

TOWARDS DURABLE SOLUTIONS: UNHCR LEGAL ASSISTANCE AND LEGAL AWARENESS SUPPORT

UNHCR Ethiopia, in collaboration with the Universities of Bule Hora, Dilla, Wollega, Dembi Dollo, Assosa, Arba-Minch, and Wollo, and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) **provides free legal aid and legal awareness services to forcibly displaced persons and members of the host community to promote the rule of law through fairer, more consistent, and transparent delivery of legal justice to women, the poor, and vulnerable populations.**

Access to justice remains difficult for the forcibly displaced, particularly for women and other historically marginalized groups such as persons with disabilities and survivors of gender-based violence. Legal knowledge and confidence in resolving disputes or protecting their rights continue to be low. In the pursuit of justice, resolving disputes through mediation, arbitration, administrative applications and hearings, or formal litigation before courts and petitions can be difficult. Furthermore, there are a limited number of legal professionals available to provide necessary services, making it especially difficult for forcibly displaced persons and vulnerable members of communities. UNHCR collaborates with seven local universities and Danish Refugee Council (DRC) in to promote a basic understanding of rights and obligations, as well as to provide forcefully displaced people with practical advice on where to turn when their rights are threatened or violated.

IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

- Legal services are a critical component of comprehensive disaster relief after and during armed conflict and other disasters. UNHCR's free legal aid projects continue to **provide high-quality legal services to ensure that forcibly displaced people understand their rights, to address the challenges that they and others in need face in obtaining and restoring identity and civil documentation, as well as housing, land, and property rights, and to facilitate access to justice, including for survivors of gender-based violence.**
- The projects also **assist forcibly displaced people in achieving long-term solutions to their situation by allowing them to access justice, obtain necessary documentation, and have their land and property rights restored as a first step toward solutions.**

WHAT ARE WE DOING

Total beneficiary reached

45,940

Male: 51% | Female: 49%

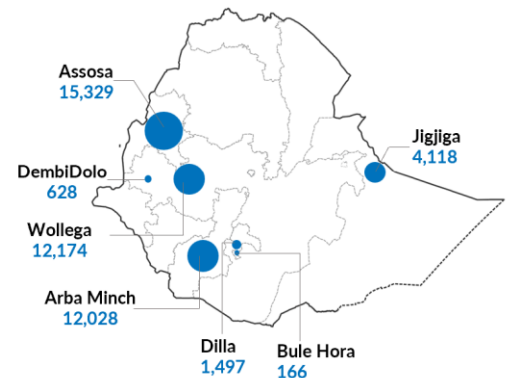
By type of activity

Legal awareness sessions	40,703
Legal Aid Interventions	5,033
Court/ Witness Fee assistance	204

Response trend



Beneficiary reached by location



- UNHCR's free legal aid project with Wollega University continued to provide quality legal aid services for beneficiaries in 12 woredas namely Nekemte/Gutu Gida, Nekemte Prison, Kiramu/Ano, Gida Ayana (East Wollega), Gimbi, Nejo, Mana Sibru, Kiltu Kara, Boji Dermeji (West Wollega), Amuru & Shambu woredas (Horo Guduru Wollega zone) for the fourth consecutive year in 2023.
- In February 2023, UNHCR signed a partnership agreement with Dambi Dollo University to provide free legal aid assistance in four conflict-affected woredas of Kellem Wollega.
- Through Wollega and Dembi Dollo University's free legal aid centers, 2,359 individuals (1,224 females) received adequate free legal aid support from January to June. The centers ensured that IDPs obtained legal remedies and civil documentation by providing legal counselling, writing, representation, advocacy, referral, and PSS support for vulnerable recipients. Furthermore, provided legal awareness focusing on human rights, HLP rights, and the prevention of Gender Based Violence GBV and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) to approximately 10,443 (4350 F) IDPs and vulnerable members of the host community.
- Following the discussion with the President of the Gimbi woreda (West Wollega) Court, psychosocial

support will be provided in a separate room to ensure that recipients receive assistance in a private and respectful manner.

- UNHCR and its partner Danish Refugee Council (DRC) provided legal awareness to 2,400 forcibly displaced people and host communities in Somali region at Tuliguled, Babile, and Shabelley woredas (Fafan zone), Meiso, Afdem, Bike, and Erer woredas (Sitti zone), Dollo Bay woreda (Afdhar zone), and Dollo Ado woreda (Liban zone). Additionally, 2,000 community members in Dollo Bay Woreda took part in a legal awareness campaign on legal identity and civil documentation, which included billboards and visibility messages. A billboard in the local language advertised event registration. T-shirts and banners were used in the campaign. Providing legal information helps forcibly displaced people, including host communities, understand the law and their rights, increasing access to justice.
- In addition, UNCHR provided legal counselling and financial legal assistance to 204 forcibly displaced persons and host community members through DRC for them to gain access to vital event registration documents.
- In two zones of the Benishangul Gumuz, three free legal aid centers were established: in Assosa, the legal aid center was able to provide 43 Legal representations, 30 Pleadings, and 11 representations in a legal proceeding; in Bambasi, the center conducted 30 legal consultations, 16 Pleadings, and 3 representations; and in Gilgel Beles, the centers conducted 72 legal consultations and 61 Pleadings.
- A total of 171 people received free legal services from the Dilla, Araba-Minch, and Bule hora universities' free legal aid centers. Legal advice/counselling was provided to 102 people (35 of whom were women), pleading preparation was provided to thirty-nine people, and court litigation and representation was provided to thirty people. Furthermore, a total of 534 (129 women) people have received legal education services.

BENEFICIARY VOICES

Beneficiary No. 1, from Shabu, Horo Guduru, Wellega Zon

"I am a 25-year-old lactating mother who was arrested in Nekmete (East Wollega). The police took me to court, and the judge granted me bail after I brought a bailiff or money. But I do not have any money, and I do not know anyone who would be willing to be my bailiff. As a result, I was imprisoned for three months with no results. One day, the legal aid officer at East Wollega Prison held an awareness session, and I summoned the courage to seek assistance. I was able to get out of prison thanks to the free legal aid officers who represented me in court. I am grateful for the freedom to raise my child."



Beneficiary No. 2, from Sayo , Kelem Wollega

"I live in Shambu Town and have a physical disability because of an injury. Because I am poor, I was unable to receive compensation for my injuries. I was in a dire situation, but I learned about free legal aid services in Shambu (Horo Guduru Wollega), and the legal aid officer represented me in court. I won the case because of the help I received."



UNHCR is grateful for the contribution to the UNHCR Ethiopia IDP Operation in 2023



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