



ETHIOPIA

Protection Analysis Update

The Critical Need for Protection amongst Armed Conflict and Climate Shocks

AUGUST 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2025, Ethiopia continues to face multiple, compounding crises of **conflict, violence, and the accelerating effects of climate change**. Over the past year, the country has experienced recurrent droughts, severe flooding, landslides, and disease outbreaks, all of which have strained national response systems and exposed large segments of the population to heightened vulnerability. These shocks have disrupted livelihoods, destroyed infrastructure, and displaced communities across several regions. Insecurity and armed violence persist in areas such as Amhara, Oromia, and Benishangul-Gumuz, while post-conflict recovery in Tigray remains incomplete. Cross-border dynamics, including instability in neighbouring Sudan and South Sudan, and ongoing insecurity in Somalia, have further exacerbated Ethiopia's complex humanitarian landscape, particularly in the border regions of Gambella and Somali.

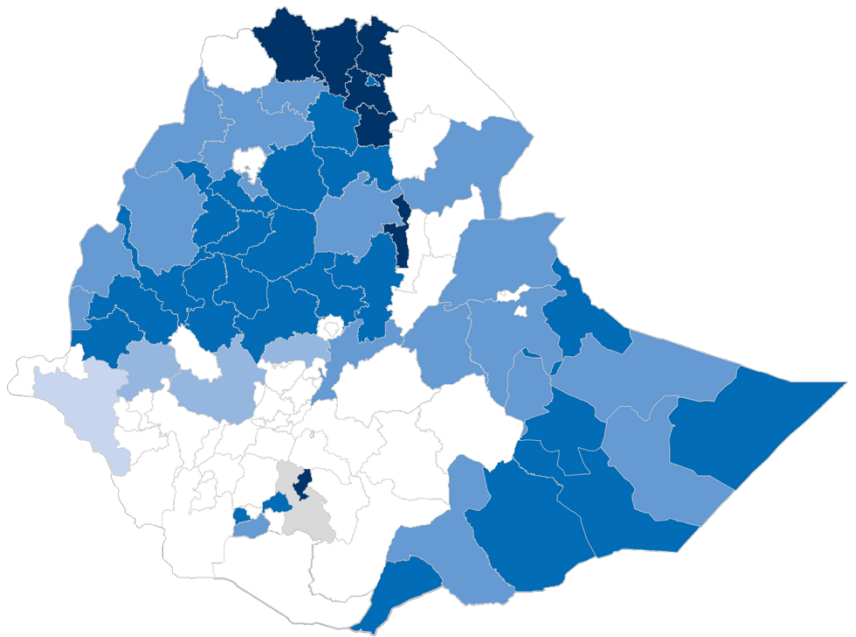


Figure 1: Map of Protection Risk Severity as of July 2025.

Ethiopia remains one of the most displacement-affected countries in Sub-Saharan Africaⁱ, and ranks as one of the **highest numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs)** in the regionⁱⁱ. These movements are driven by a combination of conflict, intercommunal violence, climate-related disasters, and localized administrative restructuring. In many areas, displacement has become protracted and cyclical, as communities face multiple waves of shocks with limited access to basic services or prospects for durable solutions. **The loss of traditional coping mechanisms, combined with strained host community resources, has increased the reliance on negative survival strategies and deepened existing vulnerabilities.**

While each region of Ethiopia faces unique political, environmental, and social dynamics, the convergence of conflict and climate shocks has created an increasingly fragile protection environment. **In 2025, significant funding shortfalls have severely impacted protection programming, undermining the scale, continuity, and reach of principled life-saving services.** Against this backdrop, the Protection Cluster and its AoRs have identified five priority protection risks that require urgent attention:

1. **Attacks on Civilians and Other Unlawful Killings, and Attacks on Civilian Objects**
2. **Unlawful Impediments or Restrictions to Freedom of Movement, Siege and Forced Displacement**
3. **Discrimination and Stigmatization, Denial of Resources, Opportunities, Services and/or Humanitarian Access**
4. **Gender-based Violence, including Child, Early or Forced Marriage**
5. **Child and Forced Family Separation**

URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

Urgent action is needed to stop these violations against civilians and mitigate the impact of armed conflict and the consequent increase in abuse and negative coping mechanisms that have been identified. With this view, it is of utmost importance to:

- Respect and protect civilians and civilian objects, including medical facilities and schools, and allow safe and unimpeded access for humanitarian actors to reach persons in need.
- Guarantee safe, voluntary, and dignified relocations and returns.
- Ensure equitable access to services and humanitarian assistance, addressing discrimination and exclusion across all population groups.
- Scale up prevention and response to gender-based violence and child separation through coordinated, survivor-centered, and inclusive systems.
- Ensure sustainable and flexible funding to scale-up protection monitoring, community-based mechanisms, and access to timely, principled and life-saving protection assistance, including MHPSS.

CONTEXT

BATTLE INCIDENTS	CIVILIAN FATALITIES	IDPs	RETURNEES
1,413	5,997	1.9M	2.8M
SINCE JULY 2024, ACLED	SINCE JULY 2024, ACLED	AUGUST 2024, DTM IOM	AUGUST 2024, DTM IOM

PROTRACTED CRISIS AND EVOLVING CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Ethiopia continues to experience a complex and protracted protection crisis, shaped by decades of political and ethnic tensions, recurrent conflict, climatic shocks, and, most recently, seismic activity. Although large-scale hostilities in Tigray ceased with the signing of the Pretoria Agreement in November 2022, the broader dynamics of insecurity and violence have continued unabated, with new fronts of conflict and patterns of displacement emerging. The reappearance of violent intercommunal and insurgent conflict across multiple regions have created persistent instability, with overlapping crises that undermine civilian protection and obstruct durable solutions for millions of displaced people. Vulnerable groups, including **older persons, persons with disabilities, and women and children** are disproportionately affected, facing heightened risks of exclusion, exploitation, and barriers to access critical humanitarian assistance.

Since the previous Protection Analysis Update in October 2024, conflict in the **Amhara Region** has escalated significantly. Efforts to dismantle the region’s informal armed structures has led to widespread armed confrontations across key urban and rural areas. Government-imposed restrictions and a state of emergency declared in August 2023 remain in effect, constraining service delivery and the operating environmentⁱⁱⁱ. Strategic towns such as Bahir Dar, Gondar, and Lalibela have experienced insecurities, while areas of North Wollo, South Wollo, and North/West Gojjam have seen fluctuating control and tensions between armed actors. These ongoing conflicts have directly driven significant displacement, with over **38,500 individuals in North and South Wollo alone currently residing in overcrowded and degraded shelter sites**, and protection concerns at an all-time high^{iv}. In most recent developments, due to the ongoing conflict in the region, the North Gondar Zonal Administration reported on 15 July 2025, a total of 5,300 households comprising 13,247 individuals, 48% of whom are women and girls, had been displaced from seven kebeles in Debark Woreda of North Gondar Zone. The region is host to one of the highest numbers of conflict-driven IDPs, reaching an estimated **660,000 individuals^v**, with most originating from Oromia and other neighbouring regions¹.

Similarly, across the **Oromia Region**, government continue military operations against non-state armed groups, particularly in the East and West Wollegas, Kellem Wollega, Horo Guduru, Guji, Southwest and North Shewa zones. The ongoing nature of the conflict, combined with limited administrative presence and weak infrastructure in affected areas, has entrenched a fragmented security and governance landscape. Efforts to initiate political dialogue remain inconclusive, while tensions with few neighbouring woredas continue to influence dynamics in border areas, fuelling cross-regional displacement, especially along the border with Somali. A substantial population of these IDPs are living in overcrowded and underserved displacement sites, with minimal access to protection services, basic assistance, and durable solutions. The prolonged displacement has been also placing immense pressure on overstretched host communities, further compounding existing vulnerabilities and intercommunal tensions. **In 2024, Oromia accounted for approximately 39% of the total national IDP caseload (conflict and disaster-induced), with 749,534 IDPs identified in accessible sites^{vi}**.

