



Dear friends and supporters of Rainbows4children,

You may have read in national media or online that on the 28<sup>th</sup> June this year, the Tigray regional government re-established itself in Mekele. The Ethiopian government troops and interim administration who had been in charge since the outbreak of the war on the 4<sup>th</sup> November 2020 have withdrawn to Addis Ababa. We therefore think it's timely to update you on the situation at the Nicolas School and in the region.

We have continued to focus on the humanitarian and educational needs of the children under our care since the outbreak of the war. As of 12<sup>th</sup> December 2020 we were again able to speak to the school staff and have done so, on a daily basis, up until 28<sup>th</sup> June this year. Through these regular updates we have been able to support the school leadership team and we have sent funds for salaries, purchase of food and other essential humanitarian materials and also helped organise the re-start of the children's education.



*Feeding the children whenever they visit the school*

It has been a bit of a stop-start process, with local difficulties interfering with smooth progress, but we did make progress overall.

The Tigray Defence Forces have reinstated the original Tigray local government officials back in Mekele after the Ethiopian forces withdrew.

However, the Ethiopian central government has withdrawn all facilities and support for the region. This means that electricity and water supplies as well as phone lines and the Internet have all been disconnected. Furthermore, the remaining bridges over the Tekeze river which were the last remaining routes into Tigray for delivery of food and medical aid have been destroyed – apparently by Ethiopian Government Forces although there is no definite proof of this so far. Our last communication with the Nicolas School staff in Mekele was on Monday the 28<sup>th</sup> June prior to the disconnection of the phone network and the Internet. Humanitarian agencies such as UNICEF and Médecins sans Frontiers (Doctors without Borders) have had almost all of their mobile phones, satellite communications devices and computers stolen by the retreating Ethiopian army. This means

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there is very little chance that our staff can communicate with us until the Ethiopian government restores the connections.

We feel a certain sense of relief regarding the safety of our school family, as we know that the Tigray soldiers will not harm the citizens of Mekele. On the other hand, we are now concerned about food deliveries to the region and health facilities. With the electricity switched off, there is no way of pumping water around the city. The closure of banks and removal of the cash back to Addis Ababa means that financial transactions cannot take place.

However we think it likely that the reinstated administration will set up an informal economy to keep things moving and make transactions possible. We know that almost all of the staff and students are safe and being cared for and we thank you all for your continued support for our sponsorship programme and our humanitarian appeals.

Our recent sponsored walk was a great success, especially considering that we had to do it online and under Covid restrictions. Thanks to your tremendous support and generosity we raised almost \$50,000, which will be used to support the school and keep it running, the moment that the local banks are operational again.

In the interim, we have to be patient because there is very little we can do from here apart from raise awareness of the extremely difficult humanitarian situation faced by the approximately 7 million people in the region.

As soon as we regain communication with the school we will let you know and of course as soon as we can send more funds we will be doing this very promptly so that we can ensure everyone is paid their salaries and they can buy food.

We have had an amazing response to our appeal for more student sponsors, having lost the support of a local company in Tigray, due to the war.

Already more than 140 students have been sponsored, but we are still looking for sponsorships for a further 125 children. Please do circulate this message to your friends and families to help us find sponsors for these children. Then please connect them directly with us.



*Some of our students currently seeking sponsors*

Many thanks again for your great support!

Best wishes from Kathryn and Max

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