

# REFUGEEES

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*"UNHCR and our partners remain committed to ensuring a positive future perspective for the upcoming generation."*

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*"When I finish my education I want to become president of my country."*



**UNHCR**  
The UN Refugee Agency

Ethiopia

# REGIONAL OVERVIEW

As of 30 November 2016

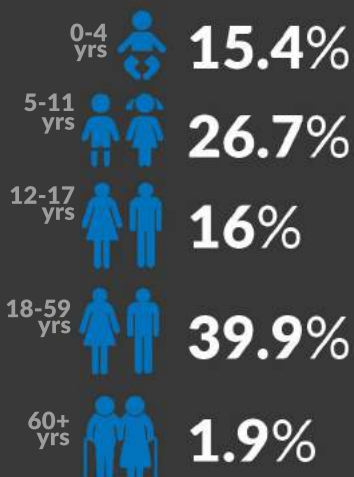
**783,401**  
registered refugees  
and asylum-seekers  
in Ethiopia

**58%**

below the  
age of 18

**12.8%**

are youth



**8,879** new arrivals  
registered in  
November

**6,095** in Gambella

**2,472** in Shire

**156** in Melkadida

**125** in Assosa

**25** in Addis Ababa

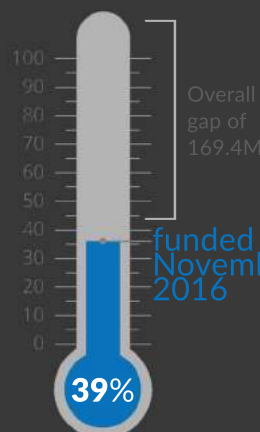
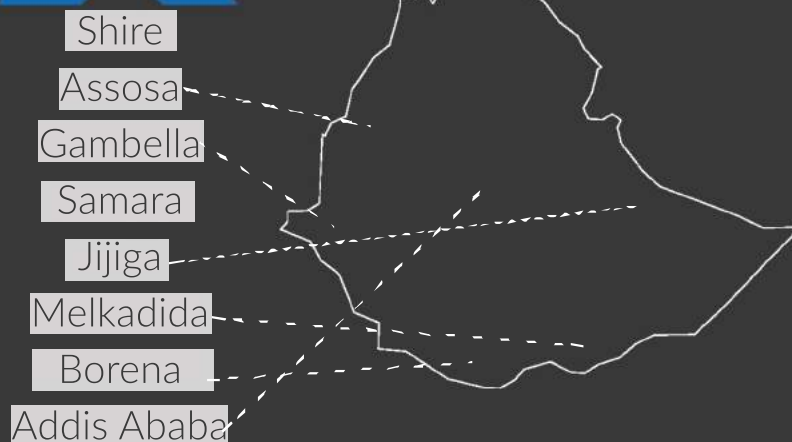
**6** in Samara

**70,849**  
new arrivals  
in 2016

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



**25** Camps



funded to 29  
November  
2016

39% 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

## Refugees in Assosa: improving lives of refugees in Ethiopia's fertile west



In the hilly lush bush lands of western Ethiopia's sparsely populated Benishangul-Gumuz region, some 52,000 refugees, the vast majority of them from Sudan and South Sudan, have found a temporary home and safety. Continuous insecurity, tribal conflicts, hunger and disease in their home countries forced them to cross the border to Ethiopia where they now live in the four camps of Sherkole, Bambasi, Tongo and Tsore, established between 1997 and 2015.

Assosa is located in a fertile region different to the hostile arid wastelands in eastern and northern Ethiopia where Somali and Eritrean refugees are being accommodated. Whilst food or water insecurity are less salient challenges as compared to other parts of the country, the operation faces a series of other distinct challenges that are being specifically addressed, many of which are related to protection, education, health or self-reliance.

"To comprehensively address the refugees' mental and physical well-being we have taken various routes of action targeting children, including the establishment of community based child protection structures, the provision of prevention and services for children at risk, and psychosocial counseling", says Ms. Marie Louise Barreto, Head of UNHCR Sub-Office in Assosa. However, services are often limited, especially for youth and children, whilst voluntary repatriation to South Sudan and Sudan remains a distant option.

