

ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY REGION)

16 –31 July 2021



Refugee children play at Um Rakuba camp, Sudan. © UNHCR/Assadullah Nasrullah

Key Developments

ETHIOPIA

- On 15 July, an [update](#) on the deteriorating situation of Eritrean refugees in Tigray was issued by the UNHCR Representative in Ethiopia indicating that the situation in the Mai Aini and Adi Harush Eritrean refugee camps in Ethiopia's Tigray region had further and rapidly deteriorated with the escalation of fighting in the area.
- On 27 July, UNHCR [implored](#) all parties to the Ethiopia's Tigray region conflict to uphold their obligations under international law, including respecting the civilian character of refugee camps, and the rights of refugees and all civilians to be protected from hostilities. UNHCR continues to urge all parties to the conflict to give immediate humanitarian access and safety for aid workers attempting to provide life-saving assistance.
- On 29 July, the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Martin Griffiths, started a six-day mission to the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. On 30 July, the ERC visited Meywani IDP site that is managed by UNHCR. The ERC was briefed by UNHCR, partners and IDP leaders, viewed the work undertaken at the protection desks and held two separate meetings with groups of IDP women and men. They informed the ERC about their

wish to return, but fear that they cannot do so due to the ongoing conflict and briefed him about their humanitarian needs. The ERC emphasized that he would continue to advocate for a ceasefire and safe humanitarian access in with relevant stakeholders in Ethiopia, Geneva and New York.

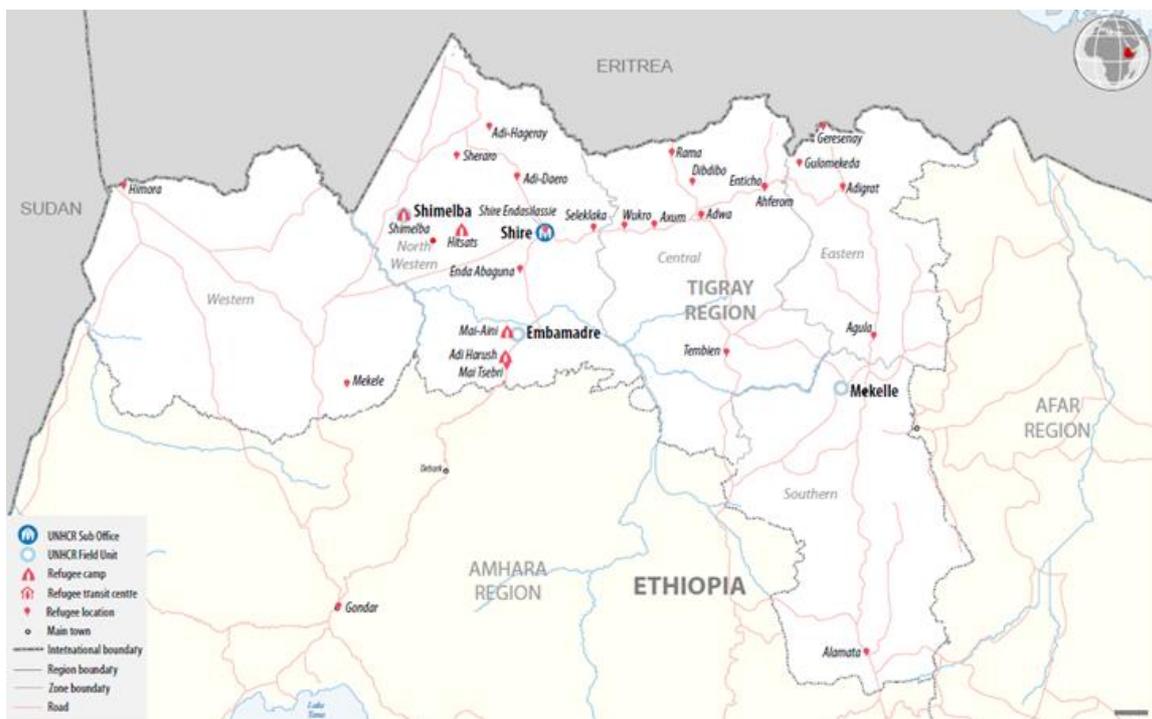
- In Addis Ababa, on 29 July, a peaceful demonstration was held by a group of Eritrean Refugees in front of UNHCR. The demonstrators demanded the UN and international communities' intervention to relocate refugees out of the conflict zone and to provide necessary assistance.