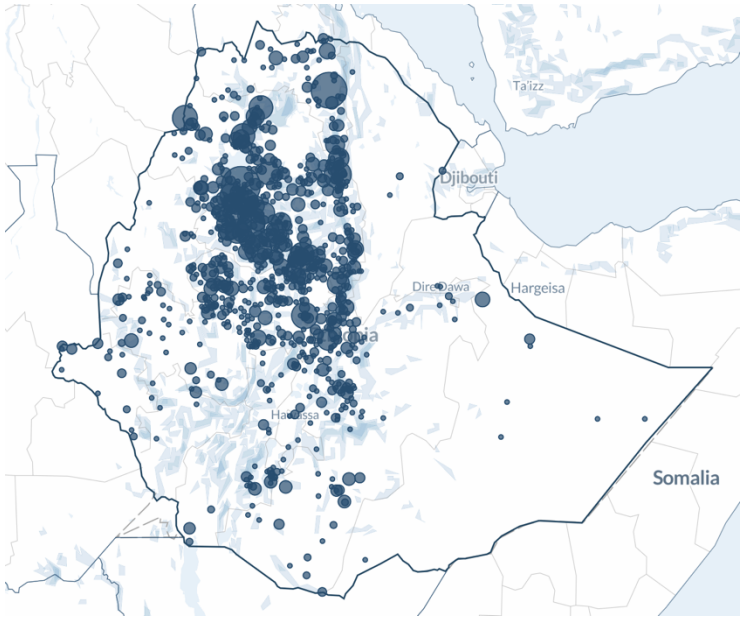


Figure 2: Conflict events (battles, violence against civilians, riots, protests, explosions and strategic developments) from July 2024 – July 2025, totaling 2,602 events. ACLED.

¹ Many areas in Amhara have access issues affecting data collection - the actual figures are likely to be higher.

Following the Pretoria Agreement in November 2022, active hostilities in **Tigray** have largely subsided, with the region entering into a fragile, transitional post-conflict phase. However, the implementation of the peace agreement remains inconsistent, with key provisions, **such as service restoration, local governance stabilisation, and resolution of the contested boundaries with Amhara progressing slowly**. Security and access dynamics persist in zones in contested areas, and the Eastern, Central and Northwestern zones under the occupation of external forces. Ongoing reports of looting, arbitrary detention, harassment, and explosive remnants of war in the **Northwestern, Western, and Southern zones** have led to the displacement of new populations and have reinforced fears among returnees, in some cases causing second rounds of displacement^{vii}. Despite ongoing challenges, chronic underfunding, high numbers of IDPs and the stress of a protracted situation continue to impede humanitarian operations and hinder potential for durable solutions.

While Tigray has the highest number of IDPs displaced by conflict, the **Somali Region hosts the largest number of IDPs whose movement is attributed to climate-induced disasters, particularly drought**, seeing 73.1% of Ethiopia's national drought-related displacement in 2024^{viii}. This distinction highlights the varying drivers of displacement across different regions in Ethiopia. The region hosts approximately 112,606 IDP households, totally 662,784 individuals across 432 accessible IDP sites, displaced both by border conflicts and communal clashes (53%) and drought (39%). Although large-scale violence in the region has subsided in recent years, the situation remains fragile. Persistent and renewed border disputes and resource-based tensions, particularly in the Dawa, Liban, Sitti and Fafan zones, continue to pose challenges^{ix}. Ongoing disputes with neighbouring Afar and Oromia regions, coupled with cyclical drought and migration pressures, disrupt governance and development efforts. The region also experiences cross-border dynamics due to its proximity to Somalia and the presence of returnees, refugees and migrants. These dynamics strain limited services and heighten risks of exploitation, with competition over scarce resources a trigger for tensions with host communities, exacerbating vulnerabilities for both displaced populations and residents.

The context of the **Gambella** continues to be shaped by cross-border dynamics with South Sudan and domestic tensions between host and refugee populations. Periodic outbreaks of violence, particularly in the Itang and Gog woredas, are linked to competition over land, access to services, and ethnic identity politics^x. The region's porous borders, combined with a weak administrative presence in peripheral areas, continue to pose significant challenges to stabilization efforts. It is highly vulnerable to both natural and human-made hazards that result in loss of life, displacement, and property damage. The increasing frequency and severity of these disasters often lead to the destruction of livelihoods, infrastructure damage, child abductions, and family separations. A recent crisis in South Sudan that spilled over into the Ethiopia–South Sudan border area has further escalated security concerns, displacing 2,234 individuals in the Lare and Jikawo woredas due to cross-border attacks. In the Gambella region, the most common causes of displacement include inter-ethnic conflict, cross-border violence, seasonal flooding, and armed clashes.

In **Benishangul-Gumuz**, particularly in the zones of Metekel and Kamashi, presence of unidentified armed groups, as well as unresolved political and intercommunal tensions have continued to fuel violence. Challenges related to land rights, basic services, regional autonomy, and representation have persisted, despite government efforts to stabilize the area. The need to strengthen service delivery due to displacement continue arise. Military deployments and local peace initiatives have reduced large-scale attacks, but reported low-level ambushes, displacement, and fear of renewed violence continue to destabilize affected communities.^{xi} Interregional tensions persist, with around 5,900 individuals were newly displaced in Kamashi Zone in June 2025, following armed attacks reportedly originating from Oromia, intensifying humanitarian needs and destabilising already fragile protection spaces^{xii}. Additionally, the region hosts a significant number of refugees fleeing conflict in neighbouring Sudan. These factors all aggravate the already existing needs of IDPs, despite continued return initiatives.

In **South Ethiopia** — which became a separate federal region in August 2023 following the division of the former Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region (SNNPR) — governance restructuring has brought both opportunities and tensions. The situation in Southern Ethiopia —specifically Konso Zone (particularly Segen Zuria Woreda); Gamo Zone (Arba Minch Zuria Woreda); Gardula Zone (Derashe Woreda); Kore and Burji Zones, the Marako and Meskan areas in Central Ethiopia remains volatile and unpredictable. This instability is marked by prolonged armed conflicts, criminal activities, and inter-communal violence, contributing to a complex humanitarian crisis. Tensions in zones such as Konso, Gedeo, and South Omo have periodically escalated due to ethnic mobilization and disputes over land and autonomy. The area continues to see a significant number of people affected by recurrent displacements or living in precarious conditions^{xiii}. **As per the 2024 Meher assessment report, about 79,828 individuals are affected by natural disasters led displacement and 30,834 individuals displaced in Konso zones due to violent conflict.** Natural disasters, including the 2024 landslides in Geze Gofa and flooding in Dasenech of South

Omo, have further contributed to displacement in the region^{xiv}. Data gaps persist, complicating efforts to fully assess humanitarian needs in the region.

In Afar, as of mid-2024, the region hosted approximately **223,000 returning IDPs**, many of whom reside in overstretched host communities or in makeshift shelters lacking adequate services^{xv}. Beyond the devastating impact of the Northern conflict, the region has also experienced **significant climate-related shocks**, including severe droughts, flash floods, windstorms, wildfires and seismic activity, contributing to layered displacement dynamics. Border tensions with both Tigray and Somali regions, particularly in Zones 1 and 3, continue to spark localized violence, complicating peacebuilding and return efforts. On the border with Somali, the protracted tribal tensions often intensify during times of drought or resource scarcity, as both pastoralist communities rely on grazing land and water for their livestock. This localized but chronic conflict is a major drivers of displacement and livelihood disruption.

Across all of these regions, protection risks are shaped by a combination of political marginalization, military operations in response to dissent, weak accountability mechanisms, and community-level grievances that remain largely unresolved. The proliferation of arms, fragmentation of armed groups, and weakened civilian infrastructure contribute to the widespread impunity and deepening humanitarian needs. These factors exacerbate vulnerabilities to violence, exploitation, and restricted access to essential services, including protection, particularly for women, children, and other marginalized groups.