In Assosa, children under the age of 18 constitute the majority of the refugee population in all four camps. "UNHCR and our partners remain committed to ensuring a positive future perspective for the upcoming generation, operating 15 early childhood schools and five primary schools in all camps", Ms. Barreto further elaborates.

However, as funding constraints hamper the educational efforts, other projects, including the 'Educate A Child' initiative of Her Highness Sheikhha Moza bint Nasser to enroll children currently out of school, and the 'Light Language Centre' (LLC) voluntarily run by refugees for refugees in the Sherkole refugee camp, are of essence to fill education gaps. Education is instrumental for someone's life and development', committed Sudanese refugee and teacher Alnur Burtel reaffirms as part of his motivation to run the LLC.

**"UNHCR and our  
partners remain  
committed to  
ensuring a positive  
future perspective  
for the coming  
generation"**

*-UNHCR Head of Sub Office Assosa*



# FOCUS ON THE OPERATION

In the quest to improve the refugees' lives in Assosa, the fertility of the region allows for innovative approaches in agriculture and energy; there are plenty of opportunities for the sustainable management of natural resources. Joint projects for the refugees and host communities are reviving bee hive production and poultry management. 83,120 trees have been planted, not only contributing to the preservation of the environment, but also decreasing the likelihood of conflicts between refugees and host communities related to the collection of firewood.

More importantly, Assosa's pilot project on biogas is a prime example for the operation's far-sighted character. Some 21 similar biogas plants were constructed in the Bambasi camp through funding by the US government. This creates opportunities to provide domestic energy solutions to the refugee households in the camp.

Subsequently, some refugees are now enjoying cooking their food using biogas. "In Assosa, UNHCR creates opportunities to connect host communities and refugees through supply chain networks, including the concept of biogas plants which adds value to what would otherwise be mere waste." Ms. Barreto remarks with excitement.

As durable solutions such as voluntary repatriation and resettlement are difficult to realize for significant parts of the refugees, UNHCR and partners keep on exploring alternatives to improve the refugees' outlook and perspectives for life. Education, agriculture and environment-related projects are only a part of the comprehensive effort.

**"UNHCR creates opportunities to connect host communities and refugees"**

- UNHCR Head of Field Office Assosa



# FOCUS ON THE OPERATION

## Refugee teacher chips in to support education services in Ethiopia's west

The walls of Mubarack's makeshift classroom are covered with photographs of graduates from his classes in the western camp of Sherkole in Ethiopia's region of Benishangul-Gumuz. A former teacher back home in Sudan's Darfur, Mubarack strongly believes in the relevance of education to build and maintain peace. "It is important for any community, not only for the refugees. It is important to talk about conflicts and how to solve them as it contributes to civil society development. After you have gone through war, it is vital for the communities to understand each other and interact peacefully," he said whilst staring proudly at the August 2016 graduates.

Mubarack still longs for his life back in Darfur, where schools and universities were available for everyone. "But after war broke out, it became very hard and dangerous to live there. Cooperation and love were important in those times, but activities such as farming became difficult; I left in 2003 to South Sudan." As times were similarly difficult in South Sudan, Mubarack found his way to Ethiopia where he sought asylum alongside his mother. "It was a disappointment. I didn't expect to become a refugee. I wanted to return to my homeland after graduation but unfortunately this did not happen," he adds.

In spite of the unforeseen life changing events, Mubarack is determined to not only improve his life conditions, but also to contribute voluntarily to the refugee community in Sherkole. "There are refugees like me here and many challenges remain, including the need to reinforce educational efforts for the youth.

The ones studying here are to become leaders one day. Therefore we need to teach the community that will one day return home."

In the midst of funding shortfalls and a growing refugee population in Ethiopia, UNHCR and partners rely on volunteers like Mubarack to complement the efforts in providing opportunities for refugees. With an increasing number of refugee children, adolescents and youth, primary and secondary education, as well as livelihood and skills training opportunities are essential to ensure a conducive path to durable solutions. "Adolescents and youth are at heightened risk of abuse and exploitation. With this in mind and considering the funding constraints UNHCR is facing world-wide, we must find innovative manners in which we can engage this population in activities that will serve their futures. Mubarack is of great support to fill in the gaps we are not able to address" mentioned Ms Marie-Louise Barreto, UNHCR's Head of Office in Assosa.

