



319,130 PERSONS OF CONCERN

as of 30 June 2020

66,898 FAMILIES IN 7 CAMPS

as of 30 June 2020

5,979 NEW ARRIVALS

as of June 2020

Operational context

At the end of June 2020, Ethiopia hosted 342,765 South Sudanese refugees of whom 319,130 were sheltered in seven camps in the Gambella Regional State. This includes 83,616 refugees in Nguenyiel camp, 64,898 refugees in Tierkidi camp, 58,935 in Jewi camp, 45,399 refugees in Kule camp, 43,433 and 9,313 refugees in Pugnido1 and 2 camps and 11,806 refugees in Okugo Camp. A further 1,730 refugees are accommodated with the host community in Akula. Most new arrivals into Gambella are expected to be relocated to the Benishangul-Gumuz Region following a Government policy issued in January 2019 requiring such transfers. As of March 2020, Ethiopia has closed its land borders in an effort to prevent the spreading of COVID-19. However, new arrivals enter Ethiopia through informal crossings, often fleeing conflict and food insecurity in parts of South Sudan. Between 31 August 2019 and 30 March 2020, a total of 7000 individuals were in the Gambella transit centres of whom 718 were relocated to Assosa. As of March 30, the Okugo transit centre terminated all its activities leading to relocation to Nguenyiel camps of the residual 2190 individuals. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, transit services were transferred to Pagak. The newly re-opened Pagak Reception Centre in Gambella is now hosting more than 8800 refugees from South Sudan. There is limited accommodation and services are overstretched for the increasing number of new asylum seekers, which remains a concern. UNHCR is also involved in the IDP response in Gambella¹.

Sectorial priorities and unmet needs



Protection

Child protection – Around 208,542 individuals in Gambella are children below the age of 18, representing 66% of the refugee population. A total of 20,982 children are either separated or unaccompanied (UASCs), making the promotion of family-based care for UASC a priority preoccupation for the office. Hence, foster families are identified and family tracing and reunification is conducted. Children are facing various protection risks such as neglect, domestic violence, child labour, and dropping out of school. Child protection services are available across all camps through trained child protection caseworkers and protection officers. However, the number of UASC has exceeded the capacity to respond to their basic needs. Eventhough child protection services are available across all camps, psychosocial support, youth programmes and other social activities remain limited. Recreational centres and/or child-friendly spaces are a significant gap in all camps, negatively impacting their well-being.

SGBV – In relation to SGBV prevention and response, the operation works to enhance justice and physical protection of survivors through special SGBV programmes, while strengthening psychosocial support at household level. In addition, an emergency SGBV response intervention has been rolled-out in Pagak reception centre aimed at mitigating SGBV risks and supporting SGBV survivors among the new arrivals. The operation continues its efforts to strenghten SGBV case management amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. A remote case management mechanism has been established and SGBV incidents can now be reported through a telephone helpline. In addition, 18 medical workers have been trained on SGBV risk mitigation and response mechanism. However,

¹ See the IDP Response Situational Update

challenges faced in the wake of COVID 19 include, heightened risk of child marriages and forced marriage of adolescents since schools are closed and the girls are at home; increase in cases of domestic violence (intimate partner violence), inadequate PPE for incentive workers conducting house to house awareness on SGBV/COVID 19 since group awareness activities were halted. Women at the Pagak reception centre face significant SGBV risks. Access to SGBV services for victims is limited and there is inadequate to no transportation to transfer SGBV cases to the Tierkidi camp. Moreover, women and girls are also confronted with harassment, physical attacks, and rape in areas where they collect firewood/water. Improving access to alternative fuel and energy sources could be a sustainable solution to reduce the SGBV incidents in and outside the. Moreover, there are no livelihood programmes and economic empowerment initiatives for women and vulnerable households.

COVID-19 Preparedness & Response

A Gambella COVID-19 outbreak Emergency Preparedness and Response Plan has been developed, and a taskforce has been established to ensure that measures are taken to curtail the impact of the pandemic on refugees and hosting communities. Joint coordination efforts are being made to strengthen the Public Health Emergency Operation Centre (PHEOC) on the following pillars: Risk Communication and community engagement; Point of entry and Quarantine, Infection Prevention and Control and WASH, Case Management; Planning and Monitoring; Capacity Building and Logistics. UNHCR and humanitarian partners continue to scale-up essential services in the refugee camps and reception centre, including health and WASH amenities. In light of the COVID-19 preparedness and response, UNHCR has established temporary isolation centers, strengthened its risk communication, enhanced community engagement, and provided additional supplies.

