



ETHIOPIA

Protection Analysis Update

The Critical Need for Protection amongst
Conflict, Violence and Climate Shocks

August 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2026, Ethiopia continues to face **multiple, compounding crises of armed violence, localized insecurity, and the increasing impacts of climate variability and environmental shocks, as well as localized pressures on land, resources, and governance structures.** Over the past year, armed violence and insecurity have persisted in Amhara, Benishangul-Gumuz, Gambella, Oromia, and the contested areas, with continued implications for civilian protection and population movement. In Tigray, post-conflict recovery remains incomplete, characterized by ongoing protection needs and service gaps, coupled with renewed threats of hostilities. In Afar, Somali and Southern Ethiopia, climate shocks include recurrent droughts, flooding, landslides, and disease outbreaks. Cross-border dynamics, including instability in neighbouring Sudan and South Sudan and continued insecurity in Somalia, further shape Ethiopia's protection environment, with implications for border areas.

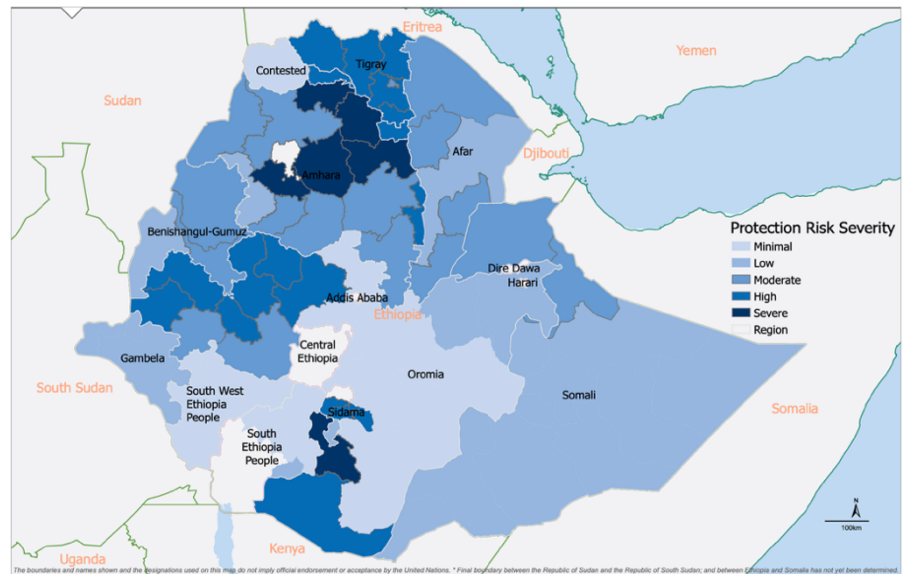


Figure 1: Map of Protection Risk Severity as of June

Ethiopia remains a highly displacement-affected context and continues to host internally displaced persons (IDPs) and returnees across the different regions. **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 solutions.** The loss of traditional coping mechanisms, combined with strained host community resources, has increased reliance on negative survival strategies and deepened existing vulnerabilities. Increasing fuel shortages, liquidity constraints, and inflation are also emerging as significant drivers of protection risks, affecting civilian access to essential services, livelihoods, and humanitarian assistance. **Humanitarian access has also been constrained by insecurity, damaged infrastructure, fuel shortages and rising operational costs.**

While each region of Ethiopia faces unique political, environmental, and social dynamics, the convergence of conflict and climate shocks create an increasingly fragile protection environment. In 2026, ongoing and significant funding shortfalls have and still severely impact protection programming, undermining the scale, continuity, and reach of principled life-saving services. **At the same time, government institutions, community structures and existing protection mechanisms continue to provide important foundations for prevention, response and recovery.** The analysis therefore considers both gaps in protection coverage and opportunities to strengthen existing national and local capacities through complementary government and humanitarian action.

Against this backdrop, the Protection Cluster has identified priority protection risks that require urgent attention:

1. **Gender-based Violence, including Child, Early or Forced Marriage**
2. **Trafficking in Persons and Forced Family Separation**
3. **Restrictions to Freedom of Movement and Humanitarian Access**
4. **Attacks on Civilians & Civilian Objects, including Presence of Mines and Explosive Remnants of War**
5. **Impediments or Restrictions to Access to Legal Identity, Remedies and Justice**

Psychological and emotional abuse, including inflicted distress, remains a cross-cutting concern across all risk areas, reflecting the sustained psychosocial impact of violence, displacement, and protracted insecurity.

URGENT ACTIONS NEEDED

- ! **Prevent further closure of critical protection services**, with flexible, multi-year funding for GBV, child protection, legal aid and mine action in high-risk areas.
- ! **Secure humanitarian access and civilian protection**, including removal of administrative and movement restrictions and stronger advocacy to prevent attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure.
- ! **Strengthen accountability for protection violations**, including GBV, trafficking and attacks on civilians, alongside survivor-centred access to justice.
- ! **Make solutions protection-centred**, ensuring legal identity, HLP rights, basic services and safety are addressed before, during and after return, relocation or local integration.

CONTEXT

CONFLICT EVENTS ⁱ	EVENTS PER REGION		CIVILIAN FATALITIES
3,033	AMHARA: 1,764	OROMIA: 926	7,078
SINCE JULY 2025	TIGRAY: 293	BENISHANGUL-GUMUZ: 57	SINCE JULY 2025

CRISIS, CONFLICT AND CLIMATE DYNAMICS

Across the diverse regions, the protection environment in Ethiopia is characterized by the interaction of conflict, climate shocks and socio-economic pressures. Repeated displacement, weakened institutions and reduced humanitarian capacity have increased reliance on community-based coping mechanisms, while also exposing populations to negative coping strategies. Women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, displaced populations and communities living in remote or contested areas face heightened barriers to accessing protection services, documentation, justice and solutions.

The protection environment in **Afar** is influenced by the combined impacts of conflict-related displacement, climate shocks, and recurrent intercommunal tensions. Following the Northern Ethiopia conflict, large numbers of IDPs have returned to areas of origin, although many returnees continue to face challenges accessing shelter, basic services, livelihoods, and protection support, especially in remote pastoral areas. In 2025 and early 2026, renewed insecurity along the Afar - Tigray boundary contributed to further displacement, with an estimated 7,513 households (37,565 individuals) displaced across five sites in Yalo Woredaⁱⁱ. Border tensions with neighbouring Tigray and Somali regions, particularly in Zones 1 and 3, remain linked to competition over scarce resources, including grazing land and water, contributing to localized displacement and undermining solutions efforts. Climate-related hazards, including drought, flooding, windstorms, and seismic events, continue to undermine pastoral livelihoods and increase vulnerability among affected communities.

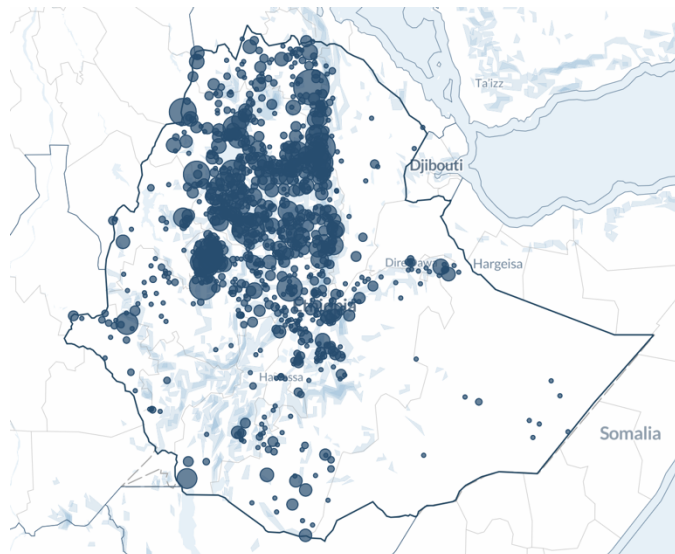


Figure 2: Conflict events (battles, violence against civilians, riots, protests, explosions and strategic developments), July 2025 – 26ⁱ.

