

# ETHIOPIA



## Report Summary

The objective of this report is to present an up-to-date analysis of the protection situation in Ethiopia, including in the Northern parts of the country. The analysis has been carried out by the National Protection Cluster with a view of identifying the most serious protection risks, impacting the civilian population, in all conflict- and drought-affected areas. The report provides an overview of the current context, and highlights five protection risks:

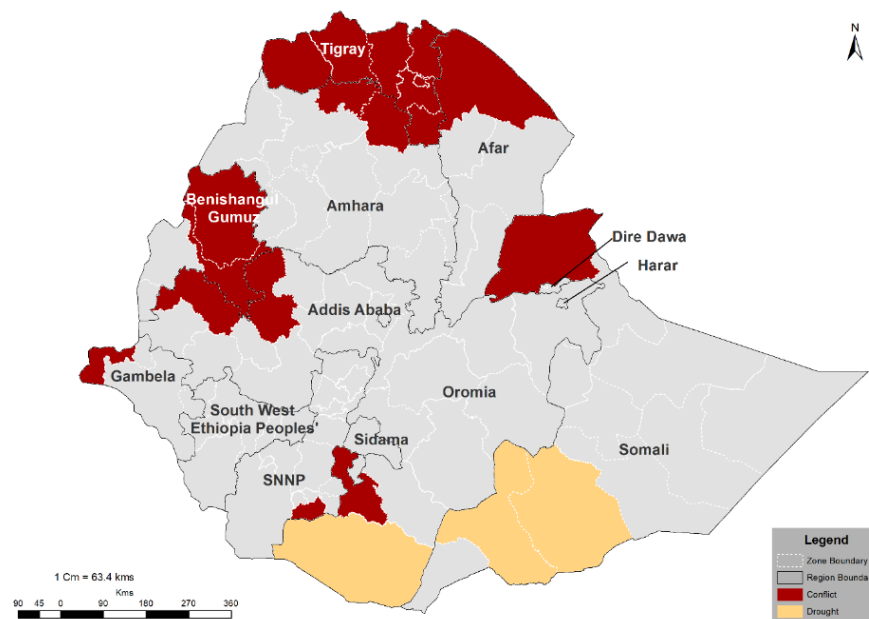
1. Attacks on civilians and on civilian infrastructure;
2. Gender and conflict-related sexual violence;
3. Denial of resources, opportunities and services;
4. Family and child separation; and
5. Deprivation of liberty.

Among other recommendations, the report calls the Government of Ethiopia and parties to the conflict to stop all attacks and violence against civilians, and ensure that adequate precautionary measures are taken to prevent as much as possible civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructure. Safe and unhindered humanitarian access of humanitarian supplies and personnel must be allowed and facilitated. The report recommends to strengthen civil-military coordination, to offer necessary training and technical assistance on the basic rules of international humanitarian law, and to engage with actors who may positively influence the parties to the conflict to protect civilians such as community and religious leaders.

In addition, the report calls the Government of Ethiopia to investigate all credible complaints of serious violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, including unlawful killings and gender-based violence (GBV) cases, to prosecute those responsible for such abuses, and to support the survivors and their families. Those who were arbitrarily detained must be released, and those who remain in custody, must be treated humanely and be able to

contact their family. The Government and other detaining parties shall allow independent monitoring of the conditions in detention facilities.

The report further recommends to enhance protection monitoring and family tracing activities, to invest in livelihood interventions – especially for women and girls – and to address negative coping mechanisms. It also calls the Government of Ethiopia to expand its Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in order to support vulnerable households in drought-affected areas, and to strengthen local capacities and partnerships with development actors to promote sustainable solutions in these areas.



## **Methodology**

The analysis has been developed by the National Protection Cluster in consultation with its sub-national protection clusters, Areas of Responsibility (AoR) of Child Protection, GBV and Mine Action, its Housing, Land and Property (HLP) Working Group, members of the Strategic Advisory Group (SAG) and Cluster's partners. It follows the Protection Analytical Framework (PAF) endorsed by the Global Protection Cluster in April 2021. The analysis is based on qualitative and quantitative data gathered by the Cluster from its partners in the field, local and international NGOs and UN agencies, as well as on expert knowledge and open-source material.

## **Limitations**

The analysis is not intended to be exhaustive. The complexity and scope of various shocks and protection concerns, rapid developments on the ground, access restrictions, insecurity and limited capacity – all hinder the ability of human rights and humanitarian actors to fully identify, monitor and assess all incidents and their related protection risks. This report may therefore not cover all occurrences, but it rather draws attention to key protection concerns and trends as of May 2022.

## **1. CONTEXT OVERVIEW**

Ethiopia has been in turmoil since 2018 when Abiy Ahmed, then the chairman of the Oromo Democratic Party, was appointed as Prime Minister. This political event has put an end to the dominance of the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) over the Ethiopian political landscape which began in 1991 with the overthrow of the Derg regime.

The new Prime Minister and subsequent reforms have shaken the fragile ethnic-based federalism, exposing the underlying tensions in Ethiopian politics. These include the strained relations between the central Government and self-administered regions; rivalry between ethnic groups and regional powers striving for greater influence within the national arena; and frustration and grievances among ethnic groups living in regions dominated by an ethnic majority. These long-lasting disputes and competition over political power, land and other resources have ultimately led to violence, fuelling existing conflicts and resulting in a fully-fledged internal war in Tigray and neighbouring regions.

The armed conflict in Tigray has been taking place since November 2020 between Government forces and the Tigray forces. The Ethiopian National Defence Force (ENDF) has been supported by Amhara and Afar regional forces and militias, as well as by Eritrea government forces. The hostilities in Tigray have spilled over during 2021 into the regions of Amhara and Afar. Despite a unilateral ceasefire declared by the Government of Ethiopia in June 2021, there has not been substantial de-escalation on the ground for many months. With Tigray forces making operational gains in Afar and Amhara and advancing south towards the capital Addis Ababa, the Government announced a State of Emergency in November 2021. This announcement authorized the Government security forces to take various measures of control against its citizens, including to restrict their rights to freedom of movement, expression and assembly, and to carry out searches and arrests.