With one-year programmes, Mubarack and his fellow refugee teachers engage young refugee men and women in English and Science classes. "They need to be educated because it is the train of life. It is difficult to go through life without education. I know how many challenges they are facing and how they are suffering, so therefore we need to support each other and contribute how we can. We need the youth tomorrow," he adds.

Whilst in exile, Mubarack continued to provide this volunteer service to all refugees who wish to join. His initiative has since then mobilized other teachers to follow, with at least two other classrooms being opened. "I love teaching; I have been doing it since high school. This is why I built this classroom myself as a contribution to my community. And in the future I wish to teach in rural communities as well, as education opportunities there are very limited," he says.

And as Mubarack begins his class, he hopes to receive further support to be able to provide school supplies and more comfortable learning spaces for his students.

*By Diana Diaz Rodriguez in Sherkole*

**"We need to  
support each  
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## DONORS VISIT SOUTH SUDANESE NEW ARRIVALS IN GAMBELLA PART II



More than 46,000 South Sudanese refugees have crossed the border to the Gambella region in western Ethiopia between early September and late November 2016. The vast majority of the new arrivals are women and children, including almost 10,000 unaccompanied or separated children. To provide a successful response to this 'children emergency', including the coordinated delivery of protection, health, and nutrition services, UNHCR and partners rely heavily on the generous support of their donors.

Two months into the emergency, four of UNHCR's donors, the Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection (ECHO), the Swiss Embassy, the Dutch Embassy, and the U.S. Bureau for Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM), jointly visited the Gambella region in order to get first-hand insights into the work of UNHCR and partners on the ground. This is the second joint donor mission to Gambella since the onset of the emergency. The overall assessment has been positive, though specific challenges became apparent and require careful prioritization and planning for the future.

"We have a crisis in a crisis. The numbers of children arriving, including those unaccompanied or separated from their families and in need of family caregivers, are huge", says Mr Jacob Asens, Field Expert for ECHO, after observing achievements and challenges in Jewi, Tierkidi and Pugnido refugee camps. Children, especially when alone, are particularly vulnerable to protection risks, including abduction, recruitment and use, sexual and gender based violence, and malnutrition. To factor the demographics of the emergency into the efforts to respond, the Addis Ababa-based Child Protection Officer repeatedly went to Gambella to support the protection officers in the field.

Another challenge of the emergency remain the high malnutrition levels which have been posing difficulties for the UNHCR operation in Gambella for several years. "Indeed, malnutrition remains one of our main concerns, especially as the refugees arrive at the Pagak entry point after days of exhausting flight without any food", remarks Ms Ineke Hordijk, Policy Officer for Migration at the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands. Whilst addressing malnutrition and associated risks concerning the general health of the refugee population through malnutrition screenings and health consultations upon arrival of the refugees represent key priorities of UNHCR and partners, the lack of resources sometimes mean that adequate treatment and follow-up are not always realized.

Recognizing these challenges, the donors unanimously agreed that some lessons from the previous emergency in 2014 have been learned, enabling a more efficient emergency response. Amongst these, there is better coordination between UNHCR and the donor community, as well as collaboration of implementing partners on the ground. "Nevertheless, we must remain alerted, and a strong contingency plan which also addresses the issue of registration is imperative to be prepared for a possible renewed influx," highlights Mr Marc Desantis, Co-Head of Cooperation and Development at the Swiss Embassy. Mr Asens agrees in that quick registration and relocation remains key to comprehensively protect the refugees, including successfully managing the problems for registration that come with refugee movements between the camps.



As resources remain tight and the future uncertain, the donors emphasize the urgent requirement of improved targeting and prioritization across and within different sectors, including protection, health, nutrition, WASH, shelter and education, are needed. "This also demands a better understanding of the socio-political context in Gambella to allow more conflict-sensitive programming," underlines Ms Hordijk.

Whilst new arrival rates in Gambella have slowed down, the emergency continues. Donor visits are key to ensure smooth coordination between UNHCR and the donors, as well as to better understand each other's perceptions and priorities of an emergency context. Working together is the only way to protect the over 46,000 South Sudanese newly arrived refugees in need of support.



