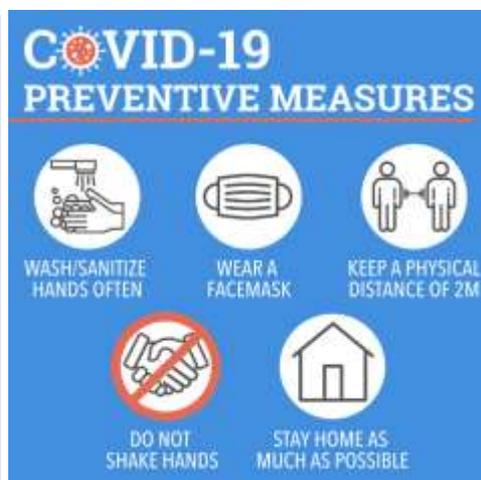


HIGHLIGHTS

- As of 25 April, Ethiopia counts 252,279 COVID-19 cases, including 59,979 active cases and 3,551 deaths (1.4 per cent case fatality rate).
- The test positivity rate stands at 25 per cent, while in cities like Dire Dawa and Hawassa, positivity rate is close to 50 per cent. Despite this alarming development, the population is not showing significant behavior change in implementing COVID-19 prevention measures.
- The complex and unpredictable security situation in several areas of Tigray Region continues to affect the delivery of full-scale humanitarian assistance to affected communities, particularly to those who live in rural areas.



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COVID-19 - Ethiopia updates

Test positivity rate in cities like Dire Dawa and Hawassa stand at 50 per cent

The number of people with COVID-19-related health complications admitted to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) and the number of COVID-19-related deaths have significantly increased since February; community transmission is also very high. The number of new cases and new deaths registered in March is three times higher than that was registered in January.

At present, the test positivity rate stands at 25 per cent, while in cities like Dire Dawa and Hawassa, positivity rate is close to 50 per cent. Despite this alarming development, the population is not showing significant behavior change in implementing COVID-19 prevention measures, especially outside Addis Ababa. This is despite the new directive [since 29 March] that imposed stricter rules to mitigate the spread of the virus.

As of 25 April, Ethiopia counts 252,279 confirmed cases (2.55 million samples tested), of which 59,979 are active cases and 3,551 people have died (1.4 per cent case fatality rate). There are currently 1,010 patients in the ICU. According to the Ethiopian Public Health Institute (EPHI), there is a significant shortage of oxygen supply in the ICUs.

As per the trend since the beginning of the pandemic, the majority of reported cases (80 per cent) are in Addis Ababa and Oromia Region. A spike in new COVID-19 cases comes as the country is preparing to hold its postponed national elections on 5 June 2021.

Tigray situation updates

The humanitarian access situation in Tigray remains volatile, with active hostilities reported in the central, eastern and north western parts of the region. The presence of multiple armed groups and shifting check points further complicates movement of humanitarian convoys and personnel. Access to rural areas remains particularly limited or in some case impossible, preventing the expansion of humanitarian interventions to the so-far unreached areas. The condition of the conflict-affected population in these areas is feared to be worsening with each passing day without assistance.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Overall, food insecurity has deteriorated across the region where the interim Regional Administration has estimated that 5.2 million people are now in need of food assistance.
- Provision of adequate shelter and protection for the estimated 1.7 million IDPs across the region, including half a million new IDPs in Shire alone is amongst the humanitarian response priorities.
- While the main focus all eyes is in the Tigray humanitarian crisis, conflicts in other parts of the country continue to leave unprecedented number of people in dire situations
- The inter-communal conflict in North Shewa and Oromo Special Zone that erupted on 18 March and escalated further on 17 April resulted in an undetermined number of casualties, destruction of social and community infrastructure, looting and destruction of private property and left some 330,000 displaced/affected in both Zones.
- Continued civilian attacks by unidentified armed groups continue to displace people in Benishangul Gumuz Region, attacks are reportedly spreading beyond Metekel Zone.

Overall, food insecurity has deteriorated across the region, especially since the conflict erupted during the harvest season. The interim Regional Administration has estimated that 5.2 million people are now in need of food assistance. Nutrition partners have expressed grave concern that the significant number of moderately malnourished cases identified so far will become severely malnourished unless the food and nutrition responses are urgently scaled up.

Provision of adequate shelter and protection for the estimated 1.7 million internally displaced people (IDPs) across the region, including half a million new IDPs in Shire alone is amongst the humanitarian response priorities. Citing official sources, Shelter Cluster partners reported a marked increase of new IDP arrivals in major towns, notably Shire, Adwa, Mekelle, and Axum. Displacement site assessments also revealed deplorable living conditions with high risk of health outbreaks, particularly during the coming rainy season.

