



ETHIOPIA

Child Protection Factsheet

October 2016

761,302

Total number of refugees

55.4%

Percentage of children amongst refugee population

38,419

Number of unaccompanied or separated children (UASC)

70,000

Number of children born refugees without birth certificates

8

Number of child protection partners operational in 6 refugee operations

HIGHLIGHTS

As a refugee team competed at the 2016 Olympic Games in Rio for the first time, hundreds of fellow refugees took part in mini-Olympic competitions in Ethiopia;

- The mini-Olympic games held in Ethiopian refugee camps were organized to involve and inspire young refugees as well as host community youths and to promote peaceful coexistence, unity and hope amongst refugees.

- The event gave young refugees the chance to add their names to the #WithRefugees petition, which requests governments to act with solidarity and shared responsibility to the global refugee crisis.

- Athletics, football, volleyball, basketball and table tennis games were organized in Gambella, Shire and Jijiga refugee camps and refugee competitors provided with shoes, jerseys and with prizes such as solar lanterns and T-Shirts by UNHCR and partners.

Ethiopia is one of the countries selected for the roll-out of the global UNHCR Strategy on the Protection of Children. The [National Child Protection Strategy 2014-2016](#) provides a basis for contextualized Child Protection strategies in field operations.

Location	UNHCR Child Protection implementing and operational partners
Melkadida	Save the Children International (SCI)
Assosa	Save the Children International (SCI) International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Jijiga	Mother and Child Development Organisation (MCDO) International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Shire	Innovating Humanitarian Solutions (IHS) Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC)
Gambella	Save the Children International (SCI) Plan International (PI) Danish Refugee Council (DRC)
Samera	African Humanitarian Action (AHA)
Urban	-
Kenya Borena	-

- Child protection strategic vision is being streamlined in all operations.
- Currently, 4 local child protection strategies of sub offices have been finalized, and 3 are being drafted.
- Child Protection Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are in place in 6 sub offices, thereof 3 are in line with HQ guidance and 3 are being drafted.



The top three winner athletes on 5000m race for male category don UNHCR flags after working hard to become Olympians of the day. [UNHCR/Reath Riek]

MAIN CHILD PROTECTION ISSUES AND TRENDS

- **Continued Influx of UASC:** The high number of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) arriving in northern Ethiopia has increased exponentially in recent years. 2015 recorded around 4,200 UASC new arrivals (300-400 children per month), a 100% increase from 2014.
 - **Onward movement of UASC:** In northern Ethiopia onward movements of UASC to urban centers and third countries is substantial with an estimated departure rate of 200 UASC per month. Onward movements expose children to risks of smuggling, trafficking and SGBV.
 - **Lack of legal documentation:** Around 70,000 children who were born over the past 10 years in Ethiopia were not issued official birth certificates which can impede their access to basic rights and services.
 - **Child victims of SGBV:** Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is a major protection concern for refugee girls, particularly in the Somali region. Early marriage is another harmful traditional practice which is dominant among the refugee populations in Ethiopia.
 - **Prevalence of malnutrition amongst children below 5 years:** The nutrition situation in the majority of Gambella, Melkadida and Afar refugee camps is critical with high Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rate above the emergency threshold.
 - **Children out of school:** Children staying out of school (particularly secondary school with only about 9% national enrolment) are left with few options available and are vulnerable to protection risks including child labour, exploitation and abuse. Out of school children are also more likely to adopt negative coping mechanisms.
- alternative care/group care due to limited options for family-based care.
- 150 families in the northern refugee operation Shire were selected for the **pilot cash-support for foster care of unaccompanied refugee children**. The initial pilot was highly successful as it provides children with valued family-based support which more adequately caters for their emotional and developmental needs. An initial research conducted has shown that there **could be as high as a 20% lower onward movement rate for UASC in family-based care**, than in community care, which can reduce the risk of children moving onward irregularly and being exposed to smuggling and trafficking.
 - Involvement of **community-based protection mechanisms** including parents, caregivers, community elders, teachers and other stakeholders to promote safe homes, learning and recreational areas, and safe public spaces.
 - In Gambella refugee operation 15 child protection committees are operational and contribute to a safe protection environment of children.
 - In the Somali region, community structures such as the religious leader's forum and Anti-FGM Task Force are actively involved in efforts to eradicate FGM, particularly to break the taboo surrounding the practice.
 - **Positive parenting skills:** 2000 foster families/community care providers were given sessions on positive parenting skills in Melkadida to promote peace at homes, zones and camp level. This enhanced the understanding of caregivers to discipline unaccompanied and separated children in a positive and constructive manner.
 - **Case management:** UNHCR staff and partners work in all operations with case management systems to identify, and respond to, needs of child victims of abuse, violence, exploitation and neglect.

