UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

Country Summary as at 30 June 2023
(Update of Summary as at 30 June 2020)

FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia continues to be the third largest refugee-hosting country in Africa, providing protection to 925,861 refugees and asylum-seekers from 27 countries as of 30 June 2023 (+ 153,262 increase since the June 2020 baseline). The increase is mostly attributed to conflicts in Sudan and Somalia. While the country is one of the fastest growing economies in Africa, human development progress has stagnated since 2020 due to the multi-faceted challenges triggered mainly by the COVID-19 pandemic, political and ethnic conflicts, climate-related vagaries, inflation and a decline in development support. Also, the country has witnessed a sharp increase in the number of internally displaced persons (3,143,255) largely induced by internal conflict and drought (+1,397,117 increase) since the June 2020 baseline.

Despite all these challenges, Ethiopia continues to receive refugees, mostly from South Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, and Sudan, and continues to seek international support to facilitate investments in refugee hosting regions to catalyse development and gainful employment for refugee and host communities.

KEY POPULATION DATA (as of 30 June 2023)

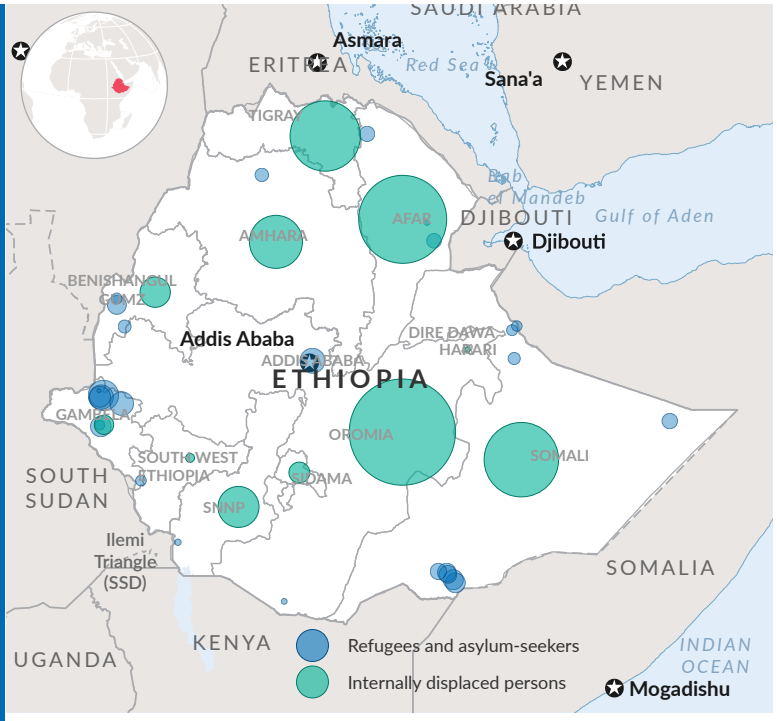
921,818
Refugees

4,043
Asylum-seekers

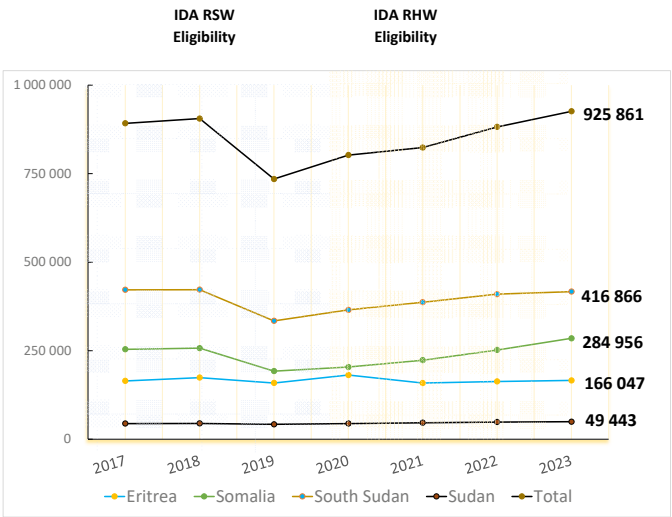
0.73%
of the country's population (126,527,060)

3,143,255
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

IDA 18 RSW / IDA 19 WHR/IDA 20 WHR Eligibility: September 2017



Refugees in Ethiopia live near 21 camps and 3 settlements near the borders of their country of origin, while some are hosted in new settlements in the Somali and Amhara Regions. Political disputes in Laascanood, Somaliland, led to 92,411 new refugees in Ethiopia's Somali Region while displacement continues. Clashes in Sudan caused refugees to flee to neighboring countries, including Ethiopia, with 16,413 new arrivals. New settlements include Mirqaan (29,032 Somali refugees), Alemwach (22,000 refugees relocated from Tigray), and Kumer (7,000 Sudanese refugees). The new settlement approach allows reufgees to be included in national systems and contribute to the economy instead of setting up camps. 106,448 refugees, mainly Eritreans, live outside camps, primarily in Addis Ababa. The majority have permits to live outside camps, but those who moved due to the North Ethiopia conflict do not.



RPRF Policy Dimensions

(as of 30 June 2023)

1. Host Communities

1.1 Support for communities in refugee-hosting areas

Since the 2020 baseline, there has been no notable change to Ethiopia's national fiscal/budget policies and mechanisms to provide for timely additional financial transfers to areas that are economically affected by the presence of refugees. The Government's Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project (DRDIP) and its successor DRDIP II, which was unveiled in December 2022, have remained the main example of programmes that use the national budget/expenditure and planning mechanisms to provide additional financing support for policy priorities in such areas. Due to a lack of technical assistance and financial resources for sub-national government institutions, the level of implementation of policies and devolving process in refugee hosting regions have continued to be limited in the reporting period.

