



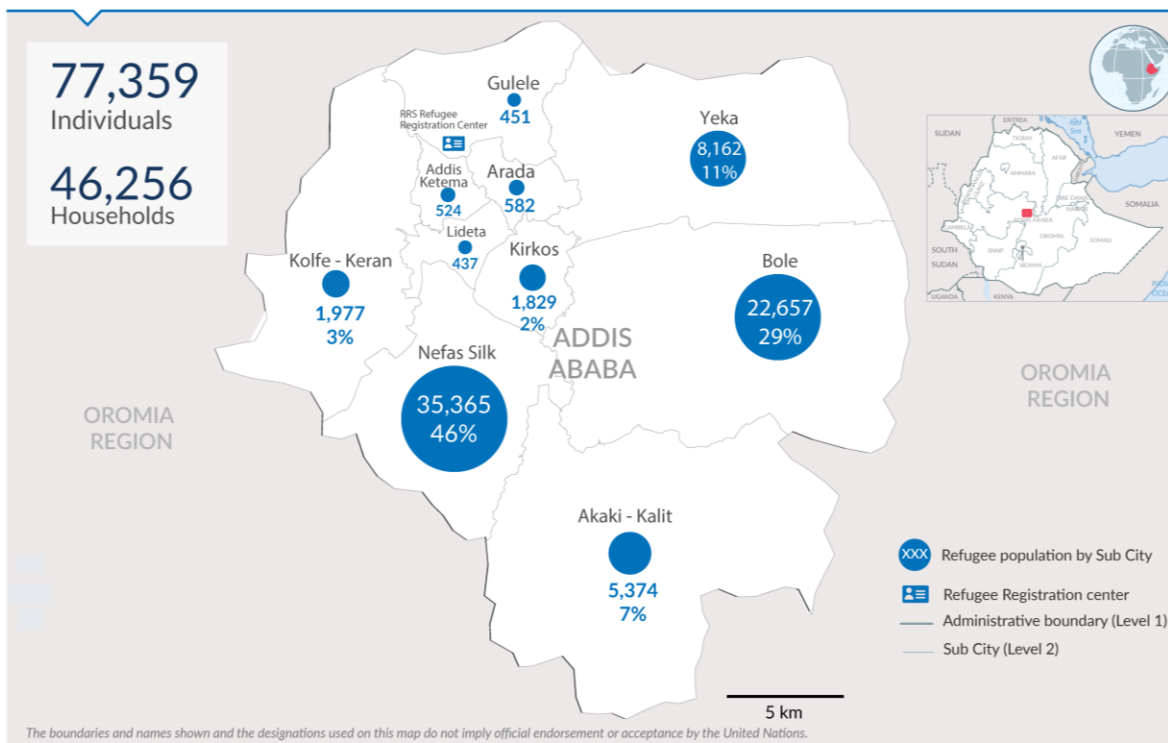
UNHCR Ethiopia Country Office | Addis Ababa Urban Response Annual Fact sheet



*Refugees and host community members train together to improve job prospects at Nefas Silk Polytechnic College in Addis Ababa.
©UNHCR/Eduardo Soteras Jalil*

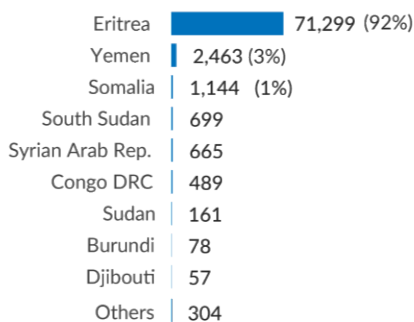
January – December 2023

Urban Refugee Population in Addis Ababa as of 31 December 2023



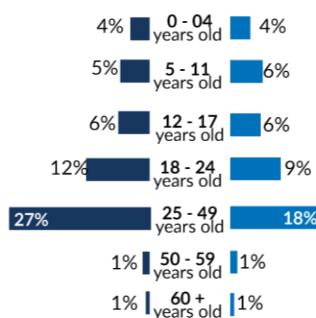
Country of origin

Refugees residing in Addis Ababa are originated from **28** different countries



Age-gender breakdown

Female 55% Male 45%



Children (0 - 17 years)

30%

Adults (18 - 59 years)

68%

Elderly (60+)

