

Childhood Cancer Awareness Builds as Ethiopia's Prime Minister, First Lady, and Minister of Health Visit the TAPCCO Compound and Pledge Support

2019 stands as a landmark year for childhood cancer in Ethiopia!

First, following on the visit of Ethiopian President Sahle-Work Zewde to the Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital (TASH) pediatric oncology unit earlier this year, ***the Prime Minister of Ethiopia HE Abiy Ahmed, First Lady Zinash Tayachew, the Minister of Health HE Dr. Amir Aman, and the Mayor of Addis Ababa Takele Uma Benti spent the morning of June 4 at Seba Dereja*** -- the compound for parents and children in treatment at TASH that is operated by TAPCCO and funded primarily by Aslan and the McMillan Stewart Foundation.

Marking the beginning of Eid, the country's leaders planted three trees as part of its green initiative to plant four billion trees nationwide. Later, while sharing a traditional coffee ceremony with the compound's residents and TAPCCO staff, they discussed ways in which the Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) and the City of Addis Ababa could promote childhood cancer care at TASH and throughout the country.



HE Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed at Seba Dereja

As a first step, the leaders pledged financial support for TAPCCO's programs as well as a minibus and an ambulance to transport families to and from the hospital. To spur awareness, they ensured that the visit was actively covered on social media and by news outlets both within Ethiopia and globally, including an extensive interview featuring the Prime Minister and TAPCCO Director Sara Ibrahim that highlighted the significant challenges facing families who struggle to keep their children in treatment throughout the lengthy, costly, and rigorous regimens.

Second, in late May, ***the Ethiopian government published a National Childhood and Adolescent Cancer Control Plan*** containing strategies for improving care and treatment systemically within the country. The Plan, which will soon be launched by the FMOH, was drafted by the National Pediatric Cancer Task Force with key input from Aslan Medical Director

Dr. Aziza Shad and Executive Director Julie Broas -- the only non-Ethiopian members of the Task Force.



Members of Ethiopian Pediatric Cancer Task Force

Not only does the Plan trigger the provision of essential governmental supports, but it also demonstrates a unique level of commitment to childhood cancer for a low- and middle-income country (LMIC). As noted by global experts in the seminal work, *Cancer: Disease Control*

Priorities, Third Edition (Vol. 3), "[m]ost LMICs lack policies to ensure good pediatric oncology care, and many have no national cancer plan, let alone one targeting the unique needs of children." We congratulate Minister of Health HE Dr. Amir Aman and his colleagues, particularly Dr. Kunuz Abdella, and the entire Task Force for their visionary leadership and perseverance in achieving the Plan's publication.

Taken together, these events promise to transform the landscape for children with cancer in Ethiopia, and Aslan's efforts over the past six years to establish the country's first pediatric cancer programs and advocate for prioritization of childhood cancer in national policies played a demonstrable role in these accomplishments. As our work is only possible through the generosity and support of our wonderful family of donors and partners, we share these achievements with you and look forward to building upon this momentum in the coming years!