While the State of Emergency has been formally lifted by the end of February 2022, ongoing hostilities in Tigray and in other regions, climate shocks and deteriorating economy continue to negatively impact the living conditions of the civilian population in Ethiopia and to exacerbate humanitarian needs.

Indeed, in parallel to the conflict in Northern Ethiopia, separate armed conflicts take place in other regions, especially in Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz where Government forces are clashing with different armed groups, in particular the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA-Shene). Inter-communal violence in other areas of the country, for example in Somali and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' (SNNP) regions, also remains a source of instability, displacement and human suffering. For example, violence between ethnic communities in Amhara (North Shewa, Oromia Special zones), Somali (Sitti and Fafan zones) and SNNP (Konso and Bench Sheko zones) resulted in dozens of deaths and thousands of displaced persons since 2021.

The effects of ongoing conflict and inter-communal violence have been exacerbated by climate shocks, including erratic rainfalls and devastating drought, reportedly the worst in 40 years. Ethiopia is highly dependent on rain-fed agriculture and natural resources, and it is amongst the most vulnerable countries to climate change. Following three consecutive failed rainy seasons since late 2020, it is now facing one of the most severe droughts in East Africa, with more than 8 million people affected (as of April 2022) across the southern and south-eastern parts of the country, including Somali (more than 3.5 million people affected), Oromia (more than 3.4 million), SNNP (more than 1.1 million) and South West (more than 200,000 people) regions.

Serious and complex protection risks are caused or exacerbated by conflict and drought. The living conditions are negatively impacted on a large scale due to rapid deterioration of livelihoods, opportunities and capacities, compounded by a volatile security environment which hinders the humanitarian effort to stop, or at least mitigate, the resultant human suffering.

## Conflict in Tigray fuels violence and tensions across the country

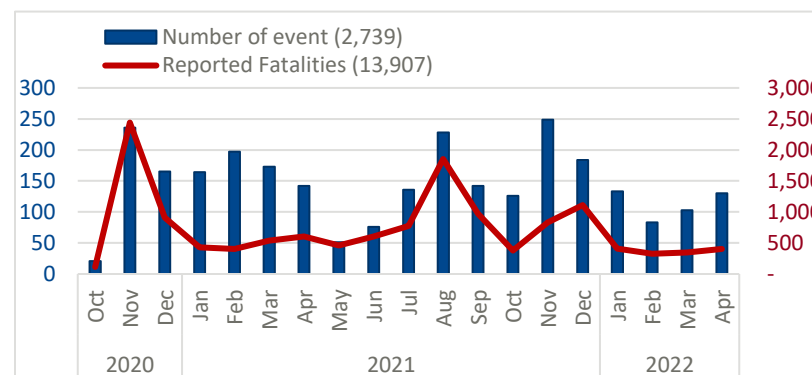


Figure 1 - Conflict events and reported fatalities

(source: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), <https://acleddata.com>).

Following the June 2021 unilateral ceasefire and withdrawal of Government forces from Tigray, the Federal Government has enforced a de-facto blockade on the passage of persons and supplies from/into Tigray (which only recently has been eased to some degree). In parallel, Tigray forces have expanded their military operations to Afar and Amhara. Between June 2021 and April 2022, active hostilities have been recorded in Tigray-Afar border, namely Zone 2 and Zone 4 of Afar region, as well as in Amhara region, namely in North Wello, South and North Gondar and Wag Hamra.

Since December 2021, the Government has gradually regained control of areas in Amhara and Afar which were captured earlier in 2021 by Tigray forces. Armed clashes, including heavy shelling and airstrikes, however continue between the parties in Tigray, Afar and – to a lesser extent – in Amhara, resulting in civilian casualties and the displacement of thousands of families.

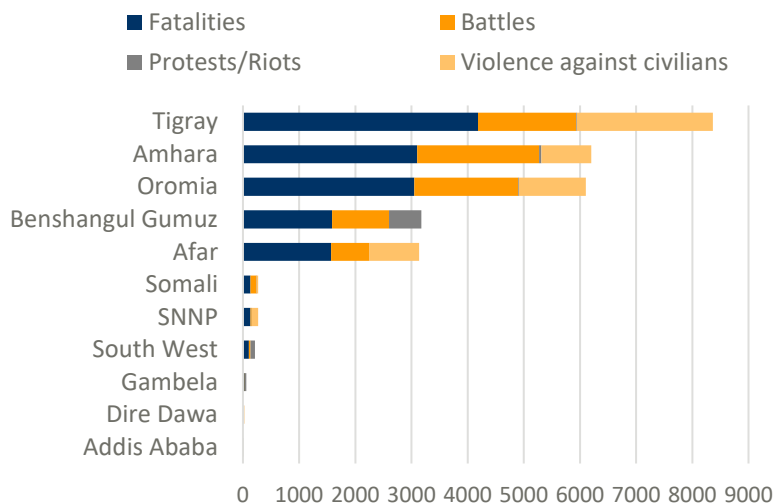


Figure 2 - Conflict events per Region

(source: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED), <https://acleddata.com>)

The conflict has caused massive population movements, including waves of displacement, secondary displacement and returnees trying to go back to affected areas in a continuous volatile environment. As of February 2022, a total of 4.51 million IDPs has been identified across the country, with conflict and social tension being the reason for the displacement of 3.8 million IDPs (85%) and drought leading to the displacement of 420,887 IDPs (9%).<sup>1</sup>

The conflict in Northern Ethiopia has been fuelling long-lasting disputes, competing claims over territory and aspirations for self-governance or greater influence over national politics and allocation of resources, thus increasing the tension between the central Government and regional structures, and among communities in other regions of the country.

In Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz, non-state armed groups carried out attacks on civilians, especially in the Wellegas and West Guji zones (Oromia) and in Metekel zone (Benishangul Gumuz).

Impact on people: internal displacement

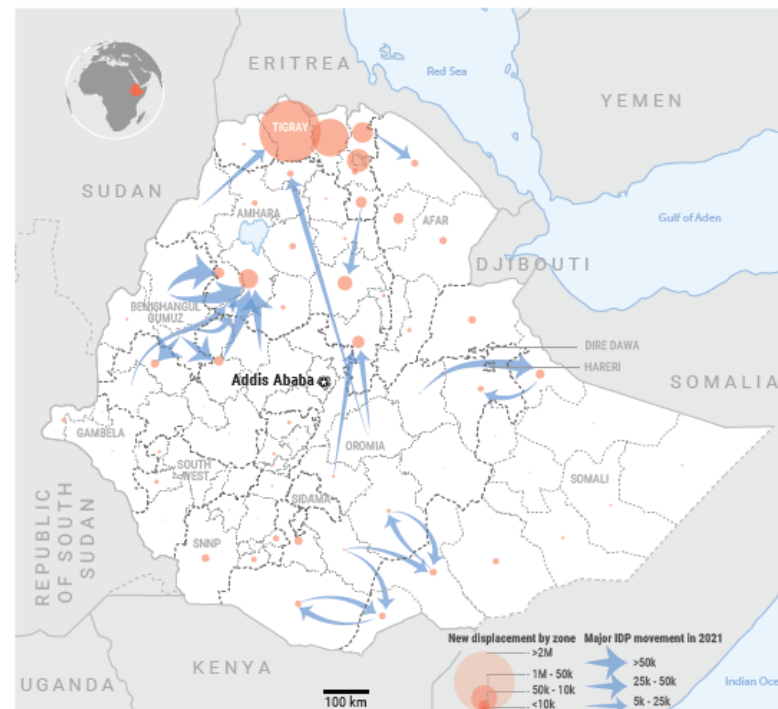


Figure 3 - Internal Displacement trends (source: HNO 2022)

These attacks caused fatalities among the civilian population, damage to private property and further displacement. Civilians are caught in the crossfire or deliberately targeted for allegedly supporting a rival party.

<sup>1</sup> DTM, National Displacement Report 11 (December 2021-February 2022) (April 2022).

Intercommunal clashes over border disputes and competition over resources have been reported, for example, between West Guji/Oromo and Gedeo/Sidama peoples along the Oromia-Sidama regional border; between Derashe and ethnic Konso in SNNP region; between Afaris and Issa communities along the Somali-Afar border (Sitti zone); and in Amhara region between Qemant and Amhara communities in Central Gondar zone, as well as between ethnic Oromo and ethnic Amhara communities in North Shewa and Oromia special zone. In late April, inter-religious violence has flared in several regions (Amhara, Afar, SNNP, Dire Dawa, Somali) following a series of attacks against Muslim communities in Gondar town (Amhara), and resulting in the burning of churches, mosques and private businesses.

A number of positive de-escalation initiatives were reported recently, for example the activation of a National Dialogue process or reconciliation ceremonies between communities in Benishangul Gumuz. However, it seems too early to assess their impact given the fragile environment, unrealistic demands and other obstacles. For instance, it is unclear to what extent the Federal Government is ready to negotiate with armed groups which are challenging its authority and legitimacy, noting that these groups are designated as ‘terrorist organizations’ under domestic law.

### Living conditions are worsened by the climatic shock

The effects of the volatile environment due to conflict and insurgency are currently worsened by the recurrent climatic shocks. The serious drought is affecting about 8 million people, particularly in southern and south-eastern regions, including Somali, Oromia and SNNP. According to the latest HNO, around 1.5 million livestock have so far died, and the remaining are weak and cannot produce enough milk. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) estimates that further 10 million livestock are at risk. The already fragile livelihoods

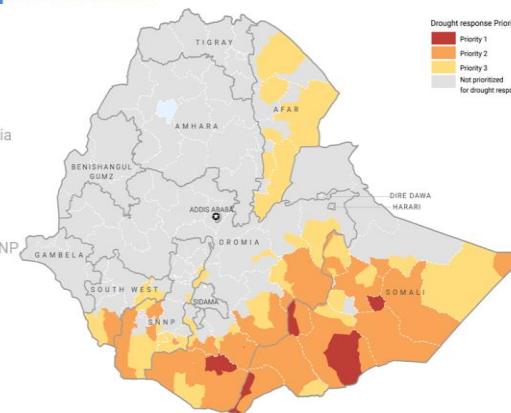
are compromised, accelerating food insecurity and malnutrition, as well as inter-communal violence.

To access water in drought-affected areas, the population's last resort is either water trucking (according to the HNO, around 2.9 million people require it in Somali and Oromia regions alone) or travel in search of either water or assistance.

### Drought geographic prioritization

Initial results

- 9** Priority 1 woredas  
6 in Somali, 3 in Oromia
- 76** Priority 2 woredas  
In Somali, Oromia, SNNP South West
- 72** Priority 3 woredas  
Including in Afar



This has resulted in a large number of children out of school, as well as vulnerable individuals (mainly older persons or those suffering chronic-illnesses) left alone by family members who travel in search of resources or assistance.

As a result of the severe weather conditions, the majority of the population, who is reliant on farming and livestock, has suffered crops failing, loss of livelihood and livestock, and unsustainable increase of cost of living. These effects, compounded by inter-communal tensions and widespread violence in different parts of the country, are leaving the civilian population with limited to no capacity to positively cope with the overall devastation.

## Challenges or obstruction to the provision of assistance

Ethiopia has a well-developed National Disaster Risk Management Policy, and the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC) oversees its implementation. The EDRMC reports directly to the Prime Minister’s Office, and although disaster risk management is decentralized to regional authorities, the EDRMC helps in setting up National Incident Management mechanisms including Emergency Coordination Centers (ECCs) and Incident Command Posts (ICPs).