Despite the challenges, humanitarian partners are working to scale up the response, although it is still insufficient to the needs and will require significant funding and deployment of additional expertise. See full response update on the latest Tigray Situation Report at <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/ethiopia/>

Update on conflict-induced displacements outside Tigray

While all eyes are on the Tigray humanitarian crisis, conflicts in other parts of the country continue to cause displacement, suffering and deaths.

Afar/Somali regional boundary:

Hundreds of people reportedly died due to fighting that broke out on 2 April between Afar and Somali communities in various locations along their regional boundaries. Despite agreement reached between the two regional presidents to peacefully resolve the conflict, fighting was again reported in Hanruka, Gelalo, Gewani and Mile *Woredas* on 7 April and the situation has not normalized yet. Afar Region hosts 80,343 IDPs, which include 45,343 displaced due to the Tigray conflict and 35,000 displaced due to the Afar-Somali/Issa conflict. On the Somali side, at least 2,100 households have been displaced to areas close to Garbo Isse, mainly in Qarraf areas and Beerta locations according to Siti Zone authorities. A major impact of this conflict is that people cannot access water sources. Those people who fled Adayti are in need of water.



Amhara Region: In Amhara Region, the security situation in North Shewa and the Oromo Special Zones remains fragile. The conflict that started on 18 March between the Amhara and Oromo communities in and around Ataye Town of North Shewa Zone was further escalated when Unidentified Armed Groups attacked Ataye Town and its surroundings on 17 April, 2021, leaving some 330,000 people (253,000 in North Shewa and about 80,000 in Oromia Special Zone) have been displaced/affected according to the National Disaster Risk Management Commission. The recent conflict resulted in an undetermined number of casualties, destruction of social and community infrastructure, looting and destruction of private property. Humanitarian partners have started assisting the displaced population with food and other relief supplies, albeit very limited compared to the needs. The Government distributed more than 500 MT of food to more than 50,000 people in North Shewa Zone and provided water, sanitation and hygiene as well as non-food items for South Wollo and Oromo Special Zones. The reignited conflict has left North Shewa, Oromo Special Zone and South Wollo Zones under a Command Post.

HIGHLIGHTS

- The recent conflict between Afar and Somali left hundreds dead and some 35, 000 displaced
- An estimated 765,971 people are expected to be highly food insecure in the coming six months due to multiple hazards.
- Apart from the common water stressed *Woredas*, water shortage is reported in other *Woredas* including Elidaar, Kori, Dubti, Gerani, Mile, Bidu, Barahle, Amibara, Hanruka, Gelalu, Gewani, Erebti, Teru, Afdera, Kilalu, Abida and Yangudi Rasa.

In addition to the recent displacement, close to 500,000 people have been displaced in Amhara Region due to violence in Oromia, Benishangul Gumuz and Tigray Regions as well as conflict within the Amhara Region over the past three years, according to the Regional Disaster Preparedness and Food Security Coordinating Office. The IDPs reside in sites as well as within the host community in Chagni, North Wollo, North Gondar, and South Wollo Zones.

Benishangul Gumuz Region: Continued civilian attacks by unidentified armed groups (UAGs) continue to kill and displace people in Benishangul Gumuz Region. Fighting between Government forces and UAGs continue to be reported, including in Yaso district on 1 April. The armed conflict that started in Guba district of Metekel Zone has now spread to all three Zones of the Region. The spread of the fighting into Assosa and Kamashi Zone may increase the numbers of IDPs as well as the humanitarian needs in the Region. Meanwhile, “stay at home” strike has been ongoing since 1 April in Gilgel Beles Town, the capital of Metekel Zone, impacting public services. The residents are demanding for the Government to improve the security situation in the Zone. More than 200,000 people remain displaced within Metekel Zone and close 100,000 others were displaced into neighboring Amhara Region.

SNNPR: The security situation in Amaro Special *Woreda* with bordering *kebeles* of West Guji Zone (Gelana and Suro Barguda *Woredas*) remains fragile. Attacks by armed groups on local Koore community in Amaro *Woreda* left at least 12 civilians killed and more than 11,000 displaced according to the *Woreda* Communication Affairs Bureau. The Bureau blamed the recurrent violence, deaths and displacement of the civilians on a joint attack mounted by armed groups who are attempting to change the defunct Segen Area People’s Zone “into Gumayde Special *Woreda*” and “Guji armed groups illegally operating inside the Nech Sar National Park.” The security situation in Guraferda *Woreda* of Bench Sheko Zone is also still volatile.