Amhara remains one of regions hosting the largest conflict-displaced populations. Efforts to dismantle the region's informal armed structures have led to widespread armed confrontations across key urban and rural areas. Strategic towns such as Bahir Dar, Gondar, and Lalibela have experienced insecurities, while areas of North Wollo, South Wollo, North/West Gojjam and North Shewa zones have seen fluctuating control and tensions between armed actors. Ongoing hostilities, including clashes and shifting security dynamics, have resulted in civilian casualties, restrictions on freedom of movement, disruption of livelihoods and essential services, and continued displacement. In North Gondar, conflict in Debark woreda displaced an estimated 4,089 households (23,855 individuals) in 2025, while insecurity in areas such as Jarri has continued to expose civilians, including IDPs, to heightened risks during daily activities such as accessing markets, schools, farming and grazing, as

well as firewood collection. In North Shewa, new arrivals have been reported in Debre Birhan, including 434 households (1,662 individuals) newly registered at Woyneshet IDP site in early 2026. In North Wollo, renewed displacement from the Alamata area into Kobo resulted in an estimated 80,387 people being displacedⁱⁱⁱ. A MIRA assessment conducted in Amhara in May 2026 recorded 1,456 households (6,182 individuals) newly displaced from Abergele to Sekota in Wag Hamra Zone due to renewed conflict, with heightened protection risks including sexual violence, attacks on civilians, movement restrictions and lack of documentation, compounded by overcrowded and unsafe living conditions^{iv}.

Benishangul-Gumuz continues to experience localized insecurity, intercommunal tensions and displacement, particularly in Metekel and Kamashi zones. Unresolved tensions related to land, identity, and access to resources continue to drive fragility, while sporadic armed incidents and fears of renewed violence affect communities' safety and stability. The region hosts at least 14,300 IDPs displaced from West Wollega Zone of Oromia Region due to armed conflict since 2021, many of whom have remained in Bambasi Woreda for over five years. In 2025, approximately 5,900 people were newly displaced in Kamashi Zone following armed attacks, with communities around Sedal town experiencing repeated cycles of displacement; some households have reportedly been displaced up to 15 times in recent years^v. In Metekel Zone, thousands of IDPs displaced from Amhara Region due to insecurity remain in both organized sites and host communities. More recently, armed conflict in Wombera Woreda displaced 15,860 people, including 586 female-headed households, many of whom sought shelter in schools, host communities, rented accommodation and temporary structures. The region also hosts more than 100,000 refugees from Sudan and South Sudan, placing significant pressure on already overstretched local resources and services. Meanwhile, recent tensions with Sudan have negatively impacted the security and protection situation in the Kurmuk area^{vi}.

The protection environment in **Gambella** is shaped by cross-border insecurity, localized inter-communal tensions, and recurrent climate-related shocks. Competition over land, natural resources, services, and political representation contributes to tensions between and among host communities, refugees, and returnees, particularly in Itang Special Woreda and Gambella town and surrounding areas, as well as Lare, Jikawo and Gog woredas. In late 2025, insecurity linked to instability in South Sudan contributed to population movements, including the displacement of 2,234 individuals in Lare and Jikawo woredas, while longstanding inter-communal tensions have continued to drive displacement, including previous episodes affecting more than 36,379 people (8,161 households)^{vii}. Seasonal flooding continues to exacerbate vulnerabilities by damaging infrastructure, disrupting livelihoods, and increasing risks of displacement, family separation, and loss of access to basic services.

The protection environment in **Oromia** is shaped by armed conflict, inter-communal tensions, and climate-induced displacement. Ongoing clashes involving non-state armed groups, combined with limited administrative presence and weak infrastructure in affected areas, continue to restrict civilian movement, disrupt livelihoods, and constrain humanitarian access. In 2025, insecurity in Horo Guduru Wollega and East Wollega resulted in new displacement, including 300 households (1,600 individuals) displaced from Abe Dongoro and 378 households (1,937 individuals) displaced from Haro Limu and Kiremu woredas^{viii}. Alongside conflict-related pressures, the Hararge zones have experienced three consecutive seasons of below-average rainfall, resulting in prolonged drought conditions, in particular the lowland woredas of the East Hararge zone.

The **Somali** Region remains one of Ethiopia's largest displacement-affected regions, driven by a combination of recurrent drought, flooding, border tensions, and inter-communal conflicts. While climate shocks undermine pastoral and agro-pastoral livelihoods, localized tensions over land, water, and grazing resources, particularly in Dawa, Liban, Sitti, Fafan, and Doolo zones, continue to contribute to displacement and protection risks. These recurrent inter-communal conflicts intensified in June 2026. At the same time, the region has increasingly shifted towards solutions initiatives, including government-led relocations and local integration efforts. In Sitti Zone, relocation of IDPs to Qaraf reached approximately 4,000 households, while in Qoloji, legal identity initiatives, including Fayda ID registration (Ethiopia's National Digital ID Programme), have supported access to services and inclusion among displaced populations, as well as supported relocation efforts. Nonetheless, limited access to basic services, livelihood opportunities, and climate-resilient recovery continues to constrain sustainable solutions, while cross-border movements with Somalia and competition over scarce resources heighten risks of exploitation, trafficking and irregular migration, social tensions, and renewed displacement.

South Ethiopia sees localized conflict, intercommunal tensions, and recurrent climate-related shocks. Following the establishment of the new regional administration in 2023, unresolved issues related to identity, land, and administrative boundaries have contributed to localized tensions in areas including Konso, Gamo, Gardula, Burji, Kore, and South Omo. In Konso Zone and other conflict-affected areas, recurrent insecurity drives displacement and disrupt livelihoods and access to services. Climate-related hazards continue to generate significant protection needs; in March 2026, landslides and flooding

across parts of Gamo Zone resulted in at least 125 deaths and displaced more than 18,000 people, many of whom were sheltered in schools, public buildings, host communities, and temporary displacement sites^x. A further landslide incident in Wolaita Zone in April 2026 caused additional displacement and highlighted continued risks linked to unstable ground conditions and seasonal rains. Persistent data gaps and limited assessment coverage continue to constrain understanding of protection needs and targeted response, particularly in remote and newly established administrative areas.

Despite the cessation of hostilities agreement signed in 2022, **Tigray** faces significant protection challenges linked to unresolved displacement, fragile security conditions, limited recovery capacity, and renewed hostilities and heightened tensions. In areas affected by unresolved territorial disputes, including **contested areas**, protection concerns related to safety, access, and conditions for sustainable return remain significant. Widespread housing, land and property (HLP) disputes, explosive ordnance contamination, and severe fuel and cash shortages continue to impede safe, dignified and sustainable recovery, while further constraining access to essential services, livelihoods and humanitarian assistance. In the Southeast Zone, particularly Wajirat Woreda, displacement and returns occurred simultaneously. In September 2025, around 200 individuals reportedly arrived in Sheraro due to insecurity in surrounding areas. Most recently, clashes reported on 1 August 2026 in the contested area of Shererina, near the Sudanese border, caused a deterioration in the security situation^x.

Across affected regions, the capacity and reach of public institutions varies according to the severity and duration of the crisis; however, regional and local government structures, community mechanisms and service providers remain important entry points for protection response, recovery and solutions, including where their capacity has been disrupted or reduced.

WIDESPREAD EMOTIONAL DISTRESS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL HARM

Psychological and emotional harm remains a pervasive, yet often less visible, consequence of prolonged exposure to conflict, displacement, food insecurity, gender-based violence, loss of livelihoods, and the erosion of family and community support systems across Ethiopia. These pressures have contributed to significant psychological distress, particularly among women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities. The breakdown of social networks further exacerbates feelings of fear, anxiety, helplessness, and social isolation, undermining individual resilience and community recovery. Among displaced children, psychological distress and trauma may manifest through developmental delays, learning difficulties, and longer-term behavioural and emotional challenges, affecting both their wellbeing and that of their caregivers.

