

# Evaluation Brief



## Ethiopia: Joint UNHCR-WFP Impact Evaluation on the Contribution of Food Assistance to Durable Solutions in Protracted Refugee Situations (2003-2010)

### Context

For more than 20 years, Ethiopia has hosted large numbers of refugees, totalling more than 150,000 at the time of the evaluation and rising rapidly as Somali refugees fled the 2011 crisis. The largest and also most protracted caseloads in Ethiopia come from Sudan, Eritrea and Somalia. The Government of Ethiopia has taken measures to protect refugees' human rights, including recent introduction of increased freedom of movement under an 'Out of Camp' policy for Eritrean refugees. However, refugees are generally regarded as temporary guests with limited freedom of movement, access to education and employment opportunities.

### WFP food assistance and UNHCR complementary support to refugees

UNHCR and WFP have a long-standing partnership, committed to ensuring that refugees' food security and related needs are adequately addressed as part of the package of support given to refugees. In protracted situations, both agencies are committed to increasing refugees' self-reliance and seeking durable solutions.

In Ethiopia, UNHCR's main responsibilities included supporting the Government of Ethiopia's Administration for Refugee and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) with the determination of refugee status and registration, providing care and protective activities for refugees, including income-generating activities, water supply and shelter, and providing non-food items (such as cooking utensils) that make food commodities usable. Through a series of protracted relief and recovery operations and one emergency operation since 2003, with a total value of over US\$100 million, WFP's main responsibility was to provide monthly food rations for general distribution. Storage and distribution are administered by ARRA with monitoring by UNHCR and WFP. Over the years, WFP has refined the 'food basket' by including blended foods to address micronutrient deficiencies and increasing cereal amounts to compensate for milling costs. Supplementary and therapeutic feeding and school meals are also provided in smaller quantities.

### Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The first in a series of four, this joint impact evaluation served both accountability and learning purposes. The series aims to provide evidence and inspiration for future strategies to improve the contribution of food assistance to increased self-reliance and potentially to durable solutions for refugees and host populations in protracted situations.

The immediate objective of this evaluation was to:

- Evaluate the impact of food assistance to refugees in relation to intended objectives and unintended effects, including on host populations; and
- Make recommendations to minimize negative and optimize positive effects in order to increase the potential contribution of food assistance to self-reliance and durable solutions for protracted refugee populations in Ethiopia.

The evaluation focused on the Eritrean and Somali caseloads. Using a mix of quantitative and qualitative methods, the evaluation team compared the outcomes and impacts in older and newer camps and the surrounding areas and between three distinct groups within these caseloads.

### Key Findings and Explanatory Factors

The Theory of Change deduced from WFP and UNHCR programme guidance and operational documents posits that UNHCR and WFP outputs and activities – rations for general distribution, supplementary feeding, school feeding, water supply, income-generating activities, non-food item distribution – will produce short-term effects, intermediate outcomes and long-term impact.

- Short-term effects should include improved food security, increased access to livelihood opportunities, positive coping strategies, and asset building.
- Intermediate outcomes should include: improved nutrition, appropriate food basket, successful IGA's, agricultural activities and improved education.
- Long-term impacts should result in self-reliance, resettlement or repatriation.

### Results: Food Consumption & Food Security

WFP provided a stable supply of nutritionally balanced food rations throughout most of the period, saving lives, protecting refugees and reducing hunger and malnutrition. Although WFP faced some problems meeting delivery targets prior to 2008 – mostly resulting from transport inefficiencies and budget constraints due to insufficient donor commitment – adequate food energy consumption was in large part achieved and improved in the later years.

However, food insecurity intensifies for refugee families during the second half of the month. Single-member households have greater difficulty: fewer than 25% consume cereals throughout the month. Refugees are compelled to sell food rations to buy non-food items. Although UNHCR provides non-food items to refugees on arrival in the camps, insufficient budgets and inadequate targeting and prioritization constrain further distributions.

The degree and intensity of chronic food insecurity vary by refugee group and type of household. Approximately two thirds of Tigrigna households (one ethnic group from Eritrea) consume an acceptable diet (food consumption score), but fewer than one half of Kunama households (the other ethnic group from Eritrea) and fewer than one third of Somali households do. For these groups food consumption is 'borderline' or 'poor'. Somali refugees also use more frequent and severe coping strategies with 94% commonly limiting portion sizes and reducing the number of meals in the second half of the month. Tigrigna single-person households (mostly single men) use the "11/5" consumption system of 'brunch' in the late morning and an early evening meal.

