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ETHIOPIA

Culmination of the TransACTION Project

Remarks by USAID Mission Director Dennis Weller

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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

It is a pleasure to see you all here today and thank you for coming to the closing event of USAID's TransACTION project. I am also pleased to have this opportunity to share a few thoughts on our partnership in the fight against HIV and AIDS and what we have accomplished with the project.

TransACTION was USAID's flagship project—funded by the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)—for HIV prevention here in Ethiopia. The project has been working hard to prevent new HIV and sexually transmitted infections and to strengthen linkages to care and support services in 119 towns. It has largely been successful in doing so.

The project, which targeted over the last five years people most at risk for HIV, established 158 HIV/AIDS multi-sector committees at the town level. These committees were instrumental in coordinating outreach messaging and services with local government and private sector clinics.

As a result, approximately 300,000 beneficiaries received HIV counseling and testing and more than 110,000 received services for sexually transmitted infections. And all of this was via 253 private health facilities organized under the Addis Mela private network.

This is a great example of working and engaging well with the private sector to build capacity to provide quality services to high-risk populations. This successful collaboration reflects the strong partnership that is needed to conquer the HIV and AIDS epidemic.

Also at the heart of the success of this project was the importance of focusing on most at-risk populations. These groups include commercial sex workers, truck drivers, and

communities along major transportation routes who are at a significantly higher risk of HIV and sexually transmitted infections than any other group in Ethiopia. Interventions targeting these groups are critical to ending the epidemic.

As a result of our focus on these populations, almost 280,000 people have taken part in peer-led education, which allows beneficiaries to learn from people they trust and who understand their lifestyle and situation.

PEPFAR and USAID's prevention activities encourage the strong engagement of communities, local partners, the private sector, and of course, local, regional, and federal government. This approach has increased social mobilization and improved capacity, which has allowed for an expansion of health services and improved access to HIV and sexually transmitted infection diagnosis and treatment.

Ethiopia's recent HIV/AIDS progress report portrays optimistic trends showing the annual HIV infection rate reducing over the past few years.

When we look back at where we were just over ten years ago when PEPFAR started, seeing the prevalence reduced to a low-level is truly an incredible achievement and one that we are very proud of.

The fight is not over, however, and though we are here today to close the TransACTION project, USAID and PEPFAR support to Ethiopia in HIV and AIDS will continue.

Our MULU Prevention and Worksite activities—which also focus on high-risk populations—will continue to ensure that there is a smooth transition of activities and that those who need services are aware and able to receive them.

These activities will take into account the lessons learned from TransACTION and expand the reach of our prevention project to produce measurable impact on people's lives.

I would like to extend a special thank you to the Government of Ethiopia and, specifically, the HIV/AIDS Prevention and Control Office, which has demonstrated strong leadership and commitment to addressing the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

I would also like to thank our lead partner, Save the Children, along with FHI 360, Population

Services International, Marie Stopes International, and our 14 local implementing partners who have all worked tirelessly these last five years to make this project a success.

The collaborative effort experienced with the TransACTION project gives us all encouragement that, with the involvement of local communities, we can ensure reduction in and prevention of new infections. Our common goal is to turn the tide to achieve an AIDS-free generation and ultimately end the AIDS epidemic.

Thank You.