



ETHIOPIA

SUDAN SITUATION: COUNTRY SOCIOECONOMIC PROFILE

January 2025

Country Context

Ethiopia continues to keep its borders open to refugees and asylum-seekers and currently hosts more than 1 million refugees and asylum-seekers, primarily from South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea. Since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in April 2023, by the end of August 2024, just over 60,000 individuals in need of international protection have crossed the border from Sudan to Ethiopia. Over 22,000 individuals crossed through the Metema entry point in Amhara, more than 26,000 individuals through the Kurmuk entry point in Benishangul Gumuz, and 700 individuals at different entry points in Gambella (Pagak, Burbiey). Some 12,000 Ethiopian refugees have also returned to Tigray. The 2024 Refugee Response Plan projects that Ethiopia will need to assist 224,000 individuals in total, including refugees (including the pre-crisis Sudanese refugee population in Ethiopia), returnees, third-country nationals, and 55,000 members of the host community.

The Government of Ethiopia has continued to uphold its commitments towards its international obligations and to address forced displacement challenges. The Governments' efforts to foster inclusion and access to economic opportunities for refugees are reflected in the refugee right to work proclamation and integration in employment sectors, in a manner that allows refugees to participate in formal economy. Steps to expanding refugee identification cards and Proof of Registration documents are critical for accessing services, protection, and economic opportunities. Together with UNHCR, the Ethiopian government is working to ensure that refugees are included in the National Identification Programme (NIDP). Legally, refugees in Ethiopia have the legal right to set up businesses, although barriers such as limited access to capital prevent many of them from setting up businesses and engaging in self-employment. Refugees also have the right to open bank accounts, register a SIM card and use mobile money services, although there is limited banking infrastructure in refugee hosting areas where refugees can open bank accounts and benefit from saving services.

Sudanese asylum-seekers are granted *prima facie* refugee status, while non-Sudanese asylum-seekers are individually assessed under Ethiopia's Refugees Proclamation No. 1110/2019. The Government of Ethiopia, in coordination with UNHCR, is responding to the influx of refugees through processing the entry, temporary stay, and transit of Sudanese and third country nationals and through its existing laws and legislation. Sudanese asylum-seekers are recognized on a *prima facie* basis, while non-Sudanese asylum-seekers arriving from Sudan are recognized on an individual basis. The Ethiopian Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) has released a guideline on access to asylum for persons in need of international protection fleeing to Ethiopia from Sudan and UNHCR supports strengthening registration systems by developing the procedures for registration of refugees coming from Sudan. The RRS and UNHCR are coordinating the response to the new refugee inflows, including daily border monitoring, screening, registration, and coordinating the provision of basic services, such as food, water, temporary shelter, and emergency healthcare, together with partners.

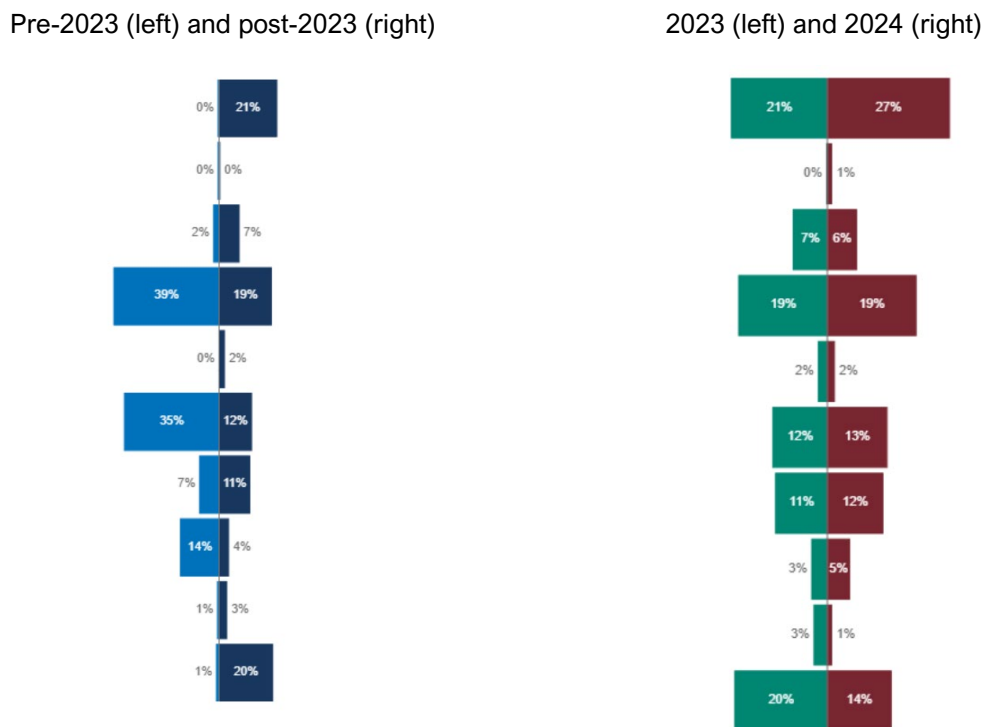
Makatet (inclusion in Amharic) and settlement approach in line with the Federal Government of Ethiopia's pledges made at the 2023 Global Refugee forum is being realized for new arrivals. While the priority has been on lifesaving interventions at the border, UNHCR, the Government and partners both at federal, regional and local levels have worked together to plan and facilitate refugee relocation from reception centres to the new settlement areas, where national systems will be strengthened and expanded to cover both refugees and host populations. Most notably, this is premised on the inclusion of refugees into existing national programs and systems and human settlements. The regional authorities in Benishangul Gumuz Regional State and Amhara Regional State, together with the RRS, UNHCR and partners are developing integrated settlements in both regions for newly arrived refugees, whereby refugees would be able to be included and have access to national services alongside host communities.

