

Moving Towards Disability Inclusion

Ethiopia

Disability inclusion support services

In recent years a growing number of stakeholders around the world - development agencies, civil society organizations, the private sector, parliamentarians, foundations and governments, among others - have begun to recognize the importance of including disability as a cross-cutting issue in policies, programmes and services to ensure that persons with disabilities enjoy the same rights and access to opportunities as other citizens. This rights-based approach and the removal of barriers that prevent people with disabilities from fully participating in society¹ together form part of a strategy crucial to reducing poverty and creating more inclusive and sustainable development.

The Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD²), a non-governmental organization (NGO) established in 2005, combines its knowledge of disability and development to enable others to include people with disabilities. Government agencies, NGOs, donors, employer and worker organizations and service providers are among those with whom ECDD collaborates. They also seek to ensure that disabled persons are engaged in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of development programmes, plans and general services. This involvement helps to ensure that the aspirations, needs and rights of disabled persons are catered for through an improved infrastructure for services and provisions to enable their effective participation and economic life. ECDD is supported by the International Labour Organization-Irish Aid Partnership Programme's INCLUDE project to promote disability inclusion in services and programmes.

About the ILO-Irish Aid Partnership Programme

The ILO-Irish Aid Partnership Programme supports two disability specific projects. The Promoting the Employability and Employment of People with Disabilities through Effective Legislation, or PEPDEL, project supports governments in improving disability-related laws and policies. The Promoting Decent Work for People with Disabilities through a Disability Inclusion Support Service, or INCLUDE, project works to build capacity at regional and national levels to effectively support equal access of persons with disabilities to training, employment services, entrepreneurship and business development services and micro-finance. Both projects operate in selected countries of South-East Asia and East and Southern Africa.

Ethiopia



The challenge

The estimated 1 billion people with disabilities worldwide represent some 15 per cent of the global population³ and 20 per cent of the world's poor. An estimated 82 per cent of disabled people in developing countries live below the poverty line, and often lack access to key areas of development, including health, education, training and employment.

In many developing and developed countries, unemployment among persons with disabilities is widespread, due to a lack of access and adequate services. When they do work, disabled persons are more likely to be underemployed, earn less money, experience less job security and have fewer chances for advancement. Yet, access to training and sources of employment are critical to overcoming poverty and exclusion.

As Ethiopia's only centre dedicated to promoting disability awareness for inclusive development, ECDD is uniquely placed to promote acceptance, dignity and opportunity for the country's nearly eight million disabled persons. Through its activities and initiatives it builds organizational capacity-building to help bridge the equality gap between non-disabled and disabled persons and full inclusion in programmes and services. However, like all new ideas, disability awareness for inclusive development has been hard to promote at the outset. Slowly, though, the idea is starting to take off.

Disability and Development Training (DDT) is a key component of ECDD's strategy that aims to foster greater access to opportunities and social inclusion of all people with disabilities. It's a strategy that is proving to be effective in improving opportunities and access and in empowering disabled persons and their families who are routinely stigmatized and isolated in Ethiopia. The implementation of DDT and training of DDT facilitators, supported by International Labour Organization (ILO), has helped challenge participants to view disability differently, identify changes for the services and programmes they run to ensure equal participation by disabled persons, and plan strategies to implement change. Development of an "action commitment" plan whereby participants apply the understanding they've gained through the new approach to their programmes and services, to make them more inclusive, is a key result of the initiative.

Under a service contract arrangement with the ILO-Irish Aid Partnership Programme begun in 2008, ECDD offers DDT courses to staff members of relevant organizations and institutions and facilitates development of their respective action plans to achieve the goals of including a disability perspective in employment and training programmes and services, such as micro-credit. Because ECDD employs its team of trainers with disabilities to lead DDT workshops, it challenges participants to interact with disabled trainers and helps them to deal constructively with mistaken assumptions about disability and disabled people.

