



ETHIOPIA

COUNTRY PROFILE

Development Partners Meeting on the Sudan
Regional Refugee Crisis

September 17, 2024

Country Context

Ethiopia continues to keep its borders open to refugees and asylum-seekers, currently hosting more than 1 million refugees and asylum-seekers, primarily from South Sudan, Somalia, and Eritrea. Since the outbreak of conflict in Sudan in April 2023, by the end of August 2024, just over 60,000 individuals in need of international protection have crossed the border from Sudan to Ethiopia. Over 22,000 individuals crossed through the Metema entry point in Amhara, more than 26,000 individuals through the Kurmuk entry point in Benishangul Gumuz, and 700 individuals at different entry points in Gambella (Pagak, Burbiey). Some 12,000 Ethiopian refugees have also returned to Tigray. The 2024 Refugee Response Plan projects that Ethiopia will need to assist 224,000 individuals, including refugees (including the pre-crisis Sudanese refugee population in Ethiopia), returnees, third-country nationals, and 55,000 members of the host community.

Sudanese asylum-seekers are granted *prima facie* refugee status, while non-Sudanese asylum-seekers are individually assessed under Ethiopia's Refugees Proclamation No. 1110/2019. The Government of Ethiopia, in coordination with UNHCR, is responding to this influx. UNHCR supports the Ethiopian Government in strengthening registration systems by developing the procedures for registration of refugees coming from Sudan, and in transferring new arrivals to established refugee settlements.

In line with the Federal Government of Ethiopia's pledges made at the 2023 Global Refugee forum and its Makatet ("*to be included*" in Amharic) approach – most notably, the inclusion of refugees into existing national programs and systems and human settlements – UNHCR, the regional authorities in Benishangul Gumuz and Amhara, the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), and partners are developing integrated settlements in both regions for newly arrived refugees, whereby refugees would be able to be included and have access to national services alongside host communities.

New settlements have been established along the border areas in both Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions. In January 2024, the regional authorities of Benishangul-Gumuz granted land with a capacity of 350 hectares for a maximum capacity of 34,000 refugees. Akuda kebele (village), adjacent to the Ura refugee site, is home to 3,500 host community members. It is 10 km away from the regional capital, Assosa, providing opportunities for economic development. Similarly, in the Amhara region, the regional authorities granted land for a new refugee settlement in Aftit in West Gondar district, 8.5 km from Gende-Wuha, where the UNHCR office and Zonal Administration are located. Aftit is an estimated 30 km from the border with Sudan. The regional government has allocated 46 hectares of land for the new refugee settlement, with an initial absorption capacity of 12,500, with the possibility to allocated additional land if needed.¹

Evidence Base

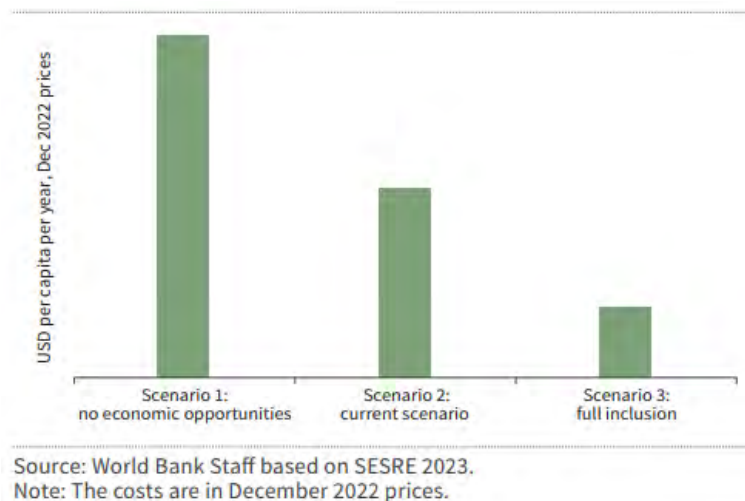
In Ethiopia, refugees face significantly higher rates of poverty than host community populations – 84 percent compared to 34 percent – have few prospects for employment and remain heavily dependent on aid ([World Bank 2024](#)). The evidence shows that freedom of movement to find work are essential to improving self-reliance. Despite restrictions, many refugees work outside of camps – and those who do see their opportunities and earnings increase considerably. When refugees have equal opportunities to

¹ The selection of these new settlements was done after an extensive assessment and dialogue that has involved all stakeholders, including refugees, host community, local, regional, and national authorities. With the ongoing conflict dynamics in the region, the government had to close Awlala and Kumer refugee sites in Amhara region; refugees have been relocated to Aftit.

hosts, models show that incomes rise, and assistance needs fall from \$221 to an estimated \$78 per person per year.²

Signs of support for this approach are evident in the host community: the report shows that 65 per cent of Ethiopian hosts think refugees are good people (85 per cent for hosts near Somali refugees), 87 per cent believe that refugees should have the right to free primary education and healthcare, and around half think that refugees have increased the number of economic opportunities locally.