1%

Women & Children

71%

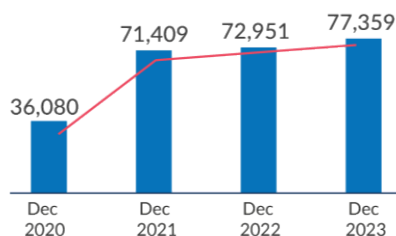
Household representatives

Female 58%



Male 42%

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

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 at the end of December 2023, including 77,359 registered urban refugees and asylum seekers residing in Addis Ababa and its environs. Following attacks in refugee camps in Northern Ethiopia in 2020 and 2021, Addis Ababa received an Eritrean refugee influx, which doubled the urban refugee population in January 2021. In the city, Eritrean refugees comprise approximately 92% of the population, followed by Yemenis, Somalis, Congolese, and other nationalities. Women constitute 55% of the urban population, while children make up 30%. A considerable portion of the people are at risk, and many have specific protection risks such as unaccompanied and separated children, chronic medical conditions, women heads of families, people with disabilities 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 program ^[2] and exceptionally their approach towards self-relocated refugees from refugee camps in Tigray. ^[3]

The findings of multiple Participatory Assessment reports reveal that urban refugees and asylum seekers in Addis Ababa and its surrounding towns face a range of acute protection challenges that adversely affect their well-being and dignity. Among the most pressing issues include risk of arbitrary arrest and detention, challenges obtaining valid refugee identification due to lack of access to asylum and registration procedures, gender-based violence, children at risk including high number of unaccompanied and separated children, the lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities and irregular onward movements. ^[4]

Further, Cash-Based Intervention Post Distribution Monitoring (PDM) revealed that the top 3 expenditures for urban refugees include food, rent and 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 needs of these households due to inflation, which resulted in continuous increase in goods and services including house rent.

To mitigate and address these risks, UNHCR together with the government's refugee agency, the Refugee and Returnees Service (RRS), line ministries and partners have been working closely with the refugee community to strengthen existing community-based protection mechanisms and advancing service provision for education, work and health through inclusion in the national system. RRS resumed registration of newborn children, issuance of residence permits, and work permits to allow for work authorization. Moreover, in November 2023 a documentation exercise was initiated with the support of UNHCR. UNHCR and partners advocate for access to asylum and registration procedures for the unregistered prospective asylum seekers, provides targeted cash-based interventions to vulnerable families, avails protection case management and response, child protection (CP) interventions, protection from Gender-Based Violence (GBV) including Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), supports health and education services through inclusion, individual counseling and legal aid, and facilitates livelihood opportunities and durable solutions in collaboration with partners.

UNHCR's budget shortfall for the Ethiopia operation significantly affected urban refugees in 2023. Targetted cash support to vulnerable refugee families was suspended in December 2023 and resumed for only the first half of 2024. Further, UNHCR's complaint and feedback mechanisms i.e. the refugee helpline and the online Digital Request and Complaint System (DRCS) continue to operate and below optimum levels due to resourcing challenges. The funding situation for the near future remains dire whereas the urban population, especially for the unregistered asylum seekers continues to grow including those fleeing the conflict in Sudan and those self-relocated from refugee camps in the Tigray region.







^[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

 <p>Protection</p> <p>Protection services and issuance of documentation to 77,359 refugees and asylum seekers</p>	 <p>Child Protection</p> <p>Adequate family-based care for 2,005 unaccompanied children</p>	 <p>Livelihood</p> <p>54,271 Work/Residence permit & business license issuance, development of skill sets for refugees</p>
 <p>Gender-Based Violence</p> <p>Intervention for 77,359 refugees and asylum seekers</p>	 <p>Health & MHPSS</p> <p>1,700 health and 41,774 MHPSS needs</p>	 <p>CBI (Cash Based Intervention)</p> <p>Regular and targeted assistance for 5,333 most vulnerable urban refugees</p>

Strategic Objectives of the Urban Refugee Management for 2023-2026

- To **enhance access to asylum and protection services** including registration, Refugee Status Determination (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, through inclusion and to boost the self-reliance of refugees, aligning UNHCR's 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 advocate for resumption of access to asylum procedures in Addis Ababa and elsewhere in the country with a view to advance protection and access to services as well as to protect refugees and asylum seekers from detention and refoulement related incidents.
- 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 resumed the issuance of ID cards and newborn registration for urban refugees and asylum seekers.** Between October 1 and December 31 2023, a total of 8,489 refugee and asylum seeker identification cards and 5,505 Proof of registrations were issued to urban refugees while 490 Newborn children were also registered. In addition, 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 1 January and 31 December 2023, a total of **99,193,346 ET Birr (Approximately 1.8 million USD) Multi-Purpose Cash, was transferred to 5,333 refugees and asylum-seekers to cover for part of their medical, protection, and humanitarian needs.** Moreover, one-off cash assistance was provided through UNHCR's partner Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC) to cover the refugees' immediate needs for an additional 197 newly identified families.
- Despite growing needs, budget constraints resulted in UNHCR suspending targeted cash assistance for protection to vulnerable refugees for the month of December 2023. This caused heightened protection and security risks because refugees could not afford housing, food, and education, exposing them

to the risks of evictions from rented houses, exploitation and abuse, and child protection risks, such as school dropouts, which are serious concerns for the operation.