# RESPONDING TO REFUGEES' NEEDS

## IKEA FOUNDATION CEO VISITS MELKADIDA

The CEO of the IKEA Foundation, Mr. Per Heggnes, and his team held a mission to Melkadida between 15 and 17 November to follow up on the project implementation in the area. The IKEA Foundation project aims at providing refugees and host communities with tools that will enable them to be self-sufficient in a collaborative manner. At an implementation rate of 75 percent, the project directly contributes to eight objectives (in all camps) in the following sectors:

- Self-Reliance and livelihoods: Markets, agriculture (irrigation project and crop production), business grants, livestock and skills trainings
- Education: Access to quality formal and non-formal education. Construction and rehabilitation of schools.
- Environment/Renewable energy: Energy service centres; solar street lights.
- Water
- Nutrition
- Shelter
- Host community support: The IKEA Foundation project benefits host community members to promote peaceful coexistence and the development of the region with the presence of refugees.



From 21 to 24 November 2016, the newly appointed UNHCR Special Envoy for Somali refugees, Ambassador Mohamed Affey, visited Ethiopia. Respectively accompanied by UNHCR's Representative in Ethiopia, Ms. Clementine Nkweta-Salami, and UNHCR's Representative to the African Union and the UNECA, Mr. Cosmas Chanda, he met with senior government and African Union officials. The Special Envoy expressed UNHCR's readiness to work closely with the Ethiopian government in mobilizing resources to improve the lives of refugees and host communities. This is especially important after Ethiopia made a number of positive pledges for the benefit of refugees at the Obama Leaders' Summit on the Global Refugee Crisis last September, including improving educational and self-reliance opportunities, job creation as well as local integration.

The Special Envoy also visited the Melkadida camps, sheltering 217,000 of the almost 255,000 Somali refugees in Ethiopia. They make up 32.5 % of the over 783,000 refugees hosted in the country as of late November 2016. He currently is on a global mission to refocus the Somali refugee situation and facilitate conditions to expand durable solutions.



## TELLING THE REAL STORY TO ERITREAN REFUGEES: A CELEBRITY IN NORTHERN ETHIOPIA

From 21 to 25 November, the Eritrean actress, film producer and dedicated humanitarian Ms. Sabrina Aman visited the four refugee camps of the Shire operation in northern Ethiopia as part of the 'Telling the Real Story' campaign to raise awareness about the risks of onward movement. Born in the United States to refugees herself, Sabrina was talking from experience. "They could relate to me, and I could relate to them. We were bonding", Sabrina recalled with excitement after her field visit. According to Sabrina, her visit clearly was a success. Extensive informal discussions on the risks of onward movement and experience exchange motivated many Eritrean refugees to open up after a period of hesitation. For many refugees, the decision to embark on risky

life-threatening journeys is the only way towards a hopeful life. Therefore, it is not only awareness about the risks, but, more importantly, physical and mental challenges and a perspective for the future that were identified as key reasons whereby refugees would decide to remain in the camps.

'Telling the Real Story' aims at comprehensively informing Eritrean and Somali refugees about the dangers and strings attached to a journey to Europe, and the realities the refugees face when moving onwards from their country of asylum. Alongside awareness raising through testimonial screenings and community dialogues both in Addis Ababa and in the field, the high-level visits by Sabrina Aman to Shire and Somali artist Hassan Mohamed Abdirahman to Jijiga are key components of the campaign. The campaign was launched in April 2016 and is being implemented both in urban and rural contexts in Ethiopia through expert outreach workers.

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## The key role of language interpreters in UNHCR: Eden Teklay

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When she first joined UNHCR as an interpreter, Eden Teklay thought mastery of the source and target languages was all what it takes to do the job. Once on board, however, she quickly realized that language interpretation in UNHCR is actually much more demanding than she thought it would be.

“My work involves so many challenges but listening to the extremely harrowing experiences that refugees had to endure before and during their flight is the single most difficult and emotionally overwhelming of the challenges”, she said.

Language interpretation is an essential component of the link between refugees and UNHCR. Miscommunication can have devastating consequences, from incorrect decisions in refugee status determination to misdiagnoses in health care treatments.

“In Ethiopia, UNHCR works with the government and other partners to support more than 780,000 refugees from some 20 different nationalities, and effective communication with the persons behind the numbers—women, girls, boys and the elderly—would be next to impossible without the expert support of interpreters”, said Mr Mamadou Dian Balde, UNHCR Assistant Representative for Protection. “Before they start their work, interpreters like Eden are given adequate briefing and other support to perform their task professionally, and to avoid unintended harm from misinterpretation or breaches of ethical boundaries in confidentiality and neutrality. Training them on how to interpret in a refugee context is a necessity—an area we need to improve upon”, he said.

