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Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia  
**OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER**

June 9, 2021  
Addis Ababa

## Press Briefing Transcript of June 9, 2021

### Office of the Prime Minister Updates

#### Key Highlights of the week include:

- On June 5 2021 the Council of Ministers in its 97<sup>th</sup> regular meeting approved the draft budget of 561.7 billion for the 2014 Ethiopian Fiscal year. In comparison to the 2013 Ethiopian Fiscal year budget allocation, the approved budget shows an 18% increase with due attention given to enhancing the nation's productive capacity in line with the ten-year perspective plan. The council also discussed additional budgetary allocation for the current 2013 fiscal year to cover costs related to humanitarian assistance in the Tigray Region, support to internally displaced persons; COVID19 response expenses; flooding prevention work etc.
- Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed undertook official visits to the Amhara Regional State in the past few days to review, launch and inaugurate large scale national projects some of which included mega projects that had been launched years ago and remained idle. One such mega project which was reviewed is the Megech dam launched 8 years ago but left idle with barren promises to the people of the region. This administration's fast-tracking projects principle however has now accelerated the pace of construction to 70% at the moment and in the coming months will be a key resource to avail drinking water to Gondar city and the vicinity as well as its utilization for irrigation development.
- Tana Beles -1 Sugar Factory is another delayed mega project which in the past three years has witnessed significant investments enabling its current operationalization. As per the original agreement signed between the Ethiopian Sugar Corporation and now defunct Metal and Engineering Corporation (METEC) in June 2012, factory constructions would have been completed to begin production within 18 months. However, due to overstretched delays which had become characteristic of the TPLF's chief embezzlement conglomerate METEC, the Corporation faced severe financial constraints.
- The newly inaugurated factory, while entering into its first phase of regular production concluding its trial, is expected to produce 6 thousand quintals of sugar a day. When operational in its second phase, it will have a capacity of producing 12 thousand quintals of white sugar per day, meeting the increasing demand for sugar of Ethiopians.
- Following the 2021 Green Legacy program launch at a national level on May 18, 2021, Regional States have been cascading the launch at the regional level. During Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's visit to the region over the weekend, he also joined in on the region's launching ceremony. It is to be recalled that the Green Legacy Program was initiated by the Prime Minister in 2019 with the aim of addressing

environmental degradation, mitigating climate change and supporting national food security with the planting of edible seedlings. Now in the 3<sup>rd</sup> year, this year program ambition is 6 billion seedlings at a national level and 1 billion provision to neighboring countries as part of Ethiopia's aspirations of promoting regional integration and strengthening neighborly relations.

- Another key activity during the Prime Minister's visit to the Amhara Regional State includes the inauguration of an edible oils production company. As this administration continues to address challenges for the private sector, the enabling environment that has been created through Ease of Doing Business measures and other interventions is supporting local investors to address the needs of the people and contributing to import substitution efforts.
- Yesterday, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed received the President of the Republic of Kenya, His Excellency Uhuru Kenyatta where both leaders presided over the signing ceremony of the historic telecom licensing agreement between the government and the Global Partnership for Ethiopia – a consortium of five leading global mobile operators. In 2018, this administration announced the commitment to liberalize the telecom sector, which initiated a major and historic policy shift. Delivering on that commitment, in late May 2021, the Council of Ministers approved the granting of one license to the consortium with a direction given to the Ethiopian Telecommunications Authority to expedite the process of granting the second license.

### On Tigray:

Few points to reiterate:

- 1) The continued calls for access still ignore that unfettered humanitarian access to the region has been granted months ago.
- 2) The continued media citations of few individuals as evidence for a region wide conflict are again unfounded. As shared last time counter insurgency operations by the ENDF are now concentrated only in two areas where the outlawed operatives are active and the terrorist groups' occasional attacks outside of these areas to give the impression of region wide conflict is mere amplification of the narrative propagated by a group declared terrorists per the House of People's Representatives – a Constitutional organ representing more than 100 million people;
- 3) The continued call by leaders of the terrorist cell to those in the region to arm themselves as testimony to the group's destabilizing mission while the Federal Government offered amnesty to lay down arms and return to life
- 4) The Tigray Emergency Recovery Plan (ERP-T) being developed by the Government together with partners which will be launched soon. The response plan builds on existing successful whole-of-government approaches and aims to strengthen and scale-up development and emergency programs, and community structures.
- 5) All schools in Mekele are open with the exception of those designated to host internally displaced persons. Per Ministry of Education, all schools in Adwa, Adigrat, and other cities are already registering students and opening up. MoE is currently in discussions with the Tigray Region on extending upcoming 12th Grade Exam as the students in the region have to cover three semesters education that was disrupted due to COVID before sitting for the Exam.