At present, monitoring activities are being carried out in all seven camps. Specialized Rapid Response Teams (RRT) are active to conduct disease surveillance, reporting and contact tracing following confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Gambella Region. As part of the UNHCR's COVID-19 preparedness plan, capacity building activities have been conducted with a total of 465 individuals (220 host community and 245 from camps) trained. Partners are disseminating WHO recommended messages on COVID-19 prevention to refugees and host communities. In addition, 661 community health workers (478 from the host community and 183 community from refugee camps) have been trained on active case finding, surveillance and risk communication activities. Moreover, 62 laboratory analysts (52 from host and 10 from camps) are working to collect, transport and analyse samples as and when necessary. Moreover, awareness raising campaigns are well underway in all the seven camps through home-to-home visits (26,947 households have been visited), mini media and use of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials translated in the local language.

The lack of adequate medical resources, such as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for frontline staff remain a challenge to the ongoing COVID-19 response. UNHCR has procured and donated additional medical supplies, such as PPEs, to Health and nutrition partners. To further strengthen the existing health structures, additional PPEs, medical equipment for isolation centres and ambulances have been provided to support health care services in their preparedness to the pandemic. More financial resources and in-kind support is needed to respond to the health needs of the beneficiaries.

One of the main challenges concerns the entry point/reception centre and quarantine centre at Pagak. Cross-border movements remain a major concern amidst the COVID-19 pandemic as it paves the way to increased transmission and infection. The reception center in Pagak is overcrowded as asylum seekers await registration and eventual relocation. UNHCR and local authorities have been working closely to explore possibilities to relocate the new arrivals to one of the camps in Gambella. This will need to be preceded by isolation and testing for COVID-19 in which case only those with negative results could be relocated. UNHCR and the local authorities continue to work together to limit and prevent the spread of COVID-19. Hence, a quarantine center was established at the Pagak entry point to ensure that new arrivals can be isolated for the required period. Joint efforts are made to ensure the continuation of Emergency Protection and

lifesaving services at Pagak reception centre. However, WASH, food, health and nutrition services are inadequate. The congestion affects the personal and environmental hygiene and poses significant risks for disease outbreaks, including COVID 19. The toilet blocks are limited to meet the current needs of the refugees residing at Pagak. Moreover, the capacity for mass testing is very limited because there is only one laboratory that has the capacity to conduct diagnostics. Efforts are being made to strengthen the laboratory's capacity.



Health

COVID-19 has placed a significant strain on provision of essential health services to scale. UNHCR continues to make efforts to ensure that essential health services are provided to meet the needs of refugees and asylum seekers. There are challenges limiting the provision of health services including reluctance to visit health centres due to fear of contracting coronavirus; lack of PPEs for staff; lack of adequate medical staff at the different sections of service delivery, including maternal health care. Fourteen primary health facilities support an average of 20,891 individuals each, against the minimum standard of 10,000. In addition, the Gambella Regional Hospital is being used to support refugee referral cases. In Jewi Camp, there is only one primary health care center. Services provided include: 24-hour emergency services; immunization schemes; supplementation; outpatient consultation and treatment; reproductive health; ambulance and referral services and HIV/AIDs services. The most common illnesses are malaria, respiratory infections, watery diarrhoea, and eye infections. Both the hospital and the Gambella Blood Bank have limited capacity to fulfil the needs of both refugees and host communities. Sustained development financing is required to strengthen the capacity of the hospital, including through equipment and additional facilities. Necessary measures to prepare and respond to COVID-19 have been put in place with the collective effort of all public health partners. For details, please check "COVID-19 Preparedness and Response" above.



