



62,559 PERSONS OF CONCERN in the Benishangul-Gumuz region as of 26 January 2020

67% SOUTH SUDANESE REFUGEES as of 26 January 2020

32% SUDANESE REFUGEES as of 26 January 2019

6456 NEW ARRIVALS

as of 31 December 2019

Operational context

General – The registered population under the Sub-Office Assosa in the Benishangul-Gumuz Region stands at 62,669 Persons of Concern (PoC), of which 67% (41,676) are Sudanese, 32% (20,149) are of South Sudanese descent, and 1% are from other nationalities. The Assosa operation continues to receive new arrivals, with a total of 6,010 new refugees registered in 2019. In addition to those directly arriving in the region, Sub-Office Assosa also accommodates South Sudanese refugees who arrive in the Gambella Region and are subsequently relocated. As of January 2020, there are some 7,000 new arrivals in the Pamdong reception centre in Gambella, 4,283 have been verified, out of which 3,024 have been registered while the status of 1,259 individuals is being verified. An information campaign was held with new arrivals on relocation to Assosa. Nonetheless, several families have indicated unwillingness to be relocated. Absorption capacity in Gure-Shombola Camp is close to the existing limit, with Tsore Camp having a remaining existing capacity of 5,500 individuals. UNCHR, ARRA and the regional authorities are engaged in discussions to explore the expansion of existing camps as well as identifying a suitable plot for the establishment of a new camp should there be a sharp increase of new arrivals. A three-month (Jan-March) action plan has been developed with respect to the relocation of the new arrivals from Gambella. This plan sets out initiatives to monitor the response on the ground and guide the activation of the refugee contingency plan should the spike in new arrivals hit the threshold of 250 refugees crossing the border per day.

Sectorial priorities and unmet needs



Protection

General – UNHCR and its partners provide protection to refugees and promote durable solutions. However, the operation faces challenges, including a lack of capacity to facilitate the documentation processes, contributing to backlogs and delays in issuing identity cards, birth certificates, and marriage documents. In addition, there is a need for proper mechanisms to protect refugees who have entered the labour market informally.

Child protection – Adolescents from 12-17 years represent 17 percent (10,525) of the overall refugee population. The current Ethiopia National Refugee Child Protection Strategy provides strategic priorities for child protection, such as strengthening of family-based care for unaccompanied and separated children; and, promoting inclusion of refugee children in the national child protection system. There are limited activities and services targeting adolescents such as psychosocial support, and technical and vocational education and training activities which are linked to labour market needs. There are cases of children entering the informal labour market at a young age making them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Recreational centres and/or child-friendly spaces are a significant gap within all camps.

SGBV – Significant challenges remain when seeking to respond to the underlying gender power imbalance and prevalent gender inequalities. Women and girls are at risk of different types of SGBV, including physical and sexual violence, as well as harmful traditional practices. The active involvement of women in community-based structures remains low and requires constant attention and consideration.



Health

In four out of five camps, one health care centre is available with a permanent structure for refugees and host communities. 31,5% of the patients that seek medical assistance are from the host community. However, medical care provision is often limited due to: 1) shortages of health staff, lab-technicians and specialists in Tsore and Tongo camps, 2) lack of psychiatric nurses in Tsore and Gure-Shombola camps, 3) lack of midwives in Bambasi camp, 4) limited medical equipment, drugs, and lab reagents, 5) inadequate supplies to prevent and control infectious diseases, 6) inadequate referral services, 7) lack of a permanent health facility in Gure-Shombola camp, 8) lack of adequate WASH facilities at the health care centres, 9) inadequate operational partners focussing on mental health services, 10) inadequate malaria control practises in Tsore camp, 11) inadequate referral services, and 11) insufficient provision of electricity supply in all camps except in Sherkole camp.



Food and Nutrition

The monthly general food distribution to all refugees provides 1,710 kcal/cap/day, which is inadequate to meet the daily caloric requirement of 2100 kilocalories. A Supplementary Feeding Programme is implemented and monitored for persons with special needs such as pregnant women, children and the elderly. The main challenges regarding nutrition relate to lack of adequate nutrition staff, lack of adequate equipment and supply for the nutrition centres, and a lack of waiting rooms for nutrition beneficiaries. In the Sherkole, Tsore, Tongo, and Bambasi camps, the Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) cases are 34, 110, 54, and 436 respectively.

