

ETHIOPIA BULLETIN

JANUARY - JUNE 2024



EDITORIAL

During the first half of 2024, people in areas affected by armed conflict and violence in the country continued to struggle to meet their most basic needs despite humanitarian intervention efforts to alleviate their suffering. In response, we have sustained our neutral, impartial and independent humanitarian activities to protect and assist the most vulnerable people affected by conflict and violence. To address the most urgent needs of affected people, we have maintained our countrywide approach in Tigray, Amhara, Oromia, Somali and Afar regions. Our efforts in all these regions are strengthened by working in close coordination with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), our principal partner as part of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement.

We have also maintained contact with the parties to the conflict and other actors to garner acceptance and support for our humanitarian mission. Our constructive dialogue with the parties is based on the needs and vulnerabilities of persons affected by conflict and seeks to uphold international humanitarian law. It focuses on humanitarian issues of concern, advocating for the protection of affected people and delivering much needed assistance to alleviate their suffering in accordance with our principles of humanity, impartiality and neutrality.

In 2024, we sustained our efforts to protect and assist people still affected by the legacy of the armed conflict in Tigray region despite the cessation of hostilities agreement signed in November 2022 that put an end to the fighting. In Amhara region, which was under the State of Emergency, we have maintained our activities to provide emergency medical and other aid to people affected by the conflict that commenced in August 2023. In Oromia region, our humanitarian interventions endeavor to address the basic needs of people affected by the ongoing conflict in West and South Oromia. In Somalia and Afar regions, our humanitarian aid was delivered to the most vulnerable people affected by communal violence.

Our humanitarian interventions for affected people in the country during the first six months of 2024 included delivering medical supplies and equipment, improving access to water and

sanitation, and distributing basic essential household items and cash assistance. We visited detainees in 27 places of detention to monitor their living conditions and treatment and to restore contact between them and their families where needed. We supported 13 physical rehabilitation centres around the country by providing physiotherapy and mobility services to 4,968 people with disabilities. Approximately 52,000 people in need who had access to markets were provided with cash assistance to meet their basic needs and help them recover, and about 1.5 million livestock were vaccinated to improve livelihoods for pastoralists and semi-pastoralists. Over 1.1 million people in urban centres, rural areas and places of detention were provided with improved access to water and sanitation. Our dialogue and training on International Humanitarian Law and International Human Rights Law enhance knowledge and respect of the Law by the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF), Police, militias and armed groups to protect civilians and ensure respect of medical workers, medical facilities and transport in this regard, we had provided relevant trainings to 150 senior military officers and judges, 530 militia members as well as 691 local authorities in the first six month of 2024.

In this issue of our bulletin, you will discover our training activities for health extension workers to provide pre-natal and post-natal health services for mothers in hard-hit, hard-to-reach areas as well as to address the needs of survivors of sexual violence and to fight stigmatization. You will also read about our assistance response in Tigray and Oromia regions providing essential household items and cash assistance to the most vulnerable and to thousands of people displaced by the conflict. You will also learn about our physical rehabilitation outreach programme that supports people with disabilities in rural remote areas to restore their mobility and reintegrate them into their communities.

Enjoy your reading!

Bruce Lorenz Biber
Head of Delegation a.i.



Dawit Tesfa/ICRC



Thousands of people displaced by armed conflict in Oromia and Tigray Regions assisted to meet their basic needs

In early 2024, armed clashes in Kellem Wellega zone of Oromia Region between the government security forces and the non-state armed group active in the region resulted in the suspension of public services, restricted access to healthcare and clean water supply, and disrupted the supply of seeds and fertilizers. People fleeing from the fighting lost their homes and livelihoods and were displaced repeatedly. As a result, families were unable to meet their basic needs.

In March 2024, the ICRC assisted more than 3,000 families (18,000 individuals) of the displaced people with food and essential household items in Koli, Dale Koli, Mugi and Yeti rural kebeles of Anfilo woreda and surrounding areas in Kellem Wellega zone. “I used to be a very strong (sic) farmer. I lost my land due to the conflict. I am relieved and feel like my strength has returned now that I bring this support back home” said a resident in Dalo Koli, Anfilo who was displaced by fighting in his area.

A wave of hope swept over the four areas where the assistance was delivered since ICRC was the only humanitarian organization that managed to reach the displaced people in these areas amidst the ongoing insecurity. “I had lost all hope to live. Every day I worry [about] how I can protect and feed my small child. Today, I am happy” said a mother in Dale Koli. **“My husband was killed in the conflict. This pushed me to daily labor, sometimes begging to meet my needs”** said a widow who was relieved to receive the assistance. Each family was assisted with food – wheat, oil, salt, and lentils.

