

ETHIOPIA

21 August 2020

769,310	40,039	18.6 litres	2,151
Refugees and asylum seekers as of 31 July	Handwashing facilities in camps	Average per capita water supply in camps	Health and community workers trained

COVID-19 Operational Context

The Government of Ethiopia declared a five-month state of emergency in early April 2020 as part of the efforts to contain the spread of corona virus in the country. This came weeks after it closed all land borders and schools, leaving millions, including over 200,000 refugee students out of school. UNHCR, ARRA and other partners have been working with the Ministry of Education (MoE) and Regional Education Bureaus (REBs) to include refugee students in the national distance learning programmes. They have been constantly adapting their programmes and ways of working to the evolving context and continue to deliver humanitarian assistance while working to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

As of 20 August 2020, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) reported 35,836 coronavirus cases and 620 fatalities in the country, with growing community transmissions of the virus. MoH and its UN partners have adopted a coordinated approach and are working in the areas of contact tracing, case investigation, case management, prevention and control of infections. The Government has launched a month-long COVID-19 mass testing campaign in the country starting at the beginning of August. This will help provide a clearer picture of the situation in the country and inform the Government's key decisions, including on whether or not to reopen schools during the new academic year in September 2020.



UNHCR distributes soap and Jerry-cans in Digdiga kebele, Kamashi Zone, Benishangul-Gumuz Region, to support IDP returnees & other vulnerable groups. ©UNHCR

Prevention and response: The Government of Ethiopia, represented by ARRA, and UNHCR, together with the Regional Health Bureaus and other health partners have scaled up preparedness and the response to COVID-19 in refugee camps and other locations sheltering refugees and asylum seekers. They have enhanced communication and hygiene and are working to reduce overcrowding to curb the spread of the virus. Supply of water and soap continues together with installation of handwashing stations, strengthening health services, equipping isolation and quarantine centres and providing personal protective equipment for health care workers, first responders and others.

A total of **40,039** handwashing stations have been installed in communal centres and households in all the 26 refugee camps to promote regular handwashing with soap. Of these, **38,708** handwashing stations have been installed in refugee households and **1,331** were set

up in communal facilities providing services to refugees and asylum seekers. UNHCR provided **320,000** surgical masks while other agencies working in the refugee response also provided personal protective equipment, including masks and sanitizers. UNHCR also provided **100** coverall gowns to the Gambella Regional Health Bureau for use by medical personnel who are collecting samples for testing.

Over **2,150** health and community outreach workers have been trained and are actively engaged in awareness raising, case investigation and management, as well as mitigation, prevention and control of the virus. They include **432** health care workers, **16** 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 **18.6** liters, with three refugee camps out of 26 receiving less than 15 liters 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. Additional isolation units, each with 20 bed capacity, will be constructed in each camp, starting with camps in Gambella, Assosa and Melkadida.

In the capital Addis Ababa, where over **27,500** urban refugees reside, UNHCR is communicating with the refugees via telephone helplines, WhatsApp and Telegram groups. In order to meet additional expenses for soap and other sanitary materials, UNHCR provides an additional allowance of ETB 300 per person per month to those refugees entitled to monthly living allowances.

UNHCR is also supporting the inter-agency COVID-19 response to the IDP situation in the country, distributing non-food aid items, equipping isolation and quarantine centers and providing community communication.

Health Impact: Re-allocation of much of UNHCR's limited health budget to the COVID-19 prevention and response efforts will result in a strain on the provision of regular health services in the refugee camps and pose challenges in continuity of disease control programmes such as for HIV, TB and Malaria. It will also negatively impact the efforts made towards the control of non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and mental health. Disruptions of immunization programmes and the delivery of essential health services, such as treatment of chronic diseases will have longer term negative consequences on the health and well-being of refugees and asylum seekers. Once the acute phase of the pandemic is over, health systems will need to maintain COVID-19 specific services with the injection of new resources that were not foreseen during the planning cycle.