CLIMATE SHOCKS AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC HARDSHIP DRIVING FOOD INSECURITY

In addition to conflict-related displacement, **recurring climate shocks and disasters further exacerbated protection risks**. Between January and March 2025, a series of over 50 earthquakes struck the Oromia–Afar Rift region, with the most severe being a magnitude 5.8 tremor on 4 January in the East Shewa zone of Oromia. The seismic events displaced over 70,000 people and forced the evacuation of an additional 30,000, leaving at least 54,600 individuals, including children under five, pregnant and lactating women, and persons with disabilities, still living in displacement sites by the end of January^{xvi}. The quakes caused widespread damage to critical infrastructure, including homes, health centres, water systems, schools, and road networks, further compounding pre-existing vulnerabilities.

At the same time, **climate-induced shocks—particularly recurrent floods and droughts—continue to drive widespread humanitarian needs**. These are not episodic crises but **cyclical events** that repeatedly affect regions such as Somalia, Afar, Oromia, Gambella, and parts of Amhara and the South region, eroding resilience over time. Parts of Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and Somali regions have been classified in IPC Phase 3 (Crisis) or above due to poor Meher harvests and prolonged drought conditions, affecting livelihoods and increasing reliance on humanitarian assistance. The World Food Programme estimates that **10.2 million people, including over 3 million IDPs, were severely food insecure in 2024**^{xvii}. Ethiopia also continues to grapple with elevated inflation, with the rate remaining high at 13% in March 2025, and projections by the Central Bank indicating a decline to 10% by mid-2026^{xviii}. During this period, prices for food and fuel have remained notably volatile, disproportionately affecting low-income and crisis-affected households. For many, especially those already displaced or economically marginalized, **the erosion of purchasing power has intensified exposure to protection threats and diminished resilience**. The consequences are stark: families are increasingly forced to adopt risky coping strategies—such as reducing meals, withdrawing children from school, or resorting to negative coping mechanisms like transactional sex—to manage escalating living costs and sustain the most vulnerable among them, such as pregnant and lactating women, children, older persons and people living with disabilities. For example, in Bahir Dar, Amhara, a 2025 study found with 87.9% of female-headed households were food insecure, with greater vulnerability than male-headed households, with 86.4% relying on high coping strategies^{xix}. In the Kamashi zone of Benishangul-Gumuz, 36% of IDP female-headed households were in the high reduced Coping Strategies Index (rCSI) category, meaning that **nearly 4 in 10 were engaging in frequent, severe food-related negative coping strategies**^{xx}.

WIDESPREAD EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

Psychological and emotional abuse remains a pervasive but often less visible consequence of the protracted crises affecting Ethiopia. **Prolonged exposure to conflict, displacement, food insecurity, gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods, and the breakdown of social structures has resulted in widespread inflicted distress**, particularly among vulnerable groups such as older persons, persons with disabilities, women, and children. The disruption of family and community networks further exacerbates feelings of helplessness, anxiety, and social isolation, severely undermining individual resilience and community recovery. Among displaced children, psychological trauma often manifests in developmental delays, learning difficulties, and long-term behavioural and emotional challenges, which can significantly hinder their ability to recover and thrive, as well as

threaten the well-being of their caregivers. Studies in Debre Berhan, Amhara region, found post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in 67.5% of IDPs^{xxi}, while a meta-analysis in Northwest Ethiopia reported PTSD prevalence up to 54.3% among IDPs^{xxii}. In south and northwest regions, depressive symptoms appeared in over 60% of displaced populations, with women disproportionately affected^{xxiii}. Among displaced children and adolescents, PTSD prevalence reached nearly 59%, contributing to behavioural challenges and reintegration difficulties^{xxiv}. The use of sexual violence as a method of warfare, notably in Amhara, Afar and Tigray, accompanied by widespread impunity of the crimes, has extremely grave impacts on survivors' physical and mental health. Access to mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) services remains critically limited due to damaged infrastructure, insecurity, and a severe shortage of trained professionals. These findings underscore the urgent need to scale up interventions across affected regions.

CRITICAL GAPS IN FUNDING AND ACCESS CONSTRAINTS

While the collective response reached a significant number of people in need, critical gaps remain. As of mid-year 2025, a **\$496 million funding gap** leaves critical sectors such as child protection, GBV response, mine action, legal aid, and protection monitoring drastically underfunded^{xxv}. As a result, key activities have been delayed or suspended, particularly in newly affected zones. The World Food Programme announced in May 2025 that it would halt nutrition treatment for 650,000 malnourished women and children due to funding constraints, exacerbating child protection risks such as early marriage, school dropout, and family separation. In Afar, funding freezes led to a dramatic reduction in mobile health clinics (from 23 to 7) and the interruption of GBV support services, including case management in Tigray. These gaps have left millions vulnerable to protection risks in conflict-affected regions, with limited access to safe spaces, psychosocial support, and legal recourse, while also constraining humanitarian access and response capacity.

Humanitarian access remains constrained, particularly in conflict-affected areas of Amhara and Contested Areas. Aid operations have been disrupted by insecurity, bureaucratic impediments, and damaged infrastructure. Developments during the reporting period have illustrated the continued fragmentation of security dynamics, limited implementation of peace agreements, and the growing impact of natural hazards. Security concerns, destroyed infrastructure, and lack of services have also been identified as **key barriers to principle and safe return and relocations of displaced communities**. Humanitarian actors, including the Protection Cluster and its partners have repeatedly emphasized that safe, voluntary, and dignified return is only possible with sustained investments in recovery, reconciliation, and sustained service delivery, alongside the active participation of displaced communities in decision-making processes.

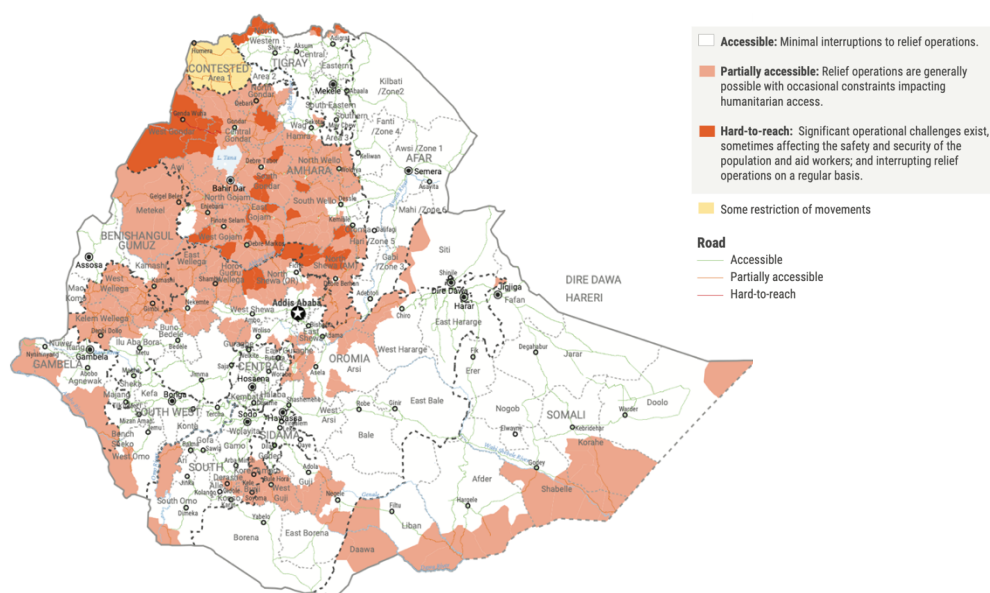


Figure 3: **National Access Map** depicting the quality of the operational environment for humanitarian actors, down to the woreda level. UNOCHA – June 2025. Available [here](#).

