncertainty

Heavy rain and rolling thunder intensify as night falls onto the now deserted streets of Mercato; Addis Ababa's biggest market. Listening to the pattering on the roof of the small back room, Ebtisam, 32, pulls her yellow dotted garment closer; her eyes telling the story of a long and troublesome flight. Together with her husband, 43, and children, Sarah, 9, and Sam, 3, Ebtisam escaped the outbreak of open violence and war in Yemen in 2015. Today, they are amongst some 1,500 Yemeni refugees living in Ethiopia's capital struggling to fully integrate into the local community.

Back in Yemen's capital Sana'a, life was different. “I had a decent job planning weddings. Our house was spacious and comfortable,” Ebtisam recalls with longing aspiration in her voice. All of that changed when armed groups became increasingly present and oppressive in the neighbourhood, intimidating Ebtisam, her family and the entire community. In 2015, a smouldering conflict turned into outright war, with the government clashing with opposition forces who took control of Sana'a. As of September 2016, the ongoing conflict in Yemen has displaced some 2.5 million persons, about 100,000 of whom crossed the borders to become refugees.

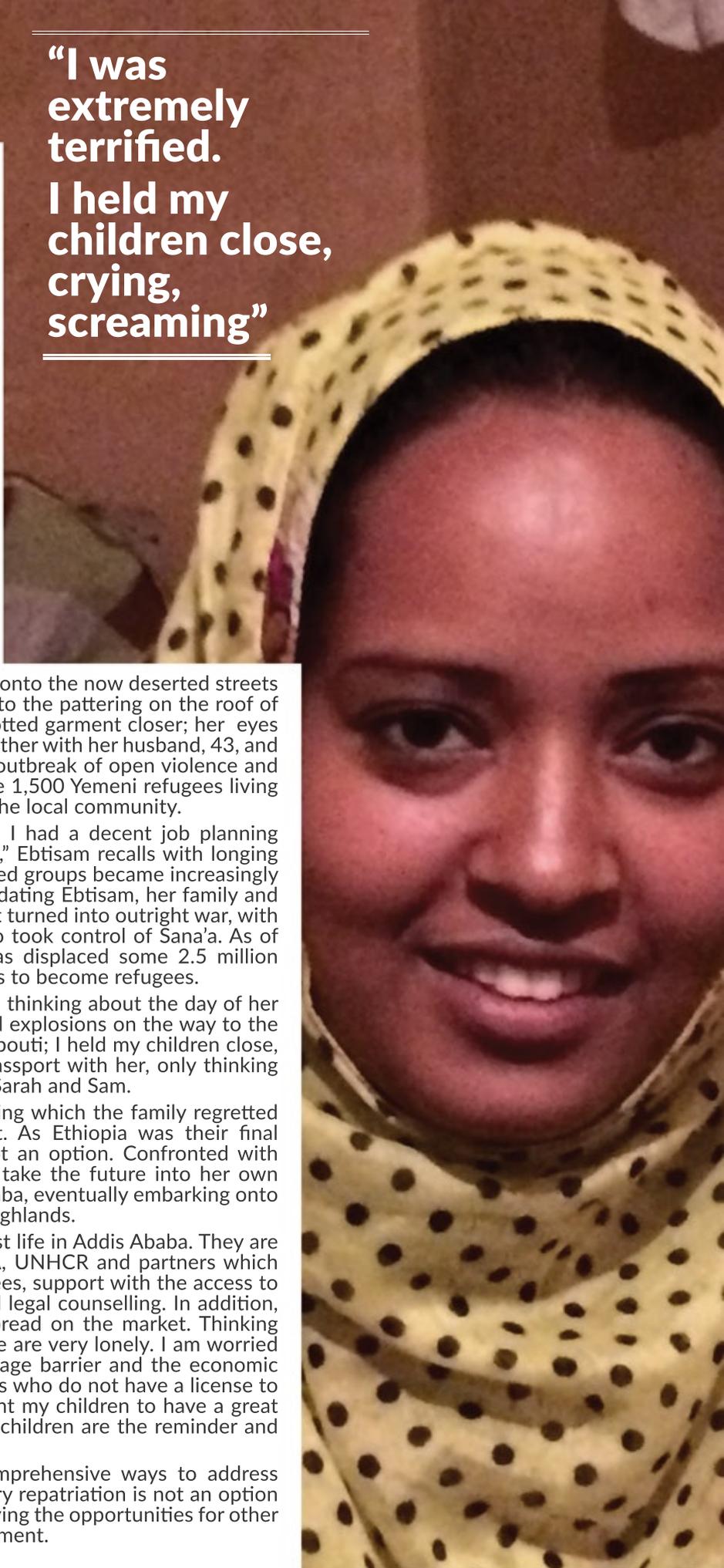
“I was extremely terrified”, Ebtisam remembers when thinking about the day of her escape in early May 2015. “There were gunshots and explosions on the way to the port in Mocha where we boarded a small boat to Djibouti; I held my children close, crying, screaming.” Ebtisam took nothing but her passport with her, only thinking about how to realise a better future for her children Sarah and Sam.

After reaching Djibouti, difficult weeks followed during which the family regretted the decision to leave Yemen more often than not. As Ethiopia was their final destination, applying for asylum in Djibouti was not an option. Confronted with increasing fear and frustration, Ebtisam decided to take the future into her own hands and started asking for ways to get to Addis Ababa, eventually embarking onto a three-day truck journey to the heart of Ethiopia's highlands.

Today, Ebtisam and her family are living a very modest life in Addis Ababa. They are now part of the urban refugee programme of ARRA, UNHCR and partners which covers the reception and registration of urban refugees, support with the access to health care and education, a monthly allowance, and legal counselling. In addition, Ebtisam is trying to make some money by selling bread on the market. Thinking about future prospects, she becomes visibly sad. “We are very lonely. I am worried about my children's education because of the language barrier and the economic situation in Ethiopia is difficult, especially for refugees who do not have a license to work like me.” Yet, Ebtisam refuses to give up. “I want my children to have a great education, I want them to think freely.” For her, the children are the reminder and strongest motivation to carry on.

UNHCR and its partners continue to work on comprehensive ways to address refugees' needs in urban settings. As long as voluntary repatriation is not an option for refugees like Ebtisam, joint efforts focus on improving the opportunities for other durable solutions such as local integration or resettlement.

By Philip Graefen in Addis Ababa



UNHCR is grateful for the direct contributions made to the operation in Ethiopia so far in 2016 from: USA | IKEA Foundation | Japan | Canada | CERF | Germany | Educate a Child Programme - EACI | Denmark | France | Sweden | International Olympic Committee | Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation | Italy | Band Aid | Priv. Donors Australia | Priv. Donors Spain

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