

Council of International Programs U.S.A

**Development of a Community Work and Life Center at Addis Ababa University - U.S.
Training Program –**

U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs

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Follow on and Phase 5 Report



Dr. Abye Tasse, Dean, Office of International Affairs, AAU and Emebet Mulugeta, Interim Director of the CWLC, cutting the ribbon to inaugurate the CWLC Job Fair, May 8, 2006.

The following report will describe the ***Follow on*** Phase and ***Phase 5*** of the Community Work and Life Center Project (CWLC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Previously completed and reported Phases 1 through 4 have resulted in the physical creation of the CWLC, including staffing, marketing and IT components. Phase 3, **Physical Creation of the Community Work and Life Center**, began in August 2005, when the 8 member Ethiopian team visited the U.S. for training

and observational internships to aid in the development of a career and life skills center at AAU. Action planning objectives formulated during the final week of the U.S. based training formed the basis for Phase 4 activities. As Phase 3 and 4 Phase reports outline, all Phase 3 & 4 objectives are now complete and the Center is fully operational. Section I of the report will address the subject phases with respect to the stated goals and objectives set forth in the original proposal project description. Section II will organize the reporting information into the format designated by the State Department, including overview of program activities, overview of administrative activities, outcomes and accomplishments and future planning.

I. The following is a general description of *follow on* and *Phase 5* program activities as set forth in the Community Work and Life Center project description:

Follow-on Activities: A team of ten U.S. based professionals will travel to Addis Ababa for an intensive one week follow-on program. The team will include four trainers who worked with the Ethiopian team in the U.S. including an IT professional, a representative from CIPUSA and a CIPUSA affiliate director.

Four American professionals who had previously worked with the Ethiopian team traveled to Addis Ababa for the final project follow on and concluding event: the first job fair of its kind held at Addis Ababa University (AAU), and organized by the recently created Community Work and Life Center (CWLC) took place on May 8, 2006 in the basketball field of the University. Twenty-two tents were set up to accommodate the employers and allow the students to walk around and visit various employers' booths. At about 10:30am, the job fair began with an opening ceremony from the AAU President followed by a welcome from the Dean of Students. The university hired 25 security officers to oversee the event and organize the flow of students coming into the field. Over 30 employers from the business, government and NGO sectors set up booths and provided information about their industry, companies, employment needs and employment prospects. Exhibitors at the job fair were charged 18,000 Ethiopian Bir (approximately \$2,250 American dollars) on a sliding scale depending on the size and budget of the company/organization. Over 1000 students attended the job fair during the 8:30am to 3:30pm time frame, many times more than the anticipated number of attendees.

The American team arrived in Addis Ababa on the weekend prior to the Monday job fair event to assist with last minute planning and preparations. In addition, the American team participated in the following primary activities associated with the job fair:



- 1) The team manned a booth at the fair representing project partners the University of Illinois at Chicago, (UIC) Cleveland State University, (CSU), the Council of International Programs USA (CIPUSA) and the Community Work and Life Center (CWLC). Information was distributed about application to CSU and UIC, resume writing and job search practices, and the various services offered at the CWLC. A number of students stopped at the booth inquiring about educational and professional opportunities, and career related matters. In fact, the booth ran out of materials after the first hour and had to replenish hand outs many times. Long lines of interested students waited for the chance to talk with our team.
- 2) The team helped the CWLC Director, Lulit Tekie Tekele develop evaluation forms for attending students and participating employers based on evaluation materials provided by CSU team members Yolanda Burt and Paul Klein. They also helped devise methods for tracking attendance, collecting data and contact information for future networking purposes.
- 3) The team participated in three (3) separate meetings with the CWLC Advisory Committee, Technical Committee, AAU staff and members of the Ethiopian Employers Federation (EEF) to evaluate all aspects of the job fair. (EEF is another project partner and recently active participant in career center planning. Teshome NAME, President of EEF traveled to the U.S. as one of the participants in the program. He has been actively involved in the development of the CWLC and is now working with AAU stakeholders to develop collaborative programs between EEF and AAU as described below). The first meeting took place prior to the job fair, second shortly after on May 8th and another took place on the day after the event. The primary purpose of the three meetings was to evaluate the success of the event, identify problems, areas needing improvement and to make plans for the next job fair and future collaborative initiatives.