The National Social Protection Policy (2016) that provides the policy framework for the provision of social safety nets for all Ethiopians, including host communities, has remained unchanged during this period. The Urban Safety Net Project (USNP) was succeeded by the Urban Productive Safety Net and Jobs Creation Project (UPSNJP) in October 2022 which will run until the end of 2025. It includes a Refugee and Host Integrated Safety Net (RHISN) sub-component that extends the safety net program to refugee hosting communities including those that were not previously covered under the USNP. It targets refugee and host community households across Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar, Somali, and Amhara Regional States.

1.2 Social cohesion

The applicable national policies that help in identifying, preventing, and mitigating potential social tension and risks of violence in refugee-hosting areas have remained unchanged during the period. However, the previous National Human Rights Action Plan, 2016-2020, expired and the revised version for the period of 2021-2025 was submitted to the Parliament but is not yet approved.

In practice, the social cohesion between refugees and host communities has remained largely the same. There has been a high level of interaction in Somali and Afar Regions and some interactions in Addis Ababa and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions. However, in Gambella Region, while there are amicable relations among refugees and host communities that belong to the same ethnic groups, quite often tension exists between the Anuak and Nuer ethnicities. Due to limited capacity and scarce financing, the implementation of policies relating to social cohesion has continued to be limited in the period. However, refugees and host communities largely share similar culture, language, ethnicity, religion and sometimes clanships, that has been further strengthened by trading, religious ceremonies, social occasions like marriage and funerals. Overall, attitudes of hosts towards refugees are generally positive; attitudes are notably better around Somali camps and worse around South Sudanese camps. In the Afar Region, refugees have engaged with the host community to secure land for sharecropping.

The number of formal and informal local governance mechanisms that are inclusive of refugees and promote peaceful co-existence, dialogue, joint activities, or civic engagement has increased since 2020. In addition to the existing Peace Committees and several customary dispute resolution mechanisms, new Peace Committees were established in Gambella, in January 2021, to manage existing tensions and conflicts between host communities as well as refugees and host communities.

The Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) and the Somali Regional Bureaus – Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSA) and Bureau of Women and Children Affairs (BoWCA) – have piloted a project in Jijiga covering the period of 2019-2023, which has brought together host and refugee community-based

structures to enhance peaceful coexistence and facilitate the integration of protection, care and support activities within both communities.

During this period, the community-based structures that were established by Refugees and Returnees Services (RRS) in camps, settlements and urban settings have continued to serve as a medium to resolve disputes arising between refugees and maintain peace and harmony. Also, they have continued to enhance community participation, ensuring that community members enjoy their rights on an equal footing and can participate fully in decisions that affect them. The guidelines for the establishment of dedicated 'Neighbourhood Relations Committees' (NRCs) for refugees and host communities is finalized and approved by RRS. However, it has not yet been implemented.

The policy frameworks to safeguard the equality of all persons before the law and their entitlement to the protection of the law without any discrimination have remained unchanged in this period. In practice, UNHCR believes that discrimination may have continued to occur in relation to gender, nationality, ethnicity and diverse sexual orientation and gender identities.

1.3 Environmental management

In addition to the five national policies that were introduced in the previous periods, additional policy improvements have been made in this period which mitigate the environmental impact of hosting refugees. In 2022, Ethiopia validated a costed Multi-Actor Cooking Energy Strategy for Refugees and Host Communities for the period of 2022-2023. The overall objective of this strategy is to improve sustainable access to clean, reliable, and affordable cooking energy solutions for refugees and hosting communities. Also, the Ethiopian Energy Authority (EEA) introduced a Mini Grid Directive, No. 268/2020, in December 2020, which has permitted the private sector to generate electricity from solar energy for commercial and non-commercial purposes. Based on this Directive, a solar mini-grid project in the Somali region, benefitting refugees and host communities in and around Shedder refugee camp and hosting communities, was licensed for commercial electricity generation and is expected to commence service at the end of 2023. Further, the National Electrification Program 2.0 (NEP II), which was initiated in 2019, has included refugee settings for on-grid and off-grid electrification. The Federal Ministry of Water and Energy (MoWE) has been developing a National Energy Policy which is yet to be finalized and endorsed. The policy will apply to all stakeholders that reside and operate in Ethiopia including refugees and displacement actors. The Prime Minister's Green Legacy Initiative has to date resulted in the planting of 25 billion seedlings by mobilizing more than 20 million Ethiopian citizens throughout the nation, including in refugee hosting regions.

In practice, implementation of the policies has continued to be a challenge in the period. The lack of effective implementation of the waste segregation and disposal process in refugee-hosting areas has remained as one of the challenges. During this period, the dependency on the natural environment to meet the demand for cooking energy and shelter construction continues to further aggravate the environmental degradation and deforestation in refugee camps and the surrounding hosting areas. Household lighting coverage is not more than 30 per cent; compared to the coverage in the 2020 baseline (56 per cent), the gains receded mainly due to the conflict in northern Ethiopia and lack of stock of distributed solar lamps. Less than 18 per cent of refugees have access to transitional and alternative cooking fuels; a slight increase (+1 per cent) from the baseline period. Increased cost of technologies, internal conflict and poor infrastructure within the displacement settings are the main challenges within this sector during the period. Further, limited allocation of resources to energy and environment interventions remained a consistent challenge to scale-up clean energy access and climate change adaptation.

The One WASH National Programme Phase II, that replaced Phase I in 2018, continued to implement water and sanitation policies during this period. However, refugee camps have remained excluded from the programme. Despite this exclusion, the Ethiopian National Guideline for Urban Water Utilities Tariff Setting, introduced by MoWE in 2013, has created a platform for integrated service delivery where refugees and host communities benefit from the same water systems. For instance, the Itang Water Utility in Gambella Region

and the Regional WASH project in Somali Region seeks to include investments in water and sanitation infrastructure for host communities, refugees, and internally displaced persons, as well as support for the establishment of efficient local water supply utilities.

1.4 Preparedness for refugee inflows

During the prescribed period, there has not been a national policy that provides the basis for a national preparedness framework, including institutional mechanisms, to respond to increased or new refugee inflows in ways that minimize short- and medium-term socioeconomic impacts on hosting regions. The 2017 CRRF Roadmap and the subsequent draft National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS), provided elements for a national preparedness framework. However, the framework has not been functional as the two policy documents have become obsolete.

