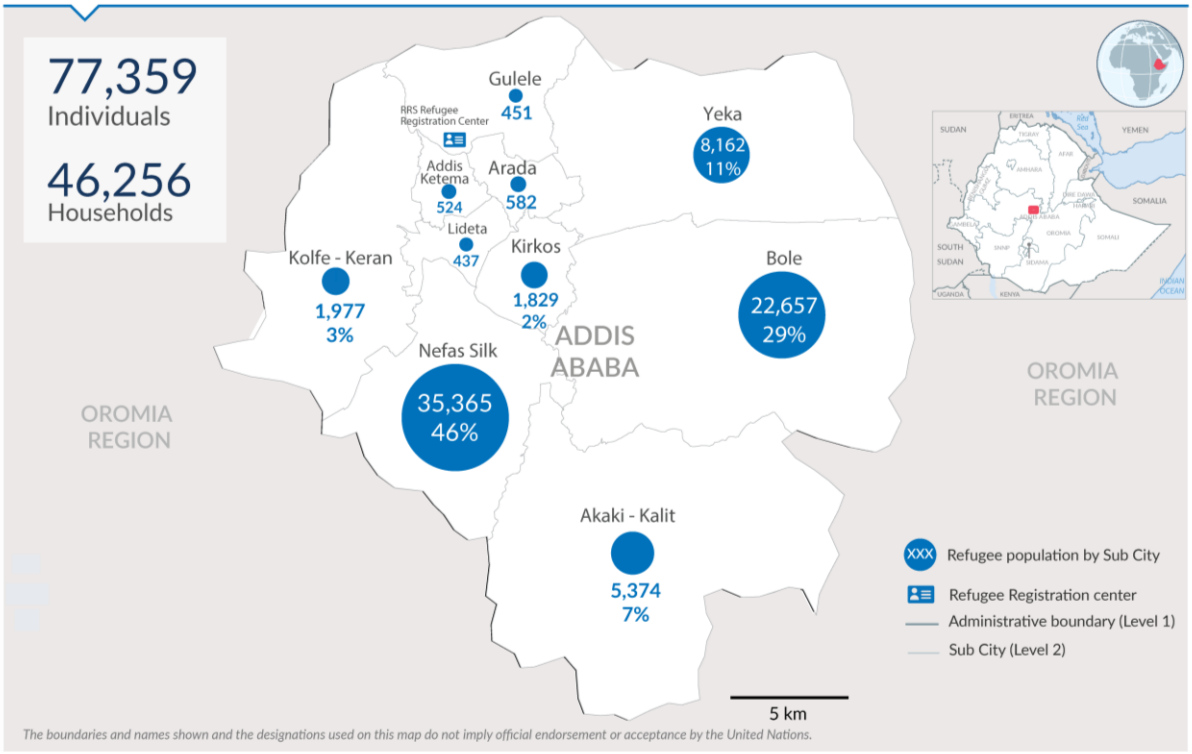
Ethiopia
Country Office | Addis Ababa
Urban Factsheet

Refugee children attending art class at one of the child-friendly spaces (CFS) in Addis Ababa©UNHCR

October – December 2023

Urban Refugee Population in Addis Ababa as of 31 December 2024

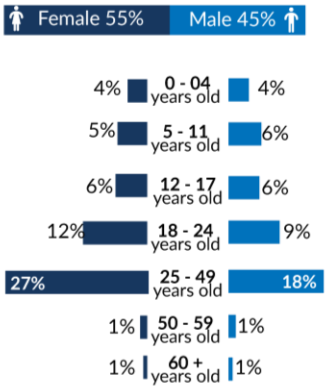


Country of origin

Refugees residing in Addis Ababa are originated from 28 different countries

Eritrea	71,299 (92%)
Yemen	2,463 (3%)
Somalia	1,144 (1%)
South Sudan	699
Syrian Arab Rep.	665
Congo DRC	489
Sudan	161
Burundi	78
Djibouti	57
Others	304

Age-gender breakdown



Children (0 -17 years) 30%

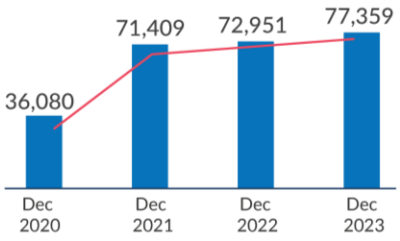
Adults (18 - 59 years) 68%

Elderly (60+) 1%

Women & Children 71%

Household representatives

Urban population trends | Dec 2020 - Dec 2023



The refugee population in Addis Ababa has doubled between December 2020 and December 2021, mainly due to self-relocation movements of Eritrean refugees from Tigray region.