In Northern Ethiopia, displaced communities in the Tigray Region are continuing to experience deteriorating living conditions due to the legacy of the armed conflict that affected the region from 2020 to 2022. Many are still unable to meet their basic daily needs for survival. The ICRC is assisting communities affected by conflict with cash and essential household items to improve their living conditions and enable them to cope with the situation. . “We are really worried about shelter because the rainy season is coming. We also suffer when the wind blows during the dry season.” said a husband and wife, Hadas and Kebede in the Northwestern

Tigray Region. **“We lacked money to buy food for [our] daily needs and this has affected our health and wellbeing”** they added to explain their dire living conditions.

The ICRC’s assistance was delivered in Adi Mehameday in the Northwestern Zone of Tigray Region to displaced people to meet their basic needs. Teklay, a father of six, from the Kunama community in Tahtay Adyabo wereda said the cash assistance helped him to buy food for his family and improve their living conditions with the household items that included a solar light, kitchen items, hygiene items, mattress, tarpaulin and blanket. He used the cash assistance that he received earlier to buy seed for his farmland and start cultivating before the rainy season.

People in communities in Tselimoy (Northwestern Zone) that were affected by the armed conflict in Tigray lost everything including their livestock and household items. **“My son was injured in his leg by shelling and has been under medical treatment for a long period of time. He was not able to harvest last year because of the unseasonal rain. He appreciated the timing of the assistance as they are entering into the lean season. He hopes to harvest well in the coming harvesting time and wishes to be self-sufficient.”** said Gebrekidan, an elderly man whose son benefited from ICRC assistance.

The ICRC has assisted displaced people and host communities in the woredas of Irob, Gulo Mekeda, Tahtay Adyabo and Asgede Woredas of Tigray Region with basic household items and cash assistance. In total, 26,586 people received cash assistance and essential household items and 4,300 people received essential household items during the first half year of 2024. As a neutral and impartial humanitarian organization, the ICRC continues to assist the most vulnerable people affected by armed conflict and violence and maintains a constructive dialogue with parties to the conflict on respect for International Humanitarian Law to protect people and their property. From January to June 2024, the ICRC in Ethiopia has assisted 18,036 people with emergency food and 91,200 people with essential household items.



Yenus Mohammed/ICRC



Protecting people affected by armed conflict and violence through dialogue with armed actors

The ICRC works with armed and security forces around the world to secure safe access to people affected by armed conflict or other forms of violence and to provide them with humanitarian assistance and to ensure that they are protected from harm. This requires the ICRC to build trust and confidence with armed actors by raising their understanding and acceptance of its independent, neutral and impartial approach as a humanitarian organization. This dialogue is bilateral and confidential, meaning that it is restricted to the ICRC and the armed actors concerned. Nothing potentially sensitive is shared with third parties or publicly.

In Ethiopia, the ICRC engages in dialogue with the Ethiopian National Defense Forces (ENDF) and other armed actors in affected areas, enabling the ICRC to obtain the security guarantees necessary to provide life-saving assistance to persons displaced and communities that host them as well as residents living in particularly hard-hit locations. Through such dialogue, the ICRC was able to reach affected people during the armed conflict in Tigray Region to deliver lifesaving assistance.

“As a neutral and impartial humanitarian organization, we do not take sides but talk to all parties involved in fighting and provide our aid without discrimination to the most vulnerable based on their needs alone.” said Bruce Biber, ICRC’s acting Head of Delegation. “Our dialogue with armed actors facilitates our access to reach communities in areas where fighting has disrupted basic services and the lives of people living there. It enables us to deliver medical assistance and essential household items, restore water supplies, and to understand the situation of those who are entitled to the protection of International Humanitarian Law”.

Indeed, the ICRC’s interaction with armed actors enables the organization to uphold the protection of civilians and their property by promoting respect for International Humanitarian Law (IHL). “We organize trainings on IHL for the Ethiopian National Defence Force and disseminate the law to other armed actors whenever possible to

emphasize the protection of civilians and their property.” said Levent Vezir, ICRC’s coordinator for outreach to armed and security forces. “We also advocate for the protection and respect of medical workers, health facilities and ambulances in affected areas to ensure the delivery of medical services for those who are wounded and sick.”

The ICRC has also a dialogue with the Police in Ethiopia to raise their understanding and acceptance of its work and to protect civilians. Police have significant powers, and the exercise of those powers can have a major impact on people affected by conflict and violence. Police powers include the use of force and firearms, the power to arrest and detain people, and to search and seize property. The ICRC contributes to training the Police by promoting International Human Rights Law (IHRL) and international norms and principles applicable to Law enforcement operations.

