



MINISTER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT CONDUCTS TOUR OF INSPECTION



The Minister of Local Government, Mr. Woldenkiel Abraha stated that alleviating social service shortages in Gelalo sub-zone will be given priority. He made the statement during the tour of inspection he conducted to the sub-zone from 21-26 September.

Minister Woldenkiel, accompanied by Ms. Asmeret Abraha, Governor of the Northern Red Sea Region, met and held discussion with administrators, heads of social service rendering institutions, and public

representatives.

After making a tour of inspection in the effort being made to ensure village regrouping activities, potable water supply projects, developing social service provision institutions and agricultural infrastructures, Minister Woldenkiel toured agricultural activities in Bada administrative area and discussed on the measures to be taken with the view to renovate flood damaged infrastructures.

Mr. Woldenkiel Abraha, finally,

called on the public to reinforce agricultural activities aimed at ensuring food security that is based on the principles of self-reliance.

The representatives of the public on their part, commending the initiative taken by the Ministry of Local Government, called for the advancement of social service provision institutions that have created socio-economic stability in their areas, alleviation of transportation problems, as well as for the immediate response to the flood damaged agricultural infrastructures in Bada, among others.

MINISTER OF LAND, WATER AND ENVIRONMENT STATEMENT

The Minister of Land, Water and Environment, Mr. Tesfai Ghebreselassie, delivered a statement at the biodiversity summit conducted in New York, on 30 September.

At the virtual summit, Mr. Tesfai stated that there is more global awareness about human dependence on a well-functioning biodiversity, the negative consequences of human action on the ecosystem, and the necessity of international cooperation to avert a likely crisis.

However, the Minister underlined that human action is not commensurate with the immense challenge being faced, that global warming and pollution continue unabated triggering climate crisis that upsets species distribution, phenology, population dynamics and community structure, among others.

Pointing out that “Damage to the ecosystem is an existential threat; and biodiversity is our barricade from novel diseases!” the Minister underscored the significance of a strong political will of all countries, a more meaningful technological and financial cooperation between the developed and developing countries for humanity to succeed in



maintaining environmental integrity conducive to life.

The Minister reasserted that Eritrea welcomes the Leaders’ Pledge to Nature that it has also endorsed and that the Government of Eritrea’s undertakings of biodiversity protection will be scaled up through wider community participation, investment and tackling regulatory framework gaps.

In conclusion, the Minister of Land, Water and Environment, Mr. Tesfai Ghebreselassie drew the attention of the summitters to the dangerous condition of an abandoned oil tanker moored in the Red Sea waters near the Yemeni port of Al Hudaydha. The Minister also called for a united stand to urge the concerned Yemenis political forces to cooperate in the safe unloading of the tanker.

RENOVATION OF SEREJAKA—GINDAE ROAD

The asphalt road that connects Serejaka with Gindae sub-zone, commonly known as the “Semanwi Bahri” route is being renovated and expanded. The highway has been partly damaged due to heavy rain and landslides and that renovation activity has been carried out for the last two months, the report added.

Pointing out that the repair and expansion task is being carried out by Adi-Halo Project-2, Mr. Birhane Hailu, head of the project, said that the task includes expansion of narrow roads, clearing drainage

ditches, culverts, and fords, as well as construction of diversion canals among others.

Through the machinery supported work road that is being conducted in cooperation with members of the EDF units, parts of the highway passing through Selemuna and Filfil has been repaired and that over 25 fords have been cleared, Mr. Berhane added.

Noting that the “Semenawi Bahri” route is one of the development programs fully constructed by domestic capacity, Mr. Omer

Yahiya, administrator of Gindae sub-zone stated that the highway has significant role in developing tourism and encourages investment as it crosses through the Semenawi Bahri National Park.

During a tour of inspection she conducted at the renovation site, Ms. Asmeret Abrha, Governor of the Northern Red Sea Region, commended the commitment the workforce involved in the project demonstrated and expressed the administration’s readiness to extend capacity level support.



