

ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY REGION)

4-8 December



A refugee family from Ethiopia sit in a shelter with their belongings at the Um Rakuba camp.

Key Developments

SUDAN

- *Nearly 50,000 refugees have now crossed into eastern Sudan – recent groups coming from areas deeper inside Tigray are weak and very fatigued, some saying they spent two weeks making their way to the border.*
- *Efforts to encourage refugees reluctant to move from Hamdayet border areas have been strengthened; nevertheless, many refugees are preferring to stay there waiting for relatives.*
- *Relocation of refugees from Village 8 to Um Rakuba camp has begun, following a request from authorities that people should be moved away from the border.*

ETHIOPIA

- *UNHCR remains deeply worried by unconfirmed reports of conflict directly affecting the Eritrean camps inside the Tigray region and resulting in casualties, including of refugees and aid workers, and possible forced return of refugees to Eritrea.*
- *Following the agreement signed between the government and the UN, there is still no effective access to persons in need across Tigray despite pronouncements by the government that “the active phase of the military operations are over”. UNHCR is preparing to provide assistance as soon as safe and unhindered access is obtained.*
- *UNHCR in collaboration with partners has so far been able to assist some 7,000 IDPS in Shire town with high energy biscuits and core relief items.*

UNHCR Response

Ethiopia

The humanitarian situation is deteriorating at an alarming rate in the Tigray region, more than a month into the conflict. Dire shortages of food, water, fuel and cash is heavily impacting the lives of 96,000 registered Eritrean refugees along with the growing number of internally displaced who continue to be at risk.

For nearly a month, UNHCR has had no access to the four Eritrean refugee camps in Tigray. With the communications blackout and no access, UNHCR has been unable to verify reports of attacks, abductions and forced recruitment at the Eritrean camps, nor the overall conditions in the camps.

With the signing of the agreement between the UN and the government on access to Tigray, UNHCR is part of the UN discussions with government on all aspects of launching a response to be able to reach those in need – including security and logistics. Supplies are ready to go pending the finalization of security assessments, which in the fluid context are imperative in order to proceed.

UNHCR continues to appeal to the federal authorities for unfettered access in order to reach the Eritrean refugees, many of whom have reportedly fled to safer locations within Tigray and other regions in Ethiopia. An estimated 4,000 have already arrived in Addis Ababa. UNHCR is providing support and developing a plan for an expanded urban refugee response.

UNHCR, WFP and the government counterpart ARRA continue ongoing discussions on logistics arrangements, distribution modalities and the need to conduct security assessment prior to proceeding with a food distribution. WFP has already repositioned the urgently needed food assistance.

In many areas across the region, civilians including humanitarian aid workers have been living for more than a month now with no electricity, running water, banking or communications.

Following an inter-agency assessment mission to the Afar region from 2-8 December, preliminary findings carried out during the mission indicate basic services, including shortage of medical supplies are among the immediate priorities of the newly displaced people.

In Shire, UNHCR together with partners have provided water, high energy biscuits, clothes, mattresses, sleeping mats, blankets, mosquito nets and kitchen sets to approximately 6,716 IDPs (2,426 families) residing in three location in Shire town.

Total New Arrivals From Ethiopia ¹

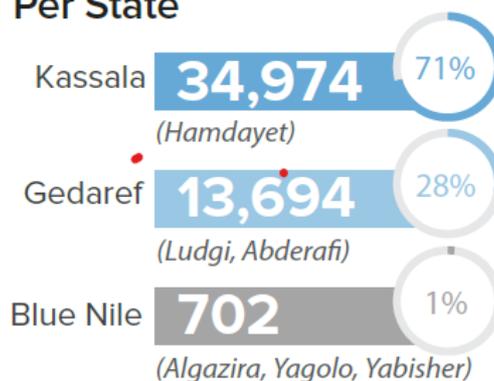


49,370

Individuals

¹ Since 7th of November 2020.

Per State



Sudan

The influx of refugees from the Tigray region into Sudan continues, reaching 49,370 by 8 December.

