

## East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes Region

20-28 May 2020


**4.6** MILLION  
 REFUGEES & ASYLUM-SEEKERS


**8.1** MILLION  
 INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS

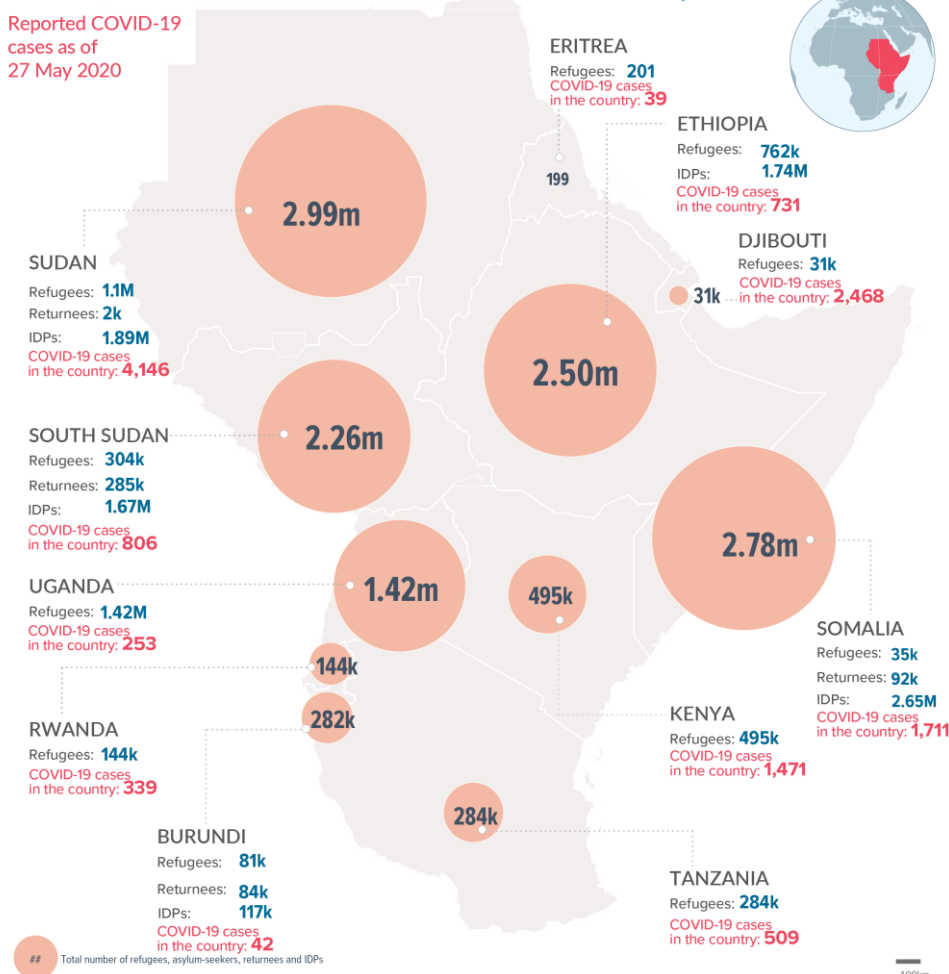

**54,835**  
 REFUGEE RETURNEES IN 2020

**12,515** CONFIRMED  
 COVID-19  
 CASES IN HOSTING COUNTRIES

### Operational Context

The COVID-19 situation in the East and Horn of Africa, and the Great Lakes (EHAGL) region continues to evolve. As of 27 May, there were 12,515 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the countries covered by UNHCR's EHAGL Regional Bureau. While there has been no large-scale outbreak amongst UNHCR's populations of concern so far, 4.6 million refugees and 8.1 million IDPs and their host communities are at risk. The need for preparedness remains urgent as cases of local transmission have now been reported in all countries of the region. Measures by governments in the region to contain the spread of COVID-19 continue to evolve, with certain countries beginning to relax restriction measures. In **Uganda**, for example, in his last address to the nation on 20 May, the President announced timelines for the easing of lockdown measures. As from 26 May, private cars will be allowed back on the road with maximum three people, while public transport will be allowed to operate at half capacity from 4 June. Wearing a mask in public is mandatory and schools, borders and the airport remain closed. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, the region is currently experiencing a number of other disease outbreaks including yellow fever, malaria, cholera, and measles, alongside heavy rains and floods.

REFUGEES, ASYLUM-SEEKERS, REFUGEE RETURNEES and IDPs as of April 2020

 Reported COVID-19  
 cases as of  
 27 May 2020


### Key Measures Taken

- Supporting national authorities in ensuring that prevention and response preparedness are ongoing in all locations.
- Ensuring basic assistance and minimum standards during quarantine for new asylum seekers and refugees who have travelled internally within host countries.
- Continued identification of isolation infrastructure in concerned locations.
- Procurement and distribution of necessary equipment is ongoing.

