Research Square

Preprints are preliminary reports that have not undergone peer review.
They should not be considered conclusive, used to inform clinical practice,
or referenced by the media as validated information.

# Aspirational Limbo: Protracted Displacement, War, and the Collapse of Human Security among Eritrean Refugees in Urban Ethiopia

**Engida Esayas Dube**

engidae@du.edu.et

Dilla University

**Research Article**

**Keywords:** human security, protracted displacement, Eritrean refugees, Tigray War, urban refugees

**Posted Date:** May 25th, 2026

**DOI:** https://doi.org/10.21203/rs.3.rs-9670429/v1

**License:** This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.
Read Full License

**Additional Declarations:** No competing interests reported.

# Abstract

“What does it mean to a refugee fleeing one of the most oppressive countries in the world to know that the country that is giving them sanctuary cannot protect them?”. This article examines the multi-layered fragmentation of human security among Eritrean urban refugees in Ethiopia against the backdrop of the Tigray War (2020–2022), where protracted displacement and a devastating internal conflict combined to produce layered vulnerabilities. Drawing on 45 in-depth interviews conducted with urban refugees in Addis Ababa (n = 24) and Semera-Logiya (n = 21), supplemented by key informant interviews with UNHCR, the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), and NGO representatives, and integrated with data from the UKRI-GCRF-funded Protracted Displacement in an Urban World (PDUW) project, this study applies a modified UNDP (1994) Human Security Framework across six dimensions: economic, food, personal, community, environmental, and political security. Findings demonstrate that the Tigray conflict triggered systemic human security failures across all six dimensions simultaneously — a phenomenon this article conceptualizes as compounded insecurity cascades. Critical infrastructure disruptions, inflation, ethnic profiling of Tigrinya-speaking Eritreans as presumed Tigrayans, suspension of refugee registration, food aid cuts, and police harassment compounded pre-existing vulnerabilities attributable to protracted displacement. Neither the Ethiopian state, the UNHCR, nor humanitarian partners adequately protected refugees. The article integrates PDUW data showing that only 38% of male and 7% of female urban refugees in Addis Ababa were employed despite 71% and 40% respectively having pre-displacement work experience — a structural waste of human capital attributable to legal and regulatory barriers compounded by conflict. This study advances theoretical understandings of human security in contexts of doubled displacement, contributes an original Compounded Insecurity Cascade (CIC) conceptual model, and argues for the urgent integration of urban refugee governance into local development planning.


# 1. Introduction: Displaced from Displacement

In November 2020, the Ethiopian federal government launched a military offensive against the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) in the northern Tigray region — triggering one of Africa's most devastating humanitarian catastrophes in decades. For most of the world's attention, this was an Ethiopian story. For approximately 181,264 Eritrean refugees hosted in Ethiopia at the time, it was something far more immediate: the country in which they had sought safety was itself at war (UNHCR, 2021; Miller, 2022). They were, in the starkest possible terms, displaced from their displacement.

This article takes up the paradox as an empirical condition and a theoretical provocation. The plight of Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia is one of the most complicated cases of long-term displacement in the world. Refugees have come in a constant stream since 1993, when Eritrea has been governed by a system of indefinite compulsory national service that may amount to institutionalised forced labour. By 2023, an estimated one in three of Eritrea’s 6 million people will reside abroad, with some 71,600 Eritreans applying for asylum in other countries in 2023 alone, or over 2% of the population in a single year (Migration Policy Institute, 2025). Ethiopia, with a long border with Eritrea, is the main destination

centre of Eritrean refugees since long ago with an estimated 166,000 Eritrean refugees in this country in late 2023, most of them (68,400 in Addis Ababa and more than 57,000 in the Afar region) (García Amado et al., 2023).

Yet the analytical and policy literature on Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia has focused largely on camp-based populations, legal frameworks and return prospects (Tufa et al., 2021; Massa, 2022; Poole and Riggan, 2020). The Tigray conflict disrupted this already fragile situation catastrophically: camps in Tigray were attacked, looted, and effectively destroyed; 20,000 Eritrean refugees were displaced from the Hitsats and Shimelba camps in the opening weeks of the conflict; aid convoys were blocked; and thousands undertook secondary migrations to urban centres, particularly Addis Ababa and the Afar regional capital of Semera-Logiya, multiplying the urban refugee population from 36,080 in January 2021 to 71,187 by November 2021 (UNHCR, 2022).

This article examines the human security consequences of this layered catastrophe for Eritrean urban refugees. It draws on original qualitative data gathered across two contrasting urban settings — Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's primate city and political capital, and Semera-Logiya, a secondary town in the Afar region — to analyse the collapse of human security across six dimensions: economic, food, personal, community, environmental, and political. In doing so, it makes three contributions.

First, it contributes empirically by providing systematic, first-person testimony of what the Tigray conflict meant for urban refugees — a population consistently overlooked in conflict and humanitarian reporting that focused primarily on IDPs and camp-based populations. Second, it contributes theoretically by advancing the concept of Compounded Insecurity Cascades (CIC) to describe the specific dynamics through which internal conflict in a host state generates intersecting, self-reinforcing failures across human security dimensions in already-vulnerable protracted displacement populations. Third, it contributes to policy by integrating findings from the UKRI-GCRF-funded Protracted Displacement in an Urban World (PDUW) project to argue that the future of refugee governance in Ethiopia must place urban refugees, local governments, and livelihood rights at its centre.

This paper is organised as follows: Section 2 surveys the theoretical landscape. 3. Research design and methods Section 4 provides background context. Section 5 provides the analytical framework. Section 6 examines findings in six dimensions of human security. Section 7 synthesises findings via the CIC model. Section 8 gives recommendations and a conclusion.

## 2. Theoretical Framework: Human Security, Protracted Displacement, and the Concept of Compounded Insecurity

# 2.1 Human Security: From Origins to Application in Refugee Contexts

The idea of human security emerged from the post-Cold War intellectual ferment, when academics and policymakers wondered whether national security — focused on state survival — adequately articulated the threats affecting the largest numbers of people. The roots of the issue are laid with the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report which provided the fundamental taxonomy of seven dimensions of human security (economic, food, health, environmental, personal, community, and political) organized around two basic freedoms – freedom from want and freedom from fear (UNDP, 1994). Unlike realist security paradigms that situate the state as both referent object and guarantor of security, the human security framework moved the unit of analysis from the state to the individual, conceptualizing ordinary people's lived experiences as the primary domain of security.

The application of human security to refugee and forced migration contexts has grown substantially since the mid-2000s. Edwards (2009) argued that human security could provide an additional normative architecture for refugee protection, supplementing — and in many contexts compensating for — the erosion of state-based refugee rights. Vietti and Scribner (2013) demonstrated that human insecurity drives forced migration and that the human security framework reveals causal mechanisms invisible to traditional immigration policy analysis. Kumsa et al. (2014) applied the framework to Somali refugees in Kenya, documenting how its multidimensional architecture exposed the intersection of economic, social, political, cultural, and environmental vulnerability in ways that conventional refugee assessments missed. De Simone (2020) called for institutionalization of the human security approach in Africa's refugee-hosting regions, arguing that its emphasis on context-specific analysis better serves the complexity of protracted displacement than normative benchmarking.

This body of scholarship has, however, largely examined human security in relatively stable host-country contexts. The application of human security to refugees experiencing not merely protracted displacement but simultaneous internal conflict in their host state remains underdeveloped. This gap is significant: as Fein and Van Den Hoek (2022) demonstrated in their analysis of conflict incidence at 1,543 refugee camps across Africa between 1997 and 2020, the assumption that camps provide a refuge from conflict is empirically unfounded. When the host state itself becomes a theatre of war — as Ethiopia did in 2020 — the human security of refugees faces a qualitatively different and more severe challenge than anything captured by existing frameworks.

## 2.2 Protracted Displacement and the Urban Turn

The PDUW project, in which the author served as Ethiopia's country academic lead and co-investigator, defines protracted displacement situations as those in which more than 25,000 refugees from the same country of origin have been in exile for at least five consecutive years without achieving a durable solution (UNHCR definition, cited in García Amado et al., 2023). Eritrean displacement to Ethiopia unambiguously meets this threshold: Eritreans have been arriving in Ethiopia since the early years of Eritrean independence in the 1990s, and by 2023 the population had been in protracted exile for three decades.