While no major recent nationwide study provides updated estimates of psychological distress among conflict- and displacement-affected populations in Ethiopia since the previous Protection Analysis Update, available evidence from specific settings continues to demonstrate significant mental health and psychosocial support (MHPSS) needs. A 2025 qualitative study among IDPs in Sebeta temporary shelter, in the Oromia region, documented psychological, emotional, financial, and adjustment challenges linked to displacement, including uncertainty, hopelessness, and weakened support networks^{xi}. Similarly, a 2025 study among 1,042 IDPs in the Metekel Zone of Benishangul-Gumuz, found high levels of psychological distress, with symptoms consistent with anxiety reported among 75% of participants, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms among 77%, and depression symptoms among 80%^{xii}. The study identified repeated displacement, loss of loved ones, being female, and limited social support as factors associated with poorer mental health outcomes. In Tigray, recent studies show that mental health presentations have shifted from acute shock to chronic symptoms including sleep disturbance, aggression and grief, alongside stress associated with poverty and loss of homes, income and relatives^{xiii}.

Crucially, conflict-related sexual violence, particularly in Amhara, Afar, and Tigray, also have profound and long-lasting physical and psychological consequences for survivors, compounded by limited accountability and persistent barriers to justice. As of May 2026, 2,506 cases of suicide attempts through chemical self-poisoning were reported in Amhara, including 162 deaths (6.5% case-fatality rate). The high burden, particularly among 15 - 34-year-olds, signals widespread psychological distress and an urgent need to strengthen MHPSS and suicide-prevention interventions. The crisis also disproportionately affects IDPs, with 131 suicide-related cases reported in IDP sites in the region in 2024 alone. At the same time, access to MHPSS remains critically constrained by insecurity, damaged infrastructure, funding shortfalls, and limited availability of trained personnel, leaving many affected individuals without access to appropriate care^{xiv}.

CASH AND FUEL SHORTAGES AFFECTING ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL SERVICES AND PROTECTION

Increasing fuel shortages, liquidity constraints, and inflation are emerging as significant drivers of protection risks across Ethiopia, affecting civilian access to essential services, livelihoods, and humanitarian assistance. Rising fuel prices and reduced availability have increased cost of transportation and essential items, constrained movement, disrupted supply chains, and affected the delivery of life-saving assistance, with disproportionate impacts on women, children, older persons,

persons with disabilities, and those in remote or displacement-affected areas. In Tigray, where fuel supplies have been severely disrupted since early 2026, black-market fuel prices exceeded ETB 800 (approximately USD 5) per litre, contributing to the suspension of 148 humanitarian interventions across 84 woredas, affecting approximately 1.8 million people^{xv}. Fuel shortages have also constrained ambulance services, health facility operations, water trucking, telecommunications, and access and protection monitoring in hard-to-reach communities. Different regions have also been impacted severely by the fuel crisis.

Cash liquidity challenges have further compounded vulnerabilities, limiting households' ability to meet basic needs and reducing the effectiveness of cash-based humanitarian assistance. In Tigray, cash shortages and limited liquidity in banks and ATMs have constrained the delivery of humanitarian cash assistance. Across affected areas, reduced purchasing power and disrupted access to markets have increased reliance on harmful coping mechanisms, including child labour, early marriage, exploitation, and negative survival strategies. These constraints are weakening community protection mechanisms, limiting safe access to services, and increasing protection risks.

RISK 1 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, INCL. CHILD, EARLY OR FORCED MARRIAGE

Gender-Based Violence (GBV), encompassing Conflict-Related Sexual Violence (CRSV), Intimate Partner Violence (IPV), Child, Early, or Forced Marriage (CEFM), and Female Genital Mutilation (FGM), constitutes a systemic protection risk across Ethiopia. Active armed conflict, severe population displacement, recurring climate shocks, and macroeconomic instability compound community vulnerabilities, depleting traditional household coping mechanisms and exposing women and girls to severe risks of exploitation, abuse, and physical harm. Barriers to prevention, reporting and access to survivor-centred services remain significant.

Violence against women remains widespread, with available national data indicating that **overall, 30% of women have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence by their current or most recent husband/partner, and 32% have experienced one or more forms of these types of violence by any intimate partner^{xvi}.** The breakdown of both formal and community-based protection systems, particularly in conflict-affected regions such as Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz, and Afar, has increased the vulnerability of women, girls, and other at-risk groups to IPV, abduction, trafficking, child recruitment, child marriage and survival sex. In many communities, social stigma, fear of retaliation, and normalization of abuse prevent survivors from reporting incidents or seeking help. For example, from January to April 2026, 685 GBV cases were reported by less than 10% of health facilities in Amhara, of whom 43.5% were children under 18, and 97.4% were female survivors^{xvii}.

Underlying drivers of GBV remain rooted in persistent gender inequalities, harmful social norms, unequal power relations, poverty and limited awareness of rights and available services. Ongoing insecurity in some locations, coupled with widespread impunity and weak law enforcement, has contributed to the normalization of harmful practices, such as FGM and child marriage. Such practices are reinforced by social expectations, weak accountability mechanisms and unequal power relations, especially in rural and displaced communities, where local norms and traditional elders assume a prime role in adjudicating related cases. **An estimated 58% of women nationally age 15 - 49 have undergone FGM.** By region, the prevalence is highest in Somali (94%), followed by Afar (91%)^{xviii}.

School disruption and closure in conflict-affected areas have further reduced protective environments for children, increasing risks of exploitation and abuse. Ethiopia remains among the countries with the highest burden of child marriage globally, with **31.8% of women nationally aged 20–24 first married or in union before age 18, while 10.5% were married before age 15^{xix},** highlighting the continued vulnerability of girls to harmful practices. The Somali region, for instance, has an early marriage prevalence estimated at 45–50% in some zones. 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^{xx}.**

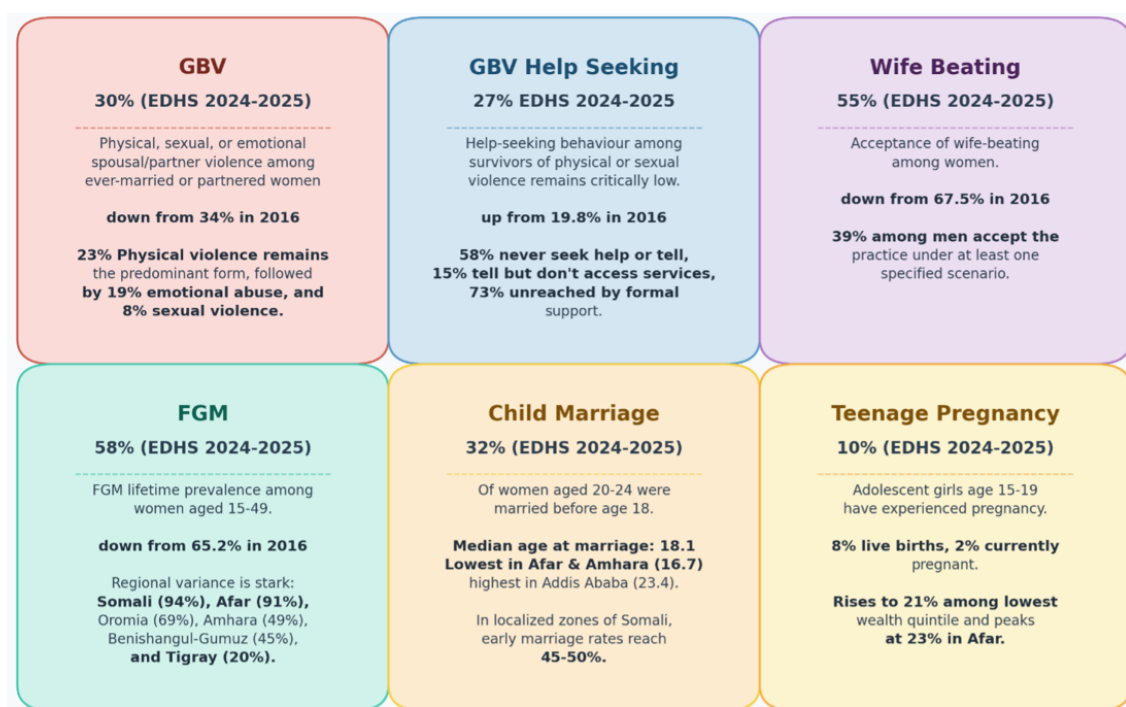


Figure 3: Key Gender and GBV Protection Indicators, Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) 2024-2025.

