

Ethiopia

UNHCR Operational Update, January 2019

Ethiopia has passed **a new refugee law** granting more rights to refugees. UNHCR welcomes the new law, one of the most progressive refugee policies in Africa. This Operational Update provides an overview of the new provisions.

UNHCR, together with fifty-three humanitarian partners has launched the **2019-2020 Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan (ECRRP)**. The Plan can be downloaded on UNHCR's Ethiopia Data Portal.

As UNHCR works to consolidate and enhance registration data, the monthly population of concern figures have been **frozen as of 31 August 2018**, to facilitate the completion of the ongoing Level 3 Registration exercise. **New figures will be released on 1 June 2019.**

KEY INDICATORS (AS OF 31 AUGUST 2018)

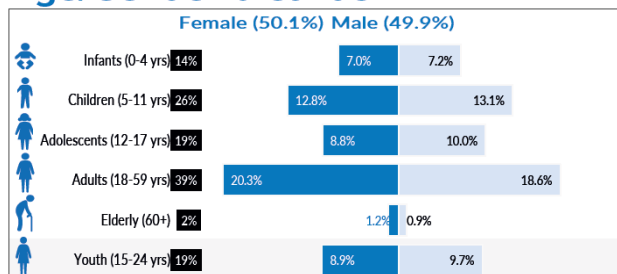
905,831

Refugees and asylum seekers registered in Ethiopia

242,937

Households

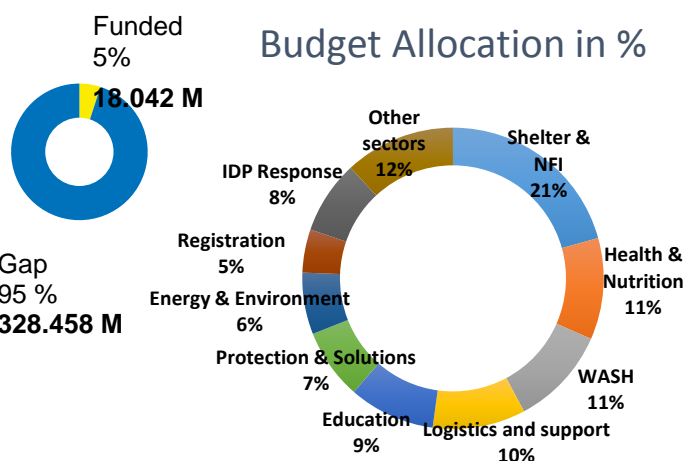
Age/Gender breakdown



FUNDING (AS OF 9 JANUARY 2019)

USD 346.5 M

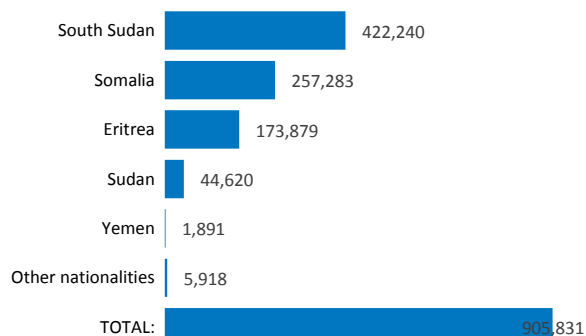
Requested for the Ethiopia operation



Mohadin, an Eritrean refugee in front of the field where he grows cotton together with a member from the host community.
©UNHCR/Helle Degrn

POPULATION OF CONCERN (AS OF 31 AUGUST 2018)

Refugee Nationalities



UNHCR welcomes Ethiopia's new refugee law granting more rights to refugees

Ethiopia has a long standing history of hosting refugees. The country maintains an open door policy for new arrivals and allows humanitarian access and protection to those seeking asylum on its territory. One of the original signatories to the 1951 Refugee Convention, Ethiopia recently updated its existing national Refugee Proclamation, making it one of the most progressive in Africa.

The new law grants more rights to refugees and asylum-seekers, including the right to engage in wage earning employment in certain circumstances. In addition, and along side other rights, refugees and asylum seekers will gain the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose his or her residence, as well the freedom to leave the country at any time he or she wishes to. See the following page for a list of key legal provisions now afforded to refugees under the new refugee law.

