

NORTHERN ETHIOPIA EMERGENCY SITUATION

26 October 2022

ETHIOPIA

Recent developments

The Ethiopian government had stated on 18 October that humanitarian services would be restored in recently occupied areas specifically via a corridor from North Gondar towards Shire and a Kombolcha-Dessie-Woldiya-Kobo-Alamata route. The opening of these routes will be preceded by technical assessments and some of the groundwork needed to restore services in the conflict affected areas.

On 21 October, UNHCR Representative, and Humanitarian Coordinator/Designated Official (HC/DO) a.i, chaired a townhall meeting attended by more than 150 staff from UN Agencies and INGOs operating in Tigray. He expressed his solidarity and sympathy to all colleagues delivering assistance in the region as well as to their families despite the extremely difficult living and working conditions. He mentioned that advocacy is being done by the UN at the highest levels, calling for movement of staff and supplies, including higher amount of cash, in and out of Tigray. During the meeting, colleagues were able to raise their concerns, mostly concerning medical evacuation and security of their dependents, ability to bring cash and documents (IDs) to national staff in Tigray..

The townhall meeting followed the discussion held on 19 October between the HC/DO and the State Minister of Ethiopia to discuss the situation in Northern Ethiopia, the possibility of greater humanitarian access as well as the rotation of staff in and out of Tigray. That same day the HC/DO briefed the Heads of Clusters and UN Agencies in Ethiopia and discussed the necessary measures to be put in place to ensure all UN agencies and partners are prepared to respond when and if access is granted.

In **Amhara**, the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS) in Debark crossed into Tigray to visit Mai Aini and Adi Harush refugee camps on 26 October. RRS confirmed that the road is safe and conducive for conducting a field mission by the United Nations Department for Safety and Security (UNDSS). RRS also met with refugee leaders in both camps and took note of 6,000 refugees ready to be relocated to Alemwach settlement in Amhara. The existing refugee relocation plan that was prepared months ago will be updated and implemented as soon as the situation on the ground permits.

Peace talks were officially launched between the Ethiopian government and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) on 25 October in South Africa under the auspices of the African Union.

UNHCR response

On 20 October, in **Mekelle**, in order to improve the protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in the sites, UNHCR through its partner Action for the Needy Ethiopia (ANE) distributed solar lamps to 2,053 persons living in four UNHCR managed sites.

In **Amhara**, the Standardized Expanded Nutrition Survey (SENS) was completed for the refugee host communities on 21 October and continues with refugees in Alemwach settlement this week. This is being conducted by UNHCR's health partner, Medical Teams International (MTI) RRS and WFP. The exercise is overseen by UNHCR and the Woreda Health Office.

The construction of the semi-permanent structure within the Dabat Health Center has been finalized to improve the hospital's capacity to receive the refugee population hosted in Alemwach.

IDPs in Jara have begun returning to their places of origin in Kobo town and Kobo Raya. So far, about 3,000 have spontaneously returned. Likewise, in Zerima, about 4,000 IDPs are reported to have returned to Adi Arkay and more returns are ongoing. The local government in Debark assisted the return of 2,000 IDPs to Adi Arkay and has requested UNHCR's support in the return process. Returns are currently ongoing for IDPs in Mersa to Kobo.

So far, the local government has supported the return of some 30,000 IDPs to Kobo and Kobo Raya. UNHCR has committed to transporting 10,000 IDPs as soon as partners can establish that conditions in the areas of origin are conducive to return.

On 17 October, UNHCR distributed solar lamps to 406 IDPs in the new site in Tebase in Debre Berhan. In addition, 30 IDP women benefitted from a training by OHCHR, UNHCR and partner the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus (EECMY) on access to justice in the China and Woinshet Factory sites.

In **Afar**, UNHCR and partner Edukans organized a workshop on 20 October, to launch the Education Cannot Wait program for refugees and host communities. The aim is to improve learning through equitable, access to quality, safe, gender sensitive and protective education for emergency affected girls, boys and children with disabilities living in camps and host communities. This first round will fund the schooling of 5,000 children, construction of 15 classrooms and 16 emergency latrines, rehabilitation of playgrounds, capacity building for teachers and GBV risk mitigation in Aysaita and Serdo.

UNHCR is preparing the resumption of refugee relocation from Barahle to Serdo, while 4,500 newly displaced persons received Core Relief Items (CRIs) in Abala.

Since our last report, a total of 36,600 refugees received the August and September general food distribution, including 24,185 refugees from Aysaita and 12,413 refugees from Serdo.

SUDAN

The number of new arrivals into Eastern Sudan (Gedaref, Blue Nile, Kasala) continues to remain low. Nevertheless, emergency preparedness measures, such as border monitoring and the repositioning of emergency relief items, remain in place in case of a potential influx.

Recent developments

On 24 October, the Commission for Refugees (COR) strike committee agreed to suspend the strike for 10 days (until 3 November) to allow negotiations with UNHCR to continue. UNHCR's own internal committee continues to engage with the COR committee to find a resolution to the demands and end the strike.

Various humanitarian agencies nevertheless reported that lack of access to the camps for the duration of the strikes has had an impact on the refugees in terms of the absence of protection counselling and delivery of response to their protection needs, in addition to halting construction works.

Nevertheless, since last week, access to the camps has been largely granted with no obstacles. Partners have prioritized the distribution of food and essential CRIs to take advantage of the access window. GBV capacity building sessions continued with women-led groups, men's group and youth-led groups in all three camps. The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) distributed dignity kits to 20 women who are all new arrivals. Food distribution took place in all camps, including for new arrivals.

Since 9 October, no new suspected cases of monkeypox have been detected. COR in Gedaref confirmed that all restrictions linked to the monkeypox outbreak in Tunaydbah and Um Rakuba camps have ended. Movements in and out of the camps have resumed as normal.

UNHCR response

On 23 October, in Kassala, UNHCR was able to access Shagarab for the WFP food distribution. Additionally, a technical team of COR and UNHCR staff left for Gergef transit centre for an assessment which will inform improvement of the centre as it continues to prepare for possible large numbers of new arrivals.

UNHCR's protection team visited Babikri, Tunaydbah, and Um Rakuba with no access problems during the week of 17 October.

Despite no new suspected cases of monkeypox, preparedness measures remain in place. In Tunaydbah, repair works for the isolation facility operated by partner ALIGHT have been completed. Additionally, MSF operates 4 isolation beds in the hospital. These are prioritized for confirmed cases of monkeypox and those with complications. At the same time, risk communication and community engagement activities in the camps continue, including awareness raising and community sensitization activities through partners. UNHCR is also in the final stages of developing IEC materials translated into Amharic and Tigrinya. Moreover, after a suspension of the COR strikes, soap distribution resumes this week in Um Rakuba camp. Soap distribution in Tunaydbah and Babikri were already conducted previously.

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