

REGIONAL REFUGEE PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE PLAN FOR THE ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY)

November 2020 to June 2021



Cover photograph:

"It's hot here but we still play outside. I'm going to the school here and I love learning to read." An Ethiopian refugee girl stands outside her family shelter at Um Rakuba camp in Al Qadarif state, Sudan. © UNHCR/Will Swanson

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PLANNED RESPONSE

115,000

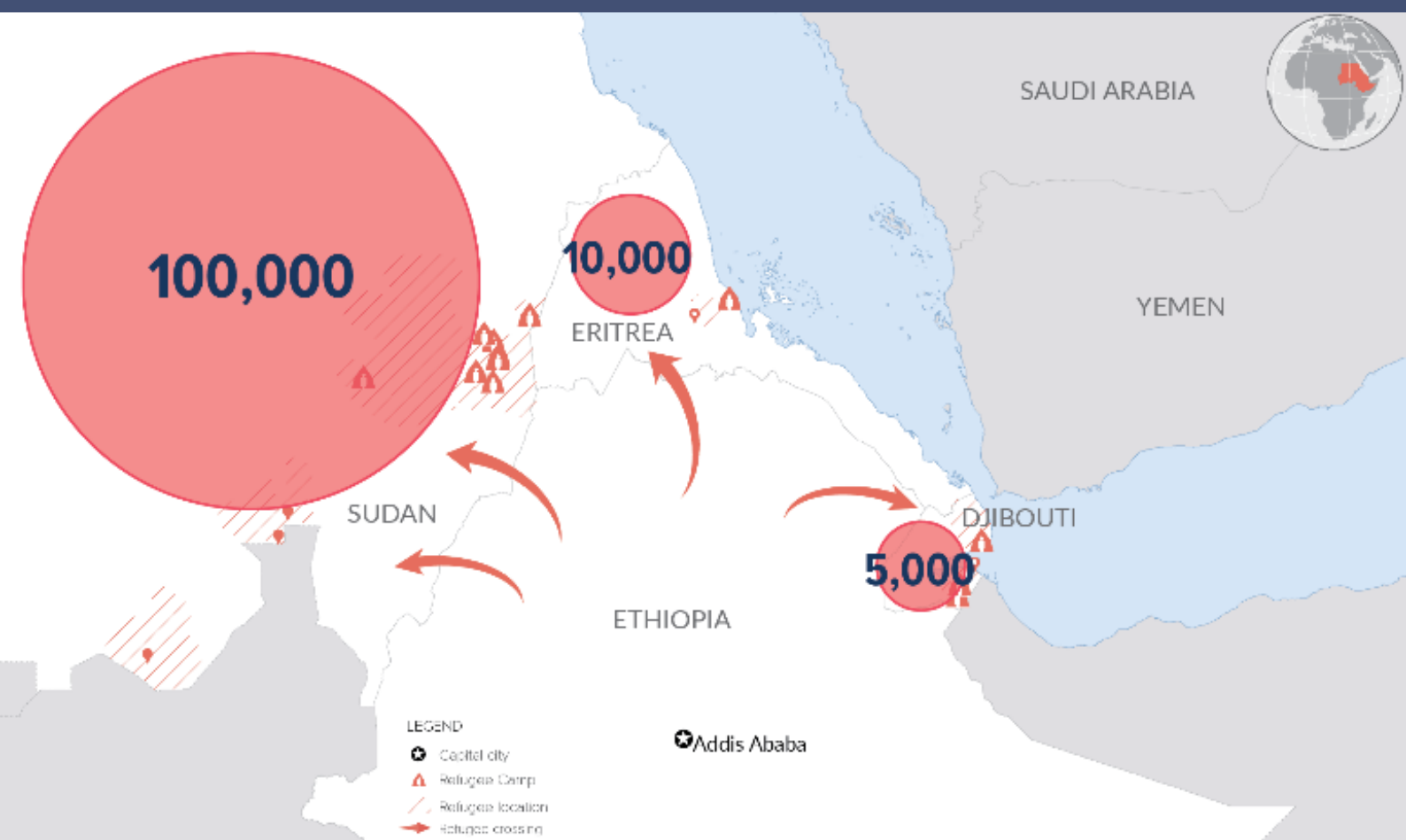
PROJECTED REFUGEE
POPULATION BY JUNE
2021