DDT represents a new approach to raising awareness of the situation of people with disabilities and the barriers they face in earning a living and participating in the development of their communities and the nation. It's an approach that is supported through the application of ILO standards and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). What makes DDT distinctive is that it helps participants understand how barriers are created, including how they may be contributing to a disabling environment through the way they organize their work. Through DDT participants become agents for organizational change and through their actions help to prevent or break down social barriers.

Since its establishment, ECDD has seen a surge in its activities and staff size: from five to 18 full-time staff members and 27 part-time assistant facilitators, disability and development trainers and accessibility surveyors - most of whom are women and all of whom have a disability. Presently, it is active in Addis Ababa and four Regions of the country (Amhara, Oromia, Tigray and Southern Nations, Nationalities and Peoples' Regional State).

Disability inclusion support services provided by ECDD are made possible by funding through the INCLUDE project, as well as several other donors. INCLUDE works to build capacity at national level to effectively support the full participation of persons with disabilities in mainstream programmes and services focussing on vocational training, entrepreneurship development, employment, and micro-finance.

The ECDD vision

ECDD envisions an inclusive Ethiopia, where children, youth and adults with disabilities, regardless of gender or type of disability, as well as their parents and families, enjoy the same rights and have access to the same medical, educational and social services, training and work opportunities enjoyed by other citizens. In such an inclusive society, people with disabilities are accepted, have a voice and participate actively in the life and development of their communities.

Articles 8 and 27 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)

Article 8 of the UN CRPD specifically requires ratifying States to promote awareness throughout society about the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and their capabilities and potential contributions. It also requires them to combat stereotypes, prejudice and activities that might harm people with disabilities. Measures to support these aims include, among others, public awareness campaigns and awareness-raising training programmes about disabled persons and their rights.

Article 27 of the UN CRPD recognizes the right of people with disabilities to earn a living by work freely chosen or accepted in a labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disabilities.

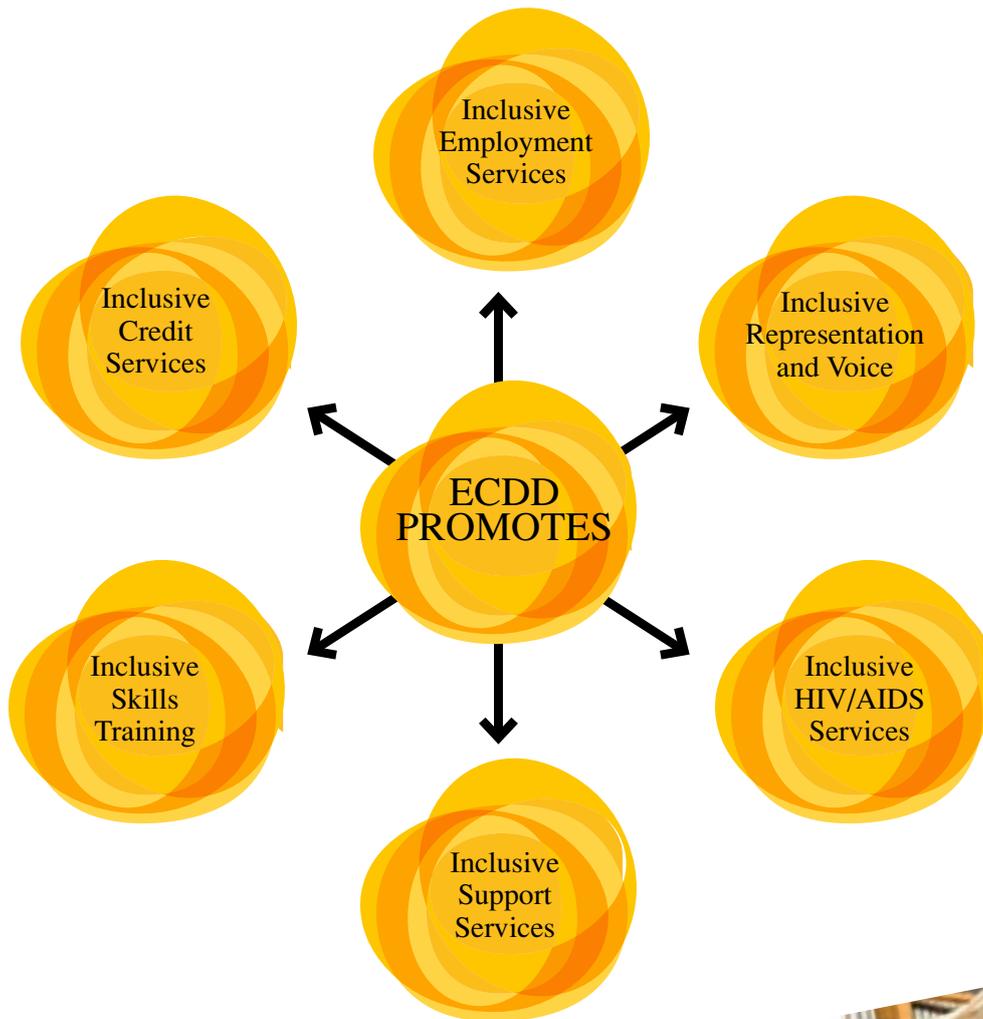
The UN CRPD together with major international conventions such as ILO Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (Disabled Persons) Convention, 1983, (No.159), which requires countries to adopt and implement a national policy based on the principles of equal opportunity and equal treatment, provide a platform for advancing equal opportunity in the world of work.