In Ethiopia, conflict and humanitarian crises significantly exacerbate GBV, **with violence used as a tool of warfare, intimidation, and retaliation**, often as both a humiliation technique, as well as sometimes with intent to destroy ability to reproduce or have children. Survivors of CRSV endure long-term physical, reproductive, and psychological trauma, including severe medical complications such as traumatic fistula and pelvic organ prolapse. In Tigray, reporting highlights the scale and severity of conflict-related sexual and reproductive violence, documenting patterns of rape, sexual torture and other forms of reproductive violence, with survivors continuing to face significant physical, psychological and social consequences, compounded by barriers to accountability and specialised services.^{xxi} In Oromia and Amhara, ongoing armed conflict has also generated reports of CRSV against women and girls^{xxii}.

The structural deficits characterizing displacement settings exacerbate these protection risks. IDP sites across high-risk regions are affected by **overcrowding, inadequate lighting, non-segregated latrine facilities, and severe economic deprivation**, which collectively increase exposure to survival sex, abduction, intimate partner violence, and human trafficking during daily activities such as firewood collection^{xxiii}. These risks are also being observed through site-level assessments and monitoring. Women and girls with disabilities, including limited mobility, older women, female-headed households and those experiencing displacement, also face elevated risks due to increased dependency, reduced mobility, social isolation and barriers to accessing survivor-centered services.

Institutional safeguarding mechanisms, specifically Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment (PSEA) structures, remain severely under-resourced. In 2025, cases of **sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment reported to the PSEA Network** totalled 22^{xxiv}, down from 38 cases reported in 2024^{xxv}. This indicates that these abuses are still under-reported and likely not well understood by affected communities. It may also reflect the fact that funding for PSEA focal point roles decreased in 2025. The highest category of cases reported were those categorised as 'sexual abuse – other', which includes unwanted touching, kissing or online abuse perpetrated by an aid worker against a community member (8 cases). The second highest reported category was the exchange of services for sex (7 cases). The cases were received from almost all regions in Ethiopia, and 91% of the survivors were women, with the remaining percentage unknown.

While informal community structures, including women's groups, youth networks, IDP committees, religious leaders, and traditional elders, continue to assist with local protection monitoring and referrals, **their capacity remains uneven and strained by prolonged insecurity, displacement, and extreme resource constraints**. In Benishangul-Gumuz, 5 of 13 operational women and girls' safe spaces (WGSS) close in August 2026, with 3 more expected to close by September, leaving over 70% of safe-space capacity unavailable. In Tigray, only 22 of 53 WGSS established since 2022 remain functional. Afar has

also seen primary protection facilities close following partner transitions, while in Amhara, 12 WGSS have closed and 18 were handed over to local authorities, with a further 13 - 16 at risk of closure or premature handover^{xxvi}. Survivors are increasingly referred to government sites, but these structures face severe funding, staffing and technical capacity gaps. As a result, facilities often experience rapid service deterioration, loss of community trust, and, in some woredas, repurposing as administrative offices or IDP shelters, compromising confidentiality and survivor safety.

Government health, social welfare and justice structures, together with community-based mechanisms, remain key components of the GBV response and referral system. Humanitarian support can complement these structures by strengthening case management, technical capacity, referral pathways and continuity of specialised services, particularly in areas where existing systems have been disrupted or are operating under significant constraints. **Urgent action is needed to continue strengthening GBV prevention, survivor-centred response and accountability, while restoring specialised services in conflict- and displacement-affected areas and ensuring that women and girls can safely access protection, health, justice and MHPSS.**

RISK 2 TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND FORCED FAMILY SEPARATION

Trafficking in persons, forced labour and forced family separation increasingly affect populations impacted by conflict, displacement, poverty and limited livelihood opportunities. IDPs and migrant and IDP returnees, as well as host communities face heightened risks of exploitation and movement through unsafe migration pathways due to weakened protection systems and limited access to sustainable economic opportunities. Available information indicates continued risks in conflict-affected, climate-impacted and economically vulnerable areas.

Economic pressures remain a major factor for trafficking and exploitation risks. Poverty, rising living costs, loss of livelihoods, limited employment and restricted access to education contribute to harmful coping mechanisms, including unsafe migration, child labour and reliance on exploitative work arrangements. In border and displacement-affected areas, including parts of Somali, Afar, Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Central and South Ethiopia, proximity to migration routes, prevalence of smuggling networks, weak enforcement, and limited livelihood opportunities heighten exposure to smuggling and trafficking. Family pressures, domestic violence, harmful social norms and expectations to provide financial support may further push women and children to leave home or seek income opportunities, increasing exposure to exploitation. However, men and boys remain primarily the largest groups tracked for in and outflows from the country. Weak access to information, documentation, protection services and legal remedies can further increase risks associated with vulnerability to trafficking, forced labour, extortion, exploitation and abuse along the journey. **Irregular migration routes from Ethiopia have been recorded to take place through three primary corridors.**