US\$ 155.7M

REQUIREMENTS FOR
NOV 2020 TO JUNE
2021

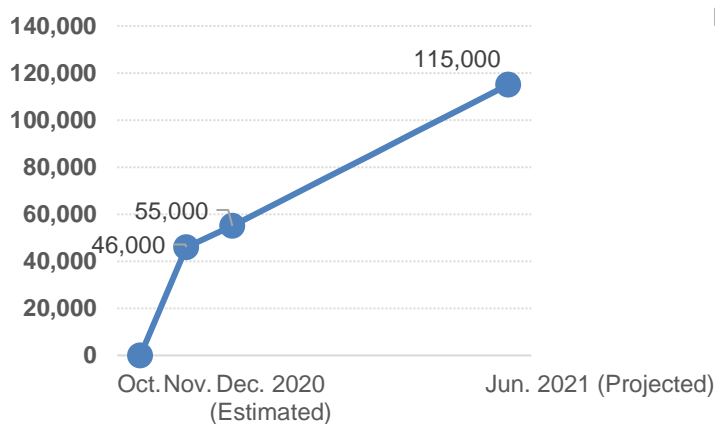
30

PARTNERS INVOLVED



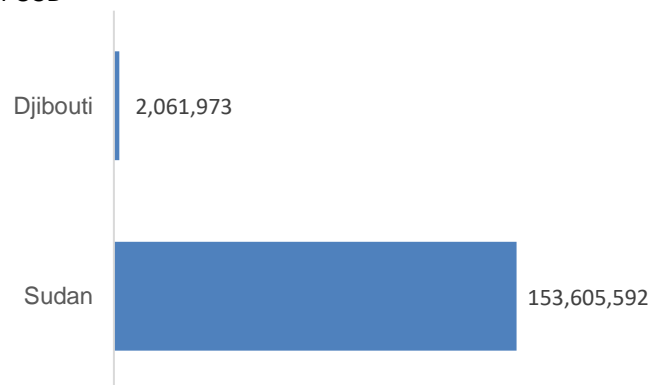
*Population planning figures include response plan figures for Sudan, and contingency planning figures for Eritrea and

Refugee Population Trends



Preparedness & Response Requirements |

In USD



The Sudan requirements include USD 6 million for UNHCR's initial response in 2020 that were not included in the Sudan country-level Nov 2020 – Jun 2021 Emergency Refugee Response Plan.

Regional Overview

Introduction

The Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan addresses the new refugee emergency triggered as a result of the crisis in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

After several months of growing political tensions, the situation in Tigray escalated on 4 November when the Office of the Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed accused the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) of an unprovoked attack on the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF) Northern Command. In response the Prime Minister announced a military offensive, termed a *Rule of Law Operation*, against the TPLF in Tigray. A six months state of emergency was declared, and electricity, telephone and internet services were subsequently shut down in the Tigray region. On 28 November, the Government of Ethiopia declared the military operations in Tigray to be over. However, armed clashes and violence have continued to be reported.

Prior to the crisis, the population in the Tigray region of Ethiopia included some 96,000 registered Eritrean refugees, approximately 100,000 Ethiopian internally displaced persons (IDPs), and some 500,000 people dependent on food relief assistance. In addition, 1 million people received safety net assistance.

The conflict in the Tigray region in Ethiopia has led to immediate and large-scale forced displacement across the border into East Sudan. The refugee influx to East Sudan started on 9 November with 146 Ethiopians arriving through two border entry points. Since then the movement dramatically increased with thousands of refugees crossing into Kassala and Gedaref States. In an effort to prevent further escalation of the conflict, the African Union and several other third parties have offered mediation. There has been continued strong



Ethiopian refugees, fleeing clashes in the country's northern Tigray region, cross the border into Hamdayet, Sudan, over the Tekeze river. © UNHCR/Hazim Elhag

advocacy by the UN system with the highest levels of the Ethiopian Government to seek unhindered and safe humanitarian access to refugees and other populations in need. An agreement was signed at the end of November 2020 between the UN and the Government of Ethiopia on access in government-controlled areas. However, insecurity has continued in the Tigray region and the operationalization of the agreement is still ongoing.

Six weeks into the conflict, with fuel and other supplies having run out, the humanitarian situation has become extremely dire and is likely to trigger increased forced displacement within and across borders. The high number of COVID-19 cases and food insecurity before the crisis, as well as the disruption in medical services in Tigray since the start of the conflict, all have implications for the health needs of the refugees arriving in East Sudan. Eritrean refugees who are dependent on humanitarian assistance have faced severe food shortages. Unlike the host population, most of them do not have the right to work and also do not have the option to relocate to other parts of the country. Given the nature of the conflict they are at risk of being further discriminated, and even targeted by armed groups.

A further deterioration of the crisis will also have implications for the wider region of East and Horn of Africa. In addition to the emergency refugee response in East Sudan, the operations in Djibouti and Eritrea are on high alert and are upscaling contingency planning and prepositioning of supplies. The complexity of the situation within Ethiopia, communication disruptions, the magnitude of the refugee flows, the remoteness of the locations where refugees are arriving or may arrive, and the limited infrastructure in most of the border regions compound the challenges in addressing this growing humanitarian crisis.

Inter-agency response to the refugee situation

The Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan for the Ethiopia situation summarizes and consolidates the inter-agency refugee preparedness and response strategies in Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea, and highlights the most critical humanitarian needs for tens of thousands of refugees fleeing from Ethiopia through the first half of 2021. This regional inter-agency response plan aims at supporting resource mobilization efforts and facilitating coordination among RRP partners to effectively address this complex emergency.