**Results: Nutrition** Nutrition in children under 5 years has improved in recent years, largely through WFP and

UNHCR targeted interventions. Chronic malnutrition (underweight) amongst this group is negligible. Global acute malnutrition (GAM) and severe acute malnutrition (SAM) have gradually improved among Somali and Tigrigna refugees and have been close to or below WHO benchmarks since 2008 and 2007 respectively. However, stunting and SAM rates are unacceptably high among Kunama refugees, primarily due to inappropriate child feeding practices, which are not being addressed. The prevalence of anaemia has declined but is still above the WHO benchmark of 20% for children under 5 years. Its persistence is partly explained by inefficient consumption of corn-soya blend.

**Results: Livelihoods** Income-generating opportunities are limited and vary significantly across the camps and ethnicities and by sex. 82% of Kunama refugee households earn some income, compared to 52% in Tigrigna households and less than half of Somali households. Older generations are more successful than newer arrivals. Multi-person households fare better than single-person households. Among Eritrean refugees, both female headed households and male-headed households find paid work, but among Somali refugees opportunities are more pronounced for male-headed households (59%) than female (49%).

Among all refugee groups, only the Kunama (who traditionally farm) have access to small parcels of land through share-cropping. Day labour represents the most important income source for all refugees. Very few own animals other than chickens or businesses or engage in petty trade. Most businesses in and around the camps are owned by local residents. Remittances and other financial support are an important source of income for two thirds of Tigrigna refugees. This partly explains the relatively high food insecurity of Somali refugees, among whom only one tenth receive remittances.

Current programming does not include local integration as a potential durable solution, due to Ethiopian legal constraints and resource constraints. Livelihood programming has not attracted donors or been linked to the high profile and highly resourced Productive Safety Net Programme among communities surrounding some of the camps.

Both UNHCR and WFP have regarded resettlement and repatriation the two durable solutions. However, repatriation will not be possible for Eritrean or Somali refugees in the near future and only a very few refugees can be resettled. In addition, the long-term distribution of full rations, coupled with limited economic opportunities, has created a dependency syndrome that permeates all aspects of the programme.

**Results: Gender** Despite UNHCR's high quality and valued services in the camps, women and unaccompanied minors remain vulnerable, especially to sexual exploitation to support their food security. Food distribution committees and other camp structures mirror Eritrean and Somali social patriarchy and deny women a voice in decision making, despite women's household responsibilities concerning food management. Marriage is used as a food access strategy, though in different ways by the different refugee ethnic groups.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### Overall Assessment

The pathway for the Theory of Change (above) was never achieved because several assumptions were not met. Through the stable supply of nutritionally balanced food rations, the agencies achieved most of the short-term effects, but did not

move from saving lives, hunger mediation, security and protection to improved livelihoods and asset building.

The programme successfully realized half the intermediate outcomes. But refugees are not food secure throughout the month, have limited livelihood opportunities, and are not self-reliant. A major contributing factor is that UNHCR and WFP have not moved from a 'care and maintenance' approach. External factors, including Government of Ethiopia policies, resource constraints and refugees' will to resettle, contribute to perpetuation of this approach.

Long-term impact has not been achieved, except in the resettlement of a few, mostly Tigrigna, refugees. It is unlikely that refugees in camps will achieve durable solutions without significant policy and programme changes. Without large-scale investment in livelihood programming, UNHCR and WFP will simply be perpetuating chronic food insecurity in the hope that resettlement occurs sooner rather than later.

### Recommendations (long-term)

**Recommendation 1:** WFP and UNHCR should develop a livelihoods strategy, promoting policy and programme assistance that enables refugees to engage in legal economic activities, paid employment and private enterprise.

**Recommendation 2:** Donors should devote a larger proportion of resources to local durable solutions. UNHCR and WFP cannot promote durable livelihood solutions without donor support.

### Recommendations (medium-term)

**Recommendation 3:** Scale up the livelihood programmes.

**Recommendation 4:** WFP and UNHCR should improve collaboration and coordination for joint programming and funding activities, including advocacy activities.

**Recommendation 5:** Consider alternative food assistance modalities, such as food for work to broaden income opportunities and food for assets to combat environmental degradation and vouchers for single refugees.

**Recommendation 6:** Scale up environmental interventions that involve refugees and the host populations.

**Recommendation 7:** WFP should promote greater synergies in the implementation of other programme activities in communities near the camps.

**Recommendation 8:** UNHCR should be more strategic and transparent in NFI distributions, given budget shortfalls.

### Recommendations (immediate)

**Recommendation 9:** UNHCR should undertake a revalidation process in the older camps as soon as possible.

**Recommendation 10:** WFP should increase women's participation in the management of refugee committees.

**Recommendation 11:** WFP and UNHCR should intensify food distribution monitoring.

**Recommendation 12:** UNHCR should instigate activities to improve child feeding practices, implemented by NGO's and monitored by UNHCR.

**Recommendation 13:** WFP and UNHCR should explore alternative milling options.



### Reference:

Full and summary reports of the evaluation and the Management Response are available at:

[www.wfp.org/evaluation](http://www.wfp.org/evaluation)

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