

REGIONAL BUREAU FOR EAST AFRICA

Situation Update #3
September 2020

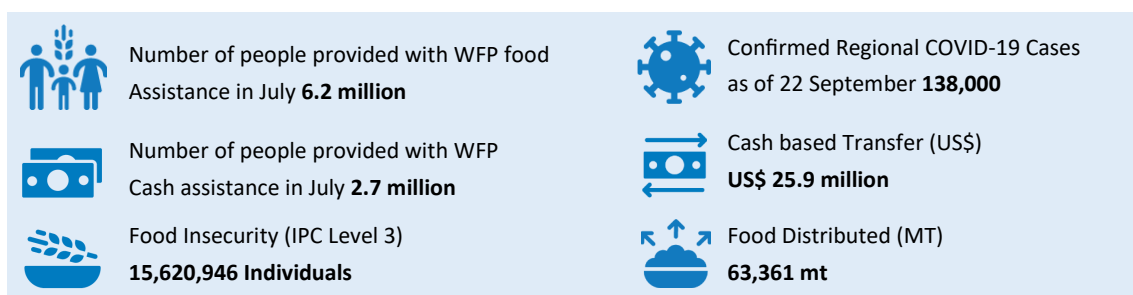
COVID-19 **L3**

WFP/John Paul Sesonga

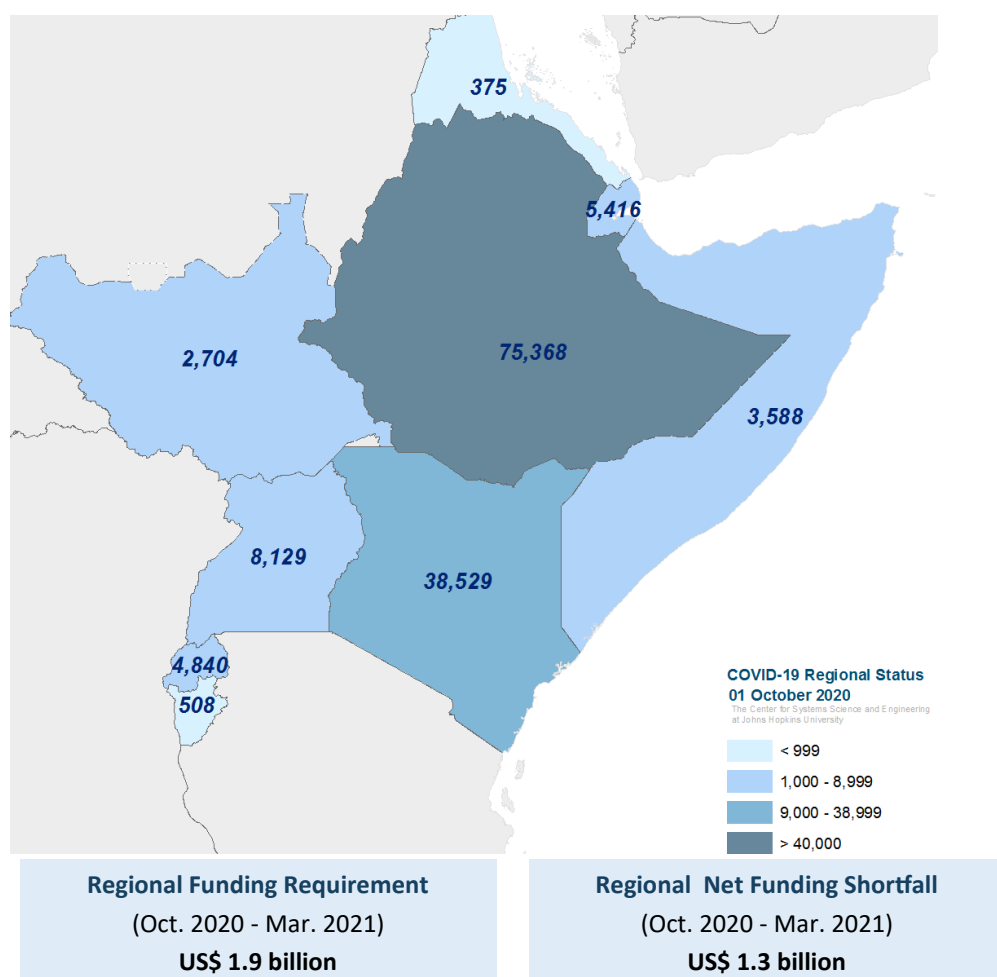
HIGHLIGHT

- The number of COVID-19 cases continues to increase in the East African region, reaching 139,000 as at 30 September 2020. The food security situation is worsening because of floods, locust invasion, the socio-economic impact of COVID-19 and recurrent conflict.
- The East African region is one of the most food insecure regions of the world. As per the Global Food Crisis Report of 2020, three of the world's eight largest food crises were from this region – Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan.
- WFP estimates the number of acutely food insecure people in East African region could increase by 73 percent – from 24 million pre-COVID-19, to 41.5 million before the end of 2020. Among the food insecure, 14 million are estimated to be in urban areas.
- WFP aims to assist 3.9 million additional people over the next six months because of the impact of COVID-19. WFP requires US\$ 1.3 billion to sustain life saving assistance and meet the emerging needs in the next six months (October 2020-March 2021).
- Refugees, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and urban populations remain of significant concern. To cope with the reduced funding, WFP has been forced to reduce food or cash transfers by up to 30 percent for over 2.7 million refugees in Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, South Sudan, and Djibouti. WFP will be forced to reduce rations further in the coming months unless urgent additional funding is received on time. WFP requires US\$388 million to assist refugees in the region over the next six months.
- Torrential rains have caused flooding in Jonglei and Unity states of South Sudan. The flooding compounds an already fragile humanitarian situation due to the increasing levels of subnational conflict across the country, and COVID-19. This is crippling food security and livelihoods. Currently, nearly 700,000 people have been affected by the floods. According to Famine Early Warning System Network (FEWSNET), emergency (IPC phase 4) is projected in 25 conflict and flood affected counties in September. The majority of populations are likely to be engaging in severe food coping strategies to cope with the food insecurity. A three-month state of emergency was declared in Jonglei in response to the increasing humanitarian needs. WFP continues to provide lifesaving assistance in South Sudan amidst these challenges. In July, WFP reached over 1.32 million people with 12,379 mt. of food and US\$2.14 million in cash-based transfers.

