

# Ethiopia

06 November 2020

**796,437**

**Refugees and asylum seekers as of 31 October 2020**

**38,746**

**Handwashing facilities in camps**

**2,509**

**Health and community workers trained**



As schools gradually reopen, refugee students in Jewi refugee camp/Gambella wear masks and observe physical distancing ©UNHCR/Reath Riek

## COVID-19 Operational Context

As of 05 November 2020, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 98,391 coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and 1,508 fatalities in the country. More than 1.5 million samples were collected and tested throughout the country to date.

Following the Government's announcement and guidelines for a phased reopening of schools, schools in the capital Addis Ababa and in some regions are gradually opening their doors to students, starting with grade 8 and 12 students, who need to sit for the national examinations. Schools in some of the refugee camps have also reopened with the necessary precautions put in place, also focusing on grade 8 and 12 students. The reopening is expected to be gradually extended to other grades over the coming weeks.

## COVID-19 Prevention and Response

The Government's Agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) and UNHCR, together with the Regional Health Bureaus and other health partners continue to reinforce their response to COVID-19 in both refugee camps and other locations sheltering refugees and asylum seekers. They have enhanced communication and hygiene and are continuously working to reduce overcrowding to curb the spread of the virus. Supplies of water and soap continue to be reinforced, together with the installation of handwashing stations, as well as ongoing strengthening of health services, equipping isolation and quarantine centers, and the provision of personal protective equipment for health care workers, first responders and others.

- **Five** ICU beds, **5** patient monitors, **50** oxygen cylinders, **10** oxygen concentrators and **300** coverall gowns are being delivered to the Gambella Regional Health Bureau to help in the COVID-19 response in the Gambella Region.
- **PPEs, COVID-related medicines and medical equipment** worth approximately 1 million USD are being delivered for health services and health staff while a fresh procurement order for medicines and medical equipment for both COVID and regular health programmes has just been placed.
- **38,746 handwashing stations** have been installed in communal centres and households in all the 26 refugee camps to promote regular handwashing with soap. **37,477** of these have been installed in refugee households and **1,269** were set up in communal facilities providing services to refugees and asylum seekers. More capacity is needed to ensure that every refugee household has a handwashing facility.
- Over **2,509** trained **health and community outreach workers** are actively engaged in awareness raising, case investigation and management, as well as mitigation, prevention and control of the virus. They include **446** healthcare workers, **22** laboratory technicians and **1,719** community outreach workers who are serving both the refugees and the communities hosting them. In addition, refugee representatives, Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROVs), women, youth and child committees and other community representatives were trained and are actively engaged to ensure that basic preventive measures are observed in the communities.
- The daily average per capita **water distribution** in the refugee camps stands at **18.4** liters, with six refugee camps out of 26 receiving less than 15 liters per person per day, below the UNHCR minimum standard of 20 litres per person per day. UNHCR, ARRA and partners are working to ensure that all refugees have access to adequate potable water in keeping with the minimum international standards.
- **Isolation facilities**, known as Temporary Assessment Units, have been set up in all refugee camps to temporarily quarantine possible suspected COVID-19 cases pending their transfer to Government isolation and treatment facilities, if necessary. UNHCR is working to equip these facilities and extend support to the Government-run treatment centers which are also accessible to refugees. Recently, UNHCR provided **160** hospital beds and **170** mattresses to help furnish the camp-based isolation centres in Melkadida. It also donated medical equipment to the Government-run COVID-19 treatment centre in Dollo Ado and **100** coverall gowns to the Gambella Regional Health Bureau for use by medical personnel who are collecting samples for testing. In the Afar Region, sheltering thousands of refugees in Aysaita and Barahle Camps, UNHCR supported the equipping of two Government quarantine facilities, providing **40** beds, mattress and beddings, two **10,000-litre** water tanks and **four pedal hand-washing machines**.
- In the capital, Addis Ababa, where over **33,000** urban refugees reside, UNHCR is **communicating with refugees via telephone helplines, WhatsApp and Telegram groups**. Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROVs) and refugee leaders are also helping raise awareness. In order to meet additional expenses for soap and other sanitary materials, UNHCR provides an additional

allowance of 300 Ethiopian Birr (US\$ 7.98) per person per month, to those refugees entitled to monthly living allowances.

- UNHCR is **supporting the inter-agency COVID-19 response to the IDP situation** in the country, distributing non-food items, equipping isolation and quarantine centers and providing community communications on health messaging.

## COVID Impact and Challenges

**Health Impact:** Pivoting of much of UNHCR's limited health budget to the COVID-19 prevention and response efforts is resulting in strain on the provision of regular essential health services in the refugee camps. This, in turn, will pose challenges in continuity of maternal and child health services, disease control programmes such as for HIV, TB and Malaria, among others. The reallocation of funds to combat COVID-19 may also negatively impact the efforts already made towards the control of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and mental health.

**Economic impact:** UNHCR continues to closely monitor how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting the socio-economic dynamics of the different refugee hosting areas, including through referencing third party assessment reports on impacts on enterprises and jobs. In addition to COVID-19, refugee hosting areas are also under the double threat of the Desert Locust invasion and floods. Many projects funded by partners continue to report implementation challenges as a result of COVID-19 measures and changed priorities. Refugees in many of the camps indicate that the pandemic has negatively affected their economic and food security, with some mentioning that opportunities for maintaining their self-reliance through income earned by working as daily laborers are now limited due to COVID-19. Others who run small-scale businesses have also reported significant reductions in business opportunities.

