

Ethiopia

07 October 2020

792,030

Refugees and asylum seekers as of 30 September 2020

37,513

Handwashing facilities in camps

2,151

Health and community workers trained

COVID-19 Operational Context



Distribution of Jerrycans and other materials in Gedeo Zone in the southern part of Ethiopia to help IDP returnees protect themselves from contracting coronavirus ©UNHCR/Mulat Zergaw

As of 06 October 2020, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 80,003 coronavirus cases and 1,238 fatalities in the country, with growing community transmissions of the virus. More than 1.3 million samples were collected and tested throughout the country, including nearly 190,000 samples collected and tested as part of a nation-wide Community-Based Activities and Testing campaign (ComBAT). Following the ComBAT, the Government released a preliminary schedule for a phased reopening of schools starting from 19th October. This will include camp-based schools where most of the over 200,000 refugee students are attending classes.

MoH and its UN partners have adopted a coordinated approach, and are working in the areas of contact tracing, case investigation, case management, prevention and control of infections.

COVID-19 Prevention and Response

The Government's Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA), and UNHCR, together with the Regional Health Bureaus and other health partners have scaled up preparedness and the response to COVID-19 in refugee camps and other locations sheltering refugees and asylum seekers. They have

enhanced communication and hygiene and are continuously working to reduce overcrowding to curb the spread of the virus. The supplies of water and soap continue to be enhanced, together with the installation of handwashing stations, strengthening health services, equipping isolation and quarantine centers and the provision of personal protective equipment for health care workers, first responders and others.

- **900,000** disposable gloves, **525** Infrared Thermometers, and **24,500** surgical masks have arrived in the country, which will be distributed to the different refugee camps following customs clearance. This is in addition to **340,000 face masks** already distributed by UNHCR.
- **37,513 handwashing stations** have been installed in communal centres and households in all the 26 refugee camps to promote regular handwashing with soap. **36,128** of these have been installed in refugee households and **1,385** were set up in communal facilities providing services to refugees and asylum seekers. More will need to be done to ensure that every refugee household has a handwashing facility.
- Over **2,150** 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 **410** health care workers, **16** 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** liters, with three refugee camps out of 26 receiving less than 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.
- **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 is working to equip these facilities and extend support to the Government-run treatment centers which are also accessible to refugees. Recently, UNHCR provided **160** hospital beds and **170** mattresses to help furnish the camp-based isolation centres in Melkadida. It also donated medical equipment to the Government-run COVID-19 treatment centre in Dollo Ado and **100** coverall gowns to the Gambella Regional Health Bureau for use by medical personnel who are collecting samples for testing. In the Afar Region, sheltering thousands of refugees in Aysaita and Barahle Camps, UNHCR supported the equipping of two Government quarantine facilities, providing **40** beds, mattress and beddings, two **10,000-litre** water tanks and **four pedal hand-washing machines**.
- In the capital, Addis Ababa, where over **33,000** urban refugees reside, UNHCR is **communicating with the refugees** via telephone helplines, WhatsApp and Telegram groups. 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 additional allowance of 300 Ethiopian Birr (US\$ 8.6) per person per month, to those refugees entitled to monthly living allowances.
- 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 communication.

COVID Impact and Challenges

Health Impact: Re-allocation of much of UNHCR's limited health budget to the COVID-19 prevention and response efforts could result in a strain on the provision of regular health services in the refugee camps, and this may pose challenges in continuity of disease control programmes such as for HIV, TB and Malaria.

The reallocation of funds may also negatively impact the efforts made towards the control of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and mental health.

Economic impact: UNHCR continues to monitor the economic impacts of COVID-19 in refugee hosting areas. In Sub-Office Melkadida in the Somali Regional State, harvesting and sales of agriculture produce have been taking place in all nine established irrigation schemes, generating income for refugee and host community farmers. However, farmers are reporting low market prices as a result of COVID-19-related disruptions to transport linkages to areas serving as major markets for onion produce. UNHCR is working to linking the cooperatives with potential buyers in cities closer to the production area.

