



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

ETHIOPIA

SUCCESS STORY

A Champion of Waste Management

A sanitarian reinforces good waste segregation practices



Michelle Pahl, JSI

Mekedes Tekle Selasie is a leader in sustaining waste management practices in her health center

Positive monitoring and supportive supervision are critical components to sustaining behavior change. Sometimes the best habits need to be reinforced.

“Waste should be segregated at the point of generation,” Mekedes Tekle Selasie is the Sanitarian at Batu Health Center, and she often repeats this phrase when speaking with her colleagues about properly handling health care waste. With support from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)-funded AIDSTAR-One Project, Mekedes has led waste management interventions and encouraged behavior changes through supportive supervision.

Since 2004, USAID has worked to prevent medical transmission of HIV and other blood borne diseases in Ethiopia by improving injection safety and waste management practices. The project trained injection providers and waste handlers at Batu Health Center in Ziway, Ethiopia, in injection safety and health care waste management (HCWM). Trainings were part of a complete package of initiatives, including supply of personal protective equipment and color-coded bins. After the training, Mekedes rose to the task of motivating her colleagues to use the color coded bins for segregating medical waste.

Mekedes practices supportive supervision by reminding her fellow staff to place infectious waste into the yellow bins and non-infectious waste into the black bins. Though all health care providers at Batu Health Center received training in HCWM, she explains that “behavior change often takes time and effort.” Mekedes also puts job aids on the walls to assist staff segregate waste in areas where injections are given. She explains that in addition to protecting staff from injuries, segregation has the added benefit of prolonging the life of the health center’s incinerator, which has limited capacity to dispose of the waste generated in a facility treating 90-100 patients per day.

The desire to keep her health center safe and clean motivates Mekedes to continue her supportive supervision activities. She remembers that before waste management interventions, waste was not segregated properly. Now, her work environment has greatly improved, and she maintains her call to action by reminding her colleagues that “segregation is important because it keeps contaminated material contained.”