



PROTECTION BRIEFING ON THE SITUATION IN TIGRAY

16th September 2021

KEY MESSAGES

1. The risks to civilians in the Tigray Region remain alarming with continued concerns regarding the safety and well-being of civilians, and many in critical need for assistance and protection.

2.7 million people are in need of protection. In the first six months of the year, protection actors delivered life-saving assistance to affected communities, reaching a total of 179,000 people.

The ongoing conflict has been characterized by multiple and severe reports of violations of human rights, humanitarian and refugee law by all parties, including extrajudicial killings, torture, arbitrary arrests, rapes and other forms of sexual violence.

Negative coping mechanisms, such as child marriage, child labour and survival sex have also been reported to be on the rise. Civilians, including children, youth, elderly and women, are traumatized and many are in need of urgent psychosocial support.

2. The humanitarian response is severely constrained by access issues, including land contamination, damaged to civilian infrastructure, lack of services, road and air transportation blockade.

Since June 2021 humanitarian access has improved dramatically *within* Tigray region with about 75% of its territory now physically accessible; however other restrictions prevent the delivery of aid in practice.

The Federal Government is blocking road and air transportation into and out of Tigray, as well as the supply of fuel, electricity, cash, telecommunication and internet access.

The humanitarian response, including moving critical relief supplies and scaling up operations to newly affected areas, is severely affected by these restrictions as well as by administrative impediments concerning visas and work permits, delaying staff recruitment and deployment.

Despite public statements and promises by government officials to improve and facilitate access, no significant change in the situation on the ground has been recorded.

3. Access negotiation to take protection risks into consideration should focus not only on item delivery but also prioritize protection programming which requires sustained presence on the ground.

Protection should be prioritized as physical presence of protection partners and community-based protection approaches are paramount. Protection issues cannot be addressed by items delivery only. Specialized services provided by the protection partners such as protection monitoring, legal assistance, case management, psychosocial support require the physical presence of individuals with certain expertise.



4. The Protection Cluster and its partners potentially have the capacity to deliver protection services and reach up to 85% of people in need of protection, if other access elements are resolved.

With 33 protection partners (including 25 national NGOs), ongoing activities include protection monitoring through new field offices within Tigray, Afar and Amhara; vulnerability identification and assistance to person with specific needs; child protection and gender-based violence case management through One Stop Centers, Women and Girls Safe Spaces, Child Friendly Spaces, health clinics and mobile outreach; psychosocial support; explosive ordnance risk education and assessments; advocacy.

The Protection Cluster's financial appeal for Northern Ethiopia Response is currently funded at 10% of a total US\$ 40 million required.

Priority areas for funding are:

- a. Protection monitoring and the scale up of protection services in Tigray and in new areas affected by the spillover of the conflict (Afar and Amhara).
- b. Psychological first aid to survivors of violence, and continuous psychological support.
- c. Case management, including for survivors of GBV, unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) and other vulnerable groups.
- d. Community-based protection and peaceful coexistence activities.
- e. HLP and related civil documentation; legal aid and awareness.
- f. Explosive ordnance risk education (EORE) and other risk mitigation activities.

5. While some protection concerns can be mitigated through funding, others require more active involvement and advocacy by donors and the international community to improve access, enable the delivery of aid and prevent further violence against civilians.

Advocate for:

- Putting an end to deliberate attacks against civilians, including sexual violence against women and girls, and of other human rights violations, such as the arbitrary arrest, harassment and intimidation of ethnic minorities.
- Unimpeded humanitarian access in the Tigray region ensuring an enabling environment for the delivery of life-saving assistance, including the resumption of transportation, telecommunication, fuel and bank services which is essential for humanitarian work.
- Access negotiations to take protection risks into consideration, and also include and allow for protection programming which requires sustained presence on the ground.
- Collaboration with human rights actors to undertake effective and independent investigation of allegations of serious human rights violations against civilians, on a large scale, including against women and children, and holding those responsible to account.