

ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY REGION)

24 December-12 January



The first group of refugees from Ethiopia's Tigray region are welcomed by UNHCR staff at Tunaydbah refugee camp, Sudan
 ©UNHCR/Taylan Dagci

Key Developments

SUDAN

- Nearly 57,500 Ethiopian refugees have crossed into East Sudan as of 12 January. Many are arriving with little more than the clothes on their backs, fatigued and in weak conditions after sometimes days of travel, reporting ongoing insecurity and violence in Tigray.
- With Um Rakuba camp reaching its current capacity, in the first week of January UNHCR and partners have relocated nearly 5,000 refugees from Village 8 and Hamdayet reception sites at the border to Tunaydbah, a second, newly established refugee settlement site. Clashes along the Sudan-Ethiopia border have prompted an acceleration of relocation efforts away from the border.

ETHIOPIA

- A UNHCR led inter-agency multisectoral assessment mission to Gondar (Amhara region) and two of the four Eritrean refugee camps – Mai Aini and Aidi Harush – took place from 4 to 9 January. Refugees at both camps noted that service provision had completely ceased during the conflict and they remain particularly concerned about their safety and security, reporting ongoing looting in the camp at night by armed groups/persons.
- UNHCR and partners remain without access to Shimelba and Hitsats Eritrean refugee camps near Shire for two months, during which no humanitarian services have been provided. There are reports of ongoing insecurity and additional destruction at the camps in the first week of January.
- The initial [findings](#) of two assessment missions carried out by humanitarian partners jointly with the government in late December to south-eastern Tigray and western Tigray indicate a dire humanitarian situation throughout the region, with widespread internal displacement and poor access to services and limited livelihoods as well as urgent needs for shelter, food, non-food items, water, sanitation and hygiene, and provision of health and protection services.

UNHCR Response

Ethiopia

The humanitarian situation across the Tigray Region remains extremely concerning for Eritrean refugees along with the growing number of internally displaced and host communities. The Tigray region remains volatile, with pockets of insecurity and conflict, while humanitarian access and the ability to move supplies and personnel remains constrained.

While some telecommunications have resumed in parts of Tigray, the majority of roads to and within the region remain inaccessible and basic services including healthcare and banking have virtually ceased to operate, with food and electricity in short supply.

On 4 January following approval by the Federal Government, UNHCR led a weeklong inter-agency multisectoral assessment mission to Gondar (Amhara region) and two of the four Eritrean refugee camps – Mai Aini and Adi Harush. In dozens of interviews and several focus groups discussions, refugees reported having no food or water for weeks and the stoppage of health, education and all other services. Refugees at both camps are particularly concerned about their safety and security, reporting ongoing looting in the camp at night by unknown armed groups/persons.

In Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps, International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been working to resume the provision of clean water and the government refugee agency, ARRA, has reestablished basic health services.

UNHCR and partners remain without access to Shimelba and Hitsats refugee camps near Shire for two full months, during which no humanitarian services have been provided. Media and other reports portray ongoing insecurity and recent destruction at and around the camps.

More than 4,000 Eritrean refugees are estimated to be in and around Shire town, including recent arrivals from Hitsats and Shimelba camp who are struggling to survive, in need of shelter, food and essential services that are not available. The ARRA transit hall which has been sheltering Eritrean refugees has run out of capacity to accommodate new arrivals and many are sleeping on the street or in open fields.

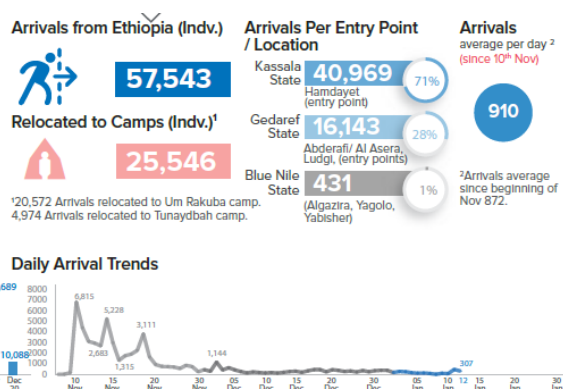
Discussions are ongoing with the federal government for UNHCR to have unhindered access to the four Eritrean refugee camps, and to areas where refugees have fled to within Tigray and outside the region.

UNHCR and partners have been able to provide some humanitarian assistance to IDPs in three sites in Shire town, including clean water, health referrals and reproductive health interventions, psychological first aid and prevention and response to gender-based violence. Additional mattresses, blankets, soap and high energy biscuits have been provided to vulnerable families.

Sudan

The influx of refugees from the Tigray region into Sudan continues, reaching more than 57,500 by 12 January.

