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## EMPOWERING ETHIOPIAN WOMEN

“For wherever women are diminished, the entire world is diminished with them. However, wherever women are empowered, towns and villages, schools and economies, are empowered, and together we are all made stronger with them.” – *First Lady Melania Trump, International Women of Courage Awards, March 30, 2017*

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In Ethiopia, 80 percent of the population resides in rural areas and women provide the majority of the agricultural labor in these communities. However, their contributions often go largely unrecognized and their fathers or husbands often restrict/dictate women’s access to resources and community participation.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR ETHIOPIA

When women have access to their own income, they are more likely to spend it on the betterment of their families and successfully participate in village savings or pay school fees for their children.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT FOR THE UNITED STATES

By promoting gender equality in access to economic opportunities and education and supporting the health of women and their families, we are creating opportunities for more equitable participation in society. In addition, we are addressing the root causes of domestic violence, child marriage and female genital mutilation as well as taking steps to enforce and support legislation to protect women and their children from gender-based violence.

## PROGRAMMING

**INCREASING FEMALE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:** Although the primary school enrollment rate of girls in Ethiopia has climbed from 21 to 91 percent in the last three decades, the majority are unable to transition to secondary and tertiary school due to distance, personal security and economic challenges. As girls grow older, academic participation becomes increasingly difficult as it takes time away from essential income generating activities. Only 34.7 percent of undergraduate university students are female and five percent of these drop out in the first year. At the same time, female-led instruction at the university level is extremely low at only 11 percent. To tackle these challenges and better support the continued education of the next generation of female Ethiopian leaders, our Reading for Ethiopia's Achievement Developed activity focuses on improving reading skills in primary schools. Our interventions work with government counterparts to proactively engage more women and girls. We provide supplementary reading materials and purposefully support girls' participation in reading clubs to enhance learning performance and increase retention.

**EXPANDING ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN:** Women often face different and more basic economic constraints than men including less access to credit and limited market access. To support women's ability to create businesses and secure their own livelihoods, we encourage financing for female-owned businesses through the Development Credit Authority. To support women in agriculture under the Feed the Future initiative, we empower women in decision making about production, the use of productive resources (land, water, capital), and control over income and time use. We support women in chronically food insecure households by boosting access to improved farming inputs and creating income earning agricultural activities.

**PROMOTING THE HEALTH AND SAFETY OF WOMEN AND GIRLS:** According to the Ethiopian Demographic and Health Survey in 2011, almost a quarter of Ethiopian women do not make decisions on most individual and family issues. Instead, their husbands make decisions for them on choices including the option to use birth control methods, and whether to give birth in a health facility or seek the assistance of a trained provider. Additionally, harmful traditional practices—early marriage and childbearing, female genital mutilation and gender-based violence—all having huge adverse effects on Ethiopian women. Through the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), we address the HIV risks associated with early marriage. We also provide medical assistance for women and girls suffering from fistula (a birth injury common in very young mothers) and educate communities about the health risks of female genital mutilation, which exceeds 65 percent nationwide. To boost maternal and newborn health, we support primary health care to end preventable child and maternal deaths and teach women about nutrition through Feed the Future. Additionally, we support the capacity of local Ethiopian law enforcement agencies to enforce laws banning gender-based violence.

**INCREASING WOMEN'S ROLES IN CONFLICT PREVENTION AND PEACEMAKING:** Conflict prevention and mitigation activities support women's peace building networks by providing women with conflict prevention training and an outlet for healing and forgiveness. Activities facilitate the formation of regional women's peace forums to ensure that women and men are contributing equally to peace building processes. Women who received leadership training are now participating with increased confidence within community peace structures.