

ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY REGION)

1 - 14 February 2021



UNHCR Ethiopia Representative talks to Eritrean refugee children in Mai-Aini camp in the Tigray region.

Key Developments

SUDAN

- More than **61,200** Ethiopian refugees have crossed into East Sudan as of 14 February.
- 20,572 refugees have been relocated to Um Rakuba camp, and 14,551 refugees to Tunaydbah settlement. Relocations from Hamdayet reception center resumed as of 14 February with more than 1,000 relocated to Tunaydbah settlement.
- UNHCR and partners continue to establish refugee community structures at all sites.

ETHIOPIA

- UNHCR and partners have established a regular presence in the two southern Eritrean refugee camps, Mai-Aini and Adi Harush. UNHCR will also use the new operational base at Debark to support the IDP response in the Tigray region.
- The Ethiopian government has announced the closure of Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps and the relocation of Eritrean refugees dispersed across Tigray to Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush camps. So far, some 5,000 have relocated to the two southern camps.
- A relocation taskforce consisting of UNHCR, government counterpart ARRA and key partners is ensuring rapid establishment of shelter and other services at Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush camps.

Response

Ethiopia

The humanitarian situation across the Tigray Region remains deeply concerning. Many refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities have endured more than three months of conflict with extremely limited assistance, leading to a significant escalation in humanitarian needs. The security situation remains volatile especially in rural areas, and in and around Shire, 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.

Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps: UNHCR and humanitarian partners have had no access to Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps for more than three months. The Ethiopian government has announced the closure of the two refugee camps. UNHCR estimates between 15,000 and 20,000 refugees who had been residing in the two camps have dispersed across the region and further beyond. On 23 January, the authorities initiated the relocation – mainly from Shire to date – of refugees who have fled Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps to Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush refugee camps.

Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush refugee camps: UNHCR and partners are planning for the relocation of some 15,000 Eritrean refugees from Hitsats and Shimelba camps to Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush camps. More than 5,000 have so far arrived, some on their own while others were transported by the government. The relocated population are receiving core relief items and food rations upon arrival.

UNHCR has set up an operational hub in Debarke to support the re-establishment of services in Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush refugee camps. The team is strengthening protection and registration services in the camps. WASH, shelter and health specialists are on the ground.



Eritrean refugee Halima (in yellow) prepares a meal for her eight children at Mai-Aini camp in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

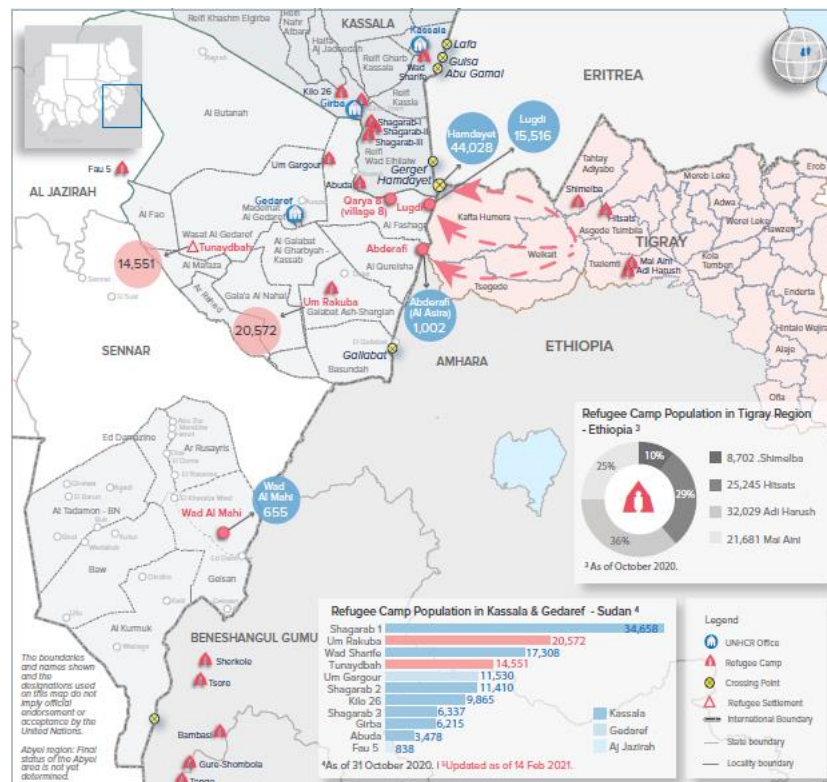
Shelter: The relocation taskforce consisting of UNHCR, government counterpart ARRA and key partners are looking to rapidly expand shelter and services at Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush camps. Shelter remains an urgent protection concern. UNHCR and partners continue to work on identifying potential additional space and shelter solutions to host relocated refugees.