UNHCR welcomes Ethiopia's new Refugee Proclamation which will guide the move away from a traditional camp-based approach towards greater inclusion of refugees into host communities. This will be to the benefit of both refugees and host communities. Refugees will be allowed to build their skills and a more dignified life while at the same time contributing to the local economies and fueling local development.

In addition, it is the expectation that UNHCR and other partners will use the Proclamation as a springboard to attract additional resources from the private sector and from development actors, to make new investments and create opportunities for employment to the benefit of both refugees and host communities.

Watch the video statement on the new refugee law from the UNHCR Representative in Ethiopia, Ms. Clementine Nkweta-Salami: <https://vimeo.com/318147201>



In Aysaita, the Afar region of Ethiopia, refugees and host community members live and farm together as part of a Sharecropping Project. Refugees are provided with access to host community fields to grow maize or cotton and receive a share of the output. This is a win-win situation as refugees get an opportunity to strengthen their self-reliance in a dignified way while at the same time contributing to the local economy. The project was initiated by Evangelical Church of Mekane Yesus (EECMY) under the umbrella consortium of RDPP EU funded projects coordinated by Danish Church Aid (DCA). EECMY has a partnership agreement with UNHCR while DCA is an operational partner. ©UNHCR/Helle Degn

The content of Refugee Proclamation and the way forward

The following legal provisions are now afforded to refugees under the new refugee law.

Freedom of movement

Subject to laws applicable to foreign nationals, every recognized refugee or asylum-seeker now has the right to liberty of movement and freedom to choose their residence, as well as the freedom to leave the country at any time they wish. This provision is consistent with UNHCR's policy of Alternative to Camps, which notes that while it may be necessary to set up camps to ensure protection and save lives, camps should be the exception and, to the extent possible, a temporary measure. The move away from a camp-based approach to an integrated model of refugee assistance will be guided by a ten-year National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS) that will be adopted this year. The transition to the provision of protection and assistance in off-camp locations is anticipated to be undertaken in a phased approach during the lifespan of the Strategy, and will reflect the needs of the refugee response during that time.

The Right to Work

UNHCR praises the decision to allow refugees and asylum seekers to engage in wage earning employment although the particular provision refrains from affording the same working rights as Ethiopian nationals. Instead, it defines that refugees will have the right to engage in wage earning employment; and acquire and transfer property and assets, under the same circumstance as the most favorable treatment accorded to foreign nationals. Equally, refugees who have sought asylum in Ethiopia arrived in the country with skills, and have acquired additional capacity since their arrival, that will enable them to become self-reliant, while contributing positively to the economy. With respect to fiscal charges, refugees shall not be subjected to any duty, charge or tax higher than is imposed on Ethiopian nationals.

It is the expectation that the enjoyment of the right to work will provide an opportunity for renewed financial investment by development actors and the private sector within the economy that will primarily benefit Ethiopians, in addition to refugees. UNHCR will continue to work with the Government of Ethiopia and the international community to ensure that resources are made available to create opportunities for the employment of both refugees and Ethiopians. In this regard, the expansion of a network of industrial parks across the country will provide 70% of new job opportunities to Ethiopians, with the remaining 30% reserved for refugees. Additionally, the new law ensures that the allocation of irrigable land by the Government of Ethiopia for agriculture production as part of joint projects will benefit refugees and Ethiopian nationals on an equal basis.

Access to social services

UNHCR lauds Ethiopia's bold decision to ensure that refugees and asylum seekers are provided with access to national health and education services on the same basis as Ethiopian nationals. This new provision is in line with the fundamental human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and many other international human rights instruments Ethiopia has signed. It is also consistent with the key principles underpinning Sustainable Development Goal 3 and 4, which seeks to ensure the full enjoyment of the right to healthcare and education. To facilitate the managed integration of refugees within national social service infrastructure, UNHCR will continue to work with the Government of Ethiopia and the international community to expand access to essential services, providing a net benefit to Ethiopians, together with refugees, to ensure that both community are provided with quality and equitable services. The new law also ensures access to telecommunication, banking, financial and judicial services, in addition to identity and travel documentation and driver's license certification.

