

Ethiopia Refugee Update March 2012

5,400 new refugees in February

UNHCR and ARRA registered 5,430 new arrivals in February, bringing the cumulative total number of refugees in Ethiopia to 303,601. Of the newly registered, 2,553 were Somalis, 1,729 were Sudanese and 1,148 Eritrean refugees. At the end of February 2012 the country hosted 189,502 Somalis, 57,038 Eritreans, 53,328 Sudanese as well as 3,733 refugees from different nationalities, including 2,780 Kenyans.

The February figures are clearly much less than the 8,050 new arrivals registered in January 2012. However, an additional 15,000 (estimated) ethnic Lou Nuer people displaced from South Sudan (*please see details in the next article*) since mid February are awaiting registration. There is also an estimated 10,000 new arrivals from Kenya in Moyale area who have been hosted within the local communities, scattered in five villages in Ethiopia along the border strip.



A group of Lou Nuer new arrivals at Fugnido camp, part of over 1,300 that have been transferred to the camp. UNHCR/Kisut G.E

Thousands of Lou Nuer tribesmen flee Jonglei into Ethiopia

An estimated 15,000 people from the Lou Nuer ethnicity in South Sudan have entered Ethiopia since mid-February and are seeking refuge in western Ethiopia's Gambella Regional State. Most are women, children and elderly people who fled from Akobo County in Jonglei State following clashes there earlier this year.

They cite clashes with rival Murle tribesmen and fear of reprisal attacks as the main reason for their flight. Many of them say they were displaced for weeks in Jonglei before they managed to reach Ethiopia.

The new arrivals are settling around the border town of Matar, some 170km from Gambella town. An inter-agency assessment team comprising ARRA and UNHCR visited the area and observed that most of them are living in makeshift huts, sharing food and water resources with the local community.



Most of the refugees arrived with their cattle and are living in makeshift huts near the border. UNHCR/Sileshi. T

The World Food Programme is extending food distribution to this area to benefit both communities.

UNHCR is helping the Ethiopian authorities to set up a reception centre near Matar, where the new arrivals are to be screened by the Ethiopian Government refugee agency (ARRA) before they are relocated to Fugnido refugee camp, some 110 kilometres from Gambella. ARRA, UNHCR and IOM have so far transferred 1,300 new arrivals to the camp, where they are registered as refugees and issued with food ration cards.

UNHCR has also dispatched additional staff to support the Government's registration efforts in Fugnido. Registration is needed to best organize the delivery of protection and assistance to the population in need,

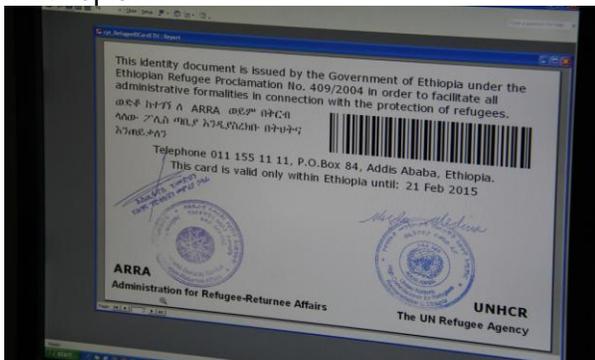
including targeted assistance to those identified as vulnerable.

UNHCR distributed to families who arrived in Fugnido an initial aid kit including tents, plastic sheets, blankets, kitchen sets and jerry cans from our stockpile in Gambella. ARRA provides them with hot meals. More relief items have been pre-positioned, including family tents for those asylum-seekers who will be transferred from the border area to Fugnido.

Fugnido refugee camp was opened in 1993 and hosted some 40,000 refugees at one point. Before the new influx, it was home to some 23,000 refugees. Now these long-staying refugees are hosting and extending their help to the new arrivals from South Sudan.

ID cards to refugees

As a result of a sustained effort on the part of UNHCR and the Government refugee agency (ARRA), the two organizations have finally started issuing ID cards to more than 300,000 refugees in Ethiopia.



A sample ID card. UNHCR/Kisut G.E.

The distribution was launched last month when the UNHCR Representative and the Deputy Director of ARRA made a symbolic distribution of the first ID cards to urban-based refugees. With the new cards, refugees will be able to identify themselves to law enforcement authorities, making ID cards a valuable protection tool. For some refugees, the new ID cards are their only proof of identity. The cards are also expected to help against fraud and to maximize the integrity of ARRA and UNHCR documentation. Refugees in Ethiopia above the age of 14 years are expected to be issued with ID cards that bear the logos of UNHCR and ARRA.

The ID cards were warmly welcome by the refugees who said that they now feel protected and more secure. In separate statements they made when launching the distribution, UNHCR Representative Moses Okello and ARRA Deputy Director Ayalew Aweke described the event as an

important milestone and an excellent demonstration of close cooperation between UNHCR and ARRA.



One of the refugees receiving her ID card from UNHCR Representative Moses Okello. The Deputy Director of ARRA, Ayalew Aweke, is watching and clapping from the left UNHCR/Kisut G.E.

The new cards replace identity documents that were previously issued by ARRA to urban refugees and attestation papers for some camp-based refugees. The new cards include a picture of the holder as well as laminated information, such as name, basic biographical information and address, as well as distinctive ARRA and UNHCR logos.

Preparations for this joint initiative have been underway since the last several years.

Update on 3rd camp in BGRS

In spite of the challenges a significant headway has been made in the development of Bambasi as the third camp for Sudanese refugees in the Benishangul-Gumuz Regional State (BGRS). Physical planning as well as demarcation of plots have been completed in two zones. Construction of key facilities such as water, health post, and communal latrines has been progressing well. The Office is working hard to sort out issue of access road to be able to open the camp in March. Once developed, Bambasi camp is expected to accommodate 20,000 refugees.

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