

# Press Release



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## Saving Lives with Puppets

39 new episodes of Tsehai Loves Learning and 12 new books released about health literacy

**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, February 4, 2016:** The U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia, along with officials from the Government of Ethiopia, took part today in the official launch of new episodes of the popular children’s television and radio series Tsehai Loves Learning. Tsehai Loves Learning - Healthy Whiz Kids is a new effort of Whiz Kids Workshop that aims to help reduce child mortality in Ethiopia through health literacy among children and parents. The episodes will air nationally on the Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation’s television and radio stations beginning 6 February 2016 and continuing every Saturday at 9:30 a.m.

Whiz Kids Workshop designed this project, which is funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), in response to data which suggests that about 350,000 children in Ethiopia die each year and more than 90 percent of these deaths are due to preventable or treatable causes such as pneumonia, diarrhea, malaria, malnutrition and HIV/AIDS.

Tsehai Loves Learning – Healthy Whiz Kids focuses on four major health-related content areas—communicable disease, nutrition, safety and hygiene—to create awareness and reduce the high mortality rate of children in Ethiopia.

Whiz Kids Workshop has produced 39 television episodes using its famous ‘Tsehai Loves Learning’ puppet show as a platform to convey different messages about health related topics suited for children and parents. Twelve children’s books have also been produced to complement the effort. This project provides all the videos and print materials produced as well as teacher training for six schools located in Addis Ababa and Debre Birhan. In addition, a Tsehai Resource Center has been opened in the Gerji area of Addis Ababa that provides a space for parents and children to learn and practice healthy behaviors together through play. The resource center is provided as a free service to the community and has had nearly 2,000 visitors since opening in August.

Whiz Kids Workshop, in collaboration with international child development experts, conducted a study to research the effectiveness of these new health related television episodes in terms of creating the desired awareness among children. The study concluded that children's health knowledge doubled in comparison to a control group after exposure to the Tsehai Loves Learning - Healthy Whiz Kids television episodes. "The results are honestly better than we had hoped for. I'm excited by the possibility of saving children's lives with Tsehai," said Bruktawit Tigabu, CEO of Whiz Kids Workshop and co-creator of Tsehai Loves Learning. "It's a matter of increasing the reach of these materials to as many children as possible. The more children we reach, the more lives we can save."

Bruktawit, a 2010 Rolex Young Laureate called the launch "The highlight of my career. For more than 15 years I've been working in children's education. All of that becomes insignificant if we can't reduce child mortality. I've been dreaming to release content like this for the past six years."

At the event, U.S. Ambassador to Ethiopia Patricia Haslach said, "We know that education is one of the best ways to bring an end to preventable deaths. Learning and applying healthy practices, identifying warning signs and taking action early-on can truly mean the difference between life and death.... Tsehai and her friends are enhancing children and parents' knowledge and positive attitudes in areas crucial for children's health."

"The fact that these episodes will be on a national TV will play a greater role in terms of creating awareness about health topics among the general public. It can serve as a benchmark to showcase the success achieved on different educational practices as well," said Haileselese Fiseha, Addis Ababa education bureau head.

A representative from the Ministry of Health also said, "We have made great progress in recent years in the reduction of child mortality in Ethiopia. However there is still much progress to be made. The challenges are great, and the solutions involve everyone. When the public gets involved and takes a shared responsibility in solving these issues, particularly when they cooperate with the Ministry of Health as was done here, we have to potential to make great strides in reducing child mortality."

Whiz Kids Workshop is one of Ethiopia's leading social enterprises and has been engaged in the production and distribution of educational media for children and youth in local languages since 2005. Their productions include the popular and award winning television programs "Tsehai Loves Learning" and "Involve Me."

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