Phase 5: Evaluation

Goal: To conduct a thorough evaluation of first four phases and to ensure that evaluation remains an important part of the Center's development to assess impact.

Objectives: Create and conduct evaluations with Stakeholders; Verbal and written evaluations conducted and feedback received from 100% of Stakeholders.

Program Evaluator, Dr. Alice K. Johnson, Professor of Social Work at UIC and primary project partner, is in the process of evaluating all aspects of the project. Her complete evaluation report will be included in the final report to the State Department.

Objectives: Create and conduct evaluations with customers i.e. students and community members; Verbal and written evaluations conducted and feedback received from at least 60% of customers.

Evaluation forms were distributed to all students attending the job fair and all exhibitors. The CWLC's new Director, Emebet Mulugeta, has assumed responsibility for collecting and evaluating the evaluations, (please see attached evaluation form on page 9. According to the following recent email from CWLC staffers, the final evaluation reports are in process and results will be forthcoming shortly:

We are entering the data that was collected from student and employers to produce job fair report. Thanks to Dr. Melese, he assigned 7 volunteers to assist us and two volunteers from the graduate school of social work are working on it with the support of the center staff.

Abebe Assefa, Center staff

Objectives: Create and conduct evaluations with community partners; Verbal and written evaluations conducted and feedback received from at least 60% of community partners.

Community partners/exhibitors and stakeholder evaluation forms were created and distributed throughout the day. This information is presently being tallied by CWLC staff and will be provided as part of the program evaluation and will be included with the final report to the State Department.

II. Pursuant to the program report requirements set forth by the State Department, the following program overview is provided:

a. *Overview of program activities undertaken in report period; include unanticipated challenges and problems that arose and describe strategies used to resolve them.*

As indicated above, the American team assisted with the final details and set up of the planned job fair, as the culminating event of the exceptionally productive partnership between AAU and their American project partners. In addition, multiple meetings took place involving the American team, members of the advisory committee, university leaders and other stakeholders. Project Coordinator, Nada Touma also interviewed a number of attendees and exhibitors at the job fair to get a first-hand report about their assessment of the event.

The most significant problem that arose at the job fair was immediately evident when hundreds of young students began to line up to attend the event in the hopes of finding employment. The purpose of the job fair - which had originally been conceived of as an opportunity for networking between businesses and NGO employers and students to prepare them for the job market – was misunderstood by many attendees to be an employer recruitment kind of event. This resulted in some disappointment as most employers were not prepared to use the event for student recruitment.

Employers/exhibitors were also unclear as to the purpose of the event. The majority of employers sent their public relations staff to the event for the purpose of “marketing” their

company or introducing the students to the work of their organization. Employers were not prepared to discuss career opportunities or recruit students at the event.

b. Overview of administrative activities undertaken in report period; include unanticipated challenges and problems that arose and describe strategies used to resolve them.

The logistical aspects of the job fair were handled well. The place chosen for the job fair was a perfect location as it was very spacious, and its outdoor location allowed for a better positioning of tents in an uncluttered and visible manner. It is also an area that most students on campus are familiar with and can easily get to. Project Partner Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA) provided tents, a big cost savings. Planning for the ceremonial aspects of the event also seemed to go well, with broad representation among multiple stakeholders. Marketing of the event consisted of postings throughout the University community and in the most common areas on campus.

However, problems did arise related to communication between key parties. The date of the event was changed from mid-July, as anticipated by the American partners, to May 8 “to avoid the rainy season”. The American team was not notified of the schedule change until April, leaving very little time for American professionals to assist with planning. In addition, the staff members at the Community Work and Life Center and the partners on the advisory board did not work well together. Staff members at the CWLC did not know what to truly expect from partners such as the Ethiopian Employers’ Federation and the Christian Relief and Development Association, and partners were also unclear as to their contributions to the overall work of the Center and the job fair in particular.