- In Ethiopia, COVID-19 cases have increased three-fold in the last one month bringing the total number of confirmed cases to 75,000. This is attributed mainly to increased testing in the country. The impacts of COVID-19 are compounded by the ongoing floods in the Somali region. This has resulted in displacements of tens of thousands, loss of livelihoods, and challenges in delivering humanitarian assistance in low-lying areas, mainly in Oromia, Somali and Southern Nations, Nationalities and People's (SNNP) regions. The Food Cluster is conducting further assessments to determine the number of people likely to require humanitarian assistance due to the impacts of COVID-19, flooding and displacement. During the first half of 2020, food cluster partners have assisted approximately 7.1 million people including IDPs, returnees and flood-affected people.



WFP RESPONSE



Refugee and Relief Updates

Amidst dwindling funding, over three million refugees who rely on WFP humanitarian assistance for survival have been negatively impacted by COVID-19. This have resulted in loss of livelihoods and increased food prices in the refugee camps. In Rwanda, WFP post distribution assessments conducted in June 2020 indicated that 88 percent of refugees reported that COVID-19 had negative impact on their livelihoods. Around 76 percent (the lowest ever recorded) had acceptable food consumption, compared to 80 percent in November 2019. Similarly, in Uganda, 24 percent of refugee households in Kampala had poor or borderline food consumption. Majority of households were also employing severe to medium coping strategies which erode households' livelihoods and assets.

WFP continues to prioritise refugee assistance but response efforts are hampered by funding constraints. WFP will have to reduce rations further in the coming months unless urgent additional funding is received on time. Increasing ration cuts for refugees could prompt refugee communities to move within host countries or even across borders; these displacements would be of significant concern especially in the COVID-19 context.

