

# NORTHERN ETHIOPIA SITUATION

A humanitarian and protection crisis is ongoing in and around Ethiopia's Tigray, Amhara and Afar regions since armed conflict broke out in early November 2020.

Over **953,400 internally displaced persons, refugees, returnees, and affected populations** benefitted from UNHCR and partners' protection interventions since January in northern Ethiopia.

While ensuring **access to basic services**, UNHCR provided **113,000** displaced individuals with core relief items in Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions since January 2022.

## Statistics Figures Sources & Dates

- Northern Ethiopia refugee & asylum seeker figures, Source UNHCR, 28 February 2022
- IDP & returnee figures: DTM Ethiopia National Displacement Report - <https://tinyurl.com/2p89czzs>

## POPULATION OF CONCERN (AS OF 28 FEBRUARY 2022)

REFUGEES	
Region	Number
Tigray	36,571*
Amhara	1,714 refugees (40 Asylum seekers)
Afar	56,086
<b>Total</b>	<b>94,371</b>

INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS	
Region	Number
Tigray	1,814,284
Amhara	542,300
Afar	255,769
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,612,353</b>

## Key Figures in February 2022

- UNHCR supported the voluntary return of **2,605 internally displaced persons** to their areas of origin in safety and dignity in February.
- **452,160** IDPs reached during protection and multisectoral assessment.
- **71,493** IDPs, returnees, and affected populations received core relief items. **400 displaced women and girls** received dignity kits in Tigray.

## UNHCR PRESENCE

Staff: 171

113 National Staff

58 International Staff

### Offices:

**3 Sub-Offices (SOs):** Mekelle, Shire (Tigray) and Gondar (Amhara)

**6 Field Offices (FOs):** Embamadrie (Tigray), Debark, Debre Berhan, Bahir Dar and Dessie (Amhara), and Semera (Afar)

### 8 Field Units (FUs):

Abi Adi, Adigrat, Maychew, Sheraro and Axum (Tigray), Kombolcha (Amhara) and Aysaita and Barahle (Afar)



Gebre is digging a trench to redirect rainwater from flooding her home in Kulichmeda IDP site (Amhara). ©UNHCR/D. Dieguen, February 2021

## CONTEXT

The humanitarian situation across Northern Ethiopia is deeply concerning, with **2.6 million internally displaced persons<sup>1</sup>, over 240,000 returnees and 94,140 refugees & asylum-seekers** in the Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions. Over 15 months into the conflict, the overall security situation remains complex and fluid, hindering effective delivery of lifesaving assistance to the most affected populations.

Since June 2021, the conflict that started in November 2020 in Tigray, has spread to the neighbouring Amhara and Afar regions forcing an increasing number of people to leave their homes within the country. This situation has brought undue burden to the civilian population that continues to endure the conflict with minimal basic services and assistance. Humanitarian needs have risen dramatically, with over **9.4 million people in urgent need of food and other aid<sup>2</sup>**.

Attacks at the Tigrayan borders with Amhara and Afar continued to create population movements. Authorities in Amhara and Afar reported over 250,000 and 293,000 displaced populations respectively in 2022. Additionally, fighting has continued in Abala, Afar, blocking the only supply road access to Mekelle. Furthermore, Barahle town, which also hosted over 34,000 refugees including in Barahle refugee camp, also experienced direct conflict, causing displacement of refugees and host community members from the area.

## Protection activities and Response

### Protection by Presence

**UNHCR continued to scale up its presence in Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions.** UNHCR has offices in Semera (Afar) and Gondar (Amhara), Mekelle and Shire (Tigray), six field offices/units across the Tigray region (Embamadrie, Abi Adi, Adigrat, Maychew, Sheraro and Axum) and three in Amhara: Gondar, Bahir Dar and Debre Birhan. Recently, UNHCR set up a presence in Dessie, Amhara region. However, as conflict persists, many areas remain out of reach for our teams - hindering access to those in desperate need.

### Protection interventions:

#### Refugees:

- **Refugee verification** - Using biometric verification **UNHCR, with the Ethiopian Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS)**, continues to verify refugees who have fled from the refugee camps to other locations due to conflict including 4,756 refugees that fled from Barahle, 1,400 **refugees** in Amhara from Mai Aini and Adi Harush in Shire and others, and **856 refugees** in Mekelle. The refugees have been verified and assisted.

