Tarikwa Tibebe, a 17-year-old girl living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, was diagnosed with HIV four years after she lost her mother to the same disease. After her mother’s death, Tarikwa’s only living relative, her grandmother, began to care for her but did not make enough money to cover their daily living expenses or transportation fees to get Tarikwa to school. The psychological toll of her mother’s death and limited access to other support caused Tarikwa to lose hope and give up on her education.

Emebet, a social service worker from the USAID-funded Family-Focused HIV Prevention, Care, and Treatment Services Activity and the Common Vision Development Association (CVDA), a local implementing partner under the Mekdim Ethiopia National Association, met Tarikwa while providing care and support to other HIV-affected children in the community. After speaking with Tarikwa to better understand her situation, Emebet came up with some viable ways Tarikwa could improve her life. Through Emebet’s help, Tarikwa got a part-time job as a waiter at a local café, allowing her to earn enough money to pay for sanitary supplies, food and other necessities. Emebet also supported Tarikwa in her health, ensuring that she took her medication regularly and worked with her local health
facility to obtain a letter to allow her to return to school. Emebet then found a volunteer to pay for Tarikwa’s transportation and other school-related costs, ultimately allowing Tarikwa to return to school.

Emebet has continued to support Tarikwa in her health and schooling and has seen tremendous improvements in her psychological wellbeing as well as in her grades. Tarikwa has started to shine, always getting remarkable grades and impressing her teachers. She desires to be a clothes designer.

“I am very happy now…thanks to the social service worker and health facility staff,” Tarikwa says. “[Emebet] is a warm-hearted, dedicated hope for me to see the unseen corner of life where I envision myself as the best fashion designer. I need to thank her and others who are helping me through continued blessings and support.”