

Tigray Situation Update

3 March 2021



Emergency shelter in Mai Aini refugee camp in Tigray region. © UNHCR/ Edward Leposky.

Background

On 4 November 2020, military confrontations between federal and regional forces in Ethiopia's Tigray region, which borders both Sudan and Eritrea, led the Government to declare a State of Emergency. Since then, and despite the announcement of an official end to military operations at the end of November, Ethiopia's Tigray region has continued to be affected by armed clashes and insecurity, with a serious impact on access and the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs).

Due to the conflict, UNHCR and partners were forced to relocate most of their staff from the Tigray region in November 2020. Only a limited number of critical staff remained in the areas affected by the conflict. With limited access to cash, fuel and food, their operational capacity was severely hindered. This led to a drastic halt in the delivery of services to Eritrean refugees.

While access to Adi-Harush and Mai Aini refugee camps was regained since the beginning of the year, and some 30,000 Eritrean refugees sheltered in both camps have been receiving their monthly food rations since December, UNHCR and partners have still not been able to access Hitsats and Shimelba camps since November. By many accounts, conflict in and around these two camps has led to the flight

of most, if not all the refugees, to other locations within Tigray, many of them still inaccessible for humanitarians, as well as to other regions of Ethiopia.

On 23rd January, Ethiopia's Government officially announced their decision on the closure of Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps and initiated the process of relocating the refugees who had fled those camps to Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps. Most of these refugees had endured a dire lack of basic needs and experienced high levels of trauma. As of 2nd March, 5,810 refugees had relocated and some 1,100 refugees have registered in Shire with ARRA, the Ethiopian Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs, to be relocated. Planning estimates suggest that a total 15,000 refugees may arrive to Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps in the next few weeks.

The number of newly internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Tigray, as well as those who have moved to Afar and Amhara regions of Ethiopia, grew steadily since the start of the conflict. OCHA and the Clusters indicate initial estimates for humanitarian planning figures at 521,200 newly internally displaced people, mainly concentrated around in Tigray (493,300), together with 23,680 in Afar and 3,850 in Amhara region. At the same time, to date 61,011 individuals have sought safety in Eastern Sudan from Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is home to **177,996** Eritrean refugees across the country, equal to 22% of the total refugee population in Ethiopia of 801,349. Before the conflict erupted in the Tigray region in November 2020, UNHCR had registered 96,223 Eritrean refugees in the Tigray region, sheltered mainly in four refugee camps in the western part of the region: Mai-Aini (21,682), Adi-Harush (32,167), Shimelba (8,702 refugees) and Hitsats (25,248).

There were also 8,424 refugees residing in the Tigray region benefitting from the Government's Out of Camp Policy, allowing refugees to live in communities. The remaining Eritrean refugees outside Tigray lived predominately in the Afar region (approximately 51,800) and in the capital Addis Ababa (approximately 30,722).

In Tigray, UNHCR has a Sub-Office in Shire as well as a Field Office in Mekelle, where the Agency is scaling up its presence to meet the current protection and humanitarian needs of refugees and IDPs. Furthermore, UNHCR has recently set up a temporary operational hub in Debark and an operational presence in Mai Tsebri to support the re-establishment of services in Mai Aini and Adi Harush refugee camps and to build up capacity to contribute to efforts to assist IDPs in Tigray and Amhara regions.

Operational response

Refugee response



PROTECTION

- In Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush refugee camps, protection and other critical services are gradually resuming. UNHCR's individual reception, counselling and registration services have reopened, while registration teams are working with ARRA in order to shortly commence updating records (deaths, marriages, and births), providing documents to those who may have lost

them during the conflict, and putting in place the Global Distribution Tool to be used for food distribution.

- Assessments on child protection and SGBV have been conducted and NRC and IRC are scaling up their services.
- NRC child protection team completed cash distributions to all caregivers of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps, as well as to all their social workers, paying the incentive payments for November and December, when both camps were still inaccessible.
- In order to strengthen community structures and improve communication with communities in the camps, ARRA has led a large-scale election process for the Refugee Central Committees (RCC) in Adi Harush and Mai Aini camps, with UNHCR as observer. The process has started with election of zonal leaders who form the ‘parliament’ and will culminate in the RCC election.