The ICRC has organized training for the police at the Ethiopian Police University (EPU) in Sandafa and Police training institutions in Oromia, Amhara, Tigray and Somalia Regions. The ICRC has also contributed to a one-week training on IHL and international policing standards within the framework of the reconstitution of the Tigray Police force that was organized in cooperation with the EPU for 114 participants, mainly heads of units from seven zones and 93 woredas. First Aid training has also been delivered to the police in conflict-affected areas, with the support of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS). Between January and June 2024, the Delegation conducted 20 IHL/IHRL events for 644 arms carriers.



Supporting people with disabilities in hard-hit, hard-to-reach areas of the West Wellega, Oromia Region

In June 2024, over 280 people with physical disabilities were screened and 201 of them were assisted by the ICRC in West Wellega Zone, Oromia Region. Most of those assisted to regain their mobility have suffered from severe injuries and life-long disabilities as a result of the conflict between the government and armed groups in the region. The ICRC assisted people in five remote woredas (villages) of Oromia Region in Mendi, Kiltu Kara, Leta Sib, Nedjo, and Boji Dirmaji.

“I used to work in agriculture and business. I injured my leg during the conflict and couldn’t walk properly or do the work that I used to do.” said a 46-year-old man from Bila town who was assisted. “Now, I can easily move with the support of the crutch I received from the ICRC.”

The ICRC’s Physical Rehabilitation Programme (PRP) of outreach in remote areas enables people with physical disabilities living in hard-hit, hard to reach locations to receive a range of physical rehabilitation services corresponding to their specific needs. These include providing wheelchairs and walking aids, prosthetic and orthotic devices, clinical advice, and financially-supported orthopedic surgery referrals to the physical rehabilitation centers supported by the ICRC in Nekemte (Oromia Region’s capital city). About 80 people with disabilities were provided with walking aids tailored to their specific needs during the outreach programme.

“Since childhood, I could not walk with both legs due to prolonged illness. I wanted to get a crutch, but due to the security situation and lack of money for transportation, as you see, I have been hanging on tree branches for almost half my life. With your support my life has now improved” said a 50-year-old physically disabled man from Mana Sib woreda.

In line with ICRC 2030 Vision for Disability Inclusion, the PRP outreach was implemented in collaboration with the physical rehabilitation center in Nekemte and the local partner from the Bureau of Labour and Social Affairs (BoLSA) responsible for disabled persons in the woredas.

In coordination with BoLSA, the ICRC contacted persons with disabilities to inform them of future referrals that they could benefit from.

“I am currently in the second grade of my studies. Five years ago, during fighting in our area, I was shot while standing near our house and both my legs were injured.” says a student in Mana Sib. “It took me over two hours to travel five km from my house to school. With this crutch, I can now walk well and continue my education”.

ICRC provided a wheelchair to a teenage girl from Mendi who had become paralyzed from a spinal injury linked to the violence there in 2021, forcing her to discontinue her education. “Now, with the wheelchair provided by the ICRC, I am able to take care of my personal hygiene and I’m even planning to resume my studies in Meskeram in September” she said.

People with physical disabilities were identified during an ICRC assessment of families with high economic needs in hard-hit, hard to-reach rural areas. This included persons with disabilities linked to ongoing hostilities. Emphasis was placed on identifying the most vulnerable people with disabilities, comprising the elderly, women, children, and others in need of specialized physical rehabilitative support. The ICRC is the only humanitarian organization conducting these activities in these hard-to-reach remote areas.

Despite the relative success of this PRP outreach response, the ICRC has a long way to go in reaching out to the growing number of affected people as many disabled people continue to face challenges in accessing PRP services due to limited resources, lack of money for transportation and security considerations affecting travel. The ICRC in Ethiopia supports 13 physical rehabilitation centres around the country to assist people with disabilities.



Training health providers to care for mothers and sexual violence survivors

The ICRC in Ethiopia is supporting medical facilities in areas affected by armed conflict and violence by donating medicine, medical consumables, medical equipment and hygiene items to enhance provision of essential health services for the wounded and sick, survivors of sexual violence and vulnerable groups such as women, children, the elderly, the disabled and patients with chronic illnesses.

The ICRC also works with Health Extension Workers (HEWs) who play an important role in providing basic preventive healthcare services and community education at health posts in many communities where affected people live. HEWs are community-based healthcare providers who serve as a bridge between health centers and people living in remote rural areas. The ICRC provides continuous training for HEWs to empower them and enhance their ability to address important health issues such as safe deliveries and to refer survivors of sexual violence to healthcare. Their training equips them to provide essential mother and child health services including prenatal care, safe delivery practices, postpartum care and family planning. This innovative approach enables the ICRC to reach and support pregnant and lactating mothers and survivors of sexual violence to address their health needs.