The primary reason for communications problems related to the facilitation of the CWLC job fair was the lack of experience of both the front line staff at the CWLC and advisory committee. A job fair has not previously taken place in Ethiopia, nor have members of the advisory committee observed a job fair in any other location. Therefore, none of the members of the planning group had a reference point for what the event should look like and no leader emerged to ensure efficient planning.

In addition, the lack of experience and competence of the Director of the CWLC, Lulit Tekle Tekele, who assumed responsibility for all aspects of the event, has been a problem for the American partners throughout the program. The American team has found Lulit to be relatively unresponsive to input from American partners. Although we did not intend to try to manipulate decision making by our Ethiopian colleagues, we felt it was important for us to express our concerns about Lulit’s competency. Following phase 4, the American team wrote a letter to the President of AAU, in an attempt to bring attention to weaknesses in the Director’s management of the CWLC. At that time, the President, in collaboration with the Ethiopian Advisory group decided to “give her another chance”. Lulit’s performance did improve slightly thereafter, but we continued to experience problems with getting the required information until June 2006 when she left the position and was replaced.

Another unfortunate development that impacted the job fair was the scheduling of the Ethiopian Business Expo during the week prior to the job fair. Teshome Zewde Teklemariam, member of

the CWLC Executive Advisory Committee and Board Chairman of project partners the Ethiopian Enterprise Federation (EEF), hosted the first ever Business Expo in Addis Ababa the previous week. Much of his and his staff's attention was focused on preparations for the business event rather than the job fair. The Business Expo, which was the product of training received by Teshome while in the U.S. as a participant in this program, was a very successful event. A total of 225 exhibitors displayed their products over the 8 days of the expo, attracting much media and public attention and possibly distracting from interest in the job fair.

c. Outcomes: accomplishments that occurred as a result of program activities focusing specifically on participant's learning, attitudes and behavior.

Despite the challenges, the job fair was an enormous success in terms of community response, stakeholder's commitment and additional important achievements as follows:

- The job fair brought exposure to the Community Work and Life Center. More students now know that the center exists on campus and are more likely to use it in their job and internship searches as well as with assistance in resume, cover letter writing and networking;
- The job fair was instrumental in demonstrating that students at Addis Ababa University are in great need of assistance in connecting with employers and are very interested in reaching employers through events organized by the Community Work and Life Center. As a result, the event helped solidify the University's commitment to the sustainability of the Community Work and Life Center. The President of the University inaugurated the job fair and spent some time visiting the various booths and talking to employers, demonstrating his strong support and making him visible to key community stakeholders;
- The University of Addis Ababa is committed to the Community Work and Life Center's sustainability and will integrate it as a department, creating a bridge between private and public sector employers and the academic community;
- The event also introduced the students to the concept of a job fair, connected them to prospective employers and advanced their knowledge of various industries and how to make one marketable to them. In their evaluation forms, many students said they would recommend the job fair to their friends despite some disappointment with what they thought was going to be a "recruitment" event.

Several meetings were held between the Ethiopian Advisory Committee and the American team to discuss all aspects of the job fair and to identify recommendations for the improvement of future events. It was established by all parties, that the job fair will be an annual event.

Below are recommendations derived from these team meetings:

Orientation: All parties agreed that better orientation of student and exhibitors was essential to the success of the event. The Community Work and Life Center will host separate orientation events targeted toward students and employers to provide a better understanding of the goals and

objectives of a job fair. Marketing materials will have to be carefully designed to insure that the purpose of the event is clearly stated.

Career vs. Job: Career experts from the American team suggested renaming the Job fair “Career Fair” to change the students’ perception that the event is solely focused on recruitment and instead will focus on recruiting and networking elements. The Community Work and Life Center will hold several networking workshops throughout the year to expose the students to the idea of career development and planning.

