

ETHIOPIA SITUATION (TIGRAY REGION)

18-26 December



A refugee from Ethiopia sits with her young daughter in their makeshift shelter at the Um Rakuba camp.

Key Developments

- On 22 December, UNHCR and partners launched the [Regional Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan for the Ethiopia Situation \(Tigray\)](#). The plan covers the period from November 2020 through to June 2021 and foresees to reach up to 115,000 refugees and 22,000 host communities in Sudan and Djibouti. It aims to support the governments of Sudan, Djibouti and Eritrea in maintaining and facilitating access to asylum and providing life-saving assistance to those who have been forced to flee Ethiopia following the conflict in the Tigray Regional State.

SUDAN

- More than 53,000 Ethiopian refugees have crossed into Eastern Sudan as of 26 December 2020. Many are arriving tired, hungry and with little belongings.
- Between 13 November and 20 December, a total of 20,572 refugees have been transferred from the border to the Um Rakuba Camp. On 21 December, the relocation of refugees from the transit centres along the border to Um Rakuba Camp was temporarily halted for five days to allow for the reception centre in the Camp to be decongested.

ETHIOPIA

- WHO dispatched emergency health supplies to treat more than 10,000 patients for three months in Tigray. Additional medical supplies are on the way.
- From 17-23 December, ARRA distributed WFP provided food in Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps benefitting nearly 25,000 refugees. WFP is still waiting for authorization to deliver food to the remaining two camps: Hitsats and Shimelba.
- On 22 December, OCHA launched the Inter-Agency Updated Humanitarian Response Plan for Northern Ethiopia covering the response in Ethiopia for a three-month period covering November 2020 through January 2021. The expectation is that the Tigray response from January 2021 onward will be incorporated into the 2021 Humanitarian Response Plan for all of Ethiopia currently under development.

UNHCR Response

Ethiopia

The humanitarian situation across the Tigray region remains dire for the 96,000 registered Eritrean refugees along with the growing number of internally displaced and host communities. Humanitarian assistance has started to gradually arrive to Tigray, although access remains limited due to insecurity in certain parts of the region.

Lack of basic services across the region and access to food, fuel and cash remain and intermittent communication and electricity continue to hinder communication.

Distribution of the food assistance provided by WFP to about 25,000 refugees in the two of the four Eritrean refugee camps – Adi Harush and Mai Aini - has been completed with the support of the government's refugee agency, ARRA, and UNHCR. However, a planned WFP convoy for the Hitsats and Shimelba camps has not yet received the authorization to proceed.

Discussions with the Federal Government on unlimited access to the four Eritrean refugee camps and to areas where refugees have fled to within Tigray, or any other region, are ongoing. Multi-sectorial assessment missions will take place to all affected areas once the necessary approvals have been received.

Two inter-agency assessment missions entered the Tigray region on 21 December following approval from the Federal Government. One team has headed to Western Tigray (Dansha, Humera, Shire areas) and another to Southern Tigray (Mekelle, Enderta, Alamata and Mehoni). The week-long mission assessed the humanitarian situation and the needs of IDPs, refugees and host communities and initial findings will be released in the coming days.

UNHCR continues to work closely with the Interim Government of Tigray Regional State and ARRA and is advocating for shelter and food assistance to refugees who have been stranded in Shire. UNHCR regularly meets with refugee representatives in Shire to update them on the ongoing efforts to ensure refugees' access to shelter and food assistance. The refugee representatives continue to express concerns for their safety and lack of basic assistance.

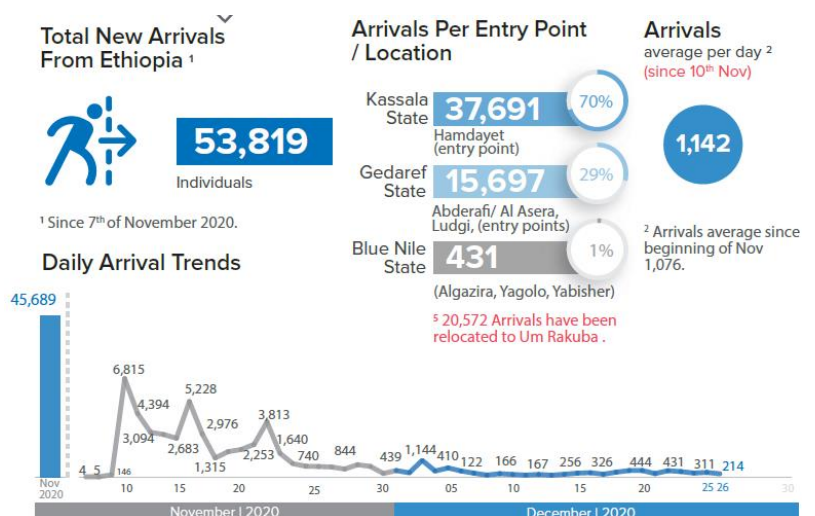
In Shire, to ensure access to clean water for nearly 4,000 IDPs hosted at the Shire Campus of Aksum University, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has maintained generators and water systems linked to an existing spring water well. Water trucking is still taking place to provide drinking water to some 3,000 IDPs currently hosted in the two remaining IDP shelters in Shire.

