

CASE STUDY

Awareness and Fundraising Campaign ,Together for Ethiopia' as a Response of Slovak nonprofits to the Conflict in the Tigray Region

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December 2021



FACES OF MIGRATION

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Special thanks: eRko – Good News (Dobrá novina), Mary's Meals Slovakia, Integra Foundation, SAVIO, Caritas Slovakia



Funded by
the European Union



This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of Ambrela – Platform for Development Organisations and may not under any circumstances be regarded as reflecting the positions of the European Union.

This publication is part of project entitled SDGs and Migration – Multipliers and Journalists Addressing Decision Makers and Citizens in the EU implemented within the framework of the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme and part of project entitled Strengthening management, coordination and implementation capacities and increasing the competitiveness of development cooperation entities funded by SlovakAid.

Introduction

Ethiopia, with its 115 million people, is currently Africa's second most populous country and until recently it was considered an economic miracle. However, it is also **ethnically and religiously diverse**. Of the 80 ethnic groups there, the most numerous are Oromo (40% of the population), Amhara (30%), Tigray (6%), Somali (6%), Sidama (4%) and others. For three decades since the fall of the Derg¹ in 1991, Ethiopia had been ruled by elites from the northern Amhara-Tigrayan part of the country and its direction and growth had been managed under the patronage of the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF). Until 2018, it was a monopoly not only of economic but also of political and military power.^{2,3} EPRDF consisted of a coalition of several parties led by the strongest of them, the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF). The situation in Ethiopia changed in April 2018 – after the Oromo politician Abiy Ahmed had become a prime minister.⁴ After his accession, **major reforms were implemented** and the direction dictated by the previous EPRDF coalition was diverted. The Prime Minister's most visible move was to strike a peace deal with Eritrea, with which Ethiopia had fought a war between 1998 and 2000, killing 100 thousand people. This earned Abiy Ahmed the **Nobel Peace Prize in 2019**.

Ethiopia, however, has had years of turbulent political development and no history of democracy to build on. And so, despite promising democratisation reforms and awards from abroad, it once again fell into the **abyss of authoritarianism**, culminating in ethnically-driven violence and subsequent humanitarian disaster in the north of the country⁵ – in the Tigray region – in November 2020.⁶



One of the refugee camps where Ethiopian people in need spend so many months. Photo: UNHCR

1 Crummey, 2021

2 Záhořík, 2021

3 Rynn and Hassen, 2021

4 Kačmár, 2021

5 Záhořík, 2021

6 In the study, this Ethiopian state will be uniformly referred to as the Tigray region.

Five Slovak nonprofits, together with the Ambrela platform, through their local partners directly in Tigray, closely monitored the deteriorating situation. In March 2021, in addition to their ongoing development and humanitarian projects aimed at mitigating the impact of the covid-19 pandemic at home and around the world, they finally established the Together for Ethiopia initiative and launched a fundraising campaign to help the Ethiopian people.⁷ **With the support of Slovak donors**, they wanted to provide the local population with drinking water, food, shelter, medicine and other necessities in the first phase, and psychosocial and post-traumatic support for the victims of the crisis in the next phase. You will learn how they succeeded in the awareness and fundraising campaign in the following case study

Political Background to the Conflict in the Tigray Region of Ethiopia

As part of his pro-reform activities, a newly elected Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed invited opposition exile parties and movements back to Ethiopia in early 2019 to negotiate the country's future settlement. Subsequently, preparations for parliamentary elections, scheduled for May 2020, begun. The TPLF party started to move to the Tigray region. After almost 30 years of ruling, the problem of **ethnic federalism** combined with a centralized system of power was deeply rooted and pervasive in the country.^{8,9} There was talk in diplomatic circles of the existence of military depots scattered throughout Tigray, as well as of arms being smuggled from Sudan. The democratisation process began to crack, and militarisation began to affect other regions as well.

