

Ethiopia

09 March 2021

801,451
**Refugees and asylum seekers
as of 28 February 2021**
38,492
**Handwashing
facilities in camps**
2,509
**Health and
community workers
trained**
50 oxygen
**cylinders, 5 ICU
beds and PPEs
donated**

COVID-19 Operational Context

As of 09 March 2021, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 168,335 coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and 2,451 deaths in the country. Ethiopia is currently one of five countries in Africa registering the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases, according to WHO, with a recent rise in the number of positive cases and deaths.

COVID-19 Prevention and Response

Ethiopia has just received its first shipment of 2.2 million COVID-19 vaccines and is expected to roll out a vaccination campaign prioritizing frontline health worker, individuals with co-morbidities and population aged 55 years and above. UNHCR continues to advocate for the inclusion of refugees, other persons of concern as well as humanitarian workers in national anti-COVID-19 vaccination programmes.

Indications are that the Ministry of Health will ensure that refugees and other person of concern are part of the national vaccination programme.

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 the coronavirus in both



A child washes his hands with soap as part of measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus in the refugee camps. ©UNHCR

refugee camps and other locations sheltering refugees and asylum seekers throughout the country. 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 provided, together with the installation of handwashing stations, as well as strengthening of health services and the provision of personal protective equipment for health care workers, first responders and others, depending on availability. In anticipation of the receipt of COVID-19 vaccines in March 2021, health workers have started taking the WHO online vaccination training.

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. For almost four months now, UNHCR has no access to Hitsats and Shimelba camps for which no update has been included.

- There have been **38,492 handwashing stations** installed in communal centres and households in 22 of the 26 refugee camps to promote regular handwashing with soap. We are unable to update the data for two of the four camps in the north east. There were **37,395** handwashing stations installed in refugee households while **1,097** 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 investigations 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 **19 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 the Tigray Region had disrupted the provision of water in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps where UNHCR currently has access to and is working with partners to normalize the provision of services.
- **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, as needed. 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. Recently, UNHCR donated medical equipment, including five ICU beds, 50 oxygen cylinders and PPEs, to the Gambella Regional Health Bureau to help it better respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- In the capital, Addis Ababa, where over **35,000** urban refugees reside, UNHCR is **communicating with refugees via telephone helplines, WhatsApp and Telegram groups**. Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROVs) and refugee leaders are also helping raise awareness. In addition, telephone helplines and a **Digital Request and Complaints System (DRCS)** are fully functional. Concerned UNHCR staff are processing and responding to requests that are received on daily basis.
- In order to meet additional expenses for soap and other sanitary materials, UNHCR provides an allowance of 300 Ethiopian Birr (\$7.55) per person per month, to urban-based refugees entitled to monthly living allowances. The intervention is monitored through post-distribution phone interviews by Protection staff.
- The Registration services resumed (they were temporarily interrupted due to the pandemic) at the UNHCR's 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.

- UNHCR continues to **support 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 negatively impact the efforts already made towards the control of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and mental health.

Economic impact: Despite the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, there have been positive advancements with respect to the planned roll out of projects designed by development partners in 2020. The £24m SHARPE Project funded by the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) will start market systems development activities in February 2021, targeting 200,000 beneficiaries in the Gambella and Somali regions over a period of three years. Similarly, the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) will kick off the Inclusive Digital Economies Action in Ethiopia: (IDEA). The project will ensure financial inclusion to 18,000 beneficiaries in 500 groups in the Somali region. The Poverty Alleviation Coalition consortium, led by World Vision in Ethiopia will be fundraising to design and implement Graduation Programs in all refugee hosting regions, expected to reach 14,000 households over a period of five years. UNHCR is working closely with these partners to ensure that refugee inclusion and protection is realized and that these projects support the COVID-19 economic recovery efforts in refugee hosting areas.

Operational Response Updates

Tigray Emergency: Protection and other critical services are gradually resuming in Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush refugee camps, where individual reception, counselling and registration services have reopened. UNHCR registration teams are working with ARRA to update the records (deaths, marriages, and births), and provide documents to refugees who may have lost them during the conflict. They are also putting in place the Global Distribution Tool to be used for food distribution. As of mid-December, monthly food rations are being distributed regularly in the two camps, and all refugees relocated from Shire and surroundings received Core Relief Items (CRIs) and food rations shortly after arrival.

Pending identification of the required 67.5 hectares of land to accommodate the estimated 15,000 refugees, construction of emergency shelters continues, with 446 already constructed by Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in Mai-Aini and Ad-Harush camps during the reporting period.

Elsewhere in Tigray, UNHCR joined a multi-agency mission to Adigrat to assess the suitability of some proposed sites for accommodating the reported 148,605 IDPs in the town that are currently sheltered in school premises. The majority came from Western and North Western zones of Tigray, although there is a good number that have originated from the Central and Southern parts of the Region as well. The mission, which involved Samaritans Purse, ZOA and IOM, also assessed the general humanitarian situation, protection concerns, gaps and challenges to be able to design appropriate response mechanisms. Several gaps were identified a decision was made to scale up humanitarian assistance, enhance protection related activities, capacitate partners and local authorities, provide management support, and consider cash as a response modality. In Shire town, western Tigray, 30,000 IDPs are sheltered in school premises requiring urgent shelter solutions and life-saving assistance. In the capital Mekelle, UNHCR is undertaking daily protection monitoring on existing and newly established IDP sites, including those at Ayder elementary school and Adiha high school. Regular Ethiopia country and regional UNHCR updates on the crisis can be found at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/rbehagl>



51 refugees returned home: Sixteen ethnic Anuak Ethiopian families, who had been refugees in South Sudan and Kenya for years, spontaneously returned home through the Raad border crossing point in Gambella. Of the 51 individuals, 36 came from Gorom Refugee camp in South Sudan while the remaining 15 were refugees in Kenya's Kalobeyei refugee camp. The returnees have been temporarily sheltered at the TVET college in Dimma Woreda, near Okugo camp. They will eventually be dispersed to their homes.