Community structures have been established at the three IDP hosting shelters in Shire. Talks with leaders at all sites are ongoing to assess humanitarian needs and to identify local solutions.

Sudan

The influx of refugees from the Tigray Regional State of Ethiopia into Sudan continues, reaching 53,819 as of 26 December 2020.

Refugees arrive through the remote border locations of Hamdayet in Kassala State and Lugdi in Gedaref State. Since 18 December, the numbers have fluctuated between 200-400 daily. The recent groups are mainly coming from areas deeper inside Tigray and are arriving weak and exhausted, with some refugees reporting they spent at least two weeks on the run inside Ethiopia as they made their way to the border. The refugees



provided harrowing accounts of being stopped by armed groups and robbed of their possessions. Many have spent time hiding in fields and bushes to avoid being spotted. Given the lack of access to parts of the Tigray Region, including areas bordering Sudan, UNHCR has not been able to verify these reports.

Since the beginning of November, about 300 Eritrean refugees from the camps in Tigray Region have arrived in Sudan— either through the reception center at the Hamdayet border crossing point or by directly going to the Shagarab Camp. Those who arrived in Hamdayet have been transferred to the Shagarab Camp. Full protection assessments are being conducted.

Registration at household level is being done by the Commissioner of Refugees (COR). So far, about 11,000 households have been registered. About 64 percent of the registered refugees are adults (18-59), 31 percent are children (under 18) and five percent are elderly (over 60) refugees.

Transit centres in Hamdayet and in Village 8 are still overcrowded. Gaps remain across all sectors, including shelter, food, health and WASH.

On 20 December, UNHCR, Commissioner of Refugees (COR) and partners together with the Security Committee of Gedaref conducted a joint field visit to Um Rakuba where additional land (16,880 square meters) is expected to be allocated to expand the site. The new zone is to hold about 1,100 tents and will include various facilities such as latrines, bathing areas, child friendly space, protection desk and one rub hall.

In addition to the new zone in Um Rukaba, UNHCR and COR in collaboration with partners have started the preparation of the new camp in Tunaydbah – 136 kilometres from Gedaref State. On 25 December, an inter-agency mission travelled to Tunaydbah to undertake site planning and to start the first phase of construction by setting up 1,000 tents and erecting rub halls for storage. According to COR, relocations to Tunaydbah are expected to start in early January 2021. Initial assessments show that about 20,000 people can be accommodated in Tunaydbah.

Relocation: Between 13 November and 20 December, 20,572 refugees have been relocated from the reception centers at Hamdayet, Abderafi and Village 8 to Um Rakuba Camp, which is located about 70 kilometres from the Ethiopian border. However, in order to decongest the reception center in Um Rakuba Camp, relocations have been temporarily stopped between 21 and 28 December.

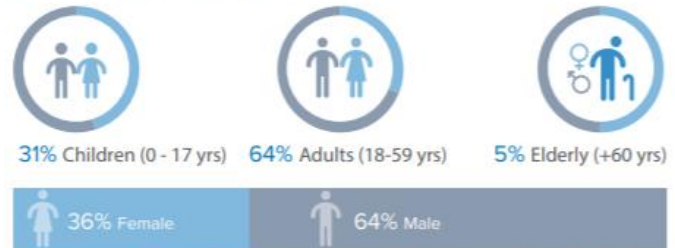
Protection: Protection desks have been established in all sites to provide information on legal and protection issues, including refugee rights and obligations in Sudan, and to facilitate registration. Protection teams are in place to identify at-risk persons including pregnant women, survivors of gender-based violence, persons with disabilities, unaccompanied children and older persons and to facilitate access to counselling, health facilities and other specialized services. Family tracing and reunification services have been established.

Given the high risk of sexual abuse and exploitation (SEA), an inter-agency **Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA) Taskforce** has been established. The Taskforce has started providing PSEA orientation to partners and organizing sessions in collaboration with UNICEF and UNFPA. To sensitize refugees on PSEA-related issues, posters are being put up across the sites.

Health: Sexual and reproductive health services are now available at Hamdayet and Village 8, providing pregnant and lactating women, people with HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, and vulnerable families with appropriate care.

