

UNHCR Ethiopia

Ethiopia Refugee Update July-August 2012



As of 31 August 2012, Ethiopia was host to 372,096 refugees: Somali refugees constitute the largest group: 209,214 individuals (61.16%), followed by Sudanese: 67,140 individuals (19.63%) and Eritrean refugees: 61,703 individuals (18.04%). Refugees from other countries including Kenya, Djibouti, DRC, Yemen, Burundi, Rwanda and Uganda comprise 1.18% or 4,039 individuals. It should be noted that the total figure includes 20,000 refugees from South Sudan and about 10,000 from Kenya who are both staying with the hosting communities in Wanthawo Woreda and Moyale areas respectively¹. In August, almost 3,000 new arrivals have been registered in the operation, mainly Somali refugees in Dollo Ado followed by Eritreans in the north and Sudanese from Blue Nile in the west.



Refugee children in Bambasi camp, western Ethiopia. Although this camp is just about two months old, transitional shelters have started to replace tents and trees have been planted. UNHCR/ N. Prokopchuk

The situation of refugees from Sudan's Blue Nile in Western Ethiopia

Months of intermittent fighting between government forces and fighters of the SPLM- N in Sudan have driven 34,500 refugees into Ethiopia since September 2011, in addition to nearly 4,000 refugees who stayed in Benishangul-Gumuz region before the outbreak of the conflict in Blue Nile. The refugees are accommodated in the three camps of Sherkole, Tongo and Bambasi in the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state in western Ethiopia. The newest camp, Bambasi, was opened in June 2012 following relocation of nearly 10,500 refugees from Ad Damazine temporary transit centre which has recently been closed by the Government of Ethiopia. The new camp can host up to

20,000 people. Unlike Ad-Damazin, Bambasi is located at a safe distance from the Ethiopia-Sudan border and has ample water sources. Some 4,000 refugees opted out of the relocation process but a few hundred have moved spontaneously to the new camp in August. Moreover, approximately 2,000 individuals, along with an estimated 8,000 livestock, are reported to be living amongst the local community according to local officials. These refugees opted out of the relocation because of a lack of grazing land in Bambasi.

In July-August 2012 more than 1,600 refugees from Blue Nile State entered Ethiopia. Some have indicated that they were previously in Upper Nile State, in South Sudan, before moving to Ethiopia, crossing into the country around Yabus and walking to Tongo camp directly. The relentless rains in western Ethiopia have rendered almost all routes to the border inaccessible, with the exception of a couple of paved roads. Border monitoring activities have been suspended due to security concerns, particularly around the Gizen corridor. As the rains subside, UNHCR is preparing for a possible increase in arrivals in the coming months.

The UN High Commissioner for Refugees urges the international community to support Ethiopia in helping refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Antonio Guterres, visited Ethiopia in mid-July 2012 to see conditions of refugees in the country as well as to attend the 19th ordinary Summit of the African Union.



The High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres, IOM Director General Amb William Lacy Swing and the UNHCR Representative Moses Okello (in the middle) in Bambasi refugee camp. UNHCR/ K. Gebre Egziabher

¹As the figures change regularly, pls check <http://data.unhcr.org/horn-of-africa>

The High Commissioner visited Bambasi, the newest refugee camp in the country which hosts some 12,000 Sudanese refugees from the Blue Nile State. Joined by Ambassador William Lacy Swing, Director General of IOM, and accompanied by Mr. George Okoth-Obbo, UNHCR Director for Africa Bureau, Mr. Moses Okello, UNHCR Representative in Ethiopia, Mr. Josiah Ogina, IOM Country Chief of Mission and Mr. Ayalew Aweke, Ethiopia's Deputy Director for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), Mr. Guterres met with refugee representatives as well as humanitarian agencies in the camp. He also toured some of the key facilities to see what services were available for the refugees.

Together with the IOM Director General and the Deputy Director of ARRA, Mr. Guterres urged the international community to extend support to refugees in Ethiopia. "It is absolutely essential that the international community mobilizes itself to support the refugees and Ethiopia which is hosting them, having kept its borders open in a very, very generous way," High Commissioner Guterres told an accompanying press crew. While appealing for more aid for refugees, Mr. Guterres also said a political solution was needed in Sudan. "The international community needs to make sure that everything is done for a political solution to be found and for peace to be re-established because these people are suffering in a terrible way and they don't deserve that," he said.

Situation of Somali refugees in Dollo Ado

The arrivals rate from Somalia to the camps in Dollo Ado in south-east Ethiopia declined from June to July with 3,612 new arrivals from Somalia during July compared to 5,040 arrivals in June. There has been further decline in new arrivals during the first three weeks of August. However, since the end of Ramadan arrival levels have increased again, during the period 25-31 August, 962 individuals arrived with a daily average of 137.



Newly arrived Somali refugees in the Dollo Ado transit centre. UNHCR/J. Ose

This movement is expected to continue for the coming days. Almost 70% of the new arrivals originate from the Gedo region, with individuals claiming a combination of factors for their flight, including drought, insecurity due to

Al-Shabab presence and fear of harassment and forced recruitment. Others originate from Bay (16%) and Bakol (14%) regions.