Displacement is not only a temporal condition. It creates structural consequences: refugees make urban livelihoods, social networks, and community connections; build up assets and debts; predict future futures; and tailor their strategies for survival and self-determination in a particular regulatory and social context of a host city (Tufa et al., 2022). Importantly, the PDUW project also found that, compared with camp populations, Eritrean refugees in urban Ethiopia generally had higher educational attainment and more work experience before going into exile—however, they were systematically excluded from the legal and regulatory labour market. In Addis Ababa, only 38% of male and 7% of female refugees worked even though 71% and 40%, respectively, had the relevant pre-displacement work experience (García Amado et al., 2023). These three legal barriers—inability to obtain work permits, inability to register businesses in their own names, and non-recognition of prior qualifications—represent a systemic waste of human capital, exacerbated and compounded by prolonged displacement, particularly in the Tigray conflict.

The urban turn in refugee studies — acknowledging today that most of the world's forcibly displaced are living in urban rather than camp settings — has shifted both the analytical and policy landscape. More than 60% of refugees globally now live in urban or semi-urban settings (García Amado et al., 2023). But governance frameworks, humanitarian programming, and funding streams remain mainly camp-orientated. This structural mismatch between where refugees live and where policy attention and resources are sent is a core concern of the PDUW project, and a critical framing in which to comprehend some of the vulnerabilities that we identify in this paper.

## 2.3 The Compounded Insecurity Cascade (CIC)

This article presents the Compounded Insecurity Cascade (CIC) as a conceptual framework for understanding the particular dynamics of human security failure, particularly in populations experiencing both protracted displacement and internal conflict in the host state. There are three theoretical claims from the CIC model.

It first argues that human security deficits arising from prolonged displacement generate certain structural vulnerabilities that magnify the effects of host-state conflict. Refugees who are unable to legally work, register businesses, or obtain documentation do not just endure economic hardship during times of conflict: They are subjected to economic catastrophe due to the lack of institutional buffers (savings, credit, legal protection, labour rights) available to host-country nationals. This baseline vulnerability is underscored by the PDUW finding that many urban refugees in Addis Ababa were already struggling to meet household expenses reliably prior to the conflict.

Second, the CIC model indicates that the dimensions of human security are more interconnected for populations in protracted displacement than for settled populations, such that a failure in one dimension triggers a domino effect of loss in others. Economic disruption produces food insecurity; food insecurity exacerbates physical vulnerability; ethnic suspicion intensifies individual insecurity; registration failure removes political security; and the cumulative effect is a collapse of the conditions that make urban life viable, driving further secondary displacement. This coupling is the "cascade" in the conceptual model.

Third, the CIC model argues that internal conflict in the host state has a distinctive and undertheorized quality in relation to refugees: it simultaneously eliminates the state's capacity to protect refugees and transforms the state's agents — police, military, local officials — into potential sources of insecurity, reversing the protective function that refugees seek when they flee to host countries. The testimonies analysed in Section 6 of this article document this reversal with striking clarity.

## 3. Research Design and Methodology

# 3.1 Approach and Epistemological Positioning

This study employs a qualitative research design with an exploratory-interpretive orientation. The epistemological positioning is broadly constructivist: it treats the knowledge produced through in-depth interviews not as objective reports of external reality but as co-constructed accounts shaped by the intersubjective dynamics of the interview encounter, the interpretive frameworks participants bring to their experiences, and the social positions of both participants and researcher. This positioning is consistent with the established tradition of qualitative refugee research that foregrounds first-person testimony as both data and evidence (Bakewell, 2008; Castles, 2003).

A critical approach to methodology is followed, motivated by feminist and postcolonial critiques of refugee research. Eritrean refugees are not merely “data sources” but political actors whose voices have been systematically marginalised in Ethiopian policy and international humanitarian discourses (Miller, 2022; Massa, 2022). The study design was developed to create circumstances — anonymity, language-appropriate interviews, community-embedded access — that enabled participants to communicate openly and extensively about their contexts.

# 3.2 Study Sites

The choice of two urban sites resulted from theoretical and substantive contrast, allowing for comparisons that can shed light on the general phenomena related to urban refugee insecurity, as well as distinctive site-based factors that differentiate the experiences. Addis Ababa is the primate city and political heartland of Ethiopia, home to an estimated population of 3.9 to 4 million (CSA, 2020). It is also Africa’s diplomatic centre, housing the African Union and hundreds of foreign bodies. The number of refugees grew sharply during the Tigray conflict, increasing from 36,080 in January 2021, to 71,187 as of November 2021, and 72,433 as of November 2022. Of the urban refugee population in Addis Ababa, approximately 92% account for 66,667, of whom 60% (43,055) migrated from Tigray (UNHCR, 2022). The study took place in the Gofa Mebrat Haile neighborhood of Nefas Silk Lafto sub-city, a densely populated area with a large population of Eritrean refugees. Semera-Logiya is the administrative capital of the Afar National Regional State situated 574 km northeast of Addis Ababa. With a population of some 94,000—more than two-thirds from Logia alone—it is a secondary city that is characterized by its own ethnic, cultural, and linguistic qualities. Unlike the ethnically mixed context of Addis Ababa, the Afar ethnic group shares linguistic and kinship relations with a number of Eritrean refugees of Afar ethnic origin, and so the society takes a completely different shape. By 2022, some 55 percent of the 25,668 Eritrean

refugees registered in Aysaita camp were living with host communities in Aysaita, Semera, and Logia, connected through clan networks (UNHCR, 2022).

## 3.3 Participants and Sampling

A purposive sampling methodology was used to recruit urban refugees who have long-term residence and social participation in the study areas and are involved in the local economy. Additional sample participants were drawn using snowball sampling from initial community contacts and UNHCR urban outreach volunteers. A total of 45 in-depth interviews were conducted: 24 in Addis Ababa and 21 in Semera-Logiya. Interviewers who spoke Tigrinya (Addis Ababa) as well as Afar (Semera-Logiya) were recruited and trained to allow participants to be interviewed in their native language. The participant profiles according to both locations are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1
Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile of Study Participants

| Characteristic | Addis Ababa (n = 24) | Semera-Logiya (n = 21) | Total (n = 45) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Gender: Male | 19 (79.2%) | 14 (66.7%) | 33 (73.3%) |
| Gender: Female | 5 (20.8%) | 6 (28.6%) | 11 (24.4%) |
| Unassigned | — | 1 (4.8%) | 1 (2.2%) |
| Age 16–25 | 4 (16.7%) | 2 (9.5%) | 6 (13.3%) |
| Age 26–35 | 15 (62.5%) | 8 (38.1%) | 23 (51.1%) |
| Age 36–45 | 5 (20.8%) | 3 (14.3%) | 8 (17.8%) |
| Unassigned age | — | 7 (33.3%) | 7 (15.6%) |
| Married | 13 (54.2%) | 9 (42.9%) | 22 (48.9%) |
| Single | 11 (45.8%) | 10 (47.6%) | 21 (46.7%) |
| Secondary education | 20 (83.3%) | 10 (47.6%) | 30 (66.7%) |
| Primary education | — | 6 (28.6%) | 6 (13.3%) |
| TVET / Vocational | 2 (8.3%) | 1 (4.8%) | 3 (6.7%) |
| University | 2 (8.3%) | 1 (4.8%) | 3 (6.7%) |
| Enterprise status: Managing | 12 (50.0%) | 9 (42.9%) | 21 (46.7%) |
| Enterprise status: Surviving | 8 (33.3%) | 7 (33.3%) | 15 (33.3%) |
| Enterprise status: Thriving | 1 (4.2%) | — | 1 (2.2%) |
| Relocation from Tigray camps | ~ 60% of AA sample | N/A | — |

*Source: Fieldwork data, July 2023; compiled by author.*

Additionally, eight key informant interviews were conducted with senior representatives of the Refugees and Returnees Service (RRS), the UNHCR urban protection unit in Addis Ababa, and three NGOs (including an Ethiopian faith-based organization and an international NGO). These key informants provided institutional and policy-level perspectives that contextualize individual refugee testimonies.

## 3.4 Data Collection and Ethical Safeguards

Semi-structured interview guides were developed for both urban refugee and key informant interviews. Refugee interview guides covered: pre-departure context and displacement history; residential and livelihood situation in the host city; experiences across the six human security dimensions during the conflict period; and perceptions of government and humanitarian response. Interviews lasted between 55 and 110 minutes. All were audio-recorded with informed consent. Participants were informed of their right to refuse questions or withdraw from the study without consequence. Ethical approval was granted by Dilla University's Research Ethics Committee.

Respondents are identified only by their location, occupation and a limited demographic descriptor, consistent with the anonymisation conventions of qualitative forced migration research. No names, neighbourhood specifics or identifying details are given. Great care was taken with participants who described experiences of police harassment and extortion because of the possibility of retaliation.