More than 765,000 people expected to be food insecure in the next six months in Afar Region

According to the Afar Disaster Prevention and Food Security Program Coordinating Office, 765,971 people are expected to be highly food insecure in the coming six months due to the impacts of drought, COVID-19, conflict, desert locusts, flood and high food prices.

Additionally, the failure of the seasonal *Sugum* rains is having a toll on crop and pasture conditions, livestock and water availability. More than 300,000 people are affected by the water shortages across the region. The absence food supply and increasing of staple food price, decreasing of livestock price due to deteriorating of livestock body conditions have further deteriorated food insecurity. Apart from the common water stressed *Woredas*, water shortage is reported in other *Woredas* including Elidaar, Kori, Dubti, Gerani, Mile, Bidu, Barahle, Amibara, Hanruka, Gelalu, Gewani, Erebti, Teru, Afdera, Kilalu, Abida and Yangudi Rasa. The additional needs put the already stressed capacity of the regional Disaster Prevention and Food Security Program Coordinating Office and the Afar Pastoralists Development Association to provide water trucking very challenging. Thus far, 25 water trucks are supplying water to 10 *Woredas* of the region. The DPFSPCO warns that there is a high risk for malnutrition. Over 66,000 children, pregnant and lactating women affected by moderate malnutrition have already benefitted from nutrition interventions targeted supplementary feeding program. However, over 20,000 children under five and pregnant and breastfeeding mothers have not been assisted.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Failed *deyr* rains triggered crop failure, resulted in reduced milk production and water shortages for both human and livestock,” said Ibrahim.
- “As livestock body conditions are deteriorating, nobody would buy your livestock in the market, and hence we can’t afford to buy cereals whose prices are very high,” added Ibrahim.
- “Two of my children dropped out of school (from grade six and seven) to support me searching pasture, water, and left-over food for remaining herd. I also sent one of my daughters to Kebridehar Town so that she can work and earn money and thereby support the family at this critical time.”
- “Continuing urgent life-saving response is vital, but parallel long-term development programs should be in place to lift us out of vulnerability and food insecurity.”

Chronic drought in Somali Region impacting lives and livelihoods

The failure of the seasonal (*deyr*) rains led to drought in Somali Region, leaving some 2.1 million people across 74 *Woredas* in need of urgent humanitarian assistance. At least \$65.5 million is required to address the needs, of which \$16.4 million is for WaSH interventions.

Traditional water sources have dried and there are limited functional water schemes/boreholes in Afder, Dawa, Jarar, Liban, Shabelle and Siti Zones. Below is the story of Ibrahim and his family who are affected by the current drought in Somali Region and struggling to safeguard their livelihood.

Ibrahim is a 55-year-old father of 7 children who lives in a village 20 kilometers north of Kebridehar Town in Korehey Zone. His livelihood depends on both rain-fed farming and livestock rearing, mainly cattle.

Ibrahim and his family, along with other members of his community, faced consecutive weather-related hazards, giving them no breathing space to recover. In 2014, a flash flood hit his home and washed away his harvest. During the El Niño drought in 2016, he lost 80 per cent of his herds and harvests. Today, he is facing yet another drought as a result of the poor performance of the *deyr* rains.

“Failed *deyr* rains led to crop failure, reduced milk production and deepened water shortages for both human and livestock,” said Ibrahim. “Nobody is buying our livestock due to their poor body condition. This has reduced our income and now we can’t afford to buy cereals,” he added. In addition to the current drought, desert locust infestation has destroyed large patches of pasture.

In his vain attempt to save his livestock, Ibrahim migrated to neighboring Dollo Zone in search of pasture and water, but he unfortunately faced a similar situation and went back home in desperation. “I have already lost five of my cattle due to sickness,” he said.

“Two of my children dropped out of school (from grade six and seven) to support me in my search for pasture, water, and left-over food for my remaining herd. I also sent one of my daughters to Kebridehar Town so that she can work and earn money and support the family during this critical time,” he added.

Although intermittently, Ibrahim said that he has received water support from the Government (through water trucking). Water is delivered to the *Kebele* once every five days, which forces members of the community to use water from unsafe sources leading to water-borne diseases such as diarrhea.

Ibrahim said that the immediate needs of his family are food, water, and pasture. He also calls for the Government and other stakeholders to address the root causes of recurrent drought in the region. Ibrahim concluded, “continuing urgent life-saving response is vital, but parallel long-term development programs should be in place to build back our resilience.”



Figure 1 Ibrahim, a drought victim in Somali Region. Photo Credit: OCHA/Ahmed

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