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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

**Remarks by Dennis Weller, Mission Director
English for Ethiopia Textbook Donation Event
Ministry of Education
November 29, 2012**

I am very happy to be here today to mark the handover of more than 5.5 million English language textbooks for students in primary grades 2, 3 and 4. Since 2009, USAID had been working very closely with the Ministry of Education to provide appropriate, quality textbooks and learning materials to students and teachers. These textbooks, and associated teacher training and support for using the textbooks, were made possible by joining Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University (AAMU) with the Ministry of Education.

I am proud to note that these English language textbooks are fully aligned with the national curricula, are culturally appropriate and relevant to the experience of Ethiopian children, and incorporate significant cross-cutting themes, such as, gender sensitivity, that is, fair and equal treatment of girl and boy students, HIV/AIDS awareness, hygiene, and the qualities of responsible participation as young members of a community.

Given the relationship between a student's achievement or learning and that student's access to having their own book, there is a clear policy implication: Getting a textbook into the hands of each child is critical. The percentages of children with textbooks in several regions of the country are low. USAID believes that quality education provides the foundation for all development efforts. We, together with the Ministry of Education, are committed to ensuring that issues of quality are addressed in the Ethiopian education system. And we believe strongly that our efforts will be best spent in the primary grades by addressing reading and English language learning. Research has shown that having access to reading material, both at school and outside school, encourages achievement in literacy over and above the wealth of individual families. Astoundingly, the impact of having a textbook is larger than being wealthy, and this finding is true for all regions of the country.

I want to thank you and Alabama Agricultural and Mechanical University for your collaboration over the past three years to develop and produce these English language textbooks for students in grades 2, 3 and 4. We look to you to immediately distribute these books into the hands of 5.5 million children to begin improving their schooling experience.

I wish you continued success in carrying out the General Education Quality Improvement Program, and most importantly, I look forward to our continued joint efforts to address the obstacles to reading and learning achievement in Ethiopia, which are fundamental elements for the progress of every Ethiopian and, thus, the growth and transformation of Ethiopia.