WFP has remained agile and adapted its refugee response to ensure food is delivered in a safe and accountable way. These include through double distributions, prepacking of food (Rwanda and Burundi), social distancing, hygiene measures and staggering timings of distributions. WFP also suspended the use of biometrics across camps to minimise contacts. WFP has switched to mobile cash transfers in some countries like Somalia in its relief response, while in Uganda cash transfers have been scaled up to cover more refugee settlements.

Uganda: Double distribution are ongoing in 13 settlements. WFP extended its 30 percent ration cut on all the 1.2 million refugees in the settlements into a fourth month in July due to funding gaps. WFP will not be able to continue its cash-based transfer modality in October, unless donors confirm new contributions. To maintain assistance for the next six months, WFP needs US\$ 70 million urgently.

Electronic cash transfers to Kampala-based refugees began in June and aim to support urban refugees to meet their basic food needs for three months. A transfer value of US\$ 6/per person/per month was provided to the urban refugees, which represents 70 percent of the minimum food basket. WFP plans to assist all 80,000 urban refugees in the Ugandan capital.

WFP has also scaled up its cash assistance in five settlements in the South West region to further limit contact and spread of COVID-19. WFP aims to expand digital solutions such as the agent banking model and mobile money in order to implement contactless distribution models as much as possible. With 52 percent of refugees now receiving cash-based transfers – an increase from 36 percent in January 2020 – WFP is injecting the equivalent of US\$3.8 million a month in the rural refugee economies in nine settlements (at a reduced ration). WFP has stepped up its support to market development, while also focusing on financial literacy training courses to enhance the capacity of refugees to deal with (digital) banking tools. This will enable markets in the rural refugee hosting districts to absorb this monthly cash injection while being able to meet the food and nutrition needs of both refugees and host communities.

Rwanda hosts approximately 148,900 refugees and asylum seekers. Of this, 92 percent live in refugee centres and 8 percent in urban areas. The confirmation of COVID-19 cases in Kirehe and Rusizi districts (Mahama and Kigeme refugee camps) led to the introduction of movement restrictions and total lock down for all refugee camps.

On 13 August 2020, WFP, UNHCR and the Government of Rwanda held a technical meeting to discuss modalities of the voluntary repatriation and reintegration process of Burundian refugees. This was a revitalization of the 2005 Tripartite Agreement. Following this agreement, on 27 August 2020, the first convoy of 493 voluntary repatriated Burundian refugees departed from Mahama camp in Rwanda. Refugees received hot meals from WFP before departure.

In July, WFP reached approximately 135,995 refugees with food assistance. School feeding activities in the camps were not implemented as schools remain closed. However, nutrition activities for vulnerable groups continued to be implemented. WFP is supporting over 500 refugees in quarantine and isolation centres and continues to support the general refugee population.

WFP is working with UNHCR under the joint UNHCR-WFP Programme Excellence and Targeting Hub to systematically enhance targeting approaches to ensure assistance is targeted to the most in need. WFP, jointly with partners, plans to conduct vulnerability assessments of refugee households in all six refugee camps to facilitate targeting and prioritization of future interventions. These assessments could potentially lead to linkages to livelihood programmes in 2021.

Ethiopia: In July, WFP assisted approximately 693,790 refugees in 26 refugee camps and 4 sites 10,210 mt. of food and cash assistance worth 32.7 million Birr (approximately US\$ 800,000) July 2020.

WFP continues to provide daily hot meals to 3,750 South Sudanese asylum seekers in Gambella. Registration of asylum seekers is ongoing, and WFP will provide dry rations once complete.

Resilience activities for refugees and host communities in Gambella region are ongoing. Communities are preparing land, and distribution of seeds has been completed in some areas. WFP is also conducting a financial inclusion study in Gambela region through desk research and phone interviews for the Tierkidi and Kule refugee camps. The study aims to identify potential barriers to accessing finance by the refugees. This will guide in the setup of Village Saving and Lending Groups (VSLA).