- For the year 2024, UNHCR needs a total amount of 109,792,464 ETB or 1,960,580 USD, to continue providing reliable cash assistance to the most vulnerable urban refugees.

§ Health and MHPSS

- Urban refugees access health services through the national health system in Addis Ababa on par with nationals. At the end of 2023, a total of **3,080 urban refugees and asylum-seekers benefited from the UNHCR health assistance** implemented through its partner organization, DICAC. However, only vulnerable refugees amongst those who self-relocated from the refugee camps in Tigray benefited from health assistance due to budget constraints.
- At the end of 2023, approximately **3,900 refugees/asylum seekers benefited from Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS) services**. Of these, 523 participated in individual and group counseling sessions, while 3,409 refugees were reached through community-based psychosocial support and recreational activities. A total of 279 refugee and host community committee members benefited from different capacity building community conversations. At the same time, 74 individuals were assisted through MHPSS assessment and referral at the urban protection reception center.
- A workshop on MHPSS Minimum Service Package initiative was conducted to pave the way for widespread dissemination across sectors led by the Ministry of Health.
- An **urban suicide prevention and response team was formed**, targeting partners' MHPSS focal points and Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROV) focal persons from each community. After the basic training in mid-2024, the team will be ready for the deployment and referral.
- The limited capacity to address the vast MHPSS needs (2023/4 Participatory Assessment report showed that 55% of the urban refugee population suffer from mental health concerns and addressing the needs remains a challenge. Refugee numbers are increasing, and partners are having difficulty taking regular sessions or follow-ups in a more consistent and timely manner because of a shortage of MHPSS staff. (See GBV section.)

Education

- UNHCR continued to ensure the **inclusion of refugee children in the national education system in Addis Ababa by promoting and strengthening school enrolment and removing barriers for children to remain in schools**. 766 refugee students (415 boys and 351 girls) attend local public schools in Addis Ababa paid for by UNHCR. More refugee students attend local public schools paid for directly by parents under the out of camp policy. The total refugee school going age children (3 to 17 years), stands at 21,335 (10,867 boys & 10,468 girls).
- In the 2022/23 and 2023/24 academic years, **UNHCR supported 766 refugee students (415 boys and 351 girls) with registration fees, school uniforms, scholastic materials, and transport allowance to enable them access education in the local public schools in Addis Ababa**. This included 132 (81 boys & 51 girls) in pre-primary, 500 (268 boys & 242 girls) in primary, and 134 (76 boys & 58 girls) in secondary education. UNHCR and partners lack the resources to support students with special needs and disabilities to attend school.
- Refugees access to "Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET)" in Addis Ababa is part of the broader objective to provide vocational and employability skills to refugees to build self-reliance. UNHCR jointly with GIZ and with the leadership of the Government, collaborated on the development of a national roadmap to support the Government of Ethiopia to implement the 2019 GRF pledge on TVET. This roadmap opens opportunities for agencies involved in TVET trainings and in the labor market to contribute towards realization of the pledge. In Addis Ababa, UNHCR works with Don Bosco TVET School through its partner JRS under the Livelihood program to train and equip refugees with the relevant skills for the labor market.

Child Protection (CP) and Youth Program



- At the end of 2023, approximately **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.
- **1,108 children at risk benefitted from the Best Interests Procedure (BIP) and specialized child protection case management services** throughout the year.
- An estimated 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, 980 refugee youth were 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.
- A total of **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)