When, as a result of the corona crisis, the Prime Minister decided to postpone the elections from May first to August 2020 and later to 2021, the TPLF held separate elections in Tigray¹⁰ in September 2020 to demonstrate its autonomy and also the government's inability to ensure the continuity of the electoral system. Incidents of **ethnically motivated violence** began to escalate.¹¹ The latest incident, which heralded Prime Minister's Abiy Ahmed, strong response, was an attack on an Ethiopian army base in Tigray and the theft of weapons along with ammunition, which was attributed to the TPLF. On November 4 2020, the Prime Minister launched the military operation against the TPLF forces, and on 28 November he declared victory for the government forces over the rebels.^{12,13} He had a vision of a rapid advance against the TPLF leadership and immediate control over Tigray. However, the planned blitzkrieg became more than a year-long war, showing signs of genocide, with only brief information leaking out into the world. Communication networks were disrupted, the media were banned and humanitarian access for the civilian population to the conflict region was restricted.^{14,15} The blockade of Tigray became a key government strategy. Doctors Without Borders teams visited more than one hundred health facilities in the region between December 2020 and March 2021. Up to 70% of them were ransacked and non-functional, third of them were completely destroyed.¹⁶

7 Together for Ethiopia, 2021

8 Záhořík, 2021

9 Rynn and Hassen, 2021

10 Grochálová, 2021

11 Lowcock, 2021

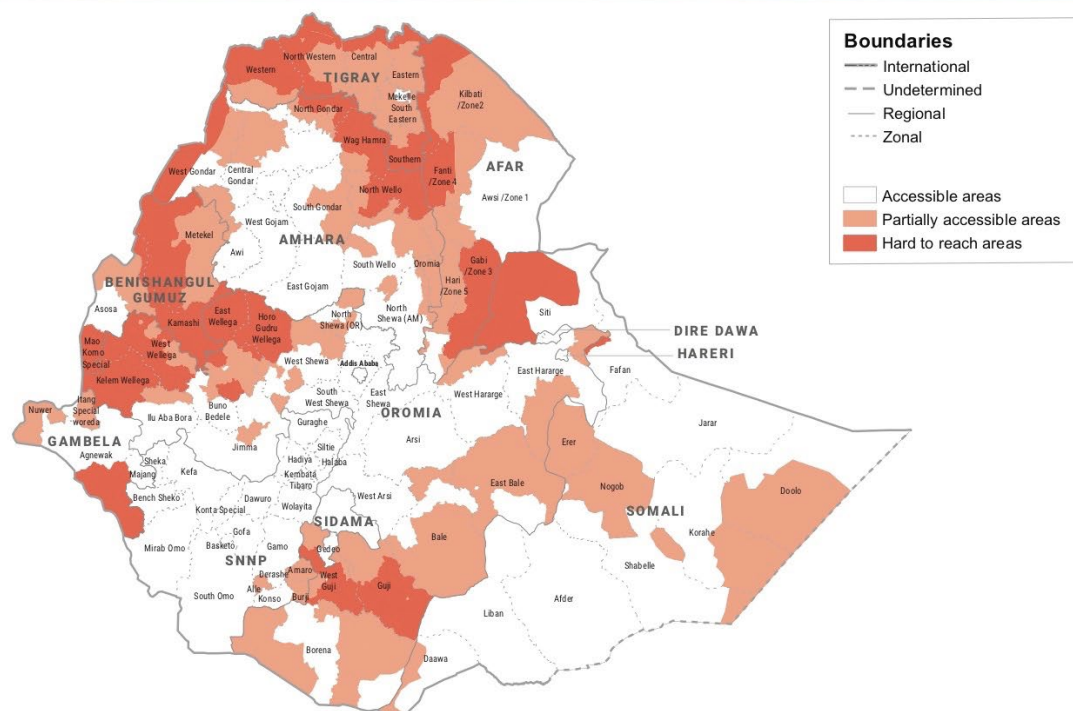
12 Kačmár, 2021

13 Ahmed, 2021

14 Together for Ethiopia, 2021

15 Gerth-Niculescu, 2021

16 Kačmár, 2021



Humanitarian aid Access map – Northern Ethiopia (December 2021). Source: UN OCHA

The situation was further made even more complicated by the presence of Eritrean soldiers in Tigray, who, according to many reports, had a major **role in the mass murders and rapes of women**. Amnesty International¹⁷ already reported at the end of February that the Eritrean army had massacred hundreds of civilians in Tigray. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke¹⁸ of ethnic cleansing in the region and the US called on Eritrean troops to withdraw from Tigray. The Prime Minister of Ethiopia was obliged to protect all the people living in the country. The EU also called for an end to the fighting and for the opening up of the region¹⁹. Back in April 2021, the European Commission²⁰ (EC) announced that it would allocate an additional EUR 53.7 million in humanitarian aid for the Ethiopian population affected by the armed conflict in the Tigray region. Some donors have multiplied their assistance to the Tigray region and are considering **curtailing their support to the Ethiopian government** if the conflict does not end.²¹