Food and Nutrition

Of late, food and nutrition programmes are implemented by observing physical distancing in line with COVID-19 precautionary measures. On a monthly basis general food distribution is provided for all refugees. Community Management of Acute Malnutrition Programmes (CMAM), Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) Programmes, and Blanket Supplementary Feeding Programmes (BFSP) and community engagement are in place across all camps. The programmes target children under five years; pregnant and lactating women and social medical cases. Malnutrition has multi-faceted causes and remains an area of attention in the Gambella camps. Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) remains high at 10.4%. According to the annual nutrition survey conducted in 2019, GAM rates stood in 11.8% in Pugnido 1, 13.2% in Pugnido II, 11.1% in Kule, 12.6% in Tierkidi, 4.5% in Jewi, 10.2% in Nguenyiel, and 18.7% in Okugo. Anemia levels remain critical at 44.2% among children 6-59 months (43.5% Pugnido 1, 46.3% Pugnido II, 40.7% Kule, 46.4% Tierkidi, 46.9% Jewi, 34.5% Nguenyiel, 51.2% Okugo) and medium at 27.3% among women of childbearing age which is expected to deteriorate due to the COVID 19 pandemic. At present, 48,455 children between 6-59 months receive Blanket Supplementary Feeding, representing 91.5% of the targeted population. CMAM indicators remain within the acceptable standards.

CRI's Core-Relief Items

Soap is distributed alongside food - each refugee receives 250 gram of soap which has currently been doubled in response to COVID-19. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, 309,057 refugees received 500 gram of soap in April and May to promote handwashing practises. Due to budget constraints, CRI's cannot always be provided or replaced to every household. Large size families, vulnerable refugees, and refugees in protracted situations are given additional CRI's such as, jerrycans, buckets, and mosquito nets. Following the closure of Pamdong, the 630 households that were relocated to Nguenyiel camp were issued with sleeping mats, buckets, jerrycans, kitchen set, mosquito nets, blankets, solar lamps and soap. Upon arrivals, refugees receive sleeping mats, blankets, jerry cans, soap, kitchen sets, mosquito nets and solar lanterns. All refugees women

between the ages of 12 and 49 receive dignity kits. However, there is a significant gap of kitchen sets, water containers, sleeping mats and blankets. Whereas 85% of refugees have reportedly benefited from CRI replenishment, this statistical display does not fully take into account limitation to meet the CRI set standards. Only 49% of refugees' needs were met according to set standards of UNHCR's CRI assistance. Substantial and consistent distribution has been achieved with soap - every month while kitchen set and water storage/ collection containers have been dismally met.



Education

In 2019/20, the Gross enrolment rate in schools was 49.4% in Early Childhood Education (ECCE), while those for primary and secondary levels stood at 79.6% and 21.6% respectively. In line with the national guidance to prevent the spreading of COVID-19, schools have been suspended since March 17, 2020. In the meantime, partners are implementing different activities to ensure continuity of learning. UNHCR, operational partners, parenting groups, and center facilitators are supporting ECCE level learners with home-based literacy and numeracy activities. For primary education, radio and print media-based learning initiatives are provided for Grades 1-8. The radio lessons are being developed by the Regional Education Bureau with strong technical and financial support from UNICEF. Additional resources have been mobilized to procure solar radios for 16,551 refugees and 1,500 host community learners. With regards to secondary education, self-learning kits have been provided to (about 74% of all students). Furthermore, teachers carry out home visits to support students and monitor progress. Prior to COVID-19, the main challenges of refugee education in Gambella include school drop out, limited access to secondary schools due to long distances and overcrowded classrooms. Moreover, the enrolment rate for girls is low and the gender disparity becomes significant at the upper primary and secondary levels. The main reasons for girls to discontinue their education is because of child marriage or obligation to help with family chores. In addition, the quality of education is affected by a limited number of qualified teachers, lack of recreational spaces, textbooks, playgrounds, WASH facilities and education facilities such as libraries and laboratories. This has adversely affected the quality of education as could be seen from the sheer numbers of students who could not make it to the secondary school. Further investments are required to maintain the schools, construct additional classrooms and recruit qualified teachers. The school feeding programme remains intermittent in most camps while it is still not available in Nguenyiel (for 22,129 ECCE and primary students) and Pugnido II (for 1,744 ECCE) camps, undermining their nutritional status and impacting wider school enrolment.



Shelter

Over all 40,350 transitional shelters have been constructed in all seven refugee camps. As of June 2020, the overall shelter coverage in the camp stood at 60.2%, leaving 39.58% of the population either to share shelters with families members or live outside the camps. There are existing communal facilities to accommodate refugees at Pagak reception center such as hangars in the Reception Centre and local community schools. In addition, 50 emergency shelters have been constructed, while construction of seven new hangars is ongoing to decongest the accommodations at Pagak reception centers. In 2020, shelter maintenance is prioritized mainly for vulnerable and targeted beneficiaries in Tierkidi, Kule, and Jewi camps. There is a need to maintain and construct the road in and around the older and densely populated camps.



