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## **In School Youth HIV Prevention Program Transition**

**Keynote remarks by USAID representative Jeanne Rideout**

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**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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I am delighted to join you this morning to celebrate the achievements of USAID's highly successful In-School Youth HIV Prevention Program, supported with resources from the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief.

The program goal was to establish and mainstream comprehensive behavior change for HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health in secondary and tertiary level schools.

It is of paramount importance to carry out HIV prevention activities with in-school youth, because the knowledge and skills they gain can have a multiplier effect that reaches other at-risk populations, such as adult parents in their communities.

The program focused on building five essential life skills among high school and university students in Addis Ababa and the Amhara, Oromia, SNNP and Tigray regions:

- Making good decisions
- Being more assertive—especially for young women
- Setting realistic life goals
- Boosting self confidence
- Resisting negative peer pressure

These are critical skills for young people to develop, not just to prevent HIV infections but to help them make good choices throughout their lives.

Working closely with curriculum experts from the Ministry of Education and the regional educational bureaus, the program developed 12 supplementary guides

that linked 72 short adolescent reproductive health and HIV prevention activities to specific lessons in the 9th – 12th grade civics, English and biology subjects.

The full integration of skill-based activities into the basic subjects is the gold standard for HIV prevention and adolescent reproductive health. In a time of decreasing funding, this sustainable approach to HIV prevention is indispensable. It is essential to equip youth with valuable life skills while they are still students. Currently, the integrated curriculum is being employed in 92 high schools along high-risk corridors.

The red card activity is a notable innovation employed by the USAID program. Young women use this tool to reduce gender inequity and violence. Simple to use, low-cost, and scalable, the red card concept is similar to the one used in football, where a player who commits a violation is “carded” by the referee, and must leave the game. Testimonies by young women about its effectiveness are promising. The red card activity has gained favorable attention among youth in social media such as Facebook.

Overall, the program was designed to ensure active engagement and ownership by the Ministry of Education and regional education bureaus, in developing and implementing high-impact practical learning for HIV prevention and sexual and reproductive health activities. The program employed the principle of “Collective Learning and Action” to target training and technical assistance to assist the ministry in taking a leadership role to sustain the program far beyond its end date.

USAID is very pleased that the regional education bureaus have all demonstrated ownership in the curriculum integration process in secondary schools. Equipping students with not only academic knowledge, but also with practical life skills will aid in sustaining decreases in HIV prevalence in Ethiopia.

So while USAID funding for this program comes to an end, we are happy to say that the program will not end. We are passing the baton to the Ministry of Education, and we are confident in their abilities to continue to expand the curriculum integration and red card activities across the country as recognized pillars in the fight against HIV and as key skills for Ethiopia’s youth to develop.

We wish to thank the Ministry of Education, the regional education bureaus, and FHI 360 for their exemplary collaboration in this program.

Thank you very much, amasegenalehu.