

ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY REGION)

1 March – 15 March



Eritrean refugees wait for a humanitarian aid distribution at Mai Aini camp in the Tigray region.

Key Developments

SUDAN

- Approximately 62,000 Ethiopian refugees have been recorded crossing into East Sudan as of 15 March.
- 41,181 refugees have been relocated from Hamdayet and Village 8 to Um Rakuba camp (20,572) and Tunaydbah settlement (20,609).
- In preparation for the rainy season, various flood mitigation activities are underway at Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah, including road improvement, drainage works, relocation of families and facilities at risk, awareness raising, and the construction of multipurpose evacuation centers for Persons with Special Needs when floods arrive.
- More than 8,000 emergency family shelters have been erected to date in Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah, as well as 12 communal shelters in Hamdayet.
- The presence of armed actors and tensions along the Sudan-Ethiopia border continues to be a concern for the safety of refugees and humanitarian operations at Hamdayet and Village 8 reception and transit sites.

ETHIOPIA

- On 5 March, the UN Refugee Agency High Commissioner Filippo Grandi [welcomed](#) the elimination of clearance requirements by the Ethiopian Government and noted improved access to Shire. The High Commissioner expressed hope to soon reach all those in need, including Eritrean refugees in Shiraro and other places.
- Following the Government's announcement that humanitarian agencies had been provided unfettered access in the Tigray region, from 8 March two UNHCR teams went on mission to Mekelle and Shire under the Government's new notification system for humanitarian access to Tigray to look at scaling up UNHCR activities for both refugees and internally displaced people in the two towns and surrounding areas. The deployment of additional staff to both locations is also underway. Additional resources are urgently required to support the necessary surge in humanitarian response as access opens up.



Ethiopia Response

The humanitarian situation across the Tigray Region remains deeply concerning for refugees, the internally displaced and host communities. Civilians have endured four months of conflict with extremely limited basic services and assistance, leading to a significant escalation in humanitarian needs with new displacement ongoing. The security situation remains volatile especially in rural areas, and in and around Shire, affecting civilians and constraining humanitarian actors on the ground. Basic services have gradually resumed in parts of Tigray; however, electricity and banking services remain intermittent.

With access restrictions lifted, UNHCR aims to reach those Eritrean refugees who have been dispersed by the conflict to areas of Tigray that have been so far inaccessible, as well as to significantly scale up IDP response operations while undertaking Protection, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster leadership responsibilities.

Eritrean Refugee Response

The Ethiopian government has announced the closure of the Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps. UNHCR is working with local authorities to identify land to support the potential relocation of 15,000-20,000 Eritrean refugees from the two camps.

As of 15 March, nearly 7,000 refugees from Hitsats and Shimelba had relocated to Adi Harush and Mai Aini camps either on their own or transported by the government from Shire. Refugees are receiving food and Core Relief Items upon arrival.

In Mekelle, Eritrean refugees from Hitsats and Shimelba camps continue to approach UNHCR, with 250 verified so far. UNHCR continues to provide protection counselling to refugees who have endured traumatic experiences and are in need of psychosocial support.



Protection: UNHCR is further increasing its staff presence in Debarq and Mai Tsebri for the refugee response at Mai Aini and Adi Harush and working on stepping up registration and protection services. UNHCR and partners are re-establishing protection assistance to support unaccompanied children, women and girls exposed to gender-based violence and psycho-social support to address the trauma that many have experienced.



Shelter: The relocation taskforce consisting of UNHCR, ARRA and key partners are looking to rapidly expand shelter and services at Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps to accommodate the newly relocating refugees. Nearly, 400 of 600 planned emergency shelters have been completed and 200 shelters have been occupied. NRC continues to erect shelters in all available identified spaces in both camps for an expected **600** emergency shelters to temporarily house approximately 3,000 refugees. An expected 15,000 refugees will be in need of shelter including some 1,300 who are already living in communal spaces such as schools. Without new land provided within a few weeks all shelters are expected to be fully occupied.



Food Security and Nutrition: Monthly food distributions have been organized with WFP, UNHCR and ARRA since December 2020. In February, some 13,600 Eritrean refugees in Mai Aini camp and 11,500 in Adi Harush camp received the monthly food assistance. All newly relocated refugees have received monthly food rations upon arrival from Shire.