RESPONSE

- **Alternative care arrangements for UASC:** In northern Ethiopia 63% of unaccompanied and separated children live in community-based

COORDINATION

- Three out of six field locations have **Child Protection coordination structures** established and coordination meetings at camp and sub-office level are being held either on a weekly as well as monthly basis.
- On country level a UNHCR chaired **Child Protection / SGBV Working Group** is taking place on a monthly basis.
- In an effort to enhance operational effectiveness **UNHCR and UNICEF have established a Joint Plan of Action** which entails various thematic areas of Child Protection.

CHALLENGES

- **Adequate care arrangement for unaccompanied and separated children:** The provision of family-based care for UASC is challenging in northern Ethiopia where the majority of the camp population comprises of young, single adults resulting in the reliance on community-based small-group care (“community care”).
- **Data management:** Gambella is the only refugee operation in Ethiopia using Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS). In other operations there is no consistency in the use of data collection and case management tools.
- **Limited Child Protection capacity in the field:** Apart from Shire and Gambella, where dedicated UNHCR Child Protection Officers are based, UNHCR as well as partners have limited child protection capacity. Lack of resources and expertise pose a challenge to qualitative and timely child protection activities.
- **Awareness and perceptions in the refugee communities:** Insufficient rights based culture among the camp population, including among parents often results in children being exposed to violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, not accessing services and being stigmatized

- **Limited services in urban areas:** Refugees living out of camps in urban areas have limited access to protection services due to the focus of humanitarian partners on camp settings.
- **Community owned child protection interventions:** In an effort to empower communities and strengthen existing child protection systems, community-based structures need to become more effective. More resources are to be invested in community-based mechanisms to ensure that they are well-functioning and child protection interventions sustainable.

OPPORTUNITIES

- **Strengthening of multi-sectorial approach:** Linkages between Child Protection, SGBV and Education: Apart from the Framework for the Protection of Children two recent UNHCR strategic frameworks, namely UNHCR’s Education Strategy (2012-16) and UNHCR’s Action against Sexual and Gender Based Violence are rolled out in Ethiopia which include and advance the protection of children. UNHCR Gambella operation further developed specific action plans on how to mainstream Child Protection into Education.
- **Engagement of youth as a catalyzer of change:** 22% of the total refugee population in Ethiopia are categorized as youth (age 15-24). To take the needs and aspirations of this young population in consideration is crucial to promote safer and more secure camps and in order for youth to adapt positive behaviours and become productive members of society.
- **Involving different actors to promote child protection** has been envisaged by Gambella refugee operation who undertook a mapping of religious structures in the camps so to obtain information about locations, activities, and rituals as well as how religious institutions can be engaged in child protection
- **Capacity building:** Given the knowledge and experience from different refugee operations within Ethiopia, UNHCR can further invest in capacity building of its staff, partners and

government counterparts such as ARRA, FVERA, BOLSA and BOWCA.

- **Access of refugee children to Birth Registration:** UNHCR advocates for the inclusion of refugee children born in Ethiopia in the national registration system which will be launched by the Federal Vital Events Registration Agency (FVERA) in July 2016.

SDG LINKAGES

- **SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls:** Child protection programs in all operations mainstream gender and promote a rights-based approach and the empowerment of refugee girls.
 - Child Friendly Spaces in Melkadida respond to the different needs of refugee girls by organizing specific activities for them to ensure girls are safe, feel comfortable and participate in culturally appropriate programs.
- **SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide**

access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all:

→ The inclusion of the host community in protection programming and the promotion of peaceful co-existence is crucial in operations where host communities have been affected by refugee influx and settlement. Gambella is one UNHCR operation where host communities greatly benefit from child protection interventions.

→ UNHCR engagement with youth is contributing to more peaceful societies, providing options for young people in displacement to adapt positive coping mechanisms.

→ UNHCR's collaboration with government counterparts, and capacity building of government partners relevant for child protection such as FVERA, ARRA, BOLSA and BOWCA contribute to the process of strengthening an effective, accountable and inclusive national child protection system.



One of the child friendly spaces in Melkadida refugee operation

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Contacts:

Ms. Rana Milhem, Community-Based Protection Officer, milhem@unhcr.org Tel: +251 116 612 822 (2424); Cell +251 911 255 645