Refugees are arriving through the remote border locations of Hamdayet in Kassala State and Ludgi in Gedaref State. Since 6 December, the numbers have been trending downward to under 500 per day. Refugees report

having to avoid militia groups and military checkpoints in order to make their way to the border. Without access in Ethiopia we are unable to verify these reports.

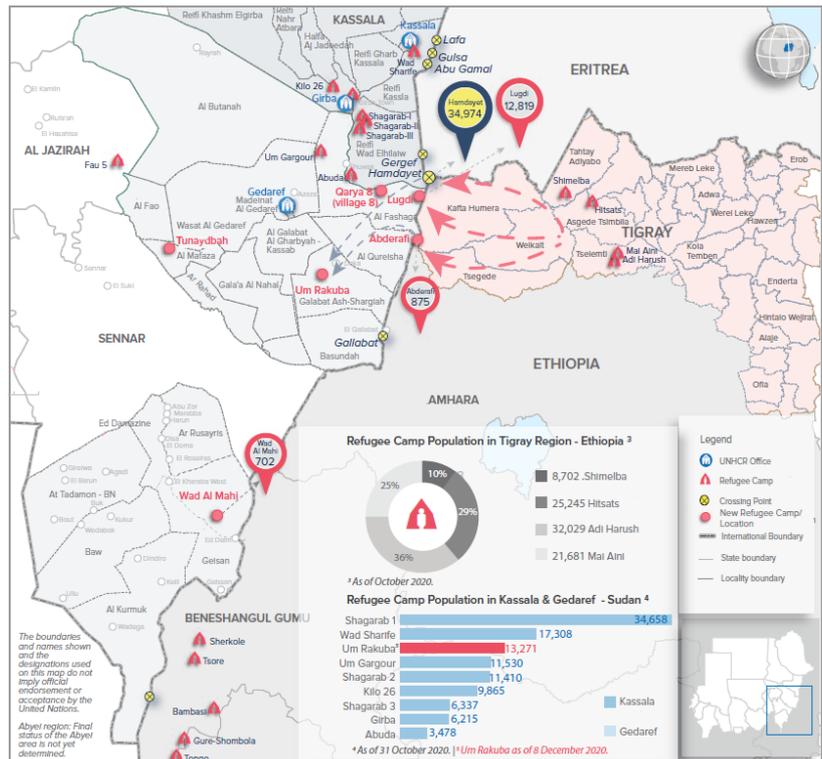
Some Eritrean refugees are among the more recent arrivals.

The government has informed UNHCR of some 500 Ethiopian families residing in a village located six kilometers away from Hamdayet town. Reportedly they are staying in the location because they have livestock and other possessions with them. UNHCR and government counterpart Commissioner for Refugees (COR) are assessing the security situation to visit the area.

Both reception areas in Hamdayet and Village 8 are still heavily congested with overall poor living conditions despite the arrival of humanitarian support and assistance. Gaps remain across all sectors including shelter, food, health and WASH. Refugees are also requesting support to help find separated family members.

Relocation: Since 13 November, 13,271 refugees have been relocated from Hamdayet, Abderafi and most recently Village 8 to Um Rakuba camp – 70 kilometres away from the Ethiopian border.

In Hamdayet, UNHCR and COR have held community discussions to raise awareness of the services provided at Um Rakuba camp that has seen some success. On 6 December, more than 1,000 were relocated to Um Rakuba from Hamdayet, an increase from previous days. The relocated refugees received water, breakfast and a packed lunch as well as masks and dignity kits.



Some refugees still prefer to remain near the border. The two main driving factors are to wait for family members and as many of them are farmers, and as it is the harvesting season, they prefer to be closer to their fields in case they can return soon.

In Village 8, on 4 December, local authorities informed UNHCR and COR that a decision has been made for the relocation of refugees to Um Rakuba camp. They have raised concerns over the possible security and public health risks for the host community around Village 8.