On 4 March, UNHCR began building a prototype of a communal cooking space in Adi Harush. These cooking spaces will be covered with corrugated metal sheets and will be placed in locations in and around the emergency shelters in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps. Refugees will be able to build their traditional mud ovens or use simple wood burning stoves to cook their meals. This will ensure fire safety given that traditionally refugees cook in or close to shelters, whereas the current emergency shelters are composed of plastic sheeting and eucalyptus poles.



Water and Sanitation: UNHCR and partners are providing 14 litres per person per day in Mai Aini camp, where water systems are fully operational, and 11 litres per person per day in Adi Harush camp where the system has been partially restored.



Non-food items: All 7,000 newly relocated refugees have received Core Relief Items (CRIs) upon arrival to Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)



IDPs On 2 March, IOM released a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) [report](#) based on assessments carried out in December and January. **131,590 IDPs** (30,383 households) were identified to be displaced across 39 sites in Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions. 91,046 IDPs (20,530 households) were found in Tigray region, 6,453 IDPs (3,533 households) in Amhara region and 34,091 IDPs (6,320 households) in Afar region. These displacement figures do not reflect the total displacement in the Tigray situation, but the number of IDPs identified in the 39 sites that were accessible.



Eritrean refugees collect humanitarian aid at Mai Aini camp in the Tigray region.

According to the data from the interim government (Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs), there are currently between **78,000-85,000 IDPs in Mekelle**, mostly living with the host community. This figure includes 17,799 individuals living in nine collective centers.

In Shire: According to the local authorities, there were around **277,066 IDPs** sheltered in three sites and about **13,000 IDP new arrivals** mainly from West Tigray. Between 7-8 March, UNHCR organized a visit to several IDP sites in Shire to assess the living conditions and be able to provide an informed, coordinated response. With new IDPs still arriving in Shire, the situation is dire with many basic needs unmet, particularly food and

shelter. Access and security issues continue to present considerable challenges for the humanitarian community in Shire. Efforts to bring CRI and other humanitarian supplies to the area is also an ongoing challenge.

Interagency meetings on the IDP situation began at the onset of the crisis in Shire and have been steadily expanded and formalized into the six clusters and an Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). UNHCR is leading the overall coordination and three of the six clusters (CCCM, Shelter/NFI, Protection). All six clusters include government counterparts and high representation from the humanitarian community in Shire.

UNHCR protection monitoring team in **Mekelle** undertook an assessment of nine IDPs sites in Mekelle and one IDP site in **Adigrat**, assessing the living conditions of the IDPs, their major protection concerns, the situation of persons with specific needs and identified the basic needs of the IDP in both locations.



Shelter and Non-food Items: On 9 March, 2,000 Core Relief Item kits, including emergency shelter, were dispatched from Addis Ababa to Mekelle. These items will support the IDP relocation activities in **Mekelle** and **Adigrat**. Three sites have been identified and validated by the authorities and some 14,000 individuals are targeted for relocation. Host communities are also targeted for assistance. In **Shire**, there is an urgent need for core relief items. UNHCR plans to distribute core relief items for 1,000 families in **Mai Tsebri communal IDP sites** to be coordinated through the cluster system.



Camp Coordination and Camp Management: Given the end March deadline given by the authorities to find alternative locations for IDPs staying in schools, CCCM cluster, co-led by UNHCR and IOM, has assessed several potential sites in and around **Shire** that could become longer term sites for IDPs. Several sites have been submitted to the interim government for endorsement. Site planning is a joint effort led by CCCM with the participation of UNHCR, IOM and NRC.

UNHCR has produced the first IDP camp setting profiles sourced through direct UNHCR verified data. The profiles of three IDP sites in Shire (Secondary School, Aksum University and Embadanso Elementary School) have been produced to support the urgent relocation of people in these locations and are being coordinated through the interagency government led Relocation Task Force under the CCCM cluster.

Sudan Response

The influx of refugees from the Tigray region into Sudan has continued with less than 100 arrivals per day since January. Refugees continue to arrive mainly at Hamdayet transit center with fewer number of new arrivals to Village 8.

Relocation: Since 13 November, 20,572 refugees were relocated from Hamdayet and Abderafi border points, and Village 8 transit site to Um Rakuba – 70kms away from the Ethiopian border. **Um Rakuba** camp has reached full capacity and no further relocations will take place except for family reunification purposes.

On 3 January, UNHCR and partners began relocations to the new settlement, **Tunaydbah** – 136kms away from Gedaref town. By 24 February 20,609 refugees had been relocated to Tunaydbah from Hamdayet and Village 8.

