

Bi-weekly Operational Update: 1-15 March 2020

COVID-19 prevention measures in place: Sensitization campaigns against coronavirus have started in all refugee camps, carried out by Community Outreach Workers, informing refugees about the importance of social distancing and proper hygiene, including through house-to-house visits. General hygiene promotion activities, including handwashing, are being maintained or reinforced across all refugee camps. Refugee Outreach Volunteers are disseminating similar messages for the urban-based refugees, while posters with information about hygiene practices have been posted at the Reception Center in Addis Ababa. Screenings for new arrivals are being carried out in some of the major refugee entry points in order to early detect and isolate any suspected cases. UNHCR is supporting the Government's effort to extend those measures to other entry points and reception centers.

UNHCR is participating in preparedness initiatives at the national and regional levels and is advocating for refugees to be fully integrated into the national and regional response plans. In all field locations, UNHCR is engaging with ARRA, local authorities, and NGO partners, using the refugee coordination platform at the sub-office and camp levels for the purpose of information sharing, contingency planning and business continuity.

Clinical personnel in camp health facilities are being trained by Regional Health Bureaus on early case identification and referral pathways. Isolation facilities are being identified in all regions. UNHCR has prepared a Business Continuity Plan and is working to empower the refugees' leadership bodies within the refugee camps to help run the camps, together with leveraging available technology, should the situation escalate to the point that staff are unable to physically access the camps. UNHCR is envisioning together with partners innovative ways of distributing life-saving assistance while reducing crowds that increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Singer Betty G named UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador: UNHCR elevated Ethiopian singer and songwriter Betty G to the level of a Goodwill Ambassador. Her appointment was announced in Addis Ababa at an International Women's Day event, which was also marked in all refugee camps across Ethiopia. Prior to becoming a Goodwill Ambassador, Betty G served as UNHCR's High Profile Supporter and visited a number of refugee camps in Ethiopia hosting South Sudanese, Eritrean and Somali refugees. Goodwill Ambassadors are some of the most recognizable public faces who help UNHCR in advocating on behalf of refugees through their influence, dedication and hard work.

Refugees in Okugo Camp receive grinding mills: UNHCR's partner the Rehabilitation and Development Organization (RaDO) handed over two grinding mills for use by South Sudanese refugees in Okugo Refugee Camp. One of them is already operational while the second one is expected to start rendering milling services soon.

UNHCR Office in Nekemte has now ICT infrastructure in place: The UNHCR Office in Nekemte, East Wollega Zone, is now operating normally having been recently connected to ICT services. The office now has access to internet through VISAT as well as the associated telecom services. Meanwhile, the Office distributed plastic sheets, Mats, Jerry cans, and Soaps to 863 patients (beneficiaries) located in treatment centres in different localities within the East Wollega Zone.