The EDRMC is thus the primary governmental agency when it comes to the provision and coordination of humanitarian assistance. Nonetheless, in the current environment, the decentralized system of early warning, risk assessment and disaster management is not fully capable of delivering a Government-led, comprehensive and coordinated response to save lives and protect livelihoods. This applies also to areas which are not hard-to-reach, nor are they affected by security risks.

Limited government capacity is, however, not the only reason that both the authorities and humanitarian community are struggling to keep up with the deterioration of food security and living conditions. The humanitarian response, especially in conflict-affected areas, is hindered by additional constraints, especially the damage caused to civilian infrastructure, contamination of land by explosive remnants of war (ERW), the presence of armed elements and ongoing fighting.

Furthermore, Government policies, inconsistent with the Government’s obligations towards its own citizens under international law, present a major challenge to the provision of life-saving assistance. In Northern Ethiopia, although the Government announced in January 2022 new measures to facilitate humanitarian assistance, this announcement – similar to announcements made during the past months – does not translate in practice to adequate

access and concrete steps which will allow the unimpeded passage of critical humanitarian supplies and authorized personnel, including protection specialists, as required by international humanitarian law.

Despite some improvement since the announcement of a humanitarian truce at the end of March, namely the resumption of road convoys into Tigray, the Federal Government continues to prevent, or tightly restrict, road transportation into and out of Tigray, as well as the supply of fuel, electricity, cash, telecommunication and internet access. The humanitarian response, including moving food and medical items, as well as scaling up operations to newly affected areas, is severely hampered by these restrictions and by administrative impediments concerning visas and work permits which delay staff recruitment and deployment. The recent commitments of the Government to increasing UNHAS flights to Tigray and to ease procedures have not taken full effect yet.

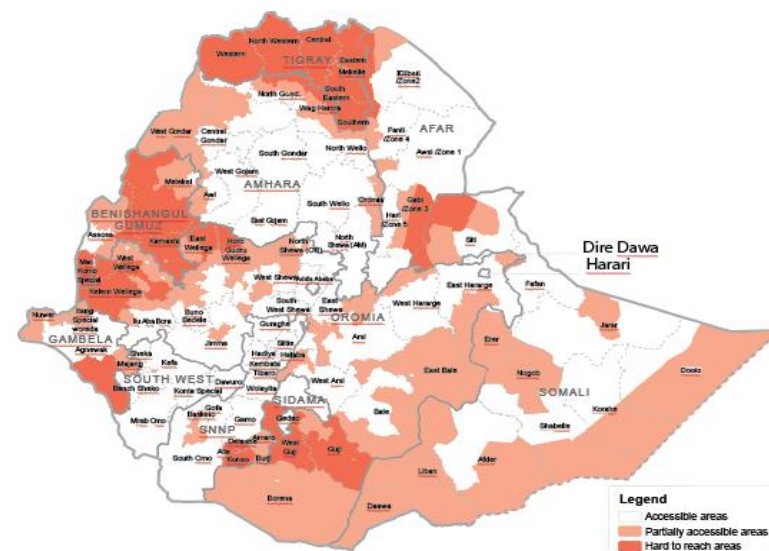


Figure 4 - Humanitarian Access May 2022 (source: OCHA)

## 2. PRIORITY PROTECTION RISKS

### **RISK 1: Attacks on civilians and on civilian infrastructure**

Since the start of April, some 350 trucks carrying aid have arrived at Tigray along the Semera-Abala-Mekelle corridor through neighbouring Afar region. However, at the time of writing, aid deliveries by road into Tigray remain far below what is required to meet people's needs. Other major routes into Tigray remain blocked due to insecurity and ongoing hostilities. Lack of supplies, fuel and cash is forcing humanitarian organizations, including mobile protection, health and nutrition teams, to halt their operations, curbing their capacity to distribute supplies, especially in remote areas. Transporters often refuse to travel given the risk of being stranded in conflict areas, especially as they do not have opportunity to refuel before heading back.

Flight transportation alone is not sufficient for a sustained and efficient response. Airlift services are limited to small quantities, prioritizing as much as possible health and nutrition needs. Other critical items, for example shelter materials, are more difficult to transport, and the costs of airlift transportation are 25 times higher than a truck convoy.<sup>2</sup>

Even when life-saving supplies arrive in Mekele, the capital city of Tigray, the restrictions on the use of cash have limited procurement and payment to service providers, as well as the payment of salaries to staff. Hence, in many cases there is not sufficient capacity to deliver services, even when supplies are available, or to monitor their distribution.

Armed attacks are the most serious threat to civilians' life and physical integrity. Public reports recorded about 8,500 fatalities in Ethiopia in 2021, and more than 1,700 fatalities between January and May of 2022 as a result of political violence across the country. While a humanitarian truce between Government forces and Tigray forces was announced on 24 March 2022, armed clashes continue in the Tigray/Afar border. Other conflicts remain active in other regions, especially in Oromia and Benishangul Gumuz. More than 700 deaths were reported since March 2022, most of them in the context of the insurgency in Oromia between non-State armed groups (mainly the Oromo Liberation Army) and Government forces. It is estimated that the number of fatalities throughout the country is significantly higher given the difficulty to collect more data and verify these figures.

The loss of life also means grave trauma and distress to victims, survivors and their families, loss of shelter and livelihood, family separation, as well as increased exposure to violence and exploitation, for example, of those who have lost a caregiver or a breadwinner.

Apart from civilian casualties, the widespread violence in Northern Ethiopia and in other regions resulted in the destruction of homes, shops, warehouses, livestock, crops and other civilian property, as well as risk of injury or death to anyone in the vicinity of unexploded ordnance (UXO). While the exact numbers have been difficult to verify, casualty data reported by NGOs and local health facilities indicate an alarming rate of children victims of UXO-related accidents.