IDPs in Shire: The first UN mission to Shire town took place earlier this month. **UNICEF** accompanied the Regional Health Bureau head, with six trucks of 122 tons of emergency supplies. The UNICEF team found there was no drinking water as the water treatment plant is not functioning. UNICEF and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society are trucking water to the most vulnerable families.

An estimated 52,000 IDPs are hosted in and around Shire. UNHCR and partners have provided humanitarian assistance to nearly 8,500 IDPs residing in three sites in Shire town, including clean water, establishing health facilities, referrals for health services, reproductive health, psychological first aid, upgrading and installing WASH facilities and educational activities. Mattresses, blankets, soap, and high energy biscuits have been distributed. Measures for prevention and response to gender-based violence are also being instituted. The **Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS)** has identified serious protection concerns among the IDP population including instances of rape, HIV and unsafe abortions.

IDPs and refugees in Mekelle: A UNHCR mission departed to Mekelle on 11 February to look at scaling up UNHCR's Mekelle office to meet the protection and humanitarian needs of refugees and IDPs. There are currently seven IDP sites in Mekelle with an estimated 50,000 IDPs. Protection concerns of family separation, unaccompanied children, and trauma have been identified.

In Mekelle, **World Vision** distributed 1,000 NFI kits in the Southern zone and 560 kits in Alamata and Chercher, as well as more than 600 jerricans, buckets and washing basins.



Sudan

As of 14 February, the influx of refugees from the Tigray region into Sudan had surpassed 61,200. Refugees continue to arrive mainly at Hamdayet transit center with fewer number of new arrivals to Village 8.

The new arrivals tell of walking long distances to reach Sudan. Refugees had to leave the elderly and chronically ill behind in Ethiopia. They also indicate they were without food and water during flight.

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 the new settlement, Tunaydbah – 136kms away from Gedaref town. By 14 February, more than 14,551 refugees had been relocated.

According to registration figures some 24,000 refugees at Village 8 (2,663) and (22,760) at Hamdayet are yet to be relocated to Tunaydbah. However, UNHCR in coordination with the Commissioner for Refugees (COR) completed an initial verification exercise to identify the actual Ethiopian refugee population in Hamdayet and the town, and have estimated the figure to be closer to 15,000. Relocation of refugees remains a priority to ensure their safety and security away from the border.

UNHCR is holding daily discussions with refugee leaders and refugees who remain in Village 8 to understand their reluctance to relocate to Tunaydbah. Some stated their commodities (motorbikes/tractors/livestock) are still in Village 8 customs area. UNHCR's legal partner is following-up with the authorities. Other reasons include refugees wanting to observe the security situation in Ethiopia with the hope of returning, while some are also waiting for family members that are yet to arrive in Village 8. Refugees also reported receiving information from Tunaydbah that there is no accommodation and other services. UNHCR and COR continue to engage refugees to provide up-to-date information on land extension and services provided in Tunaydbah and on the process of customs in Sudan.

COVID-19 precautionary measures such as social distancing, temperature checks, and the use of masks are in place during relocation movements. Refugees are also provided with water and high energy biscuits for the trip.