Refugees in many of the camps indicate that the pandemic has negatively affected their food and economic security, with some mentioning that opportunities for maintaining their self-reliance through income earned by working as daily laborers are now limited due to COVID-19. Others, who run small-scale businesses have also reported significant reductions in business opportunities for them.

UNHCR received **USD 9.8 million** out of its financial requirements of **USD 34.7 million** for the COVID-19 response. The funding shortfall coupled with delayed delivery of international procurement orders of PPEs, medicines and medical supplies are among the key challenges hampering the response efforts. The delays were caused largely due to the general slackening of global air traffic and international shipments, which are gradually easing. There is no testing machine in Melkadida, and samples are being transported to Jijiga for testing, posing a considerable logistical challenge.

Operational Response Updates



PROTECTION

New arrivals in Gambella: Out of the 8,220 new arrivals at the Pagak Reception Centre in Gambella, 2,516 were relocated to Ngueniyyel Refugee Camp where they were isolated for 14 days before being assigned family shelters. Of those who completed the quarantine period, 1,328 were L3 registered and issued with proof of registration documents, ration cards and ID cards as appropriate. More than 5,700 new arrivals are still in Pagak awaiting relocation. In the meantime, they are receiving protection and emergency assistance.

Flood response: Heavy rainfall in many parts of Ethiopia has destroyed property, damaged livelihoods and displaced thousands across the country. UNHCR is providing emergency aid in different parts of the country to support 80,000 flood-displaced people in the Jijiga and Melkadida areas in the Somali Region as well as in the Afar Region. In the Afar Region, flash floods in four Aysaita kebeles (lowest administrative structure), led to the displacement of an additional 670 families. Floods have blocked the road linking Samara and Aysaita Woreda, forcing humanitarian workers and others to use a detour. Furthermore, huge swarms of desert locusts have infested 84,460 acres of land in Aysaita Woreda, one of two the Woredas hosting refugees.



SHELTER AND NFIS

Shelter construction and distribution of NFIs: Construction of 30 additional shelters in Mate Toma Kebele, Bule Hora Woreda of West Guji Zone, is progressing well. This is in addition to the completion of 70 shelters that were constructed by UNHCR and its partner Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE) for the benefit of vulnerable families. Similarly, 20 shelters are being constructed in Baya kebele of Kochore Woreda, within Gedeo zone. During the reporting period, UNHCR distributed an assortment of non-food relief items, including 2,384 bars of soap, 909 blankets, 383 buckets, 600 kitchen sets, 989 mosquito nets, 1,189

jerricans, 1,093 sleeping mats and 909 tarpaulins among 400 flood-affected vulnerable households in Haro Mada kebeles in West Guji zone of Oromia Region.



EDUCATION

Reopening Schools: UNHCR is making the necessary preparations to reopen the camp-based schools following the Government of Ethiopia's decision for a phased reopening of all schools across the country, starting from 19 October 2020. The Ministry of Education requires school administrators to ensure key precautionary measures are in place before reopening. Accordingly, class sizes should not exceed 25 students; students and teachers alike must wear face masks; schools must set up adequate handwashing facilities and temperature screening devices.



Registration of students and 'back-to-school' campaigns are ongoing in all camps. Observing the COVID-19 protocols issued by the Ministry of Education will have significant resource implications for building additional classrooms, recruiting additional teachers, and the procurement of personal protective Equipment (PPE), among other things.

A refugee girl from South Sudan attending class in a camp school in Gambella; photo was taken prior to school closure in March 2020. © UNHCR/Kisut G.Egziabher

COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

Livelihoods: As part of the livelihoods project in the Melkadia camps, the construction of eight granaries is progressing well, with 75% of the work completed. This will be used by the Cooperative that is engaged in the production of perfumed gum and incense. Members of the Cooperative are drawn from the refugees and the host communities.

UNHCR opens office in Dire Dawa: UNHCR has opened an office in the eastern city of Dire Dawa to be able to better support and address the internal displacement in eastern Ethiopia. Following the official opening of the Field Unit on 21 September 2020, UNHCR officers met with relevant government sector bureaus and humanitarian partners operating in the Dire Dawa administration areas including in East and West Hararghes where discussions were held about working together.

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