Refugees arriving tell of being caught in the conflict and being victims of various armed groups, including looting of property, forceful recruitment of men and boys, and sexual violence against women and girls.



Registration at household level is being done by the Commissioner of Refugees (COR) and initial figures show that among the first 18,000 households registered, 64 percent are adults aged 18-59 years, 31 percent are children (under 18) and five percent are elderly (60 and over). There appears to be an increasing trend of elderly and single mothers with their children arriving to Sudan.

Both reception areas in Hamdayet and Village 8 are still overcrowded. In refugee camps and reception sites, it is critical to further improve water and sanitation conditions as well as to ramp up COVID-19 prevention measures, including isolation facilities.

Relocation: Since 13 November, 20,572 people have been relocated from Hamdayet and Abderafi border points, and Village 8 transit site to Um Rakuba – 70kms away from the Ethiopian border. Although discussions on extension are ongoing, Um Rakuba camp is reaching its current capacity and no further relocations will take place for the time being except for family reunification purposes.

On 3 January, UNHCR and partners began relocations to the new settlement, Tunaydbah – 136kms away from Gedaref town. As of 12 January, a total of 4,974 refugees have been relocated from Hamdayet border point and Village 8 transit site. At both locations, Hamdayet and Village 8, nearly 20,000 refugees have registered to be relocated to Tunaydbah camp.

COVID-19 precautionary measures are in place during the movements include social distancing, temperature checks, and mask use. Refugees are provided water and high energy biscuits for the trip. An ambulance accompanies the convoys from Village 8 to Tunaydbah camp to support with medical cases if needed.

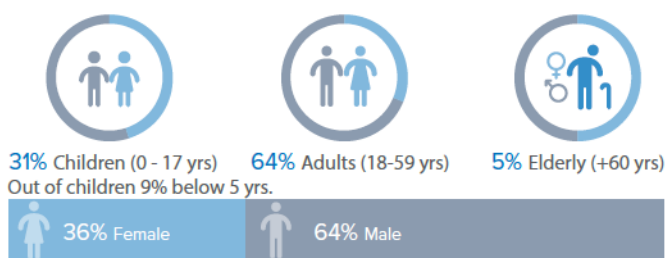
Protection: Protection desks have been established in all locations. The desks provide information on legal issues, right and obligations of refugees in country of asylum, and facilitate the registration process. Protection teams are identifying people at heightened risk and referring them to specialized services, including pregnant women, persons with disabilities, unaccompanied children and older persons. Counselling and health services are available for survivors of gender-based violence.

Family tracing services continue, and free calls provided for refugees in Hamdayet with an average of 100 calls per day and in Village 8 with an average of 40 calls per day.

An inter-agency **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA)** task force has been established recognizing the high risk of SEA in this environment. The taskforce finalized the first PSEA training with 50 participants from partners and security personnel. Posters are being visibly put up across the sites to widely publicize PSEA-related information for refugees.

Child protection: To enhance the facilitation of family tracing and reunification (FTR) for refugee children and minors, a meeting was held on 27 December with the State Council of Child Welfare (SCCW), focal point for FTR in Gedaref and Kassala State, and a committee comprising of focal points from Sudanese Red Crescent (SRC), Save the Children International (SCI) Plan International and COR was established.

Estimated Demographic Data³



³Population distribution statistics are based on the ongoing household registration (18,000 HH) conducted by UNHCR and COR at registration centers.



Relocation convoy from Hamdayet to Tunaydbah camp. UNHCR/Ali Abdi Ahmed

Education: Students in their final stages of tertiary education in Ethiopia have raised concern of their future. Many of them claim their academic documents remained in Ethiopia. There is a need to start profiling the refugees and their levels of education to inform advocacy and design interventions that can address their concerns.

COVID-19: Four positive cases have been identified in Um Rakuba camp and are currently in isolation in the camp. More than 60 close contacts have been identified and quarantined. The State Ministry of Health (SMoH), WHO and COR are leading the response with the support from UNCHR and partners.

Temperature screenings are in place at the entry point in Hamdayet for new arrivals. UNCHR continues to distribute soaps and masks to new arrivals at Hamdayet and Village 8. In Um Rakuba masks continue to be distributed at the four registration points. Information on COVID-19 including leaflets have been disseminated at all sites.

Village 8 in Gedaref State: Refugees arriving at Lugdi are being transported by the Sudanese army to Village 8, further away from the border. Nearly 12,200 refugees remain at Village 8 with daily new arrivals.

Currently, 12 partners are operating at Village 8, they are mainly supporting with protection, food and nutrition, health, WASH, and core relief items.