Somalia: Refugees and asylum seekers in Somalia are comprised mainly of Ethiopians and Yemenis who fled conflict and persecution in their own countries, most of them settling in Berbera, Bossaso, Galkayo, Hargeisa and the country's capital Mogadishu. A review by UNHCR indicates that most refugees and asylum seekers calling the agency's hotlines during the COVID-19 period have lost their only source of livelihood and are unable to meet their basic needs since March. Prior to the loss of work, many refugees and asylum seekers in Somalia worked as casual labourers or small business owners.

In response, UNHCR and WFP Somalia have signed a three-month agreement (July to September) to provide a package of relief food assistance to almost 30,000 refugee and asylum seekers, mainly women and children. Distributions began in August with WFP providing the food and UNHCR handling distribution.

WFP e-shop - a home delivery mobile app- has continued to enable those receiving WFP cash assistance to buy food from the online shopping app from retailers in their neighbourhood and have the food delivered to their homes. Over 18,000 have used this app and purchased food worth US\$ 830,955. WFP has also introduced mobile money transfers in order to minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 among those receiving the assistance under its relief response.

Kenya: WFP continues to provide food assistance to around 400,000 refugees in Dadaab, Kakuma, and Kalobeyei. WFP is also supporting 129 refugees in quarantine/isolation centres in the camps. Due to reduced funding, WFP is only providing 70 percent of the food basket due to funding gaps. WFP requires US\$ 38 million to meet the food and nutrition needs for refugees the next six months.

Djibouti: WFP is working in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Affairs, to provide food vouchers to 6,000 households affected by the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 in Djibouti City. In addition, distribution of food vouchers to 448 households with one family member affected by the HIV/AIDS is still ongoing. This ensures people PLHIV continue to take their ARTs to keep their immunity system strong and cushion them from potential impacts of COVID-19.

Nutrition

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Fill the Nutrient Gap (FNG) analysis which identifies barriers faced by the most vulnerable to accessing and consuming health and nutritious foods, found that more than 50 percent of the population in most countries are unable to afford a nutritious diet, highlighting already existing high levels of vulnerability due to inability to access nutritious foods.

As a result, there is high risk of malnutrition, including micronutrient deficiencies. Adolescent girls and pregnant or breastfeeding women are particularly vulnerable because their nutritional needs are very high. This has long lasting consequences for their own health and productivity as well as that of their (future) children.

Further, more children are becoming malnourished due to the deteriorating quality of their diets, interruptions in nutrition and other essential services, and the socioeconomic shocks created by the pandemic.

WFP is working with communities and partners to identify long-term solutions to help better protect, develop, and leverage human capital and address root causes of malnutrition and build plans to effectively address future shocks.

Nutrition interventions in the region are prioritised with continued adaptations actions such as: double distributions; enhanced community level nutrition actions such as use of family-led MUAC; and use of mobile-health applications; pre-positioning of specialised nutritious foods; and enhanced Social Behaviour Change Communication (SBCC) initiatives to ensure continued access to services while maintaining infection prevention and control measures.



Key Country nutrition Updates:

- **Burundi:** WFP will resume the treatment of Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) activities in Kirunzo and Mukenke districts that had been suspended 2019. A total of 11 (from 9 previously) health districts and 147 health centres (previously 126) will be supported from September onwards with Specialised Nutritious Foods for the Treatment of MAM. This is after WFP and the Ministry of Public Health through the National Integrated Food and Nutrition Program (PRONIANUT) signed the amendment to a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) allowing resumption of nutrition activities. The resumption is timely as the nutrition situation is fragile due to the impacts of COVID-19 pandemic as well as the upcoming lean season beginning September.
- The MoU will also lead to financial contribution towards the implementation of a Standardized Monitoring And Assessment of Relief and Transition survey (SMART survey). WFP Burundi has committed US\$70,958 towards the survey implementation. The SMART survey will show the current nutrition situation, and extent to which the relief system is meeting the needs of the population and the overall impact of relief response. This will ensure resources are prioritised to meet the needs of the most vulnerable.
- **Rwanda:** WFP supported the Rwanda Biomedical Center (RBC) in providing one month of food assistance to 16,250 People Living with HIV (PLHIV). Further, WFP is supporting RBC to revise the Nutrition Guidelines for PLHIV which have now included adolescents and HIV nutrition—thanks to WFP's support. WFP also supported the pilot of Smart Simplicity/Stunting Free Model (as part of the BCG-WFP partnership) in a village in the most stunting-affected district of Burundi. Given the success of the pilot, the model was scaled up to 42 villages (1 sector) in the same district. This aims to reduce stunting levels in the targeted districts.
- **Djibouti** will start its third two-month dispatch of food, to 2,500 households in the five regions in the rural areas. Nutrition commodities targeting Pregnant and Lactating Women (PLW) and children of age 6-59 months will also be provided with prevention of malnutrition prevention support linked to the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, WFP is also implementing a two-month food distribution to small farmers affected by the COVID-19 and the locust invasion in order to recover their livelihoods.
- **Kenya:** An increase in cases of malnutrition among infants under the age of five has been recorded in Mombasa County during the pandemic period. This may be attributable to a reduction in health seeking behaviour due to fear of contracting COVID-19, in addition to reduced incomes among parents to support a healthy diet for children over the period. Planned expansion of MAM treatment activities in Mombasa county is underway following engagement with county representatives and development of a roll out plan. In Nairobi county, nutrition support to 2,500 women and children in Nairobi's informal settlements has commenced and will target 123 facilities in Nairobi informal settlements.
- **Somalia** WFP has aligned its programmes to the global guidance on nutrition programme adaptations including double distributions; PPE distribution; and development and distribution of IEC materials. A joint training has been developed by WFP/UNICEF and Ministry of Health using the newly developed Community Health Workers (CHWs) guidelines. The training will integrate COVID-19 messaging alongside HIV/TB, wasting, and infant and young child feeding (IYCF) messaging.
- WFP Somalia trained mothers and caregivers on how to take Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC). This approach enables mothers to screen their children and detect signs of malnutrition early, while limiting their exposure during the pandemic. By the end of August, 82 percent of WFP's cooperating partners had transitioned from community health workers-led Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) to mother-led MUAC screening.

WFP Kenya/Martin Karimi



Social Protection

WFP's Regional Bureau for East African Region continues to work with a team of social protection experts from the Centre for International Development and Training at the University of Wolverhampton, and the Institute for Development Studies, through a regional learning facility established earlier this year. The experts that comprise the facility are working alongside social protection staff in WFP country offices to provide technical assistance for the adaptation and expansion of social protection programmes. This is in response to COVID-19 and other shocks, to monitor, and learn from WFP's work on social protection across the eight countries in the region.

In South Sudan, on top of regular assistance to 5 million people, WFP will assist an additional 1.6 million people mostly in urban settings who will face rising food needs linked to COVID-19.

WFP Kenya has disbursed cash transfers to 67,000 urban households affected by COVID-19 out of the target of 70,500 households in the 13 informal settlements of Nairobi. Working with Government, WFP is working to ensure transfers to the remaining 3,500 households within the month of September. The cash-transfer programme is being expanded to 24,000 families in Mombasa's informal settlements in October.

In Ethiopia, WFP is supporting the government in the scale-up of the urban Productive safety net Project (PSNP), to reach 17,500 people with cash assistance from September onward. WFP is also planning to provide food assistance to returnees/deportees in quarantine at border areas.

WFP Rwanda is providing technical support to the Government of Rwanda on the emergency cash transfers funded by EU DEVCO. The cash transfer will support populations most impacted by COVID-19. WFP has met with Local Administrative Entities Development Agency (LODA), the government's social protection implementing agency, to discuss areas in which this support could be provided, including delivery mechanisms, data management and operational delivery.