Relocation to Tunaydbah settlement remains on hold since 24 February. Discussions are ongoing between UNHCR and local authorities about the total number of refugees that can be accommodated at Tunaydbah and the support requested to enable the government to provide policing services in and around the settlement.

In **Hamdayet and Village 8**, UNHCR and Commissioner for Refugees (COR) conducted two rounds of verification exercise with local authorities, partners, refugees, and host community leaders to identify the remaining actual population, which has been established to be lower than figures from the initial registration upon arrival. UNHCR and COR will revise the figures accordingly.

SECTOR UPDATES



Protection: In all locations, Protection desks have been established to provide information on legal issues, rights, and obligations of refugees and facilitate the registration process. Protection teams are identifying people at heightened risk, including pregnant women, persons with disabilities, unaccompanied children and older persons and referring them to specialized services as may be needed, including counselling and health services for survivors of gender-based violence.

In **Village 8**, a focus group discussion was held with women from the (Ethiopian) Kunama community to discuss relocation. Women and girls will also benefit from a planned distribution of hygiene kits.

UNHCR leads the **Gender-Based Violence (GBV) Sub Working Group (SWG)** coordinating the GBV multi-sectoral response in Gedaref State with UNFPA. The SWG was established at the onset of the emergency and members include key GBV service providers. GBV Referral Pathways have been developed and continue to be updated. They are translated for wider community dissemination. Key health services are available in all locations, including clinical management of rape (CMR). Case management services are established in both **Um Rakuba** camp and **Tunaydbah** settlement.



UNHCR holds focus group discussions with women and girls in Um Rakuba camp.

A rapid GBV assessment was conducted in December 2020 and informed initial programming for the emergency.

A second inter-agency assessment, coordinated by UNHCR, was conducted in February 2021. The assessment findings and recommendations inform sectoral risk mitigation interventions as well as continued strengthening of GBV prevention and response specialized programming. Women's Centers are established in both **Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah** where case management services are available and where activities are conducted. Outreach and awareness-raising is also conducted directly in the communities responding to requests for increased and direct communication.

Specific risks that have been identified by community members, particularly women and girls, include the lack of lighting in the camps, lack of safe access to cooking fuel and the lack of lockable shelters. Limited available livelihoods opportunities increase the risk of harmful coping mechanisms. The changing dynamics in the family, including gender roles, is also increasing tension and is a risk for intimate partner violence (IPV). The increased use of alcohol as a coping mechanism by men increases the risk of exposure to GBV in public and private spaces. Some barriers to reporting that have been identified include stigma, fear of being blamed and the community reaction, fear of the family reaction and physical violence as a consequence, religious reasons and a preference to resolve disputes through informal community-based mechanisms.

Capacity development has been conducted for GBV actors on various topics including case management, Caring for Child Survivors and Psychological First Aid. Capacity development, including coaching, will remain an ongoing priority activity to improve capacities and quality service provision. Additional priorities include increasing women's participation in community leadership positions and focusing on at-risk groups such as adolescent girls, as well as the engagement of men and boys on social norms change. Collaboration with the Women's Directorate and respective local governmental structures remains an ongoing priority.

The **Communicating with the Communities (CwC) Working Group** is led by UNHCR with COR and aims to enhance harmonization in information delivery, rationalization of resources and efficiency of the two-way communication approach. UNHCR conducted a data collection exercise, which was carried out through a multi-functional team and volunteers in **Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah**. The exercise focused on one thematic area of CwC to gather refugee feedback on methods of communication to inform future activities and the effectiveness of our communications moving forward.

UNHCR and COR have established community-based representation mechanism at Zone level. In **Um Rakuba**, each block is represented by committee members nominated by the community and diversified into age, gender and locations. The committee members are composed of block representative and assistant, while the rest are members with diverse backgrounds and experiences in health, education and other sectors. The number of committee members vary from block to another based on the refugee population.

UNHCR has also been working with OCHA on an Accountability to Affected Populations capacity building project since February.



Child Protection: *UNHCR and partners are working to scale up child protection programmes in the camps and Transit Centers, with a focus on psychosocial support, family tracing and reunification of unaccompanied and separated children, and referrals to support services.*

The **Child Protection Sub-Working Group** co-chaired by UNHCR and UNICEF has strengthened coordination and collaboration between child protection actors. A task force on Family Tracing and Reunification (FTR) and case management is currently working on updating the referral pathway for child protection, and standardized tools for FTR and case management.