Protection: UNHCR protection help desk on site continue to identify and refer people with specific needs to specialized services. The protection desk continues to inform refugees of legal and GBV issues, right and obligations of refugees in country of asylum, and facilitates the registration process. The refugee committee continues to support families with the latest information on how to register, to receive services and assistance and to register for relocation to Tunaydbah camp.

Core relief items: UNHCR, through COR, is distributing core relief items to new arrivals and people with specific needs. The items include blankets, sleeping mats, soap and plastic sheets.

Food: WFP finalized the distribution for December dry food rations to nearly 12,000 refugees and to all new arrivals. New arrivals and refugees being relocated to Tunaydbah camp are also being provided with high energy biscuits.

Health: At Village 8, MSF is providing support with primary healthcare at the clinic run by the Ethiopian refugee health team where more than 1,000 medical consultations have been conducted for both the refugee and host community. Most of the cases received are acute watery diarrhea (AWD), malaria, upper respiratory tract infection and minor cases of skin diseases. Treatments and medications are being provided.

MSF has supported the clinic with a maternity hall with beds and mattresses including an MSF midwife to begin the delivery of babies. MSF will also support with a generator to operate 24/7.



High energy biscuits provided to refugees being relocated to Tunaydbah camp.

The Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development (SORD) and UNFPA sexual and reproductive mobile health clinic is supporting refugees and the host community. The mobile clinic is supporting between 200-300 people per day with medical consultations including neo-material services, family planning services to women, and sexually transmitted infections treatment.

The Ministry of Health with the support of UNICEF are screening children under five and pregnant and lactating women for malnutrition and supporting with supplementary feeding programs. They are also supporting with vaccinating children under five with polio, measles and meningitis.

SORD counsellor is supporting with psychological first aid sessions to refugees in need of basic mental health support.

WASH: UNHCR and MSF continue to truck 90,000 litres of water daily with water chlorination. There is a need to rehabilitate the main water treatment plant.

There are 110 latrines on site and WASH actors continue to segregate and designate for women and men.

Hamdayet in Kassala State: Hamdayet remains overcrowded. Currently, nearly 23,000 people are at Hamdayet reception centre and in Hamdayet town residing with the host community.

UNHCR and partners are carrying out information campaigns on the relocation process for refugees to Tunaydbah, focusing on refugees at the reception centre, residing in the market and with the host community in Hamdayet. Most refugees were receptive to the relocation. UNHCR continues with preparation including the premanifest registration and identification of persons with special needs.

Currently, 15 partners are operating at Hamdayet, mainly supporting with protection, food and nutrition, health, WASH, shelter, and core relief items.

Protection: The UNHCR protection help desk and mobile teams, with the support of Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) volunteers, continue to identify people with specific needs and ensure their basic needs are met such as food, relief items and referrals to specialised services, these include pregnant women, people with disabilities, women at risk and other vulnerable people.

UNHCR and community volunteers have conducted home visits to families at the transit centre. The main concern shared is they have spent most of their resources including farm animals and request to be relocated to the Tunaydbah camp. Some families believe their missing family members are at Um Rakuba camp and have requested to be relocated.



UNHCR staff register Ethiopian refugee at registration desk in Village 8.

GBV: In Hamdayet, UNHCR held a focus group discussion with 12 female refugees (14-40 years). The main challenges they face include lack of sanitary materials, trauma associated witnessing young girls being raped in Ethiopia, lack of proper WASH facility, lack of privacy and financial constraints to meet their basic needs.

Child protection: The UNHCR child protection desk are screening and identifying unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and other vulnerable children. Referral to specific services and counselling continues.

UNHCR child protection team held a focus group discussion with 30 children to understand their situation and the hardships they are face. They shared their wish to continue their education, request for more child friendly spaces and books, paper and pens.

Plan International (PI) continues to provide educational and recreational activities to nearly 700 children. There is a need for additional child friendly spaces.

Shelter/Core relief items: Ten additional communal shelters have been completed to accommodate the increasing number of new arrivals. UNHCR through COR continue to distribute core relief items that include blankets, sleeping mats, soap and plastic sheets to the new arrivals and people with specific needs.

Food: Two hot meals are being provided at Hamdayet. Muslim Aid serves roughly 3,500 refugees for breakfast and 4,500 refugees for dinner. However, considering the current refugee registration at Hamdayet,

more than 20,000 refugees are not collecting meals. The reasons are families prefer to cook their own meals and some do not like the type of food served.

On 4 January, Forest National Cooperation (FNC) delivered 1,000 improved Badia stoves to Um Rakuba Camp. The second batch of 1,000 is expected to be delivered by 25 January. The consignment is part of the rehabilitation of environment in refugee hosting areas, funded by UNHCR. The intervention is expected to support the refugees with economical cooking options.

