

Tigray Situation Update

31 March 2021



Internally displaced persons (IDPs) hosted in Shiraro. © UNHCR/ Awash Ameha.

Background and key developments

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 in late November, Ethiopia's Tigray region has continued to be affected by armed clashes and insecurity, leading to further forced displacement of population -particularly in Western Tigray-, and having a serious impact on access and the provision of humanitarian assistance to refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). Many refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities have endured more than three months with extremely limited -or no- assistance, leading to a significant escalation in humanitarian needs.

In Eastern Tigray, access has improved over the past weeks and UNHCR and partners have been able to reach some previously inaccessible areas such as Adigrat or Adwa. On 18th March a joint OCHA-UNHCR mission gained [access to Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps](#) for the first time since November 2020, amid ongoing security concerns. UNHCR staff found both camps that both once vibrant camps have now been completely destroyed, and all the humanitarian facilities looted and vandalized, and refugees have fled the camps. The joint mission was also able to visit Shiraro town, where considerable

numbers of Eritrean refugees are believed to be living scattered in the area and in urgent need of safety and support.

Displacement figures

Ethiopia is home to **178,980** 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).

According to BoLSA (Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs) and the Early Warning Response (EWR) regional directorate from NDRMC, the conflict in Tigray has displaced **some estimated 735,000 persons (IDPs)**, a number likely to rise as the situation is dynamic and new IDP arrivals are being registered. At the same time, as of 30th March **62,383 refugees have sought safety in Eastern Sudan** from Ethiopia.

Operational response

Refugee response



POPULATION DISPLACEMENT

Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps

- Following the decision of Ethiopia's Government in late January on the closure of Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps, a relocation process for refugees who had fled those camps to Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps started. Most of these refugees had endured a dire lack of basic needs and experienced high levels of trauma. As of 25th March, 7,519 have relocated to Adi Harush (3,291) and Mai Aini (4,228) camps, formally or spontaneously.

Mekelle

- A total of 314 refugees (151 households) have been verified in Mekelle as of 26th Mar 2021.

Adigrat

- During an UNHCR mission to Adigrat, the refugee representative indicated that there are some 2,000 refugees (400 households) living in an IDP site.

Addis Ababa

- On 9 March, a joint ARRA and UNHCR team started an identification exercise of Shimelba and Hitsats refugees self-relocated in Addis Ababa. As of 26th March, a total of 2,010 refugees (1,054 households) have been processed. As per the rapid intention survey incorporated in the process, 1,830 individuals have expressed their interest in having temporary urban status in Addis Ababa, 142 indicated their interest in being relocated to Adi Harush or Mai Aini camps, and 38 have expressed the need to have OCP (out of camp) documents. The three main specific needs identified are women at risk, unaccompanied and separated children, and single parents.

Afar region

- In the first half of March, a total of 24 refugees and asylum-seekers from the Tigray camps have approached the UNHCR Field Unit in Aysaita camp for support. The refugees were immediately referred to ARRA and the partners for support, including psychosocial counselling and health services. ARRA has provided them with NFIs and the food rations for the month of February. So far, a total of 54 refugees from Tigray camps have reported to ARRA in the Aysaita refugee camp. Among them were 35 women and children, including six unregistered babies who were born during the flight to Afar.



PROTECTION

Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps

- 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 update 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. Despite the attempt to scale up, practical staffing and logistical constraints place a strain on service delivery.
- In Adi Harush and Mai Aini camps, election process for the Refugee Central Committees (RCC) led by ARRA have concluded, with UNHCR playing an observatory role. This process will help strengthen community structures and improve communication with communities in the camps.

Mekelle

- UNHCR is providing protection counselling to the displaced refugees and new arrivals.



SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS (NFI)

- Following a shelter assessment, emergency shelter construction started in Mai Aini and Adi Harush on 16th February, with 600 emergency shelters already completed by UNHCR's partner Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) in both camps.

- All newly relocated refugees have received Core Relief Items (CRIs) upon arrival to Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush camps.

**WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE**

- Water systems are fully operational in Mai Aini, and partially restored in Adi Harush. However, refugees are currently receiving 11 liters per person and day in Adi Harush and 14 liters in Mai Aini, which is still far below UNHCR standards of 20 liters/person/day
- NRC has started the construction of communal latrines around the newly established emergency shelters in Adi-Harush and Mai Aini camps. One block of latrines (1 shower, 3 latrines) has already been completed, and two blocks are at excavation stage.



Tanker truck delivering potable water in Adi Harush refugee camp. © UNHCR/ Dhananjaya Bhattarai.

