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BUILDING RESILIENCE FOR ETHIOPIA'S MOST VULNERABLE

“Persistence and resilience only come from having been given the chance to work through difficult problems.” – *Gever Tullet*

Ethiopia has reduced the number of people living under the poverty line by 33 percent since 2000. However, 37 million Ethiopians remain either poor or vulnerable to falling into poverty in the wake of natural disasters and market shocks. These crises can increase humanitarian needs and cause households to fall back into dire situations. Land degradation, limited household assets, little mechanization and technology applied in farming, few job opportunities, climate change and a growing population all undermine Ethiopia's efforts to be self-sufficient. The 2015-2017 related droughts and food insecurity crises affected more than 20 million people—requiring a \$1.4 billion response, the largest humanitarian response ever. Because of improved household resilience and a rapid response, including prepositioning of food, widespread famine was averted.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR ETHIOPIA

As the population continues to grow—albeit at a reduced growth rate—and droughts become more frequent, Ethiopia's ability to be resilient to shocks will be a key for maintaining growth and stability.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE UNITED STATES

We support the most vulnerable and those affected by crisis or natural disaster because doing so is a core American value. We provide humanitarian assistance because we value the dignity of human life and seek to save lives and prevent suffering, but we also recognize that the long-term solution comes from helping people gain the ability to withstand shocks. By improving food security, and building the ability to withstand shocks, such as droughts, we can protect and advance our development gains.

Proactive assistance also makes financial sense. After the 2011 Horn of Africa famine, evidence showed that every dollar spent on resilience programming saved almost three dollars in humanitarian assistance. Seed responses, when conditions allow, help families to meet their own needs and also reduce the overall cost of responding. When the 2015-2016 drought was subsiding and farming was again possible, we stepped in as the largest provider of seeds to the international effort. The UN estimated the savings from the international seed response at nearly one billion dollars.

PROGRAMMING

ACCESS TO WATER: We are helping to increase the availability of improved, sustainable drinking water sources, while also expanding water use for agriculture. By rehabilitating non-functioning infrastructure and constructing new systems, we're working to provide improved drinking water sources for 225,000 people. Investments in small-scale irrigation improve crop production while providing increased access to water for livestock. Lack of water is also a major source of conflict in the lowlands and our activities ease tensions associated with water insecurity.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY: We support efforts to institute resilient livelihoods interventions, including providing seeds for the main growing season and helping to reduce post-harvest losses.

LIVESTOCK MARKET EXPANSION: We are helping pastoralists improve livestock health by providing better access to feed and veterinary services and strengthening their links with livestock traders, processors and exporters—a private sector approach to ensure long-term sustainability. We work with rangeland management councils to map resources and help pastoralists plan their grazing to support smarter natural resource utilization and mitigate potential conflicts. For those seeking other employment opportunities, we support vocational training and better access to finance, providing pastoralists with the potential to find or create alternative livelihoods. Our activities are informed by community-based climate service and early warning systems, so we can adjust interventions based on drought conditions, allowing us to intervene before a situation becomes critical. Despite the worst drought in 50 years, targeted households saw an average increase in annual income of \$194, strengthening their resilience going forward.

PRODUCTIVE SAFETY NET PROGRAM: We support Ethiopia's Productive Safety Net Program to help food-insecure households find a path toward self-sufficiency. Currently, eight million chronically food insecure people receive six months of food or cash transfers, providing reliable access to food and helping households protect their assets. In exchange, able-bodied adults work to build community assets and infrastructure. Evidence shows that the transfers made through the program have reduced poverty in Ethiopia by two percentage points and that the program has had a transformative effect on rural communities through land rehabilitation, small-scale irrigation, and the construction of roads that link villages to education and health services and open up more livelihood opportunities.

NUTRITION: We support the expansion of comprehensive nutrition treatment programs at the community level, capable of rapidly identifying, treating moderate and severe malnutrition, to address the critical needs of malnourished children and pregnant and lactating women.

RELIEF SUPPLIES: We strive to ensure the basic dignity of people whose households have been destroyed or reduced by drought, flooding or conflict by rapidly providing basic relief materials, such as water treatment kits, cooking implements, and plastic sheeting.