RISK 1

ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS AND OTHER UNLAWFUL KILLINGS, AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIAN OBJECTS

Armed hostilities persist in regions including Tigray, Gambella, Oromia, Amhara, Afar, and Benishangul-Gumuz, while the newly established Southern Ethiopia region experiences instability linked to administrative uncertainties and instability following its recent federal reorganization, and ethnic tensions. **Intercommunal clashes** are particularly prevalent in Afar, Gambella, Oromia, Somali and Southern Ethiopia, often exacerbated by competition over land and resources. Cross-border dynamics further complicate security, especially in Gambella and Southern Ethiopia, where armed groups from neighbouring countries such as South Sudanese forces or Kenya's Turkana community respectively, contribute to insecurity. Politically and socio-economically, tensions remain high in the contested areas, where disputes over land and governance persist amidst a fragmented security environment involving armed groups.

These threats are not confined to active combat zones but reverberate through surrounding areas, disrupting lives, eroding social cohesion, and compounding humanitarian needs. Persons with disabilities, older persons, and marginalized ethnic communities often face targeted discrimination, mobility constraints, and barriers to accessing protection and assistance. In some areas, they are unable to evacuate from active conflict or reach services, heightening their exposure to harm.

Region such as Amhara face ongoing **pressures from armed groups with alleged political motives**. Between April 2023 and December 2024, more than **430 civilian fatalities** were reported from **54 drone and airstrike incidents in the Amhara region**^{xxvi}. These attacks struck markets, schools, health centers, and homes—resulting in widespread humanitarian harm. Damage to civilian infrastructure, including justice institutions, remains prevalent, and transitional justice mechanisms are notably absent, hindering accountability and long-term peacebuilding. The protection of civilians and civilian infrastructure is further weakened by limited engagement of human rights actors in these volatile contexts. The overall estimate of civilian death and injury resulting from drone and airstrike attacks is also likely low, as reporting in remote areas of the country poses significant challenges^{xxvii}.

The **destruction and non-civilian use of infrastructure, including homes, schools, health centers, and water systems**, has contributed to the collapse of basic service provision and poses severe protection risks to the communities usually served by these facilities. **Hundreds of education and health facilities** have been rendered non-functional across western Oromia due to ongoing violence. In April 2025, the ICRC reported that schools in Kellem Wollega, especially Anfilo and Gidami woredas, in were used to store weapons and were contaminated with ERW, risking the safety of students and staff^{xxviii}. By November 2024, **more than 10,000 schools** (18% of all schools in Ethiopia) were damaged by conflict or climate shocks, with **3.2 million children in Oromia alone** out of school^{xxix}. This highlights structural threats to civilian infrastructure and education in the region, with the disruption of education services not only denying children their right to learn but also heighten their exposure to protection risks such as child labour, early marriage, recruitment by armed actors, and exploitation, particularly in displacement-affected and conflict-prone areas.

59 incidents of violence against healthcare in Ethiopia were documented during 2024, with 26 attacks specifically damaging or destroying health facilities, with killings and obstruction of medical personnel in conflict zones, including Oromia^{xxx}. Attacks on healthcare severely undermine protection by denying communities access to essential medical services, including maternal care and emergency treatment, increasing mortality and vulnerability—especially among women, children, persons with disabilities, and older adults. Damage to facilities and violence against health workers erode trust in the health system, discourage care-seeking, and force people to travel through unsafe areas. This exposes them to further harm and particularly impacting women and adolescent girls accessing sexual and reproductive health services, and pregnant and lactating women, who may be forced to travel these riskier and often longer routes. These attacks also hinder emergency response and disrupt critical services. In Tigray, the destruction of infrastructure, including schools, healthcare facilities, and roads has significantly impeded access to essential services, with reports from the Central zone highlighting **that 82% of households lack access to healthcare** with the unavailability of medicines and treatment being the leading barrier, followed by the lack of proximity to facilities.

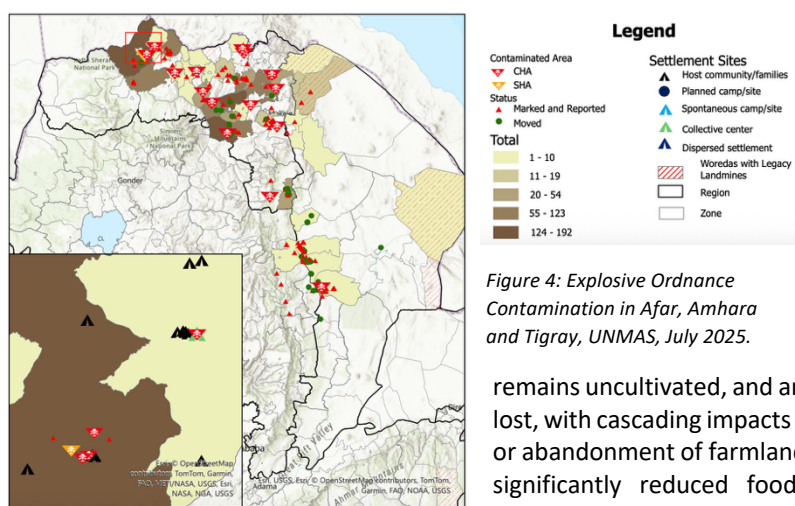


Figure 4: Explosive Ordnance Contamination in Afar, Amhara and Tigray, UNMAS, July 2025.

The presence of explosive remnants of war (ERW) continues to result in deaths, injuries, and forced displacement across several regions, including Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Oromia, Somali, and Gambella. Unexploded ordnances indirectly threaten lives and livelihoods by restricting safe access to agricultural land and community spaces. In Amhara, due to conflict and displacement in zones like South Wollo, North Wollo, and North Shewa, almost half of the agricultural land

remains uncultivated, and an estimated 14 million quintals of potential crop yield lost, with cascading impacts on livelihoods and food insecurity^{xxxix}. The destruction or abandonment of farmland, often due to insecurity or ERW contamination, has significantly reduced food production and household income, deepening economic vulnerability. These risks are disproportionately borne by vulnerable

groups. In June 2025, more than ten children, aged between 7 and 11, were injured in an explosion at the Jarra IDP camp in Amhara. The incident occurred while the children were playing with an explosive device they had found^{xxxix}.

However, affected communities also demonstrate resilience, leveraging local knowledge, social networks, and traditional conflict resolution mechanisms to cope with ongoing and newly emerging risks. **Communities maintain important capacities to mitigate such risks, including local expertise such as community-based safety initiatives, such as neighborhood watch groups and community policing, seeking to hold perpetrators of violence within communities accountable.** Traditional conflict resolution practices facilitated by elders, women's groups, and religious institutions work alongside government bodies, humanitarian organizations, and cluster mechanisms to actively support protection efforts. In contaminated areas, the Mine Action AoR provides explosive ordnance risk education, victim assistance, and hazardous area marking, though these remain under-resourced and face access challenges in insecure areas. Strengthening collaboration between formal institutions and local community actors is critical to improving civilian protection and restoring essential services.

RISK 2

UNLAWFUL IMPEDIMENTS OR RESTRICTIONS TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT

Across Ethiopia's conflict-affected and environmentally fragile areas, civilians face escalating physical barriers and unlawful impediments to exercise their basic rights, safety and freedom of movement, which in many cases can result in involuntary displacement. Rooted in longstanding land and resource disputes, ethnic tensions, and exacerbated by seismic hazards such as earthquakes and floods, physical barriers manifest through **roadblocks, armed group buffer zones, ethnic-based administrative controls and presence of mines and other explosive ordnances**, amongst others, that limit civilians' ability to move safely. Checkpoints, often with armed groups, impede safe passage for civilians. The involvement of parties to the conflict in restricting movement further compounds these issues, undermining peacebuilding efforts. Bureaucratically, the problem is aggravated by widespread **lack of civil documentation, for example IDs and residency papers**, which severely restrict affected populations' access to basic rights and services, as well as their ability to move freely. In Mekelle, Tigray, IDPs with no ID reportedly face arbitrary detention, trafficking, and exploitation attributed to their inability to verify their identity, and thus access services^{xxxiii}.

