

Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

VEGA Wins Associate Award for Ethiopia's "AGOA+" Program

USAID/Ethiopia has signed an Associate Cooperative Agreement with the Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA), awarding \$299,278 for a two-year program to promote trade under the broader trade initiative African Growth and Opportunities Act (AGOA) which was signed into law on May 18, 2000. The Act offers tangible incentives for African countries to continue their efforts to open their economies and build free markets. VEGA is pleased to announce that it will be promoting AGOA's greater objectives through a new program, VEGA/AGOA+, which will be implemented by VEGA Member, International Executive Service Corps (IESC).

This program aims to develop export trade between Ethiopia and the United States and other international markets, further an understanding of and familiarization with AGOA and other trade agreements, and promote linkages to the Ethiopian Diaspora in the U.S. The project will accomplish these objectives through three primary project activities: 1) AGOA Information Dissemination; 2) Trade & Ethiopian Diaspora Linkages; and 3) Trade Missions & Reverse Trade Missions.

The purpose of the Information Dissemination component of the VEGA/AGOA+ program is to raise awareness of the opportunities that the AGOA initiative brings to Ethiopian companies to identify potential exporters for accessing international markets. VEGA/AGOA+ activities will include workshops and presentations with the Ethiopian Chamber of Commerce, the Addis Ababa Chamber of Commerce as well as the Chambers of Commerce in other cities. The program will reach out to other niche business support organizations such as Addis Ababa Women Enterprises Association, Addis Ababa Private Industries Association, Ethiopian Manufacturing Industries Association, Women Self-Help Organization, Tigray Women's Association and the Women Entrepreneurs Associations in Awassa and Amhara.

Second, promoting linkages with the Ethiopian Diaspora is an essential piece of promoting trade and economic development in the country. Leveraging the skills of the highly educated and technologically advanced Diaspora community will open new opportunities for Ethiopian businesses. VEGA/AGOA+ will work with existing Ethiopian networks in the US to establish these linkages to facilitate business and export linkages, foreign direct investment and potential joint ventures.

Finally, VEGA/AGOA+ will work closely with existing USAID programs that host Trade Missions and Reverse Trade Missions such as the ECA TRADE Hub, ALINC, and the Africa Fast Track Trade Program (AFTT), who regularly participate in US-based trade shows. The program will also coordinate with other US agencies that are currently hosting trade missions to East Africa to facilitate trade for agricultural products.

The VEGA/AGOA+ Program will offer USAID/Ethiopia assistance with the design, reporting, and data for additional program development and implementation throughout the life of the program. The program is designed to be responsive and flexible to changing market conditions and to take advantage of opportunities as they present themselves.

The program will draw on VEGA's existing field capabilities and will be staffed by a small, highly skilled full-time staff for program management and logistics. A number of long and short-term Volunteer Experts (VEs) will provide technical assistance in the following areas: Diaspora coordination, export promotion, trade show support, and information and communications technology. Further, one MBA Advisor will also support the program's goals of delivery cost-effective technical assistance on trade-related issues.

The Volunteers for Economic Growth Alliance (VEGA) is the world's largest consortium of economic growth volunteer organizations providing technical expertise in private sector development. Collectively, VEGA has more than 350 years of experience in mobilizing American volunteers to support economic growth in developing countries (including post-conflict and transition), and in designing and implementing successful technical assistance projects across the spectrum of economic growth activities worldwide.

VEGA is demand-driven and provides comprehensive resources with a single point of contact. Program designs are consolidated, but created through a collaborative process based on our members' extensive expertise in:

- Private Market Development
- Financial Services
- Agribusiness Development
- Expanded Opportunities for Rural and Urban Poor