

Press Release



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U.S. Government Celebrates International Women's Day

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, March 5, 2015 – Today, the U.S. Government, through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and in collaboration with Addis Ababa University (AAU), celebrated International Women's Day (annually held on March 8) under this year's theme "Make it Happen!" International Women's Day was first celebrated more than 100 years ago and is a day to commemorate the achievements of women and girls throughout the world.

At the experience-sharing event, sponsored through USAID's University Success Program (USP), U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Patricia M. Haslach along with five prominent Ethiopian women role models shared their personal experiences with more than 100 female university students and staff members. The forum encouraged the young women to make the most of their university education and aimed to inspire them to always keep reaching for their goals and life aspirations.

Speaking to the university students, Ambassador Haslach said, "Looking at our young and enthusiastic audience today, I see future business owners, future ministers, future ambassadors, future mothers, and future role models and mentors. With your contributions, Ethiopia is well on its way to becoming a middle-income country. Ethiopian women will have a better life expectancy. Ethiopian women will be successful in agriculture and business. Ethiopian women will excel in education. And you, the young women of this country, will help lead Ethiopia into the future. You can "Make it Happen!"

The purpose of the USP, implemented by FHI 360, is to improve the retention and graduation of female students from universities in Ethiopia and to improve the capacity of partner universities to support those students during their time on campus. The program has reached more than 2,250 female students through life skills training, English as a second language education, and mentoring modules.

There has been a visible increase in the university enrollment of young women in recent years, in part because the Government of Ethiopia has taken important steps to eliminate constraints in girls' and young women's access to education. However, attrition and dropout rates among female university students are still higher than their male colleagues due to limited services and resources, and a challenging environment for women in most universities.

The USP program has been successful because of the strong collaboration between USAID and the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, the British Council, the U.S. Peace Corps, and the three partner universities: Addis Ababa University, Adama Science and Technology University and Jimma University.

For more information, please go to www.usaid.gov/ethiopia