UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency | ETHIOPIA

OPERATIONAL UPDATE

February 2024

KEY FIGURES:

970,299
Refugees & Asylum seekers in Ethiopia

49,142
People fleeing ongoing conflict in Sudan to Ethiopia
(as of February 2024)

3.5M
Internally displaced people in Ethiopia
(as of February 2024)

OPERATIONAL CONTEXT

Ethiopia hosts one of the largest refugees and internally displaced populations in the world. As the third largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, it is currently home to over **970,299 refugees** - mainly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan. Furthermore, over **3.5 million people remain internally displaced (IDPs)**, according to the 2024 Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan, with ongoing displacements and returns in certain parts of the country.

In February 2023, the Somali Region of Ethiopia, already hit by climate extremes and conflict, was affected when 100,000 people, as estimated by local authorities, fled violence in the city of Laascaanood (Somalia), and crossed into its remote Doolo zone. UNHCR immediately responded to this emergency, rushing, together with the Ethiopian Government's Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) and partners, to provide protection and life-saving assistance to the newly arrived Somali refugees, the majority of whom are women, children, and older refugees.

Since conflict broke out in Sudan in April 2023, 50,000 refugees, returnees and asylum seekers have crossed into Ethiopia from Sudan. Most of them were Sudanese (64%), Eritrean (16 %), Ethiopian returnees (15%) and South Sudanese (4%) coming through border points in the regions of Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz and Gambella.

SECTORAL HIGHLIGHTS:

Protection

52,325 New arrivals from Somalia have been registered in Mirqaan site Somali region.

Education

54% of refugee children of school going age are **not** enrolled in school.

Health

over **4,000** People coming from Sudan to Ethiopia have received medical care.

Food security + Nutrition

50% of over 86,000 refugee children are **malnourished.**

Water & Sanitation

only **25%** of refugee settlements have adequate sanitation vs the minimum standard of **85%.**

⚠ **UNHCR is critically underfunded.** Key sectors like food, shelter, WASH, education, health, energy lack critical support exposing refugees to various **risks** including **Gender Based Violence**, malnutrition and stunting, disease outbreaks. Additionally, the lack of clean water, sanitation, healthcare and education leading to negative coping mechanisms (transactional sex, child labor, child marriage and begging) and ultimately dire living conditions.

WORKING WITH PARTNERS

UNHCR works with 45 implementing partners as well as the Ethiopian Government Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), UN Agencies, international and national NGOs, universities, and other legal entities.

RESPONSE AT A GLANCE

970,299
Individuals registered
(**961,655** refugees | **8,039** asylum seekers)

231,338
households
(average family size: 4)

80% Women & Children

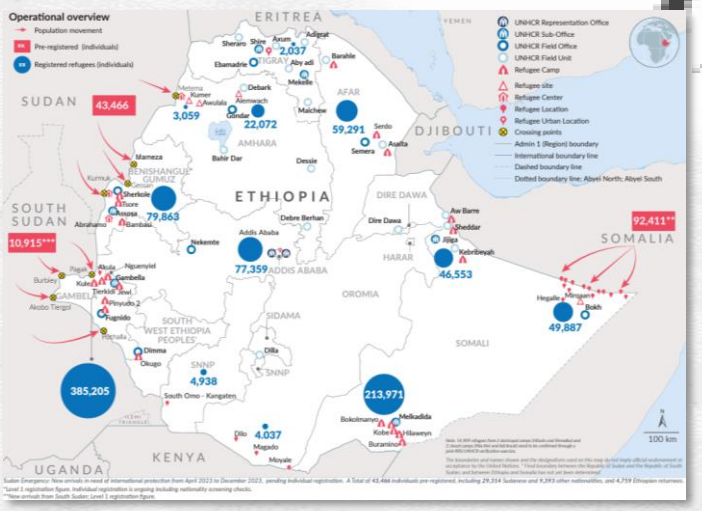
54% Children (0 -17 years)

44% Adults (18 - 59 years)

2% Elderly (60+)

Country of origin breakdown

Country of origin	Total Individuals	Percentage
South Sudan	419,919	43%
Somalia	314,188	32%
Eritrea	171,824	18%
Sudan	55,238	5%



Protection

49,142 people have crossed the border from Sudan to Ethiopia. UNHCR and the Government's Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) have identified 20,959 people at the border crossing points in Amhara region (Metema), 21,139 people through Kurmuk in Benishangul-Gumuz region (Kurmuk) and 700 individuals arriving through Gambella region (Pagak & Burbiey). UNHCR and partners provide protection counselling, healthcare, and lifesaving humanitarian assistance.

