

Northern Ethiopia **Update**

December 2021



The 54 Protection Desks set up in IDP sites in Shire, Mekelle, Sheraro, Adwa, Adigrat and Adi Daero towns continuously receive queries from refugees and displaced population in need of services. @UNHCR / Olga Sarrado

Background and key developments

Over one year into the conflict, the overall security situation in Northern Ethiopia remains complex and fluid, hindering effective delivery of lifesaving assistance to the most affected populations, including refugees and internally displaced people. The conflict spread into Amhara and Afar regions in October 2021, and on 2 November a nation-wide State of Emergency was declared. The conflict in the three regions of Northern Ethiopia (Tigray, Afar and Amhara) has led to the internal displacement of well over 3 million people, with displacement continuing to occur on a daily basis across the region, and 9.4 million people are in urgent need of food and other aid.

UNHCR's presence has been scaled up in Amhara and Tigray regions. In Amhara region, in addition to the Field Office in Debarke, a coordination hub has been set-up in the regional capital Bahir Dar. Three response teams have been deployed to Gondar, Bahir Dar and Debre Birhan to better assist new IDPs arriving daily. In Tigray region, UNHCR has Sub-Offices in Shire and Mekelle. To strengthen the emergency response, UNHCR has since August 2021

opened five field units in Abi-Adi, Adigrat, Maichew, Sheraro and Axum. UNHCR also has a Field Office in Semera, in the Afar region.

However, UNHCR and partners are facing severe challenges that are negatively impacting their ability to work and deliver assistance in the midst of the volatile security situation, lack of unhindered access, scarcity of cash and fuel, and limited electrical power and telecommunication services. This situation has further worsened in preceding weeks, as operations were severely hindered due to the lack of fuel preventing the implementation of some planned activities.

Displacement figures

According to regional authorities, the conflict has displaced over 1.8 million people in the Tigray region, more than 1 million people in the Amhara region and 334,196 in the Afar region with daily displacement.

Operational response

Refugee response

Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps, Tigray region

- From 19 to 23 October, 24,843 individual refugees benefitted from the monthly food ration provided by UNHCR and WFP in both camps. Also, 8,000 refugee households received core relief items (CRIs) consisting of sleeping mats, blankets and soap. Additionally, 600 households in Adi Harush camp and 688 in Mai Aini camp received WASH CRIs comprised of laundry and body soaps, plastic buckets, jerricans, and washbasins. Sanitary napkins were also distributed to 6,352 girls and women in both camps.
- Substantial shortage of medicines remains a significant challenge, despite some quantities delivered by Medical Teams International (MTI) and the Ethiopian Pharmaceuticals Supply Agency (EPSA).
- Lack of water supply continues in the two camps where refugees survive by collecting water from the river or purchasing it from local sources as water trucking by partners has been hampered due to lack of fuel in the area.
- 20 Eritrean refugees from Mai Aini camp self-relocated to Dabat (Alemwach site) in the Amhara region and UNHCR has supported the relocation of five Eritrean asylum-seekers to the two camps (Mai Aini and Adi Harush).

Barahle and Aysaita camps, Afar region

- The Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) has resumed its presence in the Barahle refugee camp and partner staff are gradually returning to resume the implementation of their respective programs.
- At the end of October, 21,000 refugees living in the Barhale camp received three-month food rations (July to September) through cash assistance. Distributions had been delayed because of insecurity coupled with difficulties to access banks. The partner GOAL Ethiopia distributed nutritional food to 1,568 beneficiaries under blanket and therapeutic feeding programmes.
- Two-month food distribution through cash assistance was also completed for the 24,818 refugees living in the Aysaita camp, covering September and October. Planning is underway to distribute food rations through cash in the two camps.

- Out of the 62 Eritrean refugees (30% children and 40% female) who departed from the Aysaita camp at the end of October, 52 were successfully relocated to Debat in the Amhara region.

Alemwach refugee site (Debat), Amhara region

- The total number of verified refugees in Debat stands at 377 individuals.
- In Alemwach refugee site, UNHCR partner Innovative Humanitarian Solutions completed the construction of 20 showers, 20 latrines and five water points. Four community hangars have been constructed to date while another two are at the final stages of completion
- UNHCR and RRS organized a two-day joint workshop on refugee law and international protection in Bahir Dar, 45 participants were present, including the RRS Deputy director and representatives from the local authorities and peace and security offices of Debark and Debat.
- UNHCR is working with RRS to identify the number of students among the refugee population in Debat to ensure access to education. RRS is currently negotiating with the community school for the admission of these refugee students.

Out-of-camps refugees in Tigray

- UNHCR verified some 2,000 registered refugees who reside among the host communities in Mekelle, Shire, Sheraro and Adigrat. Out of the refugee population who lived in the former camps of Hitsats and Shimelba, 7,643 remain unaccounted for. Due to the lack of access to basic assistance and protection services, refugees residing outside of camps face increasing difficulties in meeting their basic needs, such as shelter, water and food.
- UNHCR, in collaboration with RRS in Addis Ababa, will continue with the biometric verification of refugees in the Tigray region. UNHCR is working with the refugee community to encourage other refugees to come forward for biometric verification.