\*COVID-19 Case information: WHO, John Hopkins University, Ministries of Health, Governments. Note: COVID-19 cases refer to total cases reported in the countries of asylum. IDP figures- source: IOM, OCHA and UNHCR.

## UNHCR Response

### Protection

UNHCR continues to assess the impact of border closures and travel restrictions on access to asylum. Access to registration and refugee status determination for new asylum seekers remains difficult due to the current lockdowns. Movements continue through unofficial border crossing points where screening and provision of information is not in place. Across the region, UNHCR has appealed for special measures to be put in place, to allow for asylum-seekers to be screened, quarantined and admitted, and for UNHCR to be granted access to areas where new refugees are arriving. In **Ethiopia**, authorities in the Somali Region, which shares borders with Djibouti, Kenya and Somalia, have started screening individuals crossing through the official border entry points, while management of the porous borders and informal entry points remains a challenge. The government agency responsible for refugees, ARRA, has established quarantine centers in three of the five refugee camps in Melkadida where individuals coming from outside the region are required to stay in isolation for fourteen days. UNHCR is helping to furnish the centers. In **South Sudan**, advocacy on access to asylum has been maintained and so far, there have been no restrictions on access to asylum. The operation has continued to encourage the observation of COVID-19 precautionary measures in all assistance provided to asylum seekers, spontaneous refugee returnees and internally displaced persons. Renewed Lords Resistance Army attacks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and clashes in the Central African Republic (CAR) are leading to new arrivals into South Sudan. In early May, some 200 individuals crossed from the DRC into South Sudan; in the second half of May, new arrivals from CAR were reported. Verification of information, including assessment of the figures, is still ongoing and yet to be confirmed due to difficulties in reaching the area including the beginning of the rainy season. In **Uganda**, the office continues to advocate for the admission of asylum seekers fleeing violence and persecution in neighbouring countries following recent reports that an estimated 1,000 people from the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) had fled deadly clashes in the Ituri province and were reportedly stranded in no-mans land between Uganda and the DRC, west of Uganda's Zombo district.

### Education

**The spread of COVID-19 has led to the closure of more and more schools for an indefinite period across the region and the ability of refugee students to access distance learning programmes at scale has proven challenging.**

The region continues to pursue measures to provide distance learning for refugee students. Similar to the challenges faced by refugee students in other education levels, higher education students are hampered by a lack of smartphones, tablets and laptops required for the e-learning mode of education. UNHCR and partners are working to support students with different measures to access both online and offline classes. In **Kenya**, refugees enrolled in tertiary education in urban areas receive free daily data bundles from Safaricom (local telecommunication company), to facilitate access to e-learning classes. In Kakuma, Jesuit Worldwide Learning has provided students with laptops, data bundles and offline materials to support continued learning and undertake assignments. In **Rwanda**, university students are supported through cash transfers to continue their studies online.

**11** countries have closed their borders to a certain degree and partially impacting access to asylum. UNHCR continues to advocate with Government partners to be able to carry out border monitoring activities, especially in lockdown situations.

UNHCR and partners are faced with the need to revamp education programming to support distance learning.

**Strengthening** and seeking innovative approaches to communicate and engage with communities to provide fact-based information on COVID-19 through a wide variety of methods.

## Health

**Major health challenges include the immediate availability of equipment necessary to detect, test and treat complicated cases, medical and PPE supplies and adequate facilities for isolation, as well as the feasibility of practicing physical distancing at the community level.**

Operations continue to implement preparedness and response plans which involve identification, establishment and equipping of isolation units in often congested camps and settlements. In **Ethiopia**, temporary facilities have been designated in each camp to isolate suspected cases of COVID-19, pending their transfer to Government designated isolation and treatment centres. As most of these spaces are within pre-existing structures such as schools and community centers, UNHCR, ARRA and other partners have started construction of new semi-permanent structures. Two such facilities are being constructed in Melkadida and Hilaweyn refugee camps in the Somali Region with the other three camps expected to follow subject to availability of funds. In **Somalia**, over 242,000 persons have been informed about the COVID-19 pandemic, including prevention and recommended actions if an individual is symptomatic. The risk of transmission is highest in Somalia's over 2,000 highly congested IDP sites. As a result, 260 IDP leaders received training to increase their capacity to prevent and respond to COVID-19 concerns in their IDP sites and are now raising awareness. UNHCR has supplied six health centres/hospitals with PPEs to protect their health workers in close contact with infected persons. Over 1,300 displaced persons deemed high risk of viral exposure have received PPEs. Most of these individuals are IDP leaders who are raising awareness in IDP sites.

## Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

**Emphasis remains on blanket prevention activities in camps and working with the health sector to assess and prepare for WASH needs and infection prevention control in identified health structures to isolate and treat COVID-19 patients.**

WASH prevention activities targeting all camp populations, such as increased hand washing with soap, water supply, physical distancing and public awareness are progressing throughout the region. In **Burundi**, 56 handwashing facilities were installed in neighborhoods and community centers in Nyankanda camp, in the eastern province of Ruyigi. In addition, 21 water tanks of 50 litres each were distributed to primary, secondary and nursery schools for prevention against COVID-19. In **Somalia**, UNHCR has installed 48 handwashing stations in front of hospitals, health centers and reception centers allowing for some 1,100 persons to wash their hands on a daily basis before entering the facilities. Three boreholes complete with solar panels and water pumps, generator/control rooms, water kiosks and elevated water tanks have been provided to Government partners. In **South Sudan**, UNHCR and CARE International, distributed 1,030 boxes of soap to 55,282 host community members at seventeen distribution locations and 565 boxes of soap to 42,171 refugees in Yida settlement. This is part of the COVID-19 prevention measures support to the host populations and the refugees. In **Sudan**, UNHCR and SRCS distributed soap to 2,293 refugees in Abu Jubayhah and Wad Delibat refugee settlements in Kordofan in the last week. The distribution was accompanied by COVID-19 awareness messages and precautionary measures such as social distancing during the distribution process.



*Innocent Havyarimana, a Burundian businessman, prepares a bottle of freshly made hand sanitizer, which he sells to fellow refugees, aid workers and Kenyans in Kakuma refugee camp, Kenya. © UNHCR/Samuel Otieno*

## Livelihoods

### Spotlight on urban refugees

As described in a recent media [Briefing Note](#), refugees in urban areas across the region are struggling to meet their most basic needs as the economic impact of COVID-19 takes hold. Job losses and business closures are severely affecting refugees' incomes, leaving a majority struggling to afford rent, food and other essentials. UNHCR is working closely with governments and partners to find solutions for urban refugees in these challenging times.

In **Djibouti**, UNHCR has distributed vouchers to urban refugees to be able to buy food and is working to find alternative accommodation arrangements for refugees and host community members evicted from their homes. In **Ethiopia**, a regular cash assistance programme for some 4,200 urban refugees in Addis Ababa was adapted in April to provide a two-month payment and a small top up to cover additional hygiene items. More resources are needed to reach all of the more than 27,000 urban refugees who have been impacted by the COVID-19 situation. In **Kenya**, urban refugees work primarily in the informal sector, in shops selling small goods such as vegetables or clothes, or in restaurants, where restrictions on movement have led to businesses downsizing or closing entirely. UNHCR and partners are working with the Government to provide emergency cash assistance to the most vulnerable, including those who face eviction from their homes while working on the design of a larger scale program for cash support for the more than 80,000 urban refugees. In **Rwanda**, most of the 12,000 urban refugees, who live in Kigali and Huye, have seen the family wage earners lose their jobs, often having been working for businesses that have closed or are struggling to import commodities due to border restrictions. UNHCR and partners are providing emergency cash support to some 4,000 refugees. In **South Sudan**, close to 8,000 refugees and asylum-seekers living in the capital, Juba, face an increasingly precarious situation. Unemployment and poverty levels are high and rising. UNHCR is providing emergency cash grants to some of the most vulnerable, however, socio-economic conditions are expected to deteriorate further in the coming weeks, with the newly formed government having limited capacity to intervene. In **Sudan**, UNHCR and WFP collaborated with the Ministry of Labour and Social Development to include more than 10,000 refugee households so far in a large-scale distribution of food and hygiene materials to vulnerable urban households. In **Uganda**, UNHCR is introducing one-off cash assistance for some 80,000 urban refugees, most of whom work in the informal sector, using mobile money to help cover rent and basic household needs.

With socio-economic conditions expected to further deteriorate in the coming weeks and months, additional funding is needed to extend these initial, one-off interventions accordingly.

### Emerging practices with refugee artisans

Country operations have been pursuing opportunities for refugee artisans to use their skills and continue to generate income by producing items needed to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Refugee artisans have started producing masks and soap to prevent and minimize the spread of the virus. Several of MADE51 local social enterprise partners have adapted their production and are now producing fabric masks from home. In **Tanzania**, MADE51 partner WomenCraft reacted decisively as soon as the first official cases were reported, with the artisans they support taking a lead role in developing and implementing safety measures. They decided to shut down production centers to limit exposure and distributed pamphlets about the Coronavirus and best safety practices to all members. Artisans now weave at home, drop off finished products at agreed-upon locations for collection and use WhatsApp to stay connected. WomenCraft is opening an online shop to stimulate direct sales to customers. Refugee tailors in **Kenya**, **Rwanda** and elsewhere are also producing masks at scale for refugees, host communities, and staff of humanitarian and government agencies.