Gender Based Violence

Gender based violence (GBV) prevention activities are ongoing: awareness raising sessions with specific curriculums (SASA!, EMAP, girls shine), activities in Women and girls' wellness centers, dignity kit distributions and material support for women and girls at risk. In Metema (Amhara region) and Kurmuk transit centers (Benishangul Gumuz), awareness-raising sessions (12) were conducted to prevent physical violence, child marriage, and sexual exploitation addressing a total of 940 people. In addition, 200 dignity kits (sanitary napkins, underwear, toilet soap, detergent, lotion, shaving stick, towel, a medium carry bag, flashlight) and 79 material support kits (mats, bedsheets, pajamas, head scarf, slippers, lamp torch, soap, sanitary pads) have been provided for reproductive-age and vulnerable women and girls countrywide.

Along with its partners, UNHCR provided GBV survivors with mental health, medical, legal and security support. Additionally, UNHCR collaborated with the local bureau of Women and Children affairs (BOWCA) in Bokh, Somali – where community workers conducted house-to-house visits with GBV, child protection messages, and available services. 96 individuals also participated in GBV orientation training on community structures roles, responsibilities, and the code of conduct to empower and enhance understanding.

⚠ **UNDERFUNDING** in <u>**any**</u> sector (food, shelter, WASH, education, health, energy) exposes **women** refugees to **Gender Based Violence** leading to negative coping mechanisms including transactional sex, child labor, child marriage and begging.

Child Protection

For their safety and security, refugee children are being followed-up by protection staff across refugee settlements though Best Interests Assessments (BIA) and Best Interest Determination (BID).

Child-Friendly Spaces (CFS) in different locations are hosting recreational activities for children's mental health and psychosocial wellbeing. In January, 3,000 refugee children have participated in various activities including indoor and outdoor activities, drawing, storytelling, football, volleyball, thanks to UNHCR's partners in Child Protection.

Our partners continue to conduct regular home to home visit to assess the needs of children under various care arrangements and counseling parents on different child protection topics.

UNICEF organized a three-day training on National Child Protection Case Management for 30 participants (UNHCR, RRS, BOWCA and others) in Bokh, Somali region.

Registration / Documentation

Since November last year, registration activities are ongoing for existing refugees and asylum seekers in Addis Ababa. In January, 1,970 Proof of Registration (PORs) were provided, 2,017 expired IDs were renewed, and 250 vital events registered by RRS in collaboration with UNHCR. Additionally, cash was provided to 5,176 urban refugees based on family size prioritizing those with serious medical conditions or those who cannot stay in refugee settlements because of protection concerns and populations who aren't from neighboring countries. Finally, individuals newly arriving from Sudan were briefed on their rights as well as the prevailing asylum procedures in Addis Ababa. Law enforcement officials were also briefed on protection considerations and the recognition of valid refugee IDs.

Education

Schools have re-opened after a short-term semester break in January. Learning kicked-off in all locations except in Gambella region, because of ongoing financial constraints from 2023. School equipment as well as learning kits were distributed to refugee and host community children in primary and secondary education. UNICEF donated 7,711 school bags and stationery to refugees and host community children in **Mirqaan** (Somali region). 30 Early Childhood Development kits, 3,200 bags with stationery, 30 recreational kits and 40 School-in-a-carton were also donated to children in **Kumer** site, Amhara region.

The Government of Ethiopia under the General Education Quality Improvement Program for Equity Program project funded by the World Bank supported transfer of 2 refugee secondary schools to government management in 2023. The goal is to transition 10 refugee secondary schools to the government by 2025. The project further trained refugee teachers, provided school grants and textbooks to refugee children. This project, aims to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia as well as for refugees. Additionally, UNHCR and RRS are in the process of transferring the management of refugee primary schools to NGO partners and eventually to the Ethiopian government.

⚠ **UNDERFUNDING in Education** will interrupt the schooling of over 187,000 refugee students hosted in Ethiopia because teacher's salaries, textbooks and learning materials are not being covered. Refugee children then fall behind, reducing their chances of coming out of poverty and supporting their families.

PHOTO OF THE MONTH

Kumer, Amhara

"Teaching is a distraction from all the uncertainty."

With the outbreak of violence in Sudan, Mubarak was forced to interrupt his studies & flee to Ethiopia.

He now teaches English to refugees in Kumer refugee site in Amhara.