The total number of Somali refugees in the country has surpassed 209,000 persons, with some 167,000 persons in Dollo Ado camps and about 41,000 in camps in Jijiga, Somali region. As the population of Buramino camp is reaching 30,000, development of the sixth camp in the area remains an urgent priority. After months of negotiations the government has approved the site for the sixth camp. Meanwhile, UNHCR continues to advocate for assistance inside Somalia.



In Dollo Ado baby-friendly centres mothers are sensitized about breast-feeding and taught healthy nutrition practices. UNHCR/J. Ose

A follow up health and nutrition survey

Based on the October-November 2011 survey recommendations UNHCR, ARRA, UNICEF, WFP, IMC, ACF and GOAL conducted a joint follow up survey on nutrition and health situation in Kobe and Hilaweyn.

The nutrition situation in Kobe and Hilaweyn camps has improved significantly compared to 2011. In particular, reduction in acute malnutrition and mortality rate should be noted. The new survey shows a global acute malnutrition level of 13.1% and 15.9% in Kobe and Hilaweyn camps respectively. Crude Mortality Rate (CMR) is 0.5 and 0.76 per 10,000/day while the Under Five Mortality Rates (U5MR) is 1.56 and 1.46per 10,000/day respectively. The anaemia level improved slightly in children 6-59 months². It reduced by approximately 25% in non-pregnant women of reproductive age.

The improvement can be attributed to the collaborative efforts from all the actors including the establishment of a strong community outreach to identify, refer and follow up malnourished children at the community level; the promotion of appropriate infant and young

²These are preliminary results of the nutrition and health survey. The final results will be available in September 2012.

child feeding practices as a preventative approach; adequate ready-to-use therapeutic food (RUTF), ready-to-use supplementary food (RUSF); and blanket feeding for all children 6-59 months. Water access and quality improved with Kobe having a permanent water system and Hilaweyn having jet wells pumping water to the tap stand level. Sanitation also improved with an average of 25 persons per latrine thus nearing the UNHCR standard of 20 people per latrine.

Despite the improvement of the nutrition indicators, anaemia levels remain above 40% and the crude mortality and under-five mortality rates are at or above the emergency threshold. UNHCR, the government and partners have initiated intervention to ensure provision of optimal health and nutritional care for the refugee population.

Mission of the Assistant High Commissioner to Ethiopia

UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Operations, Ms. Janet Lim, visited Ethiopia from 18-21 July 2012 to discuss ways of improving livelihoods opportunities for the urban-based refugees.

Accompanied by Ambassador David Robinson, the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for BPRM, USA, Ms. Lim met with members of the refugee community to listen to their concerns, challenges as well as proposed solutions.

A roundtable session was held with potential and current partners, as well as Ministries, Embassies and donors. The main objective of the session was to brainstorm around challenges and solutions related to the urban refugee population with a focus on education and livelihoods. As a follow-up to the mission recommendations for livelihood programmes are being initiated for the urban refugee population.

Situation of Eritrean refugees

Ethiopia has been hosting Eritrean refugees since the 1998-2000 war with Eritrea. On average several hundred Eritrean refugees cross the border into Ethiopia every month, fleeing forced conscription into the national service among other reasons. Now the country is host to 61,703 Eritrean refugees registered by UNHCR and residing in the three camps in Tigray region (Shimelba, Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush) and the camps of Asayita, Berhale or in the local community of the Afar region.

Eritrean refugees have a unique profile that is dominated by young, educated and urbanized individuals who find it difficult to adjust to life in a refugee camp. Moreover, limited opportunities for self-reliance and for post-secondary education continue to be a challenge. Of late, a large number of unaccompanied minors have been crossing the border on their own and this poses new challenges both to UNHCR and ARRA.

A large number of the new arrivals often leave on a dangerous secondary movement to Europe, the Middle East and Southern Africa.

For one month (16 July-16 August) UNHCR in collaboration with ARRA and other partners conducted a revalidation exercise and issued ID cards for Eritrean refugees at Shimelba refugee camp, Mekelle and Shire towns (for beneficiaries of the "Out-of-Camp" scheme of the Government and refugee university student in Tigray region). In all, 6,661 refugees were revalidated at the three sites of which 6,458 individuals were camp based. Some 203 individuals previously registered in Shimelba were revalidated in Shire and Mekelle. The total number of refugees not showing up for revalidation amounted to 1,436 individuals, which shows 18.2% decrease of this refugee group.

Following the conclusion of the revalidation exercise, ARRA and UNHCR printed and issued Refugee Identity Cards for more than 3,565 (88.6%) individuals out of the total 4,025 eligible refugees.



Eritrean refugee women cooking injera for unaccompanied and separated children in a communal kitchen in Mai-Aini camp in Tigray region, northern Ethiopia. UNHCR/T. Buckenmeyer

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