



UNHCR
The UN Refugee Agency



UPDATE: ETHIOPIA EMERGENCY SITUATION (TIGRAY)

UNHCR REGIONAL APPEAL

January - December 2021



Selam, 19, started her coffee making business almost as soon as she arrived in Tunaydbah refugee camp in Sudan from Tigray. She ran a café at home before the conflict forced her to flee. Selam is determined to use her entrepreneurial skills to make a life for herself and her family.
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Overview



Priority populations targeted for assistance

120,000
ETHIOPIAN
REFUGEES IN
EASTERN SUDAN

96,000
ERITREAN
REFUGEES IN
ETHIOPIA

650,000
ETHIOPIAN IDPs IN
TIGRAY REGION,
ETHIOPIA
(Note: total estimated IDPs
in Tigray: 2 million)

\$164.5 million
TOTAL REQUIREMENTS
(Ethiopia \$101.3 million;
Sudan \$63.2 million)

Since UNHCR’s original emergency appeal for the humanitarian crisis in Tigray, which has displaced millions inside Ethiopia and abroad into Sudan, two of the four Eritrean refugee camps in the Tigray region have been looted and destroyed, a threat of severe food insecurity has arisen, and a surge in gender-based violence has been reported. Two other Eritrean refugee camps in the neighbouring Afar region have also been affected due to conflict spreading into the region. Amid a challenging and complex situation, UNHCR is appealing to donors to help it bring vital protection and assistance to people displaced by the conflict.

The situation inside Tigray is volatile and fluid. In the last week of June, Tigrayan forces took control of the towns of Mekelle and Shire and are now reported to be in control of large parts of Tigray. Both the federal authorities and the new *de facto* authorities in Tigray continue to highlight

their willingness to work with the humanitarian community, and it is hoped that access to some of the most affected areas may become easier, allowing for activities to scale up in previously hard-to-reach areas. However, access into Tigray remains extremely difficult. Meanwhile conflict continues across other parts of Tigray, including a worsening security situation in the areas around Mai Tsebri. This is the location of the two Eritrean refugee camps of Mai Aini and Adi Harush, where access issues are hindering the movement of supplies and staff, and the safe relocation of refugees to alternative locations.

The updated [UN Humanitarian Response Plan for northern Ethiopia](#) estimates (as of 9 July) that 5.2 million people may be in significant humanitarian need, but that the challenges to scaling up assistance are formidable. UNHCR and partners will review their operational approach and

plans to ensure the flexibility to adapt to potential IDP movements back to areas of return or new displacement in different areas, including further displacement of refugees. [Multiple UN inter-agency assessments conducted in June 2021](#) across central, western and eastern Tigray found there were limited or no health services; partial or non-functioning water systems with limited water trucking services; limited banking services; that insecurity was seriously hampering farming; and that schools have been looted.

UNHCR's partners are receiving indications of rising hunger, as the conflict exacerbated an already fragile context marked by the COVID-19 pandemic and desert locust invasion. Families are having to cope with severe food insecurity with the harvest season having been missed. With no trade in or out of the region, markets are about to collapse. Malnutrition is likely to have increased significantly. The June 10 [Integrated Food Security Phase Classification \(IPC\) report](#) highlighted that over 350,000 people are already facing catastrophic conditions of food insecurity (IPC 5) and more than 1.8 million people were or are in emergency level (IPC 4) in Tigray and adjacent locations in Amhara and Afar in May and June.

Serious protection needs persist across the region. The conflict has driven a dramatic rise in reported gender-based violence cases, believed to be a fraction of the actual number of incidents, given the lack of access to medical facilities in many parts of the region and social stigma around reporting.

As of end June 2021, according to a biometric verification exercise, Sudan hosted 54,039 Ethiopian refugees who had arrived since November 2020. There were 46,505 individually registered refugees in eastern Sudan from Tigray, as well as 7,534 in Blue Nile state from Benishangul region who have not yet undergone biometric verification. The majority of the new arrivals are hosted in camps that need improvements to shelter, sanitation, health and road infrastructure—particularly in light of anticipated extreme weather during the rainy season—as well as improvements in protection to better guarantee physical safety and reduce the risks of gender-based violence.

With the developments in Tigray in late June 2021 and shifting conflict dynamics, UNHCR is preparing for the possibility of new refugee influxes from Ethiopia into Sudan, pre-positioning supplies and ensuring preparedness at border reception points while working with the Government to identify additional locations for refugee settlements.

Tigray's pre-conflict population of 6 million included 96,000 registered Eritrean refugees, of whom approximately 60,000 were actively collecting food assistance in 2020. The population of the camps has fluctuated due to the changing security environment in Tigray. There were 32,000 refugees registered in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps as of June 2021, with approximately 23,000 actively collecting assistance. Two other camps, Hitsats and Shimelba, were looted and destroyed during the conflict, scattering refugees across Tigray and beyond. UNHCR teams, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Government's Administration for Refugee

and Returnee Affairs (ARRA) have been tracing refugees to bring them to safety. More than 11,000 of the 20,000 refugees previously in the two destroyed camps have been accounted for; outreach and tracing continue including in hard-to-reach areas and in the capital Addis Ababa.

