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FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Closeout of the Urban Nutrition and Food Security Project
Remarks by USAID Representative Ritu Singh
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Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
(as prepared for delivery)

Inde-men wal-a-chu

It is my great pleasure to be here today on behalf of USAID to celebrate the successful completion of our Urban HIV Nutrition and Food Security Project implemented by the World Food Programme.

Ethiopia has come a long way in the fight against HIV and AIDS. However, the lack of nutrition and economic opportunities for people living with HIV/AIDS, among other issues, still exist. Because of these challenges, it is so important to ensure that food insecure people living with HIV/AIDS improve their nutritional status and take their medication so they can live healthier lives.

There are many accomplishments to highlight over the project's five years of implementation. The feeding program, access to HIV treatment services, and the economic strengthening activities have improved the lives of 625,000 people! That is truly an impressive number!

Of these, more than 11,800 pregnant and lactating women living with HIV/AIDS have received counseling on good nutrition, treatment adherence, and infant and young children feeding. One of these women is Selam, a 35-year-old mother who suddenly found out that she is HIV positive. Scared and confused, she left her husband and moved to a town where nobody knew her. She started working as a housekeeper, got pregnant, and became desperate. With the support of the project, Selam was linked to prevention of mother-to-child transmission services. She received counseling on good nutrition, treatment adherence, and infant and young child feeding. As a result, she delivered a healthy HIV-negative baby!

Another project accomplishment was providing food and nutrition assistance to nearly 14,700 malnourished and 51,300 food insecure people living with HIV. This resulted in people adhering to their treatment and improving their overall nutritional status.

To enhance these achievements, the economic strengthening component of the project went beyond just providing food. It also ensured the sustainable improvement of people's lives. When people living with HIV/AIDS are food secure, they adhere to their medication and live healthier lives.

The project's success at breaking the vicious cycle of HIV and food insecurity is commendable. With economic strengthening support such as business skills training, Selam, who I described earlier, is also now running her own small business. In the words of Selam, *"I have passed through unbearable challenges and loneliness. But now, my life has changed its course for the better through the project that made me resilient."*

Most of us in this room could probably tell similar wonderful stories of people like Selam, whose lives were improved through the project. I would like to thank the Ministry of Health, regional health bureaus, and the World Food Programme. Your partnership, along with the support of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, or PEPFAR, have been instrumental in achieving these impressive results and positively affecting so many lives.

Thank you and *amasegenalehu*.