

ETHIOPIAN RED CROSS



Emergency Operations Centre

Case Study

Summary

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| National Society | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) |
| EOC Level(s) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• National EOC in Addis Ababa and 8 regional EOCs |
| Year Established | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 2019 at HQ and replicated to 8 regional offices gradually. |
| Administrative Coverage | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National EOC supports 15 regions in the whole country, while 8 of them have regional EOCs established and cover 67 zones & 582 woredas. |
| EOC Type | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 regional EOCs and National EOC are fixed EOCs in a building, where virtual coordination through Microsoft Teams or tele-conference is in place. |
| EOC Modality | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The EOCs operate permanently and active every day. |
| Supporting NSs | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Supported by IFRC and Danish Red Cross technically as well in infrastructures along with other PNSs (e.g. GRC, NLRC), and ICRC. |
| EOC Specific Staff / Volunteers | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• At National level, there are 3 staffs (National EOC Coordinator, EOC officer, and one senior IM officer). Further, in each regional branches, there is one dedicated regional EOC Coordinator per branch. |
| Governance Line | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The National EOC reports to Deputy Secretary General of DRM. In regional branch offices the regional EOC coordinator reports to Head of Branch and technically supervised by the National EOC Coordinators. |

Connection with Authorities

- ERCS closely works with the Ethiopian Disaster Risk Management Commission (EDRMC) at national level extended to region, zone, and woreda level. ERCS plays an auxiliary role to government entity (EDRMC) – which coordinates disasters management in the country and mandated in declaring emergencies.

1. Context and Characteristics

Leveraging ICT for effective disaster risk management operations being one of the strategic priorities of Ethiopian Red Cross Society (ERCS) and aligned with IFRC's strategy on digitalization; the national society established its Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) in 2019 at its Head Quarter, and gradually replicated the setup to its 8 regional branches from 2020-2025, with the aim of utilizing ICT to support the national society's effort in disaster risk management operations in an effective and efficient manner, harnessing operations through a standardized central coordination hub.



EOC in Ethiopia. © Ethiopian Red Cross, 2025

ERCS has been utilizing the EOCs in its effort in responding to slow and sudden onset crisis mainly focusing on natural disasters (i.e. flood, drought, epidemics, landslide,).

2. Core Functional Areas

a. Strategic

Strategic decisions during emergencies are made by the Emergency Task Force (ETF), with leadership determined by the disaster's severity: Red-level crises are led by the Deputy Secretary General, Dark Red by the Secretary General and senior management, and Orange/Yellow at regional or zonal levels. The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) coordinates the process using field data, early warnings, and external sources for evidence-based decision making in disaster risk management. ETF meetings are convened within 72 hours of a disaster and held daily until strategy and roles are set; large-scale emergencies involve HQ EOC with virtual links to regional and zonal teams.

b. Operations

Operational coordination is directed by the Emergency Task Force (ETF), with daily operational oversight provided by DRM leadership at the zonal, regional, or headquarters (HQ) level, as appropriate to the disaster category. Zonal and Regional DRM Heads are responsible for field implementation, coordinating BDRTs and volunteers, and managing immediate response activities. HQ DRM oversees strategic direction, technical support, and resource mobilization, particularly in Red and Dark Red emergency categories.

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) serves as the central coordination platform upon receipt of an emergency alert, early warning, or government request. The EOC coordinator manages situational analysis processes, delivering evidence-based insights to senior management and the ETF.

The EOC facilitates structured communication between HQ and regional, zonal, and woreda branches through established reporting lines. Field teams—including BDRTs, NDRTs, and branch staff—provide assessment data and situation reports to the EOC, which in turn disseminates analysis, guidance, and coordination updates back to the branches, ensuring effective two-way information flow between field operations and leadership.

The EOC is deactivated once the emergency phase stabilizes, the operational strategy is approved and implemented, and responsibility transitions to routine management, recovery, or rehabilitation structures. Subsequently, reporting lines revert to standard departmental and branch coordination protocols.

c. Information Management

Following the SG's directive, all operational information is shared via the EOC channel. The national society uses the IFRC-hosted Kobo server for data collection and Power BI for visualization. The EOC distributes situation updates—such as emergency alerts, rapid assessments, and field reports—to senior management, partners, and potential donors through WhatsApp and formal channels to ensure coordinated response and situational awareness.

3. Infrastructure and Equipment

The Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) at headquarters features six 84-inch smart TVs with VuWall Docker for situational updates, two 43-inch TVs for media streaming, a 10-seat conference table, pin board, whiteboard, and power stabilizer. There are limited VHF radios at HQ and regional branches. The EOC can operate remotely via its cloud-hosted platform, providing real-time information online.

4. Integration with Government and Partners

The EOC acts as the central hub connecting ERCS with government bodies, humanitarian organizations, and the Movement. It coordinates closely with national and local authorities like the EDRMC and regional administrations, supporting ERCS's auxiliary role. Government alerts and disaster requests prompt EOC analysis and coordinated response.

Real-time disaster data is managed primarily for operational decisions and shared officially with Movement partners via established channels like the ETF and IFRC Go Platform. ERCS plans to share selective data with external stakeholders once policy is set.

Situation updates are sent to Movement partners and donors through WhatsApp and email for shared awareness. During major emergencies, the EOC engages with humanitarian partners through coordination platforms, including cluster mechanisms when needed.

Information on Impact-Based Forecasting is shared to support early action. Coordination is guided by ERCS SOPs and established mechanisms. The EOC also links with new initiatives such as anticipatory action and climate-smart projects in collaboration with various stakeholders.

5. Lessons Learned and Adaptation

Achievements

- Since its establishment in 2019, the Ethiopian Red Cross Society Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) has become a pivotal coordination hub, significantly enhancing the speed and effectiveness of emergency responses.
- The EOC model has expanded to eight regions, supported by well-trained teams and clear operational guidelines, which have strengthened local response capacities.
- The adoption of dashboards and standardised reporting has improved both coordination and situational awareness among stakeholders.
- Enhanced collaboration with partners has been achieved through improved data management and communication channels.

Challenges

- As operations become increasingly complex, gaps have emerged in staffing, technical expertise, infrastructure, and interoperability across systems.
- There is a pressing need for investment in skilled personnel, state-of-the-art technology, and comprehensive training to ensure the EOC can effectively address multi-hazard scenarios and support rapid, coordinated national responses.

Adaptations

- The EOC has demonstrated notable flexibility by adapting its processes and tools to a wide range of emergency types, proving the robustness and scalability of the model.
- Key lessons highlight the importance of continuous capacity building, modernisation of infrastructure, and maintaining strong partnerships to overcome emerging challenges and sustain effective operations.