A more robust and enhanced multisectoral response is still required for forcibly displaced people across Tigray, encompassing the whole spectrum of basic needs. As the protection lead agency with commitments towards IDPs, returnees and host communities, UNHCR is working with partners on mitigating the effects of armed conflict on the civilian population. UNHCR will endeavour to ensure civilians have access to assistance and services in a safe, equitable, accessible, and dignified manner. Protection mainstreaming measures, including protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and accountability to affected populations, will be critical to ensuring that the needs

of vulnerable populations are recognized across the response. UNHCR and partners will review their operational approach and plans to ensure the flexibility to adapt to potential IDP movements back to areas of return or new displacement in different areas, including further displacement of refugees.

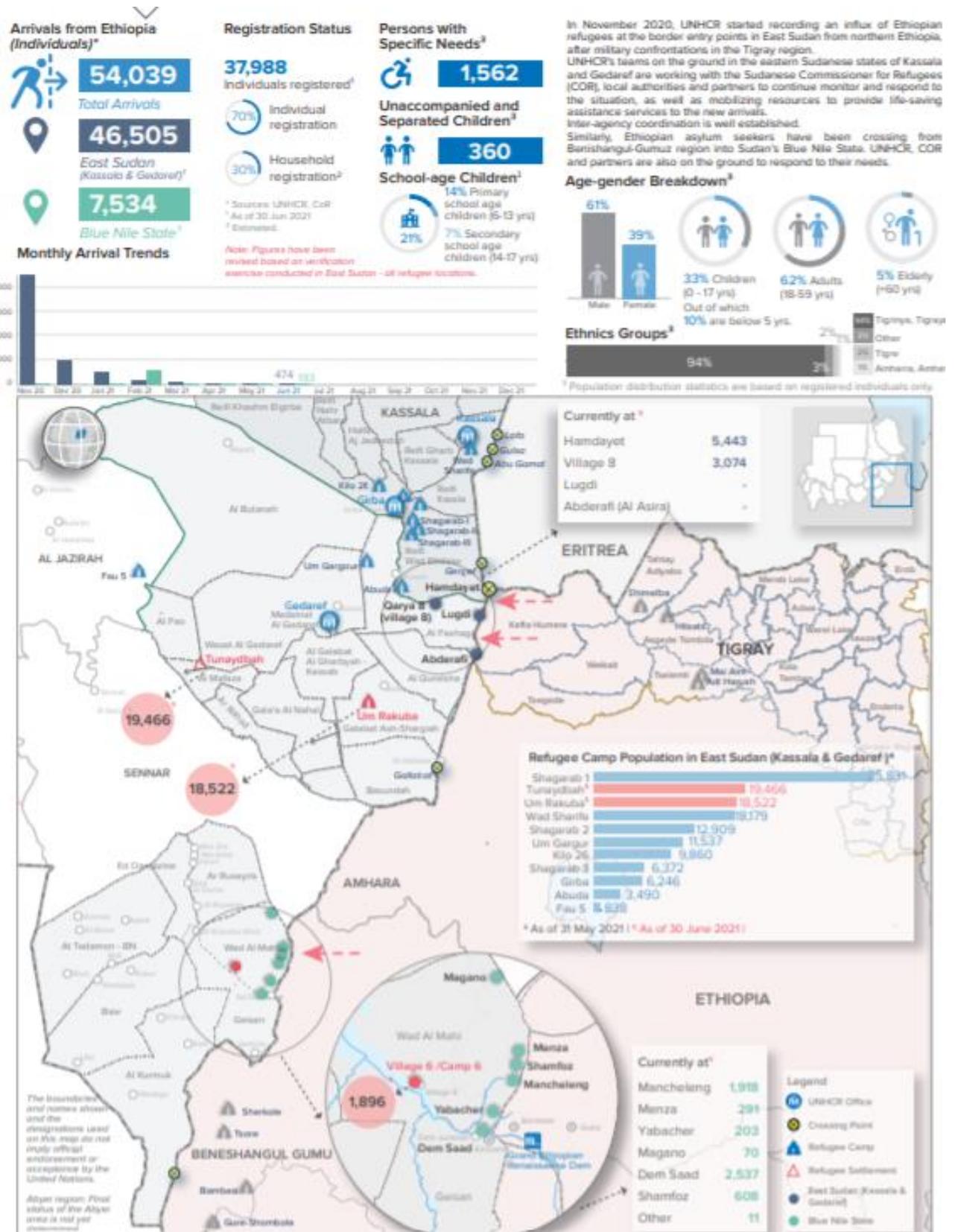
Priorities and strategies for the remainder of the year will depend largely on the security situation, logistical challenges, risk management and coordination with UNHCR partners and stakeholders in what is a highly complex humanitarian and operational environment.