With continued notable steps being taken, aims to politicize the Tigray situation at a global level is not constructive nor helpful. It may benefit a handful of the terrorist group and embolden them in their destructive mission and vicious cycle, but is not supportive to the people of the region nor to Ethiopia at large. The rightful direction of pressure needs to be towards a withering terrorist cell that now only thrives via social media bravado and entities that think it can be resuscitated. Channelling this energy towards supporting the Provisional Administration will be helpful to the people of Tigray and to the nation overall.

Ethiopia continues to stand open and willing constructively with all partners in responding to the needs of our people in Tigray region. It aspires to work closely and constructively with partners to enable the growth of Ethiopia and the prosperity of its people.

## Ministry of Health Updates

The Ministry of Health, its agencies, and the Tigray Regional Health Bureau in collaboration with humanitarian and development partners, have continued the efforts to restore and strengthen the delivery of health services in Tigray. So far:

- **Functionality:** 55% of the hospitals (22 out of 40) and 52% of the health centers (117 out of 227) in the region have currently been made functional (total of 52% of hospital and health centers are function). In our report last week this figure was 46% but there were 10 health centers that became functional in this past week raising it up to 52 %. Evaluation is done on extent of damage and fund allocated by federal government to maintain and restore the services of 14 hospitals of the remaining 18 and 58 health centers of the remaining 123 and expected to resume services soon. To restore services, one of the focus areas is providing the needed equipment. 20 Health Centre Kits were sent (each kit can equip one health center). Out of these, 14 kits have been used to restore services, two mobile x-rays, an Ultra Sound, (Mekelle and Abi Adi), and 6 mechanical ventilators (Mekelle, Quiha, shire, 2 each) sent to hospitals and 47 microscopes to be distributed from our Mekelle EPSA hub.
- So far over 310,895,690 ETB worth of medicines and medical equipment has been delivered by the Ethiopian Pharmaceutical supply Agency of MOH. (based on the recovery plan for the whole region which needs 722 million USD, 110 million USD is allocated for health)
- A total of Birr 215,086,658.69 has been transferred from the ministry and its agencies for the response, recovery activities and for various health programs.
- Various professional experts have been deployed to the region to provide technical support.
- **IDP sites:** Essential health services are being provided for free for IDPs, and in addition to the existing professionals, 80 doctors, 25 nurses and 15 midwives (a total of 120 health professionals) have been recruited by the RHB through the support of Ministry of Health and deployed in all IDP centers. In 17 IDP centers with large population, temporary clinics have been established.
- **Mobile Teams:** Along with the efforts to make health facilities functional, 65 Mobile Health and Nutrition Teams, each consisting of 6-8 professionals, have been established by the government and partner organizations to deliver health services to the community, especially for mothers and children, and are providing various services in several woredas. In the last 2 months 75,077 under five children were screened for malnutrition at facilities and by mobile teams and Outpatient Therapeutic Feeding and SC was given to 2780 (4%) children diagnosed with malnutrition (SAM). MAM 9,581 (13 %).
- **Overall service delivery:** Through the functional health facilities and the mobile health teams, 409,963 people have received services in the last two months which includes MCH, delivery, HIV, TB, NCDS and others
- To improve ambulance services, 12 ambulances have been supported by the Ministry of Health and 8 ambulances supported from different regions. Currently, 58 ambulances are operating in the region. 65 ambulances are under maintenance and efforts are being made to get more ambulances through the government and partners. 15 vehicles were also provided to support the mobile clinics and commodity delivery in addition to those provided by partners.
- **GBV:** To provide the necessary treatment and support to victims of gender-based violence, so far a total of 57 mental health, psychological and social support professionals are providing services in 6 cities. To facilitate access to physical, psychiatric, social, and legal services, new one-stop center services have become operational at Mekelle Hospital, Axum, Shire, Maychew, and Adigrat in

addition to the existing one in Ayder Hospital. In addition, a Toll-free line (8983) has been set up for reporting to prevent and reduce the risk of gender based violence.

