

## Joint News Release

05 November 2021

### **WFP, UNHCR, ARRA APPEAL FOR FUNDING TO AVOID RATION CUTS TO OVER 700,000 REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA**

**ADDIS ABABA** – *The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), and ARRA, the national agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs, appealed for US\$68 million to avoid food ration cuts for over 700,000 refugees in Ethiopia. Funding shortages will force ration cuts of up to 60 percent of the minimum food basket recommended. The agencies warned of growing risks including increased malnutrition and anaemia, stunted child growth, deterioration of the health status due to susceptibility to diseases/infection and a myriad of protection risks further compounded by the COVID 19 pandemic.*

A shortage of funds is forcing WFP to cut the size of food baskets from 1,773 kilocalories per person/day (84% of the recommended minimum of 2100kcal/p/d) to 1,262 kilocalories per person/day (60% of the recommended minimum of 2100kcal/p/d) for some 710,000 refugees. The cuts, starting in November, will impact all refugees living in camps in Gambella, Afar, Shire, Melkadida, Assosa and Jijiga in Ethiopia.

The ration cuts are a last resort to avert a complete break in food supplies across the country. However, even with this reduction – if WFP doesn't receive an additional US\$68 million to cover the food needs of refugees for the next six months, it will completely run out of food for refugees by January 2022.

"We are appealing to our donors to quickly come to the aid of the refugees, who solely rely on WFP food and cash transfers for survival," said Dr. Steven Were Omamo, WFP's Country Representative and Country Director for Ethiopia.

"Sadly, prolonged ration cuts affect the refugees' nutrition and health. The immediate priority for us all must be to restore assistance to at least minimum levels for refugees, many of whom lost the lifeline of remittances due to the global impact of COVID-19." said Dr. Omamo.

If there is an immediate response from donors, however, WFP would be able to buy food available in the region and quickly transport to meet the refugees' urgent dietary needs and avert the ration cuts. WFP would also be able to transfer cash to refugees immediately so they can buy the food they need from local markets and meet their urgent dietary needs.

"We are grateful to donors for continuing to provide funding to meet the food and non-food needs of refugees," said UNHCR's Representative in Ethiopia, Dr. Mamadou Dian Balde. "However, the lack of funding to sustain food assistance will greatly undermine the overall protection needs of the refugee population in Ethiopia, with negative effects on the peaceful coexistence between refugees and hosting communities, and plausibly reverse the gains made in reduction of malnutrition."

UNHCR, WFP and ARRA continue to prioritise the food needs of refugees, in accordance with their Tripartite Memorandum of Understanding, and have established effective food assistance identification systems through the biometric verification, which ensures accountability and entitlement of the food and cash assistance to refugees on a monthly basis. UNHCR is calling on all partners to increase efforts to address the medium- to long-term food needs of refugees, in line with the Government of Ethiopia's 2019 Refugee Proclamation, and the commitments contained in the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and its Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF).

"We must all do more, in support of refugees and their host populations," said Dr. Balde.

At present the Government of Ethiopia provides protection to over 800,000 refugees, of which 710,000 are fully dependant on the food assistance. ARRA, the government refugee agency, is distributing the food both in kind and in cash in a more accountable and transparent manner. The refugees' full profile is registered in the level three registration, and assistance distribution is based on the biometric database. ARRA will continue to ensure asylum-seekers and refugees have access to level three registration to meet their protection and assistance needs.

ARRA, WFP and UNHCR continue to count on the donor community for the extended funding support for the refugees in the principle of shared responsibility to implement basic humanitarian life saving activities.

"ARRA strongly appeals to the donor community to extend their generous hands to the refugees, in the principle of shared responsibility before the refugees impacted seriously by continuing cut off from the recommended minimum food basket," said Ato Eyob Awoke the deputy director of ARRA.

WFP also provides specialized fortified foods to young children, and pregnant women and nursing mothers, to stave off malnutrition. As an additional measure to avoid a pipeline break - nutrition support will be limited to only children under two years of age (instead of the current under five years old) as well as pregnant and breastfeeding women.

The triple burden of food insecurity, undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies is expected to worsen, behind the background of the already high global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates in 16 of the 24 (2/3) refugee camps. In 19 of the 24 camps anaemia levels are above the UNHCR standard (of <20% for children 6-59 months of age).

UNHCR, WFP and ARRA are jointly implementing the ration cuts and have begun to work together on sensitising the refugee leaders and refugees in the camps of the changes in their entitlements.

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The **United Nations World Food Programme** is the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate. We are the world's largest humanitarian organization, saving lives in emergencies and using food assistance to build a pathway to peace, stability and prosperity for people recovering from conflict, disasters and the impact of climate change.

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**UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency**, protects people forced to flee their homes because of conflict and persecution. We work in over 130 countries, protecting millions of people by responding with life-saving support, safeguarding fundamental human rights and helping them build a better future.

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**ARRA, the national agency for Refugee and Returnee Affairs** in Ethiopia will continue its long-established commitment to protect refugees in a spirit of global solidarity and in line with the fundamental principles of international refugee law, made highly significant pledges to improve further the rights and services enjoyed by refugees in the country.

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