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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Communication for Health Activity Launch

Remarks by USAID Acting Mission Director Ramona El Hamzaoui

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

(as prepared for delivery)

Indemen wallachu

Thank you to everyone here for attending this special event to launch our social and behavior change communication activity, **Communication for Health**.

This five-year 22 million dollar initiative is funded by the United States Agency for International Development in order to strengthen evidence-based health communications in Ethiopia.

Ethiopia is a country of beauty and of hard-working people. It's commitment to development, and the rapid pace at which it is improving the lives of its citizens, make Ethiopia in many ways a model for other developing countries.

Unfortunately, preventable diseases—many of which are easily preventable—are still prevalent. These preventable diseases take their toll in lives lost and on the burden they place on the health sector.

The Government of Ethiopia envisions a country where its people practice healthy habits, are protected from emergency health hazards, and have access to quality healthcare at all levels and at all times.

This activity will help to close the gap between the current situation and the Government of Ethiopia's vision for a healthier nation.

And, it presents a great opportunity for everyone working to improve health systems to join their efforts and coordinate for a more harmonized and high-quality intervention of health communication in Ethiopia.

Led by Johns Hopkins Center for Communication Programs and implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Health and John Snow, Inc., this activity is expected to take health communication in Ethiopia to the next level.

USAID applauds the ministry's lead in this effort, a leadership that is vital for the continued success of improving health communication and the health of Ethiopians.

Five years from now, we expect to see

- stronger capacity of the Ministry of Health and our partners in planning and executing health communication interventions,
- improved coordination among partners,

- higher quality communication products at all health system levels, and
- materials and messages that better respond to the needs of communities.

More importantly, we expect to see more families and communities that are informed, empowered and choosing healthy practices and, as a result, are enjoying a better quality of life.

The Ministry of Health, non-governmental organizations, civil societies, media, and faith based organizations, and others working in healthcare have the same goal—improve the health of Ethiopian families and communities.

USAID, through this flagship activity and our broader development agenda, is committed to improving health in Ethiopia.

Let us collectively commit and own the challenges as well as the solutions toward strengthening people with the knowledge and ability to embrace positive and healthy behaviors.

I'll leave you with a quote from one of America's founding fathers, Ben Franklin: "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure!" Good behavior change communications can serve as that ounce of prevention.

Thank you very much, *amasegenalehu*.