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 including counselling and health services for survivors of gender-based violence.

UNHCR is conducting protection monitoring exercises across all sites with the aim to provide a clear protection analysis by understanding the protection needs, gaps, challenges and opportunities, inform protection priorities plans and interventions, and improve internal and external reporting, as well as advocacy and awareness raising. Initial observations include that 92 per cent of those interviewed stated that they fled due to generalized violence. 44 per cent stated that they had left behind family members who are now in different parts of Tigray.

Gender-based violence (GBV) likely remains under reported. Information gathered from rapid assessments, protection monitoring tools, and interviews with women and girls have highlighted that many women fled from their villages following information of armed groups committing serious human rights violations such as rape, torture and killing. Women who reported GBV stated these incidents happened when they went back to their homes to collect food and clothes for their families so they could flee Ethiopia. As women and girls went back home to collect basic items, many were separated from their families. Refugees in the camp are receiving information from media and families remaining in Ethiopia who report human rights violations, including torture and rape at detention centers. Cases of rape and gang rape resulting in unwanted pregnancies have been reported and due to the stigma girls approach health facilities for abortion. Girls and women who engaged in survival sex while in Ethiopia have continued with the activity at the transit centers and camps in East Sudan. Women and girls appear distressed and traumatized by the conflict in Ethiopia and approach women centers for peer support. Survivors of torture have also been approaching women centers for support and referral to other services.

UNHCR held a two-day workshop on Refugee Law for government officials who are involved in the formulation and application of legislation and policies affecting people in need of protection. The workshop also focused on raising awareness on anti-trafficking, coordination, and procedure for refugees to apply for work permits.

In **Hamdayet reception center**, the community has formed a committee structure to have continuous contact with the community and two-way communication with humanitarian partners on the ground. The community nominated 15 representatives to oversees service delivery including distribution and logistics, communication and monitoring, transportation and relocation, and social activities.

Tunaydbah settlement: A **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)** session was held for 33 refugee volunteers, staff from MSF, UNICEF, COR, and SORD in Tunaydbah. The session enhanced awareness-raising among the group on PSEA and mechanisms for feedback and reporting and referral mechanism.

A second Women's Centre has been opened by **Alight** in Tunaydbah. Women held informal discussion on the situation in the camp and those with specific needs were identified and referred to services provided in the settlement.

A list of 80 committee members from six blocks in Tunaydbah settlement have been established. The committee structure will be linked with communicating with the communities, GBV, child protection and other sectors for disseminating information, identification and referrals of issues/cases and required follow ups.



UNHCR protection teams hold focus group discussions with Ethiopian girl refugees in Tunaydbah settlement in East Sudan.

30 members of community committees and leaders have informed UNHCR that families are facing tension mainly caused by limited assistance. UNHCR and partners are designing information dissemination on negative coping mechanisms and gender-based violence.



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.

There has been an increasing number of unaccompanied and separated children identified within the first week of February. According to the **Sudan State Council and Child Welfare (SCCW)**, there are currently 33 unaccompanied and 61 separated children at Hamdayet. SCCW informed that the families of 37 children out of the 61 separated children were located (31 in Um Rakuba and 6 in Tunaydbah). Some of the unaccompanied children are coming directly from Ethiopia and some are coming from the Hamdayet market area. Best Interests Assessments are ongoing. Unaccompanied children have received complementary food assistance as well as soap from the Tigray society. Separated children are already living with an adult caregiver. UNHCR together with Plan International and SCCW will assess and continue to monitor the care arrangements.

UNHCR held trainings on child protection with protection staff on the ground. UNHCR together with UNICEF also held a training for SCCW social workers. The focus of the trainings was definition of children at risk and techniques for identification. The trainings focused on the principles of child rights and referral pathways.

Educational and recreational activities continue at child friendly spaces in Um Rakuba camp. In addition to psychosocial support through recreational activities and art. The space also sensitizes children on COVID-19 prevention and personal hygiene. In Tunaydbah, child protection activities have not started. Child protection partners have committed to implement child protection programmes but partners are still in the process of completing construction of facilities and recruitment of staff and community-based animators.



