

Ethiopia

March 2020

Ethiopia is one of the largest refugee-hosting countries in Africa, sheltering **758,199** registered refugees and asylum seekers as of 31 March 2020.

Following the Government's decision to close all land borders as part of efforts to prevent the spread of corona virus, UNHCR issued a [statement](#), acknowledging the decision as a necessary measure, but appealed to the Government to consider the protection needs of asylum seekers while implementing the same.

UNHCR is scaling up efforts to increase capacity to prevent and limit the potential spread of **COVID-19** among the nearly **760,000** refugees in Ethiopia. Prioritized areas of preparedness requiring additional resources include provision of soap and ensuring adequate water supply, procurement of medical supplies, and enhancing community awareness.

UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff:

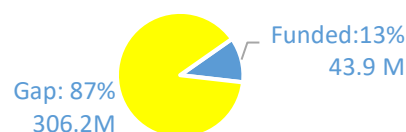
380 national staff, **124** international staff (including JPOs)
142 individual contractors; **33** deployees & IUNVs

Offices:

1 Branch Office in (Addis Ababa), **5** Sub-Offices - Melkadida, Gambella, Shire, Assosa and Jijiga, **4** Field Offices – Embamadre, Tongo, Pugnido and Mekelle.

Funding (As of 31 March 2020)

USD 350.1 M requested for Ethiopia



Working with partners

- UNHCR's main government counterpart to ensure the protection of refugees in Ethiopia is the Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA), within the Ministry of Peace. UNHCR also works in close coordination with 57 humanitarian and development partners, and is part of the Humanitarian Country Team in Ethiopia where refugee programmes are discussed strategically to ensure the needs of refugees are adequately presented and addressed across the UN System. UNHCR builds on a well-established coordination forum, including the inter-sector Refugee Coordination Group, together with national and regional sector working groups. As part of the GCR/CRRF, UNHCR is furthering partnerships with line ministries, regional and local authorities, as well as development partners and the private sector.

Main Activities

Protection

- UNHCR temporarily suspended activities at the Refugee Reception Centre in Addis Ababa as part of the effort to contain the spread of COVID-19. To allow refugees to continue accessing services including protection, registration and resettlement, UNHCR launched a Helpline system through a dedicated phone number. The Agency continues to use existing outreach systems such as the refugee leadership and Refugee Outreach Volunteers to facilitate communication between UNHCR and the refugee community.

Education

- Following the nation-wide closure of schools as part of the fight against COVID-19, over 200,000 refugee students in Ethiopia are currently out of school. In coordination with partners, UNHCR facilitated the return of university students back to the camps. UNHCR is working with key Government offices at the federal and regional levels to develop alternative learning modalities for refugees while at home. Additional funding is required for the printing of self-study materials.

Health

- Critical and essential primary healthcare activities are maintained in all refugee camps. Although no cases of COVID-19 have been reported amongst the refugee population, UNHCR is working closely with ARRA and relevant Government health structures at all levels to ensure that refugees are included in the national COVID-19 response plan. Awareness raising activities are being intensified with a lot of focus on handwashing as a preventive approach, and the setting up of handwashing stations. Health personnel in the refugee camps have been trained on how to respond to COVID-19. Gaps in medicines and other medical supplies within the camp-based health centers have been identified, and necessary action is being taken to address them.

Food Security and Nutrition

- The prevalence of Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) in 85% of the refugee camps remains higher than the 10% UNHCR standard for stable operations. This is due to household food insecurity attributed to limited access to livelihoods opportunities, reduced food assistance (refugees continue to receive only 84% of the minimum recommended 2100Kcal/day), inappropriate feeding practices among others. UNHCR is working to improve the nutrition status of refugees by strengthening the ongoing nutrition programmes and their monitoring, together with continued advocacy with donors for the reinstatement of the full food ration with 2,100Kcal/person/day. Arrangements are being made for food distribution to take place once every two months to reduce risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Water and Sanitation

- Out of the 26 refugee camps in Ethiopia, 67% receive the acceptable standard of 15 litres and above of water per person per day, while the remaining 33% receive less. Similarly, 82% of the refugee camps have met the minimum standards of 20 persons per latrine, while only 40 percent of the refugee households have access to family latrines. In the context of COVID-19, water shortage is being addressed together with the distribution of additional containers. The supply of soap has also been doubled to encourage repeated handwashing among refugees.