Ethiopia

Meeting the challenge

Since its establishment over five years ago, ECDD is demonstrating it can be a major influence and central force in promoting greater access of persons with disabilities to mainstream services, programmes and activities, including employment services, credit, skills and business training, and self-employment in Ethiopia.



Photos (left to right): 1: ILO / T. Tesfaye - 2: ILO / R. Kapur - 3 and 4: ILO / A. Florente



Access to employment services

In Addis Ababa, the ECDD has been working with Info Mind Solutions PLC (IMS), a private employment agency with nearly 95 per cent of market share, to help job seekers with disabilities access employment opportunities. For IMS, providing better services for qualified disabled job candidates is not difficult given its commitment to providing employers with skilled workers and heightened awareness of disability inclusive principles, resulting from the agency's roots in the United States and familiarity with the Americans with Disabilities Act (1990).

As the leading recruitment agency in Ethiopia, IMS connects employers to some 180,000 qualified job seekers, operating largely as a web-based company. Employers registered with IMS use their online services to obtain information on prospective applicants. IMS has modified its website to encourage disabled job seekers to apply for job vacancies through the addition of a few questions about their disability and job support needs, if required; and employers are asked to consider hiring disabled persons. In addition, when asked by a registered employer for a list of qualified candidates for a new job vacancy, IMS typically includes a disabled candidate among its short-list of five candidates.

Since 2008 with support provided by the ILO through ECDD, IMS employs a candidate relations officer to assist disabled job seekers with CV writing and in honing interview skills. The candidate relations officer also reviews all relevant vacancy postings publicized through newspapers and online services and transcribes them into Braille. Some 40 to 50 vacancies are incorporated into a single Braille booklet, from which an additional five booklets are prepared and circulated weekly in selected locations such as the blind association libraries and through disabled persons' organizations. The Braille booklets are also available at various locations at Addis Ababa University, where visually impaired prospective graduates and campus community members can access them easily.

Working to change perceptions among human resource professionals

In close collaboration with the Society of Human Resource Management in Ethiopia (SHRME), an association of Human Resource (HR) managers founded three years ago and more than 100 members strong, the ECDD has also been instrumental in helping to change the perceptions of HR professionals towards hiring workers with disabilities. Training workshops designed to influence HR professionals to pay attention to the needs of disabled professional job seekers, providing guidance on how to work with disabled workers and on implementing inclusive employment policies help provide modern ways of working, sharing experiences and bringing greater efficiencies to their respective organizations.