SUDAN

- Advocacy to resume the relocation of some 5,400 Ethiopian refugees from Hamdayet continues in view of the recurrent clashes across the border and the potential influx it could spark. Except for family reunification, un-accompanied minors and medical cases, relocation from Hamdayet to the camps has been suspended since February 2021, pending authorization by local authorities.
- UNHCR, partners and government counterparts continue to monitor the situation along border areas given the fluid and dynamic context in the Tigray region and militarization of the border. Several scenarios and contingency plans are being finalized by the operation, including a new influx from the Tigray region and possibly other regions, as well as spontaneous returns from the camps to Ethiopia.

Ethiopia Response

The humanitarian situation across the Tigray Region remains deeply concerning for refugees, the internally displaced and host communities. Civilians have endured eight months of conflict with extremely limited basic services and assistance available, leading to a significant escalation in humanitarian needs with ongoing new displacements. The security situation remains volatile, affecting civilians and constraining humanitarian actors on the ground. Communication, electricity, and banking services remain intermittent. The conflict is now also affecting civilian populations in neighbouring Amhara and Afar.



Eritrean Refugee Response



Pulleys and ladders used to cross the Tekeze river. © UNHCR

Adi Harush and Mai Aini: On 30 July, UNHCR and partners accessed Adi Harush and Mai Aini refugee camps for the first time since 13 July. The team ascertained that, while the situation inside the camps may be relatively calm, refugees are apprehensive and concerned about the insecure environment outside the camps. Refugees are presently unable to access local markets and basic services. Regional and zonal authorities have restricted the movements of refugees for security reasons. Food distribution in Mai Ani and Adi Harush camps that was due to take place at the end of July was postponed.

The situation in the refugee camps is reportedly calm but acute shortage of water and health services remain critical as humanitarian agencies are unable to resume normal operations due to the uncertain security situation. Movements to the area are restricted as the bridge over the Tekeze River has been damaged, the two bridges that span the Tekeze River between Sheraro and Humera and around Dedebit remain impassable. Movements of cargo and people to and from Shire and Mai Tsebri, are only possible using pulleys and ladders to cross the Tekeze river.

Dabat: Works are progressing in Dabat on the sites already hosting refugees and those expected to receive refugees from Mai Aini and Adi Harush. During the reporting period, UNHCR visited the temporary emergency site in Dabat where 97 refugees currently reside, after having left the camps of Mai Aini and Adi Harush and made their way to Debark and Adi Arkay from where they were then transported to Dabat. UNHCR is advocating with the regional and federal authorities for a cessation of hostilities to grant refugees safe passage to be relocated to Alemwach camp. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society in Gondar and UNICEF plan to provide CRIs along with high energy biscuits to refugees in Dabat. Meanwhile, a WFP mission visited Debark on 25 July and supported the operation with an additional rubble hall.

During the joint UNHCR/ARRA visit to monitor construction activities at Dabat, Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE) presented its planned shelter response to the team. The two-phased plan, that includes construction of 100 hangars, access roads, communal kitchens, demarcation, and improvement of site, is scheduled to be completed before the end of September 2021. Innovative Humanitarian Solution (IHS) deployed staff to conduct hygiene and sanitation works in Dabat school communal sites. Construction of emergency latrine/shower blocks by UNHCR at Dabat school and Edi Tebib is in progress.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

According to the [IOM Emergency Site Assessment \(ESA\) report](#), the conflict in Tigray has displaced some estimated 1.9 million people. UNHCR is working to significantly scale up IDP response operations while undertaking Protection and Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster leadership responsibilities.



Protection: UNHCR's regular protection activities continue to be implemented in IDP sites in Shire and Mekelle. Rapid assessments are being conducted to evaluate the conditions and protection needs of persons of concern considering the evolving situation in Tigray.

