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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## **Launch of the Ethiopian Land Research and Development Network (ETHIOLANDNET)**

**Acting Mission Director Gary Linden**

**November 25, 2014**

**Bahir Dar University**

It is a great honor and pleasure to be here with you, on behalf of USAID and the American people, to mark another milestone for the land sector in Ethiopia.

The issue of land tenure and property rights is a cornerstone of Ethiopia's growth and transformation plan as it is linked to peace and governance, to agricultural productivity and food security, to conservation of natural resources, to economic growth and prosperity, and to equity for women and men. It is integral to achieving the goals of the [U.S. Feed the Future Initiative](#) to end hunger and ensure adequate nutrition and food security for generations to come.

The Government of Ethiopia and USAID have carried out land tenure and land administration programs together since 2005, nearly a decade. These programs helped to make some strategic achievements for improving land tenure security in rural areas by strengthening the legal framework for land administration; by increasing the awareness of multiple stakeholders about rural land governance, and by demonstrating cost effective surveying methods for rural land mapping, building the capacity of the federal and regional land administration agencies, and encouraging further public investment in land surveying and administration.

Yet much work remains to accomplish our shared goals of increasing economic growth, particularly agricultural sector growth, strengthening rural resiliency, and improving governance. So USAID in consultation with the Government of Ethiopia designed and launched the third consecutive program—Land Administration to Nurture Development (LAND) in 2013.

LAND works at the national and regional levels of government to further improve the legal and regulatory framework related to land tenure and property rights and to support capacity building. LAND also operates in pastoral regions to clarify and strengthen communal land rights for pastoralist and agro-pastoral communities. This activity will provide communities with decision-making rights over their

natural assets—land, water and other natural resources, often the source of tension.

As a complementary activity, USAID's LAND works with Ethiopian universities to train government officials and professionals and to engage Ethiopian universities in policy analysis of land issues. In this regard, Bahir Dar University admitted 42 mid-career students coming from various regions in the 2014 summer master's program. Hawasa, Bahir Dar and Haramaya universities, in collaboration with corresponding regional governments, have been assessing existing land policies to help the regions make evidence-based decisions.

It gives me great satisfaction that USAID LAND facilitated the establishment of the Ethiopian Land Research and Development Network (ETHIOLANDNET) which we gather to launch today. This network will provide Ethiopian academic, research and development communities a forum for exchanging information, promoting and disseminating research on land issues. USAID believes that this network can foster academic research and exchange, knowledge management and support informed policies for the country.

The success of this network, of your work, will be measured when research results inform the development or the reform of land policies in keeping with the goals of the national Growth and Transformation Plan. I urge you all to seize this opportunity to contribute to learning and the development of this great country whose economic, social and peaceful transformation will advance with able, sustainable, and equitable governance of its vast land resources.

I would like to congratulate and thank Bahir Dar University and its Land Administration Institute for hosting the ETHIOLANDNET secretariat and for hosting this launch.

Thank you.