In practice, responses to increased or new refugee inflows have continued to be guided by annual Refugee Response Plans (RRPs) that are developed, coordinated, and implemented through a Refugee Coordination Group (RCG) co-chaired by UNHCR and RRS consisting of national and regional sectorial working groups, donors, local partners, UN agencies, and refugee-led organizations. The RRPs continue to guide the response under the coordination leadership of the RCG; however, they have not been imbedded in the national policy base nor integrated into national institutional coordination structures during the period. UNHCR has continued to update its own contingency plans for Ethiopia to respond to major events that would significantly affect the continuation of regular response; the latest contingency plan was updated in May 2023 for the period of May 2023-April 2024.

2. Regulatory Environment and Governance

2.1 Normative framework

During the prescribed period, the Refugees Proclamation, Proc. No.1110/2019, and its three Directives, on Refugees' Right to Work, Freedom of Movement and Grievances and Appeals Handling, have continued to provide the overall national legal framework for the protection of refugees in Ethiopia. However, the 2017 CRRF Roadmap has been dormant during the period. The lack of subsidiary laws including comprehensive regulation and directives has continued to limit the full implementation of the Refugees Proclamation. Despite that, some progress has been made in operationalizing the legislative framework.

At the national level, Directive No. 772/2021 issued by the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) to regulate work permits for expatriates employed in investments has included recognized refugees within its scope. In addition, asylum-seekers, and refugees, under the broad definition of resident, are also included in the Ethiopia Digital Identification Proclamation No. 1284/2023. Further, a MoU was signed between RRS and the Ministry of Labor and Skills, in November 2022, to facilitate the provision of work permits to refugees. In September 2021, a MoU was signed between the Jobs Creation Commission and the RRS on cooperation in areas of inclusion of returnees, refugees, and host communities in the national job creation plan and initiatives.

At the sub-national level, a tripartite MoU was signed between RRS, the Somali Regional State and UNHCR, in May 2023, to pursue inclusion and local integration of the refugee population in Kebribeyah refugee camp as well as facilitate the sustainable development and integration of the refugee camp into Kebribeyah town and the surrounding woredas (districts) In addition, an MoU was signed between these three parties in May 2023 to follow a settlement approach (in opposition to setting up refugee camps) from an outset of an emergency for those refugees that fled to Ethiopia due to the recent conflict in Somalia. These policy frameworks are further elaborated in the subsequent policy and sub-policy dimensions.

The change in the Government's shift in focus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the conflict in northern

Ethiopia, and other impeding issues have slowed down the implementation and the realization of the rights of refugee rights in the period. Weak coordination between RRS, line ministries, State Departments and service providers, lack of harmonization with other laws, and limited capacity of national systems to integrate refugees have continued to be major hurdles to the realization of the rights of refugees in Ethiopia.
During this period, the three directives have been published and disseminated in relevant languages. However, the limited awareness of applicable refugee rights and entitlements among relevant stakeholders and refugees has continued to be a challenge. Notably, there is limited information on the policy environment at the Regional Government level across all refugee hosting areas.

There has been some progress made towards realizing the pledge made by the Government of Ethiopia at the GRF in 2019 to strengthen the national asylum system and implement the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) section of the Refugees Proclamation. RRS established an RSD unit in June 2022 and an Appealing Hearing Council (AHC) in March 2023. These institutional structures were set up in a bid to assume full responsibility to adjudicate at first instance and in appeal asylum claims. Further, a draft RSD Directive and an internal guideline for the AHC have been developed and are awaiting approval by RRS. An assessment conducted by RRS, in January 2023, identified, among other issues, that the RSD procedures are not sufficiently harmonized, the standard operating procedures (SOPs) lack clarity, and there is a lack of sufficient dedicated RSD staff.

The *prima facie* approach for granting refugee status has continued to apply for Somalis from South and Central Somalia (and recently for those that fled from Laascanood, Somaliland), South Sudanese, Sudanese from Blue Nile and South Kordofan, and Yemenis who arrived in Ethiopia after 1 January 2015. All other nationalities have continued to undergo individual RSD procedures in the period. Following the Government decision, in January 2020, to change the previous asylum policy of prima facie refugee recognition for Eritreans, asylum-seekers from Eritrea have been required to undergo individual RSD in the prescribed period. However, when the war erupted in November 2020, the access to registration, documentation and asylum procedures were suspended in Tigray Region where Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers were hosted. As a result, from that time until 30 June 2023, no Eritrean asylum seeker was registered with RRS. In the other parts of the country, including Addis Ababa, access to asylum procedures, which had been partially restricted as of April 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic, was fully suspended in November 2021 after a State of Emergency (hereinafter SoE) was declared because of the war in northern Ethiopia. Even after the SoE was lifted in February 2022, registration, documentation, and access to asylum remained largely suspended with notable exceptions for the new arrivals from Somalia and Sudan emergencies in 2023. Accordingly, RRS has conducted the registration and recognition on prima facie basis of refugee status for thousands of new arrivals from Laascanood, Somalia. Similarly, Ethiopia has been receiving and registering thousands of Sudanese and non-Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict-affected areas in Sudan. However, since November 2021 asylum-seekers not covered by the prima facie approach have faced challenges with registration and the processing of their application. Registered asylum-seekers awaiting a decision on their claim enjoy similar rights as recognized refugees.

2.2 Security of legal status

The policy framework regarding security of legal status of refugees in Ethiopia has remained unchanged during this period. There have not been major trends of unlawful termination of refugee status through cancellation, revocation or cessation. However, the closure of all land borders announced by the Government in March 2020, as one of the measures to curb the spread of COVID-19, was prolonged during the SoE. In practice, asylum-seekers have continued to cross the border into the country gaining *de facto* access to the territory. While RRS has gradually resumed limited registration and documentation activities, including issuance of Proof of Registration, newborn registration and issuance of pass permits, the issuance and renewal of refugee ID cards remain suspended since November 2021. There have been a few instances where access to asylum was denied at the Bole international airport in Addis Ababa to some individuals as they did not possess an “Immigration Letter” issued by the Immigration and Citizenship Service (ICS). This requirement by RRS is not envisaged in the Refugee Proclamation.