New settlements have been established along the border areas in both Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. In January 2024, the regional authorities of Benishangul-Gumuz granted land with a capacity of 350 hectares for a maximum capacity of 34,000 refugees. Akuda kebele (village), adjacent to the Ura refugee site, is home to 3,500 host community members. It is 10 km away from the regional capital, Assosa, providing opportunities for economic development. Similarly, in the Amhara region, the regional authorities granted land for a new refugee settlement in Aftit in West Gondar district, 8.5 km from Gende-Wuha, where the UNHCR office and Zonal Administration are located. Aftit is an estimated 30 km from the border with Sudan. The regional government has allocated 46 hectares of land for the new refugee settlement, with an initial absorption capacity of 12,500, with the possibility to allocated additional land if needed.¹

Socioeconomic Characteristics of Displacement

Based on UNHCR’s registration records, the share of Sudanese refugees in Ethiopia with secondary or university education has expanded significantly since the start of the crisis in April 2023. Compared to pre-2023, university education Sudanese increased from 0.33% to 21%, while higher secondary schooling increased from 1% to 20%, reflecting a higher overall level of education compared to Sudanese in Ethiopia previously. Between 2023 and 2024, the share of university education population grew further, from 21% to 27%, while secondary fell slightly. Overall, the share of the population with no recorded schooling sits before 15%, while primary schooling rates are around 19%.

Figure 1: Education

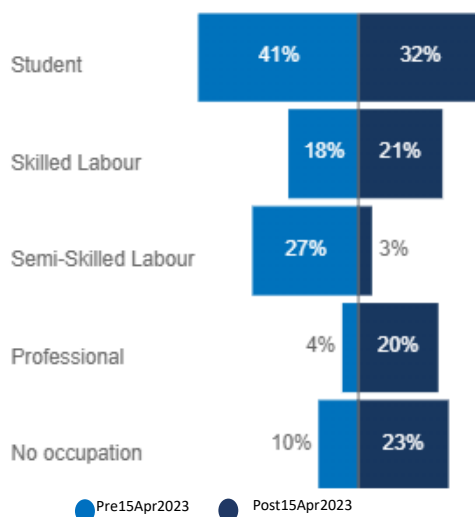


Source: UNHCR registration records

¹ The selection of these new settlements was done after an extensive assessment and dialogue that has involved all stakeholders, including refugees, host community, local, regional, and national authorities. With the ongoing conflict dynamics in the region, the government had to close Awlala and Kumer refugee sites in Amhara region; refugees have been relocated to Aftit.

In terms of occupation, students make up a large share of the population, followed by similar shares of individuals with skills, professional qualifications and no occupation. Compared to before April 2023, the share of students fell slightly from 41% to 32%, while semi-skilled labour fell and professional occupations rose. Roughly similar shares of the new arrivals have occupations in skilled labour (21%), professional categories (20%) or no occupation (23%)

Figure 2: Employment



Source: UNHCR registration records

Socioeconomic Survey (2023)

In Ethiopia, refugees face significantly higher rates of poverty than host community populations – 84 percent compared to 34 percent – have few prospects for employment and remain heavily dependent on aid (World Bank 2024). The evidence shows that freedom of movement and rights to work are essential to improving self-reliance. Despite restrictions, many refugees work outside of camps. Those who do see their opportunities and earnings increase considerably. Evidence also shows that when refugees have equal opportunities to hosts, incomes rise and assistance needs fall from \$221 to an estimated \$78 per person per year.

Signs of support for an approach based on inclusion are evident in the host community. The report shows that 65 per cent of Ethiopian hosts think refugees are good people (85 per cent for hosts near Somali refugees), 87 per cent believe that refugees should have the right to free primary education and healthcare, and around half think that refugees have increased the number of economic opportunities locally.

Rapid Scoping Mission on Agrifood Systems and Livelihoods (2023)²

The main objective of the scoping mission to Benishangul-Gumuz was to conduct a rapid assessment on the current situation of agrifood systems with a particular focus on agriculture and livelihoods options in the region to generate evidence and to better understand the existing opportunities and to identify constraints that may need to be addressed as well as factors that may constitute a conducive and enabling environment for intervention. The findings will be taken forward to support the design and strengthening of agriculture and food systems for Sudanese refugees and host communities, particularly those targeting agriculture and livelihood interventions in the region.

² FAO (2024). Benishangul-Gumuz Agriculture and Livelihoods Assessment.

Currently, the livelihood of the region is mainly derived from subsistence agriculture for both crop and livestock production systems. The region has a large area of land suitable for both staple and high value horticultural crop production. It also has suitable agro-ecology and adequate rainfall for supporting needed improvements in farm production and productivity that would support the livelihoods of rural communities. Livestock production is an important source of livelihood in the region next to crop production. It is an important source of food, cash income, and assets to buffer against shocks. Other livelihoods options such as traditional gold mining, petty trade, forestry, and lowland bamboo production contribute to food security and incomes of the households though practiced on a lower scale. Mixed crop-livestock farming system is widely practiced in the region. Small-scale poultry production has the potential to be expanded through capacity building support and start-up capital financing of organized youth and women.