Where access has been possible in Tigray, UNHCR has established 40 protection desks in IDP sites in Shire (18) and Mekelle (22). IDPs are provided with information and counselling on protection issues, including on relocations to established IDP sites, and supported with referrals to available service providers. Through these desks, protection teams identify persons at heightened risk and with specific needs, including pregnant women, persons with disabilities, unaccompanied children and older persons and refer them to specialized services, including psychosocial counselling and health services for GBV survivors. Through the Protection cluster, and its areas of responsibility for child protection and GBV, efforts are underway to strengthen the referral pathways and service capacity

UNHCR, through its partner Innovative Humanitarian Solutions (IHS), has identified, referred, or assisted more than 9,000 vulnerable and unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) in Shire's AoR: Axum, Adwa, Sheraro, Endabaguna, Adi Daero and Adi Hageray). There is an urgent need for expanded child protection services in the region, especially the North-western part of Tigray. Many children were separated from their families and/or were unaccompanied by adults during displacement according to various reports.

UNHCR participated in the RRM mission to Wajirat on 19 July and shared the findings with OCHA especially in GBV, Documentation/HLP, Mine action, IDP Returns. There are serious gaps on GBV response identified, including issuance of documentation.

The Regional Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSA) supported by its Statistics Agency is planning to enroll IDPs across Tigray regions and has reached out to UNHCR and other organizations for technical support.

A Protection Cluster Strategy has been drafted, together with UNICEF and UNFPA who coordinate the child protection and GBV areas of responsibility under the Cluster and submitted to members for their endorsement. Their strategy will be accompanied by a workplan.

The escalation of fighting in and around Adi Arkay (Amhara region) has reportedly led to the internal displacement of local communities. With ongoing fighting, there is an increasing number of IDPs arriving at Debark. Local authorities reported the number at 40,000. UNHCR, together with other partners, assessed the situation, food, shelter and CRIs were noted as urgently needed. In the reporting period, preparations for a CRI distribution by UNHCR were ongoing.

UNHCR is undertaking intention surveys with IDPs about return and is leading return planning efforts with attention to the principles of voluntariness and return in safety and dignity. Possible IDP returns have been envisaged and they will be needing our support. It is anticipated that IDPs will have a diverse set of needs including household items, farming equipment and seeds. A reintegration package will be provided to support 75,000 IDP returning households and 30,000 local community households through multi-purpose cash assistance along with CRI kits. UNHCR launched several intention surveys in Mekelle and Shire and will continue in Adigrat, Abi Adi, Axum, Sheraro and Adwa.



Shelter and Non-food Items: As part of the Emergency Shelter and NFI Cluster, UNHCR will participate in a joint field visit to Zana in the central zone to assess damaged homes for possible rehabilitation to support IDPs returning to the town. UNHCR plans to organize monitoring visits to areas of return in the north-western and central zones of Tigray.

UNHCR is working with its partners to finalize the construction of 100 shelters in the Hibret IDP site in Shire. A total of 250 shelters are yet to be constructed. On 15 July, UNHCR and partners in Shire completed the distribution of CRI kits to 500 vulnerable IDP families who were identified

To date, UNHCR and partners have distributed core relief items (CRIs) to more than 14,431 IDP households in Tigray, thus reaching approximately 71,473 individuals. Out of this, 2,750 individuals (500 families) (individuals (500 families) with specific needs (PSNs) have been assisted in Shire during July. UNHCR has prepositioned CRIs for 1,480 IDP families, approximately 7,000 individuals in Shire, Zana and Endabaguna. The Tigray

operation is also expecting the dispatch of CRIs that would cover some 8,000 and 5000 families in Shire and Mekelle's AoRs respectively.



Camp Coordination and Camp Management: On 28 and 29 July, ESNFI and CCCM clusters undertook site assessments in three new sites in Shire - Edaga Bieray, Sudan's Clinic and Mariam Awetsash. The sites have capacity for 202 additional emergency shelters that could accommodate 440 families. At the same time the local authorities are negotiating with the owners of two private schools in Shire to host IDPs temporarily.

UNHCR has established and/or revived community structures in all IDP sites and facilitated the formation of security committees from each IDP site. The community structures in IDP sites in Shire have received trainings and benefitted from material support including stationery and megaphones.

Sudan Response

Arrivals from Ethiopia
(Individuals)*



54,039

Total Arrivals



46,505

East Sudan
(Kassala & Gedaref)¹



7,534

Blue Nile State¹

As of 29 July, the total number of registered new arrivals to Hamdayet Transit Centre stood at approximately 162 individuals including 127 Ethiopians who fled the latest clashes in the Tigray region and 34 Eritreans refugees who escaped compulsory and indefinite military service. This small but significant increase in new arrivals – which started some three weeks after Ethiopia's federal government declared a unilateral ceasefire – and follows renewed fighting between state and non-state armed actors in the Tigray region.

