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FEEDING ETHIOPIA

“The war against hunger is truly mankind’s war of liberation.” – *Former U.S. President John F. Kennedy*

Ethiopia’s rapidly growing population underscores the need for sustainable access to nutritious food. Boasting Africa’s largest livestock herd—and as the third largest producer of staple food crops on the continent—Ethiopia has great agricultural potential. That said, changes in rainfall associated with worldwide weather patterns have exacerbated cyclical droughts. Ethiopia suffered two of its worst droughts in decades from 2015 to 2017, increasing food insecurity for millions of Ethiopians. Through the U.S. Government’s Feed the Future initiative, we enhance food security, increase agricultural productivity, and promote resilience, especially among vulnerable populations. Our assistance promotes more efficient and sustainable agriculture to improve food security and decrease Ethiopia’s dependence on international food aid to feed its population.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR ETHIOPIA

Malnutrition contributes to more than 50 percent of all infant and child deaths in Ethiopia. The damage caused by malnutrition during the first 1,000 days—from the start of a woman’s pregnancy to her child’s second birthday—is usually irreversible in terms of its negative impact on the child’s health, cognitive development, physical growth, and school and work performance later in life. The major causes of malnutrition in Ethiopia are persistent food insecurity, poor maternal and child feeding practices, high incidence of infectious diseases, and limited access to quality nutrition services. Household wealth, education, and family planning are also key drivers of children’s nutrition. Twenty-seven percent of women in Ethiopia are underweight or malnourished and thirty-eight percent of children suffer from stunting. Ethiopia’s lowland pastoral areas and densely populated, food-insecure highland districts suffer

PHOTO: ABIY SOLOMON, SAVE THE CHILDREN

frequent droughts, complicating access to and consumption of nutritious foods. Nearly 80 percent of Ethiopian incomes are tied to agriculture.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE UNITED STATES

A spike in world food prices in 2008 hurt economies across the world and led to destabilizing riots in more than 30 countries. To feed a population expected to grow to nine billion people by 2050, the world will have to double its current food production, all while the frequency and severity of changing weather patterns continues to increase.

Undernutrition robs the developing world of critical human capital and capacity, and undermines other development investments in health, education and economic growth. Globally, undernutrition contributes to 2.6 million child deaths each year—more than any other disease.

Proactive investments to improve food security also make financial sense for the U.S. Government. As households are better able to meet their food consumption needs, they are less likely to be impacted by shocks, like droughts or floods. This, in turn, reduces the need for emergency or humanitarian food assistance also alleviates causes of instability.

PROGRAMMING

FEED THE FUTURE: Our assistance helps farmers improve agricultural production for both household consumption and market sales, helping families earn more while improving their diets. Focus commodities include maize, wheat, chickpea, sesame, coffee, honey, livestock, dairy and poultry. These efforts are aligned with and support the Government of Ethiopia's Agricultural Growth Program, which aims to improve agricultural productivity and increase market opportunities for smallholder farmers. Through the U.S. Government's [Feed the Future initiative](#), we also work with chronically vulnerable households to graduate them from food insecurity by increasing income generation opportunities for farmers. In lowland areas of Ethiopia, we support pastoralists to benefit from livestock market value chains and new economic opportunities through entrepreneurship and employment opportunities. All of these activities decrease dependence on food assistance while transforming the economic potential of Ethiopia's rural population.

NUTRITION: Our integrated multi-sectoral nutrition program focuses on nutrition sensitive and nutrition specific interventions to reduce stunting. Working through our Feed the Future and health partners, the program supports the Government of Ethiopia's National Nutrition Program.

HUMANITARIAN FOOD ASSISTANCE: When a crisis hits and households cannot feed themselves, we use emergency food assistance to save lives, reduce suffering and lessen the impact of shocks on overall food security. During an emergency response, we use in-kind food aid, locally or regionally procured food, cash transfers or food vouchers to ensure communities have access to food. Our support is coordinated with the Government of Ethiopia and the international community so that we know our resources are targeted to where they are needed most. We also support refugees fleeing conflict and crisis in their home countries who temporarily settle in Ethiopia.