**FOOD SECURITY**

- From 1st to 9th March, some 13,600 Eritrean refugees in Mai Aini received the February food ration in Mai Aini camp 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, while some 11,500 refugees in Adi-Harush received their monthly food assistance between the 23 February to 2 March.
- All newly relocated refugees have received monthly food rations upon arrival from Shire.
- Communal cooking spaces with corrugated metal sheeting are being constructed in locations in and around the emergency shelters in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps. In total, two communal kitchens have been completed and 3 are at excavation stage.

IDP response

**POPULATION DISPLACEMENT****Shire**

- Thousands of newly internally displaced people, mostly from Western Tigray, have continued to arrive in Shire since the end of February, leading to the saturation of reception facilities in town. The newly internally displaced people have been hosted in Adi Wenfito, Hibret and Tsehaye primary schools as well as in Freseweat Secondary School, where around 15,000 IDPs are currently being hosted. As the classrooms of these schools are full, many are sleeping in the open. The vast majority of the IDPs have arrived with just the clothes on their backs and food, relief

items and shelters are urgently needed. Overall, there are around 352,000 IDPs sheltered in 14 sites and within the host communities in Shire, according to local authorities.

Mai Tsebri

- In Mai Tsebri, according to local authorities there are some 25,000 IDPs, including 8,500 individuals living a communal IDP site, while the rest are living with the host community.

Shiraro

- Local authorities have reported the presence of some 95,000 Ethiopians who are internally displaced within Shiraro's administrative area. About 47,000 people were registered by authorities last month while the rest are estimated to have arrived since. To date, the vast majority of internally displaced people (IDPs) are living within the host community, and some 30,000 are living in five settlements. In Shimelba camp, the joint OCHA-UNHCR mission that visited the camp on 18th March found over 2,000 IDPs and vulnerable host community members who had sought sanctuary in Shimelba camp. All of the displaced people in Shiraro and Shimelba are in dire need of urgent life-saving assistance, including food, shelter, health care, water and sanitation.

Mekelle

- As per the estimated figures provided by government authorities in Mekelle, there are around 95,000 IDPs sheltered in 15 sites and within the host communities.



PROTECTION

- In Shire, while registration of IDPs is still ongoing with increased capacity, as the government has involved 100 teachers and 25 youth volunteers to run the registration, considerable challenges have been noted, given the high volume of new arrivals. The government staff responsible for IDP registration are still overstretched and lack a functional registration system and equipment. UNHCR is providing technical assistance, including registration forms, IDP card format and technical guidance.
- In Mekelle, protection staff started protection monitoring in the new IDP sites. UNHCR is also conducting regular protection desk and protection counselling at the IDP sites in order to listen to the protection concerns from IDPs.
- In Shiraro, the joint OCHA-UNHCR mission met with the provisional administrator and other authorities such as the health focal point and the woreda provisional administrator. The mission visited two of the IDP sites and noted their precarious situation and pressing needs, including food and medical assistance.



SHELTER AND NON-FOOD ITEMS

- In Addis Ababa, the CCCM Cluster National Coordination Team (UNHCR and IOM) organized a Training of Trainers between the 8–12 March, with the participating of 22 UNHCR, IOM and NGO representatives from across the country, including Mekelle, Shire, Mai Tsebri, Debark, Addis

Ababa, Asossa, Jijiga and Gambella. Following the training, the new CCCM trainers will deliver CCCM trainings in the coming weeks and months to governmental and humanitarian partners.

- In Shire, authorities indicated on 22 February their intention to relocate the 7,165 IDPs residing in the Axum university campus to a former detention facility. Following the efforts of the CCCM Cluster, co-led by UNHCR, and site selection taskforce, authorities suspended the relocation of IDPs from Axum university until the end of March.
- A permanent site for IDPs in Shire has been identified by the CCCM Cluster and site selection taskforce, and approved by authorities. This new IDP site consists of three plots of land with a total 42 Ha (421,637 m²) and will have capacity to host 18,740 persons (3,750 households), in accordance with the Sphere standards of 22 m² per person. As Axum University will be restarting classes soon, IDPs residing in their premises will be prioritized during the relocation process to the new sites.
- Since 15th March, UNHCR, with the support of its partner IHS, distributed in Shire core relief items to some 2,000 internally displaced families from Western Tigray currently residing in schools and other sites. The items delivered included a blanket, a plastic bucket, sanitary napkins, women underwear, jerrycans, a kitchen set, laundry soap, a mosquito net, sleeping mats and plastic tarpaulins.
- In Mai Tsebri, UNHCR distributed core relief items to over 2,000 displaced families (4,011 persons) who reside in the communal site in Mai Tsebri town.
- In Mekelle, UNHCR conducted a verification together with its governmental counterpart BoLSA (Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs) and identified 500 households (2,500 persons) as beneficiaries for Core Relief Items (CRIs) assistance. So far, in collaboration with BoLSA, Innovative Humanitarian Solutions (IHS) and the IDPs committee, UNHCR distributed relief items (sleeping mats, kitchen sets, jerrycans and soap) to 300 households (1,500 persons) recently arrived to Maiweyni, one of the collective centers hosting IDPs.