## Inter-agency Coordination

Operations are working closely with UN Country Teams, Resident Coordinators and the World Health Organization on crisis management, personnel and business continuity arrangements, program criticality, preparedness, and response planning. Existing refugee response coordination structures continue to function, through virtual communication where relevant.

At the regional level UNHCR is engaged with the Regional Humanitarian Partners Team (RHPT) to map the impact on humanitarian operations and coordinate on advocacy messaging, as well as with many sectoral groups including health, nutrition, education, and child protection which have been developing context specific inter-agency guidance on programming during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The last two weekly dialogues held between UNHCR and NGOs at the global level – on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and the Global Compact on Refugees (GCR) and follow-up to the Global Refugee Forum

(GRF) – both featured colleagues from UNHCR’s Bureau for the EHAGL Region providing insights on how related challenges and opportunities are manifesting in country operations in the region in the current COVID-19 context.

## Funding needs

The revised UN inter-agency [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) was launched on 7 May seeking US\$6.7 billion and includes UNHCR’s revised requirements of US\$745 million. UNHCR’s [Revised Emergency Appeal](#) detailing the country and sectoral breakdown of UNHCR’s global budget requirements was launched on 11 May. Within the revised appeal, \$126 million has been requested for ten countries in the East and Horn and Great Lakes Region.

This is a revision of the initial [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) launched on 25 March seeking US\$2.01 billion, and which included US\$255 million for initial, prioritized requirements in UNHCR’s operations in affected countries.

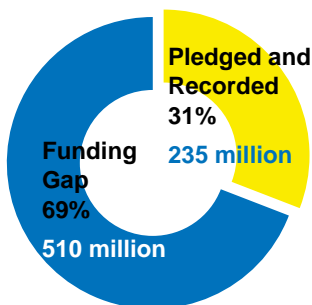
The increase is due to a rapid evolution of humanitarian needs, the inclusion of additional countries, increased cost of essential health and other supplies, and air and sea transportation. UNHCR is further scaling up its health, shelter and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) preparedness and response interventions, providing cash and other support to vulnerable displaced families experiencing economic shock, and ensuring protection and assistance for those most affected.

**USD 745 million requested by UNHCR in the revised inter-agency Global Humanitarian Response Plan**

**USD 126 million requested for 10 countries in the East and Horn of Africa and Great Lakes region**

## Funding

USD 745M requested for UNHCR’s COVID-19 response globally over the next nine months:



### Total contributed or pledged to the COVID-19 appeal

**USD 235M** including:

United States \$64M | Germany \$38M | European Union \$31.8M | United Kingdom \$24.8M | Japan \$23.9M | Denmark \$14.6M | CERF \$6.9M | Canada \$6.4M | Ireland \$3.3M | Sweden \$3M | Sony Corporation \$3M | Luxembourg \$2.6M | Finland \$2.4M | Education Cannot Wait \$1.8M | Qatar Charity \$1.5M | Norway \$1.4M | Australia \$0.8M | Monaco \$0.2M | Estonia \$0.1M | Iceland \$0.1M | Portugal \$0.1M | Liechtenstein \$0.1M | Slovakia \$0.1M

### Unearmarked contributions to UNHCR’s regular global programmes:

Sweden 76.4M | Norway 41.4M | Netherlands 36.1M | Denmark 34.6M | United Kingdom 31.7M | Private donors in Spain 26.6M | Germany 25.9M | Switzerland 16.4M | Private donors in Republic of Korea 13.9M

## Links:

UNHCR COVID-19 country updates: [Ethiopia](#), [Kenya](#), [Somalia](#), [Uganda](#).

UNHCR Briefing Note: [Urban refugees struggling to survive as economic impact of COVID-19 worsens in East, Horn and Great Lakes of Africa](#)

Joint WHO-UNHCR press release: [WHO and UNHCR join forces to improve health services for refugees, displaced and stateless people](#)

UNHCR publication - [Emerging best practices for Livelihoods and Economic Inclusion in response to the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

UNHCR story: [Soap maker in Kenya refugee camp lowers prices to fight COVID-19](#)

Click [here](#) to access a [live dashboard](#) providing information on COVID-19 cases in the region, as well as travel restrictions and movement and border controls put in place by Governments.

## Contacts

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