ANNOUNCEMENT FROM THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH

Six patients have been diagnosed positive for COVID-19 in tests carried out on 1 October at Quarantine Centers in Adibara (1), Shilalo (2)), Mukhti (1); Goluj (1), and Om-Hager (1) in Gash Barka Region.

All the patients are nationals who returned from Sudan and Ethiopia recently.

On the other hand, twelve patients who were receiving medical treatment in hospitals in Gash Barka and Southern Regions have recovered fully and have been released from these facilities.

The total number of recovered patients to-date accordingly stands at 353.

The total number of confirmed cases in the country to-date has risen to 381.

Ministry of Health
Asmara
1 October 2020

SpotLight



Editor's Note: Understanding Eritrea is a series of articles that sheds light on the development path, anchored on the preservation and utilization of soil and water resources that Eritrea is following.

Billion Temesghen

Most people in Eritrea live in rural areas and earn a living through traditional farming and animal breeding practices. They grow food almost entirely by depending on the seasonal rain, which is often scarce.

However, the Government of Eritrea has been working on reducing peoples' dependence on subsistence farming by encouraging and assisting farmers to introduce small scale commercial farming practices. Of course, water is one of the most important resources needed to make this a reality, and the Logo Dam Developmental Pilot Project has been designed with this in mind. Water reservoirs were built and check dams were put in place with an extended work in soil and water conservation through a joint Government-People venture. The seven villages included in the project surrounding Logo Dam are Adi Zawl, Adi Kelkelti, Adi Halo, Adi

Selait, Adi Tsenay, Adi Sherefeto and Adi Hayo, thereafter, started working on a new pattern towards social transformation.

Logo Dam was built not only to provide sustainable potable water but to allow rural farmers of the villages included in the package to expand their farms to small profit generating operations. While touring the seven villages, we saw many farmers who are growing a variety of fruits, vegetables and organic honey.

So what kind of investment resulted in such changes in less than four years? The main actors in the transition from subsistence farming to small scale commercial farming are the farmers themselves. This is an awesome achievement, but to make it even better the farmers' investment should not be limited to the land but also to their own development.

To see the efforts being made to empower the farmers through training so that they could apply modern ways of farming on their fields, my colleagues and I went on a tour in the villages targeted by the project.

At 6:00 in the morning, Monday to Friday, land cruisers, carrying

Logo, Empowering Farmers through Training

small groups of young professionals, leave the Plant Nursery Department, which has 24 agronomists, head to the designated villages.

By approximately 6:30, the teams reach their designated areas in the six villages. Farmers of Adi Halo come directly to the Plant Nursery station because it's close to their village. There, the young professionals meet their main stockholders in the project, the farmers. Classes begin at 6:30. The young professionals -- men and women -- go there to teach.

On August 22nd, we stopped by the Plant Nursery Department so that our photographers could take some pictures in the nimble light of the morning sunshine. The rest of the team aimlessly toured the nursery until we were attracted by the voice of a young woman coming from the back. We followed the voice coming from a room filled with women covered with *natsela* (a traditional white shawl), young girls rushing to take notes, men and boys. They were all sitting in a semi-circle, attentively looking at a young woman standing in front of them with a book on her hand.

I wondered what they were doing gathered so early in the morning. And it was almost impossible to take a guess until I approached the group and heard what the lady standing was saying. She definitely looked different from the villagers. Her nails and hair were done beautifully. She is not a farmer; she is an agronomist. And she was there to share her knowledge with the farmers and

villagers of Adi Halo. The session was animated by the participation of the villagers.

Through the program, farmers from the villages learn modern farming including irrigation and soil and water conservation. With the assistance of professionals,

The farmers are also taught public health and encouraged to refrain from harmful practices that can damage the environment. The farmers' standards of living are gradually improving as we saw while on tour for ten days.

Young professionals like Miss. Ruta realize the impact of their awareness raising programs. She



Mrs. Azieb

they practice modern farming in the community farms owned by the villages and are encouraged to apply it on their own farms.

