

## **Ethiopia/Health after 2 years of conflict In the Tigray region**

***LIBREVILLE, January 30 (Infosplusgabon) - According to the ICRC, urgent humanitarian needs remain in northern Ethiopia following two years of conflict that damaged healthcare infrastructure and disrupted public health services in most areas. In the Tigray region, providing much-needed medical care remains very challenging as many health facilities were damaged or destroyed during the conflict.***

The ICRC press release explains that "In some areas, as a result, healthcare services are practically absent. Still, improved conditions on the ground have enabled the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to access some of these previously hard-to-reach areas with humanitarian aid".

"We are only managing to give what we have in our hearts. But that's not enough, because seeing patients who come to be treated die in your hands is very painful," says Dr Erdey Asefa, chief executive officer of Yechilla Primary Hospital.

Healthcare in and around these damaged or destroyed hospitals is under enormous strain, making it difficult for health staff to operate. Their capacity to treat patients was diminished by the attacks on health facilities, and the impact on the population is devastating. Many people have died from a lack of medical care, and thousands have gone for months without healthcare.

Ambulances were looted, vandalized and destroyed during the conflict. Without ambulances to urgently evacuate patients suffering from life-threatening medical conditions, many have died at home. The Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS), one of the main ambulance service providers in the region, is yet to fully resume services across Tigray because of the lack of logistical supplies. The ERCS operated over 250 ambulances in Tigray before the conflict started, but only 82 of those remain, and many are not in operation.

“We have faced so many challenges. One of them is our driver who was shot while transporting a pregnant woman,” says Berhanu Mekonnen Berhe, the head of Tigray regional branch of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society.

Health facilities and health staff need to be protected by all sides during conflict, in accordance with international humanitarian law, even amidst heavy fighting.

Faced with these enormous health needs, the ICRC has scaled up its support in the region and the rest of the country, providing urgent medical assistance and helping to restore the healthcare system in Tigray – as well as responding to growing humanitarian needs in other parts of the country, within the parameters of a fast-moving humanitarian situation in the Oromia, Afar, Amhara and Somali regions where health facilities have also suffered damage and destruction. In the northern part of the country, in particular, conflict-affected areas have become more accessible, allowing for the support required to enable health facilities to function again.

The ICRC supported 94 health facilities in Ethiopia in 2022, including 29 in Tigray. Our teams offered consultation services to more than 400,000 patients at the primary health level. Some 59,800 people wounded during conflicts in Amhara, Afar, Tigray, Oromia and Somali regions received medical support from the ICRC, and nearly 11,500 persons received physiotherapy and mobility services.

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