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<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Samantha Power, of the US International Development Agency (USAID), 7th April 2022, BBC.



According to the joint investigation by the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission (EHRC) and OHCHR, there is a high probability that all parties to the conflict in Northern Ethiopia have committed serious violations of international human rights and international humanitarian law. These include the deliberate targeting of civilians and civilian objects, indiscriminate attacks, failure to take sufficient precautionary measures to protect the civilian population, and widespread destruction of property.<sup>3</sup> Following the withdrawal of Tigray forces from areas in Afar and Amhara, reports began to emerge regarding killings of civilians, rapes, and the large-scale destruction of private property and essential infrastructure by Tigray forces.

The civilian population affected by these attacks includes displaced communities. IDP and refugee camps have been directly hit by airstrikes, including the Dedebit IDP camp and the Mai Aini refugee camp in Tigray. Infrastructure and property, including schools, mills, warehouses and factories have been damaged. Clashes also caused deaths and injuries among IDPs while on the move, raising concerns regarding lack or insufficient precautionary measures taken by Government forces to minimize civilian loss or damage.

Attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, or the fear of such attacks, resulted in an increase in displacement. While the displaced population in Tigray is currently around 1.8M IDPs (44% in the North Western zone), protracted displacement is also a major issue in other regions due to ongoing violence which impedes the process of durable solutions. Around 410,000 IDPs are recorded in Benishangul Gumuz region (regional authorities' estimation; around 25% in the West Wollega zone), 300,000 in Afar (regional authorities' estimation), 790,000 in Oromia, 460,00 in Amhara (around 90,000

recently displaced in eastern Amhara), while all other regions are experiencing fluctuating waves of IDPs.<sup>4</sup>

IDPs arrive at displacement locations traumatized, exhausted, at times physically injured or having experienced separation from family members, loss of homes, documentation and other belongings. At the points of arrival, they often have to deal with limited to no essential services and livelihood opportunities; a harsh reality which increases their exposure to protection risks and possible tension with host communities. Children are particularly affected, representing a very high proportion of the overall IDP population.

As a result of various armed conflicts, including those occurred prior to the Northern conflict, around 1,056 square kilometres of land in Ethiopia is estimated to be contaminated with landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERWs) in 7 out of the 11 country's regions. The latest fighting, with its use of heavy artillery and widespread shelling, has further contaminated areas in Northern Ethiopia. ERWs pose a direct threat and also affect the ability to move freely, to use the land for farming or building, or to return to the place of origin. Millions of civilians across Ethiopia, including refugees and IDPs, are living in constant fear for their safety and well-being, and are self-restricting their movements.

Access and security constraints, political and ethnic tensions, the damage caused by armed conflict to civilian infrastructure and services, including to the judicial system, and insufficient support provided to survivors and witnesses, leave those who were harmed by attacks without an adequate remedy and further contribute to the general lack of accountability.

The limited availability of specific protection services, such as child protection and explosive ordnance marking and clearance, hinders

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the EHRC - OHCHR Joint Investigation into Alleged Violations by all Parties to the Conflict in the Tigray Region (3 November 2021).

<sup>4</sup> DTM, National Displacement Report 11 (December 2021-February 2022) (April 2022).

the ability to prevent, respond to and mitigate the consequences of attacks on already-vulnerable families and households.

## **RISK 2: Gender and conflict-related sexual violence**

Gender-based violence, specifically conflict-related sexual violence, has been reported in the context of the Tigray conflict in November 2020 and subsequent fighting in Amhara and Afar. The EHRC/OHCHR joint investigation has documented different forms of sexual violence against women and girls, including rape, gang rape and intentional transmission of HIV, committed in Tigray by all parties involved in the conflict. Women and girls were targeted on the basis of their alleged or actual association – usually family ties – with members of the opposing armed forces. In some cases, family members witnessed, or were forced to witness, the sexual abuse.

Despite the number of cases and their severity which continue to emerge – and similar to the situation faced by survivors of conflict-related attacks – the security conditions, breakdown of law and order, collapse of government services, erosion of livelihoods and means of subsistence, as well as displacement and damage to social support networks, access constraints and limited availability of health and protection specialists – all these hindered the ability to support survivors with quality services.

The conflicts in Tigray, Amhara, Afar, Benishangul Gumuz, Oromia and SNNP regions significantly increased GBV risks, especially for women and girls. According to the Health Cluster, 16,698 survivors of GBV accessed or were referred to medical services in 2021, with women and girls accounting for the majority of survivors. The actual number of GBV cases is probably higher given under-reporting of GBV both at the national and sub-national levels, mainly due to stigma and fear of retaliation.

Not everyone targeted with conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) survives. Those that do, specifically women and children, are highly vulnerable during movements and displacement, in particular when they also suffered the loss of the breadwinner or head of household. The limited access to basic services, together with the general inadequacy of shelters and housing facilities, increases exposure to GBV, exploitation and to negative coping mechanisms, such as sex work or early marriage. In Tigray, protection monitoring recorded cases of survival sex due to lack of food and cash among female IDPs and refugees, particularly single women heading households.

Cases of intimate partner violence, sexual harassment, assault and rape, outside the context of conflict or in non-conflict areas, have been reported as well. For example, in Somali region which is affected by drought, more than 60 rape cases were reported at the One Stop Center in Jijjiga in the first three months of 2022. It was suggested that the risk of GBV increases in drought-affected areas as women and girls are forced to travel far distances to fetch water, while in other cases they are often left alone while family members are away looking for food or livelihood.

As noted, the systems in place, responsible for preventing GBV and providing support to survivors and their families, are weak or overstretched. Clinical management of rape (CMR), psycho-social support, post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) and treatment for sexually transmitted infections (STI) are not accessible, both in terms of the number of facilities and quality of services. Existing GBV case management, legal aid and referral services are also limited considering the number of individuals affected and the scope of their needs. Lack of awareness of survivors' needs and of the available services, stigma and harmful social norms that perpetuate gendered violence leave survivors to bear the brunt of sexual violence with limited to no support.