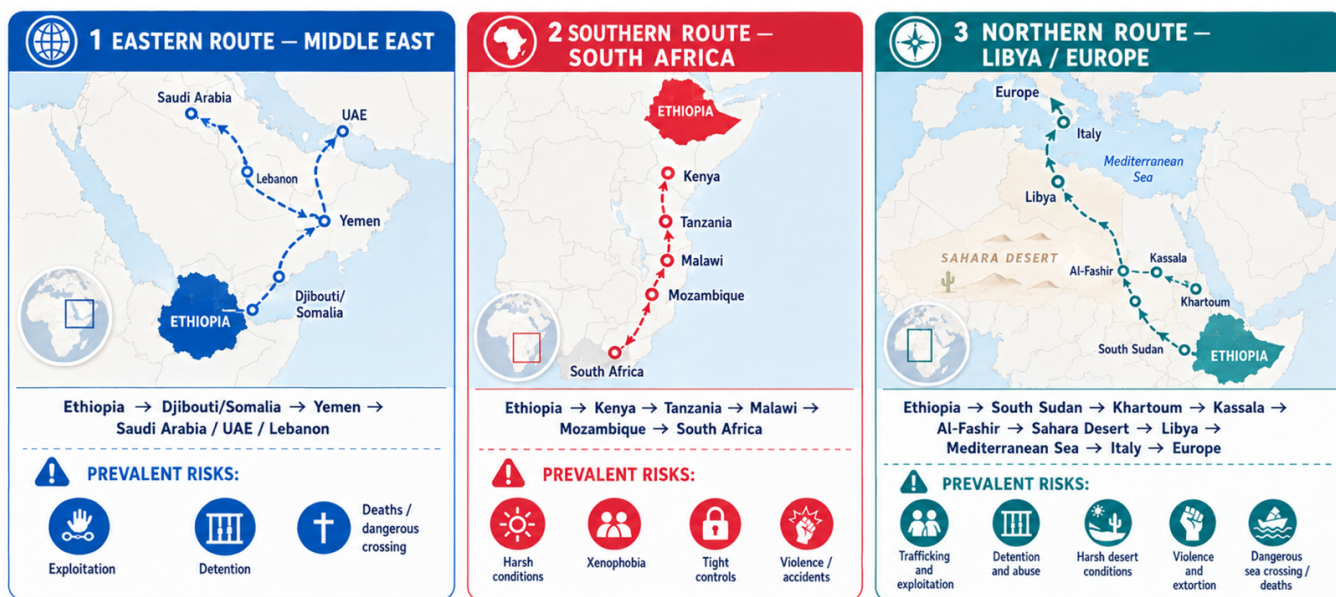


Figure 4: Major migration routes from Ethiopia^{xxvii}

The **eastern route** runs from Ethiopia through Djibouti/Somalia and Yemen towards Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Lebanon. Communities have reported serious consequences associated with these movements, including detention, exploitation, disappearance, extortion of money and ransom demands, severe hunger and life-threatening dehydration, injury and death, with smugglers and traffickers increasingly using remote and hazardous routes to evade law enforcement and border controls. In Qoloji IDP site in Somali Region, community members identified irregular migration as one of the most significant protection concerns affecting youth. Participants reported that 74 young people from the community had died in Saudi Arabia following legal proceedings related to alleged drug-trafficking offences, while approximately 65 others reportedly awaiting trial. Several detainees report they had been recruited by people smugglers to carry packages, unaware of their contents^{xxviii}. This is not particular to Somali region, but youth from Tigray and Amhara are currently in prisons in Saudi Arabia for the same reasons. Recent migration observations indicate that movements along the Eastern Route continue to increase despite persistent protection risks. It is reported that those victims of trafficking from Tigray mainly originate from the eastern and southern zones. Amhara is also a significant origin area for outward irregular movement, with the Metema - Gallabat border considered an established migration corridor, with many migrants seeking assistance reporting some form of physical or psychological abuse.

The **southern route** passes through Kenya, Tanzania, Malawi and Mozambique towards South Africa, where victims face harsh conditions, xenophobia, tight controls and risks of violence and accidents. This route is particularly significant for young Ethiopians seeking employment and livelihood opportunities in South Africa, primarily. Available information indicates that **46% of those using the route are aged 24 - 34**, with 95% of movement through irregular pathways, exposing them to prolonged journeys and multiple risks across transit countries, including starvation, dehydration, wildlife attacks, and criminal exploitation. Between 2014 and 2024, 484 deaths were recorded along the route, with Ethiopian nationals accounting for 42% of those identified. In one documented case, 51 Ethiopian nationals, including eight children, were intercepted on the Kitale - Kapenguria highway in Kenya as part of an organised trafficking network^{xxix}. Many don't reach intended destination, and instead often end up in detention for long periods of time in Malawi and Tanzania primarily, but also Uganda, Zambia, and other southern African countries.

The **northern route** remains one of the most dangerous mixed movement corridors affecting refugees, asylum seekers and migrants departing from or transiting through Ethiopia. The route typically runs through South Sudan and Sudan, including major transit hubs such as Khartoum and Kassala, before continuing through Libya and across the Central Mediterranean towards Europe. Individuals using this route face an extensive spectrum of protection risks, including human trafficking, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, arbitrary detention, gender-based violence, forced labour, physical abuse, disappearances and killings. Evidence from route-based programming highlights that smuggling operations frequently evolve into trafficking networks, with migrants becoming trapped in cycles of abuse, coercion and debt bondage as they move northwards. Along the Sudan-Libya corridor, travellers are exposed to harsh desert conditions, deprivation of food and water, violence by armed groups, detention in informal and official facilities, and repeated extortion by smugglers and traffickers who demand increasingly large sums of money from migrants and their families. The final leg of the journey, involving dangerous sea crossings across the Mediterranean, continues to result in significant loss of life each year. Community consultations conducted in Afar and Tigray further underscore the severity of these risks. Participants reported widespread accounts of detention, exploitation and extortion targeting migrants attempting to reach Libya and ultimately Europe, with smugglers reportedly demanding payments of up to ETB 3.4 million to facilitate movement or secure release from captivity. These testimonies reinforce concerns that the Northern Route is not only a migration pathway but also a major protection crisis, with routine exposure to organized criminal networks, severe human rights violations and life-threatening conditions throughout their journey. Based on community reports and broader regional analysis, trafficking and smuggling networks operating along this corridor continue to adapt their methods and exploit vulnerabilities created by conflict, displacement, lack of documentation and limited access to legal pathways, making strengthened protection interventions and cross-border cooperation essential^{xxx}.

Conflict and displacement also further increase risks of exploitation and forced family separation. At any point during the displacement, children may get separated from their primary caregivers or unaccompanied. Separation from trusted adults is one of the biggest protection risks for children in crises. In Amhara, in 2025 a total of 10,600 unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) were reported in the region, in Oromia the estimated figure is 6,000^{xxxi}. In Tigray, renewed insecurity, displacement and armed mobilisation have weakened protective environments and increased concerns regarding conscription, forced association and exploitation of children and youth by armed actors. Reports have been raised regarding recruitment pressures amid renewed tensions and limited livelihood opportunities. Since April 2026, allegations that Tigrayan forces have abducted former combatants and other men and boys, including children as young as 15, for recruitment purposes

have continued to emerge. Communities reportedly described abductions occurring in public spaces, workplaces, gold-mining areas, markets and through nighttime house-to-house searches^{xxxii}. In addition, children affected by school closures, damaged infrastructure and displacement face increased risks of child labour and exploitation. Reports of children collecting scrap metal or tending livestock in Tigray, as well as in Afar highlight the intersection between economic vulnerability, child labour and exposure to explosive ordnance risks.

Ethiopia has established legal and coordination frameworks to address trafficking in persons and smuggling of migrants, child labour and family separation, including the Anti-Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation No. 1178/2020, Child Labour Proclamation No. 1156/2019, Ethiopia's Overseas Employment Proclamation No. 1389/2025 and the National Referral Mechanism for vulnerable migrants and victims of trafficking. Government coordination Structures, including the National Council, National Partnership Coalition and Regional Coalitions with Nine Thematic working groups and institutions including Ministry of Justice, MoWSA, the Ministry of Labour and Skills, justice and law enforcement actors, alongside humanitarian partners, support identification, return, direct assistance, referral and reintegration efforts. Child protection systems, including CPIMS and social workforce structures, provide mechanisms for responding to separated children and alternative care needs. However, significant gaps remain. Limited victim identification and service providers capacity, shortage of granular and standardize data on internal trafficking and forced labour constrains evidence-based programming, while anti-trafficking structures face inconsistent implementation, particularly in conflict-affected areas where institutional capacity has weakened. Limited survivor support, insufficient staffing and resources, and gaps in accountability mechanisms continue to restrict effective prevention and response.

Strengthening rescue and identification and referral pathways, increasing case management services for victims, improving data collection, classification and standardization, expanding livelihood and skills opportunities, enhancing durable solutions strategies, and reinforcing child protection and community-based prevention mechanisms is critical to reducing exploitation risks amid continued conflict, displacement and economic pressures.

RISK 3 RESTRICTIONS TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

Across Ethiopia's conflict-affected and environmentally fragile areas, civilians increasingly face physical, security-related and administrative barriers that restrict freedom of movement, limit access to essential services and humanitarian assistance, and, in many cases, contribute to forced displacement. These barriers are driven by ongoing armed conflict, inter-communal tensions, unresolved land and resource disputes, localized insecurity and climate-related hazards, including flooding and earthquakes that damage infrastructure and disrupt transport routes. **Checkpoints, insecurity along transport corridors, the presence of armed actors, explosive ordnance contamination and localized restrictions continue to limit civilians' ability to move safely, access livelihoods and seek assistance, with some communities reporting risks of harassment, intimidation, extortion or arbitrary restrictions during movement.** In areas where administrative presence is weak, contested or disrupted, communities face additional challenges accessing markets, healthcare, education, humanitarian assistance and protection services. These constraints disproportionately affect older persons, persons with disabilities, people requiring urgent medical care and households dependent on humanitarian assistance.

