

# Press Release



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## **Too Much Fluoride Is Bad for Teeth and Bones: USAID and Government of Ethiopia Inaugurate Fluoride Reduction Technology Center**

**Modjo, Oromia Region, Ethiopia, April 14, 2016** – The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) Mission Director in Ethiopia Dennis Weller together with His Excellency Kebede Gerba, the state minister of the Ministry of Water, Irrigation and Energy, launched a new fluoride filter manufacturing facility today. Developed as a result of USAID’s grant to the Oromo Self Help Organization, the investment will help mitigate fluorosis in the Ethiopian Rift Valley through innovative fluoride reduction products and services.

While some fluoride in water is good for people, consuming too much fluoride causes a condition called fluorosis. Fluorosis negatively affects human health, particularly the teeth and bones, when too much fluoride is consumed. Children under age eight, whose teeth are still forming under their gums, are particularly susceptible to having dental problems, and prolonged consumption of water with too much fluoride can lead to abnormal bone fragility. The new USAID-supported facility will produce water filters, which use locally available bone char and low-cost chemicals. These filter materials will reduce the amount of fluoride in local water sources, thereby reducing the incidence of fluorosis. Additionally, the products made at the new facility can be recycled more than five times after their initial use and disposed of as an environmentally-friendly phosphate fertilizer.

In his keynote address, Weller said, “This manufacturing plant constructed by the Oromo Self Help Organization, with USAID support, is the first of its kind in the country that enables the production of high quality fluoride filter material. This investment is particularly timely to address the long-standing problem of excess fluoride in the ground water in the Rift Valley area.”

The Oromo Self Help Organization will initially distribute the water filters to 12 community fluoride treatment systems established with the support of USAID in four *woredas* (districts) in East Shewa Zone. Residents who obtain the clean water from the water points will pay a nominal fee and a portion of the fee will be used to purchase replacement filters as needed.

In the future, the facility will provide water filters to other fluoride-affected *woredas* in Afar, Oromia, and SNNP regions.

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