Ethiopia

Job fairs

Job fairs provide an opportunity for university-educated job seekers with disabilities to demonstrate their talents to potential employers. In Ethiopia, job fairs with the participation of persons with disabilities were initially organized by IMS in 2007, with the participation of ECDD, but since 2008 have been organized by SHRME.

Orientation sessions, led by SHRME in close collaboration with ECDD, form part of the pre-event activities designed to inform employers interested in hiring disabled workers. These include meetings to determine their labour market needs and disability awareness training that highlights the business case for hiring disabled persons, illustrating the advantages of hiring disabled jobseekers. SHRME also provides prospective employers with a list of interested professionals with disabilities who have applied for jobs posted with IMS. From this, a short list is prepared.

With some 7,000 job seekers attending the 2010 job fair and over 120 prospective employers in attendance, competition was stiff. To prepare disabled job seekers invited to interview - some 20 from a list of 75 individuals - the IMS candidate relations officer coordinated sessions on writing CV and how to prepare for an interview. In total, nearly 300 scheduled interviews took place during the 2010 job fair held at the Addis Ababa Exhibition Center.

Dina Makonnen, Info Mind Solutions PLC

“A diverse workforce contributes to a healthy workforce and the growth, efficiency and success of any organization.”

Access to credit

ECDD provides sector-specific training on disability awareness for business, industry, and public sector organizations. In the rural area of the country's northernmost region, it works with Dedit Credit and Savings Institution (DECSI), a provider of small lines of credit and financial services with 140 branch offices throughout Ethiopia and some 2,000 staff. DECSI's main aim is to provide credit to poor people who have the capacity to engage in productive activity and to convert that talent into goods and services. The institution's non-discriminatory loan policy treats disabled loan applicants on an equal basis with others and allows aspiring entrepreneurs to start their businesses. Yet, in previous years DECSI was reluctant to give loans to disabled applicants. DECSI's policy has evolved since 2007 as a result of the influence of the Tigray Disabled Veterans Association (TDVA) and convincing arguments made by TDVA, based on a study which showed that disabled persons make credit-worthy clients.

Loans are also provided to disabled entrepreneurs who already operate a business. Loan periods range from three to five years with a maximum amount of 20,000 Ethiopian Birr, or US \$1,200. Close to 90 per cent of the DECSI loans are for non-collateral businesses.

In 2010, DECSI served 421,000 applicants, with just over 18,300 applying for regular loans. Loans to disabled clients totalled over 900, or just over 5 per cent. A majority of these are to disabled veterans whose loans are subsidized in part by the TDVA as a first step out of poverty. Yet, it was ECDD's awareness raising activities that has encouraged DECSI to keep track of the number of loans to disabled clients. Quantitative information on the financial results and impact of the loans on individual businesses will help facilitate more accurate monitoring of its inclusive lending policy and provide baseline data against which future improvements in this area can be measured. Their cooperation has also led to discussions about DECSI's sub-branch offices and what can be done to remove any existing physical and communication barriers - for example, lack of elevators, sign language interpreters for deaf clients or bank brochures, and forms and books in a format suitable for visually impaired persons.

Access to skills training, business skills and management

Amhara Regional Micro and Small Enterprise Development Agency (ReMSEDA)

Micro- and small businesses are powerful drivers of economic growth and job creation globally. They provide income generation and employment for many poor and low-income individuals. Established in 2001, Amhara ReMSEDA is a government organization established to provide basic skills and business management skills training, information and consultancy services for small and micro enterprises (SME). One of its main objectives is to tackle poverty by creating long-term and sustainable job opportunities for unemployed citizens. With offices at woreda, zonal and the grassroots or kebele levels, ReMSEDA beneficiaries include operators of start-up and expanding businesses such as shops, small manufacturers, food processors, makers of handicrafts and others.