SHELTER

- The inter-agency shelter assessment conducted in Mai Aini and Adi Harush (31 Jan – 7 Feb) reviewed all communal space available and available land for building transitional shelters in both camps. It was reported that 170 acres or 67.5 hectares of additional appropriate land would be required for settling the estimated potential relocated population of 15,000 individuals.
- Following the shelter assessment, emergency shelter construction started in Mai Aini and Adi Harush on 16th February, with around 446 emergency shelters in varying stages of completion in both camps. It is expected that some 500 emergency shelters can be constructed by NRC in the coming weeks in the already identified available land in both camps.
- All relocated persons received Core Relief Items (CRIs) and food rations shortly after arrival.



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- NRC is initiating the construction of communal latrines in the compounds of the NGOs Development and Interchurch Aid Commission (DIDAC) and ZOA in Mai Aini camp, as well as in areas around the emergency shelters in Adi Harush camp.
- All relocated persons received Core Relief Items (CRIs) and food rations shortly after arrival.



FOOD SECURITY

- Eritrean refugees in Adi-Harush camp are currently receiving February food supplies through the joint delivery by the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP), the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) and Ethiopia’s Agency for Refugees and Returnees Affairs (ARRA).
- Spots for communal cooking spaces have been designated in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps. These communal cooking spaces will be placed in locations in and around the emergency shelters, with corrugated metal sheeting to shield areas where refugees can build their traditional mud ovens or use simple wood burning stoves to cook their meals.

IDP response



PROTECTION

- An UNHCR team led by the Assistant Representative (Protection) was on mission to Mekelle from 11 to 17 February to determine the level of scaling up of UNHCR's Mekelle office to meet the protection and humanitarian needs of refugees and IDPs; verify the number of refugees reported to be in Mekelle; engage with officials planning and coordinating the humanitarian response in Tigray, as well as with donors and partners; and to provide support to staff who have been in Mekelle since the beginning of the law enforcement operation in the region.



SHELTER AND WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- In Mai Tsebri, according to zonal authorities there are about 24,000 individuals in the area, with many thousands of these IDPs hosted in a communal site in Mai Tsebri town. UNHCR, NRC and the authorities visited the communal sites on 16 February, noting the important basic and urgent needs, such as food assistance, WASH and health services, core relief items (CRIs), as well as protection for the most vulnerable.
- The team also visited IDP sites around Mekelle town, where some 12,000 IDPs are currently residing in schools. As these are education facilities that need to be vacated to regain their initial purpose, UNHCR, together with partners, is active in a local government led relocation task force to identify alternative locations to shelter this population.



COORDINATION

- In Shire, while the interagency meetings concerning the IDP situation started from the outset of the crisis, on 4th November, it has steadily expanded and formalized into the 6 clusters, as well as into the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). The latter has been sitting regularly (sometimes on a daily basis), with UNHCR leading the coordination for all partners and moving from the refugee coordination model to a focus on the IDP response and clusters. Three of the six clusters are led by UNHCR (CCCM, Shelter/NFI, Protection), and all the 6 clusters include Government counterparts and high representation from the entire humanitarian community active in Shire.
- In Mekelle, UNHCR is represented in various inter-agency coordination fora – ECC, ICCG, Access working group, Shelter/Non Food Items(NFI), Gender Based Violence/Child protection, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) sub-clusters, in order to ensure a protection lens in planning for the sectoral response.
- In Mai Tsebri, weekly coordination meetings have been taking place since Friday 19th February with the participation of some 15 partners, including NGOs, UN agencies and all relevant governmental sectors.

Issues and Challenges

- The majority of roads to and within the Tigray region **remain inaccessible**. So far, this has posed serious challenges to the delivery of assistance by humanitarian actors.
- In Shire, ongoing insecurity is significantly constraining humanitarian assistance to refugees and internally displaced persons.
- Shelter for the newly relocated refugees in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps remain a concern. Without new land, within approximately 3 weeks all shelters will be fully occupied, including the 500 emergency shelters (under construction) and all existing communal shelters which are already full. UNHCR and ARRA urgently are looking for additional land that might be made available to host relocated refugees.
- In the meantime, UNHCR and ARRA are working on the identification of potential additional space and shelter solutions to host relocated refugees in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps.