Response of Slovak nonprofits to the Tigray Crisis

The conflict between the federal government and the regional government continues to this day, and not only people living in Tigray pay for it. As a result of the fighting, people are forced to flee their homes in fear for their lives, often without access to food, drinking water, medicine or safe haven that would protect them from further violence. Entire families with children are becoming internally

¹⁷ Amnesty International / France24, 2021

¹⁸ Al Jazeera, 2021

¹⁹ Kačmár, 2021

²⁰ EC / TASR, 2021

²¹ Záhorký, 2021



Women, girls and children are suffering the most during the military conflict in northern Ethiopia. Photo: archive of the Together for Ethiopia (Spolu pre Etiópiu) initiative

displaced within their own country, seeking shelters in major cities. Tens of thousands have also fled to neighbouring Sudan. There are growing concerns in the region not only about impending famine, but also of the rapid community spread of the covid-19 pandemic, as people accumulate in large numbers in makeshift camps without clean water, sanitation and medical facilities. According to UN estimates from the spring of 2021, almost five million people^{22,23} in the region were in need of assistance, which can be compared the population of the whole of Slovakia.

Therefore, in March 2021, Slovak nonprofits joined together in the **Together for Ethiopia** appeal and fundraising campaign in response to the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the northern Ethiopian region of Tigray. It was an initiative of five organizations eRko – Good News (Dobrá novina), Mary's Meals Slovakia, Integra Foundation, SAVIO, Caritas Slovakia with the support of the Platform for Development Organizations – Ambrela. Ambrela, which aimed to raise funds to support humanitarian activities representing direct assistance to the people affected by the war conflict. All of these organisations have long been involved in development activities in sub-Saharan Africa.

For twenty-seven years, the Christian Children Communities Movement – **eRko**²⁴ has been organizing a Christmas carol singing campaign called Good News (Dobrá novina) in Slovakia, through which it educates Slovak boys and girls about the life of children on the African continent in conditions of extreme poverty and teaches them solidarity, while also implementing development and humanitarian projects in Africa (including Ethiopia). The aim of **SAVIO**²⁵ civic association is to uplift the lives of children and young people in less developed countries through development and humanitarian projects,

22 Kačmár, 2021

23 Gerth-Niculescu, 2021

24 eRko, 2021

25 SAVIO, 2021



Joint visual design – a flyer promoting the Together for Ethiopia campaign. Photo: archive of the Together for Ethiopia initiative

through a volunteering programme, the annual public collection Brick and remote adoption of children and classes. SAVIO also actively strives to raise the awareness among the Slovak public about development issues and the need for development cooperation. In addition to numerous projects and activities in Slovakia, the **Caritas Slovakia**²⁶ also implements humanitarian aid and development cooperation in the countries of the Global South. The most important development activities include the Distance Adoption programme and the Lenten Box for Africa collection. Like the members of Ambrella – eRko and SAVIO – Caritas Slovakia also annually prepares and sends international volunteers to the African continent. **The Integra Foundation**²⁷ has developed its Malaika adoption programme on the African continent and in Ethiopia it has long supported education for 371 children thanks to Slovak donors. It is a member of the International Humanitarian Alliance Integral, with which it cooperates in crises and wars (currently in Ethiopia and Lebanon). The fifth Slovak organisation, **Mary's Meals Slovakia**,²⁸ was involved in the initiative with its umbrella organisation Mary's Meals International. The latter has long provided school meals to two million children in various parts of the world living in extreme poverty (including 24 320 children in the Tigray region) as part of its school meals programme.