Addis Ababa

- Around 30,000 Eritrean refugees have self-relocated to Addis Ababa, including some 9,000 from Hitsats and Shimelba camps since the beginning of the conflict. 14,266 Eritrean refugee households of 17,172 individuals have been registered for residence in Addis Ababa. All registered refugees who self-relocated have been verified and provided with adequate documentation in Addis Ababa. It allows them to reside in Addis Ababa for 3 years. Also, the verification and documentation exercise has been extended to self-relocated refugees from Mai Aini and Adi Harush.
- Cash assistance has been provided to 14,314 individuals to date.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDP) Response



PROTECTION

- UNHCR has strengthened its response and deployed teams in Gondar, Debre Birhan, and Bahir Dar, Amhara region, where the UNHCR protection team has been set up and UNHCR also leads the Protection Cluster. UNHCR also leads the sub-regional Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG) On behalf of OCHA.
- The Tigray Statistics Agency (TSA) with the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSA) completed the enrolment of IDPs in over 60 IDPs centers in Adwa, Shire and Sheraro. UNHCR is advocating for a partial release of the enrolment data for humanitarian planning purposes. The enrolment is ongoing in Debre Birhan and Bahir Dar with UNHCR technical support.

- So far, 2,519 queries were received from which 1,036 referrals have been made to specific services from the 54 protection desks set up by UNHCR and partners in IDP sites in Shire, Mekelle, Sheraro, Adwa, Adigrat and Adi Daero towns. UNHCR is currently training the Bureau of Women Children and Social Affairs staff to operate in UNHCR Protection Desks in Debre Birhan and Bahir Dar in the Amhara region. Protection desks are also used as Return Help Desks in all IDP sites to assist the return counselling process.
- Given the pressure to reopen schools, over 16,000 IDPs from 16 sites have been evicted by zonal authorities from schools throughout Tigray. The Advocacy Paper on Prevention of Forced Eviction drafted by the Protection and CCCM Clusters shared with the Area Humanitarian Team encourages local authorities to ensure voluntariness, informed consent and movement in safety and dignity during relocation to other sites in the region. The paper also promotes access to shelters and services in the new sites.



CAMP COORDINATION AND CAMP MANAGEMENT (CCCM)

- UNHCR CCCM partners, jointly with WFP and local authorities, registered 33,333 vulnerable individuals from 18 IDP sites in Shire town managed by UNHCR and IOM for targeted urgent food assistance through WFP. Food distribution took place in November.
- More than 400 scabies cases have been reported across all IDP sites in Shire and Mekelle. UNHCR health partners provided medicine to all confirmed cases, launched awareness sessions and distributed additional soaps in the concerned sites.
- UNHCR CCCM partner Organization for Social Services, Health and Development (OSSHD) assessed the protection situation of IDPs evicted from primary schools in Abi Adi, Axum and Adwa, and relocated 2,489 households in the secondary schools in Aksum.
- The CCCM Cluster was activated in Bahir Dar and Debre Birhan in November. UNHCR co-facilitated several trainings organized by IOM for local authorities and partners to build capacity in camp management.



SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS (NFI)

- After opening additional warehouses in Gondar, Debre Birhan and Bahir Dar in Amhara to support response efforts, UNHCR distributed more than 18,000 core relief items (CRI) including, sleeping mats, blankets, laundry soaps, solar lamps, mosquito nets and plastic buckets to IDPs in the three regions.
- In Motta IDP site, Bahir Dar, 179 vulnerable IDP households of 579 individuals received CRIs.
- Dessie and Kombolcha (Amhara Region): In collaboration with Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), UNHCR distributed CRIs to 5,000 households. This distribution which started in October was suspended due to security concerns but was finalized end of November.
- In Debark town, Northern Amhara, 935 households (1,515 individuals) received standard NFI packages comprising plastic sheet, blanket, bucket, jerrycan, kitchen set, soap and sleeping mat. Also, UNHCR erected 85 tents out of the 200 planned for IDP families.
- In Shire, North Western Tigray, 4,579 NFI kits were distributed to 2,333 new IDP families living in overcrowded facilities in remote locations through UNHCR's partners.
- In Afar, 1,000 solar lamps were delivered to the Afar Regional Disaster Prevention Food Security Program Coordination Office (DPFSPCO) for distribution to the most vulnerable IDP households.

**GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE (GBV)**

- In Shire, 1,000 IDP women received dignity kits. UNHCR partner IHS conducted awareness-raising sessions for 607 IDPs (including 344 female) on GBV, environmental and personal hygiene, and identification of most vulnerable people for protection assistance.
- UNHCR and UNFPA held 19 sessions of community dialogue on GBV prevention and mitigation in Amhara (West Armachio, Debat, Debark and West Gondar zones) to 379 participants including 146 females.
- GBV pocket guides on survivor support for non-GBV actors were made available in English, Amharic, and Tigrinya in Mekelle to be distributed by the Regional PSEA Network Coordinator (UNHCR).
- 63 GBV cases have been reported to UNHCR partners and referred to the hospital.

**CHILD PROTECTION (CP)**

- 3,656 children (including 1,710 girls) received mental health and psycho-social services by participating in supportive child-friendly spaces and receiving basic individual support by partners' community workers throughout Tigray (Mekelle, Maichew, Adigrat, Adwa, Axum, Abi Adi, Adidaero, Endabaguna, Shire and Sheraro).
- 1,295 community members (including 685 women) were reached with Child Protection communication messages. They were also trained to identify, prevent and respond to child protection cases at Shire, Axum, Adwa, Adidaero and Sheraro.
- During the enrolment exercise in Mekelle, 600 unaccompanied children were identified and are hosted in El Shadai IDP site to receive specific services.
- As part of the school reopening campaign, 1,967 IDPs were reached through leaflets, mass communication campaigns and community discussions. School materials were also distributed in Tigray and Amhara regions to support children.
- In Axum, 13 children with specific needs were referred to service providers and five (5) separated children suffering from acute malnutrition were referred to Save the Children. They were provided with food and nutrition aid.

Issues and Operational challenges

- On 22 November, UNDSS recommended the immediate evacuation of all eligible family members of internationally-recruited staff from Ethiopia to their home or third-party countries to be completed no later than 25 November 2021.
- UNHAS flights to Mekelle, suspended since 22 October, resumed on 24 November

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