



# USAID | ETHIOPIA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## Promoting Urban Health and Launch of the Strengthening Ethiopia's Urban Health Program (SEUHP)

### Opening Remarks

**Mission Director Dennis Weller**

**February 11, 2014**

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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It is an honor to be here today on behalf of the United States Government and the American people to celebrate our partnership with the Government of Ethiopia to improve urban health services in this country.

The Ministry of Health has a strong reputation for its results-driven health program that empowers communities and demonstrates impressive successes. One such example is achieving Millennium Development Goal-4 of reducing child mortality well ahead of schedule. We are pleased to witness the gains that health service delivery to homes has contributed toward improving health services in rural and urban areas.

With an estimated 15.9 million people living in urban areas, Ethiopia is one of the least urbanized African nations.

However, the population is growing and by 2050, Ethiopia's urban population is projected to exceed 77 million<sup>1</sup>.

The health challenges in urban areas are complex. For example:

- HIV prevalence is more than five times greater among women living in urban and peri-

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations Population Fund, 2007

urban centers compared to women living in rural communities<sup>2</sup>,

- More than 50 percent of pregnant women in urban centers still deliver at home<sup>3</sup>, and
- Neonatal deaths<sup>4</sup> in urban settings are almost as high as the rate in rural settings.

Adding to the complexity is that with the development of effective anti-retroviral therapies, life-long treatment of HIV is becoming similar to that of chronic illnesses, such as diabetes, cancer, and mental illness. As a result, there have been important changes to the public health response and many governments are now committing to mainstream, integrate, and decentralize HIV care.

We need to be prepared to address the health challenges related to rapid population growth and urbanization before it happens, and I am pleased to say that the Ministry of Health, USAID, and the development community are committed to making sure Ethiopia's health system is ready to adapt to the ever-changing urban environment.

In 2009, the Government of Ethiopia initiated the innovative Urban Health Extension Program. The program's aim is to improve access to and equity of public health information and services for urban populations by deploying thousands of nurses to serve as community health workers providing house-to-house health services. In support of the Government's program, USAID implemented its Urban Health Extension Program from 2009 to 2012. The USAID program supported the training and deployment of more than 2,300 urban health extension professionals and provided HIV services for more than 110,000 most-at-risk persons.

Our partnership with the Ministry of Health is something that we deeply value and is a large part of the success of our joint efforts to address the prevailing health challenges in Ethiopia. Today, we are excited to continue that partnership as we launch USAID's five-year Strengthening Ethiopia's Urban Health Program, partially funded by the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief. This new program will build on the achievements of its

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<sup>2</sup> 5.2% urban vs. 0.8% rural, Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey [EDHS], 2011

<sup>3</sup> Welfare Monitoring Survey, 2011

<sup>4</sup> 41 per 1,000 live births, EDHS 2011

predecessor by expanding access to essential health services. The program will target vulnerable households in urban communities to reduce HIV- and TB-related illnesses and deaths and the incidence of communicable diseases in mothers, newborns and children.

In cooperation with the Ministry of Health, the private sector, regional health bureaus, city administrations, and others, this new program will promote best practices to reach more than 1.6 million urban households with high-quality health services in the coming five years.

As we celebrate the gains made over the last few years in combating HIV and TB and improving child health, we are committed to build on Ethiopia's achievements in the health sector. Ethiopia's experience has shown that with commitment, clear policies, and innovative strategies, dramatic success in improving health care is well within our reach.

In closing, I would like to thank the Government of Ethiopia for spearheading the Urban Health Extension Strategy that will contribute to strengthening Ethiopia's health system. With a concerted multi-stakeholder collaboration under the leadership of the Ministry of Health, we will achieve the objectives of the Ethiopian Health Sector Development Plan IV. Today, we take a new step forward in that collaboration and in bringing vital health services to Ethiopia's urban populations.

Thank you.