Marketing to Employers: It was agreed that changing the employer recruitment methods is an important recommendation. Staff at the Community Work and Life Center will be more persistent when inviting employers to the job fair. Follow-up calls will be made repeatedly and invitations will be extended to employers even when the employer is not initially interested in attending. American career professionals suggested that notification should be given 6 months ahead of time with a reminder as the job fair date gets closer. Also, invitations need to be sent out to many more employers than are expected to attend in order to obtain reasonable attendance (i.e. 2,500 employers will be invited and only 500 will actually attend).

Faculty Involvement: Involving faculty members in the work of the Community Work and Life Center is important to the career development of students. AAU administrators will work with faculty to develop collaborative approaches to career development. By having faculty hold sessions in the classroom about the Center and its work, students are more likely to become engaged in CWLC activities.

Strengthening Community Partnerships: Strengthening commitments and relationships with partners to make better use of the wide range of access to employers and resources that the partners already have and to help clarify the amount of material contributions each partner can contribute, will help to further the mission of the CWLC. A Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted to solidify the Ethiopian Employers’ Federation’s commitment to the Center and future job fairs. In addition, the American team met with the Christian Relief and Development Association and obtained a commitment from them to write a Memorandum of Understanding with the CWLC to help work more efficiently with the Center in the recruitment of students in the social sciences and liberal arts. Partners will also commit to holding information sessions for their members to discuss the benefits of recruiting through the University. Teshome, the President of the Ethiopian Employers Federation has committed to holding such sessions for his members, highlighting the advantages of recruitment through the CWLC and the job fair. He is also exploring the possibility of combining the Business Expo with the Career Fair as an annual event.

Decentralizing: Another proposal suggests several smaller job fairs and networking events targeting each University Department and/or specific field, creating more targeted and more manageable events. Some students suggested extending the job fair over a few days where every day targets a department or industry.

Public Information: The CWLC will improve its website and use it as a promotion tool and information resource for the job fair. Another absolutely essential component, missing from the

job fair was media coverage. The CWLC will learn how to solicit free media for the event and how to involve press contacts throughout planning phases to generate interest.

Scheduling/Time Management: The selection of a date for the job fair is essential to its success. The selection of dates for subsequent events will be carefully determined based on all relevant factors and with input from all potentially interested and impacted parties. In addition, tasks will be determined and assigned based on established timeframes to ensure efficient management of all related details.

At the Job Fair:

- Allow for better flow of students: Due to security concerns, the entire event was monitored by security personnel, also working as organizers to manage the amount of students present at the job fair. As a result, students followed a specific course, all hovering at one booth at once, while other booths remained empty. Consequently, students were visiting all booths in a row, without targeting the companies or industries that they were most interested in. In the future, a map of the field with a list of employers will be provided at the entrance to allow the students to navigate more effectively through the job fair;
- A handout describing each attending employer and/or organization will be created and distributed at the job fair entrance to give the students a better sense of the types of industries present. Another idea is to hang a sign on the outside of each tent, describing the organization or company and the majors targeted.
- Refreshments will be available for students as they await their turn to enter the job fair.

d. Planning: Describe how the subject phase relates to previous and/or following phases and how the subject phase fulfills overall program goals/objectives.

The CWLC job fair is the concluding event of the final phase of this Ethiopian workforce program. All of the partners are extremely proud of what we have accomplished together. The CWLC is fully operational and assisting students in making the transition to full employment and self reliance. Our first job fair, despite a few flaws, has introduced the CWLC to the community while establishing vital connections between the academic community and graduating students and public and private sector employers.

Teshome Zewde Teklemariam, Chairman of EEF, and Abye Tasse, AAU President are meeting regularly to make arrangements for future collaborations that will result in appropriate employment preparation, linkages and networks between students and employers. Prior to the development of the CWLC program, the academic and business communities in Ethiopian functioned completely autonomously. After working together for two years, leaders from both sectors have recognized, as a result of their experiences with this program, that they have mutual goals and responsibilities for developing their country's workforce.

Attachments:

Evaluation Form.....page 9