Landmines and ERW contamination entrench displacement, restrict recovery, limit movement and pose a persistent barrier to safety and dignity for affected populations. In conflict-affected regions such as Tigray, Afar, Amhara, and parts of Benishangul-Gumuz and Oromia, communities are often unable to access farms, grazing routes, water sources, schools, and health facilities due to fear of triggering hidden explosives—undermining livelihoods and exacerbating food insecurity. As of 2024, Ethiopia still had an estimated 726 km² of contaminated land from past and recent conflicts, including the 2020–2022 war in Tigray^{xxxiv}. The threat of landmines also has a profound psychosocial impact, instilling fear and trauma, particularly among children.

Those civilians trapped in areas where freedom of movement is restricted, for example in the West Gojjam, Wollo, Gondar, and Awi zones of Amhara, often face prolonged isolation and deprivation. Children and older persons are particularly at risk,

experiencing **family separation as parents or caregivers flee or are detained**, while others face increased vulnerability to **forced recruitment, abuse, and exploitation, including forced labour**. Access to education is severed, with schools either inaccessible or occupied by armed actors, contributing to rising dropout rates. Women and girls in blockaded or displacement-affected areas face heightened risks of gender-based violence, including sexual exploitation, forced and early marriage, and transactional sex, often in exchange for food, water, or safe passage. In areas under siege or movement restriction, access to essential services deteriorates sharply: health facilities may be cut off or non-functional, shelters overcrowded, and water and sanitation services inadequate, compounding risks of malnutrition, infectious disease outbreaks, and psychosocial distress. These impediments not only violate international humanitarian and human rights law, but also **entrench cycles of displacement and vulnerability**, obstructing protection and recovery efforts.

Safe, voluntary, and dignified returns or relocations of IDPs remain a critical protection concern across Ethiopia. Many IDPs in Tigray, Afar, Amhara, Oromia, and Benishangul-Gumuz are unable to return home due to ongoing conflict, landmines, damaged or occupied infrastructure, and unresolved disputes over land and resources. **Where returns or relocations do occur, they are often ad hoc and lack adequate support for shelter, livelihoods, and access to essential services**, exposing returning populations—particularly women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities—to heightened protection risks, including those related to secondary displacement where the areas of return or relocation are not suitable. In Western Tigray, the return process faces significant challenges. Despite some IDPs returning to areas like May Tsebir and Tselemti, many report returning to homes reduced to rubble, destroyed livelihoods, and insecurity.

Civilian populations and community members themselves often act as first responders, providing care and informal protection despite limited resources and support. Traditional justice systems and community solidarity networks serve as important local mechanisms for conflict prevention, dispute resolution, and support referral pathways, though these are strained under current pressures. Despite existing coordination mechanisms such as the government-level Emergency Coordination Center and humanitarian cluster coordination, responses are hampered by limited presence on the ground and ongoing budget constraints. Capacity exists in terms of local knowledge and community engagement, yet **sustained investment and strengthened institutional frameworks, as well as adherence to international humanitarian and human rights law remain critical** to reversing the impacts of unlawful impediments to freedom of movement and forced displacement in affected regions.

RISK 3

DISCRIMINATION AND STIGMATIZATION, DENIAL OF RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES, SERVICES AND/OR HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Discrimination and stigmatization, particularly based on displacement status, age, gender, disability and ethnicity, remain entrenched protection risks across Ethiopia, severely undermining social cohesion and equitable access to rights and services. This is particularly acute for **persons with disabilities, older persons, and survivors of GBV**. These groups face multiple, overlapping barriers—including physical inaccessibility of aid distribution points, communication challenges, and exclusion from decision-making processes, as well as attitudinal barriers such as ageism and ableism. Women and girls with disabilities are especially vulnerable to violence and exploitation, while also being systematically left out of prevention and response services. In almost all regions, **safe spaces, case management, and referral pathways** remain under-resourced or non-functional, especially in areas where humanitarian actors have limited or no access. Stigmatization and fear have also impeded access to vital services. In several locations under the control of armed actors, the population face intimidation or threat of retaliation for attempting to access aid. This has created an environment where community members are unwilling or unable to seek healthcare, education, or legal recourse. For instance, health clinics and schools in militarized or contested zones have either shut down or operate at minimal capacity, leaving residents—particularly children and persons with chronic conditions—without access to critical services. **Over 2,500 households** with members of disabilities in conflict-affected woredas of the Amhara and Somali regions required targeted cash transfers to meet basic needs in 2023—with evidence of children with disabilities being pulled out of school and excluded from daily chores due to lack of accessible support^{xxxv}. 17.6% of Ethiopia's population has a disability, yet fewer than **12% of children with disabilities are enrolled in school**.

Fragile governance in many regions, as well as limited legal frameworks fail to provide adequate protection or recourse, while peace initiatives, for example in the Tigray and contested areas, have progress still to make. In conflict-affected regions, public service delivery systems have fractured, and parallel administrative structures have emerged, introducing new and informal administrative systems^{xxxvi}. The lack of access to **civil documentation**—including IDs and birth certificates—has also emerged as a major barrier to accessing food distributions, education, and legal redress, particularly for returnees and children born

during displacement. Lack of civil documentation also leads to communities facing **recurrent forced evictions**, particularly among marginalized and displaced populations. In Ethiopia, civil documentation, such as national ID cards, birth certificates, land tenure documents, and residency papers, is **essential for establishing legal identity and asserting claims to land or housing**, especially impacting IDP returnees re-establishing themselves in their areas of origin.

Risks have intensified in conflict-affected and contested areas, where political instability and fragile governance persist. Inter-ethnic tensions have further reinforced exclusionary practices that disproportionately affect already marginalized communities, for example in the East and West Wollega and Guji zones of Oromia, or the Liban and Dawa zones of Somali. At the same time, communities hosting IDPs in both urban and rural areas frequently express concerns about unequal prioritization, which can fuel resentment and social tension. These dynamics have contributed to localized outbreaks of violence and the re-displacement of some groups.

In Amhara and Oromia, ongoing conflicts and ethnic tensions have resulted in the exclusion of minority and displaced groups from accessing services. Up to **30-40% of IDPs and returnees** in parts of Amhara and Oromia reported inability to access basic services, as well as lack of civil documentation^{xxxvii}. In Benishangul-Gumuz, intercommunal violence has displaced thousands, with marginalized groups facing ongoing barriers to reintegration and access to services. Host communities in urban centers such as Addis Ababa, Bahir Dar, and Adama, as well as rural hosting areas in Gambella and the Somali Region, frequently express concerns about **unequal prioritization of humanitarian aid favouring IDPs, fueling resentment and social tension**. Community support structures such as **Iddirs**², **youth and women's groups**, and **peace committees** have been undermined by politicization, distrust, and unequal access to resources. Discriminatory attitudes have also shaped the targeting of aid and livelihood support. In some areas, selection criteria for humanitarian assistance or job creation programs are perceived as biased or manipulated, which undermines trust and accountability and increases protection risks for the most vulnerable.

The consequences of this discrimination across Ethiopia are wide-ranging. Affected individuals experience **heightened psychological distress**, including depression, trauma, and emotional withdrawal. Many resort to **negative coping mechanisms** such as **transactional sex, substance use, child labour, or risky migration**. Stigmatization also heightens individuals' vulnerability to violence, trafficking, and exploitation, while pushing others to seek protection from armed groups or informal actors. In some cases, especially among older people, exclusion from services leads to food insecurity, where individuals quietly suffer without complaint or visibility, due to the shame and exclusion they experience.

