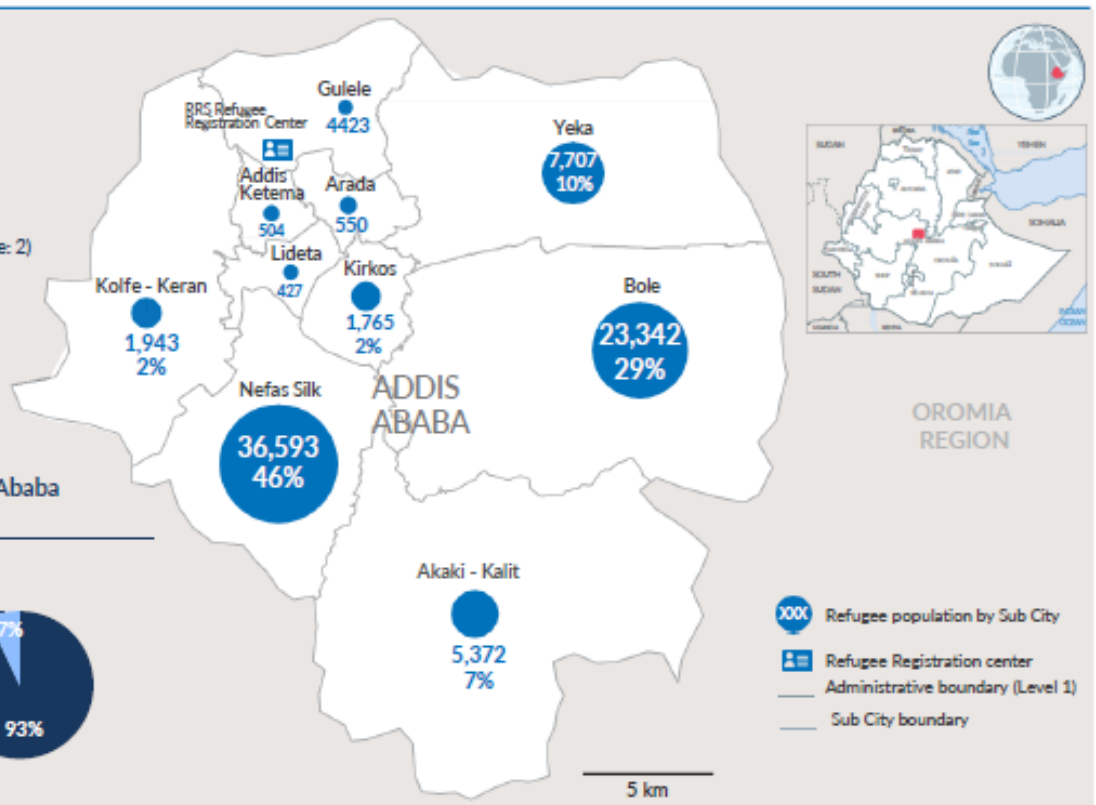
UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency

UNHCR ETHIOPIA

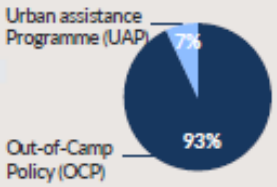
ANNUAL URBAN FACTSHEET 2024

79,253
Individuals

46,765
Households
(average household size: 2)



Refugees in Addis Ababa by category

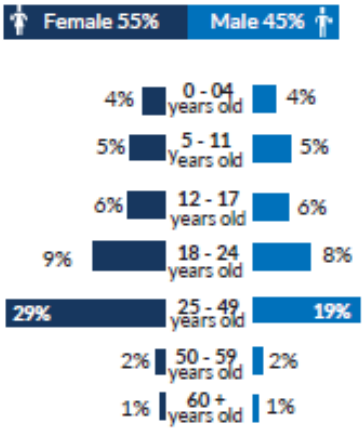


Country of origin

Refugees residing in Addis Ababa come from 28 different countries

Eritrea	73,092 (92%)
Yemen	2,513 (3%)
Somalia	1,167 (1%)
South Sudan	739
Syrian Arab Rep.	734
Congo DRC	396
Sudan	167
Burundi	69
Djibouti	55
Others	321

