

## Weekly Operational Update

08 May 2020

### Update on COVID-19

As of 07 May 2020, Ethiopia has tested a total of 28,445 people and reported 191 confirmed COVID-19 cases, four deaths and 93 recoveries. The country has observed a considerable increase in the number of cases compared to 133 last week. There are no confirmed cases amongst the refugee population and their host communities thus far, but UNHCR continues to intensify efforts to prevent and limit the potential spread of the corona virus among the over 761,000 refugees in the country.

Despite the circumstances, UNHCR remains committed and continues to serve persons of concern to the organization. Most UNHCR staff in the Representation Office in Addis Ababa are working from their homes, with a few staff reporting to the office every day. Staff in all the 26 refugee camps are working as usual while taking the necessary precautions to protect themselves from the virus and reducing risk of transmission to the refugee populations.

**Preparedness and response:** Sustained awareness raising continues in all the refugee camps and host communities with aid workers, medical personnel and refugee representatives providing information including via posters, announcements and hotlines



*In the Refugee Camps near Jijiga, religious leaders are part of the effort to curb the spread of coronavirus in the area. In so doing, they set an example by practicing social distancing in their meetings. UNHCR/Hanna Qassis*

about COVID-19 and how to protect themselves. Efforts to improve the supply of water and soap continue, supported by key messages promoting personal hygiene and social distancing. In the three camps near Jijiga, two water trucks have been deployed to mitigate water shortages, together with increasing the pumping hours of existing water systems in Kebribeyah and Sheder camps. The refugees were also issued with 1,500g of soap per person to last for three months. Across the five camps in Melkadida, 320,000 bars of soap have been distributed to refugees. Expansion of handwashing facilities continues, mainly by using jerry-cans. While meetings and other crowd-creating situations and services have been limited or suspended, innovative food distribution modalities are being implemented. Fewer refugees are issued with food rations at the same time to allow for social distancing. Most camps are conducting screening for corona virus using thermal scanners while the remaining are in the process of securing the screening equipment. Camps have also put in place tools for relaying reports related to COVID-19. These would be investigated and addressed in efforts to mitigate the spread of the virus.

Stocks of supplies are being reinforced and health-care needs are being constantly assessed along with training of health personnel. In Melkadida, 33 healthcare workers are being trained on COVID-19 Surveillance, Case management and Infection Prevention and Control. In Tigray Region, UNHCR is working in partnership with Axum University to conduct a similar training

for health professionals working in the Refugee Camps. At the same time, efforts are being enhanced to furnish isolation areas. In Tigray and Afar Regions, UNHCR is procuring beds, portable oxygen cylinders and oxygen concentrators to support such facilities.

**Support to Government facilities:** UNHCR provided an assortment of 5,195 essential aid items to the authorities in West Guji and Gedeo zones to support their effort to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The items, which included kitchen sets, sleeping mats, blankets, mattresses and jerry-cans, were handed over to the Health and Women, Children and Youth Affairs bureaus in the two zones where UNHCR is responding to the needs of IDPs and returnees. The authorities appreciated the support and said that the items would be distributed to the different health centers within the two zones to help them furnish the newly established COVID-19 isolation and stabilization centres. The SGBV One Stop Service Centre constructed by UNHCR at the Bula Hora Hospital will support the management of reported SGBV incidences in a safe and confidential manner in accordance with the procedure of clinical management of rape. It will enhance the hospital’s capacity to deliver appropriate services to the survivors as well as contribute to their overall improvement service-seeking behaviour of the survivors.

In Jijiga, UNHCR is in the process of procuring beds for the three isolation centres established, as has extended support to the Regional Health Bureau in Assosa with the provision of sanitizers and masks. UNHCR’s partner ZOA provided 1,035 litres of liquid soap (worth ETB 104,000) to ARRA and Tselemti Woreda Administration as part of its efforts to prevent COVID-19 in Mai Aini and Adhi Harush camps and its surrounding hosting communities. The liquid soap was produced by a refugees’ self-help group in Mai Aini camp.



*UNHCR hands over essential aid items to authorities in Gedeo and West Guji Zones*

**Refugees’ engagement:** Refugee leaders and volunteers continue to play a crucial role as important first responders by providing information, demonstrating handwashing and social distancing, and helping to distribute posters, soap and other essential items. The awareness raising support extends to the nearby host communities who in most cases share linguistic and cultural similarities with the refugees. Refugee groups are also helping tackle misinformation and misconceptions about the virus by sharing authentic information in line with WHO and Government of Ethiopia guidelines. Talented refugee individuals such as those in Addis Ababa are using creative means, such as comics to spread the word.

**Key challenges:** Shortage of personal protection equipment (PPEs) for the protection of front-line aid and health workers remains a major challenge. Offices are trying to mitigate the shortage by procuring locally made, reusable face masks and other items pending the delivery of bulk international orders. Inadequate shelter and disruptions to livelihoods are also among the key challenges that refugees are facing. The latter is particularly evident in camps in the Tigray and Somali Regions where refugees had to close their small-scale businesses to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Some camps still face shortage of water and are trying to lessen the impact through water trucking.

### Update on regular protection and assistance programmes

Implementation of UNHCR's regular protection and assistance programmes across the refugee camps is progressing well. Essential primary health care and nutrition services are ongoing together with other key protection activities. However, with the nationwide closure of learning institutions to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, over 200,000 refugees remain out of school. UNHCR and partners are working with the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaux to ensure the inclusion of refugee students in the distance education through radio and TV broadcasts. Below are some additional updates that are not related to COVID-19:

#### **Rainstorms cause damage in Aysaita and Tierkidi Refugee Camps:**



*Children sitting on the ruins of their collapsed home in Aysaita Refugee Camp. © DEC/Kedir Ibrahim*

Rainstorms slammed Aysaita Refugee Camp on 03 May 2020 injuring one person and damaging shelters, latrines and other camp infrastructure. The girl who sustained minor injuries during the stormy night has since been treated in the camp health centre. A total of 22 refugee houses were damaged, eight of them completely destroyed. Additionally, 17 family and communal latrines, including six with showerheads, were damaged, requiring urgent repair and replacement on case-by-case basis. While ARRA provides plastic sheeting and food to households that suffered severe damages, a multi-agency team from the camp has finalized the damage assessment and is working

on budget estimates to repair and replace the damaged houses, latrines and other camp infrastructure such as school rooms, food distribution centres and fencing. Meanwhile, windstorm in Tierkidi Camp, Gambella, destroyed several facilities including women, girls and child-friendly spaces and school rooms. UNHCR and ARRA are assessing the damage that has been caused.

**UNHCR activates cholera prevention measures in Melkdida:** UNHCR and its partners have activated cholera prevention measures in the Melkadida camps following reports of a suspected cholera outbreak in the Dollo Ado Woreda at the end of April. The preparations and preventions have been imbedded into the ongoing COVID-19 prevention measures.

**UNHCR Helpline received 97 calls:** A total of 97 refugees have called the special Helpline that was established by UNHCR following the temporary closure of the Refugee Reception Centre in Addis Ababa. The Helpline was set up to ensure continuation of the services that used to be provided in the reception centre. All the callers were directed to the concerned units in UNHCR for immediate support.

*For further information, please contact:*  
 External Relations Unit | UNHCR Representation in Ethiopia | P.O. Box 1076 | Addis Ababa | Tel. +251-116 17 05 90  
[www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)