The amount raised after the end of the Together for Ethiopia campaign was to be used to **finance assistance to the affected vulnerable groups** through long-established local partners operating in the Tigray region, mainly in the form of providing: food aid, drinking water, hygiene items, blankets and shelters etc. It was also intended to provide post-traumatic and psychological care, social work and

²⁶ Caritas Slovakia, 2021

²⁷ Integra Foundation, 2021

²⁸ Mary's Meals, 2021

other activities for the benefit of the victims of the military conflict.²⁹ „We prepared the whole campaign in about five weeks, when we had to play together as organisations, to develop and fine-tune joint communication and to make the campaign technically sound (the way of contributing, launching the website). It was a very labour-intensive period, but we were able to tune in to one wave and focus on a common goal. We also cared a lot about the involvement of the Slovak Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs,” say Daniel Fiala and Darina Maňurová from the Team Good News (Dobrá novina) under the leadership of eRko.

As part of the joint challenge, the local partners – the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent (Daughters of Charity Tigray Region), which has long been cooperating with eRko and Mary's Meals; the Charity Tearfund as a project partner of the Integra Foundation directly in Tigray; and the Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (VIS) as a direct partner of SAVIO – were to provide specific assistance to people in need directly at the scene of the crisis. Thanks to these local partnerships, the joint initiative was able to provide **effective and targeted assistance directly in the conflict area**, namely in Mekelle – the capital of the Tigray region and its wider surroundings. It was possible to support the collection between 22 March and 25 April 2021. A total of four humanitarian aid projects within the Tigray region, implemented by local partners of the participating Slovak organisations, were supported.

The Response of the Slovak Population to the Awareness-Raising and Fundraising Campaign

The **Ambrella** platform represents the interests of 28 Slovak nonprofits working in the field of development cooperation, humanitarian aid or global education.³⁰ It supported the initiative with the Together for Ethiopia campaign by communication (support on the web and social networks), media (press releases, journalistic speeches and organizing of public discussions) and also through advocacy and partnership creation (at the level of the MFEA Slovakia and Slovak Agency for International Development Cooperation – SAIDC). That is why, right at the beginning of April, Ambrella organised (and promoted strongly to the professional and lay public) an online discussion³¹ entitled **How Slovakia can help** the Ethiopian people during the war in the Tigray region', which addressed the topic of urgent humanitarian aid to the people affected by the war in the Tigray region. The following voiced from the initiative 'Together for Ethiopia' participated in the discussion: Darina Maňurová from eRko, Ivana Čorbová from Integra Foundation and Viktor Porubský from Mary's Meals Slovakia. The Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs (MFEA) SR was represented by Drahomír Štos – the Ambassador of the Slovak Republic to Ethiopia. The discussion was viewed by 8.1 thousand people, which is important not only for advocacy, support of donation behaviour of the Slovak population, but also for education, public awareness and motivation for solidarity with the needy in the countries of the Global South.

In the event of natural or social disasters, the **media play an important role in** both launching and accelerating humanitarian interventions and public collections to support them. Media coverage awakens the general public's interest in the subject, sympathy for the people affected and the need to help. The research team of Brown and Minty³² (2006) listed **five phenomena** that can promote

²⁹ Together for Ethiopia, 2021

³⁰ Ambrella, 2021

³¹ Ambrella, 2021

³² Brown and Minty, 2006



Distribution of food for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Ethiopia. Photo: UNHCR

generosity and **increase the level of donor behaviour** in the population. The first is the timing, when the crisis takes place during the celebration of important holidays, emphasizing compassion and solidarity associated with donating a financial contribution to a charity or a material gift to the needy. In the case of Together for Ethiopia initiative, it was a Christian holiday of Easter. The second is geographical proximity, when tourists, international volunteers, or donors from adoption programmes are familiar with the area in question and publicly share their memories of the area visited and their concerns. The third is tax incentives, where donors can claim tax reliefs when reporting a contribution to a charity campaign, a public fundraiser. The fourth is the technological facilitation of donation, where an NGO visibly places a direct donation button or a quick link to make a financial contribution on a well-known website. The fifth is the 'buy-in' donation model, coupled with a 'commitment' model influenced by both the media and one's friends, where individuals feel led or even compelled to help because their friends or colleagues have already contributed and have boasted about their donation on social media, for example. Today, this model would be modified or rather enriched by a contribution to the topic or direct support of the donation from national influencers and influencers on social media. The Together for Ethiopia initiative has been supported in this way by male and female artists (a singer Janais, a comedian Fero Joke).