Since May 2023, mass detention of Eritrean refugees and unregistered Eritreans have reportedly increased in Addis Ababa, with a few hundred reportedly forcibly returned to Eritrea. Though RRS managed to secure the release of most of the registered refugees, a few cases of refugee refoulement were encountered. UNHCR and RRS have been working closely with the security and immigration bodies, conducting training to sensitize the relevant authorities on the rights of refugees and asylum-seekers to prevent the occurrence of similar incidents. UNHCR has been supporting RRS to expeditiously resume registration and documentation services to mitigate risks of detention and refoulement of refugees and asylum seekers.

2.3 Institutional framework for refugee management and coordination

The national institutional framework for refugee management called for by the 2017 CRRF Roadmap and the draft National Comprehensive Refugee Response Strategy (NCRRS) has remained dormant since 2019. As such, there is currently no policy basis for a national institutional framework for refugee management that would involve sectoral line ministries, foster coordination between local levels of Government or provide leadership. In practice, the Refugee Coordination Group (RCG) has continued to provide the platform for refugee coordination and management.

Meanwhile, after the current Government was formed in October 2021, the Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA), that was under the Ministry of Peace, was re-established as the Refugees and Returnees Services (RRS), accountable to the National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS). This was made by virtue of the Definition of Powers and Duties of the Executive Organs Proclamation No. 1263/2021. While RRS has, in effect, maintained its traditional mandate, it does not yet have an established Regulation detailing its powers, responsibilities and functions, including how it seeks to foster coordination. Having a legally defined power, structure and accountability would assist RRS in clearly articulating and strengthening its protection mandate.

The refugee community governance structures have continued to function and provide refugee inputs and feedback to the Government in the prescribed period. However, the level of functionality of other associations such as women's associations, youth associations and religious leaders' associations has continued to vary from area to area. These associations are registered by RRS but lack legal personality. The Grievances and Appeals Handling Directive No 03/2019, which sets out grievance mechanisms relating to misconduct committed by RRS has not yet been functional.

A national population census has not been conducted since 2007, although refugees have been included in administrative data collection. RRS has continued to provide refugee vital events data to the ICS and refugee education data to the Ministry of Education (MoE). The steps taken at the sectoral level to include refugees in education sector planning have been further strengthened. Refugee data have been included in the Rapid Justice Sector Assessment that was conducted from July 2020-July 2021 at the national level by the government Justice Sector Steering Committee commissioned by UN agencies (UN Women, UNODC, UNDP, UNICEF, and OHCHR).

2.4 Access to civil registration and documentation

In line with the Refugees Proclamation, refugees have continued to be entitled to receive identification documents during this period. Policy improvements have been made that further enhance access to official identification and digital inclusion of refugees. Based on the national identity programme and the national digital strategy 2025, the Ethiopia Digital Identification Proclamation No. 1284/2023, which was enacted in March 2023, entitles refugees and asylum-seekers the right to register for and obtain digital identification. However, the lack of readily available guidelines (subsidiary legislations) that are meant to set requirements for issuance, period of validity, and benefits associated with identity papers has continued to pose a challenge in the period.

In practice, the suspension of registration and documentation services including issuance and renewal of refugee identity documents following the COVID-19 restrictions and the SoE has led to the expiry of

refugee ID cards for the majority of refugees affecting the enjoyment of their rights including access to socio-economic services. This has led to increased rates of forgery as a coping mechanism and has exposed refugees to the risks of arbitrary arrest and refoulement. To date, almost 92 per cent of the refugee population eligible for an ID card (above the age 14), do not have a valid ID card and more than 11,000 refugee families do not have any proof of registration. However, Government (RRS) led registration and documentation activities have been gradually resuming in Addis Ababa and in field locations. Recently, RRS fully managed the Level-1 registration of more than 92,000 new arrivals from Laascanood, Somalia. In addition, Refugee Convention Travel Documents (CTDs) have continued to be issued during this period. However, CTDs are non machine-readable and therefore not compliant with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards. The issuance and delivery process has remained very long as it involves RRS, Immigration Citizenship Services (ICS), and UNHCR, and its short validity period (one year only) has exposed refugees to various protection risks and challenges as re-entry to Ethiopia needs to happen within this short period.

The identity documents have been increasingly recognized by both the public and private sectors, enabling refugees to access legal rights and services provided by the Government, such as social services, healthcare, and the judicial system. In addition, they have continued to access services provided by private entities, such as financial services, telecommunications, mobile money, and employment opportunities using such documents. Nevertheless, there is a continuing lack of awareness from some service providers, particularly in the private sector, which hesitate to recognize refugee identity documents.

Policy improvements have been witnessed for vital events registration activities during this period. Refugees have been included in the Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Systems (CRVS) Improvement Strategy and the Costed Action Plan of Ethiopia (2021-2026). Also, refugees have been included in the National Social and Behaviour Change Strategy to Increase Demand for Vital Events Registration, introduced in March 2021 and aimed at raising awareness about vital events registration.

In practice, the Government has taken steps to simplify and improve access to birth registration and civil documentation in line with the pledges made at the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness and the 2019 Global Refugee Forum, which has removed procedural barriers that require the presence of both parents to register the birth of a child. Also, dedicated RRS staff (birth registrars) were recruited to address the staffing shortage. The integration of refugees into the national civil registry services is so far limited to the out-of-camps refugees.