Local integration

UNHCR welcomes the move to grant long-staying refugees the right to locally integrate into Ethiopian society, should they choose to do so. Local integration is one of the three durable solution for refugees, together with voluntary repatriation to their country of origin and third country resettlement. It should be noted that this provision will only stands to benefit refugee who have lived in Ethiopia for a protracted period; a small fraction of the over 900,000 refugees currently residing in Ethiopia. Although the term 'protracted' is not currently defined, indications are that the preparation of a secondary legislation will define the criteria for inclusion to be

those refugees who have lived in the country for more than 20 years. Mindful of the fact that the overwhelming majority of refugees arrived in the country over the past 10 years, only a modest number of refugees will benefit from local integration. The new law did not define any new right applicable to refugees with regard to naturalization. Rather it makes reference to the existing Nationality Law of Ethiopia which allows foreign nationals, including refugees, to acquire Ethiopian nationality by fulfilling the necessary requirements.

The making of the law and the way forward

UNHCR was substantively involved in the drafting process of the refugee law revision, which was led by Ethiopia's Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs, ARRA. It replaces the 2004 Refugee Proclamation, which also upheld the key principles of the 1951 Refugee Convention and the 1969 OAU Convention, but limited some refugee rights, including freedom of movement and the right to work

In the coming weeks and months, UNHCR will be working with the relevant state entities to ensure that clear and concise regulations are drafted to accompany and give effect to the new sets of rights contained in the proclamation.

The move away from a camp-based refugee approach, entailed in the new Refugee Proclamation, to an increasingly integrated model of refugee assistance will not happen overnight but be guided by the Government's ten-year National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS) that will be adopted in 2019.

Ethiopia's revision of its refugee law comes just weeks after the UN General Assembly agreed to the Global Compact on Refugees on 17 December 2018. At the heart of the Global Compact is a more comprehensive response to displacement in which refugees are included in national services like health and education, rather than setting up parallel systems. It also focuses on ensuring refugees have the opportunity to be self-reliant and can contribute to local economies in a way that at the same time benefits their hosts. The Global Compact also puts significant emphasis on responsibility-sharing in global refugee response. The new refugee law in Ethiopia is a step towards turning the vision of the Global Compact into reality.



Refugee family in the Afar region ©UNHCR/Helle Degn

Launch of Ethiopia Refugee Response Plan



Pictures from the launch of the Ethiopia Refugee Response Plan, held at UNHCR's Branch Office in Addis Ababa on 30 January with participation from *humanitarian partners and the donor community*.
©UNHCR/Helle Degn

On 30 January, UNHCR, together with the Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA) and humanitarian partners, launched the 2019-2020 Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan (ECRRP) which defines the collective response plan of 54 organizations in support of refugees in Ethiopia.

The Plan, which was developed through a consultative process, aims to ensure increased coherence and alignment of all planned activities supporting refugees, thereby improving efficiency and coordination in the delivery of protection and services to refugees.

It outlines a financial requirement of 643.4 Million to support a more than 905,831 refugees in 2019, ranging from basic life-saving services to protection and durable solutions where feasible.

Deputy Director General of the ARRA, Ato Addissu Kebelesa, hailed the document as a key operational tool guiding engagement with refugees and host communities over the next two years. The ARRA official reaffirmed the government's commitment to create the conditions necessary for refugees to be self-reliant and part of the country's development plan. He urged the international community to support this effort through strengthened humanitarian and development resource mobilization.

UNHCR's Representative for Ethiopia, Ms. Clementine Nkweta-Salami, used the opportunity to congratulate the government on adopting a new refugee law which she described as one of the most progressive refugee policies in Africa. She said the adoption of the law was testament to the government's commitment to transform the life of refugees and host communities in Ethiopia. The Representative said the ECRRP is very well grounded on the Global Compact on Refugees and will improve efficiency in the delivery of protection and services to refugees.

The Ethiopia Country Refugee Response Plan can be downloaded here <https://bit.ly/2TrSi2m>

Comprehensive biometric data registration continues throughout the country



Since August 2018, UNHCR and Ethiopia's Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA) have been conducting the Comprehensive (L3) Registration of refugees in Ethiopia. The Comprehensive (L3) Registration system is accompanied by the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) which involves the collection of biometric information, including fingerprints, iris scan, and digital photos. The additional information gathered, which include detailed information on individual skills, education, occupation and family members abroad, will inform the planning and programming of the response of UNHCR and its partners through an increasingly specific and targeted approach.