Health: In Hamdayet, two state clinics continue to provide health services to nearly 200-300 refugees per day the main illnesses have been reported to be acute watery diarrhea (AWD), upper and lower respiratory tract infection as well as malaria. MSF continues to screen new arrivals at the health screening point at the Tekeze River. The MSF mobile clinic also provides medical consultation to refugees and the host community.

Vaccination teams are vaccinating children for measles, meningitis, and polio. Nutritional teams are screening children under five and pregnant and lactating women for malnutrition and providing treatments.

The Sudanese Organization for Research and Development (SORD) mobile clinic with the support of UNFPA are providing medical consultations including neo-maternal services, family planning services to women and sexually transmitted infection treatment for people.

SORD counsellors are supporting people in need with psychological first aid sessions and providing basic mental health support.

WASH: To ensure access to clean water, Cooperazione Internazionale (COOPI) continues to truck nearly 100,000 litres of chlorinated water per day that benefit around 7,000 people every day; UNHCR carries out daily water quality control. One water bladder has been added to the reception centre making a total of five at the location.

World Hunger Aid (WHH) has constructed ten additional latrines and maintain the non-functional latrines. UNHCR has set up three water tanks for handwashing and cleaning for the latrines at the reception centre and WHH completed the drainage system for them.

Solid waste management and hygiene promotion campaigns continue around the transit centre compound, registration sites, clinics, and water points through daily workers from the refugee community supported by Concern and Sudan Vision volunteers.

Um Rakuba camp: The site is currently hosting 20,572 refugees. There is currently an unbalanced distribution of services at Um Rakuba and a need to reorganize the camp to take the services closer to all refugees.

COR has identified additional land (187,512 square meters) to allocate shelter for 1,120 refugees who remain at the transit site and reorganize tents for 500 families. Discussions on the additional land are ongoing with the host community and local officials.

There are 21 partners operating at Um Rakuba supporting with protection, education, food and nutrition, health, WASH, shelter, and core relief items. Daily camp coordination meetings continue with all partners by UNHCR and COR. Sector and technical coordination meetings are held regularly inside the camp to ensure that partners understand the real gaps and needs for Um Rakuba.



A refugee and volunteer teacher from Ethiopia teaches refugee children Tigrinya language studies at temporary classroom in Um Rakuba camp.

Protection: Individual registration with Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS) continues in Um Rakuba camp. UNHCR protection desk at the reception centre, with the support of SRCS volunteers, provide new arrivals with a safe space to raise their protection concerns. UNHCR protection staff continue to identify persons with specific needs and provide support as well as facilitating access to services.

Child protection: Save the Children (SCI) is providing care for 116 unaccompanied minors as alternative care arrangements is found for them.

SCI continues to operate its mobile child friendly space with activities including drama, drawing, singing, and sports, reaching over 1,200 children. Plan International Plan established a child friendly space, reaching 300 children. The MoH, supported by UNICEF, continue to operate a child friendly space for recreational activities like sports.

Education: The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) continues to operate two primary schools from grade one to eight with students aging from six to 13 years. The two schools rotate between two shifts and no formal curriculum is being taught yet.

UNHCR, Save the Children International (SCI) and NRC agreed on the set-up of a child friendly playground and a third primary school. Each partner will present the site layout plan for their facilities to optimize the space for an integrated child friendly and recreational space along with a primary school.

The gap remains for secondary education. UNHCR, NRC and SCI are working to address the issue.

On 28 December, the Um Rakuba camp level education sector working group chaired by SCI was held with the main education partners. The key priority is to map out the immediate and long-term education needs for the education response and overall education strategy.

Food: WFP finalized the general food distribution for cycle II for Um Rakuba camp on 31 December. Overall, 92 percent (19,094) out of the 20,752 refugees who have been issued ration cards received their December food rations. The remainder (8 percent) have not shown up to date to receive their food and WFP, UNHCR and COR with refugee leaders are working to determine the reasons.

Health: One primary health care clinic near the camp, supported by Mercy Corps (MC), continues to provide health services to the refugees. For further support, the American Refugee Committee (ARC) has established a primary health care clinic at Um Rakuba and will begin to support with health services. MSF continues to run a health facility at the site and providing medicines and medical supplies. Ascend UK have set up a clinic and provides laboratory tests and conducts hygiene promotion campaigns.

Medical referral services and access to medicine in Um Rakuba camp remains a challenge for refugees.

WASH: UNHCR is providing clean water through trucking to meet drinking and domestic needs; nearly 90,000 litres per day, using water containers provided by UNICEF. The MoH, with the support of WHO, is conducting water quality control. Preparations are ongoing to construct a water supply distribution system to replace water trucking.

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