Age-gender breakdown



Children (0 -17 years) 29%

Adults (18 - 59 years) 69%

Elderly (60+) 2%

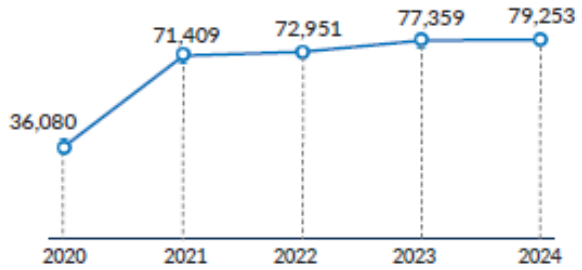
Women & Children 70%

Head of Household

Female 59%

Male 41%

Urban population trends | Dec 2020 - Dec 2024



The refugee population in Addis Ababa doubled in December 2021, mainly due to self-relocation movements of Eritrean refugees from Tigray region.

Persons with specific needs

	F	M	Total
Woman at risk	12,155		12,155
Single parent	3,107	76	3,183
Child at risk	1,380	1,519	2,899
Unaccompanied or separated child	1,453	1,511	2,964
Person with disability	409	690	1,099
Serious medical condition	1,332	1,181	2,513

Update date: 21 January 2025 Sources: UNHCR proGres Feedback: ETHADIM@unhcr.org
More information and documents are available on UNHCR Ethiopia data portal, please click on the following link: https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/eth

Operational Context

Over the last decade, Ethiopia has witnessed significant influxes of refugees from neighboring countries, primarily Somalia, South Sudan, Eritrea, and Sudan. As of the end of December 2024, the country hosts 1,073,275 refugees. The total refugee population in Addis Ababa, the capital of Ethiopia, stands at 79,253. Eritrean refugees make up approximately 92% of the urban population in Addis Ababa, followed by Yemenis, Somalis, South Sudanese, and other nationalities. Women constitute over half (55%) of the urban refugee population, while children make up 29%. Many women and girls are at risk and have specific protection needs, such as survivors of gender-based violence (GBV), female-headed families, or unaccompanied and separated children.

The Government, UNHCR and partners support refugees living in Addis Ababa under the Government of Ethiopia's Out-of-Camp Policy (OCP)[1], refugees assisted through the urban programme[2] and exceptionally self-relocated refugees from now defunct refugee camps in Tigray.[3]

The 2024 Participatory Assessment revealed that refugees and asylum seekers living in Addis Ababa and its surroundings face a range of protection challenges that affect their well-being and dignity. Some of the most pressing issues are delays in accessing asylum procedures and obtaining valid documentation, the lack of sustainable livelihood opportunities and economic inclusion programs, child protection challenges such as unaccompanied and separated children, high school enrollment and dropout rates, the prevalence of GBV, especially among women and girls, physical safety and security issues pertaining to arbitrary arrest, detention and refoulment as well as irregular onward movements.[4]

To mitigate and address these challenges, UNHCR, together with the Government's Refugee and Returnees Services (RRS) and partners, has been working closely with the refugee community to strengthen existing community-based protection mechanisms. RRS conducts registration and documentation with support from UNHCR. UNHCR advocates for access to asylum procedures, provides cash-based interventions, protection case management and response, child protection interventions, advances protection from GBV including Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), supports health and education services, provides individual counseling and legal aid, and facilitates livelihood opportunities and durable solutions.

In 2024, funding for UNHCR Ethiopia operation has been significantly reduced. Consequently, the extent and availability of cash assistance, medical services, mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS), free legal aid services, and community-based protection have been significantly limited.

[1] The Government of Ethiopia shifted its refugee policy in 2010 – specifically towards Eritrean refugees – by establishing the 'out-of-camp' policy through which Eritreans are allowed to live and study outside the camps if they are able to sustain themselves independently (usually through relatives or remittances).

[2] Comprises approximately 6,000 refugees referred from the camps on medical grounds, compelling protection concerns and/or refugees who have no designated camps in Ethiopia. This group relies on Cash Based Interventions to cover their basic needs including food, health, housing and education.

