

Ethiopia – Tigray Conflict

FEBRUARY 3, 2021

SITUATION AT A GLANCE

6 MILLION	950,000	2.3 MILLION	4 MILLION	60,595
Estimated Population of Tigray	Number of People in Tigray Requiring Assistance Prior to the Conflict	Number of People Targeted Through the Northern Ethiopia HRP	Estimated Number of People in Urgent Need of Food Assistance	Number of Ethiopian Refugees Arriving in Eastern Sudan Since November
<i>GoE – 2017</i>	<i>UN – November 2020</i>	<i>UN – December 2020</i>	<i>Food Security Cluster – January 2021</i>	<i>UNHCR – February 2021</i>

- Beginning in early November 2020, conflict in northern Ethiopia’s Tigray Region has resulted in civilian deaths and population displacement, generating large-scale humanitarian needs and leading to a severe protection crisis.
- As a result of the conflict, at least 4 million people across Tigray will likely require emergency food assistance in 2021.
- Many conflict-affected populations in Tigray remain inaccessible to relief organizations due to access impediments and insecurity; as such, the USG is calling for full, unhindered humanitarian access.



TOTAL U.S. GOVERNMENT HUMANITARIAN FUNDING For Ethiopia, including to Tigray, in FY 2020	USAID/BHA ^{1,2}	\$522,232,575
	State/PRM ³	\$129,904,934
	Total	\$652,137,509⁴

¹ USAID’s Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID/BHA)

² USAID/BHA FY 2020 funding includes emergency food assistance from the former Office of Food for Peace and non-food humanitarian assistance from the former Office of U.S. Foreign Disaster Assistance.

³ U.S. Department of State’s Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (State/PRM)

⁴ A breakdown of the total USG contributions to Ethiopia—which includes funding for the Horn of Africa desert locust infestations and coronavirus disease (COVID-19) responses—is reflected on USG Ethiopia Complex Emergency Fact Sheets. For additional information regarding the Ethiopia desert locust response, please refer to the USAID/BHA East Africa Desert Locust Crisis Fact Sheet.

KEY DEVELOPMENTS

Conflict Persists in Parts of Tigray, Generating Humanitarian Needs

Following nearly three months of fighting between the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), the Ethiopian National Defense Force (ENDF), and other armed group elements, security conditions across Tigray remain unstable, according to the UN. While major military operations ceased in late November, ongoing insecurity—including clashes between armed elements, ambushes and violent crime—continues to disrupt basic services; endanger civilians, including aid workers; generate population displacement; trigger large-scale humanitarian needs; and limit humanitarian access in several parts of the region. Since the conflict began, relief actors and international media have reported widespread protection and human rights violations affecting civilians in Tigray. Up to 950,000 people in the region required humanitarian assistance prior to the start of the conflict; while the scale of needs has increased considerably, specific figures remain difficult to verify due to the persistent lack of internet connectivity and telecommunications, as well as significant access constraints, the UN reports.

Access Challenges, Bureaucratic Impediments Hinder Response Efforts

In response to the humanitarian needs generated by the conflict in Tigray, the Government of Ethiopia (GoE) and the UN signed an enhanced coordination agreement in late November intended to facilitate humanitarian access to the region. In addition, GoE's National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDRMC) activated a regional emergency operations center (EOC) in the region's capital city of Mekele intended to improve humanitarian response coordination. The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) assists in operating the regional EOC, which reports to the GoE National Emergency Coordination Center in Ethiopia's capital city of Addis Ababa.

Despite efforts to bolster coordination, delayed GoE approval processes under the enhanced coordination agreement, alongside insecurity and other constraints, are preventing humanitarians from accessing the region, particularly rural areas, where approximately 80 percent of Tigray's population resides. Similar procedures initially impeded the delivery of relief supplies in the region as well, though the UN reports improvements in the pace of humanitarian cargo clearances in recent weeks. The U.S. Government (USG) continues to underscore the need for safe, sustained, and unhindered humanitarian access for UN agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to all conflict-affected areas of Tigray and neighboring Afar and Amhara regions, where needs are likely rising in the absence of adequate relief assistance in recent months.

