

UNICEF EDUCATION

Education Case Study

ETHIOPIA

Improving access to quality education for refugee learners

15 June 2021

Ethiopia—with now more than 800,000 refugees, of whom about 400,000 are school-aged children, and a staggering 2 million internally displaced people (IDPs), of whom nearly 800,000 are school-aged children—committed both at legal and policy levels in 2016 to improve access to education for refugees. This commitment was put to the test when COVID-19 closed schools in March 2020. Refugee children were at an even higher risk of dropping out: in addition to problems accessing distance learning modalities, displaced students were unable to access other essential services offered at schools such as school meals and psychosocial support. Moreover, the conflict in Tigray Region, which erupted in November 2020, has displaced more than 1.7 million people (815,286 female), including 500,820 school-aged children, compounding an already dire situation for young people in the country.

To reach refugee children and those living in host communities, UNICEF Ethiopia is providing formal and non-formal education, building temporary learning spaces (TLS), constructing latrines, furnishing classrooms, providing school supplies, mobilising back-to-school campaigns and prioritising psychosocial support and child protection in Tigray, Gambella, Benishangul-Gumuz, Afar and Somali Regions.

RESULTS

- To facilitate refugees' return to school, UNICEF helped prepare safe school reopening guidelines, which were translated into local languages and disseminated to 101 refugee schools (67 early childhood, 27 primary and 7 secondary) and those in host communities.
- UNICEF helped provide 20,000 refugee and host community households with solar powered radios to keep children attending

distance education during COVID-19-related school closures. In isolated areas lacking radio frequencies, UNICEF, with Regional Education Bureaus and non-governmental organizations, provided USBs uploaded with lessons so that learning is not disrupted even in the absence of direct radio frequencies.

- UNICEF, together with the Ministry of Education (MOE), UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA), supported the construction and furnishing of 60 classrooms and 96 latrines across four refugee-affected regions. To curb the spread of COVID-19, UNICEF provided 800 pedal operated hand washing stations in refugee and host community schools across nine regions.
- In May 2021, UNICEF targeted 120,000 children in refugee and host community schools across the country with 350,000 textbooks, stationery items, 80 early childhood education kits, 724 recreation kits and 755 school-in-a-box kits.
- In Tigray Region, as of May 2021, UNICEF, [Imagine One Day](#) and the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) installed 48 TLS in host communities, IDP sites and refugee camps, supporting [4,089 children](#) (662 pre-primary). Also with NRC support, UNICEF trained 230 teachers and 3 parent teacher associations in Tigray on back-to-school community mobilization activities to advocate for children's safe return to the classroom.

LESSONS LEARNED

- **Government buy-in is essential to the integration agenda.** For the past five years, the Government, supported by UNICEF, has taken concrete steps towards including refugees in national education, such as integrating

schools attended by refugees into the national supervision and inspection system. Moreover, in partnership with UNESCO's International Institute for Educational Planning, UNICEF Ethiopia trained MOE, UNHCR and ARRA staff on crisis-sensitive education planning, with the overarching objective of refugee integration.

- **Tailored support to refugees helps ensure an equitable response.** Provision of handwashing stations, solar radios and infrastructure support were integral to the inclusion of refugee learners in distance learning and school reopening.
- **Teachers are on the front line and must be prioritised.** In refugee settings, many teachers conducted home visits to support and distribute learning materials to the most vulnerable children, while respecting physical distancing measures. Despite the prolonged school closures due to COVID-19, national and refugee teachers in Ethiopia continued to be paid, which helped ensure the functioning of the education system and facilitate reopening.

NEXT STEPS

In 2021, UNICEF Ethiopia is supporting ongoing curriculum reform and conducting a study on out-of-school children. A nascent alternative learning programme known as Bete (*"my home,"* in Amharic) aims to reach out-of-school children and adolescents in an integrated manner with non-formal learning, skills development opportunities, psychosocial support and child protection services. While Bete is initially focusing on children on the move, including IDPs and refugees, and host community children, it will gradually scale up to include other out-of-school children across the country.

Cost effectiveness: From March 2020 to date, UNICEF Ethiopia has provided US \$75 million to ensure the continuity of learning to refugee and IDP children affected by COVID-19, the Tigray crisis and other overlapping humanitarian emergencies in the country, benefitting over 300,000 refugee and host community children.

For more information, please contact:

UNICEF Ethiopia Country Office: ethcommunication@unicef.org
© UNICEF June 2021

unicef 
for every child