FOOD SECURITY

- In Mai Tsebri, NRC started the food voucher distribution for 1,200 households, with a planned daily reach of 100 households. The NGO is planning to expand their food voucher support to 4,000 additional IDP households in the coming weeks.



WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

- In Mai Tsebri, IRC installed a water storage tanker with two fossettes in the IDP site, and together with the zonal water and health office representatives, they have carried out a site assessment to select an area for the construction of two segregated latrines and two shower blocks. IRC initiated the construction of two WASH facilities.

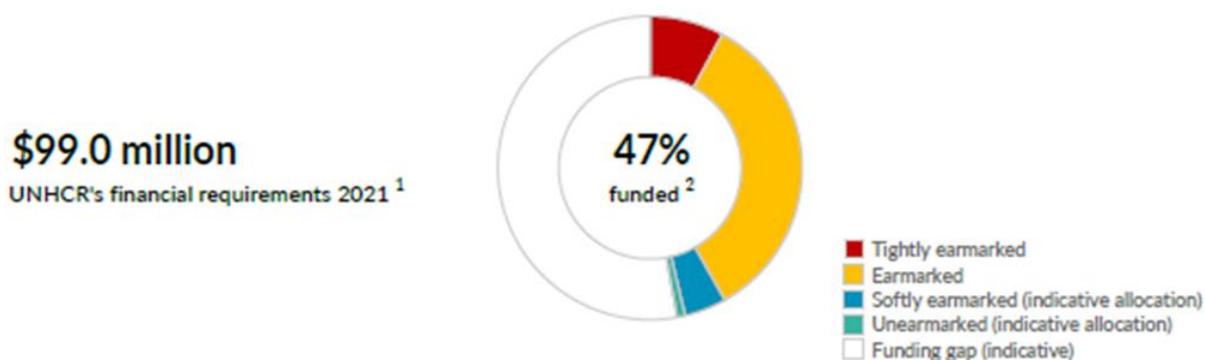
Issues and Challenges

- 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, all shelters will soon be fully occupied, including the 600 emergency shelters) and all existing communal shelters which are already full. In addition, the emergency shelters will only address the needs of refugees for a short period and under the current dry conditions. With the beginning of the rainy season in the coming months, emergency shelters will not provide sufficient protection.
- A multifunctional team of UNHCR and ARRA undertook a full site assessment of possible land that might be made available to host relocated refugees in a new camp.
- In the meantime, UNHCR and ARRA are working on the urgent identification of potential additional space and shelter solutions in and around Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps to host the relocated refugees.

Ethiopia Emergency Situation Funding Update

(as of 30th March 2021)

The [UNHCR Regional Appeal for the Ethiopia Emergency Situation \(Tigray\)](#) covers the period January to June 2021 and highlights the 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 47% funded. UNHCR Ethiopia would like to express its thanks to funding received for Ethiopia specifically from the Central Emergency Response Fund (CERF), ECHO, the Government of Japan and the United States of America, alongside situation level funding from Finland, Luxembourg and Private Donors.



**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 | - | - | 19,130,000 | - | 19,130,000 |
| 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 |
| Novo Nordisk Foundation | - | 327,004 | - | - | 327,004 |
| Luxembourg | - | 305,998 | - | - | 305,998 |
| Latter-day Saints Charities | - | - | - | 172,200 | 172,200 |
| Other private donors | - | 182,000 | - | - | 182,000 |
| Sub-total | - | 4,071,370 | 19,940,811 | 2,972,189 | 26,984,370 |
| Indicative allocation of funds and adjustments ⁶ | 852,110 | 338,959 | 13,670,245 | 4,832,359 | 19,693,673 |
| Total | 852,110 | 4,410,329 | 33,611,056 | 7,804,548 | 46,678,043 |

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

United States of America 42.2 million | Sweden 3.5 million | Denmark 2.9 million
 Education Cannot Wait | IGAD | Ireland | Netherlands | Private donors

