

ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY REGION)

16 March – 7 April

Key Developments



UNHCR protection staff register newly arrived Ethiopian refugees at Um Rakuba camp in East Sudan.

ETHIOPIA

- On 7 April, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi [cited](#) the scaling up of humanitarian operations in Tigray as access widens. The High Commissioner stressed that efforts “must be accelerated, as large numbers of displaced people keep arriving in urban areas – 350,000 in Shire town alone – and thousands of Eritrean refugees are still dispersed.”
- On 18 March, UNHCR and partners were able to access Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps for the first time since November 2020. The mission confirmed the destruction of all infrastructure and the absence of refugees in the two camps. The mission was able to briefly visit Sheraro where they received reports of both IDPs and refugees in and around the town. A follow-up mission to Sheraro is planned.

SUDAN

- Approximately 62,500 Ethiopian refugees have been recorded crossing into East Sudan as of 5 April. Some 41,000 refugees have been relocated to Um Rakuba camp (20,572) and Tunaydbah settlement (20,609). Overall population statistics are subject to revision pending additional verification of the remaining refugee population at Hamdayet.
- Discussions are ongoing between UNHCR and local authorities on the resumption of relocation to Tunaydbah settlement, which has been on hold since 24 February due to several factors.
- UNHCR and WFP have started joint rehabilitation of 56k of roads serving Um Rakuba and Tunadybah as well as extensive drainage works as part of flood mitigation activities ahead of the rainy season.



Ethiopia Response

The humanitarian situation across the Tigray Region remains deeply concerning for refugees, the internally displaced and host communities. Civilians have endured five months of conflict with extremely limited basic services and assistance, leading to a significant escalation in humanitarian needs with new displacement ongoing. The security situation remains volatile especially in rural areas, affecting civilians and constraining humanitarian actors on the ground. Basic services have gradually resumed in parts of Tigray; however, electricity and banking services remain intermittent.

With access restrictions lifted, UNHCR aims to reach those Eritrean refugees who have been dispersed by the conflict to areas of Tigray, as well as to significantly scale up IDP response operations while undertaking Protection, and Camp Coordination and Camp Management cluster leadership responsibilities.

Eritrean Refugee Response

The Ethiopian government has announced the closure of the Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps. UNHCR is working with local authorities to identify land to support the potential relocation of 15,000-20,000 Eritrean refugees from the two camps.

As of 1 April, nearly **7,650 refugees** from Hitsats and Shimelba had relocated to Adi Harush and Mai Aini camps either on their own or transported by the government from Shire. Refugees are receiving food and Core Relief Items upon arrival.

In **Mekelle**, Eritrean refugees from Hitsats and Shimelba camps continue to approach UNHCR, with 327 verified as of 1 April. UNHCR continues to provide protection counselling to refugees who have endured traumatic experiences and are in need of psychosocial support.

A UNHCR mission to **Adigrat** received information that there are some 2,000 Eritrean refugees (400 households) living in an IDP site.

Since the 9 March start of the joint ARRA and UNHCR identification exercise of Eritrean refugees from Shimelba and Hitsats who self-relocated to **Addis Ababa**, 1,284 households, representing 2,397 individuals, have so far been identified. Of the total, 2,207 refugees have expressed a desire to have temporary status in Addis Ababa, while 143 expressed a willingness for return/relocation to Adi Harush or Mai Aini camps, and 53 indicated they would like to apply for Out of Camp Policy (OCP) status. The main vulnerabilities are women at risk, unaccompanied and separated children and single parents. UNHCR's urban protection team is in the process of developing a strategy to provide protection assistance to this group.



Protection: UNHCR individual reception, counselling and registration services have reopened at both Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps. Registration teams are working in collaboration with ARRA to update records (death, marriage, and birth), providing documents to those who may have lost them during the conflict and organizing the Global Distribution Tool to be used for food distribution.

UNHCR and partners have re-established protection assistance to support unaccompanied children, women and girls exposed to gender-based violence and psycho-social support to address the trauma that many have experienced.

In Adi Harush and Mai Aini camps, the election process for the Refugee Central Committee (RCC) led by ARRA concluded, with UNHCR in an observatory role. This process will strengthen the community structures and improve communicating with the communities in the camps.



