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Contact: Betsy Edwards  
[BEwards@ChildFund.org](mailto:BEwards@ChildFund.org)  
(804)756-2722

**ChildFund partners with organizations to improve lives of Ethiopian women and children affected by HIV**

**RICHMOND, Va. (Dec. 1, 2014)** – The 2014 theme for World AIDS Day is “Focus, Partner, Achieve: An AIDS-free Generation,” and for three years, ChildFund has partnered with Pact and Family Health International, achieving great results with the [Yekokeb Berhan program](#), the largest USAID-funded Orphans & Vulnerable Children (OVC) program in Ethiopia.

The main goals of Yekokeb Berhan are to strengthen incomes for families and provide early childhood development (ECD) programs for children – the most vulnerable group – affected by HIV, the virus that can cause AIDS.

“Early childhood development, which is often neglected in initiatives targeting families struggling with the effects of HIV and AIDS, is one of ChildFund’s particular focuses within this broad program,” said Lloyd McCormick, ChildFund’s director of youth programs. “When the work began, preschool enrollment among 3- and 4-year-olds was at 4 percent; as of May 2014, it was 75 percent.”

To date, ChildFund has trained dozens of volunteers and local organization staff in the developmental needs of children 0-6, created and disseminated learning materials in local languages and provided teacher training and start-up support for 42 ECD centers. The program aims to reach 500,000 highly vulnerable children throughout Ethiopia.

While the program focuses on children and healthy development, parents are taught skills to better their lives despite their HIV status.

Mekiya, an HIV-positive woman and single mother of three children who was abandoned by her husband, struggled to make ends meet. She was informed about the Yekokeb Berhan program by women who, too, were infected with the virus but were earning money to provide for their families. Through Mekiya’s enrollment in the program, she was given a loan to make and sell injera, a flatbread, directly to local markets. The income she earned improved her quality of living, and she began repaying her loan.

“I was very excited at that time,” she said. “Who would give me a loan? I have nothing, and I am very poor. The program gave us the opportunity no one could ever give us.”

Mekiya is hopeful, and her children are thriving. “This program changed my life for the better. In the future, I want to do the same for others,” she said.

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