Relocation of refugees from Village 8 to Um Rakuba began on 8 December, with the first group of more than 200 people. UNHCR together with COR continue to organise the logistics for nearly 13,500 people to be relocated to Um Rakuba. An inter-agency reception task force has been created and a special zone has been set up at the camp for refugees from Village 8. UNHCR has enough tents in stock to meet the additional shelter needs and is providing family tents upon arrival.

Protection: At all sites, protection desks and additional protection monitoring by mobile teams continue to provide support to refugees with specific needs. The protection desks also provide information on legal issues, rights and obligations of refugees in country of asylum, and facilitate the registration process.

Family tracing and reunification services are ongoing though a need for more support is required, as many have been separated since the start of the conflict and have not had contact with family members.

An increasing number of persons with disabilities have approached the protection desk, requesting services, such as hearing aid, crutches or cash assistance.

Sexual and Gender Based Violence (SGBV): To mitigate risks of gender-based violence in the overcrowded transit centres, UNHCR and humanitarian partners continue to establish separate latrines for women and men and the installation of lighting in places hosting new arrivals. Meanwhile, systems to ensure necessary support to survivors of gender-based violence, including medical, psychosocial support and legal assistance have been established.

Child protection: UNHCR child protection desks with the support of Plan International continue to screen and identify unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and other vulnerable children and provide them with support and counselling. Rapid Best Interest assessment are being conducted with children being referred to foster care or group care arrangements with people the children knew and who they had travelled with during flight. There is a need to expand temporary group care arrangements in the new communal shelters until family-based care can be found, as more UASC approach the desks.

Specialized psychosocial support as well as shelter, core relief items, and clothing have been prioritized for foster families to ensure the children are safely accommodated and receive the care they need.

Efforts are being made to provide children with more child-friendly spaces to enjoy educational and recreational activities.



Ethiopian sisters and their cousin at Hamdayet transit centre in Sudan.

An inter-agency **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)** has been established due to the high risk of SEA in this environment. The taskforce will coordinate and implement PSEA activities with all sectors in the different sites.

Food: There is an urgent need to increase nutrition and food assistance at all sites. With support from WFP, hot meals and dry food rations have been distributed but it is difficult to keep up as the needs increase.

Health: Efforts continue to fill the gaps in shortages of health staff, medical supplies and medicines, as well as medical beds and ambulances. There is need for treatment for Tuberculosis and HIV across sites. There are shortages in diabetic medication. There is a need to establish a laboratory for diagnostic tests and solar power back-up for the clinics.

UNHCR and partners continue to conduct awareness sessions on COVID-19 prevention measures, as well as safe water chain and food handling.

Village 8 in Gedaref State: Refugees arriving at Lugdi are being transported by the Sudanese army to Village 8, further away from the border. The relocation of refugees to Um Rakuba has begun.

Protection: UNHCR protection help desk on site provides information on the process of relocation and the services provided at Um Rakuba; also inform refugees of legal and GBV issues, right and obligations of refugees in country of asylum, and facilitates the registration process. The refugee committee continue to encourage families to register to receive services and assistance.

UNHCR and COR assisted by the refugee committee identified persons with specific needs and the most vulnerable families will receive a distribution from a Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) distribution of 1,450 blankets, 1,000 food rations and 1,000 hygiene kits.

Core relief items: UNHCR, through COR, is distributing core relief items to new arrivals, including blankets, sleeping mats, soap and plastic sheets.

Food: 16,000 people received a one-month food ration in November from WFP including supplementary super cereals for pregnant and lactating women and children under five.

Health: MSF is providing support with primary healthcare at the clinic run by the Ethiopian refugee health team.

Nutritional screenings and identification for treatment continues for children under five years.

WASH: The high intensity of use of the main water station in the nearby village since the arrival of refugees has damaged one out of two water pumps. In agreement with local authorities, UNHCR is permitted to continue fill one water tank four times per day to provide water to the site. MSF with the support of UNHCR erected two water bladders and water chlorination of the water at the site.

