



65, 513 PERSONS OF CONCERN as of 30 June 2020

33.2% SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEES as of 30 June 2020

65.5% SUDANESE REFUGEES as of 30 June 2020

1700 NEW ARRIVALS as of 30 June 2020

Operational context

The registered refugee population in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region stands at 65,513 Persons of Concern (PoC), of which 65.5% (42,945) are Sudanese, 33.2% (21,808) are South Sudanese and 1.31% are from other nationalities. In the first six months of 2020, Sub-Office Assosa received a total of 1700 new arrivals out of which 1483 were registered before closure of the border and the remaining 218 new arrivals were received after the border closure. To curb the spread of COVID-19, Ethiopia closed its land borders in March; hence only a limited number of new arrivals (218) have been registered. Per the Government's State of Emergency, movement restrictions have been enforced, and refugees who have arrived in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region from other parts of Ethiopia or overseas have been quarantined. The Benishangul-Gumuz Region is one of the Regions affected by COVID -19. The overall security situation is relatively calm and most protection and assistance activities in the Refugee Camps have continued without any major disruptions except the delays of food arrivals.

Sectorial priorities and unmet needs



Protection

General – UNHCR prioritizes the provision of basic needs and essential services to refugees in the camps and surrounding host communities and will continue to ensure that the minimum standards are met within the respective sectors. The protection activities in all five refugee camps are mainly focused on care and provision of assistance services. The COVID-19 outbreak has put a strain on service delivery including some protection interventions and the implementation of durable solutions. UNHCR is employing innovative approaches to redefine and align various community engagement and assistance activities with the precautionary measures outlined by WHO and Government of Ethiopia guidelines. Refugees continue to cross borders to visit families or seek job opportunities. Cross-border movements / recyclers remain a major concern amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as it is feared that this could contribute to the spreading of the disease. Since mid-June, ARRA decided to close the quarantine centers in camps to quarantine recyclers and trickling new arrivals. This measure is observed to be a major concern that limit the movement tracking as recyclers may keep their movement hidden. However, awareness creation and sensitization campaigns have been continued to refugees to respect social distances, hand washing and other COVID-19 preventive measures across the camps. Limited PPE's such as masks, sanitizers, and gloves to safely deliver services is of great concern. The unreliable mobile network in the camps is foreseen to hinder remote working arrangements and eventually strain service delivery required.

Child protection – A child protection business continuity plan has been rolled out to ensure that services to children, adolescents, and youth remain affected by COVID-19 pandemic albeit in a scaled down mode as COVID -19 preventive measures. UNHCR has a great concern that the limited protection activities could expose children to more protection risks such as substantive abuse, FMG, child labor, early marriage and pregnancies. Youth participation programmes are in place to create awareness on potential child protection risks presented by the COVID-19 situation. In addition, community-based child protection structures have been strengthened to offer basic psychosocial support services to vulnerable children in their respective communities within the camps. Counselling is offered for children that need psychosocial support.



SGBV – UNHCR has developed a Business Continuity Plan (BCP) for SGBV, redefining the way we do business during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Regular Community Wellbeing Initiative – which involves large gatherings - was suspended due to COVID-19. However, considering the importance of psychosocial wellbeing of beneficiaries, the Initiative was resumed in May 2020 with limited number of participants. Case management services always continued, but beneficiaries could not access the safe space services as to prevent crowded places amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Incidents reporting was carried out through mini-medias and home-to-home visits. There was no significant change in SGBV cases albeit some increases in domestic violence cases by intimate partners between March and April. It is thought that the limited activities in the camps have contributed to family conflict and domestic violence. Caseworkers have been trained on remote case management to ensure that victims of domestic violence receive adequate support and assistance.