## 3.5 Data Analysis

Interview recordings were transcribed and translated (where necessary) into English language. Thematic analysis was undertaken following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach: data familiarisation; initial code generation; theme searching; theme reviewing; theme defining and naming; and report production. Data management and coding were conducted using NVivo software. Inter-coder reliability was established by double coding 25% of transcripts with a Cohen's kappa of 0.81 (strong agreement). Member checking was conducted with three participants, at each site, to validate theme interpretations. The full thematic coding framework is illustrated in Fig. 1.

# 4. Contextual Background: Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia and the Tigray War

## 4.1 Eritrean Displacement: Scale, Duration, and Urban Turn

Eritrea's authoritarian rule by President Isaias Afwerki, including his indefinite compulsory national service, failure to have a functioning constitution and systematic clampdown on dissent, has led to a steady increase in refugees since the late 1990s. The Migration Policy Institute (2025) approximates that as much as one-third of the country's born population is living abroad. As of 2023, about 71,600 Eritreans have applied for asylum in other countries in one year – a profile indicative of a practically permanent exodus from a country comprising just 6 million. Due to geographical proximity, historical connections and a relatively open-door refugee policy stemming from Ethiopia's 1969 and 2019 Refugee Proclamations, Ethiopia has been the primary destination. The 2019 Proclamation outlined within the

UN's Global Compact on Refugees and Comprehensive Refugee Response Framework specifically mentioned Eritrean refugees' right to work, free movement, and national education and health provision (RRS, 2019). However, as the PDUW project also noted, COVID-19, and the Tigray conflict systematically delayed and undermined implementation of these reforms (García Amado et al., 2023). The Tigray War, led by the Ethiopian federal government against the TPLF in November 2020, yielded disastrous results for Eritrean refugees, who had been settled in four large camps of people situated in Tigray (Adi-Harush, Hitsats, Mai-Aini, and Shimelba) in the pre-war period, having accommodated an estimated 96,223 Eritrean refugees. The migration of refugee populations by site and by time is depicted in Fig. 2.

The Shimelba and Hitsats camps were looted and effectively destroyed in the early months of the conflict, displacing approximately 20,000 Eritrean refugees. The UNHCR expressed urgent concern in July 2021 about an estimated 24,000 refugees remaining in Mai-Aini and Adi-Harush camps who were being denied access to humanitarian aid. Secondary displacement to Addis Ababa and the Afar region produced a rapid urbanization of the Eritrean refugee population: by November 2022, the urban refugee population in Addis Ababa had nearly doubled compared to pre-war levels.

## 4.2 The PDUW Project: Wellbeing and Displacement Economy Data

This study integrates data and findings from the Protracted Displacement in an Urban World (PDUW) project — a UKRI-GCRF funded comparative mixed-methods research initiative led by IIED (London) in partnership with Cardiff University, Samuel Hall, and Dilla University, covering Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Jordan. The author served as Ethiopia country academic lead and co-investigator. The project was based on two analytical themes – wellbeing and displacement economies – and three sites in Ethiopia: Addis Ababa (Gofa Mebrat Haile), Semera-Logiya and Aysaita camp.

Wellbeing measures for PDUW were composite measures across five domains (bodily, political, economic, social and psychosocial) based on quantitative surveys complemented with qualitative data. Key findings relevant to this article are:

- In Addis Ababa, only 38% of men and 7% of women were employed despite 71% and 40% respectively having pre-displacement work experience — a structural waste of human capital attributable to work permit restrictions, inability to register businesses in their own names, and non-recognition of prior qualifications.
- 70% of non-working urban refugees said they were willing to work, showing economic inactivity to represent regulatory exclusion rather than lack of motivation or capacity.
- Many of the urban refugees got remittances as conditions of living out of camps under the OCP, although remittances were sporadic and insufficient to cover the urban cost of living.
- Psychosocial well-being was lowest in Addis Ababa, indicating the absence of concrete official support for integration, together with a widespread desire for resettlement or onward migration—although many stated they would remain in Ethiopia if conditions improved.

- In Semera-Logiya, a common Afar language and culture between refugees and host resulted in higher social well-being and life satisfaction scores and had clan-based networks and informal support arrangements with much greater flexibility.
- In the Aysaita camp (a location that has been included in the PDUW but was excluded from this article's interview sample), food insecurity, poor healthcare, and inadequate shelter led to the lowest bodily wellbeing scores across all sites, thus raising important questions about the adequacy of encampment as a response to protracted displacement.

These PDUW findings provide an important quantitative and mixed-methods backdrop to the qualitative human security analysis presented in this article: they confirm that the vulnerabilities documented in the interviews were not individual or idiosyncratic but structural and widespread.

## 4.3 Legal and Regulatory Architecture

Understanding the human security situation of Eritrean urban refugees requires engagement with the legal and regulatory architecture that shapes their lives. Table 2 summarizes the key regulatory instruments and their implementation status as of the period of this study.

Table 2
Legal and Regulatory Framework — Eritrean Refugees in Ethiopia (2019–2023)

| Instrument | Key Provisions | Implementation Status (2023) | Human Security Implications |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ethiopia Refugee Proclamation (2019) | Right to work; freedom of movement; access to national education and health services; right to open bank accounts | Partially implemented; COVID-19 and Tigray conflict caused delays; work permit issuance inconsistent | Regulatory basis for economic and political security exists but enforcement is incomplete |
| Out-of-Camp Policy (OCP) | Permits registered refugees to live outside camps; requires evidence of income/remittances; applies mainly to Addis Ababa and select urban areas | Active but administratively burdensome; registration suspension from 2020 prevented new OCP applications | Critical for urban residence but conditioned on income proof that many lack |
| UNHCR-RRS Refugee Registration | Biometric registration enables access to services, documentation, and legal identity | Suspended for new arrivals from 2020 through late 2022; thousands of newly displaced Eritreans were undocumented | Political insecurity: unregistered refugees lack any documentation; access to aid blocked |
| Driver's License / Business License Renewal (Tigray Region Issued) | Documents issued in Tigray could not be renewed during the conflict due to blockades and administrative collapse | Complete breakdown for Tigray-issued documents; no national-level remedy provided | Immediate livelihood and mobility threat for refugees holding Tigray-region documentation |
| UNHCR Urban Refugee Programme | Community-based protection through Refugee Outreach Volunteers (ROVs); case referrals; protection monitoring | Operational but overwhelmed by 2021 population surge; capacity constraints reported by KII | Partial mitigation of political and personal insecurity; insufficient scale |

*Sources*: RRS (2019*);* UNHCR (2020, 2021, 2022, 2023*);* García Amado et al. (2023); *Key Informant Interviews, 2023.*

# 5. The Analytical Framework: Modified Human Security Lens

The analytical framework applied in this study modifies and extends the UNDP (1994) seven-dimension Human Security Framework in three ways to better capture the situation of urban refugees in protracted displacement contexts experiencing internal host-state conflict.

First, the health security dimension is acknowledged but not empirically analysed due to data limitations: health was not a primary focus of the interview guides, and the PDUW project covers this dimension through a separate strand of analysis. This follows established practice in refugee-focused human security research (Kumsa et al., 2014; Amin, 2022).

Second, the framework explicitly integrates the distinction between freedom from fear (personal, community, and political security) and freedom from want (economic, food, and environmental security) as organizing axes — a distinction that, as the analysis shows, is analytically useful for identifying which dimensions of the conflict bore hardest on which aspects of refugee life.

Third, the framework is applied within the conceptual architecture of the Compounded Insecurity Cascade (CIC) model, treating the six dimensions not as independent analytical categories but as an interconnected system in which failure in one dimension generates pressure on others. Figure 3 presents the complete analytical framework.

Figure 4 shows the human security index, a qualitative composite score of each dimension pre-conflict versus during the Tigray conflict, developed from thematic analysis of interview data. The radar chart shows the differential effect of the conflict across dimensions, with political security showing the sharpest fall.

## 6. The Compounded Insecurity Cascade in Six Dimensions

The analysis presented below is based directly on interview data with 45 participants at two sites. Each dimension is examined in turn, paying attention to the mechanisms through which the Tigray conflict exacerbated pre-existing vulnerabilities and produced new forms of insecurity. Before the detailed narrative analysis, Table 3 gives a structured overview of the identified threats along the dimensions and sites.

