

# Ethiopia

11 January 2021

**802,821**

Refugees and asylum seekers as of 31 December 2020

**42,695**

Handwashing facilities in camps

**2,509**

Health and community workers trained



*IDP returnees in Bule Hora washing their hands with soap to prevent contracting coronavirus ©UNHCR*

## COVID-19 Operational Context

As of 07 January 2021, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 127,227 coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and 1,966 deaths in the country. Ethiopia is currently registering the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases in the Horn of Africa.

## COVID-19 Prevention and Response

The Government's Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) and UNHCR, together with the Regional Health Bureaus and other health partners continue to reinforce their response to COVID-19 in both refugee camps and other locations sheltering refugees and asylum seekers throughout the country. They have enhanced communication and hygiene and are continuously working to reduce overcrowding to curb the spread of the virus. Supplies of water and soap continue to be reinforced, together with the installation of handwashing stations, as well as ongoing strengthening of health services and the provision

of personal protective equipment for health care workers, first responders and others. However, the delivery of services including COVID-19 prevention and response in the four refugee camps in the Tigray Region has come to a complete halt over the past weeks due to the conflict.

- **PPEs, COVID-related medicines and medical equipment** worth approximately \$1 million are being delivered for health services and health staff while a fresh procurement order for medicines and medical equipment for both COVID and regular health programmes has just been placed. Procurement of 5 ICU beds, 5 patient monitors, 50 oxygen cylinders, 10 oxygen concentrators and 300 coverall gowns for the Gambella Regional Health Bureau is in its final stage and partly delivered. PPEs have also been provided to various health facilities in Bule Hora where UNHCR is involved in the response to IDPs.
- **42,695 handwashing stations** have been installed in communal centres and households in all 20 of the 26 refugee camps to promote regular handwashing with soap. We are unable to update the data for the remaining six camps (four in Tigray two in Afar) due to the conflict. **41,474** of these have been installed in refugee households and **1,221** were set up in communal facilities providing services to refugees and asylum seekers. More capacity is needed to ensure that every refugee household is equipped with a handwashing facility.
- Over **2,500** trained **health and community outreach workers** are actively engaged in awareness raising, case investigation and management, as well as mitigation, prevention and control of the virus. They include **446** healthcare workers, **22** laboratory technicians and **1,719** community outreach workers who are serving both the refugees and the communities hosting them. In addition, refugee representatives, Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROVs), women, youth and child committees and other community representatives were trained and are actively engaged to ensure that basic preventive measures are observed in the communities.
- The daily average per capita **water distribution** in the refugee camps stands at **18.6 litres**. While some of the camps have access to 20 liters per person per day per the UNHCR standard, others are receiving less than the emergency threshold of 15 liters per person per day. UNHCR, ARRA and partners are working to ensure that all refugees have access to adequate potable water in keeping with the minimum international standards. The conflict in Tigray Region has seriously disrupted the water provision in the 4 camps located in the region. UNHCR and partners will work to normalize service provision there as soon as the situation allows, following assessments of the effects of the conflict.
- **Isolation facilities**, known as Temporary Assessment Units, have been set up in all refugee camps to temporarily quarantine possible suspected COVID-19 cases pending their transfer to Government isolation and treatment facilities, if necessary. UNHCR has provided hospital beds, mattresses, coverall gowns and other supplies to equip these facilities and extended support to the Government-run treatment centers which are also accessible to refugees. The construction of five additional isolation facilities in the five Melkadida camps has been completed.
- In the capital, Addis Ababa, where over **33,000** urban refugees reside, UNHCR is **communicating with refugees via telephone helplines, WhatsApp and Telegram groups**. In addition to this, a **Digital Request and Complaint System (DRCS)** is fully functional, with an average of 100 requests received on daily basis and processed by the Protection team. Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROVs) and refugee leaders are also helping raise awareness.
- In order to meet additional expenses for soap and other sanitary materials, UNHCR provides an allowance of 300 Ethiopian Birr (\$7.61) per person per month, to urban-based refugees entitled to monthly living allowances to whom a two-month advance cash transfer is also made as a living allowance. The intervention is monitored through post-distribution phone interviews by Protection staff.