Restrictions on movement and humanitarian access have far-reaching protection consequences. **Inability to safely reach healthcare, education, farms, markets, livelihoods and humanitarian assistance increases economic hardship, food insecurity and reliance on negative coping mechanisms.** Prolonged displacement and disruptions to education expose children to heightened risks of child labour, exploitation, family separation and child, early and forced marriage, while women and girls face increased risks of GBV when insecurity and limited access prevent them from reaching protection, health and psychosocial services. For older persons, persons with disabilities and people with chronic health conditions, and those requiring specialised protection assistance, restricted mobility can further limit access to essential care, assistive devices and social support, increasing dependency and isolation. **Pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities also face particular challenges where insecurity, administrative boundaries and resource-related tensions restrict traditional mobility patterns.** In Afar, recurrent inter-communal tensions and insecurity along border areas have disrupted traditional pastoralist mobility patterns, limiting access to grazing areas, water points and markets and contributing to displacement and livelihood losses among pastoralist and agro-pastoralist communities^{xxxiii}. In Somali Region, recurrent drought and resource pressures have constrained pastoralist mobility, with reduced access to water and grazing areas increasing competition over resources, including across the international border, heightening tensions between communities^{xxxiv}.

Landmines and explosive remnants of war (ERW) contamination entrench displacement, restrict recovery, limit movement and pose a persistent barrier to the safety of affected populations. In conflict-affected regions, such as Tigray, Afar, and Amhara, communities are often unable to access farms, grazing routes, water sources, schools, and health facilities due to fear of triggering hidden ERW and other types of unexploded ordnance, undermining livelihoods and exacerbating food insecurity.

Humanitarian access has also been constrained by insecurity, damaged infrastructure, fuel shortages and rising operational costs. In Oromia and Benishangul-Gumuz, insecurity along key routes, including the Adama - Chero corridor, the North Shewa corridor and the Gilgel Beles - Guba road, has further complicated movement and humanitarian access. In Amhara, insecurity has continued to affect civilian movement and humanitarian operations along key transport corridors, including the Woldiya - Gashena - South Gondar corridor, the Gondar - Metema route and roads around Sekota, disrupting both humanitarian and commercial transport^{xxxv}. In 2025, 36 woredas in Amhara were classified as hard-to-reach, primarily because of localized insecurity and the presence of armed actors. A further 289 woredas nationally experienced partial accessibility, with intermittent constraints affecting aid delivery^{xxxvi}. National fuel shortages have continued to limit humanitarian mobility and increase operational costs, as well as affecting general costs of living, while severe fuel and cash shortages in Tigray during 2026 further disrupted transportation, markets, public services and humanitarian operations. Administrative requirements, regulatory constraints and insecurity continue to impede humanitarian access, particularly in remote and hard-to-reach areas.

Existing community mechanisms and humanitarian coordination structures continue to facilitate access and referrals, but insecurity and administrative barriers leave many hard-to-reach communities beyond regular service coverage. **Safe and predictable humanitarian access, mobile protection outreach and protection-informed solutions planning are therefore critical to prevent further exclusion and secondary displacement.**

RISK 4

ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS AND CIVILIAN OBJECTIVES, INCL. PRESENCE OF MINES / EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

Civilians continue to face significant protection risks from **armed conflict, inter-communal violence and explosive hazards, resulting in deaths, injuries, displacement and reduced access to essential services.** Active hostilities persist in Amhara, Oromia, Benishangul-Gumuz and parts of Tigray, while localized violence continues in Afar, Somali, Gambella and other areas affected by insecurity, often driven by competition over land, natural resources and political grievances. Fragmented security dynamics, the proliferation of armed actors and limited accountability mechanisms continue to constrain civilian protection. Under international humanitarian law (IHL), parties to non-international armed conflicts are required to distinguish between civilians and military objectives and to protect civilians and civilian objects from the effects of hostilities. The disproportionate use of force and weapons in civilian areas continue to cause casualties and loss of properties.

Between July 2025 and July 2026, **3,033 conflict events** were recorded across Ethiopia, with the highest concentration in Amhara (1,764 events), followed by Oromia (926), Tigray (293) and Benishangul-Gumuz (57). During the same period, **7,078 civilian fatalities** were associated with conflict. Battles accounted for nearly two-thirds of all recorded events (1,953), indicating the continued prevalence of active hostilities, while 529 incidents of violence against civilians highlight the direct targeting and exposure of civilians to conflict-related harm. Conflict incidents remained consistently high throughout the reporting period, with renewed increases observed in mid-2026, reinforcing the sustained nature of the protection environment^{xxxvii}.

Across conflict-affected regions, continued insecurity has driven civilian harm, displacement and disruption of movement and livelihoods. In Benishangul-Gumuz, armed conflict in Metekel Zone displaced more than 15,860 people and caused significant destruction of homes and livelihoods. In Amhara, ongoing violence triggered displacement from the Alamata area to Kobo, affecting more than 80,000 people and further increasing protection needs among displaced communities. In Tigray, insecurity in the northwestern and southeastern zones resulted in approximately 39,500 people being displaced, with around 7,000 reportedly remaining displaced. In Oromia, continued armed violence, including renewed insecurity in Arsi Zone, exposed civilians to killings, injuries, abductions, displacement and destruction of property^{xxxviii}. In Somali Region, inter-ethnic and communal clashes linked to land and resource disputes resulted in fatalities, injuries, displacement and temporary disruption of movement, including along border areas and in affected districts^{xxxix}. In Gambella, inter-communal clashes in late 2025 reportedly displaced more than 36,000 people, highlighting the continued protection impacts of localized violence^{xl}.

Attacks affecting civilian infrastructure, including schools, health facilities, water systems, markets and transport routes, continue to disrupt access to essential services and undermine community resilience. Continued insecurity and damage to

infrastructure also restrict humanitarian access, limiting the delivery of life-saving assistance and protection services in affected areas. **Conflict-related damage, occupation and insecurity have also disrupted education access, with schools in affected areas damaged, occupied or rendered inaccessible.** Active armed conflict in the Amhara region has also precipitated a collapse of institutional civil protection networks and local governance support systems. Crucially, 4 health facilities situated in the most conflict-affected zones have ceased reporting entirely, creating visual and operational blind spots in areas where health and protection risks, including GBV, are highest^{xli}.

Explosive ordnance contamination remains one of the most persistent legacies of conflict, with new contamination from recent hostilities compounding pre-existing hazards. Ethiopia's mine action reporting indicates estimates **125.2 million square metres of suspected and confirmed explosive ordnance contamination requiring further assessment and clearance**¹, with conflict-related contamination particularly affecting Tigray, Afar and Amhara following the northern conflict. Since January 2020, over 1,676 explosive ordnance victims have been reported in northern Ethiopia, although the actual number is likely higher due to under-reporting. Children, particularly boys, account for more than 63% of recorded casualties, reflecting heightened risks linked to exposure during play, livelihood activities and movement through contaminated areas. **Explosive hazards also continue to restrict safe access to land for farming, grazing and firewood collection, schools, health facilities and community infrastructure**, with farmers, pastoralists, returnees and humanitarian workers facing heightened risks when accessing contaminated land. UNMAS assessments identified 329 suspected contaminated areas across 89 woredas in Afar, Amhara and Tigray, with more than 3,000 explosive items reported, including projectiles, rockets, mortars, fuses, grenades and mines. In Tigray, explosive ordnance risk assessments and clearance activities have supported the reopening of 29 schools, 15 health facilities and 10 water points, demonstrating the extent to which contamination has constrained access to essential services and delayed recovery^{xlii}.