Similar phenomena and subsequent trends were also reminiscent of the motivation of Slovak and Czech donors in the recent past – during the earthquake in Haiti in 2010, the typhoon in the Philippines in 2013, the explosion of an ammonium nitrate warehouse in Lebanon in 2020, and now in the case of the war in Tigray. Already in 2016, NGO workers participating in qualitative research³³ agreed with the assertion that **the media coverage of the humanitarian crisis** directly influences the behaviour of the reading community, resulting in a willingness to donate to help the victims of a given disaster. Therefore, charities do not underestimate the work and cooperation with the media (quite the contrary), as news coverage and media work raise public awareness of the situation and the need of emergency in the disaster-affected country, as well as of the activities of the humanitarian organisations in the field. At the same time, it motivates audiences to take action and donate in an effort to save lives and contribute

33 Baluchová and Kožušníková, 2016

to the restoration of the country. The media, and consequently the public receiving the media content, then put pressure on their particular governments and organisations to act and provide assistance to the victims in the affected country.³⁴ „Given the interconnectedness of Slovakia and Ethiopia, we wanted to bring information about the events in Tigray to our media, which we did, but to a lesser extent than we would have liked,“ say Daniel Fiala and Darina Maňurová the team Good News (Dobrá novina). The Integra Foundation team speaks literally of „the struggle with the interest of the Slovak media in such a serious topic“.

The Involvement of the MFEA Slovakia and the Outcome of the Campaign

An Ambrela member eRko also invited the public to participate in a campaign for children called **„Peace for Tigray“** which aimed to express opposition to the war and to promote ideas of peace and tranquillity for the people of Tigray. The symbolic guide of the children's campaign was an angel of peace (and the symbol was a feather). The children learned more about the situation there, while making paper feathers on which they wrote or drew Wishes for their peers and their families who are suffering the most from the war.³⁵ At the end of the campaign, at the end of April, the eRko Girl from Sládkovičovo handed over a handmade angel with dozens of connected feathers to the leaders of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs of the Slovak Republic (MFEA SR), namely to the State Secretary Ingrid Brocková, on behalf of the eRko Girls and all the supporters and well-wishers. This activity was innovative, impressive and visually appealing for the media. The Good News (Dobrá novina) team speaks about the important involvement of the youngest citizens in the campaign: „We were able to create a space for the active participation of the youngest members in our society - more than a thousand children from all over Slovakia painted feathers with wishes of peace for the angel of peace. The voice of Slovak children has been heard and we believe that even this small drop of water can help in the sea of efforts to stop the war in Ethiopia.“³⁶

The implementation team of the initiative and the entire Together for Ethiopia campaign has, also thanks to Ambrela's support and advocacy work, attempted to implement a **„matching gift“** or **„matching fund“** instrument,³⁷ whereby a donor (e.g. a foundation) makes a donation of a certain amount to a specific organisation based on the provision that another donor (e.g. a member of the public) will first donate that amount to that organisation as part of a fundraising campaign.³⁸ Research on the phenomenon of donation and the example of the online giving portal Big Give from 2015 showed that more people (including 84% of the research respondents) tend to contribute to charity, and actually contribute more, if they know that their donation will be valued and equally matched by a financial amount from another foundation or larger donor. The analysed literature also indicated an increase in total campaign income of between 51% and 120% when matching, i.e. the aforementioned matching fund, was offered.³⁹ „Despite the efforts of nonprofits and the pre-communicated idea of joining forces, the matching fund instrument was not applied in its usual form. It was not possible to agree on a key of how

34 Oosterhof et al., 2009

35 eRko, 2021

36 eRko, 2021

37 Philanthropy works, 2021

38 Philanthropy works, 2021

39 Philanthropy Impact, 2017



The result of eRko's campaign for children – Peace for Tigray (Mier pre Tigráj). Photo: eRko

the MFEA Slovakia would, match' the proceeds of the public collection, nor on a greater involvement on the communication level. The opportunity to create more leverage was thus missed," says Daniel Kaba, Ambrele's Executive Secretary. As the full matching of the public contributions collected by the MFEA Slovakia did not happen in a way the campaign team had hoped, the campaign organisations themselves (through their own annual collections tied to the Christmas and Easter period) took finally the care of the increase in the entire amount.