Table 3
Human Security Threats by Dimension — Eritrean Urban Refugees during the Tigray Conflict

| Security Dimension | Primary Threats (Addis Ababa) | Primary Threats (Semera-Logiya) | Mechanism | Severity (1–5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Economic Security | Electricity cuts; internet disruption; transport failure; inflation (metals + 171%); market slowdown; loss of customer base | Supply chain disruption; credit access withdrawal; customer displacement; business closure | Infrastructure disruption → cost escalation → market collapse → livelihood failure | 4.5 |
| Food Security | Food aid delays; WFP ration cuts (50%); price escalation (oil + 200%; shiro + 88%); supplier credit withdrawal | Same + heightened dependence on aid; cafeteria and food business collapse | Aid system failure + market inflation → dietary reduction → malnutrition risk | 4.2 |
| Personal Security | State of emergency curfews; mobility restriction; police extortion and harassment; ethnic arrest; theft and robbery surge | Increased robbery; harassment in public spaces; unsafe working environment | State emergency powers + ethnic targeting + governance failure → physical threat | 4.6 |
| Community Security | Ethnic profiling as Tigrawai; stigmatization of Tigrinya speakers; mass arrests; second-class treatment; UNHCR registration suspension | Less severe; clan networks provided partial protection; but influx created tension | Linguistic identity (Tigrinya) rendered indistinguishable from Tigrayan → collective punishment | 3.8 |
| Environmental Security | Modest direct impact; indirect insecurity from population influx, crime surge, and collapse of public order | Most severe: secondary migrant influx from northern Ethiopia → overcrowding → crime increase → public insecurity | Population influx → resource strain → crime → environmental insecurity | 2.8 |
| Political Security | Registration suspension; ID and license renewal blocked (Tigray-issued documents); restaurant closures ordered; music restrictions | Same documentation issues; somewhat less acute due to Afar community integration | State administrative collapse → documentation void → loss of legal identity → extreme precarity | 4.8 |

*Source: Fieldwork data, July 2023; severity scores are qualitative composite indices derived from thematic analysis. Scale: 1 = Minimal threat; 5 = Severe, life-altering threat.*

# 6.1 Economic Security: The Infrastructure of Survival

Urban refugees in Addis Ababa and Semera-Logiya had drawn their livelihoods from the service economy — tailoring, barbering, beauty salons, metalwork, cafeterias, taxis, and small retail shops. Within the PDUW conceptual framework, these businesses were "displacement economies," a set of collective economic formations that refugees have established through livelihood activities, mutual assistance, and diaspora relations (García Amado et al., 2023). They were also, as this research reveals, acutely dependent on basic urban infrastructure: electricity, internet connectivity, fuel supply, and functioning transportation networks.

The Tigray conflict destroyed all of these simultaneously. Electricity cuts reduced working hours and spoilt perishable stock. The shutdowns of the Internet severed the digital payment links. Disruptions to fuel supply led directly to increased transportation costs. The wider economic disruption — national uncertainty among investors, declining consumer confidence and the constraints imposed by curfews — devastated the market for non-essential services. The compound effect on refugee businesses was dire. A male metal worker in Gofa Mebrat Haile, Addis Ababa, expressed the rising prices in stark terms:

*The war between the Ethiopian government and Tigray has made things more difficult than COVID-19. Now metals are very expensive, the metal we bought for 240 birr is now 650 birr. It went to 500 just after the war started. Even the metal slices that used to be sold for 10 birr now cost 30 birr.* — Male, metalworker, Gofa Mebrat Haile, Addis Ababa

It is a 171% rise of the primary input cost of a metalworking business in months. For a refugee entrepreneur already excluded from formal credit markets, unable to register their business in their own name, and unable to secure a bank loan — as PDUW data documented — this kind of cost escalation was existential. A female mobile phone accessories vendor in Addis Ababa connected economic insecurity directly to the psychological condition of protracted uncertainty:

*. I must say that I am pessimistic about the future of the enterprise in connection with the political and economic crisis in the country. The market is in a very depressed state due to the political instability. My market has shrunk dramatically since the war started. I'm always thinking about how to feed my family on a daily basis."* — Female, mobile phone accessories vendor, Addis Ababa

These qualitative descriptions are supported by the PDUW Livelihoods Outcomes Index: Eritrean refugees in Addis Ababa had far worse livelihood outcomes than host-country nationals in the capital and refugees in the Afar region, driven by insecurity of work and poor working conditions (García Amado et al.,., 2023). The conflict added to an already fragile baseline.

## 6.2 Food Security: Severed Supply Chains and Shrinking Rations

Food security consists of two pathways for urban refugees: market access (purchasing food with earned or remitted income) and humanitarian aid (food rations from WFP through UNHCR-RRS). The Tigray conflict was disrupted both simultaneously and severely. The inflation described in the previous section also affected food prices. A cafeteria operator based in Semera-Logiya explained how the conflict destroyed not only his supply line, but also his customer base, in a single movement:

*The Tigray conflict first led to inflation. All things get more expensive. Price increases made the people who used to give us goods on credit unwilling suppliers. Furthermore, the war brought about the loss of numerous customers. I know not where they have gone. Maybe people changed their locations due to fear of war when war was coming.* — Male, cafeteria operator, Semera-Logiya

If anything, the humanitarian aid channel was hit even more destructively. In the past, UNHCR and WFP have supplied food rations to registered refugees, particularly those living in camps. But the fighting disrupted supply convoys to camps and urban aid points and WFP imposed major ration cuts. One respondent, reporting on conditions in the Aysaita refugee camp (with which many of the Semera-Logiya urban refugees had contacts), described reductions of 50% or more in ration quantities:

*We worry mainly about diminished feeding. The government gives us half of what they give us — for six months, now they give us three kilograms of wheat grain, half a litre of cooking oil, eight kilograms of peas, and two pieces of soap. The aid in kind has been totally stopped, and money has not been given to us for three months. In addition, we are concerned about high price increments. Shiro has gone from 80 to 150 birr; cooking oil from 300 to 900 birr; one kilogram of berbere from 200 to 400 birr.* — Refugee, Aysaita camp contact

Not small changes at all: cooking oil increased by 200 per cent; shiro by 88 per cent; berbere by 100 per cent. The price hikes, in a context of halved rations, resulted in a sharp fall in effective access to food and a direct threat of insufficient nutrition to the population. The CIC model is visible here with particular clarity: the conflict disrupted the supply chain (economic security failure) which both raised food prices (food security failure from the market side) and blocked aid convoys (food security failure from the humanitarian side), simultaneously attacking food security through two independent channels.

## 6.3 Personal Security: Policing, Extortion, and the State as Threat

Personal security involves protection against physical violence, criminal assault, and institutional coercion. For Eritrean urban refugees in the context of the Tigray conflict, perhaps the disquieting new reality was not so much that criminal insecurity rose — despite that it did — as that the police themselves became the primary source of personal insecurity. This is the central mechanism underlying the CIC

model: the host state's conflict transformed its security apparatus from a potential protector into an active threat.

Multiple respondents described systematic police extortion under the pretext of counter-insurgency operations against alleged TPLF supporters. The state of emergency imposed during the conflict granted security forces expanded powers of arrest and search, which were applied to Eritrean refugees on the basis of their Tigrinya language — indistinguishable to most Amhara-speaking Ethiopian police from Tigrayan. One respondent in Addis Ababa described this dynamic with barely-suppressed outrage:

*This is all about security. A police officer would come to your house; you have taxes and rents to pay. He still threatens you to give him money. You are legal, but he still harasses you in uniform. I would rather give a policeman 1000 birr than be arrested for the second time — your entire family would be disturbed. A policeman would say you are a "supporter of the junta" [TPLF fighters] and threaten you. They would come without any evidence, and after you talk to them, they'd invite themselves to lunch. If you give them 500 birr for lunch, where is the government?* — Male, Addis Ababa

This account describes a system of institutionalised extortion, where emergency powers create a regulatory vacuum that individual officers exploit. The third claim of the CIC model is that internal strife undermines the will and ability of the state to provide protection, even for refugees with legal registration, substituting protection with predation. This is perfectly summarised in the phrase "you are legal, but he still harasses you. Robbery and theft also rose significantly. One claimed his business establishment had been broken into five separate times and police had refused to pursue investigation even though they had been warned with evidence each time:

*The enterprise suffered more than five breaks in theft. One time, my brother and cousin who were sleeping there barely escaped the robbery by the robbers. "But my grudge was that the police did not help me to catch the robbers. I told them five times straight away and they did not investigate. In one effort I obtained sufficient evidence to identify the robbers, but the police took no action.* — Male, photographer, Addis Ababa

The loss of a camera and the 23,000 birr debt incurred to pay the owner from borrowed money are examples of the extreme fragility of the economy, where a single criminal act can trigger cascading financial ruin with no institutional backstop.

## 6.4 Community Security: The Linguistic Trap of Tigrinya Identity

Community security includes the physical security of members of a group, and the protection of cultural and ethnic identity. The Tigray conflict represented an especially dangerous identity trap for Eritrean refugees, whose language, Tigrinya, was the same as that of the Tigrayan population. In the context of the Ethiopian government's construction of the TPLF as a terrorist organization and "Tigrayan" identity as

presumptively hostile to the Ethiopian state, Eritrean refugees were systematically misidentified, stigmatised, and in many cases arrested as presumed Tigrayans.

