

UNHCR Operation in Ethiopia

Fact Sheet | May 2011



UNHCR operational highlights

- UNHCR registered 12,543 new refugees in May, bringing the cumulative total number of refugees in Ethiopia to 192,891. Somalis accounted for over 96% of the new registration with 12,045 new arrivals. Some 450 Eritreans and 34 Sudanese also arrived during the month.
- Twenty Sudanese, claiming to have come from the conflict flashpoint of Abyie, applied for asylum in Sherkole refugee camp. The Office is closely watching the situation around the border, and whether or not the arrival of these individuals is indicative of any bigger picture will be seen in the days and weeks to come.
- An estimated 20,000 ethnic Lou-Nuer South Sudanese, along with large heads of cattle, have crossed into Ethiopia, apparently fleeing an imminent reprisal attack from the rival Murle tribe. They have settled among their Ethiopian kinsmen in 10 villages. On the surface of it, this can be seen as part of the historical rivalry between the two groups over cattle rustling, but there could possibly be more to it than just cattle rustling given the current political instability in the Sudan. Regional authorities and aid agencies working on the ground described the scale of displacement as unprecedented. A good number of them are armed and they said they would neither disarm nor seek asylum. The Government has given them a one-month grace period to make up their mind. The UNHCR Representative, together with an official of the government refugee agency (ARRA) flew to Gambella and had a series of discussions with the regional authorities and with heads of UN and NGO partners on the ground. The objective of the mission was to verify the authenticity of the reports and to lay the groundwork for UNHCR to pursue its mandate responsibilities should the group decide to seek asylum. There were also discussions on a possible provision of a one-time assistance on humanitarian grounds.
- UNHCR signed a tripartite Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with ARRA and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) under which the latter would work as a partner in the areas of shelter, school construction, camp management and provision of vocational and life skills to refugees and vulnerable members of the host community.
- UNHCR and ARRA are working to develop Kobe as the third camp in the Dollo Ado area which should be opened in June. At the same time, discussions are going on to identify a suitable site for the fourth camp.
- The Task Force on Refugees in Ethiopia, which is co-chaired by UNHCR and ARRA, continues to meet every week and exchange updates on the evolving conditions in the country. The Task Force has in recent times focused its discussions on the growing influx from Somalia and the volatile situation in the Sudan.

Refugees and asylum seekers in Country (by country of origin)

COUNTRY OF ORIGIN	TOTAL NUMBER	NEW REGISTRATION IN MONTHS
Somalia	115,556	12,045
Eritrea	47,956	450
Sudan	25,861	34
Kenya	2,757	0
Others	745	14
Total	180,303	12,543

Other relevant stats (Stateless, IDPs, etc.)

POPULATION	TOTAL NUMBER	ASSISTED BY UNHCR
N/A	N/A	N/A

Working with partners

UNHCR works with the following implementing and operational partners in extending international protection to refugees and finding durable solutions to their plight:

Implementing partners: Administration for Refugees and Returnee Affairs; Jijiga Water Supply Office of Somali National Regional State; Natural Resource Development and Environmental Protection Agency; Bureau of Agriculture; Africa Humanitarian Action; African Humanitarian Aid and Development Agency; Gaia Association; Hugh Pilkington Charitable Trust; International Rescue Committee; Jesuit Refugee Service; Lutheran World Federation; Mother and Child Development Organization; Refugee and Returnee Affairs Department of the Development and Inter-Church Aid Commission of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church; Rehabilitation and Development Organization; Save the Environment; Jesuit Refugee Service; Partnership for



Pastoralists Development Association; Italian Development Cooperation; Save the Children USA.

Operational partners: Bureau of Education; Bureau of Health; HIV and AIDS Prevention and Control Office; Safer Africa; UNAIDS; UNDP; UNFPA; UNICEF; WFP; IOM.

Return of refugees by country of origin

From 2006 to April 2011*

Country	TOTAL
Sudan	36,178

*No voluntary repatriation has taken place in 2011

Achievements

- UNHCR registered 12,543 new refugees in May, which is the highest arrival figure in a single month over the last five years. The new registration brought the cumulative total number of refugees in Ethiopia to 192,891. Most of them were transported to their assigned camps in the course of the month. In the past five months, the Office registered over 31,000 Somali refugees, representing 300% of the envisaged influx for the whole of 2011.
- Together with the government and NGO partners, UNHCR is working to develop Kobe into the third camp in the Dollo Ado area. Demarcation of plots has been finalized and temporary shelter facilities being put up. Temporary water facilities and nutritional treatment centres have also been put in place. The ongoing work on erecting temporary health and sanitation facilities has to be finalized before the office can move in refugees. The two existing camps as well as the transit centre are overcrowded so much so that the new camp can already be considered as “almost full” before it is opened. UNHCR and the government are already scouting for the fourth camp.
- Following reports of the arrival of an estimated 20,000 South Sudanese in the Gambella Region, the UNHCR Representative led a joint mission with ARRA to the region and held a series of discussions with the regional authorities as well as with UN and other humanitarian agencies on the ground. The objective of the mission was to verify the authenticity of the reports and to lay the groundwork for UNHCR to pursue its mandate responsibilities should the group decide to seek asylum. However, the group, which is reported to have a number of armed members among its ranks, would neither disarm nor seek asylum. They said they would like to return home in the near future. The government has given them a one-month grace period to make up their mind. The ethnic Lou-Nuers, who crossed along with large heads of cattle, have apparently fled a retaliatory attack by the rival Mule tribe with whom they had long-standing issues of cattle rustling. Although the regional authorities acknowledge that this was not a new phenomenon, the scale of arrival this time was seen as unprecedented. UNHCR also discussed with fellow humanitarian agencies in the country on the possibility of providing a one-time assistance on humanitarian grounds. The decision of the regional authorities is being awaited before any action can be taken.
- In the absence of prospects for voluntary repatriation or opportunities for local integration, resettlement remains the only feasible durable solution for the majority of refugees in Ethiopia. UNHCR continues to vigorously pursue resettlement both as a protection tool and a durable solution, particularly for long-staying refugees from Somalia and Eritrea. In addition to facilitating the departures of accepted refugees under the group and expedited processes, resettlement staff remain seized with submissions and identification of new cases.

UNHCR staff

Staff comprise: **183** national staff, including UNOPS, and **37** international staff, including partner employees, consultants, JPOs, and United Nations Volunteers.

UNHCR operation in 2011 (in million USD)

BY POPULATION	BUDGET	FUNDS AVAILABLE
Refugees	118.4	8.2
Stateless	NA	NA
Returnees	NA	NA
IDPs	NA	NA
Total Budget	118.4	8.2

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