- **COVID-19:** COVID-19 testing has also been started and covid-19 treatment is being provided in 2 centers in Mekelle, one in Adigrat, and one in Axum hospitals. Preparations are underway to open treatment centers in Maychew, Wukro, Shire and Kuiha hospitals. A budget for this activity has also been transferred. In addition to prevention and treatment, more than 128,000 vaccine doses have been sent to the region and so far, more than 87,000 doses have been administered so far, of which around 3700 was given for IDPs.
- To alleviate the recent shortage of oxygen, 308 oxygen containing cylinders have been delivered. 160 oxygen cylinders for OR are also sent. Ayder and a private center oxygen plants are under maintenance while Federal budget has been allocated to set up a new production facility.
- **Coordination with Humanitarian and Development Partners:** Supporting with supplies like nutrition, emergency kits, providing actual service delivery.
- We would like to thank partners, individuals in country and abroad and all stakeholders who are supporting the government's efforts to reach our people during this difficult time. Despite these encouraging progresses, many challenges remain and we urge all to continue to support in all aspects.

## Disaster Risk Management Commission Updates

### Humanitarian Assistance

- Food and non-food items have been delivered for 4.5 million beneficiaries in the first round and have been delivered for 5.2 million beneficiaries in the second and third round. It continues to address more people.
- 170,798 Metric Ton (MT) of food which costs 5.4 billion birr or 135 million USD distributed so-far. The food distributed in the region for the 1st and 2nd round covered by both government (70%) and Partners (30%). Since the 3rd round food distribution 6 operators namely World Food Program, World Vision, CARE, Relief Society of Tigray (REST), Food for the Hungry (FH) and the Government of Ethiopia are providing food assistant in the region. Out of the 93 Woreda's (districts) in the region.
  - o WFP covers 21 woredas (22.58 %) in the North Western and Southern Zone of the region.
  - o World Vision covers 7 woredas (7.3 %) in the eastern and South Eastern Zone of the region.
  - o CARE international covers 6 woredas (6.45 %) in the Central and Eastern Zone of the region.
  - o REST covers 40 woredas (43.01 %) in Central, North Western (Shire Endasilase, Tahitay Koaro), South Eastern, and South Zone of the region.
  - o Food for the Hungry (FH) covers 5 woredas (5.38 %) in the central Zone of the region.
  - o Government of Ethiopia covers 14 woredas (15.05 %) in the Western zone of the region.

### Regarding for distribution:

- o World Food Program (WFP) addresses 18.64 % of the beneficiaries.
- o World Vision (WV) addresses 5.80% of the beneficiaries.
- o CARE International addresses 6.28 % of the beneficiaries.
- o REST addresses 54.6% of the beneficiaries.
- o Food for the Hungry (FH) addresses 5.98% of the beneficiaries.
- o Government of Ethiopia (NDRMC) addresses 8.70 % of the beneficiaries.

In general humanitarian partners (5 operators) cover 84.95 % of the woredas and address 91.3 % of the food supply and distribution where as 15.05 % of the woredas and 8.70 % of the food supply and distribution is covered and addressed by the Government of Ethiopia.

The role of the Government is confined to monitoring, creating conducive environment for partners and mainly focusing on Recovery and Rehabilitation activities.

This shows how the Government of Ethiopia has been working closely with partners and creates conducive environment for Humanitarian Partners.

I would like to stress on beneficiary number. Currently the report from humanitarian partner has been released indicating that 5.2million or 90 % of the population of the region needs immediate humanitarian assistances. While we are looking at the break down of this 5.2 million people, we can observe that 1,010,752 people are Productive Safety-Net beneficiaries and 40,336 are Eritrean refugees. These two programs (PSNP and Refuge) have their own resources which should not be included in the beneficiary list for humanitarian assistance.