These risks disproportionately affect children, women, older persons, persons with disabilities, IDPs and returnees, who often face greater barriers to evacuation, accessing services and recovering from harm. **Damage to health facilities limits access to emergency, maternal and reproductive healthcare, while attacks on schools and prolonged education disruption increase risks of child labour, recruitment or use by armed actors, exploitation and child marriage.** Older persons and persons with disabilities often face additional barriers to evacuation and assistance, while displaced populations frequently remain exposed to violence, criminality and explosive hazards in insecure settings.

Humanitarian personnel and assets have also been affected by insecurity, restricting the ability of humanitarian actors to deliver assistance and increasing operational risks. Access constraints, incidents affecting aid workers, and the presence of armed actors in operational areas have contributed to delays, suspension of activities and reduced humanitarian presence in some conflict-affected locations. OHCHR has documented 9 incidents of attacks on humanitarian workers impacting 9 individuals (7 men and 2 women).

Communities continue to reduce exposure through local coping mechanisms, including adapting movement patterns, avoiding insecure or contaminated areas, sharing security information and relying on community leadership structures for early warning, mediation and referrals. Government institutions and humanitarian actors support civilian protection through protection monitoring, legal assistance, mine action, explosive ordnance risk education, survivor assistance and referral services. However, insecurity, access constraints, limited mine action capacity and funding shortfalls continue to constrain the response. **Strengthening compliance with IHL, protecting civilian infrastructure, expanding mine action, investigating and prosecuting perpetrators to deter impunity, as well as ensuring timely assistance remain critical priorities.**

RISK 5 IMPEDIMENTS TO ACCESS TO LEGAL IDENTITY, REMEDIES AND JUSTICE

As efforts to support voluntary, safe and dignified returns and other solutions increase alongside continued humanitarian needs, the ability to obtain identity documents, resolve housing, land and property (HLP) disputes and access effective remedies is becoming increasingly important for affected populations to claim their rights, access services and rebuild their lives. However, years of conflict, displacement and institutional disruption have weakened civil registration and justice systems, while insecurity, limited administrative presence and movement restrictions continue to constrain access to legal identity, administration and justice mechanisms.

¹ Further data analysis by the Ethiopian Mine Action Center may see this number reduced.

In Tigray, the conflict resulted in widespread disruption of courts, civil registration offices and administrative institutions, with services damaged, looted, suspended or rendered inaccessible in many areas^{xliix}^{xlii}. The pause in payment of civil servant salaries in 2026, including judges, prosecutors and administrative personnel, has further reduced access to formal justice mechanisms, while unresolved HLP disputes, damaged or lost documentation and limited institutional capacity continue to complicate recovery^{xlii}. As returns gradually increase, unresolved documentation and property claims remain significant barriers to principled returns, particularly in areas affected by territorial disputes, explosive ordnance contamination and damaged infrastructure. **Returnees may encounter occupied or destroyed homes, disputed ownership, missing documentation and limited access to formal dispute resolution mechanisms, increasing risks of secondary displacement, protracted housing and land disputes, and tensions between returnees, host communities and other affected populations.**

Similar challenges continue to affect parts of Amhara, Afar and Oromia, where insecurity and uneven restoration of public institutions continue to limit access to legal and administrative services. Furthermore, in Northern Ethiopia, the issuance of Fayda ID cards has been temporarily suspended in the contested areas of the Northwestern, Western, and Southern Zones. The suspension also risks excluding some of the most vulnerable and long-displaced IDPs from receiving humanitarian assistance and protection services, as many cash support interventions increasingly target beneficiaries with valid bank accounts, for which a Fayda ID is required.

Displacement has also disrupted access to legal identity. **Many IDPs and returnees lost or damaged identity and civil documentation during displacement, while others continue to face barriers linked to insecurity, distance, cost, limited outreach and administrative constraints.** These gaps restrict access to healthcare, education, banking services, humanitarian assistance and livelihoods, while also limiting freedom of movement and increasing difficulties in claiming HLP rights, and proving family relationships. At the same time, the Fayda ID roll out offers important opportunities to strengthen legal identity and improve access to public services. **However, conflict-affected and displaced populations remain at risk of exclusion where enrolment services are inaccessible, incomplete or documentation has been lost or destroyed.**

Women, children, persons with disabilities, older persons, pastoralist communities and populations living in remote or contested areas face heightened barriers due to mobility constraints, inaccessible services and discriminatory social norms. Children without birth registration risk long-term exclusion from education, services and legal recognition, while women, particularly female-headed households, may face additional obstacles in accessing inheritance, property rights and justice mechanisms.

Where formal justice systems are unavailable or inaccessible, communities continue to rely on elders, religious leaders, social courts and customary dispute resolution mechanisms. These structures remain important sources of mediation and social cohesion, particularly in rural and displacement settings, but may provide limited remedies or accountability for serious violations, including GBV, child protection concerns and discrimination, particularly where harmful social norms or unequal power relations influence decision-making. The gradual restoration of public institutions, expansion of the Fayda programme and continued legal assistance provided by humanitarian and civil society actors offer important opportunities to strengthen protection. However, ensuring that civil registration, legal aid and HLP services are accessible in conflict- and displacement-affected areas will be essential to enable affected populations to claim their rights, support principled returns, relocations and local integration, and reduce the risk of unresolved documentation and property disputes contributing to future displacement. The continuous expansion of the Customary Court system will provide a welcome opportunity bring formal justice structures closer to the population, which could help in addressing some legal challenges.

RESPONSE

Between January and July 2026, **90 Protection Cluster partners** reached **1.2 million people** across Ethiopia with integrated protection services, including **63% women and girls**, while **17,452 persons with disabilities** and **22,289 older persons** received assistance. Protection activities were delivered through **45 national NGOs, 40 international NGOs, three UN agencies, and two government entities**, reflecting the continued leadership of national actors in the response. Services included protection monitoring, case management, MHPSS, legal assistance, explosive ordnance risk education (EORE), cash for protection, and community-based protection interventions.



Key achievements included **protection monitoring in 51 woredas, 3,208 unaccompanied and separated children reunited with their families, 7,808 children and caregivers receiving MHPSS, 58,127 women and girls receiving dignity kits, 2,423 individuals receiving HLP counselling, more than 16,000 individuals accessing legal identity documentation through Fayda ID registration, and 11,030 people benefiting from EORE.** Community-based prevention remained a cornerstone of the response, with **over 816,000 people** reached through protection and awareness-raising activities.

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. These actors play a pivotal role in maintaining access in high-risk zones, fostering community engagement, and strengthening referral pathways. Mentioned interventions complement existing government-led protection and social service systems by helping maintain service continuity, strengthen referral pathways and extend protection support to populations facing barriers to accessing public services. Continued alignment with federal and regional government priorities and coordination mechanisms can help ensure that Protection Cluster interventions reinforce national protection systems and contribute to longer-term institutional and community capacity.

Strengthened Accountability and Community Feedback Mechanisms: The Protection response maintained more than 15 context-tailored feedback and complaints channels, including hotlines, face-to-face engagement at distribution sites and through FGDs and community spaces, community volunteers, information desks, youth- and child-friendly spaces, feedback committees, suggestion boxes, and digital platforms. According to the AAP WG-E Community Voice Report (January to April 2026), 9,231 complaints and feedback items were received, of which 89.34% were successfully resolved and closed, demonstrating strengthened mechanisms for communities to safely raise concerns and for partners to address feedback.



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.

RECOMMENDATIONS

RISK 1 GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE, INCLUDING CHILD, EARLY OR FORCED MARRIAGE

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR and HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

- Establish GBV prevention and response as an essential, life-saving component of the emergency humanitarian response, advocating for multi-year funding to prevent the closure of WGSS, preserving specialized case management, and securing survivor referral pathways.
- Mobilize inter-cluster leadership to address environmental and spatial risks in displacement settings, prioritizing lighting installation, overcrowded collective centre decongestion, secure WASH design, and protected fuel collection pathways.