Persons with specific needs

Specific Need	F	M	Total
Women at risk	11,938	-	11,938
Single parent	3,143	81	3,224
Child at risk	1,360	1,478	2,838
Unaccompanied or separated child	1,389	1,414	2,803
Serious medical condition	1,336	1,209	2,545
Persons with disability	607	1,831	2,438

Update date: January 2024 **Sources:** UNHCR proGres **Feedback :** ETHADIM@unhcr.org **Design :** Information Management unit Addis Ababa
Further documents and information are available on UNHCR data-portal Ethiopia page, please click on the following link: https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/eth

Operational Context

Over the last decade, Ethiopia has witnessed significant influxes of refugees from neighboring countries, primarily Somalia, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Sudan. The country hosted 963,181 refugees as of the end of December 2023, including 77,359 urban refugees residing in Addis Ababa. Due to the Eritrean refugee influx from the northern part of Ethiopia in late 2020, the refugee population in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, has doubled from January 2021. In the city, Eritrean refugees comprise approximately 92% of the population, followed by Yemenis, Somalis, Congolese, and other nationalities. Women constitute over half (55 percent) of the urban population, while children make up 30 percent. A large number of people are at risk, and many have specific protection risks such as unaccompanied and separated children, cornice medical conditions, women heads of families, and survivors of gender-based violence.The government, UNHCR and partners support refugees living in Addis Ababa under the Government of Ethiopia's Out-of-Camp Policy (OCP) [1], the assisted refugees programme[2] and exceptionally those self relocated refugees from Tigray camps.[3]

Based on the findings of the 2022 Participatory Assessment report, urban refugees and asylum seekers living in Addis Ababa and its surrounding towns face a range of protection challenges that adversely affect their well-being and dignity. Among the most pressing issues are the delay in accessing asylum procedures and obtaining valid documentation, the lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities, the lack of economic inclusion programs, school enrollments and dropouts, gender-based violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, and irregular onward movement. [4]

Further, the June 2022 Cash-Based Intervention Post distribution monitoring showed the top 3 expenditures for urban refugees include food, rent, clothes/shoes. The top 5 basic needs not afforded by the households being clothes/shoes, rent, food, education and transport. Based on the PDM assessment the current assistance only covers 34% of the basic need of these households due to the inflation, which resulted in continues increase in goods and services including house rent.

To mitigate and address these risks, UNHCR together with the Government's Refugee and Returnee Services(RRS) and partners have been working closely with the refugee community to strengthen existing community-based protection mechanisms. The RRS conducts registration and documentation with the support of UNHCR. UNHCR advocates for access to asylum, provides cash-based interventions, protection case management, and response, child protection (CP) interventions, provides protection from sexual and gender-based violence including Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), supports health and education services, individual counseling and legal aid, and facilitates livelihood opportunities and durable solutions.

In 2023, UNHCR's budget for the Ethiopia operation was reduced by 50% due to the global funding shortfall significantly affecting its protection and assistance programme. Within the urban program, key Complaint and Feedback Mechanism i.e. Helpline and the DRCS and the Cash Based Intervention components have been significantly affected thus limiting UNHCR's operational response. The funding situation for the near future remains dire if not worse whereas the urban population continues to grow rapidly.

[1] The Government of Ethiopia shifted its refugee policy in 2010 – specifically towards Eritrean refugees – by establishing the 'out-of-camp' policy through which Eritreans are allowed to live and study outside the camps if they are able to sustain themselves independently (usually through relatives or remittances).

[2] Comprises approximately 6,000 refugees referred from the camps on medical grounds, compelling protection concerns and/or refugees who have no designated camps in Ethiopia. This group relies on Cash Based Interventions to cover their basic needs including food, health, housing and education.

[3] Actual population unknown as pending verification and documentation by government following their self- relocation from Tigray in 2021.Covers those with specific needs i.e. children at risk, women at risk and those with severe medical conditions.

[4] According to the 2022 urban program Participatory Assessment Report which assessment was conducted from 26th September -7th October 2022.

