Humanitarian partners access to Tigray improved in February, with a number of requests for the deployment of international aid workers cleared at the Federal level and progress in mobilizing emergency supplies into the region. Despite these advancements, humanitarian and access situation within Tigray remains highly restricted as a result of continued insecurity, and limited assistance reaching people in need, particularly in rural areas.

By early February, mobile communications were re-established in main towns, banking services resumed in Adigrat and Shire (in addition to Mekelle and Alamata). The heavy toll of the conflict on the region’s health infrastructure continued to affect access to essential health services, including maternal health care, COVID-19 treatment, and other public health services. The conflict has also significantly affected partners and commercial/private movements.

In February, 84 international aid workers (62 UN and 22 INGO) have been deployed in Tigray, and over 100 national aid workers moved from other parts of Ethiopia. Partners’ cargo requests through the Logistic Cluster (WFP) were cleared by the National Disaster Risk Management Commission (NDMRC) and by the Agency for Refugees and Returnees Administration (ARRA).

On 9-12 February, the inter-religious Council of Ethiopia travelled to Tigray. Protests by youth erupted in Mekelle town, prompting the intervention of security forces. In successive days, protests spread to Wukro, Adigrat, Axum, Shire and Abiyadi, including commercial strikes/halt of public transport. Unverified reports indicate that an undetermined number of people were killed/injured.

Armed confrontations between Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and Tigray Special Forces (TSF) and associated militias continued in February, including heavy artillery, ambushes, and hit-and-run attacks. The presence of Eritrea Defense Forces (EDF) and Amhara Special Forces (ASF) in Tigray - flagged by the population since the beginning of the conflict - was acknowledged by United Nations senior officials and Ethiopia’s Human Rights Commission (EHRC). These hostilities continued to impact humanitarian access to large areas in the region.

Humanitarian operations remained concentrated along the main road Mekelle - Mekelle - Adigrat - Shire, and adjacent woredas. While some clashes were reported close to this axis, these did not significantly affect partners and commercial/private movements. Most access constraints due to insecurity were reported in Central zone (Edaga Arbi, Emba Sieneti, Endefelas, Kola Temben, Tanqua Melash, and Abegerle woredas), South Eastern (Samre, Saharti, and Wajirat woredas), and Southern (Zata, Ofa, and Bora woredas).

According to the regional Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC) in Mekelle, relief food actors were unable to operate in nine woredas, seven of which in Central zone, i.e. Adet, Keyhe Tekli, Ahsea, Chila, Egela, Hahayle, and Aheferom (Central Zone), in addition to Neqsege (Southern) and Asgede (North-Western). Partners reported limited logistic capacity (unavailability of trucks, private operators refusing to work due to insecurity, limited storage capacity in rural areas), while the lack of administrative decentralization hampered targeting/monitoring of distributions. This notwithstanding, important progress was achieved in terms of dispatching food through the region.

The presence of EDF along the northern corridor bordering Eritrea, from Sheraro (North-Western) to Adigrat (Eastern), reportedly impacted access to rural areas in Adi Hageray and Seyemti Adyabo woredas (North-Western), Chila, Rama, Ahsea and Egela woredas (Central), and Erb, Sae, and Atsib woredas (Eastern). Three months after the start of the conflict, partners remained unable to reach the refugee camps of Shimei-ba and Hitas (North-Western), where six aid workers were killed in November. Some, 61,415 Ethiopian refugees have reached Sudan, as of 19 February (UNHCR). ASF were reportedly present through Western Tigray, Mae-Tsebri woreda (North-Western) and Raya Alatama, Zata, and Ofa woredas (South), including Alatama town. Partners reported being unable to move from North-Western to Western zones, with access only possible through Amhara region. Partners remained operational in Western Tigray, however, bureaucratic constraints persisted for international staff at Federal level. Reports from partners indicated that Tigrayan IDPs in Western Tigray and Mae-Tsebri struggled to access assistance.

The ability of aid partners to provide services to the population has been curtailed by the large-scale looting of aid facilities and supplies. Partners’ offices in Axum (Central), Mae-Tsebri (North-Western), and Freweini (East) were vandalized. In Axum, two schools and one health centre of a faith-based organization were looted. In North-Western, offices in Shire and Mae-Tsebri, and several buildings, schools, and one health centre in the refugee camps were looted. At the time of writing, due to limited access, some partners have not yet been able to determine the extent of the looting.

Access to hard-to-reach areas continued to be a major concern for humanitarian partners on the ground. The presence of armed groups in some zones, as well as the loss of logistic capacity, limited humanitarians’ ability to reach people in need. The situation continues to be extremely volatile, compromising the safety and security of the population and aid workers, compelling relief operations on a permanent basis.

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

**Access Snapshot - Tigray Region**

**As of 28 February 2021**

**Sources:** OCHA, Tigray Statistical Agency, humanitarian partners

**Create date:** 28 February 2021

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