UNHCR received **USD 9.8 million** out of its financial requirements of **USD 34.7 million** for the COVID-19 response. The funding shortfall is limiting UNHCR's ability to effectively respond to the pandemic as resources are not enough to procure all needed PPEs, medicines, WASH facilities and other supplies. Inadequate WASH infrastructure, lack of additional space in schools and lack of masks for school children are also making school reopening challenging.

## Operational Response Updates

**Developing Situation in Tigray Region:** UNHCR is concerned by the impact of the ongoing conflict and the declaration of a six-month state of emergency on the humanitarian situation in the Tigray Region. This is adding to the already difficult situation precipitated by COVID-19, particularly on our protection and humanitarian response for Eritrean refugees and any potential internal displacement. Humanitarian activities are limited by the current situation. Phone and internet services are down in the Tigray Region, making communication nearly impossible. There is a shortage of fuel and banking services which were halted, resulting in a lack of access to cash. Of concern is the impact of restricted lifesaving services leading to a deterioration of the humanitarian needs and physical security in the camps. We are also concerned about the safety of refugees and UNHCR and partner staff due to the relative proximity of the camps to the border areas.



**New arrivals in Gambella:** Out of the 8,220 new arrivals at the Pagak Reception Centre in Gambella in 2020, 3,565 have been relocated to date to Ngueniyel Refugee Camp where they were isolated for 14

days before being assigned family shelters. They are subsequently being comprehensively registered and issued with proof of registration documents, ration cards and ID cards as appropriate. A total of 4,655 new arrivals are still in Pagak awaiting relocation. In the meantime, they are receiving emergency care and assistance.

**Phone survey in Shire:** UNHCR conducted a phone survey involving 41 unaccompanied and separated children in the Tigray Region, in order to better understand the protection environment for refugee children during the COVID-19 pandemic. The questions raised, ranged from their knowledge of how to protect themselves from coronavirus, access to PPEs and onward movement. Some 93% of the respondents felt they had significant information to protect themselves from COVID-19, with 80% reporting they have the necessary PPEs at hand.

Among the respondents, 92% said they do not know anyone who undertook an onward movement over the last seven months while 5% confirmed that they knew some children who had actually moved out of the camp during that period. Moreover, 15% of the children mentioned that even with COVID-19 realities, they were still “very likely” or “likely” to move onwards, without specifying whether that would be to other locations in Ethiopia or to other countries. Regarding the quality of child protection case management, 15% noted child protection case management services are “poor”, while roughly 65% rated the services as “very good” or “good”. The survey also included questions on safety, with 85% of children responding that they felt safe in their current living environment,



**Reopening Schools:** Schools have started reopening in camps in the Tigray region, albeit in a staggered manner, with the Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) being the first to reopen on 19 October by the International Rescue Committee (IRC). This was followed by ARRA resuming classes for 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in Shimelba camp on 27 October. There is a plan to resume classes for grades 9 and 11 on 9 November, if the current insecurity situation in the Tigray Region allows it. In Gambella, ARRA, Plan International and World Vision have started 45-day catch-up classes for students in 8 and 12 grades in Jewi camp, in preparation for the national examinations.

Preparations are still underway to reopen all schools in the different refugee camps. A recent joint multi-agency assessment mission to the camps in the Gambella Region observed that work is in progress to put in place the necessary precautionary measures before classes resume.

**Dollo Ado Teachers' College graduates refugee teachers:** The Dollo Ado Teachers' Training College graduated its first batch of 233 school teachers including 17 Somali refugees who fled insecurity in their country. They studied for three years in the college which was established with support from the Ikea Foundation, as part of the effort to address the critical shortage of qualified teachers in the region. Not only will this help improve the quality of education, but it will also promote the Government of Ethiopia's commitment to increase the enrollment of refugee students at different levels of the education ladder.



*Pictured here are five of the 17 refugee teachers recently graduated from the Dollo Ado Teachers' college.*  
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“I’m happy I successfully completed my studies and graduated today”, said a vividly elated Yusuf Isack Ibrahim, a resident of Kobe Refugee Camp. “I would like to impart my knowledge in the minds of the young generation”.

The refugees and their Ethiopian hosts studied together in the college, which is very much in line with objective of the Global Compact on Refugees, which seeks to support the two communities to work together and thrive together.

**Distribution of school materials:** UNHCR delivered an assortment of school materials to Belojeanfoy Woreda in Kamashi zone for distribution to students of vulnerable families ahead of the reopening of schools. The materials consisted of 2,000 notebooks, color pencils, pencils, sharpeners, rubber gum and school bags). Earlier in the month, UNHCR delivered 2,000 sharpeners and pencils to Limu Woreda Education Office (East Wollega).



#### COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT AND SELF RELIANCE

**Livelihoods:** In Bambasi Refugee Camp in the Benishnagul-Gumuz Region, an irrigation canal is being constructed to implement an agricultural livelihood project which will benefit 400 families, including 200 from the refugee and 200 from the host communities. Financed by GIZ and implemented by Lutheran World Federation (LWF), the construction is expected to be completed within two months.

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