Health

In four out of five camps, one health care center is available with a permanent structure serving refugees and host communities. The fifth health care center (Gure-Shombola Health center) is semi-permanent – UNHCR is planning on upgrading the center to a permanent structure this year. A total of 42,946 (new and repeat) medical consultations were made at outpatient department. Among the total medical consultations 34% were nationals who seek healthcare in refugee health facilities. A total of 88 refugees were referred to secondary and tertiary treatment care level during the past three months. A total of 118 people living with HIV have been given Antiretroviral therapy. To prevent malaria related morbidity and mortality 30,239 insecticide treated mosquito net distributed to all 5 camps. COVID-19 preparedness and response activities have been conducted in all five camps. A total of 97 health professionals were trained on COVID-19 Case Management; Infection Prevention and Control; Risk Communication and Community Engagement, COVID-19 Surveillance; Point of Entry (PoE) Screening and Guidance; Partner Coordination and Planning; and Laboratory Detection. Awareness raising campaigns are well underway through home to home visits, mini media and use of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials. To date, the Assosa SO has printed and dispatched a total of 2000 IEC materials translated in English and Arabic (2000 A2 size posters and 10 banners). At each camp quarantine centers have been established in all five camps. This quarantine centers and health centers have been supplied with locally procured Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and disinfectants. However, these centers are closed at the end of June by health partner (ARRA). A total of 192 refugees have been tested for COVID-19 and all of them were negative in June 2020. In some camps provision of medical care is often limited due to a combination of factors including shortages of health staff, inconsistent supply of drugs and medical equipment, lack of a permanent health facility in the case of Gure-Shombola camp, lack of adequate WASH facilities in some health centers, limited number of partners working on mental health services, and insufficient provision of electricity. UNHCR and ARRA, together with health partners are working to address the gaps for which an injection of financial resources is needed.



Food and Nutrition

The monthly general food distribution to all refugees provides 1,800 kcal/person/day, which is inadequate to meet the daily requirement of 2100 kilocalories. A Supplementary Feeding Programme has been implemented for persons with special needs such as pregnant women, children 6-23 months old, people with chronic diseases, and the elderly. A total of 449 children have been admitted to Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and are being managed as per the WHO SAM protocol. The main challenges of the nutrition sector are related to incomplete food basket, lack of adequate nutrition staff, lack of adequate equipment and supply for the nutrition centers, and a lack of IYCF centers, waiting rooms for nutrition beneficiaries. Limited resources remain a key challenge in addressing these priority needs.



NFI Non-Food Items

Basic and domestic items for new arrivals have been prioritized for 2020. All new arrivals received kitchen sets, blankets, sleeping mats, and jerry cans. Soap is distributed every month, and considering the COVID-19 pandemic, additional two pieces of soap per person per month have been distributed. Additionally, 5000 pieces of soap have been distributed for communal handwashing facilities, and 2,500 pieces donated to the Benishangul-Gumuz prison office. Dignity kits were distributed to women and girls of reproductive age 11-49, which represent 25.36% of the population (16,534 Women/girls). The quarantine centers in Bambasi and Tsore camps have been equipped with blankets sleeping mats, plastic sheets, and buckets. The replenishment of worn-out CRIs remains a significant gap in the operation.



Education

In 2020, Gure-Shombola Tsotsora secondary school received 100 combined desks for students, 50 tables, 6 blackboards, 6 calculators, 500 reference books, and 100 packs of chalk. However, due to the nation-wide closure of schools to mitigate the spread of corona virus, all refugee students are out of school and trying to study from home. Teachers carry out home visits to support students and monitor progress, but self-learning materials are in urgent need in the camps. There are significant challenges concerning education, including inadequate classrooms, sports fields, WASH facilities, playgrounds and pedagogic services. Additionally, only 31% of the teachers are qualified and there are limited teacher training and development programs available to enhance the quality of the education. Children with disabilities do not have access to special education and which remains a great challenge. To mitigate the above-mentioned challenges UNHCR in collaboration with other stakeholders, like UNICEF and the Regional Education Bureau, have started providing summer diploma courses for incentive primary teachers. Also, construction of new secondary schools, and the expansion existing ones is underway. However, more resources are required.



Shelter

In 2020, a total of 137 new emergency shelters have been constructed in Gure-Shombola and Tsore Refugee Camps. Overall, out of the planned target of 352, a total of 230 transitional shelters have been constructed in the five camps (60 in Tongo, 40 in Gure-Shmobolla, 50 in Bamabsi and 40 in Sherkole and 40 in Tsore). In addition, out of the 10 planned TS for host community, 5 are completed. The planned maintenance of 92 Shelters is not yet implemented and is expected to be undertaken in the second half the year (32-Tongo, 30-Tsore and 30-Sherkole) together with a total of 363 emergency shelters in Tsore and Gure Shombola camps. In general, more resources are required to fully meet the shelter needs of refugees in the five camps.