However, some policy and institutional gaps have remained during this period. Refugee children born out of health facilities have not been registered and remain at risk of statelessness as the policy framework does not specifically address the issue of community births. Also, the parallel structure of ICS registering vital events of nationals and RRS registering vital events of refugees has led to several challenges with respect to coordination, efficiency, accessibility, and capacity of the system. Furthermore, the parallel system does not guarantee refugee children access to national birth registration services in a manner comparable to nationals in the same situation. Hence, integrating the refugee vital events registration into the national system requires amendment of Vital Events Registration laws.

During the prescribed period, the suspension of birth registration due to COVID-19, SoE, and technical issues related to the digitalization process, have led to an increase in the birth registration backlog. A backlog clearance exercise targeting refugee children below the age of three years was conducted, however, considering the enormity of the task, additional resources are required to clear it.

2.5 Justice and security

During the prescribed period, the overall security situation in Ethiopia has deteriorated due to political and ethnic conflicts that have dire consequences for both nationals and refugees. UNHCR believes it is likely that the levels of security enjoyed by refugees as compared to nationals were lower than at the time of the 2020 baseline. In the Benishangul Region, due to the fighting between armed groups and federal forces,

refugees had to be evacuated from two camps (Tongo and Gure-Shombola) and relocated to another camp (Tsore Camp) in 2022. In Tigray, due to the war, four camps were closed (Hitsats, Shimelba, Mai Aini and Adi Harush) which resulted in the relocation of refugees mainly to Alemwach settlement in the Amhara Region and Addis Ababa. In the Afar Region, refugees were forced to abandon the camp (Berhale Camp) and seek refuge in other parts of the Region due to the war; the refugee camp has since re-opened. Furthermore, the refugee security services were disrupted during the SoE (November 2021- February 2022), and multiple conflicts in various regions resulted in the relocation of refugees to different camps and settlements. While the overall security situation for refugees and host communities improved after the signing of a peace deal between the Government of Ethiopia and the Tigrayan People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in November 2022, several challenges remained. In Addis Ababa, urban refugees have faced detention and arrest without court appearance. Undocumented Eritrean asylum-seekers and refugees have been at high risk of arbitrary detention and deportation.

Refugees have remained entitled to access law enforcement and justice on par with nationals through the Constitution and the Refugees Proclamation during this period. Some policy and institutional improvements have been made to operationalize this access. For instance, refugees were explicitly included as a priority category in the National Free Legal Aid Service Strategy, which was developed by the Ministry of Justice in 2022 and is pending approval by the Ministry. The Ministry of Justice also developed a green paper titled "Transitional Justice Policy Options in Ethiopia" which was made public in January 2023. The policy options serve as a basis for the nationwide consultations including refugees and IDPs to gather inputs consultations that will inform and lay the foundations for the crafting of a nationally led and human right-centred transitional justice policy for Ethiopia. Further, RRS has commenced work on a roadmap to better connect and integrate camp-justice systems and refugee justice providers into local and national justice systems. However, significant policy improvements are still required to integrate the specific justice needs and criminal acts faced by refugees in relevant national justice, law enforcement and crime prevention policies and systems.

During this period, in line with the Refugees Proclamation that entitles refugees equal enjoyment of rights with nationals for protection against gender-based violence, the National Standard Operating Procedures for Shelter Services to Women and Girls Survivors of Violence in Ethiopia (2020) has included refugees and asylum-seekers in the Women Shelters that provide services to GBV survivors. However, the development of a sector wide national GBV strategy is still not finalized.

In practice, access to law enforcement and justice has remained limited for refugees in Ethiopia mainly due to capacity constraints. Refugees have continued to rely on informal/traditional justice resolution mechanisms including for GBV related issues in the period. UNHCR observes that the findings of the 2020 Social Analysis and the 2020 JNS Survey that were conducted in the baseline period, namely that both refugees and host communities were affected by these challenges but refugee GBV survivors disproportionally so, have remained unchanged during this period.

3. Economic Opportunities

3.1 Freedom of movement

In the prescribed period, the Refugees Proclamation and the Directive No 01/2019 to Determine Conditions for Movement and Residence of Refugees outside of camps, have continued to provide the legal framework for the right to freedom of movement and freedom to choose residence of refugees.

Despite the 2019 Refugees Proclamation acknowledging refugees' right to freedom of movement and the 2019 related Directive passed by RRS, refugees *de facto* continue to face an encampment policy. The above directive offers limited possibilities to obtain an out-of-camp permit based on the fulfilment of stringent conditions, to which many refugees are not eligible. In practice, less than 10 per cent of the total refugee population in the country still live outside of camps. Evidently, the figure of those that live outside of camps seems to represent meaningful progress to implement the Out-of-Camp (OCP) pledge made by Ethiopia in

2016, but a considerable proportion of Eritrean refugees were impacted by the mass self-relocation from the refugee camps to Addis due to the war. The Government issued OCP permits for the majority of these refugees considering their presence in Addis Ababa and the lack of other viable options. However, the diversity of beneficiaries of the OCP permit has remained to be a challenge since most of the beneficiaries are still Eritrean refugees. In practice, refugees have continued to move around freely in the areas close to the camps without an OCP permit during this time.
During the period, refugees have continued to face procedural hurdles when they intend to move outside of their designated place of residence due to the pass permit requirement. Also, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, followed by the SoE and the impact of the war, have severely restricted the freedom of movement of refugees. Despite the lifting of the SoE in February 2022, the provision of several services including documentation, registration and access to asylum have remained suspended with a continued adverse impact on refugees' ability to move from place to place.

3.2 Right to work and rights at work

The Refugees Proclamation and the Refugees Right to Work Directive, Directive No.02/2019, have continued to provide the legal framework for refugees right to work and rights at work in Ethiopia along with other relevant national laws. However, the Right to Work Directive and other subsidiary laws have not clarified the comparator group of foreign nationals that would have defined the scope of the "most favourable treatment accorded to foreign nationals" standard of treatment for refugees' access to rights to work. Ethiopia distinguishes the foreign nationals of Ethiopian origin (such as the members of the Rastafarian community from Jamaica) and other foreigners. Furthermore, the discrepancies between the Refugees Proclamation, the Right to Work Directive and applicable national laws relating to the right to work have remained and are yet to be addressed through subsidiary laws.