### **RISK 3: Denial of resources, opportunities and services**

In conflict-affected areas, the damage to public facilities, including schools, health, markets and other essential services, has severely disrupted access and availability of services. More than 2,000 Health facilities are non-functional because of the ongoing conflicts, and around 11,393 schools are either fully or partially damaged. Around 1.7M displaced children were out of school in 2021.<sup>5</sup>

In Tigray, the medical system is on the verge of collapse, also having to deal with the lack of fuel, electricity, communication, and banking services. The de-facto blockade and Government-imposed restrictions further impede access to critical supplies and services, including much needed medical items. This practice renders the delivery of minimum health services to the local population impossible, and humanitarian actors were forced to suspend life-saving operations in light of these challenges.

In drought-affected areas, at least 1.5 million livestock have so far died for lack of pasture and water.<sup>6</sup> The drought has even damaged the livelihood of families not usually living in a situation of poverty. In some areas which are affected by both drought and conflict, for example in Oromia region, communities are in a desperate situation given that the ongoing violence is preventing them from seeking alternatives. Insecurity and drought are limiting their ability to access land, harvest crops and engage in agricultural activities, while destruction of essential agricultural infrastructure further decreased the availability of resources, assets, seeds and tools.

Drought and conflict, with the resultant inadequate access to critical services, have led to further displacement. Still, according to the 2022

HNO, around 580,000 IDPs do not have any form of shelter, and access to civil documentation is challenging. IDPs who cannot present the relevant documentation face exclusion from essential services such as banking, employment, telecommunications, and restriction of their freedom of movement. Most authorities are unwilling to issue documentation to IDPs, thus hindering the appropriate protection support to the displaced population.

Families who have left their houses and assets, may find them upon their return occupied, vandalized, looted or damaged. Vulnerable households, including children, are increasingly resorting to harmful activities to cope with the situation, including school drop-out, early marriage, survival sex, begging, child labour and theft. Community tension, including between families and between communities, is also on the rise given limited services and competition over resources.

Ethiopia has a functioning Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) which has been instrumental to support poor households and families during the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>7</sup> The National Disaster Risk Management Policy and the EDRMC are suitable mechanisms to support also the most vulnerable ones affected by conflict and climatic shocks. Nonetheless, the authorities are currently struggling to address these challenges effectively, not only in Northern Ethiopia, but also in conflict-affected areas in Oromia, Benishangul Gumuz and SNNP, as well as in drought-affected areas in Oromia and Somali.

Indeed, even in areas that are *not* hard-to-reach, the capacity to assist is limited compared to the needs. The number of supporting humanitarian actors and their geographic coverage are both limited. In addition, looting or blocking of trucks carrying supplies is still

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<sup>5</sup> HNO 2022

<sup>6</sup> OHCA, Ethiopia Drought update (April 2022).

<sup>7</sup> IFPRI, <https://www.ifpri.org/blog/ethiopias-social-safety-net-effective-limiting-covid-19-impacts-rural-food-insecurity>

recurrent; the presence of explosive ordnance reported by partners limits staff and population movements; and the lack of funding negatively impacts the procurement of essential supply.

#### **RISK 4: Family and child separation**

The conflict and de-facto blockade in Tigray, clashes in Amhara, Afar, Benishangul Gumuz and Oromia – and to a lesser extent the difficult living conditions created by severe drought – all have led to the separation of many families.

Parents and care caregivers have been separated from their children and other family members as a result of killings and attacks, displacement or economic and livelihood difficulties. Older persons and persons with disabilities have been left behind, at times abandoned by their family, as they were unable or unwilling to flee their homes. In those cases where the household remains female-headed, several consequences have been recorded, including the erosion of family livelihood, engagement in negative coping strategies and increased vulnerability to gender-based or conflict-related sexual violence.

One of the effects of conflict and its related displacement is the increase in the number of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC). For example, a total of 9,330 UASC living in IDP sites and host communities has been identified by child protection partners in Tigray as of March 2022. UASC suffer intense emotional distress, increased risk of abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, trafficking or forced recruitment into armed groups. Those who have been separated from their family often experience significant barriers to access humanitarian assistance, for example due to lack of civil documentation, inadequate access to information, safety issues or social exclusion.

In Tigray, unaccompanied children who are living by themselves as heads of household face a number of barriers to essential support. For instance, they do not always have beneficiary cards required to receive assistance in their own names; they only have limited access to cash; or may be deprioritized by foster or interim caregivers, thus prevented from accessing food, health, education or other services. They may be forced into hazardous work, begging and illegal activities, while adolescent girls in particular may engage in transactional sex to meet their basic needs. Child protection partners operating in Mekelle, Tigray, have observed children living and working in the streets.

The Government tends to offer non-family-based residential care for large numbers of UASC, an arrangement which does not provide the minimum technical or institutional capacity to properly address their needs. The challenges highlighted earlier, such as lack of fuel and cash, and the disruption of communication services, impede the ability of humanitarian actors to carry out family tracing activities and to support separated family members, including UASC.

#### **RISK 5: Deprivation of liberty**

The joint investigation by EHRC and OHCHR concluded that there is a reasonable ground to believe that arbitrary detentions, abductions and enforced disappearances have been perpetrated by all parties to the Tigray conflict.

IDPs fleeing western Tigray, which is controlled by Amhara regional forces and militias since the beginning of the conflict, have been reporting mass arrests of ethnic Tigrayan young men. Those in detention were reportedly subjected to harsh conditions, including torture, starvation, and denial of medical care. It was further reported that 160 youths from Raya ethnic group in Alamata,

southern Tigray, were abducted by Tigray forces in March 2022 to be forcibly recruited as fighters.<sup>8</sup>

Both Government forces and Tigray forces have captured members of the opposing party and are holding them in detention. In May 2022, Tigray forces released more than 4,200 persons (400 women) previously detained in connection with the conflict. Sick and seriously injured detainees, as well as women who gave birth while in detention, were prioritized.