WASH actors are looking into alternatives to water trucking to ensure sustainable access to water. Work on the existing water system and to extend the pipeline are ongoing.

Al Twaki, with the support of UNICEF, have built 30 latrines for the site.

United Peace Organization (UPO) established two hygiene committees to carry out awareness sessions on hygiene and sanitation reaching so far 400 people.

Hamdayet in Kassala State: Hamdayet remains overcrowded. Currently, nearly 22,000 people are at Hamdayet reception centre and in Hamdayet town residing with the host community.

Protection: The UNHCR protection help desk and mobile teams, with the support of Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) volunteers, continue to identify persons with specific needs and have referred 168 people to specialised services, these include pregnant women, people with disabilities, women at risk and other vulnerable people.

Family members continue to approach protection and ICRC-supported family tracing desk to inquire about missing family members. A need for more family tracing and reunification support is required at Hamdayet.

Child protection: Rapid Best Interest assessments continue at Hamdayet and an increasing number of unaccompanied and separated children have been placed in foster or group care; and reunited with families in Um Rakuba camp. There is a need to expand temporary group care arrangements in the new communal shelters until family-based care can be found. Relief items, shelter, clothing and specialised psychosocial support are being prioritised for foster families to ensure the children are safely accommodated and receive the care they need.

Plan International (PI) has enrolled nearly 400 children and provide educational and recreational activities along with distribution of clothes to the children. The child friendly corner has attracted a large number of children. There is an increasing need to establish more child friendly spaces.



UNHCR protection staff speaks with newly arriving refugees from Ethiopia

Food: Hot meals are being provided at Hamdayet reception centre by Muslim Aid with the support of WFP. Sabine Organisation (SO) has distributed food baskets and cooking pots to 280 vulnerable families.

Core relief items: UNHCR through COR continue distributing core relief items that include blankets, sleeping mats, soap and plastic sheets to the new arrivals.

Health: In Hamdayet, two state clinics continue to provide health services but are facing shortages of medicines, medical supplies, ambulances including urgent needs for a laboratory for diagnostic tests and solar power back up for use at night. Medical consultations at the clinics have observed diarrhea as the most common disease, followed by respiratory tract infections and malaria.

Mobile clinics are in place at the transit site to alleviate the caseload on the clinics. The Sudanese Organization for Research and Development (SORD) mobile clinic with the support of UNFPA have conducted 829 medical consultations and provided 50 women with clean delivery kits. SORD counsellors are also conducting psychological first aid sessions to nearly 100 people. MSF continues to operate a health screening desk by the Tekeze river.

The Ministry of Health (MoH) with the support of UNICEF conducted 289 consultations and nine nutritional screenings for children under five. They also provided nearly 200 pregnant women with iron and vitamin B supplements, while 35 lactating mothers received vitamin A supplements.

WASH: To maintain access to clean water Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) together with MSF Netherlands supply nearly 53,000 litres to the reception centre, nearby health facility and entry points. UNHCR is conducting daily water quality control. There is a need to increase the water quantity at Hamdayet to meet the needs of the refugees.

An increase in number of showers and handwashing facilities at the reception centre and a further 80 drop hole latrines have been installed.

UNHCR and partners have scaled up hygiene promotion awareness at the site to be aware of key public health risks.

Um Rakuba camp: The site is hosting 12,565 refugees as of 8 December. Infrastructure works continue to develop the site. Site planning and allocation of plots to families is ongoing.

To improve coordination and management at the site, UNHCR activated Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) working group, co-chaired by UNHCR and COR with the participation of all agencies and organisations operating in the camp.

Protection: UNHCR protection desk at the reception centre, providing new arrivals with a safe space to raise their protection concerns. UNHCR protection staff continue to identify persons with specific needs and provide support as well as facilitating access to services.

Protection teams continue to hold focus group discussions with women and men to have a comprehensive insight of their concerns and needs to enable humanitarian actors on the ground to provide a tailored response.