There is no known case of refugees working in the formal sector while many refugees seek waged work or self-employment in the informal sector. There is, however, no available data on the percentage or number of refugees employed in the formal and informal sectors. Overall, refugee youth face high rates of inactivity and unemployment relative to hosts, especially in Addis and in Eritrean camps. According to the Ethiopia 2019 GRF Pledge Report, published in June 2023, approximately 129,000 economic opportunities have been created for refugees and host communities in the agriculture and livestock sectors through 14 joint projects with development and humanitarian partners. This surpasses Ethiopia's 2019 GRF pledge to create 90,000 economic opportunities in the same sectors by 2024.

During the reporting period and in line with the Right to Work Directive that sets out the provisions that may facilitate the lifting of restrictions related to documentation, a MoU was signed between RRS and the Ministry of Labor and Skills, in November 2022, to facilitate the provision of work permit for refugees. Under this arrangement, RRS is delegated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs (MoLSA) to issue work permits for refugees. Similarly, a MoU was signed between the Jobs Creation Commission and the RRS in September 2021 to foster cooperation in areas of inclusion of returnees, refugees, and host communities on the national job creation plan and initiatives. In practice, RRS has issued around 14,800 work permits and residence permits to refugees including those issued in 2020: 7,200 residence permits issued to refugees participating in joint projects and 7,600 work permits issued for refugees engaged in wage earning employment or self-employment outside of the joint projects. The issuance of the residence permit is ongoing, and the exact figures remain to be verified by an Independent Verification Agent (IVA).

A new addition to the existing framework is the Ethiopian Investment Commission (EIC) Directive Regulating the Issuance of Work Permit to Expats Employed in Investments and the Implementation of Knowledge and Skill Transfer from Expats to Ethiopians, Directive No.772/2021, which provides that recognized refugees, holding a valid identity paper and engaged in wage-earning employment outside the context of joint projects, could be issued with work permits to be employed in investments, whose administration fall within the mandate of the EIC. The Directive exempts eligible refugees from the requirements of a passport, entry visa, and service charges. In practice, there are no known cases of refugees who have accessed work permits under this Directive.

In addition, it has been a challenge for refugees to access business licenses as multiple agencies need to coordinate for this purpose i.e., RRS, the Ministry of Trade and Urban city administrations. Further, refugees do not possess a Tax Identification Number (TIN), which also complicates their ability to formally pay taxes or access financial services. Refugees have nevertheless continued to open small business-like shops in the refugee camps without fulfilling the legal requirement.

The Refugees Proclamation coupled with the Labor Proclamation provide refugees with the same protection as nationals including with regard to terms of working conditions, wages, safeguards against child employment, the right to a safe and healthy working environment, the right to fair wages and benefits, and the right to join trade unions. Further, organizations that employ refugees have continued to be required to comply with Ethiopian labor laws and regulations, including those related to occupational health and safety, working hours, and minimum wage.

The Refugees Proclamation has continued to grant refugees the right to acquire professional certificates/ diplomas recognized by the competent authorities of the host Government and allows them to practice a profession on the same basis as the most favorably treated foreigners. However, the discrepancies between the Refugees Proclamation and the various profession-specific regulations have continued to pose a challenge to the implementation of those rights. In practice, there are no known cases of refugees engaging in liberal professions in the reporting period.

3.3 Land, housing, and property rights

The national policy and legal framework governing the HLP rights of refugees has remained unchanged during this period. The scope and limitations of refugees' rights to acquire, transfer, lease or use immovable property including land and buildings, as provided under Article 29 of the Refugees Proclamation, have not been clearly specified in subsidiary legislations. As a result, the most favourable treatment that refugees are entitled to regarding the right to immovable property has not been elucidated. Furthermore, the framework and procedures for refugees to access agricultural and irrigable land for joint projects, as stipulated in Article 26 of the Refugees Proclamation, giving wider rights of use, have not been clearly defined in subsidiary laws including in the Refugees Rights to Work Directive No.02/2019. In practice, in Melkadida, Somali Region, refugees have continued to access irrigable lands outside of the lease arrangement through the framework of an MoU entered between UNHCR, RRS and the Somali National Regional State in 2016.

During this period, RRS has started to gradually transition from camps to a settlement approach in the new refugee settlements in Alemwach, the Amhara Region and Bokh in the Somali Region. Also, the MoU signed between RRS, the Somali Region and UNHCR to upgrade the Kebribeyah Camp as a settlement and integrate it with Kebribeyah town will enhance refugees HLP rights.

Regarding access to social/public housing schemes, the legal framework has remained unchanged. In practice, there are no reports of refugees accessing public/social housing schemes during the period.

3.4 Financial and administrative services

In the prescribed period, the Refugees Proclamation has continued to provide the legal and policy base for refugees' access to financial services, including opening bank accounts, on par with nationals.

In practice, the number of refugees who are able to open bank accounts has continued to rise in most locations during the period, particularly where cash-based interventions have been implemented by UNHCR. In locations where telecom infrastructures are in place, refugees have continued to get sim cards as well as access to mobile banking services. However, they still face difficulties accessing credit facilities mostly because of a lack of clear procedures, limited awareness of refugee rights among financial service providers and a lack of collateral/savings to back the loan request. Further, refugees have continued to obtain driver's qualification licenses and telecommunication services by fulfilling the necessary requirements

using the identification document provided by RRS. However, data on the figure of refugees who access these services is not available. During this period, the main challenge for refugees to access financial and administrative services has resulted from the suspension of registration and documentation services by RRS following the declaration of the SoE.

The Refugees Proclamation has continued to recognize refugees' foreign academic and vocational qualifications as per the most favorable treatment accorded to foreign nationals. However, data is not available on the figure of refugees who have authenticated their educational credentials in the prescribed period.