Several respondents reported being verbally abused, physically confronted or harassed by police when speaking Tigrinya in public. “It has a cumulative effect on day to day life,” said one respondent in Addis Ababa.

*The country is not politically stable and this has had many effects. When you are with other citizens it affects you as a second citizen. There is the language, Tigrinya - you know the situation. There are many difficulties when you get in, even the police in the airports. When people hear me speaking Tigrinya on the phone, some insult you, they even push you. You won’t be able to tell the difference between Tigrians and Eritreans – Tigrinya is Tigrinya. It's been really tough since the war started.* — Male, Addis Ababa

This testimony reveals an ironic structural contradiction: the language that differentiates Eritrean refugees as something other than Ethiopians and Tigrayans — a cultural marker of difference — in the particular context of the Tigray War, is the basis of their collective punishment. Their identity became the greatest threat to the community, not a source of security. But the picture of community security was more complex in Semera-Logiya. The shared language of the Afar and the clan networks of many Eritrean refugees and the host community also provided some protection and social integration that was not available in Addis Ababa. This was confirmed by the PDUW project as social wellbeing scores were higher in Semera-Logiya than in Addis Ababa, partly due to the clan-based social architecture that allowed refugees to be absorbed into their host society (García Amado et al.,., 2023). The cross-site comparison is theoretically significant: it demonstrates that host-state conflict does not universally eliminate community security and that pre-existing buffers of social integration can partially offset its worst consequences.

## 6.5 Environmental Security: Population Influx and the Urban Security Ecology

Environmental security is embedded in the UNDP framework. Environmental security encompasses safety from environmental degradation, natural disaster, and resource scarcity. Within the urban frame of the present study, it is reconstituted as the safety and livability of the urban environment — that is, refugees’ capacity for moving and living without physical threat from their immediate surroundings. This aspect appeared differently in both study sites. The primary environmental security issue affecting Semera-Logiya was the great number of secondary migrants and displaced persons from northern Ethiopia, leading to the transformation of the urban security ecology of the town. Participants described a rapid increase in robbery, harassment, and general disorder associated with the arrival of displaced populations from conflict zones:

*In recent years, Semera-Logiya has become overpopulated because of displaced people from the northern part of the Afar Region. As a bajaj driver, I got more customers who did not know the towns very well. They ordered me for things they needed, and I would bring them food from restaurants and vegetables to their*

*homes. But following the conflict, Logia became more dangerous because different kinds of people came from different places. So sometimes nowadays I witness harassment, which is why I do not like to work late.* — Male, bajaj driver, Semera-Logiya

In Addis Ababa, environmental insecurity was less dramatically transformed because the city had larger existing infrastructure and policing capacity to absorb the population influx. However, the collapse of effective policing — documented in the personal security dimension — meant that the environmental security consequences of increased criminality were inadequately managed.

# 6.6 Political Security: The Documentation Void

Political security encompasses protection from state oppression, preservation of political and civil rights, and the maintenance of legal identity. This dimension shows the sharpest deterioration in the human security index (Fig. 3) and reveals perhaps the most structurally damaging consequence of the Tigray conflict for Eritrean urban refugees: the creation of a documentation void through the simultaneous suspension of refugee registration and the administrative collapse of the Tigray regional government.

The conflict made it impossible for thousands of Eritrean refugees to renew documents like driver's licenses, residency permits and business licenses issued by the Tigray regional administration. Tigray was cut off from communication, regional administrative offices were destroyed or unreachable and the Ethiopian federal government offered no remedy at the national level. This particular vulnerability was described by an Addis Ababa taxi driver:

*"I'm going to lose my driver's license in a month and I don't know what I'm going to do."' I got it from Adigrat [Tigray] and there was no renewal. I lost it one time before but there was no blockade then so I went on a round trip and got it renewed and came back in one day. You can't think about your driver's license now, though. Your whole life is all you think about.* — Male, taxi driver, Addis Ababa

Thus, this account records the layering of insecurity with arresting economy: fear of physical survival displaces worry about administrative continuity. The driver's licence is not just a bureaucratic form, it is the legal basis of his livelihood. Since it expires without the possibility of renewal, it is a political security failure (destruction of legal identity), an economic security failure (loss of livelihood), and the failure of personal security (exposure to police harassment for driving without a licence). More seriously, the UNHCR and RRS stopped new refugee registration from 2020 through late 2022. That left thousands of Eritreans displaced by the Tigray conflict who fled to cities to be unable to secure legal refugee status, documentation, or access to services. One key informant in the refugee services sector spoke with controlled urgency about its impacts: "Refugees cannot obtain the basic universal rights of refugees. Refugees who have lived for many years find their rights no longer respected. Ethiopia can no longer protect its own people. We are simply existing because we are lucky enough to blend in with the community." The term "blend in with the community" reveals analytically that for Afar Eritrean refugees in Semera-Logiya with linguistic and clan ties to the host community, invisibility provided a partial

substitute for legal protection. Linguistic visibility forbade even this option for Tigrinya-speaking Eritreans living in Addis Ababa.

## 7. The Compounded Insecurity Cascade and its Policy Implications

# 7.1 The CIC in Evidence

Together, the findings across all six dimensions display the Compounded Insecurity Cascade empirically. Table 4 shows the cascade mechanisms of the primary shocks of the Tigray conflict through the dimensions of human security.

Table 4
The Compounded Insecurity Cascade — Propagation Pathways across Human Security Dimensions

| Primary Shock | First-Order Impact | Second-Order Cascade | Third-Order Cascade | Human Security Dimension(s) Affected |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tigray War outbreak (Nov. 2020) | Military conflict in northern Ethiopia; national state of emergency declared | Infrastructure disruption (electricity, internet, fuel, transport) | Cost escalation; market collapse; enterprise failure | Economic → Food |
| Destruction of Tigray camps | 20,000 Eritrean refugees displaced; Shimelba and Hitsats closed | Secondary migration to Addis Ababa and Afar; urban population surge | Overcrowding; strained services; increased criminality; community tension | Environmental → Community |
| Aid convoy blockades | WFP ration cuts of 50%+ to remaining camp refugees | Urban food aid delays; market food price increases of 88–200% | Dietary reduction; malnutrition risk; debt accumulation for food purchases | Food → Economic |
| State of emergency powers | Expanded police arrest and search powers; ethnic/linguistic profiling | Mass arrest of Tigrinya speakers (Eritrean and Tigrayan); extortion | Fear of mobility; business disruption; self-censorship; psychological distress | Personal → Community → Economic |
| Tigray regional administrative collapse | Tigray-issued documents (licenses, IDs) unable to be renewed | Undocumented status for thousands; loss of legal livelihood rights; business closures | Exposure to police harassment; loss of income; forced informality | Political → Economic → Personal |
| UNHCR/RRS registration suspension | New Eritrean arrivals (from Tigray) unable to obtain refugee status | Undocumented status; no access to aid or services | Invisibility; extreme vulnerability; reliance on community protection only | Political → Food → Community |

*Source: Synthesized from fieldwork data, July 2023, and secondary sources (*UNHCR 2021, 2022, 2023; Miller, 2022; García Amado et al., 2023).

The table reveals a cascade architecture of remarkable complexity. What began as a conflict in a region hosting refugee camps produced — through the propagation pathways of infrastructure disruption, ethnic profiling, administrative collapse, and aid system failure — compounded insecurity across all six human security dimensions simultaneously. No single dimension can be addressed in isolation: a policy that restored food aid without addressing police extortion would leave refugees vulnerable to losing their

income to extraction; a policy that issued new documentation without restoring the right to work would leave documented but economically excluded refugees.

## 7.2 The Structural Waste of Refugee Human Capital

A recurring theme across the economic and political security dimensions is what the PDUW project terms a "structural waste of refugee human capital." The finding that 70% of non-working urban refugees were willing to work; that 71% of men and 40% of women had relevant pre-displacement work experience; and that legal barriers — not lack of skill or motivation — produced the labour market exclusion documented in Addis Ababa, represents a policy failure of substantial magnitude. The Tigray conflict exacerbated this failure: the erosion of legal identity through documentation voids, registration suspension, and business licence problems compounded the pre-existing legal barriers to formal employment.

This framing — refugee human capital as a development resource squandered by policy design — runs through both the PDUW project and the human security analysis of this article. Eritrean urban refugees in Ethiopia are not, predominantly, a passive aid-dependent population: they are educated, experienced, entrepreneurial, and — as the interview data demonstrates repeatedly — deeply motivated to achieve economic self-sufficiency. The failure to achieve that self-sufficiency reflects the regulatory architecture governing their lives, amplified by the Tigray conflict, not individual deficits.

