



**INTER-AGENCY  
REFUGEE EMERGENCY RESPONSE PLAN  
ETHIOPIA: ERITREAN REFUGEES IN TIGRAY**

November 2020 - January 2021

INCLUDED IN THE UPDATED HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE PLAN FOR NORTHERN ETHIOPIA

**FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH**

Ethiopia, Tigray region. Eritrean refugee woman in Adi Harush camp receiving her October WFP food distribution from ARRA and UNHCR. © UNHCR/Awash Ameha

# Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>Overview of Planned Response November 2020 – January 2021</b> | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>Context</b>   | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>Situation Overview</b>  | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Challenges in the Response</b>                                | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>Inter-agency Response</b>                                     | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>Beneficiary Population</b>                                    | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Needs Analysis</b>  | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>Response Strategy and Priorities</b>                          | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Response Objectives</b>                                       | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Emergency Priorities</b>                                      | <b>10</b> |
| <b>Host Communities in the Refugee Response</b>                  | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Planned Response Activities</b>                               | <b>12</b> |
| <b>Partnership and Coordination</b>                              | <b>16</b> |
| <b>Financial Requirements Summary</b>                            | <b>17</b> |
| <b>By Sector</b>   | <b>17</b> |
| <b>By Organization &amp; Sector</b>                              | <b>17</b> |



## PLANNED RESPONSE NOVEMBER 2020 – JANUARY 2021

**80,000**

PROJECTED REFUGEE  
POPULATION

**US\$ 18 M**

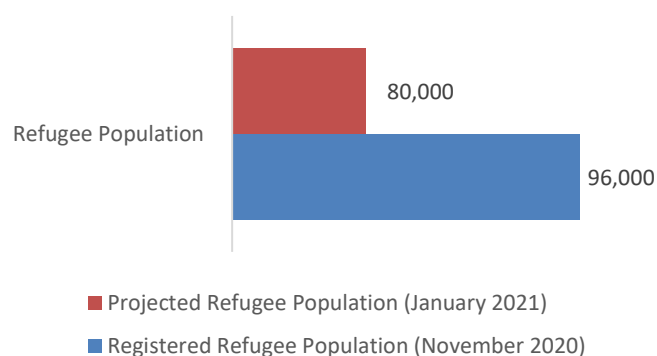
REQUIREMENTS

**7**

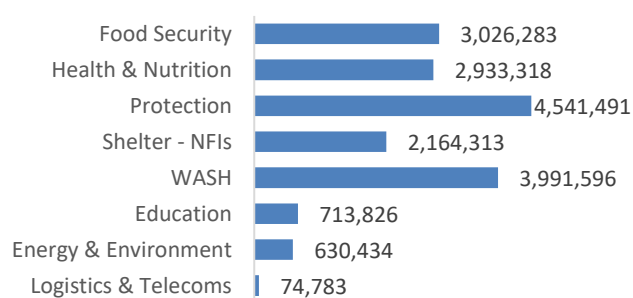
PARTNERS INVOLVED



### Refugee Population Trends



### Requirements by Sector | In millions \$



■ Nov 2020 - January 2021

**Context**

## Situation Overview

Tension between the Federal Government and Tigray's ruling party (TPLF) has been escalating in recent years. This escalation eventually led to armed conflict from 4 November 2020, rapidly impacting the four Eritrean refugee camps in North-Western Tigray zone and the city of Shire over the past weeks and continued moving to the eastern and northern areas of Tigray. Fighting in different parts of the region, including in the area of Mekelle, is still being reported as this response plan is being drafted.

The continued lack of access to Tigray risks severely impacting the entire population in the region. The lack of access to food, fuel and other essential supplies is creating a complex humanitarian situation with extreme suffering and life-threatening impacts. Displacement of people is ongoing, mainly at the border areas with the Amhara and Afar regions, as well as Sudan and Eritrea.

UNHCR and partners have been advocating with federal authorities in Ethiopia for urgent access to Eritrean refugees in the Tigray region who are in desperate need of humanitarian assistance and services. As of end October 2020, there were nearly 150,000 registered Eritrean refugees in Tigray and Afar regions, with around 96,000 in the Tigray region alone. The Government hosts refugees in six camps in the two regions: Adi Harush, Hitsats, Mai-Aini and Shimelba in Tigray, and Aysaita and Barhale in Afar. In addition, many Eritrean refugees reside outside of camps including those who benefited from the Government's Out of Camp Policy (OCP), mostly in Addis Ababa, as well as in several settlement areas throughout Afar.

Since the change in the Government's asylum policy for Eritreans in January 2020, the region has been hosting a large number of Eritrean asylum-seekers who were denied access to asylum and remain undocumented/unregistered. While some have reportedly moved to Addis Ababa, others were living with their relatives in the refugee camps or host communities. Within the Tigray and Afar regions, the refugee population has traditionally shared linguistic, religious and cultural ties with the host population. The region had long welcomed refugees prior to the conflict, and despite some challenges related to competition for resources, there was an established pattern of social cohesion.