The national policy framework for refugees to access national skills development opportunities has remained unchanged in the period. In practice, refugees have continued to access skills development opportunities supported by NGOs. A case in point is the Qualification and Employment Perspectives (QEP) program, 2019-2023 – commissioned by the German Ministry for Economic Development (BMZ), co-financed by the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORD) and implemented by German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) – a key initiative that provides quality and accredited skills training for refugees and host communities with linkages to the labor market.

4. Access to National Public Services

4.1 Education

During this period, policy improvements have been made that further enhanced the inclusion of refugees in the national education system. Based on the provision of the Refugees Proclamation that entitles refugees access to education, the Ministry of Education (MoE) has included refugee education in the sixth series of the Education Sector Development Plan (ESDP VI), for the period of 2020-2025, which is an important milestone as it is a guiding policy document regarding education in Ethiopia. In line with the Djibouti Declaration, the Government has finalized and started the implementation of the multi-year action plan to cost education for refugees and host communities that started in December 2019. The costed action plan has generated some support for teachers' capacity building in secondary schools. Further, as a result of the continued inclusion of refugee data in the Education Management Information systems (EMIS), refugee education data has been integrated in the Education Statistical Annual Abstract (ESAA), a national yearbook of the MoE that is published every year.

In practice, refugee students completing secondary education who are eligible to join tertiary education have been automatically placed in public universities regardless of their status. Further, the inclusion of refugees in ESDP VI has generated additional support from the World Bank (WB) which has extended the General Education Quality Improvement Program on Equity (GEQIP-E, 2017- 2022) until 2025. Subsequently, two secondary schools have been handed over to the Gambella and Somali Regional Education Bureaus (REB) which is part of a plan to include 13 secondary schools in the MoE/Regional Education Bureaus by the end of 2025.

During this period, the education authorities have provided quality assurance services, including the supervision, inspection, registration and accreditation of schools established in the refugee camps. Moreover, the training of teachers from schools in the refugee camps (both refugee and Ethiopian teachers) in the Teachers' Education Colleges has been a good inclusion practice. In addition, the MoU that was signed between RRS, the Somali Regional Government and UNHCR in May 2023 to guide the inclusion of refugees in the national services provision, including in Kebribeyah and Doolo Zone, is a positive step towards the inclusion of refugees in the national education system.

The available data shows a total of 4,280 pupils (1,375 females), close to 1 per cent of the school-age population, have enrolled in the national education system. This figure does not include refugees under the

OCP program as their data has been integrated with that of host communities. Also, the number of refugees in the national education system has remained very low due to the remoteness of the refugee camps and limited presence of host community schools. The earlier gains made have receded due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in North Ethiopia. During the 2021/2022 academic year, participation of refugee children and youth in education, expressed as Gross Enrolment Rate (GER) for pre-primary, stood at 42.6 per cent while it was 44 per cent for Ethiopian nationals. For primary and secondary education, GER for refugees was 50.8 per cent and 14 per cent respectively compared to 97.2 per cent and 45 per cent for Ethiopian nationals. Overall, the figures for refugee children have continued to trail significantly behind the national GER for Ethiopia children, and the gender and regional disparities have remained huge. In effect, both hosts and refugees have low educational attainment. However, primary and secondary net enrolment rates are higher for hosts compared to refugees, especially for secondary schooling. Furthermore, Out-of-camp refugees and hosts have a relatively better education level than those in the camp settings.

The lack of awareness and buy-in of the inclusion agenda at various levels of the Federal Government and the lack of capacity and resources of refugee hosting regions have continued to pose challenges during this period. Further, refugees and host communities have continued to have little or no access to specialized education programs and tertiary education due to the lack of available resources and implementation gaps.

4.2 Health care

During this period, based on the Refugees Proclamation that entitles refugees to access the health services under the same conditions as nationals, progressive steps have been taken to include refugees in the national healthcare systems including in the available national sexual and reproductive service for refugee women and girls. The Ethiopia Health Sector Transformation Plan II (HSTP – II), 2020/2021 – 2024/2025, unlike its predecessor, HSTP (2015/2016 – 2019/2020), provides for a mitigation plan for the risk of population changes due to refugee influxes. Also. unlike the previous policy framework, the 2017 National Malaria Elimination Roadmap of Ethiopia, the Ethiopia Malaria Elimination Strategic Plan, 2021- 2025, has explicitly included refugees.

While the National Strategic Plan (NSP) for Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control, 2013/2014- 2020, only mentioned refugees as a population to be included in advocacy, communication, and social mobilization, the subsequent NSP for Tuberculosis and Leprosy Control, 2021- 2026 opens the door to refugee inclusion. The HIV/AIDS National Strategic Plan, 2021 – 2025, has included refugees and determined the services that they would access. While refugees access Ministry of Health (MoH) vaccines both in camp-based and government public health facilities, the Ethiopia National Expanded Programme on Immunization, 2021-2025, does not include tailored strategies to cover refugees and asylum-seekers.

One considerable progress is the MoU signed between UNHCR, RRS, and the Somali Regional Government, in May 2023, which anchors refugee access to all levels of government health facilities within the Somali region of Ethiopia thus eliminating a parallel health system.

Despite the positive development, the financial resource and capacity limitations coupled with the continuous occurrence of epidemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic, malaria, and measles, as well as the damage to health facilities caused by the conflict have affected the provision of healthcare services in the period.

Data on the figure of refugees who have accessed all the levels of the national healthcare facilities during this period is not available as the national health information system does not disaggregate data based on nationals/refugee/asylum-seeker status. However, in 2022, over 5,800 refugees accessed government healthcare facilities for secondary and tertiary (specialized medical care) healthcare. In practice, refugees in urban areas have continued to access public health facilities at similar conditions to nationals which include cost recovery for certain services. Tuberculosis, HIV and leprosy treatment, vaccines, and essential SRH services are received free of cost at public health facilities. However, refugees often need to pay from their pocket in public health facilities due to the limited availability of other general medicines and medical

supplies. In camp settings, the Government has continued to provide refugees with all health services at no cost including HIV testing and treatment, tuberculosis and leprosy treatment, and routine vaccinations from the MoH free of charge. Refugees requiring secondary or tertiary healthcare outside of the camps have continued to access MoH facilities on the same conditions as nationals. On average, 14 per cent (+4 per cent from the 2020 baseline) of the users of the camp-based health system have been host communities.
During this period, refugees have not been included in the national health insurance scheme (CBHI). The first part of the feasibility study done by UNHCR/ILO in 2022 to determine the possibility of enrolling urban refugees in Addis Ababa is due by the end of 2023.