UNHCR is working with government counterparts ARC, COR and community leaders to set up gendered and sectoral sub-



A refugee family from Ethiopia register with UNHCR registration offer at the Um Rakuba camp.

committees, such as a women network and a community patrolling system in Um Rakuba camp. These structures should help identify and refer issues related to access to basic services especially for persons at heightened risk as well as lower security and protection risks. COR and the local police are willing to support and provide training on basic patrolling techniques.

In Um Rakuba, the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) began a one-time cash assistance programme, targeting all new arrivals with 850 households reached so far. Individuals received SDG 6,000 (100 USD) and families received SDG 12,000 (200 USD).

Child protection: In Um Rakuba, NRC is operating two primary schools from grade 1 to 8 with students from 6 to 13 years old. The schools operate in two shifts, using an informal curriculum and have already enrolled 1,100 children.

The MoH, supported by UNICEF, continue to operate a child friendly space for recreational activities like sports. Save the Children set up a mobile child friendly space for some 1,500 children; recreational activities range from drama, drawing, and sports.

There is a need for more child friendly spaces.

Shelter/core relief items: More than 2,000 family plots have been demarcated and 800 families have been allocated spaces. 500 tents were delivered, and the installation has started to relocate families from the communal shelters to the family tents.

UNHCR and World Hunger Help (WHH) through COR and SRCS distributed shelter and relief items that include plastic sheets, sleeping mats, blankets, jerry cans, clothes, shoes, mosquito nets, and hygienic products. From 25 November to 2 December some 1,500 families received these items.

SRCS, with the support of UNHCR, have installed a communal kitchen and distributed further shelter materials to 480 families.

UNDP is also installing nine solar stoves for cooking.

Food: Muslim Aid supported by WFP and WedCo prepare two hot meals per day although there is difficulty to sustain this as the numbers increase. WFP is providing one-month dry rations.

Health: One primary health care clinic near the camp, supported by Mercy Corps (MC), continues to provide health services to the refugees. MSF continues to run a health facility at the site. UNFPA has provided the clinic and facility with 100 delivery kits to prevent infections for women delivering outside the hospital. WHO has also provided emergency health kits, trauma kits and a cholera kit to the clinic.



The MoH, with the support of UNICEF, conducted 660 nutrition screenings with children under five years.

A refugee from Ethiopia makes tea for her family outside their temporary shelter at the Um Rakuba camp.

WASH: WASH interventions continue at the site. UNCHR is providing clean water through trucking to meet drinking and domestic needs; nearly 89,200 litres, using water containers provided by UNICEF. The MoH, with the support of WHO, is conducting water quality control.

As the number of arrivals are expected to increase from Hamdayet and Village 8, the need to improve WASH at Um Rakuba is a priority. Preparations are ongoing to construct a water supply distribution system to replace water trucking; IOM completed the platform for the installation of a 40,000 litres storage tank and the partial excavation of 1,649 metres of trench for the pipeline.

SRCS have installed 40 communal shower units. IOM completed the excavation of pits for two ventilated improved pit (VIP) latrines at both primary health centres. WASH partners are installing at the health facility and school gender segregated latrines.

Distribution of soap and masks continue.

Interagency Coordination

In Sudan, the Refugee Working Group (RWG) in East Sudan is the main coordination forum for the emergency response, while the Refugee Consultation Forum (RCF) provides coordination at national level. A RWG sub-group has been established in Gedaref to facilitate coordination of efforts at Village 8 and Um Rakuba. COR and UNHCR co lead the refugee response which includes NGOs and line ministries. [The Inter agency Refugee Response Plan](#) launched on 27 November 2020 guides the response. It calls for \$147 million for 30 partners to meet the needs of up to 100,000 refugees for a period of 8 months.

Djibouti

No arrivals have been reported in Djibouti.

An inter-agency contingency and response plan has been finalized and submitted to humanitarian partners for their review.

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 is restricted. Contingency and response plans are being finalized under the leadership of the Resident Coordinator.

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