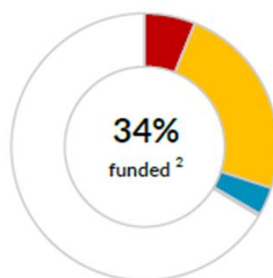
Ethiopia Emergency Situation Funding Update

(as of 23 February 2021)

The [UNHCR Regional Appeal for the Ethiopia Emergency Situation \(Tigray\)](#) covers the period January to June 2021 and highlights needs of approximately \$99 million for Ethiopia and Sudan. Ethiopia's needs within the appeal amount to \$49.7 million (\$32.3 million for refugee response and \$17.4 million for IDP response*. The overall appeal is currently 34% funded. UNHCR Ethiopia would like to express its thanks to funding received for Ethiopia specifically from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), ECHO and the Government of Japan, alongside situation level funding from Finland and Private Donors.

\$99.0 million

UNHCR's financial requirements 2021 ¹



■ Tightly earmarked
■ Earmarked
■ Softly earmarked (indicative allocation)
■ Unearmarked (indicative allocation)
 Funding gap (indicative)

**These needs will also be reflected in the larger Ethiopia Humanitarian Response Plan 2021 and Country Refugee Response Plan 2021*

CONTRIBUTIONS³ | USD

| | ■ Unearmarked | ■ Softly earmarked | ■ Earmarked | ■ Tightly earmarked | Total |
|---|----------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-------------------|
| United States of America | - | - | 12,330,000 | - | 12,330,000 |
| European Union | - | - | - | 2,799,989 | 2,799,989 |
| Finland | - | 2,389,486 | - | - | 2,389,486 |
| UNO-Fluechtlingshilfe | - | 866,882 | - | - | 866,882 |
| United Kingdom | - | - | 810,811 | - | 810,811 |
| Latter-day Saints Charities | - | - | - | 172,200 | 172,200 |
| Other private donors | - | 110,600 | - | - | 110,600 |
| Sub-total | - | 3,366,967 | 13,140,811 | 2,972,189 | 19,479,968 |
| Indicative allocation of funds and adjustments ⁶ | 266,768 | (5,277) | 10,467,291 | 3,127,053 | 13,855,835 |
| Total | 266,768 | 3,361,691 | 23,608,101 | 6,099,242 | 33,335,802 |

Methodology: Unearmarked funding is allocated and reallocated multiple times during the year to allow UNHCR to fund prioritised activities. This funding update includes an indicative allocation of funds so as to accurately represent the resources available for the situation. The contributions earmarked for the Ethiopia Emergency shown above are combined with an indicative allocation of the softly earmarked and unearmarked contributions listed below. This allocation respects different levels of earmarking. Adjustments relate to programme support costs and carry-over.

■ OTHER SOFTLY EARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS⁴ | USD

Denmark 2.9 million

Education Cannot Wait | IGAD | Ireland | Netherlands | Private donors

■ UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS⁵ | USD

Norway 80 million | Sweden 66.9 million | Netherlands 36.1 million | Denmark 34.6 million | Germany 22.1 million | Switzerland 16.4 million | Ireland 12.5 million | Belgium 11.9 million

Algeria | Armenia | Canada | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Luxembourg | Malta | Monaco | Montenegro | New Zealand | Portugal | Republic of Korea | Saudi Arabia | Singapore | Thailand | Turkey | Uruguay | Private donors

Notes:

- The financial requirements of the Ethiopia Emergency include requirements in Ethiopia and Sudan.
- The percentage funded (34%) and total funding amount (\$33,335,802) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of \$65,655,754 representing 66% of the financial requirements.
- Contributions to the Ethiopia Emergency are shown by the earmarking modality as defined in the Grand Bargain.
- Due to their earmarking at a related region, sub-region, country or theme, the other softly earmarked contributions listed are those which can potentially be used for the Ethiopia Emergency. Where a donor has contributed \$2 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.
- Contributed without restrictions on its use, unearmarked funding allows UNHCR critical flexibility in how best to reach refugees and other populations of concern who are in the greatest need and at the greatest risk. Where a donor has contribution \$10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.
- Includes an adjustment for generous contributions from Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom that were received and acknowledged in 2020, but that can be used in 2021, thereby increasing the funds available to the Ethiopia Emergency Situation in 2021.

Ethiopia operation: Tigray presence

(as of February 2021)



CONTACTS

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LINKS

[Ethiopia Data Portal](#)

[Ethiopia Situation – Tigray Emergency Situational Page](#)

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