Despite these challenges, affected communities have demonstrated significant resilience. Community members often rely on **resource sharing, family networks, and informal support systems**, including **faith-based groups and traditional leaders**. In some areas, **community-based rehabilitation** and peer support mechanisms are active, particularly for persons with disabilities. These initiatives play a vital role in fostering inclusion, promoting self-reliance, and mitigating some of the immediate harms of exclusion. In conflict-affected rural areas such as the Gurage Zone in Southern Ethiopia, Iddirs comprising roughly 150–200 households, have become essential support structures for IDPs. Beyond their customary role in funeral support, these groups coordinate resource sharing, shelter arrangements, and informal protection for displaced families. They mobilize local resources and engage in informal mediation with authorities to facilitate IDPs' access to land, basic services, and social inclusion amid fragile formal governance^{xxxviii}. Efforts to reduce discrimination have also benefited from the presence of **religious institutions, organizations of persons with disabilities, and women-led groups**, which contribute to awareness-raising, advocacy, and informal mediation. **Alternative dispute resolution** frameworks, including mediation and arbitration by community elders, continue to provide a degree of accountability and protection where more formal systems are less present.

RISK 4 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, INCLUDING CHILD, EARLY OR FORCED MARRIAGE

Gender-based violence (GBV), encompassing Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), child, early, and forced marriage, persists as a pervasive protection threat across Ethiopia. The October 2024 Ethiopian Women's Status and Priorities report indicates that **20.2% of women experienced at least one form of GBV (physical, sexual, psychological, or economic) in the preceding 12 months**. Regional disparities are notable, with Sidama, Afar, Amhara, and Tigray reporting the highest incidences. Intimate partner violence is a primary concern, with husbands or partners identified as the most common perpetrators of physical violence, experienced by 9.3% of women in the past year. Sexual violence was reported by 6.0% of women, with younger women aged 15-29 (7.4%), engaged girls (12.9%), never-married girls (9.6%), and divorced/separated women (8.9% and 7.7%

² Traditional, community-based mutual aid associations, functioning primarily as informal social safety nets, especially during times of crisis, such as death, displacement, or illness.

respectively) being most affected. Afar, Amhara, Sidama, and Gambella regions show elevated rates of sexual violence. Psychological abuse, experienced by 13.3% of women, disproportionately affects women aged 30-49 (14.3%) and 15-29 (14.1%), as well as separated (21.9%), divorced (18.2%), or polygamous women (17.8%). Regional prevalence ranges significantly, from 1.5% in Benishangul Gumuz to 20.1% in Amhara. Economic abuse, reported by 5.8% of women, is highest among women in polygamous marriages (12.7%), separated women (10.3%), and divorced women (9.2%). Sidama (25.1%) and Tigray (12.2%) regions report significantly higher rates of economic abuse, with women in low-wealth quintiles and rural areas experiencing higher prevalence across both psychological and economic forms of violence.

In Ethiopia, conflict and humanitarian crises have significantly exacerbated gender-based violence (GBV), **with violence often used as a tool of warfare, intimidation, and retaliation**, often as both a humiliation technique, as well as with intent to destroy ability to reproduce or have children. The breakdown of both formal and community-based protection systems—particularly in conflict-affected regions such as Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, and Afar—has increased the vulnerability of women, girls, and other at-risk groups to intimate partner violence, abduction, trafficking, child recruitment, and survival sex. Ongoing insecurity, coupled with widespread impunity and weak law enforcement, has contributed to the normalization of harmful practices such as female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM) and early marriage, especially in rural and displaced communities. Despite a reported decline from 65.2% in the 2016 DHS, 48.5% of women in the 2024 report stated they had undergone FGM, with the highest prevalence among women aged 50 or above (66.9%). Somali (83.5%) and Afar (70.2%) regions demonstrate the highest FGM prevalence. Similarly, child marriage remains a critical issue, contributing to adverse health, social, and educational outcomes. The Somali region, for instance, has an early marriage prevalence estimated at 45–50% in some zones. The closure of schools due to conflict, such as over 3,600 in Amhara, further erodes safe spaces for girls, increasing their exposure to abuse, early marriage, and exploitation.

Beyond conflict, environmental crises and urban development pressures also intensify GBV risks by displacing families, straining support systems, and increasing economic hardship. In post-war woredas of North Shewa, Amhara, for example, 58% of women in displaced families living in substandard conditions reported experiencing GBV, with 30.1% experiencing physical violence and 16% sexual violence. The current threat environment is shaped by **structural drivers including deep-rooted gender inequality, poverty, and damaging customary norms and legal ambiguity or gaps in prosecuting GBV-related crimes**. In many communities, social stigma, fear of retaliation, and normalization of abuse prevent survivors from reporting incidents or seeking help. Even in areas where statutory protection frameworks exist, such as national GBV SoPs, PSEA mechanisms, or referral pathways, their implementation is inconsistent and often undermined by weak institutional presence, underfunding, and lack of trust in authorities. Certain humanitarian actors and community leaders have reportedly reinforced harmful norms, with some cases indicating tacit support for early marriage or FGM as coping mechanisms or cultural preservation.

The impact of GBV on affected populations across both conflict and climate-impacted regions is both immediate and long-term. Physical consequences include injuries, unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections (including HIV), and even death. Across Ethiopia, psychosocial impacts are equally severe: many survivors experience depression, anxiety, PTSD, and suicidal ideation. Socially, survivors—especially adolescent girls and unmarried women—face rejection, isolation, and discrimination, which can lead to further marginalization, economic hardship, or re-exploitation. These challenges are also faced by children born as a result of rape. Early and child marriage, often both a cause and consequence of GBV, exacerbates these vulnerabilities by truncating education, limiting economic opportunities, and increasing exposure to domestic violence and reproductive health risks. Girls married early are more likely to experience repeated pregnancies, obstetric complications, and social isolation, all of which **undermine their physical and mental well-being and entrench cycles of poverty and dependence**.

In 2024, 38 cases of **sexual exploitation and abuse** were received through the national Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Network^{xxxix}, with the majority of cases reported from Tigray. 14.8% of the reported cases were abuses against children, highlighting the fact that this form of GBV is also being perpetrated by staff.

Despite this, local communities and individuals retain important capacities. Women-led organizations, youth-led initiatives, and customary structures such as **Dagu (Afar), Afosha (Oromia), and Shimglina (Tigray)** continue to play a critical role in protection awareness and response. **Existing community-based protection mechanisms—such as women watch groups, child protection clubs, and traditional dispute resolution structures—facilitate localized support, prevention, and referrals**. Safe

spaces for women and girls, child-friendly spaces, and local service points provide pockets of support, particularly in urban or camp settings. However, limited funding, weakened coordination, and a lack of comprehensive coverage restrict their scale and impact. While some community groups demonstrate strong awareness of rights and protective norms, the pervasive nature of GBV continues to threaten local response capacity and individual resilience.

RISK 5 CHILD AND FORCED FAMILY SEPARATION

Across Ethiopia, escalating instability is fracturing families - **separating children from caregivers and isolating older persons from vital support networks**, particularly in the conflict-affected regions of Tigray, Amhara, and Benishangul-Gumuz. The combined effects of armed violence, environmental shocks, and fragile governance have undermined traditional and institutional safety nets. Fragile governance systems, the absence of post-disaster recovery plans, and weak child protection policies have eroded families' ability to remain intact, particularly in hard-to-reach or areas with armed group presence. The erosion of community cohesion exacerbates these risks, particularly where **civil-military administrations** replace traditional governance and accountability mechanisms. The absence of transitional justice measures and violations of housing, land, and property (HLP) rights also contribute to family breakdown and secondary displacement. In addition, **hundreds of seismic events** were recorded in 2024, alongside **recurring droughts and landslides**, further undermining community stability and forcing displacement, in many cases without the possibility of coordinated evacuation or family tracing. In February 2025, reports state that since early December 2024, over 230 earthquakes (magnitudes 4.2 – 5.8) had occurred within just two months in Afar and Oromia, resulting in widespread displacement and emergency response needs^{xi}. In Afar alone, this included 6,229 IDP children under five^{xli}.