[3] *Actual population unknown as pending verification and documentation by government following their self- relocation from Tigray in 2021.Covers those with specific needs i.e. children at risk, women at risk and those with severe medical conditions.*

[4] According to Participatory assessment conducted between February 01-March 01/2024 (https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:EU:1de393d2-830f-4952-9b19-99f638dabc0a

Immediate needs

Protection Protection services and issuance of documentation to 57,745 refugees and asylum seekers	**Child Protection** Adequate family-based care for 2,964 unaccompanied children	**Livelihood** 54,365 Work/Residence permit & business license issuance, development of skill sets for refugees
Gender-Based Violence Prevention, response and risk mitigation intervention for 79,253 refugees and asylum seekers	**Health & MHPSS** Medical Intervention for over 2,500 health and 42,700 MHPSS needs	**CBI (Cash-Based Intervention)** Regular and targeted assistance for over 24,000 Tigray war self-relocated refugees

Strategic Objectives of the Urban Refugee Management Programme 2023-2026

- To enhance access to asylum and protection services including registration, refugee status determination, and documentation towards strengthening access to protection, assistance and durable solutions considering the growing population and diversity.
- To improve access to essential social services, to education, health, and justice, and to boost the self-reliance of refugees, aligning this support with existing national programs.
- To enhance community-based mechanisms/approaches to support robust women and girls' participation and empowerment from exploitation and abuse through child protection, gender-based violence and protection from sexual exploitation and abuse interventions.

UNHCR's response

Protection

- Registration and documentation: UNHCR continues to support the Ethiopian government's Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) in the verification exercise for refugees and asylum-seekers in Addis Ababa. In the year 2024, RRS with the support of UNHCR issued 14,018 Identity Documents (IDs) and 9,956 Proof of Registration (POR) for urban refugees, all of which included a FAYDA number. Moreover, 602 Birth certificates, 1,743 Marriage certificates, 16 Divorce certificates and 2 Death certificates were issued under the national civil registration conducted by RRS. UNHCR supports RRS in the overall supervision of the exercise, managing litigation cases, providing technical and logistical support required for the exercise.

Basic Needs

- Between 01 January and 31 December 2024, a total of ETB 107,030,302, equivalent to US$1.6 million, was transferred to 5,595 most vulnerable refugees and asylum-seekers to cover part of their basic needs. Moreover, one-off cash assistance worth US$ 1,055.14 was provided to cover the immediate needs of an additional nine newly identified families through UNHCR's implementing partner, Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission (DICAC).

Health and MHPSS

- By the end of 2024, about 1,100 asylum seekers and urban refugees benefited from the UNHCR's healthcare services implemented through its partner organization, DICAC. Refugees who had self-relocated from Tigray camps were not included in the healthcare services due to budget constraints, with targeted assistance being provided only to those most in need. This reporting period saw a relatively smaller number of urban refugees benefiting from health interventions due to the reduction of the budget affecting the partner The expenditure for health was US$ 247,182.04.
- Over 6,000 refugees benefitted from mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services throughout the year 2024. Of these, 985 participated in individual and group counseling sessions, while 4,309 refugees were reached through community-based psychosocial support and recreational activities. Some 550refugee and host community committee members benefited from different capacity enhancement community conversations. At the same time, 135 refugees were assisted through MHPSS assessments and inter-agency referrals.
- A training on Mental Health Gap Action Programme (mhGAP) was organized by the MHPSS implementing partner, Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS). Thirty health professionals from government health facilities and four MHPSS partner staff participated in the training.
- Following the health facilities' readiness and capacity assessment on MHPSS results and recommendations received from the Addis Ababa Health Bureau, psychotropic medications were purchased and donated to 17 public health centers by the MHPSS partner, JRS. Each health center received four types of psychotropic medication items support at the beginning of 2024.

Education

- UNHCR has worked to ensure the inclusion of refugee children in the national education system by promoting and strengthening school enrollment.
- In the year 2024, 784 refugee students (340 girls), who were enrolled in different schools, received education assistance. The program provided funds for transportation and stationary materials for the students which were distributed across various levels of education: 156 (62 girls) in pre-primary, 466 (215 girls) in primary, and 162 (63 girls) in secondary education.