- **All reported cases of GBV survivors received survivor centered case management and referred to appropriate services, including psycho-social, medical, and legal support, based on their wishes and needs.** Refugees are included into the national response service delivery model. UNHCR supports these services with resources and training.
- In 2023, UNHCR supported training for case management and GBV responses to refugees for NGO partners (2 DICAC and 2 JRS) and 66 government staff members representing 4 one-stop centers (Gandhi Memorial Hospital, Menelik II referral hospital, Zewditu Memorial Hospital, Yeka Kotebe General Hospital, Tirunesh Beijing General Hospital), 6 sub-city police and women and social affairs offices (Nifasik-Lafto, Bole, Yeka, Lemi-kura, Akaki Kality, and Cherkos sub-cities), Addis Ababa city police and Women and Social affairs offices.
- 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 aimed 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 variety of services are presently accessible to both refugee and host community survivors of gender-based violence (GBV) throughout the city. These services are offered by government institutions such as women, children, and social affairs offices, as well as one-stop centers, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). However, most of these services are below standard due to limited capacity.
- A group comprising of refugee men and boys from various nationalities was established, and they participated in awareness sessions 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 was developed in refugee-spoken languages and distributed to the community.
- **Eight awareness-raising sessions on PSEA and its reporting mechanism were held with different community structures of different nationalities.** Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) materials on PSEA developed in refugee-spoken languages were placed and distributed to different partners operating in the urban program. An annual targeted session for PSEA awareness and the reporting mechanism was organized for the staff and refugees residing 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 counselling, support in drafting statements of claim and defense to courts of law, as well as preparing petitions and application letters to government agencies. Landlord and tenancy contracts have also been prepared for the refugee's benefit.
- Between January 01 and December 30, 2023, **58 urban refugees received direct legal assistance in relation to their legal problems**. Legal information sessions targeting 136 refugees were conducted in this reporting period through the legal aid center on practical legal issues they face such as family matters, landlord and tenancy issues, arbitrary arrest and detention, and the right to documentation.
- Detention monitoring efforts in collaboration with RRS included referral of individual cases to RRS for intervention with relevant authorities. Incidents of mass detention were reported in 2023. Most of the refugees were released from detention after RRS intervention. As part of its advocacy for the resumption of access to asylum procedures, UNHCR continued to call for release of unregistered asylum seekers and to speed up registration. UNHCR advocacy efforts with RRS resulted in UNHCR's securing access to detention centers since January 2024.

 **Accountability to Affected People (AAP)**

- Between January 1 and December 31, 2023, **approximately 4,647 calls were received at the refugee helpline**. Among these callers, 1,407 were assisted to submit their complaints through UNHCR's online digital platform (Digital Request and Complaint System) and 3,240 received immediate counselling. Most of the complaints related to protection and resettlement-related concerns. The number of calls received by the help line decreased in the last quarter compared to the 3rd quarter by 50% (2,356 calls) due to limited capacity to facilitate the service.
- Between January 1 and December 31, 2023, approximately **2,778 individuals received in person counselling for their different requests at the protection reception desk**. Most of the requests were resettlement-related requests due to lack of assistance and livelihood opportunities in the country.

 **Community-Based Protection**

- To strengthen community engagement and empowerment, UNHCR and its partners established two urban refugees' child protection and MHPSS centers in locations commonly known as Cherkos and Ayat, and one refugee community center in an area commonly known as *Sidist Killo*. The centers provide recreational, educational and livelihood activities with the fundings received from PRM and other donors. These centers also continue to serve as networking platforms and create conducive environment for refugees to enjoy their freedom of association and engage in refugee led initiatives.
- Refugee leadership and community-based structures have been established in the urban refugee program to ensure participation and to enhance community-based interventions. **In the 4th quarter of 2023, the youth association and the women association were restructured**. Election of leaders was also carried out.
- Several capacity building trainings were conducted for community structures. These include, the training provided to Refugee Outreach Volunteers (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 has increased to/through Addis Ababa following the Sudan situation. The government and UNHCR responded to reports of groups of refugees moving via the southern route.

In 2024, the Borena Zone of Oromia (115 individuals) and Alle zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region (152 individuals) reported intercepting refugees attempting to move into Kenya with smugglers. Most were returned to Addis Ababa following advocacy by UNHCR, RRS, National Partnership Coalition on Migration and engagement with diaspora groups.

- In collaboration with dedicated ROV, UNHCR engages in regular community outreach efforts, facilitating meaningful interactions through face-to-face discussions, testimony videos highlighting events, and success story features. These interactions serve as platforms for open dialogues about the diverse opportunities and challenges the refugee's encounter.

Self-reliance

- UNHCR continues to work with RRS to mitigate legal and procedural hurdles for skilled refugees to gain access to employment. Consequently, **791 work permits and 791 residence permits were issued to urban refugees in 2023**. UNHCR and its partner also continue supporting refugees to be self-reliant through providing technical and vocational training programs.

Contacts

Lorraine Ombech, Protection Officer, UNHCR Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, ombech@unhcr.org,

Dr. Florah Bukania, Senior Health Officer, UNHCR Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, bukania@unhcr.org

Emily Lugano, Senior Education Officer, UNHCR Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, lugano@unhcr.org

Parveen Mann, Senior Registration Officer, UNHCR Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, mann@unhcr.org

Melike Trigg, Senior External Relations Officer, UNHCR Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, trigg@unhcr.org

David Karp, Assistant Representative for Protection, UNHCR Ethiopia karp@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>

In 2023 - 2024, UNHCR is grateful for contributions by:



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