- The Registration services resumed at the UNHCR office in Addis Ababa to issue refugees with registration documents and update their data. Limited numbers are received per day due to the health measures in place to ensure the safety of refugees. In parallel, UNHCR also supports Voluntary Repatriation through the facilitation of exit visa processes for Yemeni refugees in Ethiopia.
- UNHCR is **supporting the inter-agency COVID-19 response to the IDP situation** in the country, distributing non-food items, equipping isolation and quarantine centers and providing community communications on health messaging.

## COVID Impact and Challenges

**Health Impact:** Pivoting of much of UNHCR's limited health budget to the COVID-19 prevention and response efforts is resulting in strain on the provision of regular essential health services in the refugee camps. This, in turn, will pose challenges in continuity of maternal and child health services, disease control programmes such as for HIV, TB and Malaria, among others. The reallocation of funds to combat COVID-19 may also negatively impact the efforts already made towards the control of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and mental health.

**Economic impact:** UNHCR continues to closely monitor how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the socio-economic dynamics of the different refugee hosting areas, including through referencing third party assessment reports on impacts on enterprises and jobs. In addition to COVID-19, refugee hosting areas have been under the double threat of the Desert Locust invasion and floods. Many projects funded by partners continue to report implementation challenges as a result of COVID-19 measures and changed priorities. Refugees in many of the camps indicate that the pandemic has negatively affected their economic

and, with some mentioning that opportunities for maintaining their self-reliance through income earned by working as daily laborers are now limited due to COVID-19. Others who run small-scale businesses have also reported significant reductions in business opportunities. security

UNHCR received approximately **USD 9.8 million** out of its financial requirements of **USD 34.9 million** for the COVID-19 response in 2020. The funding shortfall is limiting UNHCR's ability to effectively respond to the pandemic as resources are not enough to procure all needed PPEs, medicines, WASH facilities and other supplies. Inadequate WASH infrastructure, lack of additional space in schools and lack of masks for school children are also making school reopening challenging.

## Operational Response Updates

**Tigray Emergency:** On 15 December, a one-month food ration distribution took place to 25,000 Eritrean refugees in Adi-Harush and Maiaini camps, in coordination with WFP and ARRA. The refugees last received two months' worth of food in mid-October. UNHCR is still unable to access Hitsats and Shimelba refugee camps.

In Addis Ababa, UNHCR held a meeting with NGOs and UN agencies with presence in the Tigray region to discuss their operational capacities and planned activities on the ground as well as access issues. UNHCR has prepared an Online 3W Form to help in the planning and coordination efforts to assist the refugee population, beginning with Adi Harush and Mai Aini camps.

UNHCR and partners were forced to relocate most of their staff from Shire in northern Tigray Region due to the conflict that erupted in early November between the Ethiopian Defense Forces (EDF) and forces

loyal to the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF). Since the start of the conflict, communication via telephone and internet has hindered UNHCR efforts to follow the developments in the refugee camps and IDP locations. Only a limited number of critical staff remain, in the areas affected by the conflict. With limited access to cash, fuel and food, their operational capacity has been severely hindered. This has led to a drastic halt in the delivery of services to refugees. Regular Ethiopia country and regional UNHCR updates on the crisis can be found at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/rbehagl>

**PROTECTION**

**Relocation of new arrivals to camps:** UNHCR, together with ARRA and other partners transferred 52 newly arrived Somali refugees from the Reception Centre in Dollo Ado to Hilaweyn, one of five refugee camps in the Melkadida area. Their relocation followed a preliminary registration and a two-week quarantine at the Reception Centre. In the camp, they were issued with emergency shelters and other essential aid items. Meanwhile, the Dollo Ado Reception Centre is being maintained with 75% of the work completed to date. In **Gambella**, 1,740 South Sudanese refugees were relocated from Pagak Reception Centre to Nguenyiel Refugee Camp, bringing the total relocated so far to approximately 5,300. More than 2,900 others remain at the reception centre awaiting relocation.