#### IDPs

- In February, to foster an effective and targeted response in Afar, Amhara and Tigray, UNHCR reached over **721,400 IDPs with various protection interventions**, including protection monitoring and assessment, awareness-raising, capacity building, prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV), material assistance, identification of persons with specific needs, child protection, psychosocial support, counselling, and legal

<sup>1</sup> Sources: DTM Ethiopia National Displacement Report - <https://tinyurl.com/2p89czzs>

<sup>2</sup> OCHA: Northern Ethiopia Humanitarian Update. [Northern Ethiopia - Humanitarian Update | Situation Reports \(unocha.org\)](#)

assistance. Nearly a million IDPs and affected populations have benefitted from UNHCR interventions in 2022.

- **UNHCR together with Government counterparts, partners and other humanitarian agencies conducted protection and multisectoral assessment of 452,160 IDPs to foster** an effective and targeted response in Afar, Amhara and Tigray.
- **138 UNHCR staff, community leaders, Government official and partners received capacity building and training** in Amhara and Tigray on prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV) in Emergency (Dessie), on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and abuse (PSEA) (Mekelle), on CCCM for effective response (Shire), on protection advocacy (Mekelle) and on effective advocacy strategy for IDPs and on tools to strengthen the reporting system (Gondar, Amhara). To date, UNHCR has trained **225** partners staff and Government officials.
- **7,074 IDPs (3,642 females)** were reached during eleven awareness-raising and sensitization sessions in Debre Birhan, Axum, Mekelle, and Shire conducted through community outreach and door-to-door visits on topics including peaceful coexistence, prevention and response to GBV, COVID-19, hygiene and sanitation and protecting the safety and security of sites. During door-to-door visits, critical shortages of food and medical supplies, lack of water, hygiene and sanitation supplies were observed in IDP households, bringing to over **8,600** the total estimated persons reached with UNHCR awareness-raising activities in 2022.
- **Protection against Gender-Based Violence:** UNHCR provides **support to survivors of gender-based violence**, including information, referrals to medical care, psychosocial support, counselling, and legal assistance. As of 28 February, **1,738 displaced** women and girls received dignity kits in Shire, Tigray, including 400 in February.

In Dessie, Amhara, UNHCR facilitated the distribution of **40 mattresses and 40 blankets to IDPs**, in response to the immediate needs of women at risk, including GBV survivors. The mattresses and blankets were delivered to Dessie One Stop Centre, Dessie safehouse and Dessie Police station (Children's department). The material support aims at enhancing protection through GBV response and risk mitigation measures for Dessie's multi-sectoral interventions.

- **Mental Health and Psychosocial Support: (MHPSS):** UNHCR, in conjunction with IOM and IMC, formulated a MHPSS response strategy which is being adapted by the Amhara Public Health Institute to strengthen mental health and psychosocial support to IDP returnees. In Axum, Tigray, an additional 54 IDPs (29 females) received psychosocial first aid in February. Overall, in 2022 4,491 IDPs were reached with this form of assistance.
- 476 children accessed the four Child-Friendly Spaces daily in Amhara - Debre Birhan and Gondar. In addition, 213 parents (162 females) received non-specialized psychosocial support (PSS) and information on child protection from the UNHCR PSS officer.

## **Material Assistance**

In February, **336,237** people benefitted from material assistance provided by UNHCR and partners including core relief items, shelters and equipment. Hence, a total of **382,000** IDPs, returnees and affected communities were reached in 2022.

**UNHCR Core relief items were distributed** to 72,493 IDPs (14,500 households) in the Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions in February, bringing to **113,000 individuals** the total of IDPs, returnees and affected populations to benefit from CRIs so far in 2022. Each kit included blankets, sleeping mats, jerry cans, plastic sheeting, buckets, soaps, kitchen sets, and mosquito nets.

**1,415 IDPs benefitted** from shelter repair kits and tents pitched in Afar and Shire in February, totalling 1,935 in 2022. UNHCR has also established new warehouses in Debre Birhan, Dessie, Gondar and Bahir Dar with enough storage capacity for operational and emergency response.

In Afar, UNHCR supported the Disaster Prevention Food Security Program Coordination Office (DPFSPCO) with office, IT equipment and livelihood equipments including grinding mills. It is estimated that **261,500 returnees, IDPs, and affected communities** in Afar will benefit from the equipment.

