

Press Release



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USAID ADDRESSES EMPLOYMENT CHALLENGES AMONG YOUTH THROUGH ECONOMIC STRENGTHENING HUBS

Maychew, Tigray, Ethiopia, December 2, 2015 -- The U.S. Government, through the United States Agency for International Development, today inaugurated the first of up to 30 youth economic strengthening hubs to be established in Ethiopia, while also commemorating the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. Established through USAID's Building the Potential of Youth activity, the hubs will work over the next five years to address the needs of unemployed and underemployed youth by providing access to new life skills training.

Lack of access to training and services increases the economic vulnerability of young people and also increases the likelihood that they will face discrimination, difficult choices, or even worse—violence.

The hubs will provide adolescent girls and young women, as well as young men, with access to job networks and self-help groups, while organizing experience-sharing sessions to increase individuals' self-confidence. The hubs, which will be operated by *woreda* (district) administration officials with support from USAID, will also provide young people with career guidance, business linkages, basic familiarity with computers and technology, and understanding of local value chains, including awareness about relevant job market norms and entrepreneurship start-up. Together, these services will help participating youth build individual personal development plans, further develop a variety of skills, and then find gainful employment.

"In countries around the world with large youth populations, including Ethiopia, which has the second largest youth population in Africa, there is optimism about the potential of youth as future drivers of economic growth. While it is true that youth can play this role, a youth bulge alone won't make economic growth happen. The potential of youth needs to be nurtured in order to be realized," said U.S. Deputy Chief of Mission to Ethiopia Peter Vrooman at the inauguration. "And what we've found globally is that female education and female empowerment is a critical part of that—as President Obama and Ethiopia's leaders have repeatedly highlighted."

The Building the Potential of Youth activity is implemented by Save the Children and a consortium of five local organizations. The activity incorporates well-founded gender approaches including identifying female role models for girls and young women, seeking to expand their participation in non-traditional careers and jobs.

An estimated 35,000 youth, including 17,500 girls and young women, across 30 *woredas* of Afar, Amhara, Oromia, Somali, SNNP, and Tigray regions will benefit from the USAID activity.