Nearly 4 Million People in Tigray Likely to Require Food Assistance in 2021

Nearly 4 million people across Tigray—approximately 66 percent of the GoE's 2017 estimate of the region's population, the most recent available—will likely require emergency food assistance in 2021 due to conflict-related disruptions to harvests, livelihoods, markets, and supply chains, according to projections from the Food Security Cluster, the coordinating body for humanitarian food security activities, comprising UN agencies, NGOs, and other stakeholders. Populations in many parts of the region are likely experiencing Crisis—IPC 3—levels of acute food insecurity, while some populations in central and eastern Tigray are likely experiencing Emergency—IPC 4—levels in the absence of humanitarian assistance as of December, with conditions likely to further deteriorate unless assistance is resumed and rapidly scaled up, according to the Famine Early Warning Systems Network (FEWS NET).⁵ In response to the recent estimates, USAID/BHA provided approval for the Catholic Relief Services

⁵ The Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) is a multi-partner initiative that developed a standardized scale to classify the severity and magnitude of food insecurity. The IPC scale, which is comparable across countries and time, ranges from Minimal—IPC 1—to Famine—IPC 5—for acute food insecurity.

(CRS)-led Joint Emergency Operations Program (JEOP) to increase its Tigray caseload to approximately 1.5 million people, enabling expansion into Adigrat, Shire, and other towns and *woredas*—or districts—that were previously inaccessible or where no food operators are currently operating.

Insecurity, Service Disruptions Affect Eritrean Refugees in Tigray

Insecurity and related service disruptions have prompted thousands of Eritrean refugees to vacate Hitsats and Shimelba refugee camps—the two northernmost refugee camps in Tigray, located in North Western Zone near the Ethiopia–Eritrea border—and flee to nearby Shire and other parts of Ethiopia since early November, according to State/PRM partner the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Prior to the start of the conflict, more than 96,000 Eritrean refugees were sheltering across Tigray. Although UNHCR led an interagency multi-sector assessment mission to North Western’s Adi Harush and Mai Aini refugee camps, the UN agency has been unable to access Hitsats and Shimelba, where humanitarian services have been disrupted since November and conflict has resulted in the widespread destruction of camp infrastructure. Relief actors are concerned that ongoing insecurity in and around the camps—including the possible presence of Eritrean Defense Force personnel, who are reportedly responsible for committing grave protection violations—and the lack of basic services are contributing to severe humanitarian needs among remaining refugee populations.

UN Aims to Reach 2.3 Million People in Updated HRP for Northern Ethiopia

In response to the worsening humanitarian situation in Tigray resulting from the conflict, the UN released an updated Humanitarian Response Plan (HRP) for northern Ethiopia on December 24. The revised plan requested \$116.5 million to address the acute needs of an estimated 2.3 million conflict-affected people in Tigray, Afar, and Amhara regions through January 2021, estimating that the conflict has generated humanitarian needs among at least 1.3 million people not included in the countrywide 2020 Ethiopia HRP. Among the populations identified in the northern Ethiopia HRP, more than 50 percent are children, 26 percent are women, and nearly 18 percent are persons with disabilities. As of January 25, the UN had received \$76.2 million—or approximately 65 percent—of the total funding requested by the updated HRP, with approximately \$23.5 million of funds received through the reallocation of existing resources. The UN plans to incorporate additional Tigray-related funding needs after January into the forthcoming countrywide 2021 Ethiopia HRP.

Nearly 60,600 People Flee Tigray Into Sudan; UNHCR Launches RRP

Violence in northern Ethiopia had prompted nearly 60,600 people to seek shelter in eastern Sudan’s Blue Nile, Gedaref, and Kassala states as of February 1, according to UNHCR. Daily arrivals into Sudan remained low in late January, following an initial spike in November and early December, as well as a brief uptick in mid-January. To manage the refugee response in eastern Sudan, UNHCR established a coordination hub in Gedaref in late November, and continues to relocate refugees to newly established refugee camps to decongest existing transit centers and camps. UNHCR has noted an urgent need to extend food and nutrition services to all reception centers and relocation sites in eastern Sudan; access to safe drinking water, latrines, and medical supplies are among the other identified priority needs. Additionally, many refugees are unable to contact separated family members due to communications shutdowns in Tigray, prompting increased requests for family tracing and reunification services. To address the needs of refugees, UNHCR and 30 partners launched the Regional Inter-Agency Refugee Preparedness and Response Plan (RRP) for the Ethiopia Situation—focused on the effects of the conflict in Tigray—on December 22, requesting \$155.7 million to support the ongoing response in Sudan, preparedness efforts in Djibouti, and contingency planning in Eritrea, aiming to reach up to 115,000 refugees and 22,000 host community members through June.