COVID-19: Temperature screenings are 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, masks continue to be distributed at the four registration points. Information on COVID-19 including leaflets have been disseminated at all sites.

Estimated Demographic Data³



³ Population distribution statistics are based on the ongoing household registration (11,000 HH) conducted by UNHCR and COR at registration centers.

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 13,000 refugees remain at Village 8 with daily new arrivals.

Protection: UNHCR and COR will begin with individual registration using the Biometric Identity Management System (BIMS). UNHCR protection help desks have been established to identify and refer people with specific needs to specialized services. The Refugee Committee in Village 8 continues to provide information and guidance to refugees on the registration process, provision of services and the relocation process to Um Rakuba. The State Council for Child Welfare (SCCW), with support from UNICEF, has managed to reunite two children with their families between 20-23 December.

Core relief items: UNHCR, through COR, is distributing core relief items to new arrivals, including blankets, sleeping mats, soap and plastic sheets.

Food: WFP continues to distribute dry food rations to 13,000 refugees and to all new arrivals. New arrivals are also being provided with high energy biscuits.

Health: MSF is providing support with primary healthcare at the clinic run by the Ethiopian refugee health team where 526 medical consultations have been conducted. Most of the cases received are acute watery diarrhea (AWD), malaria and minor cases of skin diseases. Treatments and medications are being provided.

Nutrition teams are screening children under five and women for malnutrition and supporting with supplementary feeding programs.



Refugee medical staff conduct a malaria test on a young refugee patient from Ethiopia in the Village 8 reception centre.

Sudanese Organisation for Research and Development (SORD) and UNFPA have opened a sexual and reproductive health clinic. The clinic is supporting refugees and host communities. So far, 1,905 medical consultations have been provided, including neo-natal services to 502 mothers, family planning services to 358 women, and sexually transmitted infections treatment to 15 people. SORD has also held 406 psychological first aid sessions to refugees in need of basic mental health support.

The Sudan Family Planning Association (SFPA) also provided reproductive health services – including family planning and counseling – and HIV treatment to 53 refugees.

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

There are 110 latrines in Village 8 which are in the process of being designated for women and men.

Hamdayet in Kassala State: the reception center at Hamdayet remains overcrowded. Currently, nearly 22,000 people are at Hamdayet reception centre and in Hamdayet town residing with the host community.

Protection: The UNHCR protection help desk and mobile teams, with the support of Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) volunteers, continue to identify persons with specific needs and have referred 232 people to specialised services, these include pregnant women, people with disabilities, women at risk and other vulnerable people.

In Hamdayet, the protection desks have provided 42 persons with specific needs, mostly elderly, with psychosocial counselling and support to access to services through the volunteer social networks.

Child protection: The UNHCR child protection desks have screened and identified 102 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and other vulnerable children. Referral to specific services and counselling continues. Rapid Best Interest assessments have been conducted for 40 UASC, who have been placed into alternative care arrangements and provided with relief items and psychosocial support.

UNHCR's child protection team held a focus group discussion with 30 children to understand their situation and the hardships they 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 400 children.

Shelter/Core relief items: There is a need to construct more communal shelters in Hamdayet to accommodate the increasing number of new arrivals as many refugees still don't have access to accommodation. In the interim, plastic sheeting is being distributed to groups of families staying together while communal shelters are being constructed.

UNHCR through COR distributes core relief items including blankets, sleeping mats, soap and plastic sheets to the new arrivals.

Plan International distributed dignity kits to nearly 3,000 women and is providing liquid soap, hand sanitizers and soap detergent to new arrivals.

Food: Hot meals are being provided twice a day at Hamdayet reception centre by Muslim Aid with the support of WFP.



A refugee family from Ethiopia share a meal in their temporary shelter at the Hamdayet border point.

Health: In Hamdayet, two state clinics continue to provide health services but are facing shortages of medicines, medical supplies, and ambulances. Nearly 500 refugees suffering mainly from acute watery diarrhea (AWD), upper and lower respiratory tract infection and malaria have received medical consultations and interventions by the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS), the State Ministry of Health (SMoH) and Sudan Family Planning Association (SFPA). During the period covering 20 to 23 December, 29 refugee children received measles, meningitis and polio vaccinations. Nutritional teams are screening children under five for malnutrition and provided treatments for 25 children.

MSF has provided medical screening and other health services to some 600 new arrivals at the border entry point between 20-23 December.

The Sudanese Organization for Research and Development (SORD) Mobile Clinic, with the support of UNFPA, has conducted more than 610 medical consultations, including maternal and neo-natal services to 222 mothers, family planning services to 48 women, and sexually transmitted infection treatment to six people. In addition, it has distributed 63 clean delivery kits. SORD counsellors have supported 95 people with psychological first aid sessions and provided basic mental health support.

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