Over 1,000 ReMSEDA extension workers operate at the grassroots level, each handling some 10 to 15 business operators for a six month period. Emphasis is placed on ensuring that women make up 50 per cent of those assisted, a decision made by policymakers. Though no specific targets have been established for disabled persons, awareness is high and a responsibility to include them in the implementation of programmes is "to be given due attention". This commitment has been largely stimulated by Disability and Development Training (DDT) organized by ECDD and attended by ReMSEDA staff in May 2010. DDT training has provided staff with a more comprehensive understanding of disability. It has also enabled them to become aware of their potential to reorganize their work so that it is inclusive. As a result, there is closer examination of how best to capture data on the number of disabled beneficiaries assisted through the agency. What is more, at the zonal level a recent proposal for business development services which cater to people with different types of impairments has been submitted for consideration, demonstrating the positive outcomes of disability awareness-raising for inclusive development.

Amhara Women Entrepreneurs' Association (AWEA)

From a membership base of 60 when it was established in 1999, the Amhara Women Entrepreneurs' Association (AWEA) now boasts 3,000 members. Disabled women entrepreneurs currently make up approximately 15 of its membership, still a low number but a marked increase since its early days when there were no disabled members. Operating in four major cities in Amhara, including Bahir Dar, Gondar, Debre-Markos and Dessie, its mission is to improve the economic status of women in the region. AWEA's main objectives range from providing training and business development services to securing work premises to facilitating access to credit for women in business.

ECDD workshops on disability mainstreaming and awareness has enabled AWEA to incorporate social issues - disability, HIV/AIDS, environmental protection, and other issues - into their programme and action plan for 2010 and beyond. In many respects, this builds on earlier commitments made by AWEA dating back to 2007, under the Partnership Programme project on Promoting Women's Entrepreneurship Development and Gender Equality (WEDGE), in which disabled women entrepreneurs were invited to take part in AWEA-supported events such as trade fairs. Association members are asked to "help bring out disabled women entrepreneurs who are working in hidden places" and encouraged to assist them in overcoming challenges - lack of business knowledge and working premises, for example. More significantly, AWEA has been working with women with disabilities from the Ethiopian Federation of Persons with Disabilities (EFPD), now called FENAPD, encouraging their members to take part in training and business development services offered by AWEA.

Ethiopia

Representation and “voice”

Experience shows that promoting equality of opportunity and inclusion is easier if there is a commitment from the highest levels. At Addis Ababa University (AAU) much has been accomplished as a result of its President's, Professor Andrias Eshete, commitment to accessibility and increased enrolment of students with disabilities. Since he took office, the number of disabled undergraduate students has nearly doubled to 450. What is more, under the University-Wide Strategic Plan for 2008 - 2013⁴, all building space is required to be accessible to users with different impairments and all ICT resources should be accessible.

The situation regarding accessible materials has improved over the past years. For example, the law library has acquired computers equipped with JAWS software to assist students with visual impairments. However, not all materials are available in an accessible format. For example, most legal codes and laws have not yet been translated into accessible formats.

Disabled students have created their own associations for deaf, blind as well as for those students with a mobility impairment. ECDD supports the activities of the three AAU associations of students with disabilities through financing select activities in support of International Day of Persons with Disabilities, International White Cane Day and Deaf Week as well as recreational activities for both disabled and non-disabled students. Through the Student Affairs Office, ECDD has also worked with the university's library to make it more accessible and to purchase assistive devices. Collaboration with the AAU Center for Students with Disabilities provides assistance to current students and new graduates and helps prepare for the transition into employment⁵.

Since 2008 under the ILO INCLUDE project, ECDD's Disability and Development Training has been provided for personnel of local development NGOs (45 persons); micro-finance institutions (29 persons); small enterprise development programmes (37 persons); private sector employers (29 persons); and, government bureaus (61 persons).