GOVERNMENT and REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

- Ensure all acts of CRSV, domestic violence, and harmful practices are investigated and prosecuted through survivor-centered judicial frameworks, expanding specialized training for police, prosecutors, and judiciary personnel.
- Deploy additional trained female police officers, specialized GBV investigators, and caseworkers to conflict-affected, remote woredas where legal and protection coverage is absent.
- Enforce the National Roadmap to End Child Marriage and FGM by strengthening legal enforcement and formalizing accountability structures with local administrative authorities, traditional elders, and religious leaders.
- Allocate dedicated operational budgets and technical staffing to regional WCYA offices and health bureaus to retain qualified caseworkers and strengthen continuity of services, with humanitarian partners supporting capacity strengthening and transition arrangements where appropriate. Any handover of services from humanitarian partners should be based on verified local operational capacity, budget allocations and adherence to safeguarding standards.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and RESPONSE PARTNERS

- Identify and map underserved, conflict-affected woredas experiencing critical GBV service deficits, targeting areas where services have been disrupted by active insecurity or funding cuts.
- Expand digital case management infrastructure (GBVIMS+) across pilot zones while maintaining data protection protocols to improve trend analysis, track CRSV patterns, and address operational coverage gaps.
- Establish monitoring protocols to prevent the unsafe repurposing of WGSS and One-Stop Centres into general administrative offices or temporary shelters, preserving confidential, survivor-centered entry points.
- Standardise feedback mechanisms (suggestion boxes or open helpdesks) to enable safe reporting of SEA, including trained female help desks and hotlines.

DONORS and FINANCING BODIES

- Allocate multi-year, flexible funding to halt the shutdown of the national WGSS network, restore case management capacity, and maintain MHPSS and survivor assistance in high-risk zones.
- Support Supply Chains and Co-Financing: Scale the GoE/Partner RMNCH Compact to cushion local health systems against macroeconomic inflation and currency volatility, while securing supply chains for IARH and dignity kits via e-LIMS integration.

RISK 2 TRAFFICKING IN PERSONS AND FORCED FAMILY SEPARATION

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Map trafficking and exploitation risks, including unsafe migration routes, recruitment patterns and service gaps, to guide targeted prevention and response in high-risk areas.
- Expand community-based awareness and prevention activities on trafficking risks, particularly targeting youth and communities affected by displacement, unemployment and economic hardship.
- Strengthen family tracing, reunification and alternative care mechanisms for separated and unaccompanied children.

GOVERNMENT and AUTHORITIES

- Strengthen implementation of the Anti-Trafficking and Smuggling of Migrants Proclamation, including investigation and prosecution of traffickers and protection of survivors.

- Improve coordination between authorities responsible for migration management, labour, justice and protection to ensure timely identification, referral and assistance for trafficking survivors. Ensure that the trafficking hotline is made available as a resource for information, tips and support.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR and HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

- Promote stronger cross-border coordination and periodic monitoring with neighbouring countries, ensuring information is challenged from the HCT to the National Partnership Coalition, particularly along routes linked to Saudi Arabia, Djibouti, Somalia, Yemen and Sudan, to strengthen prevention, referral and protection of trafficking survivors.

RISK 3 RESTRICTIONS TO FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ACCESS

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR and HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

- Strengthen high-level engagement with authorities and parties to conflict to negotiate safe, predictable and sustained humanitarian access to conflict-affected and hard-to-reach areas, including through removal of administrative and operational barriers.
- Promote principled approaches to returns, relocations and local reintegration by ensuring that populations are not pressured to return where insecurity, access constraints or lack of services prevent safe, voluntary and dignified solutions.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Expand protection outreach and mobile services in hard-to-reach areas where insecurity, distance or movement restrictions limit access to assistance, documentation, referrals and protection services.
- Integrate freedom of movement and access considerations into protection risk assessments, displacement monitoring and durable solutions planning, including assessments of conditions for safe, voluntary and dignified returns.
- Strengthen community-based mechanisms for information sharing and safe referral, including engagement with local leaders and existing community structures to support access negotiations and reduce risks during movement.

RISK 4 ATTACKS ON CIVILIANS AND CIVILIAN OBJECTIVES, INCL. PRESENCE OF MINES / EXPLOSIVE REMNANTS OF WAR

ALL PARTIES to the CONFLICT

- Uphold national and international legal obligations, including 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

- Strengthen national and regional mine action capacity through technical support and knowledge exchange and streamline accreditation processes to allow qualified mine action operators to expand survey, clearance, risk education and victim assistance activities.
- Ensure civilian infrastructure, including schools and health facilities, is protected from military use and support implementation of commitments under frameworks such as the Safe Schools Declaration.
- Investigate and prosecute all attacks on humanitarian workers to deter such attacks and ensure the respect of their protected status in accordance with international law.

DONORS and FINANCING BODIES

- Provide sustained and flexible funding for Mine Action, including non-technical survey, clearance, explosive ordnance risk education and victim assistance in affected regions, particularly Tigray, Afar and Amhara.
- Support protection monitoring and community-based mechanisms documenting civilian harm and identify emerging risks.

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- 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.
- Build the capacity of national and regional Mine Action authorities, ensuring greater expertise in the management of mine action activities.

- Education Cluster, Child Protection and Mine Action TWGs to integrate age-appropriate emergency preparedness and risk education into school curricula, including safe behaviours in the event of attacks and encountering explosive ordnance.
- Strengthen community-based explosive ordnance risk education and referral pathways, prioritising children, farmers, pastoralists, returnees and communities accessing contaminated land or essential services.

HUMANITARIAN COORDINATOR and HUMANITARIAN COUNTRY TEAM

- Promote strengthened civilian protection monitoring and incident reporting mechanisms to identify trends, support advocacy and inform humanitarian response priorities.
- Strengthen high-level advocacy with parties to conflict and authorities on protection of civilians, including through systematic engagement on civilian harm, attacks on civilian infrastructure and restrictions affecting humanitarian access.

RISK 5 IMPEDIMENTS TO ACCESS TO LEGAL IDENTITY, REMEDIES AND JUSTICE

PROTECTION CLUSTER and PARTNERS

- Continue protection monitoring of returns and other solutions processes to identify unresolved documentation, HLP and justice barriers that may undermine safe, voluntary and dignified solutions.
- Address documentation barriers by integrating legal counselling and assistance support to help individuals who lack birth certificates, previous identity documents or other supporting documentation.
- Embed protection in durable solutions approaches from the onset of emergencies, ensuring that return, relocation and local integration processes are informed by protection analysis and address risks related to safety, legal identity, access to services, HLP rights and social cohesion.

GOVERNMENT and AUTHORITIES

- Expand access to legal identity services, including birth registration and Fayda, especially for displaced communities.
- Reduce financial and administrative barriers to ensure that vulnerable populations are not excluded because they cannot afford registration-related costs or navigate administrative requirements.
- Ensure customary and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms operate in accordance with national law and human rights standards, particularly in relation to women's, children's and vulnerable groups' rights.

DONORS and FINANCING BODIES

- Prioritize multi-year funding for legal aid, civil documentation and HLP services in areas experiencing returns and displacement.

METHODOLOGY

This Protection Analysis is a joint government-humanitarian effort, and the Protection Cluster recognises the co-leadership of the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs and the contributions of relevant government institutions, Protection Cluster partners and other stakeholders.

In the second quarter of 2026, the Protection Cluster, together with the GBV, CP, HLP and MA TWGs, 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. Protection priorities also reflect direct community consultations, feedback mechanisms, and localized assessments to centre community agency. The Protection Cluster Team, including sub-national coordinators and co-lead by MoWSA, 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 2026.

The findings should be understood as an analysis of protection risks and trends identified through the available evidence and consultations, rather than as statistically representative estimates of prevalence at national or regional level. The evidence base encompasses different geographic areas, population groups, data sources and reference periods, which should be taken into account when interpreting individual findings and indicators.

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