As of 31 January 2019, a total of 251,746 out of the 905,831 individuals (30.2% of the total refugee population) have gone through Comprehensive (L3) Registration exercise, and 186,986 individuals have been enrolled in the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) in Ethiopia.

To facilitate the consolidation of refugee population data in the country through the L3 registration exercise, which will conclude at the end of March 2019, and ensure accurate reporting of refugees and asylum-seekers' figures, UNHCR has frozen the release of official data on populations of concern as of August 2018. While UNHCR will continue to provide registration services during this period, no new population updates and statistics will be produced until June 2019. There have been modest delays in roll-out of the project, virtue of the prevailing security environment in the Gambella and Somali regions.

The registration exercise is funded by the EU, the Netherlands, and Denmark. For further information, go to UNHCR's Data Portal <https://data2.unhcr.org/> and visit public registration portal <https://im.unhcr.org/eth/>

News from around the regions

JIJIGA

Comprehensive (L3) Registration has commenced in Sheder Camp on 15 January as part of the country-wide registration exercise to better inform the planning and programming of the response of UNHCR and its partners. As of January 30th, 2,949 refugees in Sheder Camp have been registered.



SHIRE

On 9 January, the Irish Prime Minister, Mr. Leo Varadkar, the Irish Ambassador to Ethiopia, and the Regional Vice-President of the Tigray region, visited Eritrean refugees in Northern Ethiopia, accompanied by Irish and Ethiopian journalists. The Prime Minister interacted with newly arrived refugee families in Mai-Aini camp and was briefed on the registration process at Endabaguna registration and reception center. In 2018, the Government of Ireland, through Irish Aid, contributed EUR 1.5 million to UNHCR Ethiopia.

GAMBELLA

Ambassador Daisuke Matsunaga of Japan visited Gambella 23-24 January, where Japan has been supporting several projects for the development of both refugee and hosting communities implemented by UNHCR, UNDP, UNFPA and partners. The Ambassador stopped by the Pamdong registration center and visited various health, water, sanitation, and education programs in Kule and Jewi refugee camps, as well as UNDP livelihood programs in the host community. In 2018, the Government of Japan supported the South Sudanese refugee situation with USD 2 million.



Global Compact in action: A school for everyone

In a small class room at Mai-Aini Secondary School in Ethiopia's Tigray region five youngsters from age 14 – 18 sit side-by-side, ready to be interviewed by UNHCR. Two of them are refugees and the rest are from the host community.

Five friends: Misgane, Tirhas, Yemane, Mike and Adhanom. Some refugees, some from the host community. ©UNHCR/Helle Degn



It is not possible to tell who is Ethiopian and who is a refugee and, according to the youngsters themselves, it doesn't matter much. They go to school together, learn together and they are friends. One of the three boys Michael, also called 'Mike', explains:

"We play, study, and live side-by-side. Some are refugees, some are not. It doesn't matter. We live in harmony."

The other students nod along. *"We are friends"*, Adhanom adds, another one of the three boys.

Although they share many similarities, their backgrounds are different. Mike and Misgane have both fled from Eritrea and lost contact with their fathers. Neither Mike nor Misgane know where they are and you can tell from their bowed heads and shifty eyes that it hurts.

In Ethiopia, Mike and Misgane, together with their families, have found safety along some 173,900 other Eritrean refugees. Mike and Misgane live in the Mai-Aini Refugee Camp but access the Mai Aini Secondary School together with the youngsters from the host community.



Misgane, 14, an Eritrean refugee, going to Mai-Ani Secondary School together with children from the host community ©UNHCR/Helle Degn

Eritrean refugees live in camps in the Tigray and Afar region, but some Eritreans live outside the camps in Ethiopia as part of the Government's Out-of-Camp Policy.

Big ambitions

Both Mike and Misgane have dreams that go beyond Mai-Aini Secondary School. Mike wishes to become a psychiatrist, while Misgane dreams of becoming an engineer.

Two of their friends from the host community, Adhanom and Tirhas, share Misgane's dream of becoming an engineer while the last of them, Yemane, wants to be a doctor.

While waiting for all of this to come true, and working hard in school to realize their dreams, the friends love to relax and enjoy leisure activities. The boys prefer football, while the girls enjoy reading. However, as all five youngsters are expected to help out at home, they seldom have much time for such activities.