“Besides striving to reduce home births and the associated risks, the trainings provided by the ICRC help us to increase awareness which educates women about the risks associated with home births and promotes the importance of delivering in health facilities,” says Almaz Taddesse*, a HEW in Maytsebry. The ICRC’s training also puts emphasis on the importance of antenatal care to enable HEWs to identify high-risk pregnancies early. The women are then referred to health centers for skilled-assisted birth and postpartum care. Postpartum visits are offered to ensure that mothers receive proper care and guidance after childbirth.

HEWs play a crucial role in understanding the challenges of sexual violence survivors who often face physical, emotional, and psychological trauma. Thanks to their training, HEWs can orient the survivors to proper care to improve their reproductive health and psychological well-being. They can also create a safe and supportive environment during pregnancy and childbirth and offer emotional support, listen to the terrible accounts of survivors of sexual violence, and connect them with appropriate services and resources. Indeed, HEWs enable these survivors to use proper health referral networks in collaboration with organizations like the

ICRC to access health services like One Stop Centers and safe houses to ensure they receive comprehensive care.

The ICRC recognizes the economic difficulties and financial strain faced by people in areas affected by armed conflict and violence. This pressure particularly affects mothers and survivors of sexual violence, hindering them from accessing health services. To alleviate this burden, the ICRC reimburses transport costs and supports free medical expenses related to the care for survivors and mothers who require antenatal care, delivery, and postpartum services. The ICRC enables these women to seek timely care without having to worry about financial constraints. **“This cost reimbursement initiative by the ICRC acknowledging the financial challenges faced by both mothers and survivors of sexual violence is an important step for them to receive health services.”** say Hiwot Asrat*, a HEW from Maytsebry. The ICRC has trained 189 HEW in parts of the country affected by conflict and violence and also provides HEW workers with kits to enable them to effectively perform their duties.

Survivors of sexual violence suffer from appalling mental and physical wounds; they face stigma in their communities that prevent many of them from revealing or discussing their experiences or seeking urgent lifesaving care. The ICRC continues to mobilize resources and to influence the behavior of key actors so that they can take the necessary measures to guarantee the safety, protection, and dignity of survivors of sexual violence and their families, both in the immediate and long-term.

Working together with the Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), the ICRC has organized a series of community outreach trainings in Tigray and Oromia regions. This mobilizes and equips the affected communities to prevent sexual violence, care for the survivors, and fight stigmatization. As the conflict intensifies in Sudan, people fleeing for safety are at high risk of sexual violence. The ICRC has trained volunteers from the ERCS in Metema, at the Ethiopia-Sudan border, to give basic care and referral services to survivors of sexual violence and donated dignity kits to local health facilities in Metema and in Kurmuk in support of survivors. From January to June 2024, the ICRC trained 32 ERCS staff and volunteers around the country to conduct community outreach and fight stigma against survivors of sexual violence.

* Names have been changed to protect their identities

ETHIOPIA

1st January to 30th June 2024

OVERVIEW OF ICRC AND ERCS RESPONSE



Reconnecting and Reuniting Families

- **771** Persons looked for by their family members, found;
- **349,739** Contacts (phone calls, oral messages) facilitated between family members separated by conflict and violence;
- **27** Places of detention visited;
- **20,593** Persons deprived of their liberty provided with assistance;
- **602** Risk Awareness and Safety Behavior (RASB) trainings were conducted in **602** communities;
- **50,108** Beneficiaries participated in the RASB sessions.



Partnership with Ethiopian Red Cross Society

- **24** Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) branches supported with ambulance services; that have serviced **62,301** individuals;
- **556** ERCS staff and volunteers trained;
- **33** ERCS branches provided with general support including the replenishment of first aid kits.



Rebuilding Lives and Livelihoods

- **48,174** Persons provided with essential household items;
- **51,990** Persons provided with multi-purpose cash assistance to help them recover from emergencies;
- **18,368** Persons benefitted from food assistance and
- **420,370** Livestock vaccinated.



