

Press Release



Embassy of the United States of America
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
2014/25

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U.S. Government is Gearing up to Support the Elimination of Fistula in Ethiopia

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, July 7, 2014 – Around 200 policymakers, decision makers and experts on fistula convened at the national conference on fistula elimination under the theme “Ending Fistula and Transforming Lives by 2020.” The Federal Ministry of Health is leading the development of an action plan to accelerate the elimination of obstetric fistula by the year 2020 and is hosting the conference to inform stakeholders about the action plan and to provide them with an opportunity to contribute to and enrich the plan.

According to the U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Patricia Haslach, the conference and the development of the action plan to end obstetric fistula are very important because untreated fistula can have a devastating impact on women’s lives due to a whole range of health, psychological and socio-economic consequences.

Fistula is especially common in Ethiopia. In a recent USAID/AusAID-funded *Fistula Situation Analysis* in Ethiopia, it was estimated that approximately 3,500 women develop obstetric fistula annually, and as many as 37,500 women are living with untreated fistula cases. Building upon the findings of the situation analysis and in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Health and other key partners, the U.S. Government will support intensified identification and referral of women with obstetric fistula to specialist repair facilities.

Since 2007, USAID has partnered with the Ethiopian government to support necessary pre-surgical preparations such as counseling, nutritional support and treatment for infections before referring patients to Hamlin hospitals for treatment. USAID has also funded hundreds of fistula repairs through its support to Hamlin hospitals.

Because of its considerable experience and success in fistula case identification, the U.S. Government will further support the Federal Ministry of Health through USAID’s well-established **Integrated Family Health Program**, implemented by Pathfinder and John Snow Inc., with technical assistance and support in sensitization, case identification, referral for treatment and reintegration into the community. “We look forward to this renewed collaboration and stand ready to support this new innovative approach to identify every single woman in Ethiopia who suffers this horrible plight,” said Haslach.

The U.S. Government expects the conference will be a great success because of the momentum and commitment of all stakeholders to join hands with the Government of Ethiopia to **End Fistula and Transform Lives by 2020**.

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