Life in the Eritrean rural areas starts at dawn. To avoid the scorching sun at mid-day, people normally start their days so early in the morning. Therefore, convincing farmers to attend classes instead of going to work on their farms was not easy. Therefore, to promote attendance in the classes farmers are given a monthly allowance of 500 Nakfa and 45 kilograms of grain.

said that the effect of the training they gave the farmers is seen in the harvest over the last two years. She said she enjoys the classes because they are not ordinary classes but platforms for sharing ideas and experiences with the farmers, who come to class with a lot of information that helps the research center at the Plant Nursery Department. Miss Ruta Mekonen, a graduate of Hamelmalo College of Agriculture, said there is no better way of giving back to her community.

Mrs. Azieb, a 28-year-old who left school in 9th grade to get married, said she is happy to be back in class. She and her husband now raise their family and work on their farm together. They also take turns to look after their kids in order to attend classes. Mrs. Azieb told me she hates missing classes because she saw her life changing gradually as she continued to rely more and more on her small scale commercial farm. Traditionally, Eritrean men do not look after their kids as it is considered to be a "woman's job." So, I was surprised to see Azieb's husband have no problems looking after his children when she goes to attend her classes. But Azieb said that the only way they could sustain their family is by both working and added that the general convention about gender roles is slowly but surely evolving in Eritrea.



Ms. Ruta in teaching

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Development

Eritrea is Winning the War against Malaria

Simon Weldemichael

The Government of Eritrea launched the *Primary Health Care Policy* (PHCP) to minimize and eventually eliminate easily-controlled diseases that pose the most serious public health problems. Malaria, which affects millions in the developing world, is one of them. The common malaria parasite in Eritrea is *Plasmodium falciparum*, which accounts for more than 84% of all cases.

Eritrea achieved the Millennium Development Goals in the health sector because it was able to reduce its infant and child mortality, morbidity, mortality due to malaria, and the prevalence of communicable diseases as well as an increase in the penetration rate of immunization. The commitment of the government to providing sustainable and accessible health care has enabled Eritrea to be one of the countries expected to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in the health sector.

The success achieved in health is attributed to strong political commitment and prioritization of health, innovative multi-sector approaches and administrative competency, and the ability of the government to motivate and mobilize the people. The main driver behind such a commitment is the government's emphasis on human capital as a vital element of development. Historically, during the struggle for independence, the EPLF put great emphasis on education and health with particular emphasis on the rural population. The barefoot doctors made regular visits and conducted surveillance to protect the health of the people.

Since independence, Eritrea has been successful in controlling the spread of many communicable diseases, including malaria, mainly due to its strong commitment that puts health at the center of development. The government foresaw future needs and made long-term investments in health. The reduction of morbidity and mortality caused



by malaria has been realized as a result of strategic interventions that included distribution of mosquito nets, early diagnosis, high level of community awareness, and access to health facilities throughout the country. As a result of the efforts made to build, expand and upgrade health facilities, access to health care is available for all within a five km radius. These developments and improvements in healthcare and other sectors over the last twenty-nine years has led to unprecedented reduction in malaria.

Although through systematic integrated surveillance and vector control mechanisms, the threat of malaria has been minimized greatly, the government will not be satisfied until malaria is totally wiped out of the nation. As the *National Health Policy* of Eritrea states "...comprehensive vector-borne disease including malaria control and prevention measures will be strengthened to ensure that malaria will no longer be a public health problem in the country" (2010:18). Eritrea's progress in the provision of health

care is also demonstrated in life expectancy, which has risen from 49 years in 1991 to over 64 years at present.

Despite the commendable achievements in the control and prevention of malaria, the threat of resurgence due to climatic changes is evident. Rainfall this season is forecasted to continue in the coming few months, and the period from September to December is considered 'malaria season' in Eritrea, especially in the Gash Barka and Southern regions, the two most susceptible malaria-risk regions in the country.