Economic impact: Ethiopia's Job Creation Commission reported the loss of 330,000 jobs in the country over the last four months. This will negatively affect employment opportunities for refugees despite Ethiopia's favorable policy directives granting them the right to work. Studies indicate a general national slowdown of economic activities and a decline in productivity. This has led to a decline in the supply of consumables and to increases in the prices of basic and essential items. In order to minimize the impact of the economic downturn on refugee enterprises that are being supported by the IKEA Foundation in Melkadida, UNHCR is working with the latter on a stimulus package for businesses to ensure that they are cushioned from any adverse effects.

UNHCR is coordinating with strategic partners to monitor the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in refugee hosting areas and to develop mitigation measures that will

minimize the impact on local economies and markets, as well as to plan for post-COVID-19 livelihoods recovery interventions for affected populations.

Challenges: UNHCR has, so far, received USD 9.8 million out of its financial requirements of USD 34.7 million for the COVID-19 response. The funding shortfall coupled with delayed delivery of international procurement orders for PPEs, medicines and medical supplies are among the key challenges hampering the response efforts.

Limited COVID-19 testing capacity in the Gambella Regional hospital is causing a delay in testing of refugees from Pagak Reception Centre to be relocated to camps. UNHCR has placed a procurement order of a second testing machine with 10,000 test cartridges. Similarly, there is no testing machine in Melkadida and samples are being transported to Jijiga for testing, posing a considerable logistical challenge.

Update on Pagak Reception Centre: UNHCR, ARRA and the humanitarian partners in Gambella have initiated the transfer of some of the over 8,000 South Sudanese refugees from the Pagak Reception Centre to a school compound in Nguenyiel Refugee Camp. They will be quarantined in the school for 15 days and then allocated family shelters in the camp. To date, 1060 refugees have been relocated, many of them vulnerable individuals including unaccompanied and separate children.



Up on arrival at Nguenyiel Refugee Camp, a woman sets up a temporary kitchen in the school compound to prepare the day's meal for her children. For her young children ©UNHCR/Goaner Yer

They have been accommodated in the classrooms, while two large halls have been prepared to accommodate more refugees.

The new arrivals were issued with essential aid items, including kitchen sets, blankets, sleeping mats and solar lanterns as well as two bundles of firewood per household to last for two weeks. WASH facilities have been installed, including gender segregated toilets and showerheads.

Meanwhile, food rations were distributed to 66 families comprising 207 individuals who have just been released from the quarantine centre at the Gambella University. They have all been accommodated in Nguenyiel camp, many of them staying with relatives there.

Flood response: Heavy rainfall in many parts of Ethiopia has destroyed property, damaged livelihoods and displaced thousands in many parts of the country. UNHCR is providing emergency aid in different parts of the country to support about 80,000 flood-displaced people, in the Jigjiga and Melkadida areas in the Somali Region as well as in the Afar Region where over 40,000 have been displaced. Kitchen sets, sleeping mats, blankets, plastic tarpaulins and jerry-cans are some of the items despatched. The distributions are ongoing in the Fafan and Shebele zones of the Somali Region while a total of 2000 returnee families in Tuligulet of the same region have already collected the relief items.

UNHCR has already distributed similar emergency relief items to 764 families displaced by floods from different localities in Bule-Hora and Gelana woredas of West Guji Zone, in Oromia Region.

In Melkadida, UNHCR have expressed their solidarity with the victims by distributing rice and sugar worth ETB 100,000.



Knee-deep in flood waters, a young mother in Metari Kebele, Galana woreda, west Guji zone struggles to save her belongings after floods destroyed property and livelihoods and displaced thousands. ©UNHCR/Mesfin Gebreab



UNHCR distributed emergency relief items to 764 families in Gelana and Bule-Hora woredas, displaced by floods. ©UNHCR/Natnael Assefa

Over 97,000 children vaccinated against measles: Refugee children between the ages of 9 months and five years in Ethiopia have been vaccinated against measles in a campaign that covered all 26 refugee camps. A total of 97,054 children have been vaccinated with an overall coverage rate of 95%.

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