Other organizations benefiting from ECDD services

Ombudsman's Office

Training on disability mainstreaming provided by ECDD to key leaders and 30 staff members of the Ethiopian Institution of the Ombudsman has led to the hiring of two disabled persons to investigate complaints. In addition, forms to be completed by complainants now require individuals to indicate if they have a disability.

British Council

Following DDT training to some staff, the British Council asked ECDD to conduct an accessibility audit of its facilities and to prepare an audit report with recommendations. This then led to ECDD providing disability awareness training for all British Council personnel.

WaterAid

ECDD works with WaterAid Ethiopia to train staff on equality and inclusion while also advising on accessibility issues as it relates to water and sanitation, more concretely, in terms of appropriate designs for latrines for people with motor impairments.

Donors working with ECDD

ECDD has attracted funding from multiple donors who are interested in including disabled persons as part of their mainstream programmes and services. For example, in terms of expanding employment opportunities for persons with disabilities, ECDD also works with the International Orthodox Christian Charities, with funding provided by the United States Agency for International Development, to provide career counselling services to disabled jobseekers.

As the representative organization for the Abilis Foundation, an NGO based in Finland, ECDD processes applications for grant funding. Founded by people with disabilities, the aim of the Foundation is to support activities to promote the economic empowerment of disabled persons through the provision of small grants. The 10,000 Euro grant-making programme benefits groups of persons with disabilities engaged in skills development and income generating activities.



Photo: ILO / A. Florente

Ethiopia

ECDD promotional activities

Guide to Accessible Addis Ababa - The first of its kind in Africa, the Guide⁶ provides information on accessible premises in Addis and features everything from hotels, restaurants, banks, travel agencies, and cafes to parks and public buildings. Over 600 establishments were reviewed by five ECDD disabled surveyors to help create awareness of accessibility issues. It is an important contribution for Ethiopians with disabilities, disabled tourists, business people and guests from other African countries. As a result of the activities associated with the Guide, several hotels and restaurants have requested assistance in making their facilities more accessible to customers with disabilities.

Inclusive employment awards

More and more businesses are recognizing that persons with disabilities are valued employees and customers in their community. To recognize business leaders that practice and promote sustainable strategies to create fair, diversified and inclusive work environments, ECDD organized an "Inclusive Employment Awards» ceremony in December 2010. Award categories included: employer hiring the greatest number of disabled persons, employer with highest number of disabled persons in their personnel, small business employing disabled persons, and an achievement award to a human resources employer who has made a commitment to disability.

The good practice

Increasing the participation of disabled job-seekers in services that promote their access to decent work.

Lessons learned

ECDD has opened up possibilities for a range of stakeholders (government services, employment recruitment agencies, human resource professionals, business development service providers, among others) to try "new ways» for making their services and programmes more inclusive, thereby helping to ensure equal participation by disabled persons. Though it is still early days and additional follow up work is required over the short and long-term, here are some of the lessons learned thus far:

- Working towards the full inclusion of persons with disabilities in all levels of society takes time and is part of a long-term process. Not only do policies and laws need to be changed but also attitudes and misconceptions about disabled persons.
- Support and commitment at the highest organizational levels is a key to disability inclusion.
- The involvement of people with disabilities as trainers and facilitators helps others learn through interaction.
- Follow-up support to organization personnel, in particular as it pertains to disability "action plans", is important in building long-term efforts towards inclusive development.
- DDT is proving to be effective in getting people to view disability differently and become agents for organizational change through their proactive actions to break down the barriers. Changes have been significant even in cases where only a few dozen persons have been taken part. Change starts with a few committed individuals and builds up little by little.
- Sharing and publicizing success stories encourages other organizations to work towards the goal of inclusive development.
- Disabled persons' organizations need to think "development inclusion" and to more assertively work with service providers and programme planners to include disabled persons.