KEY FIGURES



1.5 Million

People in Tigray targeted to receive USG emergency food assistance via the JEOP



210,000

People in Tigray reached with USG emergency food assistance via the JEOP to date



44,000

People in eastern Tigray reached with water trucking services through the UNICEF RRM

U.S. GOVERNMENT RESPONSE

FOOD SECURITY

In response to acute food needs across Tigray resulting from the conflict, USAID/BHA is supporting the CRS-led JEOP, as well as the UN World Food Program (WFP) and other NGOs, to provide emergency food assistance—including commodities such as U.S.-sourced cereals, pulses, and vegetable oil—to vulnerable people in the region. With USAID/BHA support, the JEOP had reached approximately 210,000 people with USG emergency food assistance in Mekele and two additional *woredas* as of early February.

HEALTH

USAID/BHA and State/PRM partners are conducting humanitarian health programs in Tigray as access and security conditions allows. State/PRM partner the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has distributed essential medicines and other medical supplies to conflict-affected individuals in Mekele, as well as to IDPs and health facilities elsewhere in Tigray and in neighboring areas of Amhara. State/PRM also supports UNHCR to provide health assistance to refugees in Tigray.

NUTRITION

In response to nutrition needs in Tigray, USAID/BHA partner the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is distributing nutrition commodities—including high energy biscuits and ready-to-use therapeutic foods—to conflict-affected populations.

PROTECTION

In response to protection needs resulting from the conflict in Tigray, USAID/BHA supports the International Rescue Committee and UNICEF, which conduct programs as humanitarian access restrictions and security conditions permit. In addition, State/PRM supports UNHCR to provide protection and multi-sector assistance to refugees.

SHELTER AND SETTLEMENTS

USAID/BHA supports the provision of shelter and settlements assistance to conflict-affected populations in Tigray—as well as Amhara and Benishangul-Gumuz regions—through the International Organization for Migration Rapid Response Fund, as well as the Ethiopian Red Cross Society. State/PRM supports UNHCR to provide shelter assistance to refugees in Tigray.

WASH

USAID/BHA and State/PRM fund the provision of critical water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) assistance throughout Tigray. USG humanitarian partners are distributing relief commodities—including WASH supplies—to conflict-affected and displaced populations, as well as delivering equipment to support the rehabilitation of WASH infrastructure damaged by the

conflict. With USAID/BHA support, humanitarian organizations aim to reach 25,000 conflict-affected individuals with WASH kits through the UNICEF-led rapid response mechanism (RRM). An additional 44,000 people were reached with water trucking services through the UNICEF-led RRM in recent months.

CONTEXT IN BRIEF

- Following weeks of escalating tensions between regional and federal authorities, clashes erupted between the TPLF and the ENDF in several locations across northern Ethiopia's Tigray Region on November 4. Though the GoE declared victory against the TPLF on November 28, security conditions remain volatile across Tigray, with fighting between several armed elements continuing in many locations.
- Active conflict continues to endanger populations in affected areas, while the insecurity and its effects have generated and exacerbated humanitarian needs among local populations in Tigray and neighboring areas, endangering and displacing populations within Tigray, into other regions of Ethiopia, and into neighboring areas of eastern Sudan.
- On November 17, 2020, U.S. Ambassador Michael A. Raynor reissued a disaster declaration for Ethiopia for FY 2021 due to the continued humanitarian needs resulting from the complex emergency—including the conflict in Tigray—and the impact of ongoing climate, conflict, food insecurity, and health shocks on vulnerable populations. Separately, on October 16, 2020, Ambassador Raynor reissued a disaster declaration for Ethiopia due to the sustained widespread impacts of desert locust infestations in the country.

PUBLIC DONATION INFORMATION

- The most effective way people can assist relief efforts is by making cash contributions to humanitarian organizations that are conducting relief operations. A list of humanitarian organizations that are accepting cash donations for disaster responses around the world can be found at [interaction.org](https://www.interaction.org).
- USAID encourages cash donations because they allow aid professionals to procure the exact items needed (often in the affected region); reduce the burden on scarce resources (such as transportation routes, staff time, and warehouse space); can be transferred very quickly and without transportation costs; support the economy of the disaster-stricken region; and ensure culturally, dietarily, and environmentally appropriate assistance.
- More information can be found at:
 - USAID Center for International Disaster Information: [cidi.org](https://www.cidi.org)
 - Information on relief activities of the humanitarian community can be found at [reliefweb.int](https://www.reliefweb.int).

USAID/BHA bulletins appear on the USAID website at [usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work](https://www.usaid.gov/humanitarian-assistance/where-we-work)