School Feeding

Schools in Kenya, Djibouti, Rwanda, Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Uganda have been closed for several months. As a result, almost 10 million children are missing out of school meals and other essential health and nutrition services.

While plans for school re-opening are underway, WFP has prioritised support to governments to restore access to meals and other health services. School health and nutrition services are vital to protect children from hunger, ensure their wellbeing and also serve as powerful incentives for parents to send their children back to school.

To mitigate the impact of the school closures, Take Home Rations (THR) were distributed to safeguard health and nutrition status of children. In August, WFP reached over 375,000 children with Take Home Rations in Rwanda, Somalia, South Sudan, Uganda and Ethiopia.

Schools have reopened in Somalia. WFP is transitioning from in kind to cash-based transfers under the Home-Grown School Feeding (HGSF) modality. The full transition will be implemented in Galmudug, Puntland and Hiran regions, while a phased approach will be adopted in Somaliland targeting 50 schools. The HGSF model enables schools to purchase food items to prepare hot meals from local markets and retailers, contributing to the local economy.

Burundi opened schools on 7 September. With support of WFP, the Ministry of Education is conducting annual reviews of the previous school year. Due to funding constraints, WFP will reduce the number of targeted schools under the school feeding programme from 702 to 524, starting September. WFP Burundi requires US\$5.3 million to cover critical shortfalls for its school feeding activity.



Gender, Protection, and Accountability to Affected Populations

WFP strengthened its Complaints and Feedback Mechanism (CFM) response across all countries to allow refugees to effectively raise complaints and ask questions using the existing channels such as toll-free telephone number, help desk, e-mail, suggestion box, and CFM committees. These efforts were also in response to the potential increase in protection risks as a result of the COVID-19 lockdown measures.

- In Rwanda WFP updated the current CFM case collection template to strengthen recording and follow up of protection issues as well as enhance proper referral pathways. WFP has invested in training of field monitors on how to respond to cases reported by refugees, including Gender Based Violence (GBV), Child abuse and protection issues that may arise due to the economic and social stress triggered by the COVID-19 crisis.
- WFP Ethiopia will start CFM assessment remotely using mobile phone data collection system.
- WFP Kenya has integrated accountability and feedback mechanism in the COVID-19 urban response by use of non-traditional modes of communications like FM radio stations and WFP managed bulk SMS platform. The bulk SMS platform has been vital in sending and receiving consent for potential beneficiaries to opt into WFP urban response activities and providing information on the accountability avenues where communities can report their grievances, provide feedback or receive additional information about the programmes. WFP is also mobilizing communities through: i) mass media and ii) community health volunteers, to increase coverage of the nutrition treatment programme for the urban settlements.

Monitoring

WFP has scaled up its remote monitoring and analysis through use of Mobile Vulnerability Assessment and Mapping (mVAM) near-real time monitoring in Uganda, Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and South Sudan. WFP is working with partners and governments in making use of mobile phone-based surveys to contribute to IPC analysis and targeting including in urban areas in Kenya, Ethiopia and South Sudan. WFP has also partnered with UNHabitat to work on a joint urban analysis for sub-Saharan Africa.

Supply Chain, Bilateral Service Provision and Logistics

WFP's logistics services continue to support COVID-19 efforts through global air service and the Addis Ababa hub to enable a steady flow of humanitarian and health cargo and workers to the frontlines of the pandemic. The Addis Ababa Humanitarian Air Hub in Ethiopia has begun distribution of CDC cargo to 54 African countries.

WFP's global passenger air service is serving several destinations from its hub in Addis Ababa, including Bujumbura, Entebbe, and Mogadishu.

WFP continued to provide logistical and technical support to governments and the wider humanitarian community through the Logistics clusters in Ethiopia, Somalia and South Sudan. The clusters continue to facilitate transportation of relief items including for the flood's response in South Sudan and Somalia. The cluster has also supported the Ministry of Health in these countries to transport COVID-19 cargo to various locations.



Regional Bureau Nairobi for East Africa
Regional Director: Michael Dunford

Contact
RBN.Reports@wfp.org