

# Ethiopia

08 May 2021

**814,535**

**Refugees and asylum seekers  
as of 30 April 2021**

**35,219**

**Handwashing  
facilities in camps**

**2,469**

**Health and  
community workers  
trained**

**1,218 refugees  
vaccinated for  
COVID-19**

## COVID-19 Operational Context

As of 7 May 2021, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health (MoH) reported **261,580** coronavirus (COVID-19) cases and **3,840** deaths in the country. A total of **1,287,801** people in priority groups were vaccinated against COVID-19, including **1,218** refugees. According to an update by the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Ethiopia, on average **815** positive cases were reported over the last seven days with the average positivity rate standing at **10%**. To halt the surge in transmissions, Ethiopia has put in place strict measures focusing on monitoring implementation of preventive measures such as wearing masks and maintaining physical distances, including limiting the number of participants in face-to-face meetings to 50. Ethiopia is currently one of five countries in Africa registering the highest numbers of COVID-19 cases, according to WHO.

## COVID-19 Prevention and Response

Ethiopia continues to implement COVID-19 vaccinations to priority groups including frontline health workers, individuals with underlying severe vulnerability conditions and elderly people. As of 7 May 2021, a total of **1,287,801** people were vaccinated in the capital Addis Ababa and in the Regional States. This number includes **1,218** refugees who are part of the priority groups, most of them



*UNHCR handed over PPEs to a health centre in Yirgachfe, SNNPS, as part of the fight against COVID-19. ©UNHCR/Natnael Assefa*

providing community outreach and healthcare support in the various refugee camps. Based on the criteria set out by the Ethiopian Ministry of Health, priority groups will continue to be inoculated against the virus as per the national rollout plans.

The Government's Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA) and UNHCR, together with the Regional Health Bureaus and other health partners, continue to reinforce prevention measures in the refugee camps and other locations sheltering refugees and asylum seekers. They include enhanced communications on personal and environmental hygiene, reducing overcrowding and the promotion of handwashing with soap. Supplies of water and soap continue to be provided, together with the installation of handwashing stations, as well as strengthening of health services and the provision of personal protective equipment for health care workers, first responders and others, depending on availability.

- A total of **35,217 handwashing stations** have been installed in communal centres and households in the different refugee camps to promote regular handwashing with soap. More capacity is needed, however, to ensure that every refugee household is equipped with a handwashing facility and to facilitate distribution of soap in a more consistent manner.
- **2,469** trained **health and community outreach workers** are actively engaged in awareness raising, case investigations and management, as well as mitigation, prevention and control of the virus. In addition, refugee representatives, Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROVs), women, youth and child committees and other community representatives were trained and are actively engaged to ensure that basic preventive measures are observed in the communities.
- The daily average per capita **water distribution** in the refugee camps stands at **20 litres**. While some of the camps have access to more than 20 liters per person, per day, per the UNHCR standards, others are receiving less than the emergency threshold of 15 liters per person per day. UNHCR, ARRA and partners are working to ensure that all refugees have access to adequate potable water, in keeping with the minimum international standards.
- **Isolation facilities**, known as Temporary Assessment Units, have been set up in all refugee camps to temporarily quarantine possible suspected COVID-19 cases, pending their transfer to Government isolation and treatment facilities, as needed. UNHCR has provided hospital beds, mattresses, coverall gowns and other supplies to equip the facilities and the health staff while extending support to the Government-run treatment centers, which are also accessible to refugees.
- In the capital, Addis Ababa, where over **45,000** urban refugees reside, UNHCR is **communicating with refugees via telephone helplines, WhatsApp and Telegram groups**. Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROVs) and refugee leaders are also helping to raise awareness. In addition, telephone helplines and an online portal (**Digital Request and Complaints System**) are fully functional. Concerned UNHCR staff are processing and responding to requests that are received on daily basis.
- In order to meet additional expenses for soap and other sanitary materials, UNHCR provides an allowance of 300 Ethiopian Birr (\$7.13) per person per month, to urban-based refugees entitled to monthly living allowances. The intervention is monitored through post-distribution phone interviews by Protection staff.
- Registration services resumed (they were interrupted due to the COVID-19 pandemic) at the UNHCR's office in Addis Ababa, to issue refugees with registration documents and update their data. Limited numbers are received per day due to the health measures in place, to ensure the safety of refugees.
- UNHCR continues to **support the inter-agency COVID-19 response to the IDP situation** in the country, distributing non-food items, equipping isolation and quarantine centers and providing community communications on health messaging.

