



## Empowered for a Healthy Marriage

### Promoting Community-based Response to the Needs of Married Adolescents in Ethiopia

Early marriage is common in Ethiopia, and for many young women, pregnancy follows soon after marriage and occurs during adolescence. Programmes for young people, however, tend to focus on the unmarried and on premarital sexual activity. Married adolescents have received little attention as a vulnerable group with distinct needs, yet they face a host of obstacles in making informed health decisions and accessing crucial health services.

#### Empowered for a Healthy Marriage: at a Glance

**Project Duration:** 2010 – 2013

**Donor:** David & Lucile Packard Foundation

**Budget:** \$500,000

**Location:**  
Ethiopia Oromia Region

The overall goal of this project is to improve the well-being of adolescent married girls and their families by increasing access to sexual and reproductive health (SRH) services and livelihood opportunities. The project uses a multi-pronged approach by generating demand for SRH and family planning (FP) services among adolescent married girls and women while working with health facilities and health workers to improve the provision of such service. Most importantly, the approach includes creating an enabling environment for improved SRH/FP through outreach, sensitisation and community mobilisation. Specific activities include:

#### Capacity building activities with a range of target groups:

- Training adolescent married girls on topics such as life skills, gender and development, SRH/FP, leadership, and entrepreneurship
- Selection and training of community change agents, who then work directly with adolescent married girls, health extension workers, and health facilities
- Training of health extension workers on antenatal and postnatal care, counselling and communication, SRH/FP, and record-keeping skills



**DSW**

# Empowered for a Healthy Marriage

- Strengthening of local health centres, private clinics and rural drug vendors through training as well as provision of Voluntary Counseling and Testing (VCT) kits
- Awareness creation workshops, Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) training, and SRH/FP training will for sector bureau officials and technical staff

**Awareness raising and community mobilisation** designed to change beliefs, attitudes, and practices among adolescents, young married couples, parents and influential adult figures in the communities. This includes the development of IEC/BCC materials on issues such as family planning, HIV/AIDS, gender, harmful traditional practices, and maternal health; weekly outreach in each kebele; and community edutainment.

**Home visits and SRH/FP service delivery:** Change agents, supported by field officers and health extension workers, conduct home visits to married adolescent girls. The project also works with government health centres, private clinics, and mobile VCT to provide improved quality SRH/FP services.

**Livelihoods support:** Because poverty is a key barrier to health-seeking behaviours, this project helps young women identify viable livelihood projects, provides training and seed money for small and micro-enterprises, and links them to micro-finance institutions and formal and informal education.

The project is expected to reach 58,000 married adolescent girls and their spouses and 300,000 community members over the three years.

*April 2011*



**DSW**