To deliver life-saving assistance and protection to up to **120,000 Ethiopian refugees who may seek refuge in Sudan**, to an estimated 96,000 Eritrean refugees in Tigray, and to **650,000 IDPs**, UNHCR is appealing for \$164.5 million to cover the period January-December 2021. This includes \$101.3 million of needs in Ethiopia and \$63.2 million in Sudan.

For more information

Visit **Global Focus**, which is UNHCR's main operational reporting portal for donors and other key partners. The site provides an overview of the protection risks that refugees and other populations of concern to UNHCR face across the world, as well as regularly updated information about programmes, operations, financial requirements, funding levels and donor contributions. The Global Focus Ethiopia Emergency page can be found [here](#).

Ethiopian new arrivals | as of June 2021



UNHCR's response to date

Ethiopia | As of October 2020, before the outbreak of the conflict, some 96,000 Eritrean refugees were registered in Tigray. Refugees lived mainly in four refugee camps, with some 7,800 refugees officially residing outside of camps, benefiting from the Government's out of camp policy.

Following the outbreak of the conflict in November 2020 access to the refugee camps was denied and UNHCR was compelled to relocate international staff out of Tigray while a number of national staff remained in Shire and Mekelle and responded to IDPs' needs as far as possible with the supplies on hand. UNHCR regained access to the Mai Aini and Adi Harush refugee camps in January 2021. After the easing of access restrictions in late February 2021, UNHCR scaled up its presence with emergency teams and expanded its office in Mekelle.

As of late July 2021, some 6,700 of the 20,000 refugees who were displaced from the Hitsats and Shimelba camps have been identified in Addis Ababa, while more than 7,300 have relocated to Adi Harush and Mai Aini camps, either on their own or facilitated by the Government. Refugees relocated to the camps have received emergency shelter, core relief items and food upon arrival. Monthly food distributions for the refugee population in the two camps have been organized with WFP and ARRA since December 2020, and preventive and curative nutrition interventions are ongoing. Communal latrine construction and expansion of water networks has also been undertaken.

With presence in Mekelle, Shire and Mai Tsebri, UNHCR and partners have conducted assessments and/or delivered services to key locations in Tigray, including Mekelle, Shire, Mai Tsebri, Sheraro, Adi-Daero, Endabaguna, Adwa, Axum, Adigrat, Alamata, Abiy Adi, Gijet and Semre. UNHCR is strategically positioned as the Protection Cluster lead, with partnerships established in key locations around Tigray to support protection outreach and monitoring activities. Protection desks for case management have been established in over 30 sites in and around Shire and Mekelle.

Since the onset of the emergency, UNHCR and IOM have co-led the Camp Coordination and Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster in Tigray, and UNHCR has a key role in the relocation taskforces in Shire and Mekelle, as they are led by the Protection and CCCM clusters. Progress has been made in supporting the establishment of IDP community leadership structures and sub-structures, capacity development for local authorities, site profiling to identify the access to services and gaps in Shire and Mekelle, and cluster outreach missions in surrounding cities and increasingly in hard-to-reach areas. Distribution of core relief items has reached over 12,000 IDP households (64,000 individuals), with 250 shelters constructed in Shire and 600 in Mekelle by UNHCR and partners.

Under the leadership of UNHCR, 29 humanitarian and development partners worked together to update the inter-agency Country Refugee Response Plan (CRRP) for Ethiopia, for the overall

refugee population in the country, including elements from the inter-agency Refugee Emergency Response Plan (RRP) for Eritrean Refugees in Tigray that was developed at the beginning of the Tigray crisis and in the context of the joint emergency response of humanitarian partners for a three-month period (November 2020-January 2021).

Sudan | The borders remain open for refugees and UNHCR and partners have full access to border points, with the Government granting *prima facie* status to all Ethiopian refugees arriving in Sudan related to the Tigray situation. UNHCR and the Sudanese Government's Commissioner for Refugees (COR) are screening and registering new arrivals and sheltering them in transit centres located near entry points. Water and meals are provided. A verification exercise was carried out in May 2021 by the Government and UNHCR to update the population figures.

Due to the rapidly evolving situation at the outset of the crisis, UNHCR scaled up its presence in Sudan, especially in Gedaref and Kassala States with the deployment of emergency teams and expansion of its offices. The operation has transitioned towards longer-term staffing with the recruitment of permanent positions. Scaling up of protection staff and especially female protection staffing has been achieved, with an almost 50% gender ratio in overall staffing.

Protection teams continue to identify persons at heightened risk and refer them to specialized services. Such persons include pregnant women, persons with disabilities, women and girls at risk of exploitation and abuse, unaccompanied children, youth and older persons. Counselling and health services are available for survivors of gender-based violence.

Relocation of refugees from border areas to Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah, where about 40,000 people have been settled so far, has been on hold since late February 2021 pending Government agreement for a resumption. In the meantime, registration for relocation is ongoing in Hamdayet and Village 8 transit centres. However, relocation for family reunification has been taking place. A new camp in Blue Nile state, Camp 6, has been established for arrivals from Ethiopia's Benishangul-Gumuz region.

UNHCR led the preparation of an Inter-Agency Refugee Response Plan which was issued in

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