WASH

The average daily per capita water access across the camps was 21.24 liters per person per day. Refugees were also able to access water at water points with a tap was serving to 72 refugees. The free residual chlorine was checked daily to be between 0.2-0.5 mg/lit at the water point level that ensured safe supply of water to the refugees and nearby host communities. Equally important, the connection of permanent water supply sources to nearby Homosha town host communities were made through 15m³ elevated tank and pressure line to supply water to the host communities through six water points and to the institutions through two water points. In line with this, the proper hand over process and support to this water supply system required further follow and attention. Through the support of CISP (operational partner), the construction of 158 household latrines were constructed at both Sherkole and Tsore camps though plastering of the latrine walls was ongoing. Moreover, IRC constructed 60 household latrines at Sherkole



camp, and 30 slabs at Tsore camps. The regular hygiene promotion activities were conducted including undertaking hand washing facilities. The household latrines coverage in the camps was at 57% which is an average of 7 refugees per latrine. The number of refugees per waste pit was 595 refugees for solid waste management. The number of refugees per hygiene promoters was 766 refugees in the awareness raising efforts in the camps. The key messaging of the COVID-19 preparedness and response through megaphones, mini media and community workers was conducted to engage the communities against COVID-19 pandemic.



Energy & Environment

A mixed approach initiative has been implemented to provide refugees with alternative sources of energy for cooking, and at the same time mitigate degradation of the natural environment. As part of this initiative, several resources were provided such as distribution of charcoal briquettes, the communal kitchen at Tsore and Sherkole camps, and provision of firewood to Gure-Shombola camp. 262,000kg of savannah grass is collected from the host community youth cooperatives as a feedstock for charcoal briquette production at Tore and Sherkole refugee camps. Similarly, 289,553kg of sorghum stem is procured from the surrounding farmers as a feedstock for charcoal briquette production at Bambasi, Gure and Tongo refugee camps where savannah grass is not abundant. The capacity of briquettes production stands at eight pieces per household per month, which is insufficient to meet the energy needs of the beneficiaries. As a result, refugees continue to rely on natural resources. To address this, UNHCR is exploring possibilities to provide cash to help refugees buy fuel from the market. Despite the efforts undertaken to address the energy needs of the population, there are still huge gaps in refugee household access to energy for cooking, lighting, and heating. To sustainably address the gaps in the provision of alternative energy sources, ongoing efforts to connect the camps to the national power grid, expansion of solar streetlights, and soil and water conservation need to be strengthened. It is now 23.5% of the refugee households are using environmentally friendly briquette. The operation is currently raising 270,000 tree seedlings which will be transplanted in the coming weeks to mitigate the impact of deforestation. 1,450 hectares of land became open out of it 207 hectares of land needs serious attention. Due to the COVID-19, mass plantation became impossible and it slowed down the progress of project implementation. However, since the project quite align the “Green Legacy Campaign of Ethiopia”, afforestation and plantation became more possible in the area.



Livelihood

Ethiopia’s new refugee policy which grants refugees greater rights including the right to undertake livelihoods activities and inclusion within the national development system, is well received by the refugees and appreciated by UNHCR and its partners. To date, several partners are involved in undertaking some livelihoods projects including an economic inclusion pilot project in Bambasi Refugee Camp, and an agricultural assistance program in two other Refugee Camps. Livelihood opportunities for refugees are, however, limited due to limited financial resources and partners that could implement such projects. Joint efforts are needed to promote the inclusion of refugees in national development plans through livelihood opportunities and related projects. UNHCR through direct implementation, provided agricultural livelihood assistance across all the five camps.

Operational partners LWF, GNE and CISP have delivered their livelihood projects in three major camps namely Bambasi, Tsore and Sherkole camps in this reporting period. In addition, a proportionate amount of livelihood resources also reached the host community kebeles in each camp. In total 2663 refugee households and 875 host community households were supported.