**Persons with Specific Needs:** In West Guji, Oromia Region, UNHCR provided crutches to 48 persons living with physical disabilities. They were also given orientation on how use the equipment to enhance their mobility.

**EDUCATION**

**Support to the education sector:** UNHCR donated 16 blackboards to schools in West Wollega zone of the Oromia Region where shortages were identified. The Daro Dimtu Primary School, which was reconstructed by UNHCR, was one of the beneficiaries. Similarly, four blackboards were given to a boarding school for children with hearing impairment that is run by the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) in Nekemte. Moreover, ANE distributed school bags for 750 IDP returnee students in Haro primary school, Yergachafe Woreda of Gedeo Zone. Meanwhile, thousands of refugee students sat for the grade 8 Regional Examination, including 1,255 Somali refugees drawn from the five refugee camps in the Melkadida area. 379 of the 1,255 were female students.

**SHELTER**

**Shelter maintenance and construction** In Tongo Refugee Camp, Benishangul-Gumuz Region, ANE has started distributing cash and construction materials to refugees to maintain their own shelters. 32 households were issued with construction materials, such as plastic sheet, bamboo, eucalyptus wood, nails and grass bundle as well as 800 ETB to cover labour cost. The approach is believed to improve community participation in shelter construction and maintenance and promote a sense of ownership of the shelters. Meanwhile, ANE handed over 75 completed transitional shelters to refugees and 10 vulnerable members of the host communities in and around Gure-Shembola camp. In Gedeo and West Guji zones, in the south, the construction of 150 shelters was completed as per the plan with the participation of all concerned bodies including the beneficiaries themselves.

In response to the displacement situation in the Metekel Zone of the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, UNHCR, in partnership with Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE) and the Regional Disaster Risk Management Commission (DRMC) dispatched non-food relief items to cover the needs of 4127 Households in Bulen, Debate and Wombera woredas in Metekel zone. Included in the aid package were 13,600 blankets, 50,000 bars of soap, 3,400 jerrycans, 6,800 mosquito nets, 2,400 plastic sheets, 3,400 sleeping mats and 3,400 kitchen sets.



*A refugee woman in Gure-Shembola camp receiving her family shelter. ©UNHCR*



## HEALTH

As part of the regional polio immunization campaign in the Somali Region, 24,600 refugee children under the age of five received supplementary polio vaccinations. UNHCR supported the campaign by providing rented vehicles to the health authorities in the Dollo Ado and Bokolmanyo woredas.

In Gambella, UNHCR donated five multi-parameter ICU patient monitors to the Gambella General Hospital which serves both nationals and refugees. The hospital had only four such equipment and the new addition is believed to help improve intensive care services in the hospital by delivering quick and accurate measurements in critical care.

In the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, UNHCR distributed ivermectin drugs to eligible refugees in the five refugee camps as part of the effort to prevent river blindness and its complications. A total of 38,607 refugees received the drugs.



## LIVELIHOODS AND SELF RELIANCE

In Jewi camp in the Gambella Region, refugee tailors produced over 11,000 face masks as part of a livelihoods initiative supported by Lutheran World Federation (LWF). The face masks were bought from the tailors and subsequently distributed to refugees as part of the effort to curb the spread of COVID-19. In Tsore refugee camp in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, seeds and agricultural tools were given to a total of 224 households to promote refugees and host communities' engagement in small-scale agricultural activities. The beneficiaries, composed of 134 refugee households and 90 host community households, received okra, cabbage, carrot, collard greens, onion and green paper seeds together with five types of the agricultural tools.

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