Disruption of families has significantly weakened protection networks, particularly for children and older persons. In Tigray and Amhara (North Gondar zone), ongoing security tensions and intercommunal violence have led to the displacement of hundreds of thousands of individuals, disrupting families and overwhelming local child protection mechanisms. Children affected by displacement are at heightened risk of **exploitation, recruitment by armed actors, school dropout, early marriage**, and **GBV**, including rape and trafficking. Unaccompanied and separated children often face neglect, emotional trauma, and increased exposure to abuse, with long-term consequences for their mental and physical well-being. Reports indicate a rise in **domestic violence and neglect** affecting children in displacement sites, especially in Tigray and Amhara^{xlii}. In many areas, children remain **undocumented**, with no formal identification or case management structures in place.

Older persons constitute about 5.3% of the population (approximately 6.1 million people), but few are pension recipients, and the vast majority receive no social protection, placing many at risk of separation and destitution, especially in the remote rural areas of Afar and Benishangul-Gumuz^{xliii}. This lack of support increases the likelihood that older persons are left behind during displacement or migration. Factors contributing to this include the economic burden of care on families without external assistance, mobility and health limitations that hinder evacuation during crises, the absence of formal systems for identifying and supporting separated older persons, and social norms or age-based stigma that may deprioritize their protection in emergencies. In 2025 in Tigray and the Contested Areas (Zone 3), older members of the household and heads of households were non-displaced residents, whereas other members of the household were displaced and then returned^{xliv}.

Families and communities often resort to informal coping strategies. Positive practices include community-level care arrangements such as **foster care, home-based support, and guardianship**, facilitated by women's associations and religious leaders. Older persons, despite being vulnerable themselves, often play a pivotal role in caregiving and conflict resolution. Child-friendly spaces, peer support networks, and awareness-raising among caregivers have helped to mitigate some of the psychological impacts. Despite the challenges, Ethiopia has several existing frameworks and actors engaged in addressing child and forced family separation. Government institutions have adopted Standard Operating Procedures on unaccompanied and separated children, along with the use of the Child Protection Information Management Systems (CP IMS) to collate reliable data. Civil society and community-based organizations — including **Older Persons Associations, Organizations of Persons with Disabilities, and women's groups** — have played an active role in prevention and response. Coordination efforts through the Child Protection AoR and Durable Solutions Working Groups have contributed to the identification and reintegration of separated children, but efforts are hampered by limited funding, access constraints, and a lack of specialized services in many displacement-affected areas.

RESPONSE

PROGRESS MADE ON PROTECTION

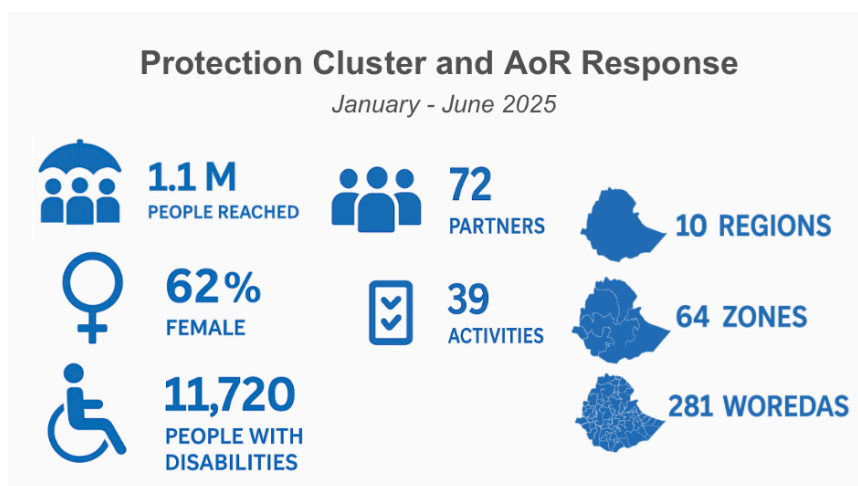
From January to June 2025, **72 protection partners assisted an estimated 1.1 million people** across Ethiopia, including 32% children, 62% women, 3% older persons, and 10% persons with disabilities. Services included protection monitoring, MHPSS, legal aid, awareness raising, case management for child protection and GBV, and community-based initiatives. Monitoring teams assessed over 64 woredas, generating incident reports and trend analyses to guide humanitarian programming.

In **Child Protection**, 22 partners reached 210,000+ people, including about 200,000 children (56% girls), through case management, family tracing and reunification, child-friendly spaces, and community awareness. Over 33,500 children and caregivers received MHPSS, 1,332 benefited from targeted case management, and 2,000+ unaccompanied and separated children were reunited with their families.

In the **GBV response**, 63 partners worked in 228 woredas across nine regions, reaching 954,706 people (69% women and 17.6% persons with disabilities). Support included case management and referrals for 40,293 survivors, cash assistance to 91,240 survivors and vulnerable individuals, MHPSS for 115,081 people, and legal aid for 330 survivors. Partners distributed 45,914 dignity kits, provided life skills/vocational training to 12,760 women and girls, reached 1,194 people with prevention messaging, engaged 563,312 in GBV awareness initiatives, and involved 69,877 in programs to shift harmful gender norms. 8,851 local actors were trained, and 5,854 women were supported in socio-economic and political empowerment. The GBV AoR, with UNFPA Ethiopia, is piloting GBVIMS+ in 96 sites across three regions, with scale-up planned for 2027. A 34% funding cut in 2025 forced the closure of 26 WGFS in five regions, leaving many survivors without services

For **Mine Action**, 8 partners reached 88,000 people through EORE in conflict-affected zones, supported 265 mine survivors, and conducted 14 contamination assessments. **Housing, Land, and Property** partners assisted 960+ people with legal aid and dispute resolution, trained 1,100+ duty bearers, and informed 12,200+ people on HLP rights, focusing on tenure security, restitution, and durable housing solutions.

These efforts have had a tangible impact on the lives of individuals and communities. Children gained safer environments to learn, play, and heal; survivors of gender-based violence accessed essential support that restored dignity and resilience; and vulnerable populations received life-saving guidance and legal assistance. Beyond statistics, these interventions fostered hope, security, and social cohesion, empowering people to recover, reconnect, and rebuild their lives in the face of adversity.



INVESTMENT IN LOCALISATION

Localization remains a cornerstone of the protection response in Ethiopia. In 2025, **42% of operational protection partners** were national or local NGOs, many of whom led frontline implementation. These actors played a pivotal role in maintaining access in high-risk zones, fostering community engagement, and strengthening referral pathways. Protection Cluster coordination structures at federal and regional levels worked closely with government line ministries, including Bureaus of Women and Social Affairs, Justice, and Children's Affairs, to enhance joint planning, technical capacity, and accountability. Translation of guidance, facilitation of cross-regional coordination, and joint protection analysis efforts also continued to improve the coherence and reach of protection programming.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In the period covered by this analysis, urgent action is required to stop the recorded increase in violence and exploitation and advance the implementation of the HCT Centrality of Protection Strategy for Ethiopia issued in 2023. Furthermore, the Protection Cluster, including its Areas of Responsibility and Working Groups, as well as partners consider the here listed actions as most necessary to avoid further harmful consequences:

RISK 1

ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS AND OTHER UNLAWFUL KILLINGS, AND ATTACKS ON CIVILIAN OBJECTS

ALL PARTIES to the CONFLICT

- Uphold national and international legal obligations, including International Humanitarian Law (IHL), by taking all feasible measures to prevent attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, and maintaining the civilian character of IDP sites.
- Provide safe corridors and access guarantees for humanitarian personnel and supplies in conflict-affected zones.

GOVERNMENT and AUTHORITIES

- Train or facilitate the training of security forces on the protection of civilians and the applicable legal frameworks, to ensure proportionate use of force, if necessary, and respect for human rights.
- Support the development of alternative justice and dispute mechanisms to handle disputes effectively and encourage the operationalization of existing alternative dispute-management mechanisms.
- Sign and implement the Safe Schools Declaration, ensuring that schools are exclusively used for educational purposes and are protected from any form of exploitation or misuse.

