

Press release

For immediate release

March 30, 2026

Over 25,000 Ethiopians gain access to quality healthcare and education as Italy and UNOPS inaugurate facilities in South Omo

Hamer, South Ethiopia. – His **Excellency Mr. Sem Fabrizi, Ambassador of Italy to Ethiopia**, together with Ms. **Worknesh Mekonnen, Director, UNOPS Multi-Country Office** for Ethiopia, Sudan, South Sudan and Djibouti and UNOPS representative to AU, and senior officials from the South Ethiopia Regional Government today inaugurated the expansion and rehabilitation of Dimeka Health Center and Aeriya Keyissa Primary School.

The inauguration ceremony marks the successful completion of key infrastructure under the "Multi-Sectoral interventions aimed at improving health conditions in Hamer" project, implemented by UNOPS Ethiopia in partnership and funding from the Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) and the South Ethiopia regional government.

At Dimeka health center delivery room, Maternal Block, EPI Block, OPD Block, Registration/Card Block General Store/Drug Block, and Toilet are fully rehabilitated while staff residence, maternity waiting rooms, staff duty Room, and guard House are added to the health center. The Health Center now has access to water sources while sanitation facilities are added to it. Area Keyisa primary school is expanded to have 13 new blocks which includes, administration building, library and book store, kitchen, cafeteria, classrooms (4), early childhood classroom, toilets (3), and guard house while the laboratory and store block are fully rehabilitated.

Both facilities are expected to directly benefit over 55,000 community members in Hamer woreda, South Omo zone. The expanded health facility now offers upgraded healthcare services to address the needs of a community affected by climate change, while the Area Keyisa Primary School enhancements include improved student feeding pace, water accessibility, and hygiene services benefiting more than 800 children.

The 3-year project, funded by the Government of Italy through AICS with a €7.6 million contribution, addresses critical health and education challenges in this climate-vulnerable region. All infrastructure has been designed to be gender-sensitive and accessible for persons with disabilities and all community members and has reliable energy through solar power, ensuring uninterrupted services and a cleaner energy future.

The school project directly addressed severe challenges in the Area Keyisa area, where students previously learned in overcrowded classrooms or outdoors under trees, and communities lacked access to clean water, sanitation, and reliable energy, which hindered education and health-seeking behaviors.

Speaking at the inauguration, **His Excellency Mr. Sem Fabrizi, Ambassador of Italy to Ethiopia, stated:** "Italy is proud to stand alongside Ethiopia in expanding access to essential services for the most vulnerable communities. Our partnership with UNOPS and regional authorities reflects a shared commitment to strengthening health systems, improving education, and promoting inclusive development. These investments are designed to deliver lasting benefits and to support Ethiopia's efforts towards a more resilient and equitable future."

Commenting on the inauguration, **the Head of AICS' Addis Ababa, Michele Morana, said** that these newly inaugurated facilities are "a tangible demonstration of Italy's commitment to supporting Ethiopia's development priorities. By investing in health and education in climate-vulnerable regions like South Omo, we aim to strengthen community resilience, improve quality of life, and create opportunities for future generations. Collaboration with UNOPS and local authorities ensures that these interventions are sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to the real needs of the people."

Ms. Worknesh Mekonnen, UNOPS Multi-Country Director, added: "Access to quality basic services is fundamental to improving lives and building lasting development. These newly inaugurated facilities demonstrate what we can achieve together through strong partnerships. We are proud to have worked alongside the Government of Italy and the South Ethiopia regional government to deliver tangible improvements that will serve this community for years to come, reducing inequality and contributing to better health and education outcomes."

The project's multi-sectoral approach integrates health, education, water, and energy interventions to create sustainable impact. Today's inauguration in South Ethiopia follows the successful completion and inauguration of similar project as part of the interventions in Chifra, Afar region in October 2025, where more than 36,000 beneficiaries who have been affected by civil war in the northern Ethiopia now have access to improved healthcare and education services, marking the full realization of Italy and UNOPS' broader initiative to strengthen health systems and support vulnerable populations across Ethiopia.

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Notes to the editors

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About respective entities:

AICS: Italian Agency for Development Cooperation (AICS) is a key player in the Italian development cooperation system, responsible for the elaboration, development, financing, management, and control of international cooperation initiatives. The Italian Cooperation has a long-standing presence in Ethiopia since 1976, focusing on various areas like humanitarian affairs, migration, refugees, health, education, and environmental protection. Read more: <https://addisabeba.aics.gov.it/home-eng/>

UNOPS: UNOPS offers practical solutions across peace and security, humanitarian and development operations. We help the United Nations, governments, and other partners, such as the European Union and its Member States, manage projects and deliver sustainable infrastructure and procurement globally. Read more: <https://www.unops.org/ethiopia>