Malaria is both a cause and consequence of poverty. For this reason, the government of Eritrea sees malaria not only as a public health concern but also as a major challenge to development. Accordingly, the fight against malaria is considered a way to improve the health status of the population and reduce poverty. The general wellbeing of the people is determined by, among many factors, health. Poverty cannot be alleviated

in an environment plagued by diseases.

The prevalence of malaria is associated with the impoverishment of households. Women's empowerment, poverty eradication, and complete self-reliance are difficult to achieve without the elimination of malaria. The Eritrean society has benefitted greatly from the defeat of malaria. People today are far healthier than ever before. As early as 2013, Eritrea's *Malaria Program- Performance Review* concluded that Eritrea was winning the war against malaria. For instance, malaria infection has been declining from 110 cases/1000 people in 1998 to 11.9 cases/1000 in 2012 and malaria-caused deaths have been declining from 0.198/1000 people in 1998 to 0.0076/1000 in 2012.

The goal of the malaria control program in Eritrea is to ensure that malaria will no longer be a public health problem. According to the *Program Improvement Agenda*, Eritrea has already launched pre-elimination programs (2014-2018). Now, the journey to

elimination and the establishment of a malaria-free future is on the way.

As we all know, the global health security is in danger due to the rapid spread of COVID-19. Human lives are disrupted and the national economy of every country is severely shattered by the virus. With the outbreak of the pandemic, UNICEF warned that the overlap of COVID-19 and malaria could have potentially highly lethal consequences for children under-five if governments failed to respond soon to ensure continuity of services. The organization reported that every two minutes, a child under the age of five dies from malaria. According to the *2019 World Malaria Report*, children under five accounted for 67 percent of all malaria deaths worldwide in 2018. Most of the cases were in sub-Saharan Africa.

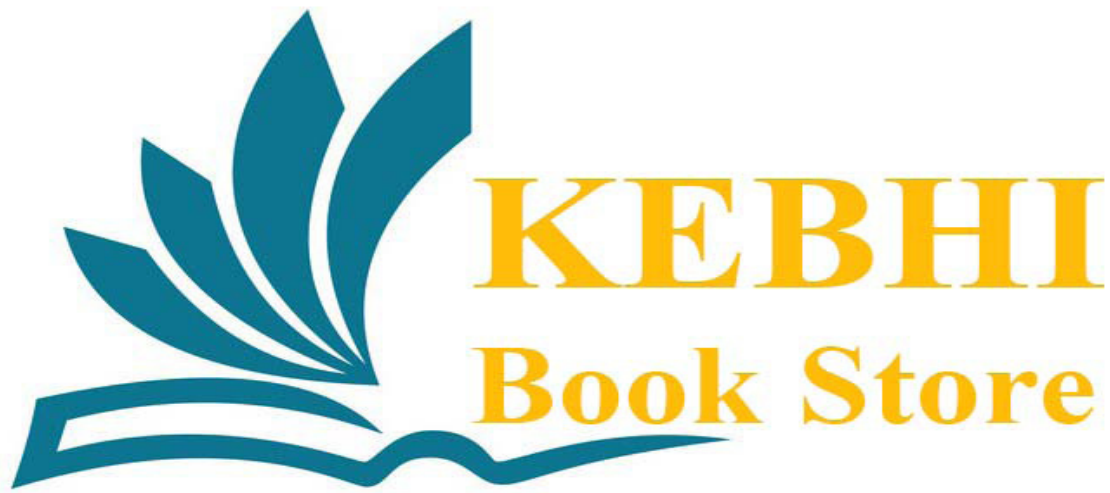
Although Eritrea is not free from the disruptions of COVID-19, it is one of the few countries that have no records of deaths caused by the virus. However, while it has been taking precautionary and necessary measures to limit the transmission of the virus, it has not ignored other killer diseases, such as malaria. Environmental management through community participation and outdoor and indoor spraying of insecticide for the prevention and control of malaria outbreaks continue to be practiced. Also, insecticide-treated mosquito nets are handed out to people who live in the malaria-prone regions and free ambulance services are given, particularly to women and children. Further, awareness-raising campaigns are conducted by the national media outlets to keep people vigilant.