Despite the positive developments, financial resource and capacity limitations, coupled with the continuous occurrence of epidemics such as the COVID-19 pandemic, malaria, and measles, as well as the damage to health facilities caused by the conflict, have affected the provision of healthcare services in the period.

4.3 Social protection

The Refugees Proclamation, coupled with the National Social Protection Policy (NSPP) and National Social Protection Strategy (NSPS), provide the overarching policy directions for the provision of social protection to refugees. No further policy framework was introduced during this period, however, which expounds on the extent to which refugees and nationals have access to basic levels of assistance.

The social protection system in Ethiopia has continued to face several gaps and challenges. The policy framework lacks a comprehensive and integrated framework, with weak budget allocation and limited partnership forums hindering a coordinated response at the national level. Program planning and implementation suffer from a lack of comprehensive standards and equitable implementation, along with limited public participation in program design. The institutional arrangement and capacity of the social protection system also has weaknesses. The social welfare system lacks specialized social workers, inadequate oversight, and service delivery for vulnerable groups.

In practice, UNHCR and other international humanitarian partners have continued to provide basic level of assistance to refugees, including to those with specific needs such as persons with disabilities and older persons.

During the prescribed period, there has not been any attempt at creating an overarching framework for a dialogue between the Government and international partners with a view to gradually aligning aid, social protection systems and support for refugees and host community members with specific needs, in terms of coverage, targeting and levels of benefits.

4.4 Protection for vulnerable groups

Progressive steps have been taken to further implement the provision of the Refugees Proclamation that entitles refugee groups with specific needs to access government-provided care and protection systems in a manner comparable to nationals in the same situation during this period. Refugee children have been included in the National Strategy and Action Plan on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC), 2021-2026. Moreover, the One Stop Centre (OSC) Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), which were introduced in 2022, have included refugees and asylum-seekers as equal beneficiaries of services provided in the Centres. The OSCs provide holistic response service to GBV survivors, including health, psychosocial, legal and safety and security. In addition, MoWSA introduced the Child Protection National Case Management Framework in 2019 which also benefits refugees.

Refugees and asylum-seekers have also been accessing shelter services provided by the Network of Women Shelters across the country on an equal basis. The shelters provide longer term shelter services for GBV survivors who need time apart from their prior residential area and possibly from their offenders in cases of cohabitation. Furthermore, based on available resources, shelters provide various services such

as accommodation, counselling, health support, business skills training, family reunification, vocational skills training etc. RRS is a stakeholder in the National Strategy on Violence Against Women and Children (VAWC) in Ethiopia, 2021 – 2026, which is at the final stage of revision.

In practice, the absence of an integrated child-specific law, the lack of clarity in the application of domestic laws and policies concerning refugee children, and the overlap of roles among the government child protection agencies, Ministry of Women and Social Affairs (MoWSA) and RRS, creating a parallel system, have been some of the barriers for refugee children to access national child protection services. In addition, an assessment conducted by UNICEF in five Regions, in July 2020, on barriers faced by women and children's survivors of violence in accessing response services in refugee and host communities, revealed a dissatisfaction with service quality including the lack of capacity to respond to issues, provision of inadequate support, confidentiality gaps and inaccessibility.

5. Cross Sectors

Characteristics of registered refugees and asylum-seekers in total refugee population
as of 30 June 2023

56.05% Children

2.34% Older persons

1.17% Persons with disabilities

52.62% Men/Boys

47.38% Women/Girls

5.1 Gender

A change occurred in the top-five policy sub-dimensions where differences or restrictions in terms of the policies and/or their implementation in relation to gender are most consequential for socioeconomic development. The current listing is as per below, replacing the right to work with documentation:

a. **Social cohesion:** As evidenced in the different assessments conducted during this period with the refugee communities, meaningful participation of women in decision making opportunities is still minimal.
b. **Justice and security:** The lack of livelihood opportunities, frequent food cuts, delays in food distribution, and the overall instability and conflict in the country have exposed women and girls to GBV risks.
c. **Education:** The drastic drop in attendance of schools by girls has remained a challenge. With 0.3 per cent gender parity in secondary schools during this period, girls drop out of school starting with upper primary classes due to several reasons, including early marriage and responsibilities in unpaid care and domestic work they have in their households.
d. **Health care:** The limited levels of access to sexual and reproductive health services have continued to be a challenge in the period.

e. **Documentation:** The suspension of registration and documentation and limited access to vital event documentation have created additional vulnerabilities for women and girls with critical consequences for all other policy sub-dimensions.

5.2 Social inclusion

The sub-dimensions where differences and/or restrictions in relation to refugee characteristics – age, gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, country of origin, statelessness, political opinions, indigenous status, disability, sexual orientation, membership of a particular social group or others – are most consequential in terms of socioeconomic development remained the same during the period. Freedom of movement has been added as a sub-dimension due to a lack of progress beyond one particular refugee nationality.

a. **Security of legal status:** inconsistent access to the asylum system and registration and documentation services with different case processing approaches have exposed several population groups to protection risks and impacted negatively on their ability to access sustainable livelihoods and opportunities for certain solutions, such as family reunification.
b. **Freedom of movement:** most of the refugees who benefited from the OCP Policy thus far have been Eritreans.
c. **Education:** The lack of targeted support for refugee children with special needs has continued to be a challenge.
d. **Access to civil registration and documentation:** The suspension of the registration process and renewal of identification documents during the period have hindered the prospect for socioeconomic inclusions and development.