TIGRAY REGION OF ETHIOPIA · CONFLICT

SITUATION OVERVIEW

The conflict crisis in the Tigray region of Ethiopia—which erupted in November 2020—has left over **90 percent of the population in need of humanitarian assistance**. In February 2021, the **ICT Emergency Cell** was launched to coordinate and address gaps in **IT and communications services** in the humanitarian response to the crisis.

ICT Emergency Cell members:
IOM, OCHA, UNDSS, UNHCR, UNICEF, WFP

Services provided/planned in
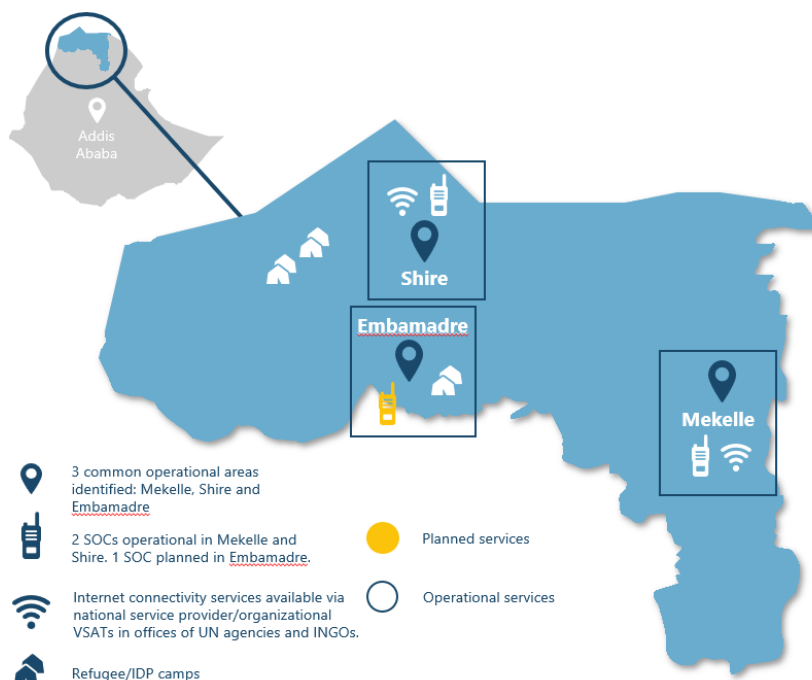**3 COMMON OPERATIONAL AREAS**
in Tigray

2 SECURITY OPERATION CENTRES (SOCs)
set up by the ICT Emergency Cell in Mekelle and Shire

US$500,000
CERF funding requested to support emergency ICT coordination and services delivery.

TIGRAY REGION

Addis Ababa

Shire

Embamadre

Mekelle

3 common operational areas identified: Mekelle, Shire and Embamadre

2 SOCs operational in Mekelle and Shire. 1 SOC planned in Embamadre.

Internet connectivity services available via national service provider/organizational VSATs in offices of UN agencies and INGOs.

Refugee/IDP camps

Planned services

Operational services

ICT EMERGENCY CELL

- The ICT Emergency Cell was endorsed by the Operational Management Team (OMT) in November 2020 and launched in **February 2021** to coordinate and address **IT and communications gaps in the humanitarian response** to the crisis in the Tigray region of Ethiopia.

- The ICT Emergency Cell membership – **IOM, OCHA, UNDSS, UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP** – has been led by UNHCR since it was established.

- A **WFP ICT Coordinator, Information Management Officer** (IMO) and **telecommunications specialist** are on the ground in Tigray to support the interagency emergency ICT sector response.

CONTEXT OF ICT SERVICES IN TIGRAY

- At the beginning of the crisis in November 2020, all communication services were shut down in the Tigray region. A **lack of communications services** and **severe power blackouts** continue to disrupt the delivery of humanitarian assistance. Following an ICT assessment in March 2021, three priority locations for the delivery of common ICT services were identified in the Tigray region – **Mekelle, Shire and Embamadre**.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE RESPONSE COMMUNITY

- Provision and enhancement of **security communications services remains a high priority** due to the volatile security situation in the Tigray region.

- There are two **Security Operation Centres (SOCs)** operating in the Tigray region – **Mekelle and Shire** – to support the safety and security of staff. The Cell continues to optimize security communications services in both SOCs. The security communications services provided by the SOC are available to UN personnel.

- UNDSS is leading a **UN harmonization project** to streamline and optimize security communications infrastructure in country-wide UN offices and vehicles. All UN agency HF/VHF radios in Mekelle and Shire are being reprogrammed and a radio training programme initiated for UN drivers to update them on radio protocol and convoy procedures.

- As part of election preparedness planning, UNDSS has secured the **emergency short code '7733'** which UN staff and their dependents can call for emergency assistance.

- NGOs/INGOs are also scaling up their operations and have requested support for security communications services. The need to **extend security communications services to NGOs/INGOs** has been escalated.

- Access to **Internet connectivity services** for humanitarian organizations is restricted across multiple locations in Tigray. Major challenges to service expansion include restrictions on the importation of communications equipment and operating within government guidelines. The Cell continues to explore solutions using available options and resources, including discussions with national Internet service provider, Ethio Telecom.

ICT Emergency Cell members::