

UNHCR Ethiopia

Ethiopia Refugee Update June 2012



Nearly 10,000 refugees arrived in June



Just arriving from Somalia, this woman heads for the registration Centre in Dollo Ado. UNHCR/Jiro Ose/June 2012

UNHCR and ARRA registered 9,824 new arrivals in June, bringing the cumulative total number of refugees in Ethiopia to 336,929 (203,187 Somalis, 69,138 Sudanese, and 60,787 Eritreans). Also included in these statistics were 3,817 refugees from different nationalities.

In addition, an estimated 15,000 South Sudanese and 5,000-10,000 Kenyans are in the country as asylum seekers yet to be registered.

Celebration of World Refugee Day 2012

“1 refugee without hope is too many”

UNHCR and its partners, including the Ethiopian Government refugee agency (ARRA), donors, non-governmental organizations, the general public and refugees themselves, marked the 2012 edition of the World Refugee Day (WRD 2012) by paying tribute to those forced from their homes by war, persecution and other causes.

Different activities were organized in all 18 refugee camps across the country, which are

home to some 330,000 refugees, as well as in Addis Ababa where some 4,000 urban-based refugees are being cared for. The activities ranged from sports and cultural performances to tree-planting, inauguration of facilities, talent competitions and awareness-raising sessions on a number of critical issues of relevance to the refugees and host communities.



Refugees & members of the hosting community at Maiaini accorded a rousing welcome to the guests. UNHCR/Dagne A./June 2012

For example, in Tongo camp, hosting Sudanese refugees in western Ethiopia, refugees and members of the host community participated in joint cultural events to strengthen ties and understanding between them. In the Dollo Ado camps, the Somali refugees organized various activities including drama



Inauguration of the Maiaini secondary school was one of the highlights of the celebration. UNHCR/Dagne A./June 2012

and cultural performances to raise awareness on issues such as environment, response to gender-based violence, sanitation and hygiene as well as disability. In Fugnido camp, which is



Sudanese refugees in Fugnido camp performing Nuer traditional dances. UNHCR/June 2012

also hosting refugees from Sudan, different activities were organized to promote a healthy lifestyle including sports competitions.

The three camps around Jijiga, which are home to over 41,000 Somali refugees, organized panel discussions, tree-planting and cleaning activities as well as a VCT (Voluntary Counseling and Testing) campaign.

At the heart of those activities and events was UNHCR's "**Dilemmas**" campaign. This builds on last year's **1campaign** and depicts some of the tough choices facing refugees, helping the public to understand their dilemma.

The main celebration was held at Maiaini camp in northern Ethiopia which is home to 15,000 Eritrean refugees, including 1,200 unaccompanied minors and separated children.

Ambassadors of different countries accredited to the Government of Ethiopia and the African Union, Government officials, heads of UN agencies and NGOs, representatives of the African Union and donors, religious fathers and others travelled all the way to Maiaini to be with the refugees on that particular day.

The guests had the opportunity to inaugurate a secondary school that was built by ARRA, UNHCR and DICAC (the charity arm of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church). As a gesture of their support to the ongoing environmental activities within and around the refugee camps, the guests also planted trees on the occasion.

The highlight of the commemoration at Maiaini was the talents competition which the Eritrean

refugees organized under the theme:

"Refugees Have Got Talents". Young refugees staged interesting contests in dancing, singing and drama which were carefully evaluated by a jury of three Ambassadors. The performances were truly entertaining and the winners were given prizes.

Also captivating was a play on the perils of secondary movement which was authored and performed by the refugees themselves. Secondary movement of the Eritrean refugees to third countries being a very serious problem, the play shaded a lot of light on the process of secondary movement, including the role of smugglers and traffickers as well as the dangers that such movers face on their way.

One year on, Somali exodus continues amid conflict and poor rains



Some of the Children who survived last summer's worst emergency now playing in the camp. UNHCR/S.Nic Iomhaired/2012

A year ago this June, desperate Somali refugees began pouring into the Dollo Ado area in south-eastern Ethiopia, driven from their homes by conflict, human rights abuses and the worst drought in decades. This latest chapter has been another stark reminder of the Somali population's tragic and prolonged suffering spanning more than twenty years.

Facing violence and starvation, tens of thousands sought survival in the five refugee camps- three of them were opened in the span of six months to accommodate the flood of arrivals. Most walked through the desert for days, weeks at times, and would arrive exhausted, sick and emaciated, often carrying their weak and dying children or the few belongings they had.

Today, many challenges remain. Continuing conflict and poor seasonal rains are still forcing people to flee their country although at lower levels than was the case last summer. In the first six months of 2012 more than 17,300 Somalis sought refuge in Ethiopia.

This May and June, the Dollo Ado camps in Ethiopia, which were already hosting more than 153,000 refugees, saw significant increases in new arrivals, from some 1,800 in April to 3,232 in May and 4,733 in June. The newcomers say they are fleeing increased physical insecurity and dwindling food resources. Specifically, they cite fear of being caught in military operations, forced recruitment, poor rains, and crop destruction by caterpillars as reasons for leaving Somalia. UNHCR and ARRA are working with local authorities to identify a site for a sixth camp in this already crowded and environmentally fragile area.