WASH

Two out of seven refugee camps (Nguenyiel and Tierkidi) are home to 47% of the refugees in Gambella Region. However, refugees in these two camps only received an average of 10 litres of water per person per day (lppd) within the first quarter of 2020 against the standard of 20 l/p/p/d. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, emergency water trucking (EWT) has been initiated to enhance the water provision to at least reach 15 l/p/p/d. The exorbitant costs and unsustainable practice of water trucking calls for additional investments to optimize and expand the Itang water scheme.

A ground water survey is needed to explore possibilities of drilling additional water sources to add into the current system such as the drilling of two deep wells (boreholes), the installment of pumps and requisite equipment including transmission pipeline to existing tanks in the camp. Moreover, limited access to water collection containers and storage containers pose a challenge to safe and quality water access. Only 28% of refugee families have access to a household toilet, whereas most refugees utilize communal latrines or engage in open defecation. More investment is required to construct additional sanitation facilities in schools by increasing latrines from 200 students per latrine down to 40 students per latrine. There is also a need to strengthen menstrual hygiene management by improving changing rooms for female students. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WASH sector faces challenges with adequate sanitation facilities, limited disinfection kits, sprayers and soap. Sanitation facilities are not adequate to meet the required sanitation standards. Shortage of disinfection kits and sprayers for communal WASH activities in camps remain as a significant gap. Jerricans and buckets for household water collection and storage also remain a gap especially for Jewi, Nguenyiel and Pugnido camps.



Energy & Environment

Despite the effort to reduce refugees' protection risks and to increase access to energy for cooking, lighting and productive uses, cooking energy remained critical in the Gambella operation. The refugee households have limited access to alternative cooking energy. The refugees use biomass fuel and the traditional three stone systems for cooking that consumes massive bio-mass. The lack of alternative sources of energy for cooking, a decrease of solar-powered public lights and home lighting systems because of lack of replacement, inadequate repair and maintenance of electrical equipment due to budget constraints have exacerbated the protection risks. To address these challenges, UNHCR is planning to engage in a new initiative to increase the provision of alternative energy sources for cooking, including briquettes, solar energy supported off-grid powers for lighting and other basic services in Nguenyiel camp, including grid connected communal kitchens. In addition, a project is underway to support 425 vulnerable households with gaining access to cooking energy in Tierkidi, Jewi and Nguenyiel refugee camps. This, however, is not enough and needs to be scaled up with an injection of additional funding and advocacy. As part of the response to the natural resource degradation, risk reduction and mitigation measures are implemented including planting seedlings which also helps to maintain the peaceful coexistence between the two communities. Despite the reforestation efforts, the replacement rate falls far short of the the degradation rate.



Livelihood

Several market-based livelihood initiatives have been rolled out with a focus on the development of the agriculture sector, vocational and entrepreneurship skills training, and provision of microfinance services. A total of 8,309 refugee households were supported with livelihood assistance in 2019. Through these initiatives, 625 adults and 528 young adults were self-employed in microbusinesses such as tailoring, tea and coffee shops, retail of basic commodities and food stuff. Refugees have been given cash grants and business development services for their microbusinesses to sustain trading and livelihood opportunities. Moreover, food security and nutrition sensitive interventions have been implemented including vegetable production activities, provision of small ruminants, provision of e-vouchers and aggregation of vendors of fresh food. Nevertheless, financial resources are scarce as more than 80% of the target population is still in need of livelihood assistance. In addition, refugees still encounter challenges to fully enjoy Ethiopian financial services due to their inability to open bank accounts, hence making it difficult to open or sustain their microbusinesses. Moreover, agricultural initiatives have been hindered in the past due to inaccessibility of farmland outside of the camps. ARRA continues to advocate with the regional government to provide farmland to refugees. In 2020, UNHCR and its implementing partners aim to provide support to 10% (9,000+) of the target population focusing on crop production, livestock development and entrepreneurship training for youth. Only 25% of the plan has been achieved as of June 2020 because, partners are either scaling down or suspending

planned activities due to outbreak of COVID-19. Meanwhile, UNHCR is piloting a large scale crop production initiative with 150 households in three camps; Nguenyyiel, Pugnido and Okugo. A Socioeconomic Assessment (SEA) is underway to gain a better understanding on the refugee context which is hoped to inform the development of the Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion Strategy.