# 8. Recommendations and the Future of Urban Refugee Governance in Ethiopia

This article has demonstrated that the Tigray conflict produced a Compounded Insecurity Cascade for Eritrean urban refugees in Ethiopia, generating simultaneous, interconnected failures across economic, food, personal, community, environmental, and political security dimensions. The pre-existing vulnerabilities of protracted displacement — legal exclusion, documentation precarity, dependence on erratic remittances and inadequate aid — created the structural conditions that amplified these failures beyond what would have been experienced by more securely established urban populations.

The analysis presents three urgent policy directions. First, urban refugee governance needs to be institutionalized in local planning and development. The PDUW project’s suggestion that local governments be engaged in refugee management and programming can be seen not just as a procedural suggestion but as an indication of a key acknowledgement that urban refugees reside in cities, that their sense of security is a function of urban governance, and that their welfare is dependent on urban policy. The RRS urban refugee unit set up in 2022 represents an exciting institutional development, but its mandate will need to be tied explicitly to the planning frameworks of Addis Ababa City Administration as well as Afar Regional State development strategies. Second, we must address the legal and regulatory impediments that induce the human capital waste within refugees on a structural basis. The PDUW project found three fundamental barriers: restriction to work permits, inability to register businesses in refugees’ own names and non-recognition of previous qualifications — policies,

not essentials. In addition, the 2019 Refugee Proclamation is the legislative basis for their removal. Implementation has been delayed because of COVID-19 and the Tigray conflict. The urgency for humanitarian action is now compelling; so, as the PDUW project contends, is the economic development case.

Third, emergency planning for internal conflict must explicitly incorporate refugee protection. The Tigray conflict exposed the absence of any specific protection protocol for refugees resident in Ethiopia if Ethiopia itself becomes a theatre of war. The suspension of UNHCR registration from 2020 to 2022 — leaving thousands of newly displaced Eritreans undocumented — was catastrophic and preventable. The inability to renew Tigray-region-issued documents through any alternative national mechanism was equally avoidable with adequate advance planning. The UNHCR and RRS must develop conflict contingency protocols that maintain registration and documentation functions under internal conflict conditions.

Theoretically, this article's principal contribution is the Compounded Insecurity Cascade model, which advances the human security framework by specifying the mechanisms through which internal host-state conflict amplifies pre-existing protracted displacement vulnerabilities. The CIC model is potentially applicable beyond Ethiopia: as Fein and Van Den Hoek (2022) demonstrate, conflict at refugee camp locations is far more common than conventionally assumed. As climate change intensifies resource conflicts, and as the internal political instability of many refugee-hosting states in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East continues, the scenario analysed in this article — refugee populations experiencing doubled displacement as their host state goes to war — is likely to become more rather than less common.

The story told in this article is not, ultimately, a story about the failure of any individual state or institution, though failures are extensively documented. It is a story about the structural inadequacy of refugee governance frameworks designed for a world in which refugees flee unstable states to seek protection in stable ones. When that binary fails — when the supposedly stable becomes unstable, and when protracted displacement populations find themselves, in the words of one respondent, "just living because we are fortunate enough to blend in" — the limits of existing frameworks are exposed. Closing those limits is the task that the evidence presented here demands.

# Declarations

Funding

This work was supported by the UK Research and Innovation Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) [ES/T004525/1

Ethics Statement

This study was approved by the Ethical Review Board of the partner institutions. Informed consent was obtained from all informants participated in the study.

Conflict of Interest: The author declares no competing interests.

Clinical Trial: Not Applicable

# Author Contribution

E.E.D ellected the data,wrote the main manuscript, prepared figures and tables. The authour reviewed the manuscript

# Acknowledgement

This research was supported by UK Research and Innovation’s Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) (project ES/T004525/1).

## References

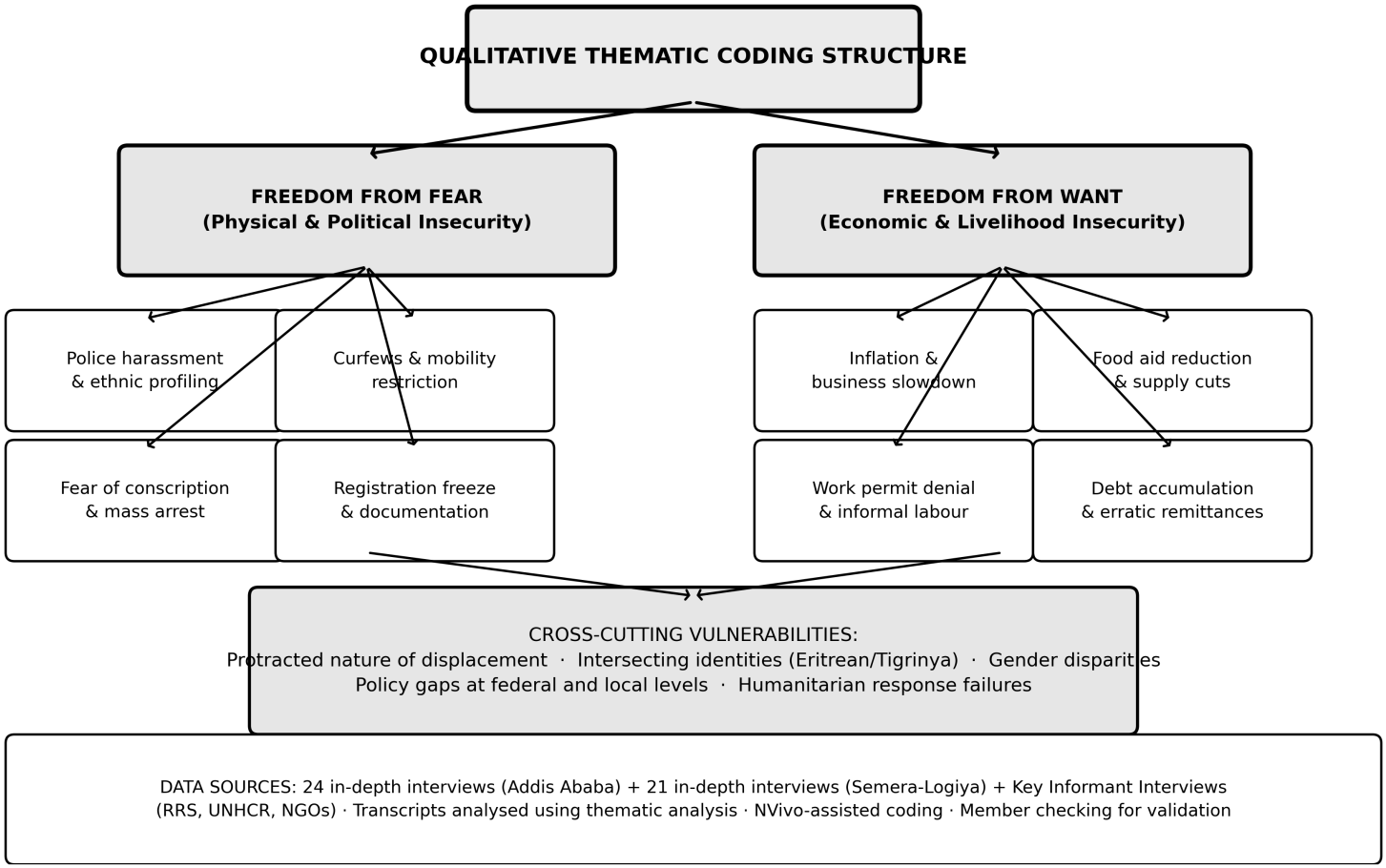
1. Abbink, J. (2021). The politics of conflict in Northern Ethiopia, 2020–2021: A study of war-making, media bias and policy struggle. ASCL Working Paper 152/2021.
2. Agblorti, S. K. M., & Grant, M. (2020). Revisiting the host–refugee environmental conflict debate: Perspectives from Ghana's refugee camps. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 55(1).
3. Akgul, A., Gurer, C., & Aydin, H. (2021). Exploring the victimization of Syrian refugees through the human security model: An ethnographic approach. *Studies on Ethnicity and Nationalism*, *21*, 46–66.
4. Ali, J. A., & Ocha, W. (2018). East Africa refugee crisis: Causes of tensions and conflicts between the local community and refugees in Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya. *Journal of Social Science Studies*, 5(1).
5. Amin, A. (2022). The insecurity of Afghan refugees in Indonesia: An overview from the perspective of human security. *Malaysian Journal of International Relations*, *10*, 63–78.
6. Bakewell, O. (2008). Research beyond the categories: The importance of policy irrelevant research into forced migration. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *21*(4), 432–453.
7. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101.
8. Castles, S. (2003). Towards a sociology of forced migration and social transformation. *Sociology*, *37*(1), 13–34.
9. Cosby, S. L. (2009). *Human security concept*. The root of U.S. national security and foreign policy.
10. Creed, X., et al. (2023). *Safe for whom? A human security perspective on Nigeria as a safe country of origin*. Journal of Refugee Studies.
11. de Simone, S. (2020). Beyond normativity and benchmarking: Applying a human security approach to refugee-hosting areas in Africa. *Third World Quarterly*, *41*(1), 168–183.