Cases of arbitrary detention, abductions and enforced disappearances have been reported in other regions as well, for example in Afar and Amhara between September and December 2021.<sup>9</sup> The EHRC reported that 145 people were abducted by armed groups in Benishangul Gumuz in October 2021. Many of those arrested and taken by security forces or armed groups remain unaccounted for.

Following the November 2021 Government declaration of a State of Emergency, mass arrests of ethnic Tigrayans took place across the country, including in Addis Ababa. Large-scale arrests of civilians, including journalists and humanitarian workers, for their alleged support of the Tigray forces or the Oromia Liberation Army, have also been reported in other areas, especially in Oromia. Indeed, the State of Emergency allowed the authorities to arrest or detain any person, without a warrant, based on a “reasonable suspicion” of cooperation with “terrorist groups”. Based on this authorization, thousands were reportedly arrested without any evidence of them cooperating with armed groups, supporting terrorism or posing any threat to Government forces and Ethiopia’s national security.

According to EHRC, unlawful detentions continue despite the lifting of the State of Emergency on 15 February 2022. Individuals are often

detained due to their perceived affiliation with a party to the conflict and held incommunicado for long periods without formal charges or legal proceedings. In a more recent development, more than 4,500 persons, including journalists and political activists, were arrested in Amhara during May 2022 as part of the Government’s crackdown on Fano militia.

While arbitrary detentions are prevalent, monitoring their occurrence – as well as the fate and condition of those who have been detained – is, however, difficult due to the denial of access and information by the detaining parties or the general insecurity and volatile situation which impede such access.

Those who were arbitrarily detained, abducted or disappeared by security forces or armed groups, and their family members, face the risk of torture and other ill-treatment, including psychological trauma. When the detention is not acknowledged by the detaining party or when detainees are held without contact with the outside world, the families live with the constant worry of not knowing the whereabouts of their loved ones.

Finally, when a family member has been detained, the household may become a single-headed one. The spouse or relatives are forced to raise and support the children and other family members alone. Bearing the related economic burden, they are becoming more vulnerable to poverty and exploitation.

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<sup>8</sup> ACAPS, March 2022 (citing ACLED).

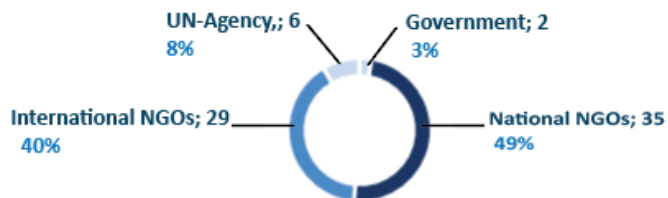
<sup>9</sup> Report on Violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law in Afar and Amhara Regions of Ethiopia, EHRC, March 2022.

### 3. RESPONSE

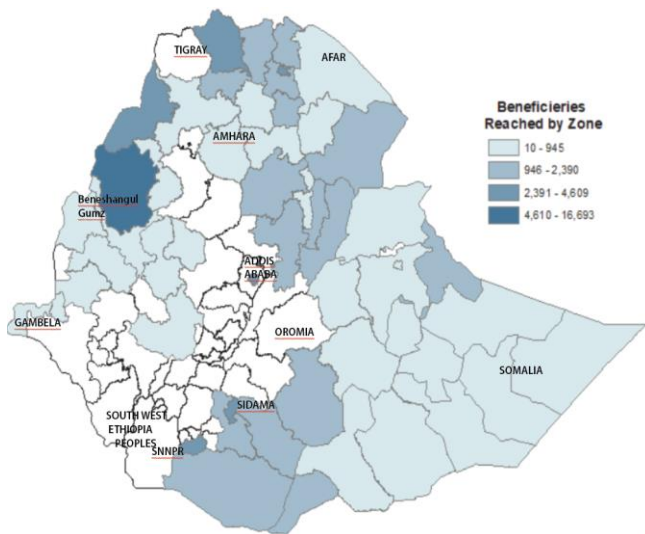
#### 3.1 Protection Cluster: Responses Provided

##### Protection operational presence as of April 2022

# of Active Organizations  
72

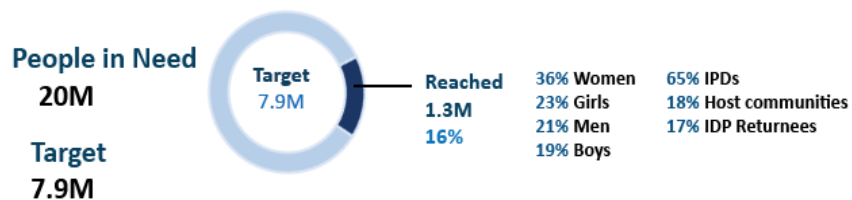


##### # of beneficiaries reached by regions (Jan- April 2022)

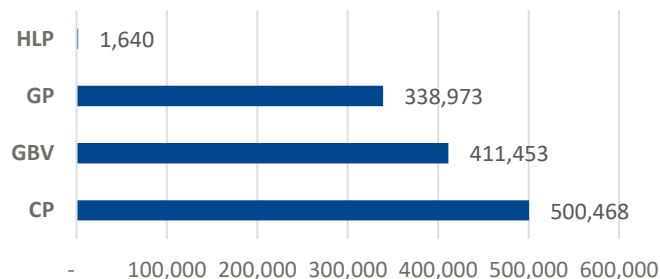


##### Population reached as of April 2022

#### Population



##### # of beneficiaries reached by AoRs



#### 3.2 Funding Data

##### Funding snapshot (as of May 2022)



## 4. RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

### **RISK 1:** Attacks on civilians and on civilian infrastructure

#### **To the Parties to the conflicts** taking place in Ethiopia:

- i) Cease all attacks and violence against civilians, including attacks against military targets which are expected to cause disproportionate damage to civilians and civilian objects;
- ii) Ensure precautionary measures are taken to prevent as much as possible civilian casualties and damage to civilian infrastructures, such as medical clinics, schools, food production and humanitarian facilities;
- iii) Preserve the civilian nature of civilian infrastructures and humanitarian facilities, and avoid placing any military assets nearby schools, IDP and refugee camps;
- iv) Facilitate the deployment of protection monitors to these sites (“protection by presence”);
- v) Investigate all suspected abuses, including complaints regarding unlawful killings and GBV committed by armed forces, prosecute those responsible, and provide adequate remedy and support to survivors and their families.