Figure 1: The “economic-inclusion dividend” in Ethiopia: Costs of basic needs per refugee per year under different scenarios



Source: World Bank Staff based on the Socioeconomic Survey of Refugees in Ethiopia 2023 (costs in December 2022 prices)

Ongoing Development Partner Interventions

- **EU International Partnerships (EU-INTPA)** has provided early development support to the new settlements to assist refugees and asylum-seekers with individual registration, support local authorities with integrated settlement planning, as well as provide financial support to expand and scale up access to basic services, with a focus on education, health, and water and sanitation. EU-INTPA funded interventions also seek to facilitate economic inclusion of refugees, through targeted energy and livelihoods support.
- **World Bank:** The World Bank has been involved in both regions, including through the Development Response to Displacement Impacts Project in the Horn of Africa (Phase II), which provides grants to districts and local government units to respond to inflows of displaced persons, and the Ethiopia Human Capital Operation, which is beginning its investment in basic services and health in conflict-affected locales. Other projects drawing on the Window for Host Communities and Refugees, such as the urban productive safety nets, also operate in the two regions.
- Additionally, other actors, including foundations, support secondary and tertiary education, and livelihoods activities including job opportunities for skilled refugees.

² With no economic opportunities, the annual cost per person is \$378. Similar results have been found in Chad, where assistance needs fall from \$197 to \$69 with more mobility and employment ([World Bank, 2024](#)).

Recommended Priority Investments

Substantial investments are required to establish or reinforce existing infrastructure, such as schools and health facilities to serve both refugees and the host community. This includes support in transitioning to sustainable water solutions, including solar-powered systems and grid connectivity. Additional funds are required for shelters, and the development of the sites, including road works and gravelling. More investment in livelihood activities to complement modest humanitarian funding, particularly in agriculture, is also essential to foster self-sufficiency and reduce aid dependency. Priority should be given to Aftit in the Amhara region and Ura in the Benishangul Gumuz region to realize the potential for this new approach benefitting both refugees and host communities.

More specifically, development actors should consider the following:

1. **Settlement planning:** UN-Habitat and FAO have provided settlement planning support in Ura, and the same technical advisory services need to now be extended to Aftit to guide the quantification and construction of infrastructure, services, and housing in the new settlements to meet the demands of the increasing population.
2. **Health:** In coordination with the Regional Health Bureau authorities, health facilities need to further expand service provision in locations hosting refugees, which includes sufficient supplies and ambulances to serve the settlement population. As government health facilities are already understaffed, the health authorities will need additional budgets to recruit additional staff at the Woreda health facilities across both regions, as well as ensure there are adequate stock of medicines and medical supplies to provide health services.
3. **Education:** With the projected arrival of 10,000 new students, the Regional Education Bureau will need to support education facilities technically and financially to expand their services in the refugee settlements so they can accommodate more students given the increasing population. This includes recruitment and deployment of additional teachers, provision of school/operational supplies, and support to language training. In both Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions, investments are needed to support schooling facilities to be further expanded/renovated.
4. **Water and sanitation:** Additional investments are needed in borehole drilling and solarisation and water system development, as well as construction of family shared latrines and handwashing stations. Interventions should capitalize on the R-WASH experiences in other parts of Ethiopia funded by development actors, which have strengthened regional and zonal water office strengthening in installing and managing integrated water systems.
5. **Energy:** In both Aftit and Ura settlements, investments are needed to increase access to electricity for the health centers, communal kitchens, grinding mills, household electrifications, water system connections and economic activities. Such investments are needed to support private sector engagement in areas impacted by displacement and facilitating the economic productivity of both refugees and host community.
6. **Environment and climate change adaptation:** Investing in the protection of existing vegetation and afforestation programs, including natural resource management, will significantly contribute to the long-term sustainability and viability of the new settlements. Investments are needed to facilitate nursery production and management, multi-purpose tree planting, and physical and biological erosion control structures, to reduce flooding of the settlement and other environmental hazards.
7. **Livelihoods:** Both new settlements are located on arable land, where agriculture is possible. Investments are needed for crop value chain development, institutional capacity building of market actors (cooperatives, unions, etc), farm inputs including mechanizations, warehousing, post-harvest handling, and market integration services. Support is also needed for integrating agro-pastoral farming for smallholder refugee and host community farmers to generate cash income. Support for the construction and establishment of new marketplaces in the new settlements would promote self-reliance and strengthen peaceful co-existence of refugees and host community through economic activities.