As a sign of solidarity with the people affected by the war in Tigray, the MFEA Slovakia finally provided a financial contribution of EUR 20,000, thus directly supporting projects implemented in Ethiopia through the Together for Ethiopia initiative.⁴⁰ The State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic Ingrid Brocková commented on the collected contribution **in the total amount of EUR 96 448 that**, *it is an important expression of solidarity and sympathy with the people suffering from the conflict in Tigray, and at the same time an appropriate opportunity to confirm Slovakia's position as a reliable and responsible partner appealing for the de-escalation of the Tigrayan conflict.*⁴¹ On the Together for Ethiopia initiative website, it can be found that the joint collection was held at the end of 2021 and Slovakia finally supported the people affected by the war in Tigray with almost one hundred thousand euros.⁴²

All the **participating organisations rate the cooperation** on the awareness and fundraising campaign Together for Ethiopia positively. *„Without this joint initiative, we probably would not have sent a hundred thousand euros to Ethiopia. We evaluate it positively overall, even though it has cost us all a lot of (volunteering) work, effort and time. After a long start of the campaign, the external presentation, PR and public acceptance of the campaign were very favourable. It turned out that people register and sensitively perceive even after the joint collection is over,*" say Martin Simon and Ivana Čorbová from

40 Together for Ethiopia, 2021

41 MFEA Slovakia, 2021

42 Together for Ethiopia, 2021

the Integra Foundation. „It was a unique opportunity to cooperate with other Slovak organisations. We enriched each other's perspectives and proposals for solutions, we complemented each other's work all the time, and our joint efforts translated into almost a hundred thousand euros for the people affected by the war in Tigray,” Daniel Fiala and Darina Maňurová from the Good News (Dobrá novina) team confirm the importance of the cooperation. „In the future, both participating organisations and the Ambrela team plan to push for the incorporation of the 'matching fund' instrument into the cooperation with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Slovak Republic. This is a suitable incentive and a visible motivator for more stakeholders in the campaign, while multiplying the amount raised will help the targeted vulnerable community many times over,” says Daniel Kaba, Executive Secretary of Ambrela.

One of the recommendations when using the matching fund instrument is to ask the donor for co-financing in the right and timely way – in a comprehensive and innovative way that will also be sufficiently presented to the public, thus raising the visibility of the work and assistance of the donors involved. The issue of timing (and the possibility of donor funds running out for other humanitarian appeals early in the calendar year) must also be taken into account, as well as the caution from experts about relying too heavily on matching fund financing.⁴³ Once an agreement on matching funding has been reached, the way in which the matching fund is communicated to donors on the campaign website, social media and in the media is then crucial and can really affect the course and outcome of the campaign.⁴⁴

Slovak Activities in the Field – One Year since the Beginning of the Conflict

The member organization of Ambrela, SAVIO, allocated 5,000 euros from the contributions of the missionary calendar to support the Salesian communities in the Tigray region. Like the Integra Foundation, it also decided to help the people of Tigray through individual collections after the joint campaign. SAVIO, through its partner organisation Volontariato Internazionale per lo Sviluppo (VIS), which had been present in the region for a long time, had already baked **more than 2,000 loaves of bread a day** during the spring and summer, together with the Salesians of Don Bosco and the Mother Theresa Daughters of Charity, and distributed them to the hungry people of Tigray. Pupils from the technical schools run by the Salesians also helped.⁴⁵ VIS is also helping other humanitarian organisations directly in Mekelle to provide basic food, as demand has increased with the arrival of internally displaced persons (IDPs). They provide access to drinking water for people in Mekelle, Adigrat, Adwa and Shire and distribute hygiene kits to families. They also repair windows and doors, build temporary shelters and shared kitchens – made of simple materials and in collaboration with people from the refugee camps. VIS, together with Salesian groups, also organises the distribution of kitchen equipment.⁴⁶ However, in early November 2021, seventeen Salesian missionaries were arrested in the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, as well as sixteen UN workers. The raids were carried out as part of the preventive detention of the Tigrayan people by government forces. In many parts of the country, the Salesians continue in their work, accompanying the population or distributing the aid they are gradually receiving from the capital.