Education: UNHCR and UNICEF conducted a school education assessment in Al-Mafasa locality where Tunaydbah settlement is located. Four public schools where refugee children are already attending were assessed. All schools need rehabilitation while others will need additional classrooms. There is a need for segregated latrines and a privacy room for girls. The schools do have water connections. Classes are in Tigrinya and English. A similar assessment will be undertaken in Um Rakuba.



Health: Temperature screening is in place at the entry point in Hamdayet. UNHCR continues to distribute soaps and masks to new arrivals at Hamdayet and Village 8. In Um Rakuba camp, a COVID-19 isolation center has been established with 32 isolation tents.

Health services have increased across all sites. **International Rescue Committee (IRC)** opened a clinic in Tunaydbah, **UNDP** will mobilize the medical mobile unit in the camps which will include management of Tuberculosis, Malaria, HIV and NTD. In addition, **ZOA** is finalizing a health clinic in zone II of Um Rakuba camp. The Ministry of Health has endorsed referral care standard of procedures to be implemented by all health partners.

There is a risk of malnutrition and nutrition services have been enhanced in coordination with Ministry of Health, UNICEF, and partners. **Concern** and Alight started community-based management of acute malnutrition (CMAM) in both sites where the programme also expanded to immunization (EPI) services including outreach interventions.

Hamdayet reception center: **MSF** has reported approximately 250 patients per day are being treated. MSF continues to carry out screening of new arrivals at the border area. There has been an increase of respiratory infections among the refugee community, with diarrhea as the second most common ailment. Screening and nutrition activities are ongoing. Nutrition screening is concerning - 253 out of the first 483 screened refugees

are on a nutrition program. Nutrition screening at the crossing points is also ongoing. MSF together with MoH will carry out a screening for everyone at the site.

Um Rakuba camp: An increase of watery diarrhea has been attributed to inadequate hygiene and poor sanitation in the camp. WASH partners are working to improve hygiene promotion activities.



Food Security and Nutrition: In Village 8 transit center, WFP continues to distribute dry food rations and high energy biscuits to all new arrivals including during the relocation to Tunaydbah settlement.

Hamdayet reception center: Muslim Aid is serving two hot meals a day for refugees and new arrivals at Hamdayet. There have been complaints from the refugees regarding the food and some had requested for dry food rations. WFP will begin distribution of dry food rations this week.

In Um Rakuba camp, WFP finalized the January food distribution cycle where 12,266 households (20,406 individuals) received food assistance. WFP is operating two milling machines in zone I and III to assist refugees who want their sorghum milled, at no cost.



Water and Sanitation: COR, MoH and Water State Department and Department of Environment in Gedaref officially shared the design of permanent latrines approved for Um Rakuba and Tunaydbah due to health consideration. Partners are in discussion with the authorities as the requirements will have an impact on project implementation and cost. UNHCR received approval to continue the emergency latrines constructed by partners until the beginning of the rainy season in May.

Village 8 transit center: UNHCR continues to truck water in eight bladders and is relocating bladders to serve the refugees who have been asked to consolidate the remaining population following the mass relocation to Tunaydbah.

Hamdayet reception center: To address the deteriorating WASH situation UNICEF has agreed to support WASH activities including construction of 60 new latrines as well as to decommission the old ones. SRCS will support with sewage and solid waste management and vector control activities, and distribution of water purification sachets. MSF will support in hygiene promotion activities until service provision is improved and pending more partners to support.

Um Rakuba camp: UNHCR is trucking up to 190,000 litres of clean water for drinking and domestic needs per day using containers provided by UNICEF. The MoH, supported by WHO does the water quality control. There has been a delay in the water pipeline project pending approval by government authorities.

There are currently some 350 emergency latrines, 180 showers and more than 20 water points across the three zones in Um Rakuba camp.

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