Advocacy with the competent authorities by the Head of Field Office to resume the relocation of some 5,400 Ethiopian refugees from Hamdayet continues in view of the recurrent clashes across the border and potential influx. On 23 July, UNHCR addressed an official letter to the Gedaref Wali, requesting authorization for the decongestion of Hamdayet Transit Center by allowing the mass movement of the refugees from the Transit Center to the Tunaydbah camp, this will be done in cooperation with the Commission for Refugees (COR). Currently, except for family reunification, un-accompanied minors and medical cases, relocation has been suspended since February 2021 pending authorization by local authorities.

In Hamdayet, in order to prepare for the possibility of additional arrivals, UNHCR has set up 12 communal shelters able to accommodate 1,200 new arrivals from regions other than Tigray (as well as an additional 250 tents for persons with specific needs). UNHCR plans to lease 3 tractor trailers to help transport new arrivals, lifesaving supplies such as CRIs and support water trucking. Hot meals have also been planned for 750 new arrivals.

As of 29 July, 28 refugees reportedly tested positive for Hepatitis E – a virus that damages the liver and is transmitted by eating or drinking contaminated food or water. Of these cases, 12 are in Um Rakuba, 6 in Tunaydbah, 5 in Village 8 and 5 in Hamdayet. An additional unconfirmed number of cases of acute jaundice syndrome – which can be a symptom of Hepatitis E – from the host community in and around Um Rakuba have also been reported. No fatalities have been recorded thus far.

UNHCR and partners are working to contain the spread by improving sanitation in the camps and transit centre and increasing the availability of safe drinking water. In Um Rakuba 78% of the total camp population have been reached via soap distribution and a similar distribution is planned for other locations in the coming days. UNHCR and partners are also providing cleaning points to clean water containers, disinfecting boreholes and bolstering hygiene promotion.



Protection: As of 29 July, UNHCR and the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) verified the arrival of some 894 individuals who had fled the Gondar area in Ethiopia's Amhara region to Taya village, Basundah locality, Gedaref State. The group has since been transferred by local authorities to a school compound in Basanga village (some 25 km from the border) to ensure their safety and protection and are being provided with food, shelter, lifesaving core relief items, water, and sanitation by UNHCR and partners. Joint registration with COR was conducted at the household level for the group, which also received tokens to receive assistance.

Efforts to scale up mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) programming in the camps are currently underway starting with the mapping of psychosocial counselling service providers inside the camps. Mental health and psychosocial SOPs have been drafted and awaiting partners to give their comments for adoption; infographics conveying information about the locations of partners as well as MHPSS brochures have been developed awaiting review. UNHCR and its partner Alight conducted a training on Psychological first aid for Um Rakuba community structures targeting (28) male and (7) females; A total of 35 participants were trained for 2 days on 28-29 July. UNHCR and Alight had a bilateral discussion on 31 July with members of HPN4Tigray (Health Professional Network for Tigray) to discuss how they can offer their support to the POC's in Tunaydbah and Um Rakuba based on their areas of expertise i.e psychiatric, trauma informed therapy and education.

UNHCR has been able to provide PSEA refresher trainings in Camp 6 in Wad El Mahi locality in Blue Nile state for some 40 people on Humanitarian Principles, International Refugee Law and PSEA for UNHCR field staff, COR protection and registration staff, partners including CAFA, Save the Children, and World Vision.



Food Security and Nutrition: On 23 July, WFP agreed to temporarily resume in kind food assistance and put on hold cash transfer assistance in Um Rakuba. This comes after a joint WFP/UNHCR and COR meeting with refugee leaders in the camp following a series of demonstrations by refugees over the sudden switch from in kind food to cash assistance.

In-kind food assistance was provided to refugees for the month of July. According to WFP, in-kind food distribution will be distributed for the next few months.

Nutrition screenings were carried out for children below the age of 5 and pregnant and lactating women among new arrivals and as well at camp level for detection (active case finding); referral of acute malnourished cases and enrolment in on-going nutrition program.

A newly recruited Senior Nutrition and Food Security staff for Gedaref is now in place, thjs to enhance and strengthen coordination, collaboration, and leadership of UNHCR in the field of nutrition and food security in Kassala/Gedaref.

UNHCR SENS nutrition survey has been prioritized in order to carry out the monitoring and assessment of

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