- More than 98,562 Emergency Shelter & NFI kits, including 41 Rub halls which is estimated to be more than 796 million birr or 16 million USD has been supplied to cover more than 492,810 IDPs. There is significant gap in the non-food items. The partner covers only 33% of the total requirement.
- Emergency medicines which are estimated to be 72.9 million birr and 12 ambulances and Birr 129.8 Million have been supplied to the region by Ministry of Health to strengthen the basic health services and facilities. The Ministry of Health has been working to functionalize the health facilities in the region and availing emergency supplies for the hospitals and other health institutions in the region. In addition more than 67 mobile health teams have been established to deliver health services in areas where health facilities are not functional. Two UN Agencies and Nine International NGO's in collaboration with the regions Health Bureau are providing mobile Health Services in different Woreds of the Region.
- Women and children have been given due attention so that CSB and Emergency Medicines have been delivered using Air transport to key areas.
- To supply safe water to the IDPs and communities, it has been deployed more than 120 water trucks (In birr more than 75.6 million) which cover to serve more than 621, 000 people in the region. More than 300, 000 peoples are supplied a hygiene and sanitation facilities to protect potential sanitation and hygiene related risks in the areas where the people are the most vulnerable.
- The federal Ministry of Agriculture has been allocated 10 million birr to strengthen the regional agriculture and natural resource bureau. Additional supports are undergoing with the coordination of regional agriculture and natural resource bureau. 322,864 quintal from port Djibouti and 214,864 quintal carry over from last season a total of 537,728 quintal fertilizer has already made available and 210,795 quintal distributed. Regarding seed supply 73,440 quintal has been purchased and transported to the region. Partners has allocated birr 71.9 million for livestock restocking.
- The Ministry of education has been allocated 95 million birr to reopening the schools. Ministry of education has dispatched 1 million face masks to the region and installing a hand washing facilities in the 58 schools to promote Covid-19 protocols in the schools with the coordination of region and education cluster in the region. 72 teachers are trained on education in emergency to save IDPs and Host community.
- The regional labor and social affairs bureau with the coordination of protection cluster has been providing dignity kits to women and psycho-social supports to women and children in IDP sites.
- Refugees in the region are one of the priority areas of the government to maintain the safety and security, continuous supply of food and non-food supplies. In the refugee camps, where access and issues that are related with safety and security, the government has taken immediate action by relocating and maintaining basic humanitarian services.

## Coordination Mechanism

- Currently, the government and its partners are working closely based on the agreement which was signed on November 29/2020 between government and partners on issues that related to access, coordination and humanitarian assistance.
- To boost safe, efficient and effective delivery of humanitarian assistance, Emergency Coordination Center (ECC) has been established at Mekele comprising of relevant line ministries, regional bureaus, UN-Agencies, bi-laterals and international NGO's.
- This ECC is mandated to address immediate food and non-food needs in best organized and coordinated manner.
- Four layers of Emergency Coordination system (Regional, Zonal, Woreda and Food Distribution points (FDPs)) has been put in place in order to capture additional needs and address all supplies within short period of time.

## Humanitarian Access

- Currently, the case-by-case access clearance procedures are replaced by blanket approval process in order to better coordination of food and Non-food items provision across the region.
- More than 202 staff members of UN-Agencies, international NGO's including 8 international media have been provided an access to Tigray to support and coordinate the emergency responses in the region.
- Now, most parts of the region are accessible and creates conducive environment to speed up the delivery of food and non- food supplies to the needy people in the region.
- In the areas where safe movement of humanitarian cargos strained military escort has been taken as a right measures and last resort to get access and reach the needy once.
- Visa extension has been put in place for partners who are stationed in the region. The extension is based on the work volume and duration in the region.
- Communication materials are one of the issues which has frequently been raised by partners. Currently the Ministry of Peace has developed a guideline and circulated it to all partners to follow the direction that indicated in the guideline

## Recovery and Rehabilitation

- Regarding recovery and peace building intervention, Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Peace are closely working with EU, World Bank and UNDP in order to build back better damaged and destroyed economic and social infrastructures in the region.
- The federal government ministerial committee oversees all supports and has developed a plan to support regional bureaus in a regular base by assigning experts.
- Currently, the federal government is working on mobilizing resources for recovery and rehabilitation of damaged and destroyed economic and social infrastructures a swell as humanitarian assistances.
- Internal displaced peoples (IDPs) have been given due attention and three option have been sorted out:
  - In those areas where peace and stability are secured, IDPS are expected to return back to their original place on Voluntary base having International IDPs Guiding Principle (Voluntary, Informed, Dignified, Safe, Secure, and Sustainable).
  - In areas that need further effort to ensure safety and security, IDPs who have relatives in place where they are now will be kept with their relatives for a while.
  - In case where option 1 and 2 do not work IDPs will stay at temporary shelter.

## Major Challenges

- Access and security issues to address few food distribution points (6 woreda),
- Shortage of Emergency Shelter & Non-Food Items (ESNFI),
- Challenges in coordinating humanitarian responses at zonal and woreda levels,
- Challenges in fulfilling supplementary foods,
- Required substantial resources to plan and undertake recovery and rehabilitation interventions in the region.

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