IMMEDIATE NEEDS

Protection
Access to asylum, registration, and issuance of documentation

Child Protection
Adequate family-based care for unaccompanied children & birth registration

Livelihood
Work permit & business license issuance, development of skill sets for refugees

Prevention & Response to Gender-Based Violence

Health & MHPSS Assistance
for self-relocated Eritrean refugees

CBI (Cash Based Intervention)
Regular and targeted assistance

Strategic Objectives of the Urban Refugee Management Programma for 2023-2026

- To enhance access to asylum and protection services including registration, RSD and documentation towards strengthening access to protection, assistance and durable solutions considering the growing population and diversity.
- To improve access to essential social services, including education, health, and justice, and to boost the self-reliance of refugees, aligning this support with existing national programs.
- To enhance community-based mechanisms/approaches to support robust women and girls' participation and empowerment from exploitation and abuse through CP, GBV and PSEA interventions.

UNHCR'S RESPONSE

Legal Protection

- UNHCR continues to support the Ethiopian government's Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) in the documentation and registration exercise for refugees and asylum-seekers in Addis Ababa. Starting from mid-November 2023 RRS with the support of UNHCR resume issuing of ID cards and newborn registration for urban refugees and asylum seekers. Between October 1st and December 31st, 2023, a total of 8,489 ID cards and 5,505 Proof of registration has been issued to urban refugees and 490 Newborn children were registered. Also, 1,535 Birth Certificates were issued. UNHCR supports RRS in the overall supervision of the exercise, managing litigation cases, providing technical and logistical support required for the exercise.

Cash Assistance to Urban Refugees

- Between October 1st to December31st 2023, a total of 9,128, 874 ET birr transferred to 5,176 most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to cover part of their basic needs. Moreover, one-off cash assistance was provided through UNHCR's partner Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC) to cover the refugees' immediate need for an additional 27, newly identified families.
- Despite growing needs, budget constraints have led UNHCR to suspend cash assistance to refugees for the month of December 2023. These caused heightened protection and security risks because refugees could not afford housing, food, and education, which might lead to evictions, exploitation and abuse, and child protection risks, like school dropouts, which is really worrying.
- For 2024, UNHCR needs a total amount of 109,792,464 ETB or 1,960,580 USD, to continue providing reliable cash assistance to most vulnerable urban refugees.

Health and MHPSS

- By the end of 2023, a total of 3080 urban refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from the UNHCR health assistance program implemented through its partner organization, DICAC. Refugees who had self-relocated from Tigray camps are not included in the health assistance program due to budget constraints, with targeted assistance being provided to those most vulnerable only.
- By the end of 2023, over 3,900 refugees benefitted from Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services throughout the year. Of these, 523 participated in individual and group counseling sessions, while 3,409 refugees were reached through community-based psychosocial support and recreational activities. 279 Refugee and host community committee members benefited from different capacity enhancement community conversations. At the same time, 74 were assisted through MHPSS assessment and referral at the urban protection reception center.
- A workshop on MHPSS Minimum Service Package initiative has been conducted for introduction to pave the way for widespread dissemination.
- An urban suicide prevention and response team is formed, including partners MHPSS focal and Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROV) focal persons from each community. After the basic training, the team will be ready for the deployment and referral.
- Limited capacity to address the vast MHPSS needs remains to be a challenge. Refugee numbers are increasing, and partners are having difficulty taking regular sessions or follow-ups in a more timely manner because of a shortage of MHPSS staff.

Education

- UNHCR has worked to ensure the inclusion of refugee children in the national education system by promoting and strengthening school enrollment.
- In the 2023/24 academic year, 877 refugee students (406 girls), who were enrolled in different schools, received education assistance. The program provided funds for transportation and stationary materials for the students, who were distributed across different levels of education: 135 (55 girls) in pre-primary, 584 (281 girls) in primary, and 158 (70 girls) in secondary education.

Child Protection and Youth Program

- By the end of 2023, over 3,300 refugee children were reached through child protection interventions. A total of 2,005 Unaccompanied and Separated Children (UASC), and other children at-risk received targeted support, including family-based alternative care, cash assistance, and MHPSS.
- A total of 1,108 children at risk benefitted from the Best Interests Procedure (BIP) and specialized child protection case management services throughout the year.
- Some 5,357 refugee children and youth benefited from services at Cherkos and Ayat Urban Child Protection and MHPSS Centers and at Refugee Community Center in Sidist Killo, all managed by the implementing partner Jesuit Refugee Services (JRS). Refugee children and youth benefited from art therapy, language, and computer classes, life skills training, and individual/group counseling services.
- To enhance community-based child protection mechanisms, 79 ROVs and 66 other refugee community members received child protection training.
- By the end of the reporting year, a total of 980 refugee youth have been provided with language, computer, music courses, and sports skills training. 95 refugee youth participated in youth empowerment activities, such as peacebuilding and conflict management and leadership skills training.
- 58 unaccompanied refugee youth who graduated from foster care arrangements received empowerment through acquiring marketable vocational and soft skills training, and access to financial services such as loans and employment opportunities.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV)

