

News story: Minister Wharton: UK will stand by people of Ethiopia affected by severe drought

During his first visit to Ethiopia and at a time when a new drought is hitting 13 million people, Minister Wharton visited the Tigray region to see the lifesaving impact of UK aid and how ongoing support is building resilience and helping recovery from last year's El Nino induced drought.

Earlier this year, the UK increased much needed support to Ethiopia to provide around 800,000 people with lifesaving clean water, food and emergency nutrition to malnourished children.

Minister Wharton also visited Endabaguna refugee reception centre in Northern Ethiopia where he met vulnerable families and children benefiting from UK support. Ethiopia is one of the largest host nations of refugees – with over 800,000 people having crossed the border – with the majority fleeing humanitarian crises in neighbouring South Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea.

International Development Minister James Wharton said:

“Millions of people are living in desperate conditions as extreme drought in Ethiopia and worsening humanitarian crises in neighbouring countries are forcing people from their homes, threatening lives and global security.

“I have seen first-hand how UK aid is providing lifesaving support to vulnerable communities in Ethiopia, as well as refugees, and making a real difference to those who need it most.

“At the same time, we are helping to boost economic development and private sector investment to create jobs and increase stability in the longer term which is firmly in Ethiopia and the UK's interests.”

In the capital Addis Ababa, Minister Wharton met with workers at a British manufacturing firm Pittards who have benefited from UK aid supported skills training to increase productivity, and met with a local entrepreneur whose leather making business has benefited from UK help.

He emphasised how the UK is strengthening its focus on economic development as a long term solution to povert. This follows on from a visit by the International Development Secretary Priti Patel to Ethiopia earlier this year where she launched DFID's first Economic Development Strategy at Hawassa industrial park, where UK aid is helping to transform the local economy by creating around 60,000 new jobs.

Over the last five years, UK aid in Ethiopia has:

- prevented 4.2 million people from going hungry
- put 2.5 million children through primary school

- provided 4.9 million people with access to water and sanitation and
- enabled 500,000 more women to use modern methods of family planning.