■ UNEARMARKED CONTRIBUTIONS⁵ | USD

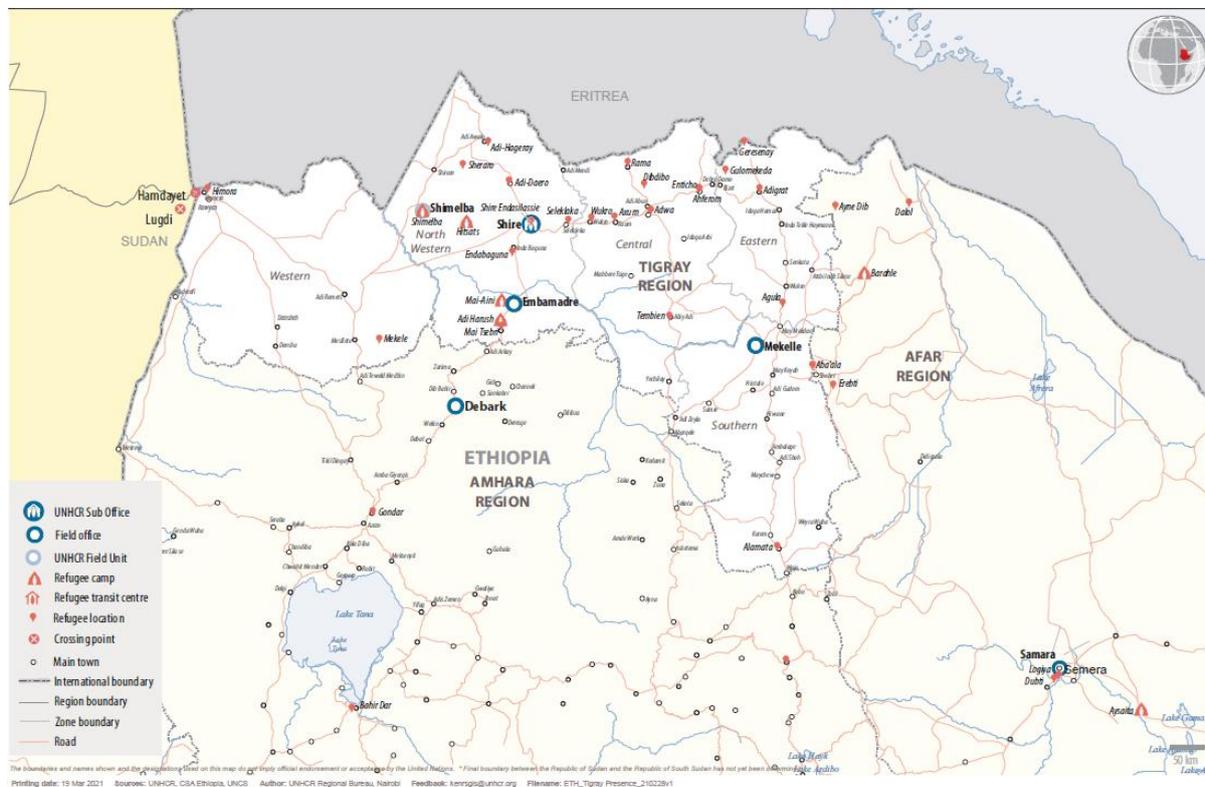
Norway 80 million | Sweden 66.9 million | Netherlands 36.1 million | Denmark 34.6 million | Germany 22.1 million | Switzerland 16.4 million | Private donors Spain 13.3 million | Ireland 12.5 million | Belgium 11.9 million

Algeria | Armenia | Australia | Bulgaria | Canada | Costa Rica | Estonia | Finland | Iceland | Liechtenstein | 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 (47%) and total funding amount (\$46,678,043) are indicative based on the methodology described above. This leaves an indicative funding gap of \$52,313,513 representing 53% 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 contributed \$10 million or more, the total amount of the contribution is shown.
- Includes an adjustment for generous contributions from Norway, Sweden, 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: UNHCR presence in Tigray



In Tigray region, 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.

Following the announcement of the Ethiopian Government of a [transition from the previous clearance mechanism for international aid workers to a flexible notification system](#) by email to the Ministry of Peace, UNHCR has been able to deploy 17 international staff to Tigray region to support the scale up of the response and currently counts with a total 79 staff in the region.

CONTACTS

Juliette Stevenson, Senior External Relations Officer, stenveno@unhcr.org

LINKS

[Ethiopia Data Portal](#)

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

[Facebook, Twitter](#)