It is common knowledge that sick people are too weak to work, and this causes them to suffer from poverty. Fortunately, the era of misery caused by malaria is going to end in Eritrea with the elimination of malaria. This means having healthy people who are productive and capable of eliminating poverty in Eritrea once and for all.



Kebhi: Online Book Store

Milka Teklom



Thank you for making time and accepting our request to interview you. Please, introduce yourself to our readers.

My name is Engineer Filimon Tesfamariam. I was born in 1992 in Adi Keih and went to school there upto second grade. But due to the border war with Ethiopia my whole family had to move to Asmara. I continued my elementary school in Adi Segdo, and did middle school at Hadnet and secondary school at Keih Bahri. I went to Sawa with high expectations of attaining high grades in the matriculation exam because students with high grades were given laptops and I was dreaming of owning one. My dream came true when I got 3.8. I was awarded a laptop. When I joined the Institute of Technology at Mai Nefhi, I chose to study computer engineering to satisfy my lingering desire to be a software programmer.

Was it your childhood dream to be a software programmer, and if it was why?

Like most kids I wanted to be a doctor. Although as a student I was not a prize winner, I had great interest in reading. My neighbors who always saw me reading for long hours used to call me the "kid doctor". In high school I started watching Hollywood movies and video games. The visual effects and what I saw on the screen fascinated me and that's when I wanted to be a programmer. I was familiar with how desktop computers work but I didn't have a laptop, and so I

didn't know how it worked. In fact, my first experience with a laptop was at the Expo annual festival. At a presentation, I saw a laptop connected to a projector, so I fearlessly went to it and started to press keys at random. It was fun for me but the presenter was annoyed. Anyway, in my freshman year I took extra courses on how to fix electronic equipment and soon began fixing fellow students' laptops and phones.

Right after graduation, in 2016, I was assigned to work at EriTel, and with the confidence I built in college repairing laptops and phones, I rented my own electronic shop and officially became a technician. Now that I am so busy with programming the shop is run by my family, especially my

younger brother who has become a good technician.

We heard you have created a lot of application soft wares; tell us about them?

Yeah, I have created a bunch of applications which I have not released yet. But there are others that I have. When I got reassigned to the Ministry of Defense I saw that their car data system was based on books, and it took a lot of time to search. It was especially confusing for new comers. So to address the inconvenience I created a 'car inventory application,' which has service registration date, license number and date and number of repairs, and this improved the browsing system. Encouraged by the results of that application, I created

inventory application for several businesses, especially super markets, kids' stores, hardware stores and kindergartens. At first, I only made computer versions, but after realizing that the data can be accessed through mobile phones, I am now completing the development of the android version of the inventory application.

Ever since your new website was introduced on the national TV, it has become the talk of the town. We are so interested in knowing about it?

First of all, I would like people to know that I didn't develop it alone. My friends, Eng. Michael Berhe and Eng. Aman Desbele,

are my partners. The website is called "Kebhi". We created it when we noticed that our local authors don't have the platform to sell their books in an international market unless they distribute them by themselves, which is very exhausting and time consuming. We tried our best to make it fit in the frame of international standard for book stores. But the author should first decide whether to sell the book or donate it. We just provide a space for readers to buy books or read from the donated ones if they cannot afford to buy books.

The Internet is infested with piracy and hacking, so how do you intend to control that? And since money is involved how secure could your users feel?

It's a user friendly website; users are required to create an account stating whether they are buyers or readers from the donated materials. People who want to contribute articles are registered as authors and we have our own system to control the flow of information. Just like any other Internet book store, we cannot guarantee a 100% protection for our users' private rights but in an effort to close the gap we are making a deal with a foreign company. We tested it locally and it worked but we still have to test it for the international market.

Thanks for your time again and we wish you luck on your upcoming projects!

