

## Bi-weekly Operational Update: 16-31 August 2019

**Gambella officials conducted a study tour to Melkadida:** UNHCR and WFP facilitated the mission of a 17-member delegation from the Gambella Region to Melkadida, in the Somali Region, to provide an opportunity to showcase investments in the agricultural livelihoods, that have positively benefited the lives of refugees and host communities and fostered peaceful co-existence. UNHCR is implementing a variety of livelihoods projects in Melkadida, Somali Region, including in the agricultural sector where irrigation canals have been constructed for the cultivation of close to 500 hectares of land for the benefit of the Somali refugees in the region and their Ethiopian hosts.

Members of the delegation, drawn from the Office of the Regional President, the Regional Bureau of Agriculture, ARRA, UNHCR, WFP, as well as representatives of the Annuak and Nuer communities, were engaged in face to face discussions with relevant stakeholders and visited farms and irrigation sites in the different camps. The tour is believed to have helped the Gambella team and the Regional Bureau of Agriculture in particular to learn some lessons including on improving its irrigation programme, creating jobs for the youth in Gambella, as well as forming and working with cooperatives. It will also create a platform for the two regional bureaus to network and exchange ideas and experiences.

**Digital solutions to food distribution in Bambasi:** Within three hours 4,500 Sudanese refugees in Bambasi Camp, Benishngul-Gumuz Region, received for the first time their monthly food and cash entitlements using an innovative digital solution known as the Global Distribution Tool (GDT). The new system, which replaces the traditional manual voucher distribution, enhances the integrity of the process and increases efficiency. Refugees coming to collect their monthly food and cash assistance present their identity cards or proof of registration documents which are then barcode-scanned using a mobile phone before assistance is given right away. Following the pilot exercise in Bambasi Camp, UNHCR, ARRA and WFP intend to roll out the new distribution system across all 26 camps in Ethiopia.

**Relocation of South Sudanese refugees to Gure-Shembola Camp:** UNHCR, together with ARRA, IOM and PIE relocated 180 South Sudanese refugees from the Gambella Region to Gure-Shembola Camp near Assosa, sheltering 6,000 refugees. The refugees, who fled renewed hostilities in South Sudan's Maiwut County, first arrived in Gambella from which they were airlifted to Assosa and then road-transported to Gure-Shembola Camp where they have been issued with relief assistance and shelter.

**Distribution of aid items, rehabilitation of facilities:** UNHCR, through its partner Goal Ethiopia, distributed essential non-food aid items to 3,000 Ethiopian families in Kamashi Zone, Yaso Woreda and East Wollega Zone, Haro-Limu-Woreda. The families were previously displaced but have now returned to their places of origin. Similarly, UNHCR, in collaboration with its partner Mekane-Yesus, identified several local facilities for rehabilitation as part of the Agency's commitment to solutions. The facilities to be rehabilitated include three schools and two health posts. Moreover, UNHCR will support 7,500 school-age children from low-income, vulnerable families with school materials in preparation for the 2019-2020 school year in Ethiopia.