
Joint News Release

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FUNDING URGENTLY NEEDED TO SUPPORT HUNGRY REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA

ADDIS ABABA –The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) and UNHCR, the UN refugee agency, are appealing for US\$80 million to provide food assistance to refugees in Ethiopia.

The amount of food that refugees receive was cut by 20 percent last year below the 2,100 kilocalories per day required to sustain the average person. UNHCR and WFP are warning of deeper cuts to the amount of food from April unless new funding is received in March.

Without new contributions, 650,000 refugees in camps in Ethiopia could soon become even more hungry and may eventually face hunger so severe that it could put lives at risk.

"After fleeing conflict and deprivation in their home countries, refugees deserve to be protected and supported," said Samir Wanmali, WFP's Acting Country Director in Ethiopia. "We have a shared responsibility to leave no one behind. Should we neglect this, we risk further destitution and marginalization of some of the world's most vulnerable people."

Ethiopia hosts the second largest number of refugees in Africa. There are more than 900,000 refugees in the country, including people from Eritrea, Kenya, Sudan, South Sudan and Somalia. Some 650,000 of them live in camps and depend on assistance from WFP and UNHCR.

The two UN agencies fear refugee families could adopt harmful survival strategies and might even try to leave Ethiopia. Particularly at risk are young children who risk becoming stunted if they do not receive the right nutrients during the first 1,000 days of life.

"The malnutrition rates in the camps are already high – further ration cuts could have a devastating effect and will hinder efforts being made to help the refugees become more self-sufficient, in line with the objectives of the global Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF)," said UNHCR's Deputy Representative, Matthew Crentsil.

Recent assessments show that malnutrition rates among children under the age of five are above the emergency threshold of 15 percent in nearly half of the 26 refugee camps.

Conflict and drought in neighbouring countries continues to force people to seek refuge in Ethiopia, which has a long tradition of hosting refugees. In 2017, nearly 110,000 refugees arrived in Ethiopia.

WFP and UNHCR work in support of the Ethiopian Government Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs and with key partners to address the needs of all refugees in camps.

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WFP is the world's largest humanitarian agency fighting hunger worldwide, delivering food assistance in emergencies and working with communities to improve nutrition and build resilience. Each year, WFP assists some 80 million people around 80 countries.

UNHCR is the United Nations programme with the mandate to protect refugees, forcibly displaced communities and stateless people, and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement to a third country.

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