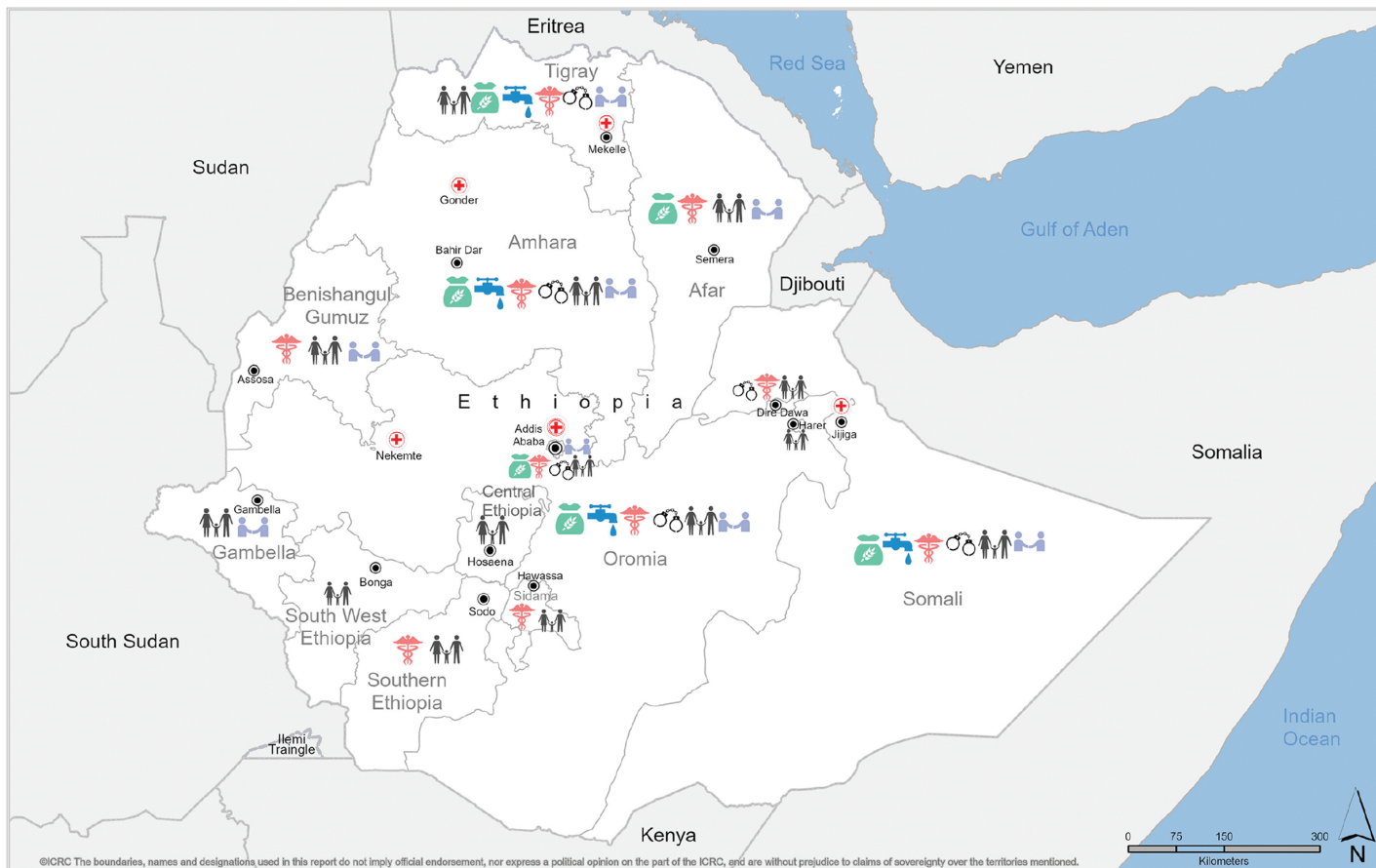
Improving Access to Water

- **21** Tons of chemicals donated to support water supply systems;
- **1,112,897** People gained access to safe water in urban & rural areas, and detention places;
- **1,506** Persons provided access to sanitation facilities
- **128** Hand pumps installed or renovated, and **57** Hand pumps donated to water authorities.



Supporting Health Services

- **56** Health facilities regularly assisted;
- **81** Health facilities supported with Ad hoc;
- **19,025** Weapon wounded assisted by the ICRC;
- **3,497** Sexual violence survivors supported;
- **4,968** Persons provided with physiotherapy and mobility services.



ICRC Presence

Cities

Major ICRC Activities

Delegation

Capital City

Emergency needs & Reducing Lives and Livelihoods

Supporting Health Services

Reconnecting and Reuniting Families

Sub-delegation

Regional Capital

Improving Access to Water

Ensuring Respect and Dignity of Detainees

Partnership with Ethiopian Red Cross Society



The ICRC helps people around the world affected by armed conflict and other situations of violence, doing everything it can to protect their dignity and relieve their suffering, often with its Red Cross and Red Crescent partners. The organization also seeks to prevent hardship by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and championing Universal humanitarian principles.

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