To support the response to the increasing needs resulting from the conflict and displacement in Afar, UNHCR has also provided equipment and furniture to the Regional Health Bureau for the Awera Woreda Health Centre in Zone 4 including delivery beds, drug shelves, generator, air conditioner, tables, printers and chairs.

### **Nutrition and Food Assistance**

Nutrition and food assistance remain a critical issue, especially in the Tigray region; 100 trucks per day are needed to enter the region to keep supplies at minimum levels - however, only approx.. 500 trucks have entered Tigray since July 2021. In February, through advocacy and support, UNHCR supported the transportation of a 15 trucks convoy with 290 Metric Tons of World Food Programme (WFP), and distributed to some **22,500 refugees** in the Mai Aini and Adi Harush camps, in Mai Tsebri. In the Amhara and Afar region, UNHCR provided hot meal to 6,200 refugees (1,500 in Dabat, Amhara and 4,700 in Semera, Afar), and supported the WFP provision of monthly rations to refugees in Aysaita camp (Afar).

### **Durable solutions – Voluntary Returns**

On 25 February, UNHCR resumed with the return activities, one month after the lack of supplies, fuel and cash access to Tigray impeded on the implementation of the voluntary return activities. Over 3,000 IDPs were counselled at the Protection and Return Desks in Mekelle. For IDP, the Protection and Return desks provide protection and information to IDPs willing to return to their areas of origin, and referral to available services. UNHCR and the local authorities in Shire and Axum facilitated the voluntary return of **2,605 IDPs** (840 households) to North-Western and Central zones in Tigray. Since December, UNHCR supported the voluntary returns of **14,827** individuals in Amhara and Tigray regions since December 2021.

### **Camp Coordination and Camp Management**

In February, UNHCR and partners were managing 64 sites and collective centers (57 in Tigray and 7 in Amhara) hosting an estimated **615,000** internally displaced persons. In addition, as co-lead of the CCCM Cluster, UNHCR supported the community-led site maintenance activities, capacity building for Government officials, partners, and persons of concerns.

### **Coordination**

UNHCR leads the Protection Cluster, co-leads Camp Coordination Camp Management (CCCM) Cluster and contributes to Emergency Shelter and Non-Food Items (ES/NFI) Cluster in all three regions (Afar, Amhara and Tigray). **The three Clusters** conducted eight assessments including joint assessments, rapid interagency assessments and multisectoral rapid assessments in the IDP sites in all three regions to guide interventions. The results of these assessments indicate that food, shelter, health, MHPSS, CRIs, WASH and sanitation materials were urgent priority needs. UNHCR is planning along with other agencies to scale up response in the IDP sites for new arrivals, with targeted CRI assistance and CCCM activities.

## **Working with partners**

UNHCR works closely with a wide range of partners to respond to the most pressing needs of the displaced persons, refugees and affected populations in camps and host communities in the Afar, Amhara and Tigray regions including **government entities** - the Disaster Risk Management Office (DRMO) Disaster Prevention Food Security Program Coordination Office (DPFSPCO), the Regional Emergency Coordination Center (ARECC) and Bureau of Social Affairs (BOWCSA/BOWSA BOLWSA), **seven United Nations agencies**: OCHA, UNICEF, UNFPA, IOM, WHO, WFP and FAO, 12 **International and National Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) partners**: Action Africa Help (AAH); Africa Humanitarian Action (AHA); Action for the Needy in Ethiopia (ANE), Association of Ethiopian Educated in Germany (AEEG); Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Development and Social Service Commission (EECMY); Ethiopian Orthodox Church-Development and Inter Church Aid Commission (DICAC); Development Expertise Center (DEC) African Humanitarian Aid & Development Agency (AHADA); International Medical Corps (IMC); GOAL Ethiopia (GOAL), Refugee Returnees Services (RRS) and World Vision (WVI).

### Funding updates

Of **\$205.4 million** in financial requirements for the Ethiopia Emergency in 2022, UNHCR received only **26.7 million USD** (13 percent) as of 08 March 2022, with a funding gap reaching USD 178.7 million.

UNHCR is grateful for the critical support provided by donors who have contributed to UNHCR operation in Ethiopia, as well as those who have contributed to UNHCR programmes with broadly earmarked and unearmarked funds.

#### **UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, is grateful for the donor support of:**

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