12. Devon, A. (2014). Human security concept in political and academic circles.
13. Edwards, A. (2009). Human security and the rights of refugees: Transcending territorial and disciplinary borders. *Michigan Journal of International Law*, *30*(3), 763–807.
14. EHRC-OHCHR (2021). Joint investigation report on Tigray conflict. Addis Ababa.
15. Erena, A. N. (2017). Land use/land cover dynamics and urban expansion in Addis Ababa. *Environmental and Natural Resources Research*, 7(4).
16. Fein, F., & Van Den Hoek, J. (2022). Do refugee camps offer a refuge from conflict? A spatially explicit analysis of conflict incidence at 1,543 refugee camps across Africa (1997–2020). *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, *4*, 857250.
17. García Amado, P., McAteer, B., Krisciunaite, A., & Brown, A. (2023). Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia: Building urban solutions. IIED Working Paper. London: IIED. http://pubs.iied.org/21866IIED
18. Gasper, D. (2014). Human security: From definitions to investigating a discourse. In G. MacFarlane, & Y. Khong (Eds.), *Human Security and the UN*. Indiana University Press.
19. Gasper, D., & Sinatti, G. (2016). Research on migration from a human security angle. In P. Taran, et al. (Eds.), *People on the Move*. ILO.
20. Kumssa, A., & Jones, J. F. (2014). Human security issues of Somali refugees and the host community in Northeastern Kenya. *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies*, *12*(1), 27–46.
21. Massa, A. (2022). Waiting for an opportunity. Future, transit and higher education among Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 49(3).
22. Migration Policy Institute. (2025). *Severe repression in Eritrea has prompted the largest refugee exodus in Africa*. MPI.
23. Miller, C. (2022). *Eritrean refugees in Ethiopia during the Tigray conflict: A situation analysis*. Refugees International.
24. Mulugeta, M., & Mekonnen, T. (2017). Illicit cross-border migration in Ethiopia: Causes, patterns and policy responses. *Ethiopian Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*, *13*(2), 53–80.
25. Mutanen, A. (2015). About human security. *Navi Mavi Journal*, 14(2).
26. Nyaoro, D. (2019). Refugee hosting and conflict resolution. In J. D. Schmidt, et al. (Eds.), *Refugees and Forced Migration in the Horn and Eastern Africa*. Springer.
27. Odutayo, A. (2016). Human security: An incomplete framework for refugee protection. *Africa Review*, *8*(2), 112–122.
28. Pathak, B. (2014). Human security and human rights: Harmonious to inharmonious relations. *Archives of Business Research*, *2*(1), 46–73.
29. Poole, A., & Riggan, J. (2020). *Time with/out telos: Eritrean refugees' precarious choice of im/possible futures in Ethiopia and beyond*. Anthropological Quarterly.
30. Rosenow-Williams, K., & Behmer, K. (2015). A gendered human security perspective on humanitarian action in IDP and refugee protection. *Refugee Survey Quarterly*, *34*(3), 1–23.

31. RRS. (2019). *Refugees Proclamation No. 1110/2019*. Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia. Addis Ababa.
32. Sesay, F. L. (2004). Conflicts and refugees in developing countries. Dissertation, LMU München.
33. Tesema, M. (2021). Effects of the Tigray conflict on natural resources and displacement in northern Ethiopia. *Regional Environmental Change*, 21(3).
34. Tufa, F. A. (2021). Figurations of displacement in and beyond Ethiopia. TRAFIG Working Paper No. 5. Bonn: BICC.
35. Tufa, F. A., et al. (2022). A matter of time and contacts: Trans-local networks and long-term mobility of Eritrean refugees. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, *48*(18), 4328–4346.
36. Tuzi, I. (2019). From insecurity to secondary migration: Bounded mobilities of Syrian and Eritrean refugees in Europe. *Migration Letters*, *16*(4), 551–561.
37. UNDP. (1994). *Human Development Report 1994: New Dimensions of Human Security*. UNDP.
38. UNHCR. (2021). *Tigray situation update, 3 March 2021*. UNHCR.
39. UNHCR. (2022a). *Ethiopia: Eritrean refugees in the Afar region*. UNHCR.
40. UNHCR. (2022b). *Ethiopia urban refugee population in Addis Ababa (as of November 2022)*. UNHCR.
41. UNHCR. (2023). *Annual results report 2022, Ethiopia*. UNHCR.
42. Vietti, F., & Scribner, T. (2013). Human insecurity: Understanding international migration from a human security perspective. *Journal of Human Migration and Security*, *1*(1), 17–31.