While this plan aims at responding to the needs of Eritrean refugees in the Tigray region, it is important to highlight the steadily growing number of internally displaced people (IDPs) due to conflict inside Tigray as well as to other regions of Ethiopia. The on-going situation in Tigray has already displaced people within the region and across the regional borders into Amhara and Afar, while nearly 50,000 are already displaced across the borders to Sudan. The updated UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Northern Ethiopia estimates that 2.3 million people might be affected by the conflict, out of whom, 1.3 million would be additional people in need.

### Challenges in the response

Due to insecurity, partners relocated most of their staff out of the North West zone of the Tigray region. Humanitarian access is severely hampered. The blockage of air and road access to the region, as well as the regional communication black-out has significantly affected humanitarian operations and the possibility to undertake a real time assessment of humanitarian needs. The likelihood of internal and external displacements is reportedly high whereas monitoring remains a challenge. Further, the disruption in the distribution of humanitarian supplies is contributing to the worsening of the humanitarian context, as it prevents timely and adequate assistance to vulnerable communities in the region.

Under these conditions, UN security risk assessment and road assessment teams have been mobilized and expect to be able to access western Tigray in the next few days. Partners stand ready to resume their full humanitarian activities in the Tigray region as soon as the situation allows; among them WFP is prepared to use its fleet trucks to resume food deliveries to the camps. Partners have requested updates from the Government on the situation in Tigray as it continues to develop,



Ethiopia, Tigray Region. Energy, particularly for cooking, has been a longstanding challenge in the refugee camps in Tigray. Eritrean refugees residing in Shimelba camp would typically trek far out into the wilderness in search of firewood. This caused friction with the host community over the impact on the environment and scarcity of resources, and also placed women and children at particular risk of assault and abuse. © UNHCR/Edward Leposky



especially on the conditions in and around the refugee camps and the readiness for distributions of food and core relief items (CRIs).

On 2 December, the United Nations signed an Agreement with the Federal Government of Ethiopia to enable assistance to those in need in Government controlled areas in Tigray and bordering Afar and Amhara regions with an overall coordination framework. The agreement includes use of telecommunications equipment for UN agencies and humanitarian partners, timely clearance and approval processes, assessments and implementation of activities. While this represents a positive move, at the time of writing this plan the actual details and modalities of application for access and distribution still need to be worked out. This response plan can only be realized once unfettered access to refugee populations is possible and security conditions allow for a safe operating space for humanitarian workers.

## Inter-agency Response


This **Inter-agency Refugee Emergency Response Plan (RRP)** for the Eritrean Refugees in Tigray outlines the multi-agency comprehensive response strategy and financial requirements of seven partners supporting Ethiopian authorities to provide protection and assistance to 80,000 Eritrean refugees and asylum-seekers in need of urgent humanitarian assistance and protection services within the next three months. Of this group, an estimated 50,000 may remain in or close to the camps, 15,000 may leave the camps to seek safety, and 15,000 may attempt to relocate to Addis Ababa. Considering the volatile situation, it is of paramount importance to allow flexibility to adjust the delivery of services and protection depending on where the Eritrean refugees are located. With increasing reports of Eritrean refugees arriving in Addis through Gondar, UNHCR is working






together with the Administration for Refugee & Returnee Affairs (ARRA) to establish a protocol for verification and assistance to these refugees, whether still in camps, on the move (Gondar) or in Addis.

UNHCR together with partners will also need to keep the services running in camps and if camps are consolidated, there are considerable additional needs that would affect the whole population. This plan is also targeting some 24,000 members of the affected local population and host communities for assistance through the inter-agency response mechanism.

The RRP is fully in line with the objectives and is included in the Updated UN Humanitarian Response Plan for Northern Ethiopia which is prepared by the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group (ICCG). The response plan outlines the priority interventions, as well as the key emergency response strategies, intended results and activities, within the emergency period from November 2020 to January 2021. The plan will be revised as needed and complemented with further activities necessary to scale up the inter-agency response, depending on developments in the context and needs.

## Beneficiary Population

|  | Current population<br>as of November 2020 | Projected population<br>as of January 2021 |
|---|---|--|
|   |   |  |
| <b>Assisted Refugee Population</b>  |   |  |
| Eritrean Refugees in Tigray   | 96,000                                    | 80,000                                     |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>96,000</b>                             | <b>80,000</b>                              |
| <b>Assisted Host Population</b>   |   |  |
|   | 24,000                                    | 24,000                                     |
| <b>Total</b>  | <b>24,000</b>                             | <b>24,000</b>                              |

| Disaggregated Data  |   | % of projected refugee population (based on profile of current refugee population)  |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Women and Girls   | Men and Boys  | Children (0-18)   | Elderly (+60)   | Persons with Disability   |
|  |  |  |  |  |

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