Success story

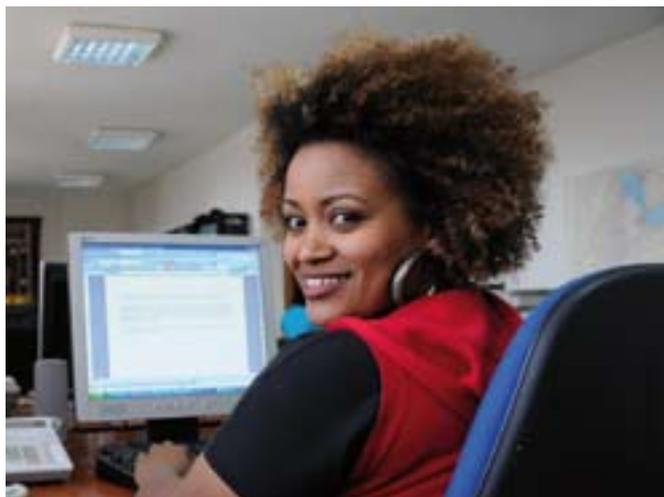
Haftom Kahsay - "Possibilities", Mekele, Ethiopia

At 23, Haftom Kahsay says life is good and *"everything is possible"*. But things weren't always that way. Four years ago, he was barely making ends meet selling snacks and biscuits along Mekele's busy streets, averaging 10 Ethiopian birr (ETB), or the equivalent of US 60 cents, per day, moving from place to place and working late into the night. A loan of 5,000 ETB (approximately US \$300) with a three year repayment period from Dedebit (DECSI) micro-finance institution enabled him to increase revenues by selling phone cards. One evening, however, things took a turn for the worse. "Stress came to me as I learned that 300 ETB in phone cards were stolen. I was not aware that a group of young men had intentions to steal from me. When I handed them the cards I thought they would give me money. I had no idea that they would steal from a blind person. I became hopeless. I stopped selling for a few days", says Haftom.

Eventually, he regained his confidence and came up with a solution to protect himself from future theft. *"I decided to set up my business near the premises of the university. I also decided to rent a small kiosk, or container, and started a public phone service. Slowly, things began to improve and I was able to hire someone to run my business and I returned to my studies. I am now studying law at the university."*

Haftom has successfully repaid his first loan from Dedebit. With a second loan of 40,000 ETB, or US \$2,400 obtained in mid-2010 he now offers, for a fee, laundry services to university students, and computer and photocopy services. Being an entrepreneur has not only had a great impact on Haftom's life, but also that of his family. He employs two of his sisters, in addition to three other workers. With an average income of nearly 3,000 ETB a month, he is able to cover salaries, rent and loan payments. He has also embarked on a new business initiative which he calls "Possibilities" which includes setting up a studio for the production of accessible educational material for blind students. *"I am full of life and life is good. I am getting loans and returning the money month by month. It's important to give thousands of others like me a chance. Everything in life is possible"*, says Haftom.





Photos: ILO / A. Florente

ENDNOTES

- 1 Barriers that prevent people with disabilities from full participating in society include physical, attitudinal, legal, regulatory, policy and communication (information in a format that is accessible such as Braille, easy-to-understand language or Sign language).
- 2 In November 2009, the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD) re-registered as an Ethiopian Resident Charity.
- 3 WHO and the World Bank, 2011: World Report on Disability.
- 4 Addis Ababa University-Wide Strategic Plan for 2008-2013, http://www.aau.edu.et/AAUBPR%20TOBE/University_Level_SP_Final_Revision,___Jan__2008.pdf, accessed 02/02/11.
- 5 At the Addis Ababa University, activities aimed to support access to higher education for students with disabilities are provided by the Ethiopian Center for Disability and Development (ECDD) with funding made possible by Threshold Association, a Finnish DPO.
- 6 The Guide to Accessible Addis Ababa was funded by Light of the World, Austria.

Further information:

International Labour Office
Skills and Employability Department
disability@ilo.org

ILO/Irish Aid Partnership Programme
<http://www.ilo.org/inclusion>