More Somalis new arrivals in Dollo Ado: The number of new arrivals from Somalia is picking up, with 1,142 people seeking shelter at the Dollo Ado Reception Centre. A further 200 individuals are staying outside of the premises as the Reception Centre is currently accommodating well more than double its maximum capacity of 500 people. 313 children under 5 years old and 57 pregnant and lactating mothers are receiving wet feeding, while other vulnerable new arrivals could only receive high energy biscuits. The overcrowding has restrained WASH and other services and ARRA, UNHCR and other partners are working to decongest the center and improve services. ARRA is conducting nationality screening which will be followed by a registration exercise.

Screening at Pagak Reception Centre: UNHCR and ARRA have so far screened 4,577 of the over 16,000 individuals currently residing at the Pagak Reception Centre in Gambella. 2,495 of them have been identified as new arrivals from South Sudan seeking asylum while over 2,000 were already registered as refugees in the different camps in Gambella but had missed the L3 registration for various reasons. As the screening progresses, ARRA, UNHCR and partners continue to improve services at the Reception Centre, including WASH and nutrition. 160,000 litres of water are being distributed everyday using 24 faucets. 411 under five children, who have been acutely malnourished, have been admitted to nutrition programmes over the past two weeks.

Calm returns to Pugnido: Following the convening of a peace conference in Pugnido, Gambella, in which refugees and the local communities agreed to work together to restore peace, calm has returned to the area and refugees are able to access the local market without fear.



Education

Scholarships to refugees in Ethiopia: UNHCR has invited refugee students in Ethiopia, who want to pursue their academic career in Italy and meet the pre-selection criteria to apply to one of 24 Italian Universities that promote the University Corridors for Refugees project (UNICORE 3.0). Supported by UNHCR, Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, Caritas Italiana, Diaconia Valdese, Centro Astalli and other partners, the project will select 43 students to begin degree courses in Italy in September 2021, with the aim to increase opportunities for higher education for refugees. UNHCR is spreading the message widely, including through social media channels, refugees' whatsapp groups and the distribution of flyers in all refugee camps and relevant urban settings. The application period is from 1 March to 1 April 2021. Currently 20 refugees of different nationalities from Ethiopia are studying in different universities in Italy as part of UNICORE 2.0.

School feeding increases school attendance: The attendance rate among primary school students in four of the five refugee camps in Assosa has significantly increased following the re-introduction of the school feeding programme. UNHCR has allocated budget and is working with ARRA and other partners to implement the same in the fifth camp-Gure-Shombola.



Shelter & CRIs

Progress in Shelter construction in Gedeo and Guji: In Bule-Hora and Gedeo Zones, UNHCR and its partner Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE), completed construction of 42 household latrines over the last two weeks, bringing the total completed so far to 513. The plan is to construction a total of 1,000 household latrines, with material for the construction of the remaining 487 latrines already distributed. UNHCR and ANE undertook a joint monitoring mission to Mate toma kebele in west Guji zone. They

observed a strong community mobilization and reduction in open defecation habits. The latrines also reduced potential protection risks for women as they now have access to a latrine even during the night.



A child smiles as he collects much needed humanitarian assistance at the Wabi-Ugur IDP site in the Somali Region. ©UNHCR/Hanna Qassis

Needs are high in Wabi-Ugur IDP site where UNHCR distributed core relief items: In the Somali Region, UNHCR distributed plastic sheets, floor mats, jerry cans, buckets, soap and solar lanterns to 200 displaced families sheltered at the remote Wabi-Ugur IDP site in Koraha zone where accessibility is very difficult. The families, made up of 1,439 individuals, originated from the West Hararge zone of the

Oromia Region and were sheltered at the Qoloji IDP site since 2016 before they were relocated to Wabi-Ugur in February 2020. Some of the key challenges raised by the community include lack of adequate shelter, food, health and WASH services.

In West Wollega, UNHCR in collaboration with the zonal Disaster Risk Management Office (DRMO) distributed essential aid items to 511 IDP returnees in Kiltu Kara woreda. The items distributed include 1,005 bars of soap, 99 solar lamps, 511 blankets, 511 sleeping mats, 148 kitchen sets, 99 jerry cans, 99 buckets, and 99 plastic sheets. UNHCR and DRMO made similar distributions in Gimbi, Nejo and Leta Sibu and Mana Sibu Woredas.



Health

MoH donates laboratory machine to Melkadida camp health centre: The Ministry of Health (MoH) donated a laboratory machine for testing sputum for Tuberculosis to the health centre in Melkadida camp. The machine is expected to improve the centre's capacity to diagnose and treat tuberculosis patients. Previously, sputum samples were sent to Hawassa, located 600km away from the camps, for testing.

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