Child Protection and Youth Programme

- In 2024, over 3,750 refugee children were reached through child protection interventions. Of these total, 865 unaccompanied and separated children and other at-risk children received targeted support, including family-based alternative care, cash assistance, and MHPSS.
- Throughout the reporting period, 839 at-risk children benefitted from the Best Interests Procedure and specialized child protection case management services.
- Over 8,600 refugee children and youth benefited from services at Cherkos and Ayat Urban Child Protection and MHPSS Centers and at Refugee Community Center in Sidist Killo. All of these centers are managed by JRS, the child protection implementing partner. Refugee children and youth benefited from art therapy, language and computer classes, life skills training, and individual/group counseling services.
- To strengthen community-based child protection mechanisms, 1,587 members of various community structures,-including refugee representatives, Child Parliament, Youth Association, Women Association and refugee incentive workers, received child protection and related capacity-building trainings.
- A total of 1,541 refugee youths received protection services such as language, computer, music courses, and sports skills training. Seventy-two adolescents and youth enrolled in vocational skill training, and 50 took advanced computer courses. Of these, 22 vocational skills trainees and 25 advanced computer trainees passed competency exams and received Certificates of Competency (COC). Moreover, 1,136

refugee youth participated in youth empowerment activities, such as reconciliation, peacebuilding and conflict management dialogues in different peace clubs at refugee hosting schools.

Gender-Based Violence (GBV), including PSEA

- UNHCR, in collaboration with its partner DICAC, is actively working to protect vulnerable refugees and to prevent and respond to Gender-Based Violence (GBV) cases.
- GBV response services, including psychosocial support, safety and security measures, healthcare, and other essential services, are being provided through the national GBV response system. UNHCR's partner, DICAC, collaborates closely with the Addis Ababa City Administration Bureau of Women and Social Affairs to enhance the inclusion of refugees in the national GBV program and to support individual refugee case management.
- Over 2,500 refugee women and girls received sanitary napkins on a quarterly basis, with each individual receiving three packs every month. Approximately 13,000 sanitary napkins were distributed at six one-stop centers. Additionally, 2,160 napkins were provided to the Addis Ababa Women Association and 11,232 to two secondary schools with a high refugee population. These distributions supported both the urban refugee community and vulnerable members of the host community by providing access to these essential hygiene products.
- More than 5,000 refugee and asylum seekers were reached through GBV awareness raising sessions in different occasions including major events like the International Women's Day and 16 days of Activism.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with DICAC, organized training sessions focused on GBV for 35 government staff members from various agencies, including the one-stop center, police, and the Women and Social Affairs Office on case management. Additionally, 50 representatives from refugee women and youth associations, as well as community volunteers, participated in basic training about GBV concepts. This initiative aims to strengthen the capacity of both government and community representatives in effectively addressing and managing GBV cases.

Access to Justice, detention and irregular onward movement

- UNHCR, in collaboration with the Addis Ababa University's legal aid center provided free legal aid services for urban refugees. The legal aid center continued to support urban refugees despite the absence of a partnership agreement with UNHCR in 2024.
- The program supports urban refugees by providing services such as legal counseling, support in drafting statements of claim and defense to courts of law, as well as preparing petitions and applications to government agencies.
- UNHCR has organized a capacity building workshop for 21 of Addis Ababa University's legal aid center's staff and student volunteers. The training enhanced their knowledge on refugee protection, community-based protection, advocacy skills for forcibly displaced persons, as well as promotion of legal aid for GBV survivors. The workshop laid the foundation for the resumption of an official partnership agreement between UNHCR and the University in 2025.
- Legal information sessions organized by UNHCR reached 151 urban refugees from diverse nationalities.
- Renewed incidents of detention of urban refugees were recorded since November 2024, with hundreds of urban refugees subjected to arbitrary and prolonged detention. The Urban program revamped its detention monitoring in collaboration with the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and RRS, which helped to secure the release of over a hundred urban refugees from detention. Moreover, a Platform for Action for Cases of Trafficking and Aggravated Smuggling (PACTAS) project was launched in November 2024 with the support of the now defunct Office of the Special Envoy for the Western, Central and Meditranian Situation. Under this project, 59 urban refugees were targeted with an awareness raising campaign,

focusing on the dangers of onward movement. Data collection on protection involving trafficking has also been conducted with the help of volunteers recruited for this purpose.