Throughout the past year the priority and toughest challenge for UNHCR, ARRA and other partners has been to reduce the unprecedented mortality and malnutrition rates among Somali arrivals.

Despite life-saving medical care and therapeutic feeding programmes in the refugee camps, many of the newly arriving children have been beyond help – dying within hours or days of arrival. At the peak of the influx last summer, the estimated death toll among children under five years old was as high as 17 deaths per 10,000 people every day.

At the onset of the crisis UNHCR and its partners set up critical nutrition programmes in reception and transit centres and in the camps. Combined with mass vaccinations and other public health measures, these massive efforts saved lives over the past 12 months. Mortality and malnutrition rates began to drop from record highs in September last year, but it took another six months before they fell below the levels usually seen in an emergency (i.e., less than 1 per 10,000 per day). Today, the Dollo Ado camps are reporting an average crude mortality rate of 0.8 per 1,000 per day and an under-five mortality rate of 2.2 per 1,000 per day.

Another vital achievement has been the reduction in the high malnutrition rates unseen in decades. Malnutrition was especially alarming among refugee children - in June and July last year more than half of Somali children arriving in Ethiopia were acutely malnourished. Even the most experienced UNHCR staff said they had not seen anything like it since the 1998 famine in southern Sudan or the 1999 nutrition crisis in Brazzaville.

The results of the most recent mass screenings show the malnutrition levels among children have stabilized with all camps showing a positive trend. In the older Melkadida and Bokolomayo camps, acute malnutrition rates have fallen to 15 per cent. UNHCR is currently preparing a follow-up survey in the newer Kobe

and Hilaweyn camps and we expect to see significantly reduced levels of general acute malnutrition.

Massive water, sanitation and hygiene programmes went hand-in-hand with these efforts and were integral to the vast improvements in the health conditions of the Somali refugee population.

Together with other neighboring countries, Ethiopia has been bearing the brunt of the Somali displacement throughout the latest emergency in the Horn of Africa. Pressure is huge on the host communities as the Somali crisis continues to affect the entire region. They need continued international support.

Some 300,000 people fled Somalia last year alone. Today, over a million Somalis live as refugees in neighbouring Kenya, Ethiopia, Yemen and Djibouti.



Some of the refugees who arrived at Bambasi camp in the first relocation convoy. UNHCR/I. Rashid/June 2012

Bambasi opened as 3rd camp in BGNRS

UNHCR and the Government refugee agency (ARRA) on 11 June 2012 opened Bambasi as the third camp in the Benishangul-Gumuz National Regional State (BGNRS) to host Sudanese refugees fleeing conflict in the Blue Nile State. In close collaboration with IOM, UNHCR and ARRA already relocated over 5,000 refugees in June from the transit centre at Ad-Dimazin, sheltering over 14,000 refugees.

The new camp has the capacity to accommodate up to 20,000 people, with a possibility for expansion. New arrivals also go to Bambasi directly from the border entry points.

Unlike Adimazin, Bambasi is located at a safe distance from the Ethiopia-Sudan border and has ample water sources. Upon arrival, the refugees are receiving food and non-food assistance.

UNHCR hands over 14.6 Million birr worth of infrastructure to the GPNRS

By way of expressing gratitude to the people and Government of the Gambella Peoples' National Regional State (GPNRS) for hosting refugees for a long time, UNHCR handed-over 14.6 million birr worth of infrastructure to the State's authorities.

Although about 36,000 refugees were repatriated and two refugee camps closed in the State, a new influx of refugees from South Sudan has once again brought an estimated 15,000-20,000 refugees into the state since last February.

The facilities, which included three primary schools, four other structures as well as a 1.4 million birr worth of water facility in Fugnido town, were built by UNHCR in close collaboration with the Government refugee agency (ARRA) and with a generous financial support by the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany. Another school is being constructed at a cost of nearly 2 million birr and



Representative Moses Okello & Vice President Galwak Tut cutting the ribbon. UNHCR/Kisut G.E./June 2012

is expected to be ready for service in the next academic year.

UNHCR Representative Mr. Moses Okello, who traveled to Gambella to handover the facilities, said that they were meant as a goodwill gesture towards the generosity of the people and Government of the State who have been and continue to host thousands of refugees for many years. He used the opportunity to appeal to the people and Government of GPNRS to continue extending their hospitality to more people coming.

The Vice President of the State Mr. Galwak Tut appreciated the support and reiterated the state's commitment to welcome people in distress.

Together with ARRA, UNHCR has been undertaking various development activities including reforestation and livelihoods activities particularly in the former camp sites of Bonga and Dimma. A good number of the local

Communities in Bonga and Dimma have benefited from livelihoods activities such as bee keeping, poultry production and horticulture.

To date, Fugnido camp in Gambella is home to over 32,600 refugees most of whom originated in the Republic of South Sudan.

UNHCR signed a Letter of Understanding (LoU) with the United Nations' Children's Fund (UNICEF) to strengthen cooperation and collaboration in their response to refugee emergencies in Ethiopia. The two sister agencies have a long history of effective collaboration in humanitarian action, and this agreement is expected to transform their partnership to newer heights.



Ms. Patrizia DiGiovanni and Mr. Moses Okello exchanging signed documents. UNHCR/N. Prokopchuk/June 2012

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