The main **strategic objectives** of the regional refugee response to the Ethiopia situation are the following:

- Support the Governments of Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea in maintaining and facilitating access to asylum, including:
 - registration and documentation for all individuals fleeing from Ethiopia,
 - ensuring the civilian and humanitarian character of asylum,
 - providing essential protection services;
- Decongest border locations and transfer refugees to designated sites away from the border and with the required capacities for the new arrivals;
- Provide multi-sector life-saving humanitarian assistance for all new arrivals at border points and in designated settlement sites in coordination with government counterparts and through support and linkages to national social services wherever possible in line with the Global Compact on Refugees;
- Ensure persons with specific needs, such as women and girls at risk and the disabled, are systematically identified and provided with specialized services:
 - Establish GBV and PSEA prevention and response mechanisms and strengthen community-based protection networks;
- Support resilience and invest in livelihoods for refugees and host communities.

Given the high rate of new arrivals in **Sudan**, with over 33,000 refugees having arrived within just ten days of the start of the influx, planning figures for the refugee response through the first six months of 2021 are set at a most-likely scenario of 100,000 refugees arriving to East Sudan by June 2021. A worst-case scenario foresees the arrival of up to 200,000 refugees. While this will mainly include Ethiopians, a smaller number of Eritrean refugees who had been living in Tigray are also fleeing to East Sudan. RRP partners in Sudan have launched an inter-agency [Emergency Refugee Response Plan](#) to respond to the Ethiopia situation, appealing for USD 147 million to meet the urgent needs of 100,000 Ethiopian refugees in Sudan. The inter-agency plan provides a multi-sectoral response with over 30 partners, including UN Agencies, national and international NGOs, covering an initial period of 8 months from November 2020 until June 2021. The plan guides partners' programming in response to the refugee influx in East Sudan, minimizes any overlaps in the planned response and ensures that gaps are addressed. The plan will be periodically reviewed and adjusted.

In **Djibouti**, the Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan addresses the needs of 5,000 potential refugee arrivals. In addition to the potential for new refugee arrivals from Ethiopia due to the situation in Tigray, there are Ethiopians transiting through Djibouti who may not be able to return to Ethiopia in the near term. Given the close commercial ties between Djibouti and Ethiopia, thousands of Tigrayan merchants and truck drivers could become stranded in Djibouti if the crisis further escalates. There are also considerable numbers of Ethiopian migrants who arrived in Djibouti after returning from Saudi Arabia and Yemen. Those who are no longer able to return home due to the ongoing conflict in Ethiopia may apply for recognition of refugee status to be considered as "refugees *sur place*" in Djibouti. By mid December, some 200 Ethiopians in Djibouti had indicated their intention to apply for asylum under this arrangement. The Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan in Djibouti was developed on the basis of an inter-agency contingency plan and includes the preliminary financial requirements for partners to ensure preparedness to receive and/or assist up to 5,000 refugees. It complements other initiatives underway, led by the Resident Coordinator, to address the complex situation of irregular migrants in the country, including Ethiopian migrants returning from the Arabian Peninsula, or residing in Djibouti who do not wish to apply for asylum.

In **Eritrea**, given the familial, cultural and language links between the Eritrean and Ethiopian Tigrayans, it is expected that some Ethiopian Tigrayans living near the border might cross into Eritrea to escape the conflict. Some Eritrean refugees residing in Tigray may also return home to avoid the conflict. The Refugee Preparedness and Contingency Plan in Eritrea is based on an inter-agency contingency plan developed by the UN Country Team for various populations in Eritrea and uses an estimate of 5,000-10,000 potential refugee arrivals and refugee returnees from Ethiopia. Financial requirements are not currently included in this Regional RRP, which will be revised accordingly if a refugee response is necessitated.

Beneficiary Population

	Population as of 15 December 2020	Estimated Population as of end of 2020	Population Planning Figures as of June 2021
Assisted Refugee Population			
Eritrea*	-	-	10,000*
Djibouti*	-	-	5,000*
Sudan	50,595	55,000	100,000
Total	50,595	55,000	115,000

Assisted Host Population			
Djibouti*	4,150	4,150	4,150
Sudan	17,500	17,500	17,500
Total	21,650	21,650	21,650

*The planning figures for Eritrea and Djibouti are contingency planning figures. No data is currently available on host population in Eritrea. The planning figure for Sudan is based on arrivals since early November 2020.

Based on ongoing household level registration in East Sudan, as of mid-December, the new Ethiopian refugee population in Sudan is estimated to be 31 percent children, with 36 percent women and girls and 64 percent men and boys. In Djibouti, partners anticipate a slightly different population profile, including 45 percent children, 51 per cent women and girls, and 49 per cent men and boys. However, these demographic breakdowns are subject to change as the situation unfolds.

Regional Protection and Population Needs

Sudan

On 9 November, the first refugees from Ethiopia started to arrive at two border points, Lugdi and Hamdayet, in East Sudan. The refugee influx soon dramatically increased and spread along the extended border in remote locations in Kassala and Gedaref States. As of 15 December, 50,595 Ethiopian asylum-seekers had crossed into East Sudan from the Tigray region in Ethiopia. Refugees continue to arrive to the remote border areas of Hamdayet (35,517) in Kassala State, and Lugdi and Abderafi in Gedaref State (14,376). 702



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