

Concern for northern Ethiopia increases amidst widening conflict and limited delivery of assistance

As Tigray continues to face a major humanitarian emergency, the conflict has spread further to neighboring Amhara and Afar, driving a significant deterioration in food security in these regions. In Tigray, most households already face Emergency (IPC Phase 4) or possibly worse outcomes at the area level, and concern has only increased in recent months as supplies into the region diminish. In Afar and Amhara, the recent uptick in conflict has already resulted in large-scale displacement, significant loss of livestock, and disruption to the ongoing harvest. Humanitarians also face considerable constraints delivering assistance to conflict-affected areas of Amhara and Afar, where Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are now likely present in worst-affected areas. Across northern Ethiopia there are likely households in Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5), and **high levels of acute malnutrition** and hunger-related mortality are anticipated. An end to the conflict and unfettered delivery of humanitarian assistance is urgently needed in northern Ethiopia to save lives.

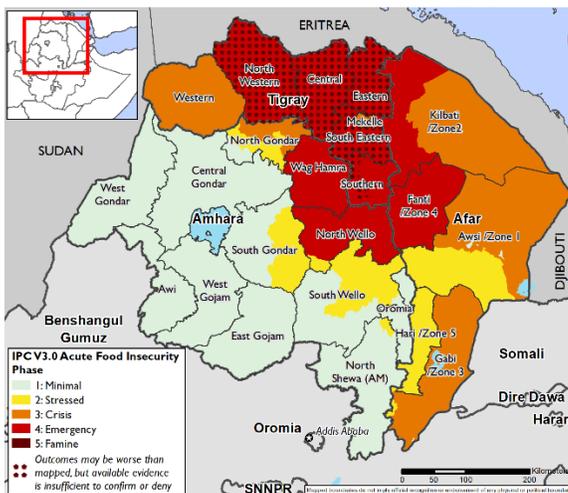
Across northern Ethiopia, the area of highest concern is Tigray Region, where millions of people continue to face devastating losses due to the conflict, and have limited to no means of obtaining food. Conflict has notably declined since July across the region, except in Southern Tigray and **along the border with Eritrea**, but significant constraints on transportation of food and other necessities into the region have led to increasing concerns. While the *meher* harvest is ongoing, the limited harvest is not expected to lead to significant improvements in food access given conflict-related disruptions to the agricultural season. Market dependence remains high and staple food supplies are limited, leading to soaring prices, with September 2021 sorghum prices in Mekele over 70 percent higher than average.

Humanitarian supplies within Tigray were depleted in August, and the only viable supply route into Tigray, via the Semera-Abala-Mekele road, is slow and encumbered with numerous barriers. **According to OCHA**, between mid-July and the end of September, the number of trucks entering Tigray with food assistance was estimated to meet only 10 percent of the need.

In July, the conflict also spread into Amhara and Afar, concentrated in North Wollo, Wag Hamra, and South and North Gondar zones of Amhara, and Zones 2 and 4 of Afar. According to regional governments, more than 149,000 people were displaced in Afar, and 700,000 in Amhara. While the conflict in Afar declined in mid-September, it continues in localized areas. Large-scale livestock losses, killing, and looting of property, including humanitarian warehouses, were reported. Livestock are the primary means by which households in Afar obtain access to food and cash income. Many crops in conflicted affected areas of Amhara were reportedly destroyed or lost due to theft. Market activities and trade have also been negatively affected, as evidenced by unprecedented increases in maize and sorghum prices, which rose 60 to 80 percent between July and late September in Dessie market. High prices, combined with limited income-earning opportunities, have severely constrained households' purchasing power. Humanitarian actors started delivering assistance in late September to conflict-affected households in Afar and Amhara, particularly in IDP camps, where concerning levels of malnutrition have been reported.

Tigray remains the region of greatest concern in Ethiopia. Data already showed extreme outcomes in mid-2021, and further deterioration is expected amidst the severe humanitarian constraints. **Multiple reports have indicated** increasing levels of acute malnutrition, and hunger-related mortality is likely occurring. At the area level, most of Tigray faces Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes at a minimum; it is possible food security outcomes are worse, but there is insufficient data and information to confirm or deny this claim. Area-level Emergency (IPC Phase 4) outcomes are also expected in much of Wag Hamra and North Wollo zones of Amhara and Zone 2 and Zone 4 in Afar. At the household level, there are likely worst-affected populations in all three regions, who have an extreme lack of food and face Catastrophe (IPC Phase 5). To save lives, immediate action is needed to end the conflict and permit access for a scale-up of assistance.

Figure 1. Projected food security outcomes, October 2021 to January 2022 for Afar, Amhara, and Tigray



Source: FEWS NET