

Ethiopia

25 January 2021

802,821

Refugees and asylum seekers as of 31 December 2020

42,749

Handwashing facilities in camps

2,509

Health and community workers trained

COVID-19 Operational Context

As of 24 January 2021, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 133,767 coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and 20,66 deaths in the country. Ethiopia is currently registering one of the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases in 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.



One of the six handwashing facilities UNHCR provided to the Tsotsora Secondary School to ensure that students are able to wash their hands with soap regularly. ©UNHCR

Organizations have enhanced communication on 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 for the prevention of COVID-19 and the response in the four refugee camps in the Tigray Region have been greatly affected due to the ongoing insecurity.

- **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 been placed. Procurement of five ICU beds, five 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.
- There have been **42,749 handwashing stations** 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. Of these, **41,474**

of these were installed in refugee households and **1,275** were set up in communal facilities to provide services to refugees and asylum seekers. More capacity is needed, however, 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 **18.7 litres**. While some of the camps have access to 20 liters per person per day per the UNHCR standards, 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 current emergency in Tigray Region has seriously disrupted the provision of water in the four camps located in the region. UNHCR and partners will work to normalize service provision in those camps as soon as the situation allows. In the meantime, priority will be given to Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps.
- **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 the facilities and the health staff 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 **35,000** 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 a daily basis and these are being 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. 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 the exit visa processes for some 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 a 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 the impact on enterprises and jobs. In addition to COVID-19, refugee hosting areas have been under the threat of the invasion of Desert Locust. 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 wellbeing, with some mentioning that opportunities for maintaining their self-reliance through income earned by working as daily laborers are now severely limited due to COVID-19. Others who run small-scale businesses have also reported significant reductions in business opportunities.

Operational Response Updates

Tigray Emergency: A UNHCR led rapid inter-agency multisectoral assessment mission to Gondar (Amhara region) and to two of the four Eritrean refugee camps – Mai Aini and Adi Harush – took place from 4 to 9 January. Refugees at both camps noted that services had completely ceased during the conflict and they remain particularly concerned about their safety and security, reporting ongoing looting in the camp at night by armed groups/persons. UNHCR and partners remain without access to the two other camps near Shire-Shimelba and Hitsats; no humanitarian services have been provided since early November 2020. There have been reports of ongoing insecurity and additional destruction at the camps in the first week of January. The initial findings of the assessment missions carried out by humanitarian partners jointly with the Government in late December to south-eastern Tigray and western Tigray indicate a dire humanitarian situation throughout the region, with widespread internal displacement and poor access to services and limited livelihoods as well as urgent needs for shelter, food, non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene, and limited health and protection services.

Following a one-month food distribution in Mai Aini and Adi-Harush in mid-December 2020, WFP/UNHCR/ARRA started another food distribution on 20 January in the two camps. UNHCR is in the process of establishing an operational presence in Debarq, 90km north of Gondar and 110km away from Mai Aini and Adi-Harush refugee camps. The aim is to re-establish presence in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps and build up capacity to contribute to efforts to assist IDPs in the Amhara region. Regular Ethiopia country and regional UNHCR updates on the crisis can be found at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/rbehagl>



Protection

Free legal aid to IDP returnees: The university of Dilla provided free legal aid services, including consultancy, and representation for litigation in court on various cases to 30 (21 female and nine male) vulnerable IDP returnees in the Gedeo and West-Guji zones in southern Ethiopia. The beneficiaries: 21 females and nine males, accessed the services in the six free legal aid centers established in Gedeo Zone and one centre found in Abaya Woreda of West Guji Zone.

Distribution of dignity kits to women and girls: UNHCR distributed sanitary materials to 3,050 refugee girls and women of reproductive age range in the Sherkole Refugee Camp, Benishangul-Gumuz Region.



Education

Support to the education sector: In the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, camp-based schools have resumed classes in shifts, taking into consideration safety precautions for protection against COVID-19. The lack of textbooks and absenteeism, which is partly attributed to the disruption of school feeding services, have been identified as key challenges for which follow-up actions have been agreed on. Meanwhile, UNHCR provided 75 combined student desks to the secondary school in Sherkole refugee camp, to ensure students maintain a reasonable distance from each other while in class. Furthermore, UNHCR provided four infrared forehead thermometers to the same school as well as to the nearby host community schools, known as Kubure Hamesa Kebela Primary School and Jimma Kebela Primary School. Similarly, UNHCR handed over 10 blackboards, six whiteboards and six handwashing stations to the Tsotsora Secondary School near Gure-Shombola camp.

In Gambella preparations to initiate a functional adult literacy programme has been completed, with 1,200 students expected to enroll in the initiative. They will include 900 adult refugees in Jewi camp, and 300 Ethiopians drawn from the hosting community in Gambella Zuria Woreda.

In the West Guji zone of the Oromia Region, UNHCR's partner Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE) distributed school bags for 250 students in Sike Boqosa primary school, who had returned from displacement.



Livelihoods

Kobe marketplace rebuilt with community participation: The marketplace in Kobe camp, which was destroyed by fire in December 2020, is now successfully rebuilt thanks to the contribution of members of the refugee and host communities. A business committee has been set up to oversee the reopening of the marketplace, but many businessmen and women are struggling to re-start their businesses after losing a substantial assets due to the fire.



Shelter & CRIs

Shelter maintenance and construction: In the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, ANE completed the construction of 12 emergency shelters in Tsore and 10 transitional shelters in Tongo refugee camps. All were allocated to the pre-identified beneficiaries in both camps. In Nguenyiel camp in Gambella, the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) constructed 525 emergency shelters of which 513 were assigned to new arrivals. The remaining 12 shelters will be given to refugees that will be relocated to the camp from the Pagak Transit Centre.



In Sub-Office Melkadida, UNHCR, ARRA and the refugee leaders have started the final technical verification of newly built shelters before they are handed over to beneficiaries.
UNHCR/ @Jonas Buni

UNHCR facilitated the transportation of an assortment of non-food aid items to locations in Oromia Region's West Wollega zone for a subsequent distribution to vulnerable families and individuals. The items, which comprised 1,800 bars of soap, 1800 blankets, 1800mMats, 300 kitchen sets, 300 plastic sheets, 300 solar lumps, and 300 jerry cans, are scheduled for distribution as soon as possible through the Disaster Risk

Management Office (DRMO). In West Guji zone of Oromia Region, Action for the Needy in Ethiopia, in collaboration with Birbisa Kajowa Woreda DRMO, Kebele administration and community representatives, distributed blankets, buckets, kitchen sets, jerrycans, sleeping mats, soap, mosquito nets and tarpaulins for 400 flood affected households in Sokoricha Kebele of Birbisa Woreda.



Food and Nutrition

In Buramino camp, Somali Region, the monitoring of the distribution of fresh food voucher (FFVs) to 1,400 children under two years of age revealed a positive outcome, including enhanced appetite of the participating children. With the lessons learned from this pilot project, including the need for better targeting, strengthening linkages with local farms and building strong evidence about its impact on the nutritional status of beneficiaries, the project will be expanded to an additional camp, and will continue for 10 months in 2021.

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