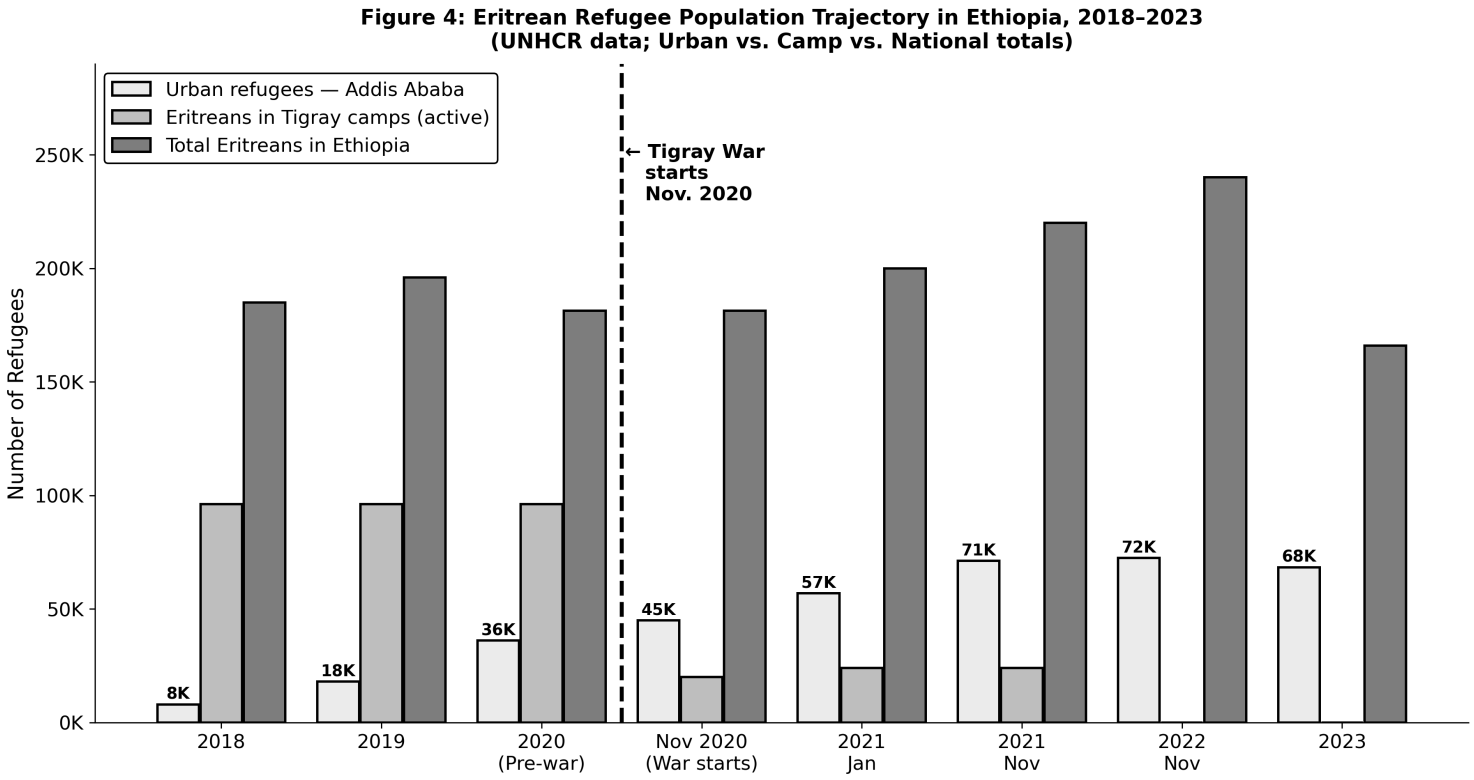
# Figures

**Figure 5: Thematic Coding Structure — Human Security Dimensions and Sub-themes**




## Figure 1

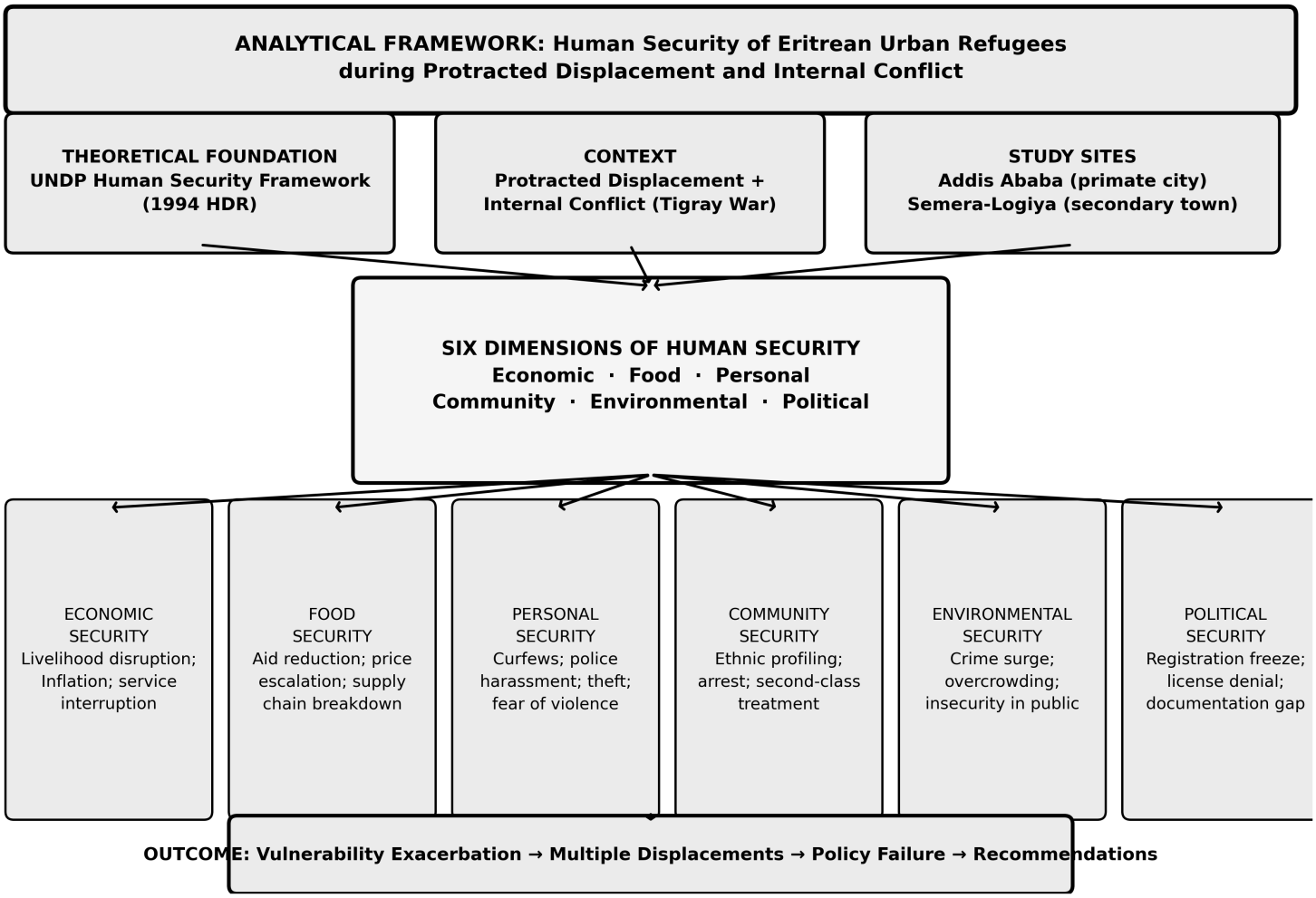
*Thematic Coding Structure — Human Security Dimensions and Sub-themes (derived from 45 in-depth interviews and 8 key informant interviews, July 2023)*




## Figure 2

*Eritrean Refugee Population Trajectory in Ethiopia, 2018–2023 (Sources: UNHCR 2021, 2022, 2023; García Amado et al., 2023; Miller, 2022)*

**Figure 1: Analytical Framework — Human Security Dimensions of Eritrean Urban Refugees**




## Figure 3

*Analytical Framework — Human Security Dimensions of Eritrean Urban Refugees during Protracted Displacement and Internal Conflict*

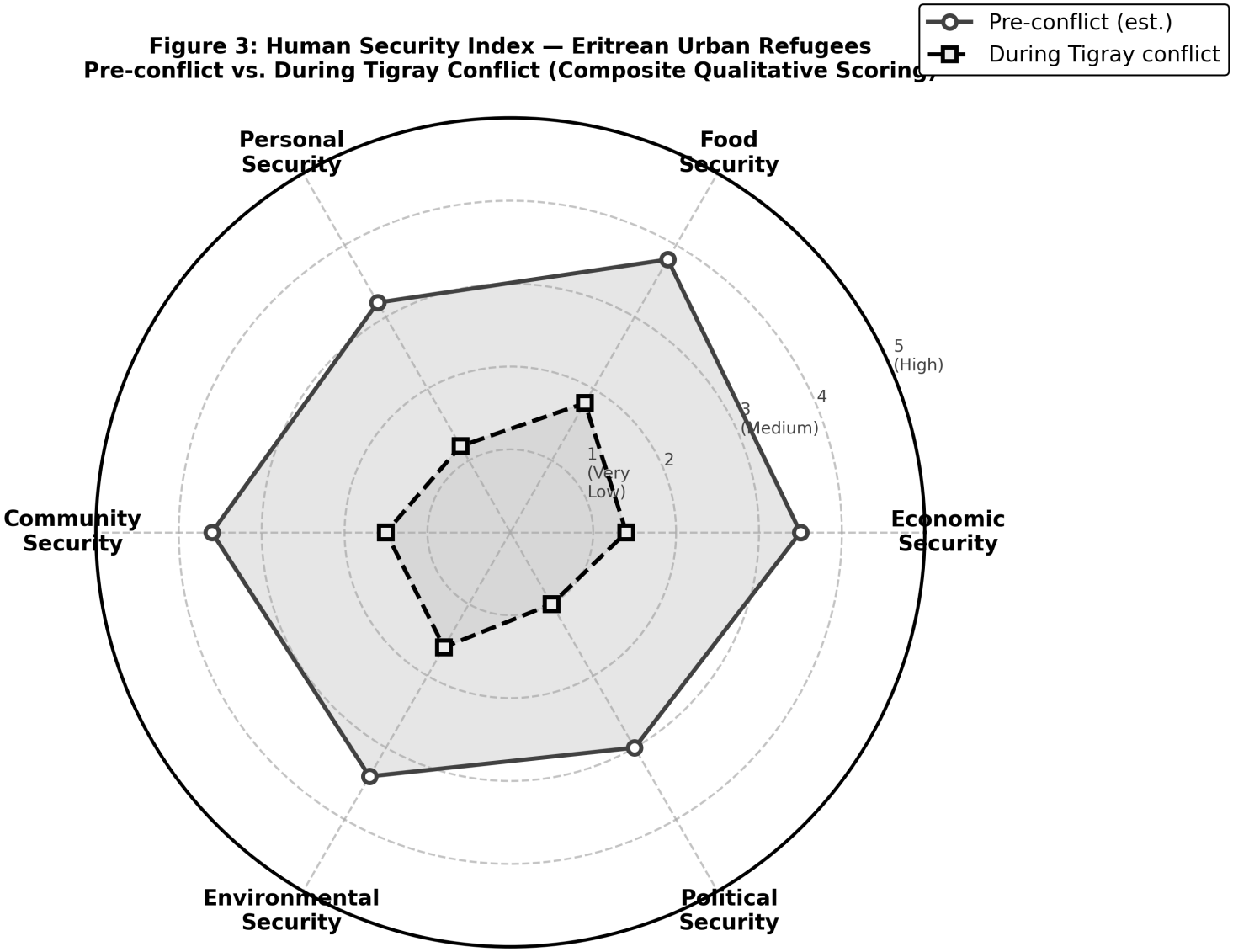



**Figure 4**

*Human Security Index — Eritrean Urban Refugees: Pre-conflict vs. During Tigray Conflict (Qualitative composite scoring: 1=Very Low, 5=High; derived from thematic analysis of 45 interviews)*