ETHIOPIA
FACT SHEET

PEACE, RECONCILIATION, AND CONFLICT MITIGATION

After having ranked as one of the most fragile states countries in the *2017 Fragile States Index (FSI)*, Ethiopia staged a remarkable turnaround ranking as the most improved country according to the 2019 FSI. As the result of the ambitious reform agenda of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, a system of more political and social inclusiveness has taken hold with the release of political prisoners, return of dissidents, liberalization of laws governing media, and efforts to heal the divisions created under the ethno-federal state model. Despite these reforms, many citizens feel that progress has been slow and that they have not yet reaped the benefits they had anticipated. Increased freedom of expression – while generally a positive step – has also opened some long-held grievances between ethnicities and regions and resulted in incidents of bloodshed and significant population displacements. While addressing domestic challenges, Ethiopia has also benefited from – and contributed to – a decrease in regional tension marked by a détente with neighboring Eritrea. Despite these improvements, Ethiopia still faces potential instability from internal and external threats, including conflict in neighboring countries, and influences from malign states which undermine Ethiopia's sovereignty and sustainable development trajectory.

Recognizing that the current socio-political situation in Ethiopia creates a very delicate situation for international humanitarian and development workers to implement critical mission programming, USAID has adopted a two-pronged strategy. First, USAID recognizes that well-intended assistance can cause harm or strengthen capacities for peace in conflict-prone or affected communities. To this end, USAID has committed to mainstreaming conflict sensitivity principles within its programming and operations. At a minimum, USAID's actions should avoid inadvertently contributing to conflict. Second, USAID has carefully assessed the operational environment, designed strategic and targeted activities, and partnered with recognized institutions to promote peace, reconciliation, and conflict mitigation in areas at

particular risk for instability and conflict. As a key partner to the United States in the region, a stable and peaceful Ethiopia plays a significant role in fostering peace and security in the region. With Eritrea, Somalia, South Sudan, and Sudan in turmoil, Ethiopia's role in the region to maintain stability – be it though providing troops to peacekeeping missions in South Sudan or taking on Al-Shabaab in Somalia – is critical. Ethiopia's successful transition to a stable multi-party democracy remains a long-term U.S. foreign policy objective and a focus of our engagement.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Through engagement with key government actors, academic institutions, and civil society organizations on peacebuilding, reconciliation, and conflict mitigation, our work seeks to ensure that local actors are better equipped to maintain the peace in their communities. Key current activities include:

- **Strengthening Institutions for Peace and Development (SIPED) II:** Building on the history of successful partnership between USAID and the Ethiopian Ministry of Peace, the SIPED II project provides a broad range of support to the Ministry's peace-building structures, human capacity, and technical resources. Our support strengthens Ministry of Peace capacity in conflict early warning, prevention, rapid response and resolution within the Conflict Prevention and Resolution Directorate General at the federal level. We also provide support the Ministry of Peace counterpart institutions at regional state, zonal, woreda, and community level to promote increased stability in selected conflict-prone areas, as well as in selected national universities.

- **Borena Cross-boundary Initiative for Peace**: Through support from the USAID Global Reconciliation Fund, this new activity aims to improve community-level resilience to conflict through strategic interventions that promote reconciliation and enhance intergroup collaboration for conflict mitigation and peacebuilding in the Borena Zone. The project conducts assessments, community dialogues, awareness and information sharing activities, trainings, workshops, conferences, intergroup interaction, and reconciliation events.

- **Conflict Mitigation and Reconciliation in Oromia-Somali Administration Boundary:** The USAID Global Reconciliation Fund also supports a new activity that seeks to bring the Oromo and Somali ethnic groups together to interact and engage constructively in a safe space to break down social and cultural barriers and promote peaceful coexistence. This project aims to reduce identity-based competition over administrative boundaries and generate a shared understanding among local administrators and the communities at the grassroots level. The activity will bring together different stakeholders, such as federal and regional governments, local administrators, leaders of customary institutions, and communities across the two ethnic groups through capacity-building trainings, inter-community dialogues, public forums, and community peace festivals.

- Through the **Office of Transition Initiatives,** USAID provides capacity-building support to key Government of Ethiopia institutions, including the Ministry of Peace, as well as civil society organizations and other groups to address conflict in targeted communities, and promote peacebuilding initiatives. USAID OTI activities also help build the skills of the Ethiopian media to enhance investigative journalism and ensure accurate, fact-based reporting.