Health

As **health facilities are being transitioned** from Government partner to NGO partners, **primary healthcare services in refugee settlements have been maintained at minimum level.** In **Gambella,** a vaccination campaign was conducted in response to a **measles outbreak** (656 cases and 37 deaths), from December to January. In **Assosa,** a mass Onchocerciasis (eye and skin disease) treatment campaign was conducted reaching 47,689 individuals. However, the lack of access to medicine, medical supplies, referral services and comprehensive primary healthcare services remain an issue.

To respond to new arrivals from Sudan, health services were provided to over 4,000 people in Amhara (Kumer) and Benishangul Gumuz regions (Kurmuk). In **Kumer**, 3,269 individuals were able to consult a doctor and get treated, while 271 individuals received mental health support and counselling. Additionally, 281 mothers received antenatal care and 64 children under five were vaccinated. In **Kurmuk**, 420 patients received clinical care and 555 individuals participated in group sessions for mental health and psychosocial support. Additionally, 77 women participated in sexual and reproductive health sessions and 1,872 condoms were distributed.

⚠ **UNDERFUNDING in Health** causes refugees to stop seeking medical care. The lack access to essential medicines and poor-quality health services discourages refugees from going to health facilities, eventually increasing their mortality rates. Referral services are halted to focus on emergency cases only. Patients are unable to reach hospitals on time because of a lack of ambulances.

Food security + Nutrition

50% of refugee children between 6 months and 5 years of age in Ethiopia are malnourished. Global Acute malnutrition (GAM) of refugee children levels stands at 14%, above WHO/UNHCR standard of 10%. Afar region (25%), and Somali region - Bokh (24%) and Melkadida (17%) - have particularly high rates of GAM. New arrivals from Sudan staying in Kurmuk, Benishangul Gumuz are in critical nutrition status with GAM prevalence of 23% because of two missed rounds of food distribution since October 2023.

With thanks to WFP and partners, 56,129 children between 6 months and 5 years across the country were admitted to nutrition centers, of which 40,473 were cured. Additionally, 31,116 children 6-23 months old as well as 27,389 pregnant and lactating women were included in Blanket Supplementary Feeding programs, to support their nutrition needs. Children between 2 to 5 years old weren't included because of WFP's funding shortfalls in 2023.

UNHCR, WFP and partners call for additional support as funding shortages will further lower food rations from 60% of household needs to 40%.

⚠ **Without additional funding by April 2024, in Food and Nutrition** will cause over 86,675 refugee children to suffer from acute malnutrition, stunting their physical and mental development, exposing them to disease and eventually die. Programs to prevent undernutrition for close to 200,000 children under five and over 40,000 pregnant and lactating women will cease.

Shelter & CRIs

To respond to the new influx of refugees from Sudan, UNHCR has been setting up shelters in Amhara and Benishangul Gumuz regions. Along with its partner Action for the Needy (ANE), 40 new family tents were installed, 72 shelter plot demarcated and 6 blocks latrine plots completed in the new Awlala site where new refugees/asylum seekers from Metema border will be relocated. Additionally, **emergency shelters** were built in the new settlement in Benishangul Gumuz (Ura) and adequate housing across refugee sites in Gambella and Somali regions continue to be built. For **internally displaced persons**, UNHCR and its partners have provided shelters and non-food items (NFIs) in Amhara, Gambella and Tigray regions.

⚠ **UNDERFUNDING in Shelter** causes thousands of refugees to be housed in inadequate shelters, living in congested conditions unprotected from rain and flooding. This is posing safety concerns to both refugees and host communities living around the settlements or refugee sites.

Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

For the influx of refugees from Sudan and Somalia, UNHCR and partners are working to increase the water supply from 10L to 15L per person per day. For improved sanitation, latrine blocks are being built in refugee hosting regions of Benishangul Gumuz and Amhara (52). However, funding shortages are limiting latrine construction and water trucking. Additionally, growing numbers of new arrivals have led to the depletion of water levels in Kurmuk (Benishangul-Gumuz), leading to further decrease in water distribution (from 10L to 5L per person per day).

Countrywide, refugee sites across the country were provided with an average of 15L of water per person and per day, lower that the required minimum of 20L. However, only 25% of refugee sites have proper sanitation infrastructure (vs. the minimum standard of 85%). In January, 47 latrines were constructed in Banbasi, Benishangul-Gumuz region.

⚠ **UNDERFUNDING in Water and Sanitation** causes health hazards, disease outbreaks (cholera) and exposes women and girls to sexual violence as they walk long distances to fetch water and don't have adequate sanitation facilities.