Shelter: The relocation taskforce consisting of UNHCR, ARRA and key partners have identified a new site close to Debark in the Amhara region to accommodate the newly relocating Eritrean refugees. UNHCR is working to retain the legal documentation for the use of land as a refugee camp. Site planning is underway. It is a priority to have the camp ready before the beginning of the rainy season and initiate the relocation.

UNHCR is holding meetings with the refugee community at Mai Aini and Adi Harush to inform refugees of the process for relocation and resettlement to manage their expectations.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) completed the 600 emergency shelters to temporarily house approximately 3,000 refugees in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps.



The relocation of Eritrean refugees from Shire to Adi Harush in northern Ethiopia.



Food Security and Nutrition: Monthly food distributions have been organized with WFP, UNHCR and ARRA since December 2020. In March, some 13,600 Eritrean refugees in Mai Aini camp and 11,500 in Adi Harush camp received the monthly food assistance. All newly relocated refugees have received monthly food rations upon arrival from Shire.



Water and Sanitation: UNHCR and partners are providing 14 litres per person per day in Mai Aini camp, where water systems are fully operational, and 11 litres per person per day in Adi Harush camp where the system has been partially restored. At both sites the level of water level is below UNCHR standards of 20 litres per person per day.

NRC has started the construction of communal latrines around the newly established emergency shelters in both camps. One block of latrines (1 shower, 3 latrines) have been completed and two blocks are at excavation stage.



Non-food items: All 7,650 newly relocated refugees have received Core Relief Items (CRIs) upon arrival to Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps.

Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)



IDPs On 20 March, IOM released a Displacement Tracking Matrix (DTM) [report](#) based on assessments carried out in February. **417,152** (108,116 households) were identified to be displaced across 96 sites in Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions. 360,268 IDPs (92,856 households) were found in Tigray region, 14,933 IDPs (7,560 households) in Amhara region and 41,951 IDPs (7,700 households) in Afar region. These displacement figures do not reflect the total displacement in the Tigray situation, but the number of IDPs identified in the 96 sites that were accessible.

According to the data from the interim government (Bureau of Labor and Social Affairs), there are currently **82,000 IDPs in Mekelle**, mostly living with the host community. This figure includes 30,000 individuals living in 15 collective centers and the remaining population living with the host communities.

In **Shire**: According to the local authorities, there are around **352,000 IDPs** sheltered in 12 sites, including about **75,000 IDP new arrivals** mainly from West Tigray.



Protection: In **Mekelle**, UNHCR continues to hold regular protection counselling through protection desks in the old IDP sites. In the new three IDP sites, UNHCR has started protection monitoring. As of 6 April, protection desks have been operational in the three sites with the support of 300 volunteers, with gender parity.

Awareness raising materials on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) were provided to five IDP collective centers in **Mekelle**. Women Association Committees in each center are engaged in disseminating PSEA awareness messages with their respective collective centers.



Shelter and Non-food Items:

At **Mai Tsebbi** IDP site, the distribution of Core Relief Items (CRIs) for 4,011 IDPs (900 households) was completed on 26 March. The distribution was the first and was jointly undertaken by Innovative Humanitarian Services (IHS) and UNHCR.

In Mayawoini IDP site in **Mekelle**, UNHCR has distributed CRIs to 500 household in collaboration with IHS, BoLSA and the IDP committee.



UNHCR and partners distribute Core Relief Item kits to IDPs in Shire.



Camp Coordination and Camp

Management: In **Shire**, a new IDP site which consists of three plots of land with the capacity for **18,740** individuals to be relocated from current temporary sites has been approved by the authorities. The search for additional land to accommodate IDPs is ongoing.

In **Mekelle**, efforts are underway to begin the relocation of IDPs from the informal sites to the identified site at Sabacare 4, which has space for up to **27,000** IDPs. The Relocation Task Force, which consists of Protection and CCCM cluster members, is working closely with the government to ensure that the relocation proceeds in accordance with key protection principles, providing information to IDPs and arranging go-and-see visits to the new site. There is a significant shortage in shelter and WASH facilities which may present delays to the process.