Child protection actors have established Child Friendly spaces (CFS) in the camps and are providing psychosocial support to children. In **Um Rakuba**, Save the children, Plan International, and State Council for Child Welfare (SCCW), which is funded by UNICEF, have established and are operating CFS. In **Tunaydbah**, Save the children and IRC have opened CFSs, and psychosocial support programs targeting children, while Plan International will also establish a CFS and implement child protection programs.

The **State Council for Child Welfare (SCCW)** is leading the efforts on FTR for unaccompanied and separated children. This includes identification of UASC and receiving referrals from other actors and undertaking family training. Children are being reunified with families arriving subsequently to Sudan, and includes reunification with parents, and unification of unaccompanied children with relatives – placing them in kinship care. SCCW reported reunification/unification of more than 300 UASC with their families. UNHCR and partners are also working with the ICRC on restoring x-border family links for UASC.

In coordination with SCCW Social Workers, child protection actors are identifying alternative care for unaccompanied children, while assessing and monitoring spontaneously established family-based care arrangements. For older children who have been living independently prior to the conflict, UNHCR is advocating and supporting child protection actors to establish supervised independent living arrangement, with dedicated community-based mentoring support.

All child protection actors have established or are in the process of strengthening community engagement in child protection prevention and response. **Community-based child protection networks (CBCPN)** have been established and members have been trained. The CBCPN members support the identification and referral of children at risk, encourage and guide children's participation in CFS activities, and supporting FTR as well as identifying families to provide alternative care for unaccompanied children.

UNHCR and partner have undertaken a number of capacity building activities. These include training for UNHCR registration staff on persons with specific needs (PSN), joint training by UNHCR and UNICEF for SCCW case workers, and child protection partner training for staff, case workers, and community members on child protection, including child protection case management.



Education: UNHCR and UNICEF co-lead the refugee education response and bi-weekly coordination meetings, which are co-chaired with the Ministry of Education. An estimated 27% of the refugee population are children (age 0-17). Education Cannot Wait funding will provide for some semi-permanent classrooms including desks, teacher training, learning materials and WASH facilities but will not provide full coverage to meet the learning needs of all students in the camp (2.3 million out of the 7 million required).

UNHCR and UNICEF are working with the Ministry of Education on a roadmap for inclusion in the national system. The Ministry of Education has made a request to UNHCR to undertake construction and upgrading of host school classrooms. The request is being reviewed in coordination with UNICEF who recently undertook an assessment of host community schools to ensure that any support given complements the support being provided by UNICEF.

A multi-partner camp wide Education Assessment in both sites will give detailed information on preferences for language of instruction (Sudanese curriculum exists in both English and Arabic), estimation of number of children in each zone and details on their previous education levels in order to understand planning for the transition into the national system.

Support for tertiary students is being reviewed through discussions with the University of Gedaref, online university programmes and the creation of a connected youth centre. Resources are required to provide for scholarships for the students, as well as support the connected learning centres.



Health: UNHCR and partners continue to conduct temperature screenings, distribute soap at entry points, and sensitization of refugees on COVID-19 mitigation measures in Tigrayan language.

The Gedaref laboratory is now able to conduct free COVID-19 PCR tests for refugees - though limited to 10 tests per day. Hygiene promotion and soap distribution are ongoing through the WASH sector (250 g/person/month). UNHCR has procured additional masks to be distributed to refugees.

COVID 19 case management training for frontline health care workers involved in the response has been conducted. Both health and non-health staff were also sensitized on the use of PPEs.

COVID 19 surveillance is being enhanced through static, non-static facilities and community-based surveillance (through trained CHVs). Rapid Response teams (RRTs) have been identified and supported by WHO/MOH and deployed to the field to investigate every suspected case reported in the camps.

UNHCR has focused on management of an expected and estimated 95 per cent of cases likely to be asymptomatic or mild to moderate, while all efforts are made to support, where possible, referral hospitals to be able to care for critical cases. UNHCR through its partner ALIGHT is establishing COVID 19 isolation units in both refugee camps. Recruitment of staff and procurement of equipment is underway.

A planned **vaccination campaign for cholera and yellow fever** has begun on 10 March at all sites.

A mapping of community health workers to maximize services and available resources will be undertaken to avoid duplication. Referral services will need to be strengthened with the existing health systems, and a broader discussion with partners and Ministry of Health on the gaps and strengthening the care at health facilities.

