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Commission of Inquiry on Tigray Genocide

Executive Summary

The Systematic Undoing of Society: War Damage and Loss in the Social Sector of Tigray

Volume 1

October, 2025

Executive Summary

Introduction

Prior to the war, Tigray was recognized for its social sector achievements, had reached near-universal access to education and healthcare, attained gender parity, and actively preserved its rich cultural heritage. The region was also distinguished by its deeply rooted traditional community structures, anchored in cultural, religious, and community-based associations and organisations such as Edir and Equb (hereafter social welfare organizations), which nurtured social cohesion, solidarity, and collective resilience. However, the onset of war in November 2020, compounded by a prolonged blockade and siege, shattered these hard-won achievements. The result showed extensive destruction of essential social services, plunging the region into a deep humanitarian and socio-economic crisis.

The primary objective of this assessment is to document the extent, nature, and magnitude of damage, the losses, and the broader socio-economic impact of the war, blockade, and siege on Tigray's social sector. The assessment also aims to generate credible evidence to support justice, accountability, recovery, and reconstruction efforts. It focused on education, health, cultural heritage, religious institutions, and social welfare organizations. This report excludes Western Tigray and parts of the eastern and northwest zones due to security concerns during the data collection period.

Methodology

This assessment employed a mixed-research design, mainly quantitative to assess the damages and losses caused by the war. It was guided by two internationally recognized frameworks: the UN-ECLAC Damage and Loss Assessment (DaLA) Framework, which focuses on evaluating the economic and social impacts across sectors, and the UNESCO Damage and Risk Assessment Framework, which was primarily applied to assess cultural heritage and related institutions. Data were obtained from the census, which consists of 659,675 households, reports of 4,960 institutions (1195 health, 1926 Education, 724 cultural heritage and religious institutions, and 1115 social welfare organizations), and 33 Investigative Cases. However, the assessment process faced constraints, including incomplete and fragmented data due to disrupted institutional reporting systems and a lack of baseline information. In addition, severe shortages of required supplies constrained fieldwork and data collection efforts. Despite these

limitations, the adopted methodological approach provided a solid foundation for estimating the scale and impact of the damages and losses across the social sector.

Findings

The findings reveal widespread and devastating destruction across all sectors, with total damages and losses estimated at approximately **USD 10.86 billion.** The education sector sustained about USD 5.38 billion, the health sector accounts for USD 3.59 billion, and others amount to approximately USD 1.88 billion (Table 1).

Table 1: Damage and Loss Summary (USD in Millions)

Sub-sector	Damage Value			Loss Value			Total Effect
	Public	**Privat**	**Total**	**Public**	**Privat**	**Total**	
Health	680.8	18.65	699.45	2,876.46	13.39	2,889.85	3,589.30
Education	2414.72	43.75	2451.28	2,887.76	44.25	2,932.01	5,383.29
Heritage		632.1	632.1		966.5	966.5	1,598.60
Social Welfare Organizations		47.54	47.54		230.53	230.53	278.07
Total	3095.52	742.04	**3837.56**	5,764.22	1,254.67	**7,018.89**	**10, 857.14**

Source: CITG survey,2022

Based on the share of the damage value attributed by perpetrators, the Eritrean Defence Forces (EDF) took the lion's share in damage to health (56.3%), education (43.9%), and cultural heritage and religious institutions (ranging from 38.62% to 40.11%) followed by the Ethiopian National Defence Forces (ENDF). On the other hand, ENDF caused higher damage to social welfare institutions, followed by the Amhara forces. (Table 3). Across all sectors, the level of damage is dominated by complete destruction, followed by high-level damage, where most losses were catastrophic and largely unrecoverable.

Table 2. Damage to the social sector by the perpetrators.

Sub-sector	Perpetrator							
	EDF	**ENDF**	**Amhara Forces**	**Afar Forces**	**EFP**	**Bandits**	**Combinations**	**Others**
Health	56.3	16.8	3.7	0	0	0	4.6	18.5
Education	43.9	24.6	1	0.2	2.9	3.9	9.8	13.6
Social Welfare	11	27.2	17.7	0.6	2.7	5	11.2	24.6
Cultural Heritages, Religious Institutions								
Cultural Heritages Assets	38.62	36.29	18.2	5.26				1.63
Historical Buildings	40.11	32.75	20.64	4.98				1.35
Historical Handcrafted property	38.75	31.22	21.09	5.35				2.34
Artistic and Historical Objects	39.06	35.34	17.89	5.5				1.78

Source: CITG survey,2022

Impact

The overall impact on the social sector includes School closures, loss of human capital, service collapse, cultural erasure, trauma, disruption of the community-based social institutions and organizations that weakened the long-term established social and cultural fabric of Tigray, which distracts social cohesion, trust, and the collective capacity for recovery.

Health systems collapsed, with maternal mortality rising from 186 to 840 per 100,000 live births, immunization coverage plummeted from 100% to 20%, and facility functionality fell below 30% in hospitals and clinics. Management of chronic diseases worsened, while HIV, malaria, and psychosocial issues grew more severe. **Education** faced a near-complete breakdown, over 1.2 million children were out of school, enrolment declined by more than 80%, and 14,000 teachers and education leaders did not return to school, deepening learning gaps and trauma. **Heritage** sites aged centuries were destroyed, erasing cultural identity and disrupting intergenerational links. **Social welfare institutions** lost public trust; traditional support systems like Eddir and Equb were destabilized; and forced identity changes and language suppression further fractured social cohesion. These combined effects have eroded trust, disrupted community institutions, and weakened collective resilience justice.

The destruction of both public and private social sectors has exacerbated displacement, poverty, weakened household resilience, and increased dependence on humanitarian assistance. In addition, the war triggered restrictions on access to basic needs and services, such as shortages of food, medicine, educational opportunities, and hindered humanitarian assistance.

Finally, given the complexity and long-term effects of the war on the social sector, coordinated efforts among government bodies, communities, and development partners are crucial, requiring substantial investment and capacity-building to ensure sustainable recovery and resilience across Tigray's social system.

Note to the Reader

This document constitutes **Volume I of the Social Sector War Damage and Loss Assessment Report**. It presents verified, self-reported data from households, private enterprises, and public institutions across the Tigray region. Due to constraints in temporal and geographic coverage, **subsequent volumes will follow** to incorporate additional findings.

Key considerations for interpreting this volume:

- **No extrapolation or estimation** has been applied. All figures reflect actual submissions, standardized only for price and quantity comparability (e.g., number of school rooms or medical equipment per facility type).
- The monetary values reported represent **intergenerational assets and accumulated wealth**, not annual budgets or gross domestic product figures. They should not be compared with fiscal or economic aggregates.
- The report covers **regional and federal institutions residing within the scope of the assessment in Tigray**, capturing the breadth of war-related effects across social sectors.
- **Losses far exceed visible damage**. The prolonged siege and blockade, lasting more than two years, led to widespread service disruptions and lasting setbacks in health, education, and cultural continuity, which persisted long after the damage occurred.
- These cumulative losses, though harder to quantify, are **central to understanding the full impact of the crisis** and must inform any recovery or justice framework.

Readers are encouraged to approach this volume as a foundational reference, recognizing both its rigor and its limitations. The data in the report reflects lived realities and institutional memory, and its interpretation demands sensitivity to context, scale, and the enduring consequences of the war.

For the details, you can read the whole Report Document at https://citghub.org/