Eden taught English at Ayer Tena High School in Addis Ababa before she joined UNHCR four years ago and she said that experience was very helpful. “As a former teacher, I did not have any problem standing in between two people and interpreting”, she said.

**“Pressures do come but one must remain neutral”**

“But the special terminologies and institutional jargons were naturally new to me and I needed a bit of time to understand many of them.”

Eden, who spends at least 12 hours a week interpreting in the UNHCR Office in Addis Ababa, feels very much supported by the team she works in and attributes her quick learning of the jargons and the do’s and don’ts of the work to the “great collegial support” she enjoys at the work place. “I now know almost all the jargons and have a great deal of information about the country of origin of the applicants which is very helpful for the effectiveness of my work.”

Like the UNHCR interviewers, interpreters have to listen to every detail of those gruesome violence stories that refugees pass through and narrate. Some of them are so disturbing that Eden had to break out crying in the middle of the interview. “Many of the stories shock you to your very core and you cannot avoid breaking out into tears”, she said, adding that even the hardest of hearts could not stand some of the stories told by female refugees in particular.

Eden admits that occasionally, some refugees think interpreters were part of the decision-making process and keep asking them for updates about their interviews. In extreme cases, some refugees demand that interpreters lie to the interviewer on their behalf. “Pressures do come but one must remain neutral and maintain confidentiality to be able to do their job with utmost professionalism and to the advantage of both UNHCR and the refugees seeking its protection”, she concluded.





# REFUGEE VOICES

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## Refugee child dreams of becoming president in Somalia

As the sun peaks in to warm up Ethiopia's Buramino refugee camp, 12-year-old Mahamoud begins his day with morning prayers before heading to Koranic school. He has a few minutes to pick up his bag and rush through the dusty streets to the World Vision school where he attends to the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) Programme. UNHCR and partners have put in place accelerated learning lessons to enable refugee children to enroll in formal education.


Back home in Somalia, Mahamoud did not have the chance to attend school. "Before I came I was illiterate. Now I have more education and I like to learn more. My life has changed, being educated I feel my life is good," he says with a bright smile on his face. Mahamoud, his six siblings and mother fled from Bala Hawa in Somalia back in 2013 seeking improved life conditions, including education opportunities. "Education is the key for life; children need to be educated. Education changes the lives of every person. If you don't go to school you cannot be a good person, you cannot work, or live a good life," he adds.

Even at a young age, Mahamoud is convinced of the power of education, to the extent that he himself has become an advocate and leader to encourage parents to send their children to school, with a special emphasis on girls. As part of a team, the young refugee mobilises the community. "I am raising awareness in the refugee community for parents to send their children, especially girls, to school. We go door to door, with a megaphone, sending messages about education; we talk to the parents; we tell them that the key of life is to be educated."

Ibrahim, director of the school Mahamoud is attending, is in charge of 487 refugee children who within the three-level ABE programme learn English, Somali language, environmental science and mathematics, following the Ethiopian curriculum. "School enrollment has increased since 2014. However, the school does not have a feeding programme which could affect their progress and retention in school. So if we start having a feeding programme it will ensure that the current students remain in class and it will attract potential new students," he proposes. "It is my hope that the children complete all of their education, even higher education and that they fulfill their hopes and dreams," he adds.

Mahamoud continues his day by attending private lessons, followed by Koranic school and reviews of his lessons to complete his homework. "I don't even have time to play football. Back home I enjoyed exercising, so on the weekends I play sports," he mentions after describing his week's busy schedule. But his dedication to education is with a purpose, and Mahamoud has big plans for his future. "I want to go back to the land that I came from, Somalia. When I finish my education, I want to become President of my country and open health facilities, hospitals and schools that are free of charge to everybody," he mentions.

By Diana Diaz Rodriguez in Buramino camp, Melkadida



**"When I finish my education I want to become President of my country"**

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

Special thanks to the major donors of unrestricted and regional funds in 2016  
Sweden | USA | Netherlands | Norway | Australia | Denmark | Priv. Donors Spain | Canada | Switzerland | Germany