MSF plans to construct a cholera treatment center in **Um Rakuba** and is discussing with COR on a suitable site.



Food Security and Nutrition: In **Hamdayet**, nearly 11,050 refugees benefited from the first WFP general food distribution that ended on 4 March, replacing the hot meals previously provided.



Water and Sanitation: In **Tunaydbah**, 212 emergency latrines have been constructed by partners bringing the ratio to 1:99. Some are already full and in the process of being decommissioned. The construction of new emergency latrines continues to meet the urgent needs of refugees including those relocated from Hamdayet and Village 8. WASH partners have collectively planned for 756 WASH blocks. Current water production is 20 l/p/d. Water trucking continues pending implementation of the distribution pipeline.

In **Um Rakuba**, 567 emergency latrines have been constructed, bringing the ratio to 1:36. Partners have started the construction of permanent shared household latrines. Water production ranges between 11.5 l/p/d and 15.8 l/p/d due to operational issues with the borehole which uses state electricity which is unreliable. New bladders have been installed for households who are being relocated within the camp as part of flood mitigation.



UNHCR family tents set up at Tunaydbah settlement / UNHCR, Desislava Ivanova

In **Village 8**, between 14.5 l/p/d and 21 l/p/d is delivered through water trucking from the water treatment plant. Poor drainage at bladders is leading to wastewater ponds and presence of mosquito larvae. Host community water treatment plant is not running effectively and 30% of households do not have access to water due to low pressure. UNICEF will rehabilitate the water plant. 44 emergency toilets and 39 showers are available; however, they are of poor quality and should be decommissioned. Partners will construct 50 permanent latrines.

In **Hamdayet**, UNICEF water treatment plant is now operational. Two distribution points have been located in the reception centre. COOPI has 5 bladders and continues to truck 64m³ day. Discussions with COR for permission to construct permanent latrines is ongoing. Emergency latrines need to be replaced before the rainy season. CARE has started solid waste activities.



Shelter and core relief items: Various flood mitigation activities are underway including road improvement, drainage works, relocation of families and facilities at risk, awareness raising, and the construction of ten multipurpose evacuation centers for persons with specific needs when floods arrive. Additional land is required for the eventual relocation of more refugees in Um Rakuba, currently under discussion with COR and the government.

Djibouti

There are no new arrivals from Tigray during the reporting period. Nearly 300 Tigrayan refugees have been registered since the start of the conflict.

Eritrea

There have been reports of refugees arriving and possible internal displacement along the border with Ethiopia, which cannot be verified as access to the border areas remains restricted.

Funding Overview

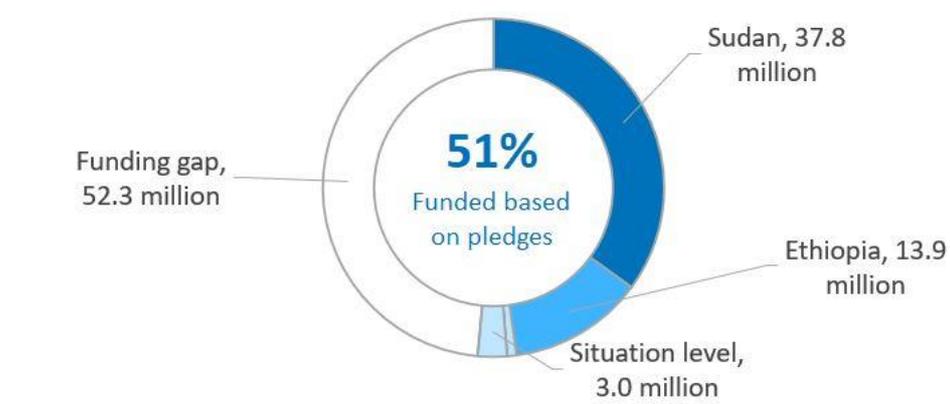
Funding Overview

Ethiopia Emergency Situation

As at: 16 March 2021

Financial requirements

2020	8.9 million
2021	99.0 million
Total	107.9 million



Contacts

Joyce Wayua Munyao-Mbithi, Senior Donor Relations Officer, Regional Bureau for the East, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region, Nairobi - munyao@unhcr.org

Mysa Khalaf, Reporting Officer, Regional Bureau for the East, Horn of Africa and Great Lakes Region, Nairobi - khalafm@unhcr.org