## COVID Impact and Challenges

**Health Impact:** Pivoting of much of UNHCR's limited health budget to the COVID-19 prevention and response efforts is resulting in a strain on the provision of regular essential health services in the refugee camps. This, in turn, will pose challenges in continuity of maternal and child health services, disease control programmes such as for HIV, TB and Malaria, among others. The reallocation of funds to combat COVID-19 could undermine the gains already made to control non-communicable diseases including diabetes, hypertension and mental health.

**Economic impact:** Despite the prevailing COVID-19 pandemic, there have been positive advancements with respect to the planned roll out of projects designed by development partners in 2020. The £24m SHARPE Project and the UN Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) Inclusive Digital Economies Action in Ethiopia (IDEA) project have started activities in the Gambella and Somali regions. UNHCR is working closely with these partners to ensure that refugee inclusion and protection is realized and that these projects support the COVID-19 economic recovery efforts in refugee hosting areas. UNHCR has commenced cash transfer assistance in Bokolmanyo Woreda of the Somali Region. The initiative targets the elderly who are profiled as the most at risk from COVID-19. The funds are provided by the IKEA Foundation and distribution facilitated by the Commercial Bank of Ethiopia.

## Operational Response Updates

**Tigray Emergency:** The humanitarian situation across the Tigray Region remains deeply concerning for refugees, the internally displaced and host communities. Civilians have endured six months of conflict with only extremely limited basic services and assistance available, leading to a significant escalation in humanitarian needs with new displacement ongoing. The security situation remains volatile especially in rural areas, affecting civilians and constraining humanitarian actors on the ground. Basic services have gradually resumed in parts of Tigray; however, electricity and banking services remain intermittent. With access restrictions lifted, UNHCR is working to reach those Eritrean refugees who have been dispersed by the conflict, as well as to significantly scale up IDP response operations while undertaking Protection, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster leadership responsibilities.

**Refugee Response:** Nearly 8,100 refugees from the now closed Hitsats and Shimelba camps had relocated to Adi Harush and Mai-Aini camps either on their own or transported by the government from Shire. They continue to receive food and Core Relief Items upon arrival.

In Mekelle, Eritrean refugees from Hitsats and Shimelba camps continue to approach UNHCR, with 330 verified as of mid-April. UNHCR continues to provide protection counselling to those refugees who endured traumatic experiences and are in need of psychosocial support. It has requested ARRA and partners to support 50 refugees and asylum-seekers from the Tigray camps who are now living in Aysaita camp and Logiya town in the Afar Region. ARRA has already provided core relief items and food rations to the group.

Regular Ethiopia country and regional UNHCR updates on the crisis can be found at: <https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/rbehagl>



### Protection

#### **Voluntary repatriation from Kenya:**

Ninety-two Ethiopian refugees returned home from Kenya on 5 and 7 May 2021 as part of the voluntary repatriation exercise that was launched in February 2020 with the arrival of a group of 76 returnees. The operation was suspended afterwards due to COVID-19.

They are part of a total of 1,688 Ethiopian refugees who have signed up to voluntarily return home from Kenya.

On arrival at the Dire Dawa International Airport in eastern Ethiopia, the first group of 66 returnees were accorded a warm welcome by official from ARRA, UNHCR and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Ethiopia. UNHCR provides the returnees



A UNHCR officer leads some of the returnees to a space within the Dire Dawa airport where they were warmly welcomed by Government and UN officials. ©UNHCR/Hanna Qassis

transport money and a reintegration package covering their basic expenses for food and non-food items for a 6-month period, with additional support for the education of children and for persons with specific needs such as those with underlying medical conditions.

**New arrivals from Somalia:** Increased arrivals from Somalia continues to be observed at the Dollo Ado Reception Centre where close to 2,000 people are currently sheltered. Most of them arrived in 2021. 1,110 are living outside the reception centre which is currently accommodating 837 individuals- way above its maximum capacity of 500. Awaiting nationality screening, UNHCR and partners are reinforcing WASH and shelter services at the reception centre where six solar streetlights have been maintained. Construction of emergency shelters in the receiving camps is ongoing. 343 new arrivals were relocated to the camps in April.