- Survivors of GBV were supported and referred to appropriate services, including psycho-social, medical, and legal support, based on their wishes and needs.
- A GBV safety audit was conducted in the sub-city of Nifas Silk Lafto as well as a GBV 5W assessment was conducted in Addis Ababa. These assessments aim to identify factors contributing to GBV, the services available to survivors, and the prevention and mitigation strategies implemented by the national system in Addis Ababa. This information helps develop and implement effective urban refugee strategies and interventions to address GBV in Addis Ababa.
- A group of refugee men and boys of various nationalities participated in an awareness session on GBV. A key focus of the session was challenging gender stereotypes and standing in solidarity with women. This activity is one of the GBV programs in which men and boys are integral to finding solutions to eradicate GBV.
- Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials including "What will you do?" booklet developed in refugee-spoken languages and distributed to the community.
- Awareness session on Protection of Sexual Exploitation and Abouse (PSEA) and its reporting mechanism organized to the refugees of resedentis in the safe house as well as DICAC staff.

Access to Justice and Detention monitoring

- UNHCR in collaboration with the Addis Ababa University Law School provided free legal aid services for urban refugees.
- The program supports urban refugees by providing services such as legal counseling, support in drafting statements of claim and defense to courts of law, as well as preparing petitions and applications to government agencies. Landlord and Tenancy contracts have also been prepared for the refugee's utility.
- Between November 01 and December 30, 2023, 11 urban refugees received direct legal assistance in relation to their legal problems.
- Detention monitoring efforts in collaboration with RRS included referral of individual cases to RRS for intervention with relevant authorities. 1306 detention incidents were reported in 2023. Over 200 incidents were reported between November and December of the same year to RRS and the latter worked towards securing their release. However, undocumented asylums seekers remain in detention ostensibly due to their status as prospective asylum seekers without documentation. UNHCR advocacy efforts with RRS helped UNHCR to have access to detention Centers since January 2024.

Accountability to the Affected People (AAP)

- Between October 1st and December 31st, 2023, 1179 calls were received by the call centre. Among these callers, 557 were assisted to submit their complaints through the UNHCR's online digital platform (Digital Request Compliant System) and 662 received immediate counselling. Most of the complaints were related to protection and RST. The number of calls received by the help line decrease this quarter compared to the 3rd quarter by 50% (2356 calls) due to the staff position cuts. Since mid-December, the call centre activity is covered by one translator and this impact may also reflect in the upcoming months as well.
- Between October 1st and December 31st, 2023, 428 individuals received in person counselling for their different requests at the protection reception desk. Most of the requests were RST appeals due to lack of assistance and livelihood opportunity in the country.

Community-Based Protection

- Refugee leadership and community-based structures are existed in urban program to ensure participation and enhance community-based interventions. On the 4th quarter of 2023, the youth association and women association were restructured and election of leaders carried out.

- The training was provided to ROVs on GBV/PSEA and CP to strengthen their skills and knowledge and to help them better serve and protect those most vulnerable, including women and children.

Irregular onward movement

- Irregular onward movement trends have bene observed with lack of access to asylum procedures, arbitrary arrest and detention, limited livelihood opportunities and durable solutions reported to have been drivers of onward movement. 115 incidents in Borena Zone of Oromia and 152 incidents in Alle zone of SNNPR were reported involving Eritrean refugees along their move through the southern route. The 115 individuals returned to Addis Ababa in the last week of January following advocacy by National Partnership Coalition on Migration to which UNHCR is a member and UNHCR's advocacy with RRS and engagement with diaspora groups working for Eritrean refugees.

Self-reliance

UNHCR continues to work with RRS to mitigate legal and procedural hurdles for skilled refugees to gain access to employment. Consequently, urban refugees were issued with work and residence permits. Also, UNHCR and it's partner continue supporting Refugees to be self-reliant through providing technical and vocational training programs.

With thanks to our donors:

And Private Donors in Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, UK, and USA

Contacts

Lorrine Ombech, Protection Officer, UNHCR Urban Response Unit, Ethiopia, ombech@unhcr.org,
Melike Trigg, External Relations Officer, UNHCR Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, trigg@unhcr.org

Further documents and information are available on the UNHCR data-portal Ethiopia page, please click on the following link: https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/eth