

Weekly Operational Update

01 May 2020

Update on COVID-19

As of 01 May 2020, Ethiopia reported 133 confirmed COVID-19 cases, three deaths and 66 recoveries. No cases of COVID-19 have been reported amongst the refugee population and their host communities thus far, but UNHCR continues to intensify efforts to prevent and limit the potential spread of the corona virus among the over 761,000 refugees in the country.

Preparedness and response:

Aid workers, medical workers and refugee representatives are on the front lines of this pandemic, providing refugees and host communities with information via posters, announcements and hotlines about COVID-19 and how to protect themselves. In parts of Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz Regions, UNHCR has partnered with a national radio station to disseminate awareness messages in Amharic and Oromiffa languages. Infection



Refugees in Aysaita Refugee Camp practice social distancing while on a queue to collect their regular food rations. ©UNHCR

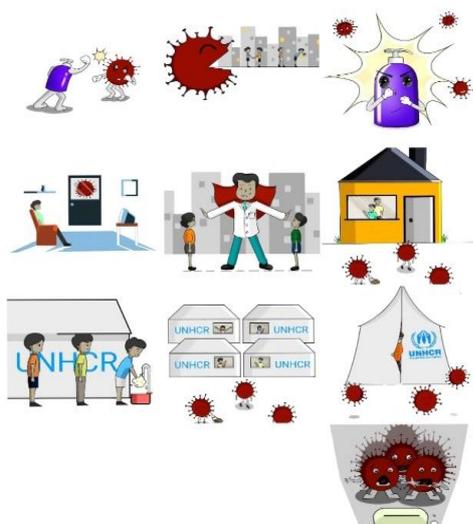
prevention and control measures are being strengthened with increased supplies of soap and water, the installation of additional handwashing facilities in central locations around the camps as well as in refugee households. Stocks of supplies are being reinforced and health-care needs are being constantly assessed along with training of health personnel. But more training is needed especially in the Afar and Somali Regions. At the same time, intense efforts are being made to furnish isolation areas and create more distancing between people while they go about their daily activities. While meetings and other crowd-creating situations and services have been limited or suspended, innovative food distribution modalities are being adopted. Fewer refugees are issued with food rations at the same time to allow for social distancing. In camps in the Somali (Melkadida) and Afar (Aysaita) Regions, where refugees are currently being issued with food rations, refugees are washing their hands before entering the distribution centres, and temperature checks are conducted.

Support to Government facilities: UNHCR provided WASH facilities to the isolation centre in Dollo Ado which will be used by host communities and refugees. In Gambella, UNHCR and ARRA are helping equip four camp-based isolation centres and one at Gog Woreda for the host community. In several other locations, UNHCR is finalizing preparations to provide training for health personnel, working in and outside the refugee camps.

Quarantine facilities in the Bokolmanyo, Kobe and Melkadida camps have been put in place by ARRA. UNHCR is ensuring that the minimum standards of treatment for refugees, that are required for quarantine, are put in place. Although the reception centre in Dollo Ado is closed, new arrivals continue to arrive through illegal routes, and they are proceeding to their families in the camps. However, once they are discovered, they are directed to the quarantine facilities.

Refugees' engagement: Refugee leaders and volunteers are playing a crucial role as important first responders by providing information, demonstrating handwashing and social distancing, and helping to distribute posters, soap and other essential items. The awareness raising support extends to the nearby host communities who in most cases share linguistic and cultural commonalities with the refugees.

In Addis Ababa and Jijiga, for instance, refugee representatives from different nationalities are using WhatsApp and Telegram groups to communicate with UNHCR, and to share hygiene promotion and social distancing messages with refugees. These groups are also helping tackle misinformation and misconceptions about the virus by sharing authentic information in line with WHO and Government of Ethiopia guidelines.



Eritrean refugee Fatima Hayuti draws comics to teach children about coronavirus. ©UNHCR

Refugee artists in Addis Ababa are creating awareness - using youth and child-friendly tools such as comics and animation.

Key challenges: Frontline aid and health workers continue to raise concerns over the shortage of personal protection equipment (PPEs), water and jerry-cans. Together with partners, UNHCR is working to enhance the supply of these needed items. Limited local procurement of PPEs is being adapted as a short-term solution pending the delivery of international shipments. Inadequate shelter and food supplies are also among the key challenges that refugees are facing. The latter is particularly evident in camps in the Tigray and Somali Regions where refugees had to close their small-scale businesses to prevent the spread of coronavirus, thereby losing their livelihoods and income.

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Update on regular protection and assistance programmes

Implementation of UNHCR's regular protection and assistance programmes across the refugee camps is progressing well with essential primary health care and nutrition services. However, with the nationwide closure of learning institutions to mitigate the spread of coronavirus, over 200,000 refugees are out of school – with no opportunities for online courses. Many are participating in activities to fight against COVID-19. Below are some of the salient activities:

Agricultural activities in Gambella: As part of the comprehensive refugee response approach, UNHCR and WFP have started allocating land to refugee farmers in Nguenyiel and Okugo Refugee Camps in Gambella, to be able to grow food crops and vegetables. So far, land and agricultural tools have been issued to 30 families in Okugo camp. In Nguenyiel camp, land demarcation is ongoing and will soon be allotted to the selected beneficiaries. The Regional Government in Gambella set aside arable land for use by refugees and host communities in line with the Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework (CRRF) which seeks to promote the self-reliance of refugees and the communities hosting them.

Relocation of new arrivals from Somalia completed: The relocation of newly arrived Somali refugees from the Reception Centre in Dollo Ado to the refugee camps in Melkadida was completed. There are currently no refugees or asylum seekers in the Reception Centre. Meanwhile, farming cooperatives continue working, with most of the farmers engaged in transplanting of onion seedlings from the nursery to the main fields. Currently, 241 and 110 hectares of land are covered with onion and maize crops respectively.

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