DONORS

- Advocate for increased humanitarian support for Mine Action to assess the contamination threat, mark and remove ERW.
- Ensure equitable and needs-based allocation of resources, including to local actors and community-based structures, and encourage all partners to uphold their commitments to the Centrality of Protection.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR and HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

- Lead high-level engagement with government authorities, advocating for improved protection of civilians and humanitarian access, as well as a principled response.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Promote systematic information sharing, protection monitoring, and evidence-based reporting, to improve early warning and response mechanisms.
- Invest in and engage more actively with peacebuilding actors to strengthen community resilience and conflict resolution.
- Build the capacity of national and regional Mine Action authorities, ensuring greater expertise in the management of mine action activities.
- Collaborate with local community, military and government counterparts to raise awareness on humanitarian principles and Code of Conduct, including obligations in appropriate formats and languages, especially in remote or conflict-affected areas, as well as ensure communities understand their rights and obligations.
- Establish safe, inclusive and confidential feedback channels accessible to affected populations including most vulnerable and marginalized.
- Education Cluster, Child Protection and Mine Action AoRs to integrate age-appropriate emergency preparedness and risk education into school curricula, including safe behaviours in the event of attacks and encountering explosive ordnance.
- Scale up cash-based protection assistance, targeting survivors of violence, displaced women, and persons with disabilities. Ensure rapid response criteria are defined and applied quickly following incident verification.

RISK 2

UNLAWFUL IMPEDIMENTS OR RESTRICTIONS TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT, SIEGE AND FORCED DISPLACEMENT

GOVERNMENT and AUTHORITIES

- Promote peaceful coexistence between communities through dialogue, reconciliation initiatives, and investment in shared services in contested or mixed areas.
- Ensure that IDP returns or relocations are voluntary, fully informed, and carried out in safety and dignity. Obstacles to return, such as insecurity, restricted access to services, or destroyed infrastructure, must first be addressed.
- Allocate resources to support the national ID registration program, ensuring that IDPs and returnees receive ID cards.
- Strengthen and rebuild local systems and processes for HLP rights to prevent conflicts in case of population movements and secondary occupation.

DONORS

- Encourage HCT to mandate regular inclusion audits to evaluate and ensure that humanitarian programs address the needs of all vulnerable groups, for example linked to EHF proposal submissions.
- Support partnerships with development actors, particularly in areas of protracted displacement or anticipated return, to invest in and foster durable solutions and community resilience.
- Prioritize development funding in regions where returnees are resettling, particularly focusing on non-volatile areas to ensure stability and sustainable development.
- Fund programs that strengthen local community mechanisms for dispute resolution and resource sharing among IDPs, returnees, and host communities.
- Financial institutions - African Development Bank, World Bank, and IMF: Support the government in its efforts to enforce good governance institutions, the rule of law, human rights and facilitate multi-stakeholder peacebuilding initiatives.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR and HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

- Engage at all levels with concerned authorities to ensure that returns and relocations of IDPs are conducted in a principled manner, respecting their rights, and ensuring their safety.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Focus on the needs of vulnerable groups, including women and women-headed households, for legal assistance on HLP matters.

RISK 3

DISCRIMINATION AND STIGMATIZATION, DENIAL OF RESOURCES, OPPORTUNITIES, SERVICES AND/OR HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

GOVERNMENT and AUTHORITIES

- Finalise the national IDP proclamation, ensuring protections for displaced populations are codified, monitored, and enforced at all administrative levels.
- Ensure transitional justice mechanisms address identity-based discrimination and historical exclusion, in line with national reconciliation efforts.

DONORS

- Encourage HCT to mandate regular inclusion audits to evaluate and ensure that humanitarian programs address the needs of all vulnerable groups.
- Ensure funding is targeted to programmes that clearly outline inclusive approaches for vulnerable groups.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR and HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

- Reinforce compliance mechanisms to ensure that aid distribution and support services are delivered in line with protection mainstreaming principles.
- Support intersectoral protection analysis and response planning, including the uptake of the Protection Risk Assessment Tool, integrating the specific needs of marginalized groups.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Integrate protection mainstreaming across sectors, ensuring that identity-based risks are factored into all humanitarian interventions.
- Promote inclusive and trusted communication that raises awareness of humanitarian principles, rights, and the Code of Conduct, helping to counter misinformation and build confidence among affected communities, local leaders, authorities, security forces, and non-State actors/armed forces.
- Foster respectful, community-led feedback systems and strengthen coordination across actors to develop shared understanding and commitment to humanitarian access and protection.

RISK 4 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, INCLUDING CHILD, EARLY OR FORCED MARRIAGE

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Ensure the effective roll-out of the GBV Information Management System (GBVIMS+) nationwide, with appropriate training, tools, and inter-agency coordination.
- Invest in empowerment and livelihood interventions for women and girls to address negative coping mechanisms such as transactional sex, child marriages and to ease re-integration of GBV survivors.

GOVERNMENT and AUTHORITIES

- Harmonize national and regional laws and policies related to GBV prevention and response to close legal protection gaps and ensure consistent enforcement.
- Prevent GBV by armed personnel against civilians, especially women and girls, including by providing the necessary training, address impunity and take accountability measures against those involved.
- Invest in the implementation of the National Road Map to end child marriage and FGM.
- Increase the number of female police officers dedicated to investigating cases of GBV and ensure all police involved in investigating cases of GBV are trained in trauma-informed investigations and how to refer cases involving humanitarian personnel as perpetrators of SEA.

DONORS

- Support multi-year and flexible funding mechanisms that allow for continuity of services, especially in areas with high GBV risks and limited presence of actors.

RISK 5 CHILD AND FORCED FAMILY SEPARATION

GOVERNMENT and AUTHORITIES

- Strengthen family tracing and reunification efforts and prioritise family-based care arrangements over long-term residential care of children.
- Ensure effective implementation of the Directive on Alternative Childcare and Support (October 2023).

DONORS

- Ensure flexibility in funding mechanisms to allow for rapid response to new family separation risks, especially in areas with sudden population movements.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Strengthen Child Protection Information Management Systems (CPIMS+) at regional and zonal levels, ensuring that all child protection actors (including INGOs and national NGOs) are integrated into the system.
- Produce and disseminate clear inter-agency Standard Operating Procedures on family tracing and reunification, adapted for regional and zonal implementation.
- Ensure services are tailored to reach individuals who are separated or left behind, particularly among non-displaced residents such as older persons.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR and HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

- Ensure child protection and prevention of family separation are prioritized in country-based pooled funding allocations, strategic planning, and advocacy as part of strategic documents, donor briefings, and government engagement.



Methodology

In the second quarter of 2025, the Protection Cluster, together with the GBV, CP, HLP and MA AoRs, organised a series of consultations with partners at sub-national level across Ethiopia to complete the protection risk prioritization exercise at zonal level. The data collection was based on the Global Protection Cluster's Protection Analytical Framework and counted with the participation of a wide range of partners. The Protection Cluster Team, including sub-national coordinators, held a workshop at the beginning of June to review the findings, as well as organized a meeting with the Strategic Advisory Group to agree on prioritized risks at national level. This analysis has been based on both quantitative and qualitative data from existing secondary data sources, protection assessments, including data from key country-wide protection monitoring tools. It has been reviewed by key Protection Cluster members and the Inter-Cluster Coordination Group.

Limitations

The analysis is not intended to be exhaustive. The complexity and scope of various shocks and protection concerns, rapid developments on the ground, access restrictions, insecurity, and limited capacity – all hinder the ability of human rights and humanitarian actors to fully identify, monitor and assess all incidents and their related protection risks. This report may therefore not cover all occurrences, but it rather draws attention to key protection concerns and trends as of August 2025.

For further information, please contact the Ethiopia National Protection Cluster at ethadpcc@unhcr.org



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