⁴³ Philanthropy Impact, 2017

⁴⁴ Cody, 2021

⁴⁵ SAVIO, 2021

⁴⁶ SAVIO, 2021

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In total, they are assisting some 8 000 families, with special attention being paid to mothers and malnourished children.⁴⁷

Mary's Meals International provided food aid to 16,000 people on the run in the conflict zone in Mekelle, Ethiopia, as well as other basic necessities for IDPs who had fled their homes and were seeking refuge in the capital of the threatened region. Mary's Meals International closely cooperates with the Congregation of the Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent (Daughters of Charity Tigray Region).⁴⁸ The Daughters of Charity Tigray Region **are also a key partner for** the other Slovak organisations involved. Caritas Slovakia supported the Together for Ethiopia initiative in the Lenten Box for Africa public collection, which has been helping the poor and needy in sub-Saharan Africa for the past ten years, with 10,000 euros – going specifically to the project of Daughters of Charity Tigray Region – to provide basic necessities for people affected by the conflict in Mekelle and the surrounding area.⁴⁹



Distribution of humanitarian aid to Tigray families in Mekelle. Photo: eRko

47 SAVIO, 2021

48 Mary's Meals, 2021

49 Caritas Slovakia, 2021

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EUR 20,000 was allocated from the Good News (Dobrá novina) carol singing campaign to provide basic necessities for people in the capital of the Tigray region, thanks to which mattresses, pillows, bed linen, hygiene and kitchen utensils were provided to 203 IDPs households at the beginning of the summer. Thanks to the Good News (Dobrá novina) carol collection,⁵⁰ eRko continued its cooperation with the aforementioned long-term partner, Daughters of Charity Tigray Region, **in the Tigray countryside** from July 2021 onwards. In Alitena, near the border with Eritrea, the Daughters of Charity Tigray Region run a health centre that has not stopped caring for the wounded and sick even during the ongoing war. Supplies of medicines and other medical supplies have been replenished; a mobile nutrition and health team is monitoring the situation in three relatively safe villages of about 4,000 inhabitants. Over a thousand hundred children under five, nursing and pregnant mothers, chronic patients and the elderly are also being provided with food.⁵¹ „We also have resources ready for new humanitarian projects in the area, not only with the Daughters of Charity Tigray Region, as we have been working with various partners in Tigray since 2010,” says the Good News (Dobrá novina) team.

The Integra Foundation, which has been involved in development cooperation in the country for more than fifteen years, has helped 12,370 people affected by the unrest in the first six months of the conflict in Tigray, mainly through food aid, distribution of hygiene items and blankets. The main objective of Integra's operational partner project, Tearfund, was to address the immediate needs of people affected by the conflict who had had to flee their homes in Mekelle and the north-eastern part of the Tigray region. This was to include assistance for 2,500 individuals in the form of food aid, non-financial support (shelters, mattresses) and cash distribution.⁵² In November 2021, a team of people from Integra Foundation returned from a **monitoring trip of their projects in Ethiopia**. The last time they were there on a monitoring mission was in January 2020 – before the covid-19 pandemic and months before the full-blown armed conflict in Tigray. They say they sense greater tension and strong polarisation in the country – more soldiers, militias, but also civilians with weapons. „So far, the current crisis has not had a major impact on the progress of Integra Foundation's development projects aimed at supporting local farming and sustainable entrepreneurship. While the conflict, combined with the covid, has restricted travel into the country and made it both difficult and expensive to transport much-needed macadamia tree seedlings from neighbouring Kenya, they are otherwise operating as before.”⁵³ Martin Simon and Ivana Čorbová from Integra Foundation confirm the follow-up fieldwork thanks to a local partner organisation in Ethiopia: „We continue to assist with a partner, in the same activities for internally displaced persons (IDPs), but already outside Tigray – in the Amhara and Afar regions.”

Both sides (the Ethiopian federal government and the Tigrayan troops) enclose themselves in bubbles of propaganda and accuse each other of **human rights violations and war crimes**. According to reports by nonprofits and the Ethiopian Human Rights Commission, suffering is inflicted on civilians and civilian women by all parties to the conflict. The fighting has destroyed crops in Tigray, people have nothing to eat and the flow of humanitarian aid is still limited. According to the UN^{54,55}, no humanitarian supplies have arrived in Tigray through the Semera-Abala-Mekelle corridor since mid-December due to the ongoing fighting in Afar. A total of 1,338 trucks have entered the region since the beginning of July, representing less than 10% of the required supplies – needed to meet the huge scale of humanitarian needs of 5.2 million people (90% of Tigray's population). UN agencies are considering suspending aid

