



# USAID | ETHIOPIA

FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

## **Women's Entrepreneurship and Leadership Training Graduation**

**Remarks by USAID Representative Gary Robbins**

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**Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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It is a privilege for me to be here this beautiful morning on behalf of USAID to celebrate the graduation of 107 Ethiopian women who are now in a better position to accelerate their livestock businesses.

The challenges and the opportunities to enhance the productivity and competitiveness of the livestock sector in Ethiopia have been repeatedly highlighted through various platforms involving diverse stakeholders. When considering women's involvement to strengthen the sector, both the challenges and the opportunities are immense.

Women make up nearly half of Ethiopia's livestock workforce but are mostly engaged in production and care of animals. They have limited participation in livestock marketing and limited access to and control over resources like land, capital, technology, information. As a result, women benefit very little from the income generated through livestock production and trade.

Inclusive agricultural sector growth is one of the objectives of President Obama's Feed the Future Initiative and empowering rural women in Ethiopia is included among its goals. USAID has been supporting the Ethiopian government to tackle the challenges that hold back women's contribution to the development of the livestock sector by addressing gender differences in productivity, profitability, participation and leadership.

In this regard, the women entrepreneurship and leadership training, under USAID's Agricultural Growth Program-Livestock Market Development project, identified high-potential female entrepreneurs and leaders in livestock businesses including today's 107 graduates, and the 104 trained last year, and equipped them to apply new technologies and management practices to create new jobs, increase the value of incremental sales, and increase their access to productive economic resources.

USAID's Ethiopia mission promotes gender equality and female empowerment across its portfolio, focusing on increasing women's social, economic and political status. Service provision and training interventions encourage equal participation of male and female beneficiaries, agents of change and project partners.

For instance, women are more likely to spend income on the betterment of their families and successfully participate in village savings, loans and trade schemes—however, their access to resources and participation is mediated through men. USAID programs promote women’s decision-making power within households, especially so that they can better influence family nutrition decisions as part of the Feed the Future and the Global Health Initiatives.

Today’s graduates can now contribute significantly toward improving livestock business results. They are pioneers in their corresponding regions. More importantly, the graduates are now role models, who are expected not only to become successful business women, but also influential mentors for other women in their respective communities.

You are now serving as mentors to other women, demonstrating the practical skills you obtained over the past five months. Challenging the status quo, you are truly role models of women leadership in agriculture and I applaud you!

USAID, together with its partners, will continue its support in mainstreaming women’s potential to increase their access to inputs, improving producers’ ability to market livestock products, enhancing technical and business skills, expanding processors’ capacity to develop more effective relationships with producers, improving governance and collaboration throughout the value chain; and connecting middle-of-the-value chain businesses with higher-value markets.

I want to close with a quote that really speaks to what the governments of the United States and Ethiopia are working together to achieve. The quote is from U.S. Vice President Joe Biden at the Global Entrepreneurship Summit in November of last year. “Without empowering women, everything else we hope to achieve is exponentially harder.”

Thank you!