

Weekly Operational Update

22 May 2020

Update on COVID-19

As of 22 May, Ethiopia reported 429 confirmed COVID-19 cases up from 272 reported on 14 May 2020. Overall, 128 patients have recovered while the number of deaths remains at five. So far, a total of 73,164 people have been tested for COVID-19 compared to 45,278 on 14 May. There are now confirmed COVID-19 cases reported in all regions, except Gambella and Harar.

The refugee camps and other locations sheltering refugees and asylum seekers have so far been spared from the infections. The Agency for Refugees and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), UNHCR and partners continue to intensify efforts to prevent and limit the potential spread of the corona virus among the over 761,000 refugees in the country. UNHCR is supporting local and regional authorities in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic in parts of the country that have been affected by conflict-induced displacement situations.

Prevention and response: ARRA, UNHCR and other humanitarian actors continue delivering protection and life-saving assistance and key services to refugees, in addition to helping to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Campaigns informing refugees to wash their hands with soap and practice physical distancing continue - along with efforts to increase the supply of water, soap and handwashing stations. In the Jijiga camps, ARRA continues to raise awareness using loudspeakers mounted on vehicles. Refugees in Aw-barre and Sheder camps are receiving on average 20.5 litres of water per person per day. Additional measures



Religious leaders in Jijiga camps mindful of physical distancing rules when discussing COVID-19 awareness campaigns. UNHCR/ Hassan Ahmedi.

are being taken to further increase the provision of water in all three camps - with the installation of six water tanks provided by UNICEF.

In the Melkadida camps, over 27,000 refugees attended hygiene promotion activities during the week. So far, 9,207 handwashing facilities have been installed in households across the five Refugee Camps in addition to 102 that have been installed in communal structures. UNHCR, with its partners have also installed WASH

facilities in the Dollo Ado isolation center and donated office materials to the Dollo Ado and Bokolmanyo Woreda administrations. In addition, UNHCR and ARRA handed over a rented vehicle to the woreda authorities to support their COVID-19 surveillance activities.

Isolation and quarantine centres: Temporary facilities have been designated in each camp to isolate suspected cases of COVID-19, pending their transfer to the Government designated isolation and treatment centers. As most of these spaces are within existing structures, UNHCR, ARRA and other partners have started construction of semi-permanent structures that meet the required standards. Two such facilities are being constructed in Melkadida and Hilaweyn Refugee Camps in the Somali Region with the other three camps expected to follow subject to availability of funds. Similar facilities are also being constructed in Aw-barre and Sheder camps while the one for Kebribeyah camp is in the pipeline. The new structures are being built with a long-term vision of transforming them into training rooms or as additional treatment centers after the COVID-19 emergency. In camps in the Tigray Region, a technical team from ARRA and UNHCR is currently assessing the camp-based isolation and quarantine facilities to identify their capacities, including the number of beds, water and sanitation facilities and other materials that may be needed to adequately prepare for them to be functional.

The authorities in the Somali Region which shares borders with Somalia, Djibouti and Kenya, have started screening individuals crossing through the official border entry points. Management of the porous borders and informal entry points presents a real challenge. ARRA has established quarantine centers in three of the five refugee camps in Melkadida where individuals coming from outside the region are required to be isolated for fourteen days. UNHCR is working with ARRA to furnish the centers. Temperature screening for COVID-19 continues in the health centers and other service-rendering facilities.



UNHCR and ARRA handed over a vehicle to Dollo Ado authorities to help with COVID-19 surveillance. UNHCR/Giulia Naboni

Supply: While awaiting the delivery of international orders for medicines and medical supplies, some urgently needed items are being procured locally.

Training: The training of health personnel and community health volunteers continued,



ARRA health focal points training on COVID-19 response facilitated by Axum University. UNHCR/ Kidist Daniel

including in camps in the Afar Region where sessions were previously delayed. The training covers *inter alia* surveillance, Infection Prevention and Control (IPC), case management, safe transport and Risk Communication and Community Engagement (RCCE). A total of 28 healthcare workers working in the refugee camps in the Tigray and Afar Regions as well as the Government health service providers in the Afar Region were trained. The Somali Regional Health Bureau (SRHB) and WHO have trained 36 healthcare personnel working in the refugee camps under ARRA and Humedica. The SRHB has also trained two staff members from each

woreda on the management of COVID-19 cases.

Challenges: Delays in the delivery of medicines and medical supplies from the international market and lack of adequate personal protective equipment (PPEs) for health care workers and first responders are among the key challenges in managing the risks associated with the spread of Corona. Moreover, refugees in many of the refugee camps indicate that the pandemic has negatively affected their food and economic 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 for them.

Other operational updates

UNHCR donates essential relief items to returnees in Gambella: As part of the effort to facilitate durable solutions to internally displaced persons, UNHCR donated an assortment of relief items to 3,000 residents of Itang Special Woreda in the Gambella Region. The beneficiaries consisting of 650 households, who had been displaced due to communal violence and flooding, have recently returned to their homes. The relief items including blankets, sleeping mats, plastic sheeting, buckets, kitchen sets, mosquito nets, jerry cans and soap, were distributed through UNHCR's partner the International Rescue Committee (IRC)

under the overall coordination of the Disaster Prevention and Food Security Agency (DPFSA). Soap, buckets and jerry cans were included in the packages, in order to promote hygiene to limit the spread of COVID-19. Awareness sessions were organized during the distribution to inform the beneficiaries about the risks of exposure to COVID-19 and how to prevent transmission of the virus. Mr. Okello Obang, Chief Administrator of the Itang Special Woreda, demonstrated to the residents the steps to follow to wash hands effectively.



*Distribution of NFIs to returnees in Itang Special Woreda, Gambella.
 UNHCR/Maria Dombaxi*

Erratic weather patterns displace over 15,000 people in Dollo Ado:

Heavy rains and flooding have inflicted serious damage to land, cattle and households, displacing over 15,000 people from Dollo Ado and the surrounding villages. ARRA, UNHCR and WFP coordinated an immediate humanitarian response with actors in the region contributing in-kind and cash donations, which were distributed to the displaced persons. The items collected and distributed include 2,000 sleeping mats, 2,000 mosquito nets, 500 jerry cans (20 litres), 200 semi-collapsible jerry cans, 2,000 blankets and 2,000 pieces of laundry soap. The displaced persons are being sheltered in schools and in tents.

Mainstreaming protection in COVID-19 messaging: UNHCR field protection staff in Sub-Office Melkadida are working with partners' staff to mainstream protection in COVID-19 messaging, particularly with respect to case reporting and access to services. While some services have been suspended, protection partners are being encouraged to inform camp residents of the ongoing availability of key services including child protection and SGBV, and to continue referring cases through community-based committees, partner outreach and protection staff.

For further information, please contact:

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