50 eRko, 2021

51 Good News (Dobrá novina), 2021

52 Integra Foundation, 2021

53 Kačmár, 2021

54 WHO / Al Jazeera, 2021

55 UN OCHA, 2021



Distribution of food to internally displaced persons (IDPs) from Tigray. Photo: Integra Foundation

deliveries due to **an increase in deadly drone attacks** on refugee camps and shelters for victims of the conflict. They are updating the situation in the region on a weekly basis – mapping the needs of the emergency as well as noting possible and impossible access points for aid supplies.⁵⁶

Seven million people are in need of assistance, not only in the Tigray region, but also in Amhara and Afar. It is estimated that the conflict has so far caused thousands of deaths, two million internally displaced persons and around a hundred thousand people have fled to Sudan.⁵⁷ Africa's second most populous country, with a once promising economy and enormous human potential, is now facing a sharp economic downturn and, among other crises, a foreign exchange crisis.

⁵⁶ UN OCHA, 2021

⁵⁷ SAVIO, 2021



The oldest inhabitants of Tigray have experienced several regime changes and conflicts during their lives.
Photo: Good News (Dobrá novina) archive

(Instead of a Conclusion): Possible Scenarios for the Development of the Situation in Ethiopia

The dialogue requested by the international community is not very realistic in the current situation. In fact, the Tigray Front and the federal government are in a race to see who will be tougher (on each other and on innocent civilians and civilian women). The mediation of a reconciliation by the US, the EU and even the African Union is viewed with scepticism by both sides. It could end in the collapse and disintegration of Africa's second most populous country, which would be a huge crisis for the entire continent.⁵⁸

The solution could be a total internal **transformation of the view of citizenship** from an ethnic to a civic principle, which is, however, a very long run. The current war in Tigray and the ethnic violence across Ethiopia are more likely to cause even a deeper fragmentation of the country. Because the state has made the men and women of one of its own regions political, or rather **ethno-political victims**,⁵⁹ the voices calling for the independence of Tigray are becoming louder and louder.

The authors of the analysis of the British think tank RUSI⁶⁰ dealt with the causes and impacts of the military conflict in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, as well as possible scenarios for the further development of the situation there. Under Scenario 1, the coalition around the TDF (Tigray Defense Forces) will prevail

58 Kačmár, 2021

59 Záhořík, 2021

60 Rynn and Hassen, 2021

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and can contemplate a much looser confederal constitution that would satisfy the appetite of many ethnic groups for greater self-determination. Scenario 2 suggests a stalemate if the TDF-OLA (Oromo Liberation Army) alliance fails to achieve a breakthrough – a blockade of Tigray, giving way to widespread famine. In Scenario 3, a government victory over the TDF in the face of inconsistent international condemnation and targeted sanctions would further reinforce nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric in the country. Scenario 4 also contemplates an enforced peace by the international community and the inevitable end of the blockade of Tigray.⁶¹ The analysis concludes that a TDF-OLA coalition victory is more likely than a complete government victory or an enforced peace. But a continued stalemate and protracted conflict cannot be ruled out, which is the worst-case scenario for the millions of people already facing hunger and poverty.⁶²

Whichever scenario is confirmed in 2022, the Slovak organisations and Ambreila members involved **will continue to fundraise** for humanitarian aid to be delivered by their local partners to vulnerable groups directly in Ethiopia. The target group will include not only people in the blockaded Tigray region, but also internally displaced people in neighbouring Ethiopian regions and refugees in Sudan. The Together for Ethiopia initiative has shown that despite the challenging pandemic situation at home in the heart of Europe, donors **in a small country of five million** like Slovakia are able to show solidarity, respond positively to the appeal of the civil sector and help the needy in (under-reported by the media, but worsening day by the day) humanitarian crisis.

61 Rynn and Hassen, 2021

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Funded by
the European Union



This document was produced with the financial assistance of the European Union. The content of this document is the sole responsibility of Ambrella – Platform for Development Organisations and may not under any circumstances be regarded as reflecting the positions of the European Union.

This publication is part of project entitled SDGs and Migration – Multipliers and Journalists Addressing Decision Makers and Citizens in the EU implemented within the framework of the Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme and part of project entitled Strengthening management, coordination and implementation capacities and increasing the competitiveness of development cooperation entities funded by SlovakAid.