**Relocation of South Sudanese refugees:** Most of the 3,245 South Sudanese new arrivals in Pagak reception centre were relocated to Nguenyiel and Kule refugee camps in Gambella Region while a good number of those that were found to be already registered in anyone of the camps in the region (recyclers) have spontaneously returned to their camps. ARRA is planning to facilitate transportation support for those who hailed from Pugnido camp given the distance from the Pagak Reception Centre. Nonetheless, the reception centre remains full as people continue to arrive daily.



## Education

**237 Somali refugees scored university passing marks:** Out of 247 refugee students in Awbarre camp- who sat for the 12<sup>th</sup> grade national examination, 217 scored enough marks to join the university in Ethiopia. 20 others in Sheder and Kebribeyah camps also scored passing marks. COVID-19 and the associated school closure was mentioned as the main factor behind the low performance in Sheder and Kebribeyah compared to the success rate in Aw-barre camp-all near Jijiga in the Somali Region.

In Tsore camp, Benishangul-Gumuz Region, UNHCR's partner Plan International Ethiopia is constructing two blocks of eight classrooms with a 95% completion rate. The additional classrooms will significantly reduce the current overcrowding in the primary school.



## Shelter & CRIs

**Emergency Shelter construction:** UNHCR's partner NRC is constructing 250 emergency shelters at the newly identified Five Angels site near Shire to accommodate the growing number of displaced people due to the crisis in Tigray. 20 shelters have been finalized while excavation for 10 blocks of latrines (40 latrines and 10 shower) has commenced. In Mekelle, UNHCR's shelter partners are constructing 150 emergency shelters at the Seba-Kare IDP site adding to the 756 shelters already completed by the CCCM cluster of which UNHCR is a co-lead with IOM.

**Distribution of clothes:** UNHCR, in collaboration with the West Wollega Zonal Disaster Risk Management office (DRMO), distributed 26,247 clothes among 13,201 displaced and most vulnerable women and girls in Boji Dermenji, Lalo Asabi, and Nejo Woredas of West Wollega Zone, Oromia Region. Additionally, 2,558 extra warm t-shirts and 1,021 extra warm tights were handed over to the East Wollega Zonal Women, Children, and Youth Affairs Bureau for distribution to 1,881 vulnerable Women and girls in Nekemte and the surrounding Kebeles. The clothes were donated by UNIQLO, the Japanese retailer.

A similar distribution was made in villages in the West Guji zone of Oromia Region and the Gedo zone of the Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples Region, reaching 7,371 school girls with the UNIQLO clothes.



## Health

**Health and nutrition screening:** New arrivals at the Dollo Ado reception centre continue to undergo health and nutrition screening while vaccination and other key health services are being provided. However, there are signs of growing number of cases of watery diarrhoea among the new arrivals, with 16 such cases having been admitted at the Dollo Ado hospital. UNHCR, and its health partners, including the Dollo Ado Hospital management, are working closely together to address the situation.



## WASH

**Shortage of water in Tigray camps:** Shortage of water has been experienced in Adi-Harush and Mai-Aini camps in the Tigray Region due to limited availability of fuel to run the pumps. The shortage has also impacted water supply to UNHCR and partners' staff. IRC warned that it would completely run out of fuel within a week unless the problem is urgently addressed.



## Livelihoods

**Seeds for cooperatives:** UNHCR and its livelihood partners provided 27 kilograms of assorted seed kits of tomato, watermelon, and spinach to two agriculture cooperatives in the Kobe and Kole irrigation site in Melkadida. The cooperatives have 78 farmers as members who are drawn from refugees (29) and members of the host community (49). The provision of vegetable seeds is aimed at promoting market oriented horticultural production that will ensure supply of vegetables in the local market. Currently onion dominates production.

In the Benishangul-Gumuz Region, UNHCR's partner Comitato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo dei Popoli (CISP) distributed 160 goats among 80 refugee households in Sherkole camp that are involved in ruminant production as a small-scale livelihood project.

## CONTACTS

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