#### **To Donors and the humanitarian community:**

- i) Strengthen civil-military coordination to address any concerns and enable immediate action to protect civilians and humanitarian personnel;
- ii) Enhance programs to support survivors and their families, expand protection monitoring activities and protection by presence, and strengthen coordination mechanisms, including the protection cluster;

- iii) Document possible human rights violations and refer to appropriate bodies (authorities, national HR Commission, OHCHR);
- iv) Offer and support training to armed forces on basic IHL rules;
- v) Engage with armed actors and strengthen relationship with those who can positively influence armed actors such as political, community and religious leaders;
- vi) Advocate for increased humanitarian access for Mine Action operators to assess the contamination threat, mark and remove explosive remnants of war;
- vii) Develop and disseminate information among the civilian population regarding safety behaviour during airstrikes and drone attacks.

#### **To Mine Action actors:**

- i) Carry out threat assessments and scale up explosive ordnance risk education for at-risk populations;
- ii) Conduct survey and, when appropriate, marking and clearance activities in potentially contaminated areas.

### **RISK 2:** Gender and conflict-related sexual violence

#### **To the Parties to the conflicts** taking place in Ethiopia:

- i) Prevent and stop all GBV by armed personnel against civilians, especially women and girls, including by providing the necessary training to their forces, investigate all complaints and take accountability measures against those involved;
- ii) Encourage safe reporting of GBV cases, protect the safety and well-being of survivors and provide them with the necessary support;

**To donors and humanitarian actors:**

- i) Continue to support GBV response and the capacity of existing structures, prioritizing under-served areas and focusing on core GBV services (health, case management, psychosocial support, legal aid, safety and security), including the opening of one-stop centers and safe houses;
- ii) Ensure protection mainstreaming within all sectors, and that all interventions are informed by robust analysis of GBV risks and gender aspects;
- iii) Support awareness raising and capacity-building activities, including working with service providers, educators, religious and community leaders, to prevent and stop GBV, as well as promote safe reporting and counter social stigma;
- iv) Ensure adequate funding for GBV in the HRP as well as longer-term funding for sustainability linked to Humanitarian Development & Peace Nexus;
- v) Invest in livelihood interventions for women and girls to address negative coping mechanisms such as survival sex, early marriages and to ease re-integration of GBV survivors;
- vi) Support access to justice for GBV survivors and accompany the Inter-ministerial Task Force (IMTF) SGBV sub-Committee to implement their action plan;
- vii) Support inclusion and empowerment of local women-led organizations, national associations, and community-based actors in the safe delivery of core GBV and protection responses and other forms of humanitarian aid to conflict-affected individuals, groups, and hard-to-reach communities.

**RISK 3: Denial of resources, opportunities and services**

**To the parties to the conflicts** taking place in Ethiopia:

Adhere to their obligations under international law to facilitate safe and unhindered humanitarian access in all conflict areas, especially

in the Tigray region, ensuring an enabling environment for the delivery of life-saving assistance.

**To the Government of Ethiopia:**

- i) Resume transportation, telecommunication, fuel and bank services in Tigray;
- ii) Minimize bureaucratic requirements, including those concerning visas and permits, in order to facilitate the rapid deployment of humanitarian supplies and personnel, and to ensure adequate and safe access of the civilian population to critical services and assistance;
- iii) Expand the country's Productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) or a similar scheme to support vulnerable HHs in drought-affected areas, or in other areas where there are no security-related access constraints;
- iv) Strengthen partnerships with development actors to find sustainable solutions in drought-affected areas.

**To donors and humanitarian leadership:**

- i) Advocate for access, ensuring the safety of humanitarian personnel and acceptance and respect of humanitarian principles;
- ii) Maintain and increase access negotiations to enable protection by presence and protection activities which require sustained presence on the ground.

**RISK 4: Family and child separation**

**To the Government of Ethiopia:**

- i) Support and facilitate family tracing and case management, children care arrangements and social services, including by



resuming fuel, transportation, communication and cash services;

- ii) Prioritize family-based care arrangements over long-term residential care of children.

**To donors and humanitarian actors:**

- i) Support and prioritize – including by multi-year funding – family tracing activities and support to separated family members, including UASC;
- ii) Collaborate with child protection actors to ensure safe identification of children in need and provision of services and humanitarian assistance;
- iii) Expand capacity-building of child protection actors, including of local authorities.

**RISK 5: Deprivation of liberty**

**To the Parties to the conflicts** taking place in Ethiopia:

- i) Release all persons arbitrarily detained or abducted;
- ii) Allow access to detention facilities and independent monitoring of the conditions in such facilities;
- iii) Provide information on the fate of those held in detention, and allow them to contact their families, including with the support of the ICRC.

**To donors and humanitarian leadership,** advocate for:

- i) Respect of international law and standards governing detention during armed conflict, including for the protection of the safety and well-being of all detainees;
- ii) Access to detention facilities and to detainees by independent monitors.

**To Humanitarian actors:**

- i) Enhance family tracing and the support of vulnerable HHs;
- ii) Advocate for consistent, safe and continuous monitoring of detention facilities by independent bodies, such as the EHRC, OHCHR and the ICRC.