Shelter

- The National Shelter Strategy (2017-2020) informs a collective and coherent response, based on available resources, to enable refugees to access shelter solutions. 54 per cent of the refugees in Ethiopia need transitional shelter solutions and UNHCR and partners are working to narrow down the gap. UNHCR has completed 93% of the 850 shelters it has been constructing in the Gedeo (SNNPS) and West Guji (Oromia) Regions for the benefit of vulnerable returnees who were previously displaced due to communal violence.

Cash-Based Interventions (CBI)

- Following the successful piloting and subsequent positive assessment results of the Cash Based-Interventions (CBI) in camps around Jijiga, UNHCR is working to scale up the use of cash to the other locations. Cash will be used in lieu of a range of in-kind aid supplies including non-food aid items. Multipurpose cash assistance continues to be implemented for refugees in Addis Ababa. Cash will also be used to respond to the ongoing IDP situation as well as reintegration support for Ethiopian refugees who voluntarily return to their country. Risk mitigation measures will be put in place to ensure contextual changes to minimize humanitarian cash assistance disruptions due to the impact of COVID-19.

Camp Coordination and Camp Management

- UNHCR and ARRA work in close coordination with partners to ensure efficient and coordinated delivery of protection and assistance to refugees. Camp coordination meetings and technical working groups have been taking place both at the zonal and camp levels.

Access to Energy

- Despite the effort to improve refugees' access to energy for cooking, lighting and other uses, the cooking energy gap in particular remains huge with less than 8% of the refugee households having access to alternative cooking energy. During the first quarter of 2020, more than 98,000 pcs of briquettes has been produced and distributed to targeted refugee households in camps in the Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. 17 grid-connected communal kitchens are functional in camps in the Tigray and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. Additionally, 18 solar streetlights have been maintained in the Melkadida refugee camps, Somali Region. As part of UNHCR's environmental rehabilitation program, nursery site development and seedling preparations are underway in all refugee camps in preparation for a massive tree planting in the upcoming rainy season.

Livelihoods and Self-Reliance

- In 2020, UNHCR will continue to work with the Government to promote economic opportunities for refugees and support their eventual inclusion within the host communities. This will include supporting the implementation of Ethiopia's pledges made at the Global Refugee Forum in December 2019 related to creating economic opportunities and skills development for refugees and Ethiopians. UNHCR supports the Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs, ARRA, to roll out the procedural directives on work permits, residence permits and business licenses under joint programmes that will be designed to benefit both refugees and their hosts. UNHCR continues with the coordination of strategic partners as they implement activities in refugee hosting areas, as well as support opportunities for private sector participation and for financial inclusion.

Durable Solutions

- Providing resettlement opportunities for refugees remains a top priority as conditions for voluntary repatriation are unfavourable for most refugees in Ethiopia, and local integration programmes are yet to be put in place. In 2020, 1,800 individuals will be referred to the UNHCR Regional Bureau in Nairobi for onward submission to resettlement countries. As of 31 March 2020, 597 individuals have been submitted to different resettlement countries while 10 others were processed for family reunification. 222 individuals departed to different resettlement countries in addition to the 77 who departed to Italy this year as part of the second phase of the Italian Humanitarian Corridor.

External / Donors Relations

UNHCR is grateful for the direct contributions to the UNHCR Ethiopia Operation from:

USA| Denmark | UK (DFID) | Netherlands| IKEA Foundation | European Union (ECHO) | Ireland| Sweden| Japan| Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints | Country-Based Pooled Fund| Spain| UN Programme on HIV/AIDS| Miscellaneous private donors.

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Sweden 76.4 million | Norway 41.4 million | Netherlands 36.1 million | Denmark 34.6 million | United Kingdom 31.7 million | Germany 25.9 million | Switzerland 16.4 million | Private donors Spain 13.2 million

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