Sudan Response

The influx of refugees from the Tigray region into Sudan has continued with fewer than 50 arrivals per day in March. Refugees continue to arrive mainly at Hamdayet transit center with fewer number of new arrivals to Village 8.

Relocation: Since 13 November, 20,572 refugees were relocated from Hamdayet and Abderafi border points, and Village 8 transit site to Um Rakuba – 70kms away from the Ethiopian border. **Um Rakuba** camp has reached full capacity and no further relocations will take place except for family reunification purposes.

On 3 January, UNHCR and partners began relocations to **Tunaydbah** – 136kms away from Gedaref town. By 24 February 20,609 refugees had been relocated to Tunaydbah from Hamdayet and Village 8.

In **Hamdayet and Village 8**, UNHCR and Commissioner for Refugees (COR) will conduct biometric verification at both border sites. The verification in Hamdayet will commence on 7 April. It is estimated that the exercise in both locations will be completed within 14 days. Ongoing effort to sensitize refugees is ongoing.

SECTOR UPDATES



Protection: In all locations, Protection desks have been established to provide information on legal issues, rights, and obligations of refugees and facilitate the registration process. Protection teams are identifying people at heightened risk, including pregnant women, persons with disabilities, unaccompanied children and older persons and referring them to specialized services as may be needed, including counselling and health services for survivors of gender-based violence.

UNHCR and Alight developed an identification tool for persons with specific needs (PSN), which is being used in Tunaydbah, Um Rakuba and Hamdayet. According to the initial findings, there is a high number of persons with disabilities, and in need of medical attention, core relief items, and livelihood activities – mainly among female refugees.

The Inter-Agency Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Task Force met at Head of Agency level in Gedaref state. Partners shared their PSEA focal points as well as self-assessments using the UNHCR provided checklist.

SEA-specific findings from the Gender Based Violence (GBV) Rapid Assessment found sex in exchange for increased food rations; sex in exchange for securing a job; and some participants indicated that adolescent girls are encouraged into exploitive situations selling sex to support their families.

All agencies agreed to work on a plan of action for raising awareness among staff, harmonizing messaging, and establishing a joint community-based complaint and feedback mechanism (in line with National PSEA Working Group) through the Communicating with Communities Working Group.



Child Protection: UNHCR and partners are working to scale up child protection programmes in the camps and Transit Centers, with a focus on psychosocial support, family tracing and reunification of unaccompanied and separated children, and referrals to support services.

Plan International (PI) registered and engaged 80 children in recreational activities in the child friendly space in Hamdayet, including games and sports.

In Um Rakuba, a youth center run by a volunteer teacher continued to host recreational activities with sports and recreational activities.



Education: Ahead of the rainy season, education partners have agreed to construct semi-permanent classrooms in Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah for children to enjoy learning in a safe space.

NRC has received funding to conduct secondary and youth livelihood initiatives.

Partners agreed to start building temporary learning spaces (TLSs) in Tunaydbah, as well as training teachers, and identifying and registering students.

In Um Rakuba, NRC established two TLCs with five classrooms for primary learning. The TLC also hosts temporary learning activities for children at the secondary level. The construction of a third TLC is expected to start soon.



Registration of newly arrived Ethiopian refugees at Tunaydbah settlement.



Health: UNHCR and partners

continue to conduct temperature screenings, distribute soap at entry points, and sensitization of refugees on COVID-19 mitigation measures in Tigrayan language.

There are seven Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) services established, two of which have been recently strengthened. More than 6,300 children under five received polio vaccination in all sites.

A total of six new Community-Based Management of Acute Malnutrition Model (CMAM) centers have been established. There is daily Mid-Upper Arm Circumference (MUAC) screening plus biweekly mass screening at all sites. The number of children under five screened as of end February is 34,669 and the number of pregnant/lactating mothers screened is 3,255.



Food Security and Nutrition: WFP continues monthly food distributions at all sites.



Water and Sanitation: The Hygiene Working Group developed a Hygiene Promotion and Community Engagement Operational strategy for Um Rakuba camp.

In Hamdayet, Sudan Vision and Ministry of Health conduct routine garbage collection and disposal at the transit center. COOPI is supplying 36,000 cubic meters of water to the center.

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