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WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE

“The impact of water on all aspects of development is undeniable: a safe drinking water supply, sanitation for health, management of water resources, and improvement of water productivity can help change the lives of millions.” – *Former USAID Administrator Dr. Rajiv Shah, World Water Day, 2011*

In 2015, Ethiopia achieved its Millennium Development Goal target of 57 percent access to safe drinking water, an increase from just 13 percent in 1990. Yet access to improved sanitation, while also vastly improved since 1990, remains alarmingly low at only 28 percent nationwide. Overall, safe water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) coverage across Ethiopia remains woefully inadequate. Communities without access to safe water depend on scarce and often seasonal surface water sources like unprotected springs, ponds, streams and rivers, many of which are located far from households and contain severe waterborne diseases. When drought conditions prevail, many of these water sources for people and their crops and livestock disappear.

PROGRAM GOALS

Water cuts across nearly every aspect of our programming. Used for drinking, hygiene, and health care, water is also needed to irrigate crops, feed livestock and develop renewable energy. Scarce water supplies can become potential sources of conflict. We incorporate WASH activities within our governance, health, nutrition, resilience and emergency assistance activities with a focus on sustainability. We also help to strengthen the Ethiopian Government’s capacity to coordinate WASH and water resource management.

INCREASE ACCESS TO SUSTAINABLE WATER SUPPLY SERVICES

To accelerate sustainable access to improved drinking water, we are enhancing the ability of local governments to contract with and oversee service providers, conduct full lifecycle cost analysis on water systems, set equitable tariffs, and monitor water system functionality and quality. We are also working with communities to establish representative water committees that can responsibly collect water tariffs and manage funding for routine operations and maintenance. Support to small entrepreneurs delivering water products and services can increase coverage and generate income, particularly for those who have no alternatives. By focusing on capacity building and leveraging local partners, activities can empower Ethiopian institutions and bolster long-term sustainability.

INCREASE ACCESS TO IMPROVED SANITATION PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

To catalyze sustainable access to improved sanitation, we are helping to create widespread demand for sanitation products and services through a community-led total sanitation and hygiene approach. We are also piloting additional participatory approaches to spark demand for improved sanitation in pastoral communities where the community-led approach has had only modest success. Lessons from these pilots will be shared widely and will feed into the national sanitation dialogue. We are also supporting small sanitation businesses to respond to increased consumer demand through targeted training on product development, marketing and procurement. By focusing on both demand and supply, activities are making progress in delivering improved sanitation to the 72 million Ethiopians still using unimproved latrines or worse.

INCREASE ADOPTION OF KEY HYGIENE BEHAVIORS

We promote the four hygiene practices with the greatest demonstrated impact on health: Hand washing with soap at critical times, safe disposal and management of excreta, proper food hygiene, and safe household water storage, handling and treatment. This includes working with a broad range of hygiene products and services providers, including government extension agents and local entrepreneurs, to provide household water treatment, water and food storage technologies and other products to facilitate optimal hygiene behaviors.

IMPROVE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF FOOD PRODUCTION FROM RAINFED AND IRRIGATED AGRICULTURAL SYSTEMS

The majority of Ethiopian farmers rely on rainfed agriculture. Through the U.S. Government's Feed the Future initiative, investments to increase agricultural production include efforts to introduce or improve small-scale irrigation. In largely pastoral, livestock-rearing areas, climate change is increasing the severity of dry season conditions. We are helping to introduce supplemental irrigation measures in traditionally rainfed systems to better harness water when it is available. We are also building the capacity of communities to manage these systems sustainably and equitably, including through the establishment of functioning and inclusive water resources management committees.

Weak management and poor farming practices can adversely affect water resources for food production and the availability of safe water for drinking. We incorporate land conservation measures and improved agronomic practices in our activities to help raise production, enrich soil organic matter, and ensure that more rainfall is absorbed and used for production.