

The international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement coordinated response to the complex humanitarian crisis in Ethiopia, Sudan and Djibouti

The humanitarian concerns in Ethiopia, Sudan and Djibouti and the impact of the Tigray Crisis

During recent years, Ethiopia, Sudan and Djibouti have been severely affected by climatic shocks with frequent and severe droughts and floods, locust infestations, and disease outbreaks - including COVID-19. In addition to these multiple challenges and their compounded effects on people's coping capacities, armed violence in several parts of Ethiopia – such as Benishangul-Gumuz and in the Konso Zone of Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) – has led to displacements, attacks on civilians, including cases of sexual violence, separation of family members, injuries, loss of life and property, disrupted livelihoods, and loss of access to basic survival goods such as water, food and shelter.

The fighting that broke out in November 2020 between federal and regional forces in Tigray has caused large-scale humanitarian needs in northern Ethiopia and beyond, with long-term consequences for the population. Clashes continue to take place regularly in some areas of Tigray, exacerbating these needs, in a region where 600,000 people were already dependent on humanitarian assistance before the crisis. Some 60,000 Ethiopians have fled to eastern Sudan and are being housed in refugee camps in overcrowded areas of Kassala and Gedaref states. This is also the usual migratory route for over 900,000 migrants and refugees, who use this area as a transit point, often staying for an indefinite period. Camps lack water, basic sanitation and hygiene, adequate shelter conditions and livelihoods. Without viable options, refugees and migrants will use scarce resources from local communities, potentially exacerbating tensions. 231 Ethiopians claimed asylum in Djibouti and have been accommodated in Hol Hol camp. Ethiopians from different regions continue to cross the border daily, officially and unofficially.

Coordination and complementarity within the Movement

As leading humanitarian actors and front-line responders, often where others do not have access, the components of the Movement are present in all three countries and coordinate closely to respond in a complementary way to critical needs, particularly in health, PSS, restoring family links (RFL), economic security and water and sanitation, of people affected by multiple vulnerabilities.

With the bilateral and multilateral support of Movement partners, the three National Societies' capacity will be enhanced and bolstered to expand their respective reach, notably with risk communication and community engagement activities, and improved protection of their staff and front-line volunteers (including against COVID-19, through the supply of health and hygiene materials, and personal protective equipment).

Since the beginning of the Tigray crisis, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) have jointly assisted, in and around Tigray, over 4,500 weapon wounded people and 10,000 primary health care patients, as well as provided crutches and physiotherapy services to over 450 weapon-wounded. Over 6,800 weapon-wounded received first aid and were evacuated by the ERCS' ambulance fleet. 6,417 individuals received essential household items and 3,700 people got clean water through the trucking and storage tanks installed in Mekelle. Meanwhile, 9,352 persons re-established contacts with their loved one through ICRC and National Societies' RFL programmes in Ethiopia and Sudan. ICRC and ERCS continue to conduct assessments, planning and delivery of services to people throughout the affected regions.

To date, few humanitarian actors have been able to access Tigray other than the ERCS and the ICRC. ERCS has developed a plan to reach 2.8 million people in various parts of Ethiopia with essential service including food, shelter, WASH, PSS, RFL and livelihoods. The ICRC budget extension and IFRC Emergency Appeal will contribute to this plan.

Through a budget extension of CHF 20 million, the ICRC is scaling up its joint activities with ERCS to provide comprehensive aid to people facing extensive needs resulting from the violence in Tigray, and its support to the delivery of family-links services and selected health assistance to Ethiopian refugees in eastern Sudan. It will do so while maintaining its humanitarian activities in other violence-affected areas of Ethiopia. The ICRC's response will prioritize fields where it has a particular expertise, especially protection – including detention-related activities, restoring family links (RFL), and confidential dialogue with relevant authorities and weapon bearers on their responsibilities under pertinent law – as well as in health, and cooperation with the National Society. It will help ERCS branches in Tigray affected by the violence to recover and bolster their capacities to deliver family-links, first-aid and ambulance services and deliver relief assistance to communities.

Complementing to these efforts, the IFRC allocated DREF (Disaster Relief Emergency Fund) to enable ERCS to cover the immediate needs in Health, WASH, shelter, livelihood, and RFL of people in Amhara affected by the clashes in Tigray, for a period of four months. The strategy focused on covering the immediate services for 7,500 displaced households. In parallel, the IFRC and the Sudanese Red Crescent Society (SRCS) launched a DREF operation to provide lifesaving emergency services to newly arrived Ethiopian refugees for a total of 8,000 households (40,000 persons) in Hamdayit centre, Al Lukdi transit centres and Um-Rakoba settlement. Shelter and household items, health services, water and sanitation interventions, and gender and inclusion services were provided.

The IFRC is launching an Emergency Appeal for CHF 27 million to provide resources to the three National Societies targeting 660,000 people, including displaced and overwhelmed host communities, in the region of Amhara, Afar, Konso and Benishangul Gumuz in Ethiopia (as coordinated with the ICRC), Gedaref, Kassala states of Sudan, and Ali Sabieh, Dikhil, Obock, Tadjoura areas of Djibouti (map in annex), focusing on shelter, health, WASH, food security and livelihoods, Protection, gender and inclusion, disaster risk reduction, migration services and National Society development.

ICRC and IFRC will work to further strengthen in-country Movement coordination platforms, ensuring joint technical and operational support to National Societies. In addition, a multi-country regional Movement approach and services have been designed, allowing a peer-to-peer alliance between National Societies, and continued humanitarian services for population on the move, as well as recovery activities once durable solutions are found.

Capitalizing on its unique position and relations with the respective governments, and based on its principled, neutral, and independent action, the Movement will seek to promote and influence all main stakeholders to ensure equitable access to assistance and resources for those most exposed to the multiple crisis and challenges.

The rapid scale up of the Red Pillar's collective humanitarian response will contribute to saving lives and to protecting the dignity of those affected by the compounding vulnerabilities of armed violence, natural disasters, and migration, as well as the wider and longer-term impacts on displaced persons and host communities.