- Irregular onward movement trends have continued to be observed with a combination of traditional and emerging drivers, such as limited durable solutions and livelihood/inclusion opportunities, and insecurity attributed to incidents of arbitrary arrest, detention and refoulement,trigger involvement in dangerous journeys by urban refugees, especially via the southern route. Under a project aimed at preventing and responding to trafficking incidents, UNHCR's Urban Response Program targeted 60 urban refugees from diverse nationalities with information sessions focusing on protection of people on the move, child protection and examples of the dangerous journeys aimed to deter potential irregular onward movement.

Accountability to the Affected People (AAP)

- From 1 January to 31 December, 2024, the call centre received a total of 6,750 calls. Out of these, 3,614 callers were guided through the process of submitting their complaints via the UNHCR's Digital Request Complaint System. Additionally, 3,136 individuals benefited from immediate counselling services. The predominant issues reported were related to protection and resettlement (RST)-related matters.
- Throughout the reporting year, the protection reception desk provided in-person counselling to 1,586 individuals seeking assistance with various requests. Most of these inquiries were appeals related to RST, primarily stemming from challenges in accessing support and livelihood opportunities within the country.
- UNHCR conducted two training sessions, focusing on AAP, aimed at enhancing the skills of partner staff. The training involved 32 staff members from JRS and 25 from DICAC. This initiative is part of UNHCR's ongoing commitment to ensure that humanitarian efforts are effectively aligned with the needs and feedback of those they serve.
- In 2024, various posters and leaflets were distributed to promote awareness on critical issues such as child protection, GBV, PSEA, Anti-Fraud measures, and services for urban refugees. This initiative aimed to provide information to the community and enhance the understanding of these important topics among the affected populations and service providers.

Community-Based Protection

- In October 2024, a community representative election was conducted, resulting in the election of 47 representatives (25 men and 22 women). Each nationality, including minority groups, has five elected representatives.
- From 21 February to 1 March, 2024, UNHCR facilitated a Participatory Assessment involving refugees and asylum-seekers in Addis Ababa. Over 600 participants engaged in discussions about key issues, identified priorities, and provided specific recommendations. The findings from this assessment will guide UNHCR's protection and humanitarian response programming for 2025.
- UNHCR also organized regular meetings with community representatives to discuss ongoing program activities, challenges, and emerging situations. Additionally, UNHCR supported refugee women and girls in participating in a women's only run organized by the Great Ethiopia Run to enhance their integration into host community events.

Self-reliance

- UNHCR continues to work with RRS to mitigate legal and procedural hurdles for skilled refugees to gain access to employment. Consequently, urban refugees were issued with work and residence permits. Also, UNHCR and its partner JRS in collaboration with various operational partners continue supporting refugees to be self-reliant through providing technical and vocational training programs.

- Through our operational partners, a total of 594 youth (refugee, returnee, and host community) received different capacity building trainings including soft and technical skill training on livelihood improvement interventions and access to work permit and business license. Save the Children's EAMR (East African Migration Routes) project, through the funding sources of Switzerland Development Cooperation, has successfully provided technical skill training for 285 youth which can enhance their engagement in profitable income generating activities.
- Digital Opportunity Trust-Ethiopia, in collaboration with the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation and Na'amal, has successfully certified 29 youth refugees, equipping them with digital skills and full stack web development.
- Following the endorsement of new directive, Directive No. 1019/2024 to Implement Recognized Refugees' and Asylum Seekers' Right to Work, a total of 274 work permits and six business licences were issued to refugees.

With thanks to our donors:

And Private Donors in Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, UK, and USA

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Further documents and information are available on the UNHCR data-portal Ethiopia page, please click on the following link: https://data.unhcr.org/en/country/eth