Access to Energy

Access to alternative energy remains one of the most underfunded needs. ⚠Less than 15% of refugees have access to alternative cooking fuels through grid connected communal kitchens, charcoaled briquettes and commercial fuel wood as transitional solution for emergencies and critical needs. In their shelters, 40% of refugee households use portable solar lamps and solar home systems for lighting. Solar Street lights are being installed at protection sensitive locations and in community facilities diesel-powered generators are being replaced with clean and reliable electricity. As per the Ethiopian Government's Green Legacy initiative and in line with the Energy and Climate Action Pledges under the GCR, we have planted over 2 million tree seedlings in the last 3 years.

Durable solutions

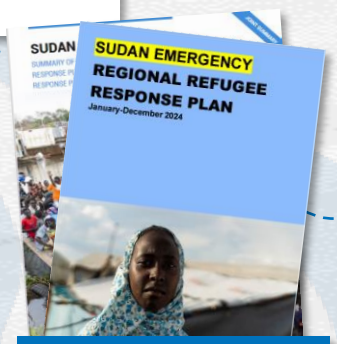
Livelihoods & Economic Integration

Livelihood activities are ongoing in refugee sites across Ethiopia. In **Gambella**, over 600 refugees and host community members were able to cultivate 156ha of Maize and Sorghum to support themselves, thanks to the Hilton Foundation's *Trade for peace* initiative. However, the absence of funding for the local soap production project in Jewi settlement will negatively impact refugee livelihood, health, hygiene and dignity. In **Afar**, refugees are engaged in various small-scale businesses: agriculture, mat making, crafts and goat rearing. UNHCR with its partner EECMY* provides in-kind assistance to help expand their businesses. Refugees have expressed their interest in vocational skills trainings to access better job opportunities and become self-reliant.

Resettlement

Over 500 refugees departed on various complementary pathways (family reunification, labor mobility or education scholarships) in January including 360 refugees on private sponsorship and 4 on family reunification. Additionally, 234 refugees are currently being considered for resettlement. Finally, UNHCR has facilitated the issuance of travel documents (CTDs) to 7 individuals to facilitate their access to complementary pathways.

LATEST UPDATES



SUDAN EMERGENCY

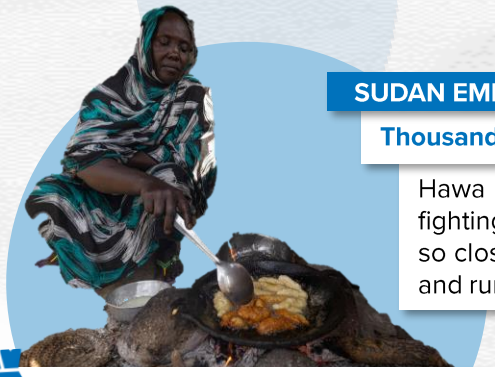
UN Launches Humanitarian and Refugee Response Plans For 2024

SUDAN EMERGENCY

UNHCR's Grandi Urges More Support For People Fleeing Sudan

REFUGEE INCLUSION

Ethiopia launches Digital IDs for refugees living in Addis Ababa



SUDAN EMERGENCY

Thousands of Sudanese Fleeing Violence Cross into Ethiopia

Hawa Ahmed Yassin, 40, was preparing breakfast when deadly fighting broke out in Sudan. Intense gunfire and heavy shelling were so close to her home that she and her family had to drop everything and run. Read the full story here.

FUNDING UPDATE | 2024

$426 million

Funding requirements for 2024

⚠ **Only 10% of our funding requirements have been met this year** causing critical gaps in our response especially considering the financial situation in 2023 (only 36% funded). UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors that have contributed to its work, as well as to those that have contributed to UNHCR programs globally with unearmarked or softly earmarked funds.

UNHCR Ethiopia is grateful for contributions by:

Canada | Funded by European Union Humanitarian Aid | German cooperation | Luxembourg Aid & Development | Cooperación Española | United Nations CERF | UNAIDS

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We are thankful to other donors for softly earmarked contributions

Norway

We are thankful to other donors for other unearmarked contributions

Sweden | Norway | Netherlands | Denmark | United Kingdom | Switzerland | Ireland | Belgium | Australia

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Together with the Government Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency aims to protect, assist and provide durable solutions for refugees and asylum-seekers in Ethiopia. UNHCR works to strengthen refugee protection through the expansion of improved community-based and multi-sectoral child protection and programs addressing gender-based violence (GBV).

Visit UNHCR Ethiopia's Operational Data Portal for more information products here.

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