NFI Non-Food Items

New arrivals are provided with basic and domestic items upon their arrival such as kitchen sets, blanket, sleeping mat, and jerry cans. Soap is distributed to all refugees on a monthly basis. Besides, sanitary materials are distributed to women and girls of reproductive age 11-49, which represent 25.36% of the population. The replenishment of NFIs remains a significant gap.



Education

In 2019, the average gross school enrolment rate was 88%. For primary the average school enrolment rate was 142% (this includes enrolment of refugees > 14 years), while that for secondary education stood at 16%. More needs to be done to ensure a better-quality education for both refugees and nationals by investing in the qualification and number of teachers, and in the teaching and learning materials as well as improving the school environment and facilities. 34% of the teachers have an official qualification and only a few of the unqualified teachers could access training to obtain a certificate. Additionally, the low incentive offered to teachers discourages qualified refugees to engage in professional work. Also, children with special education needs do not have access to education. Lastly, the enrolment ratio for girls is low and the gender disparity becomes significant at the upper primary and secondary level. Presently, a programme is being implemented to construct and expand secondary schools in Bambasi, Tsore, Sherkole and Tongo camps.



Shelter

There is a substantial shelter need. Most of the households reside in emergency shelters especially in Gure-Shembola and Tsore refugee camps. Presently, only 66% of refugees in the region reside in transitional shelters. Besides, there is an ongoing need to maintain existing shelters or construct new ones. In 2019, a total of 155 and 648 emergency shelters were constructed in Tsore and Gure-Shembola refugee camp respectively. The UNHCR has requested its implementing partner to shift 150 targeted emergency shelters from Tsore to Gure-Shembola refugee camp in order to accommodate new arrivals being relocated from the Gambella region. Out of 1063 targeted emergency shelters 803 emergency shelters have been constructed in 2019.



WASH

All camps have deep boreholes for water provision. There are seven solarized deep boreholes for refugees and the host community, with two additional boreholes currently under construction. The daily per capita water access is 20,06 liters per person per day. In Bambasi camp water provision is not sustainable due to obsolete water and distribution systems. UNHCR proposes to develop a system to pump water from the nearby Dabus river for the benefit of both host and refugee communities. The upgrading of permanent water and distribution systems in all camps requires more attention. The household latrine coverage stands at 64% which is equivalent to eight persons per drop hole. Handwashing coverage is no more than 32% and needs critical follow-up through regular hygiene promotion activities. Generally, there are limited WASH facilities at institutions such as schools and hospitals. Also, there are general concerns regarding the quality of the water that is supplied to the communities. Construction of water quality lab centers could assist in ensuring that refugees and host communities have access to safe water.



Energy & Environment

The operation in the Benishangul-Gumuz region has been prioritized for national grid integration subject to additional resources. There are limited renewable energy sources, with refugees forced to resort to natural resources to respond to their domestic energy needs, averaging 4kgs of wood, per person, per day. 65,000 trees were planted this year to mitigate deforestation and erosion in the area. The production of charcoal briquettes – 8,3 per HH per month – aims to provide refugees with an alternative source of household energy. More than 600 briquette stoves and 400 ethanol stoves were distributed to 400 households this year. However, the production of clay stoves remains low. In Sherkole Camp, 50 vulnerable households were selected to utilize communal kitchens, with plans to expand the initiative next year.



Livelihood

The Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Strategy 2020-2021 will be adapted to the Assosa operation. This Strategy will facilitate the development of key regional policies and action plans, enabling proper coordination, creating new jobs and, building stronger capacities. Refugee protection is a central focus, to ensure that the terms and conditions of refugees participating in self and wage employment initiatives are fully defined. The GoE pledged to create up to 90,000 economic opportunities through agricultural and livestock value chains that benefit both refugees and their host communities equitably by 2024. Despite the income-generating activities – varying from on-farm and off-farm activities – the operation faces challenges related to the mainstreaming of livelihood across-sectors. There is a shortage of self- or wage employment opportunities, limited access to agricultural land for refugees, lack of funding for livelihood programmes, low disposable income or lack of cash for beneficiaries, and lack of operational partners. There is a need to design and implement meaningful livelihood interventions in the Assosa operation.