



Urgent Resumption of Lifesaving Nutrition Interventions in Tigray Region: A top priority for the Nutrition Cluster.

The Nutrition Cluster in Tigray region of Ethiopia owes the government, the public, cluster donors and the humanitarian community information on the current situation in the region, especially after the resumption of escalated conflict in the last week of August 2022. Cognizant of the fact that there has been a peace deal between the government of Ethiopia and TPLF, significant quantity of Nutrition supplies being available in Addis Ababa, no change has happened on the ground except increase optimism in the population and among humanitarian actors. Any delay in action will only endanger the lives of vulnerable population, especially children under 5 years, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, and those with chronic illnesses.

Obstacles to overcome

1. Renewed conflict and escalation of insecurity in Tigray since the last week of August 2022 has led to interruption of Nutrition services to vulnerable populations who are now staring death as the situation deteriorates by each passing day. One in three children in Tigray region is wasted and in need of life-saving nutrition support. Over 26,000 children with severe wasting admitted in the Therapeutic Feeding Programme are not receiving critical lifesaving therapeutic-feeds and are facing high risk of death. A total of 140,000 children with moderate wasting will deteriorate to severe conditions as targeted supplementary feeding programme has been stopped in the wake of recent escalation of the

fighting. Seven out of every ten pregnant and lactating women screened are suffering from acute malnutrition and currently 129,000 pregnant and lactating women have defaulted from supplementary feeding programme and are in urgent need of supplementary food.

2. The Nutrition Cluster appreciated the recent signing of the peace deal between the Federal government and TPLF. Some Nutrition supplies were received in the second week of November 2022, though much less than the total requirement. Cluster partners are looking forward to receiving more of the much-needed supplies, and resumptions of basic services (transport, banking, communication etc) that will support delivery of critical nutrition services to the affected population.
3. The new wave of the active fighting came in when harvesting of grain was about to set in. This caused a huge interruption of crop care and harvest that would have had a huge contribution in bridging the food insecurity gap in the population in Tigray. A huge quantity of teff, wheat and barley has gone to waste on farm fields, further exacerbating the risk of the population to hunger and malnutrition.
4. Humanitarian corridor: Since the last convoy of supplies to Tigray took place in July 2022, the supplies were not sufficient, and none was allowed until in the second week of November when some supplies were allowed in. The previous closure of delivery of humanitarian supplies by road, especially the blockade at Semera, led to

exhaustion/total stockout of humanitarian supplies previously delivered to Tigray region, this included essential Nutrition supplies (therapeutic and supplementary foods, medicine for routine treatment of malnourished children and micronutrient supplementation). We hope the recent opening of the humanitarian corridor will be sustained to allow free flow of the much needed supplies in the region.

5. The health facilities that mostly serve as delivery points for Nutrition services were not spared in the new wave of fighting. Some health Facilities were deserted, some were damaged, and health care providers are among those internally displaced to safer locations within Tigray Region. This brought delivery of essential health and Nutrition services to a complete stop, further exacerbating the health and nutrition status of the population.
6. Collapse of basic social services and suspension of humanitarian services from woredas and locations prioritized for humanitarian assistance has put into jeopardy the lives of many people who include 457,652 newly displaced people, children under five years, pregnant and lactating women, the elderly, individuals with disability and chronically ill people¹. Harassment and killing of humanitarian workers took place at the peak of the turmoil. This subsequently resulted in many protection issues among the IDPs, general population and humanitarian workers.
7. Food distribution, albeit delayed, has completely stopped. According to Food Cluster, 5.4 million people of the population in Tigray currently rely on food aid. Between 13

- 19 October, only 24,527 people were assisted with 391 MT of food in Tigray - due to lack of pulses and vegetable oil for some partners, 23,346 people in seven woredas received wheat only instead of a balanced three-commodity basket. A complete stop on the distribution, attributed to insecurity and current blockade of the humanitarian corridor, serves as fuel to the raging malnutrition in the region.

8. Accessibility and security for movement: Movement restriction and security situation has led to deterioration of partners' response.
9. Health Workers: Due to lack of support to clinical and community health workers, majority of them have deserted their workplaces to fend for themselves, leading to collapse of Health system and lack Health and Nutrition services. Inadequate medical supplies and drugs further compromises the health system to deliver nutrition and health services
10. Disruption of subregional Cluster coordination: The Nutrition cluster is coordinated through several hubs (Shire, Abyi Adi, Adigiret and Mekelle) within the region. Because of the volatile situation in these hubs, no meetings possible, no weekly data on any activity is available and planned visits to the hubs has not been possible. Planning and coordination activities are only happening in the regional capital, Mekelle.

Nutrition Cluster Appeal:

The Nutrition Cluster estimates that a total of 53,000 cartons of RUTF, 1,640 MT of RUSF and 3,880MT of CSB++ are required to immediately resume management of wasting among the vulnerable population in Tigray region. Interventions for prevention of malnutrition (promotion of optimal infant and young child feeding, micronutrient supplementation, deworming of children aged 6-59 months, routine immunization), need to be implemented in tandem with management of wasting.

Key asks

1. **Full opening of all humanitarian corridors** to facilitate timely delivery of the much-needed lifesaving humanitarian assistance to the vulnerable population in Tigray from malnutrition and untold suffering. Some progress has been made on this in the second week on November as some supplies were delivered in the region, though far less than the total requirement.
2. **Donors' commitment** to financially and in kind provide in 2023 for an estimated 604,554 undernourished children in Tigray (150,287 SAM and, 454,267 MAM) in need of treatment of acute malnutrition. Further 774,765 (682,941 BSFP and 91,824 IYCF-E) most vulnerable women and children in need of prevention services.
3. **Supporting nutrition cluster partners with supplies:** Nutrition partners are currently constrained with lack of fuel, and this has curtailed movement and transportation of supplies. The Nutrition cluster requests any support with supplies to be accompanied with fuel to help in the distribution and monitoring of programme activities.
4. **Blanket Supplementary Feeding of children under 2 years:** Owing to increasing prevalence of malnutrition and the precarious nature of aggravating factors resumption of Blanket Supplementary Feeding programme, scale up of general food distribution is highly requested. Provision of adequate water, hygiene and sanitation services and resumption of education and other basic social services in the population are strongly recommended
5. **Conducting nutrition assessments** as a contribution to evidence-based programming and a tool for geographic prioritization.
6. **Ensure the welfare of over 25,000 health workers** to enable delivery of nutrition services.

¹ RHB Assessment report, Oct 2022.