Global Compact in Action

The school is an example of the application of the Global Compact, agreed upon by the UN General Assembly in December 2018. At the heart of the Global Compact is a more comprehensive response to displacement in which refugees are included in national services like education, rather than setting up parallel systems. This will allow refugees to build their skills and become self-reliant, contributing to local economies and development.

A number of donors are currently supporting the provision of secondary education for refugees in Ethiopia. At present, the Government of Denmark is the only donor providing targeted assistance to tertiary education



Misgane and Tirhas, two friends with different backgrounds, one a refugee and one from Ethiopia.
©UNHCR/Helle Degn



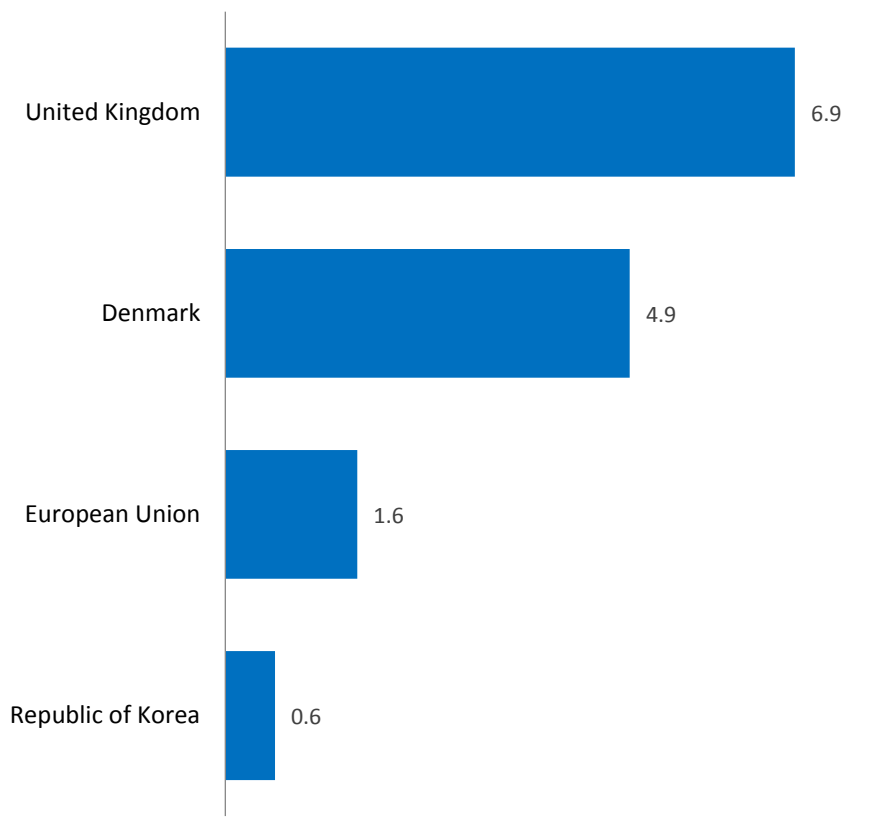
School girls at Mai Aini Secondary School.
©UNHCR/Helle Degn

The Mai Aini Secondary School has 235 refugee students and 383 students from the host community. Students from both the refugee and the host communities access the school free of charge. They also get scholastic materials for free.

Financial Information

Funding received by UNHCR Ethiopia (in million USD) as of 9 January 2019

- Total recorded contributions for the Ethiopia operation in 2019 amount to some **US\$ 18.042 million**
- UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to this operation, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with unearmarked and broadly earmarked funds.



External / Donors Relations

Special thanks to the major donors of softly earmarked regional contributions from:
 (2 million USD or more)

Germany 19.6 million

Special thanks to the major donors of unearmarked contributions:
 (10 million USD or more)

United Kingdom 31.7 million | Switzerland 15.1 million |

Belgium | Canada | Estonia | Indonesia | Monaco | Montenegro | Republic of Korea | Russian Federation | Serbia | Singapore | Sri Lanka | Thailand | Uruguay | Private donors

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LINKS

Data portal: data2.unhcr.org, Facebook: [UNHCR Ethiopia](https://www.facebook.com/UNHCREthiopia), Twitter: [@UNHCREthiopia](https://twitter.com/UNHCREthiopia)