

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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Interim Phase Report

The following report will address Phase 2, the **U.S. based training** portion of the Community Work and Life Center Project (CWLC) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The preliminary steps of Phase 3, **Physical Creation of the Community Work and Life Center**, are also underway and will be reported. Supplemental information documents are also attached as appendices 1 – 6.

1. Overview of Program Activities

a) Participant Selection:

The development and implementation of the Community Work and Life Center project is based on strong partnerships between the Council of International Programs U.S.A (CIPUSA), the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), African AIDS Initiative International, the Ethiopian Employers Federation, the Christian Relief and Development Organization (CRDA) and Addis Ababa University. These partnerships are essential to the success of the project and have played a large role in shaping its course. As originally proposed in the grant, the Ethiopian-based Workforce Advisory Board was created in October of 2004, and includes representatives from the NGO, business and academic sectors in Ethiopia, in addition to African AIDS Initiative International. The group met several times in Ethiopia during the needs assessment phase of the project to discuss needs, first steps and the participant selection process. As the project moves forward, the Advisory Board continues to meet monthly and to provide oversight and direction.

Members of the advisory group also conducted recruitment of participants for the U.S. based training phase of the program, each member selecting the candidate that best represented their area of expertise and interest. (See Planning and Needs Assessment Report-September-October 2004). Following Board recommendation and Addis Ababa University's request, the number of participants was downsized from the original proposed 10 participants, to 8 participants, to ensure that additional funding would be available for Center operations. The Ethiopian training team was thus comprised of eight participants representing multiple sectors,(See attached participants description list):

Abebe Lemma Gebrewold – Program Officer, Christian Relief and Development Association

Fisseha Itanna – Associate Dean of Students, Addis Ababa University

Melese Getu Ketele – Associate Dean, School of Social Work, Addis Ababa University

Demoze Bellete Mekonnen – Program Coordinator, African Aids Initiative

Mulugeta Naizghi – Dean of Students, Addis Ababa University
Teshome Zewde Tekle – President and Chairman, Ethiopian Employers Federation
Tsfaye Wolde Zebiro – Program Officer, African Aids Initiative
Lulit Tekle – Project Director, Community Work and Life Center, Addis Ababa University

Despite the diversity in the participants’ professional backgrounds, the group proved to be very committed and to have the capability of working as a team. All the participants took their role very seriously, understood the scope of the work and assumed responsibility for learning the skills required for project success.

Before leaving Addis Ababa, the team participated in a pre-departure orientation session led by Dr. Alice Johnson from UIC. A pre-departure information booklet was provided by CIPUSA and used during the session. The booklet contained general information about program design, host family living, the city of Chicago and the U.S. culture and norms.

b) U.S. based orientation for trainers and facilitators:

CIPUSA had originally intended to conduct one full orientation session for all U.S. based trainers. However, time constraints and schedule limitations prevented us from carrying out a group orientation session for trainers. Instead, individual meetings between the project manager and each trainer clearly illuminated the training objectives, as well as the group needs and interests. The trainers were also individually briefed on Ethiopian culture, diversity and workforce climate.

The trainers consisted of many UIC professors in addition to the UIC career center director and the UIC alumni career center director who played a central role in framing the dialogue around the creation of the career center. (See trainers’ bios document). The Midwest AIDS Training and Education Center was also an essential partner in designing the HIV/AIDS programs as they committed their own highly professional trainers to speak to the group and provided us with great references to other renowned HIV/AIDS professionals around the Chicago area.

c) Program activities:

The group arrived in Chicago on Sunday, July 10th to begin their month long U.S. based training. The training was designed to examine career center development and operations “from the ground up”, with the understanding that the participants had almost no previous background or experience. Prior to the arrival of participants, the trainers provided guidance with training topics and format. The project manager met with and was regularly in touch with Andres Garza (Director of Career Services at UIC) and Mary Anne Buckman (Vice President of Alumni Career Center at UIC) to design a comprehensive career development-training plan within the limited timeframe available. Also, Dr. Nathan Linsk (Principal investigator, Midwest AIDS Training & Education Center) provided direction on the issue of HIV/AIDS as it relates to workforce development in Ethiopia.

The training program's entire first day was dedicated to orientation and discussion of the schedule. Another whole day was devoted to team building and participatory training to create group cohesiveness and teamwork, (See introduction to action planning document). The rest of the first week was spent in seminars and lectures aimed at providing a better understanding of the fields of career development and workforce readiness. During the first week, the group was able to observe the career preparedness work of a very large university as well as the community-based career center and student life offices of Joliet University, one of the oldest community colleges in the country, offering a wide range of career services to both graduating students and members of the community.

The first half of the second training week was focused on HIV/AIDS prevention, education and awareness techniques. Panel discussions and dialogue also focused on gaining an understanding of HIV/AIDS in the workplace in the United States. One day was also dedicated to a "Life Skills" workshop with a focus on time management, stress management and leadership skills, with the plan to include these workshops in the Community Work and Life Center's future services.

By the end of the second week of training, the group was prepared and anxiously anticipating their travel to the CIPUSA affiliate offices in Columbus, Ohio, Cleveland, Ohio, Kalamazoo, Michigan and Chicago, Illinois, for a more focused, hands-on training and short observational internships, (See attached affiliate schedules). The group was divided into pairs, each pair traveling to the four affiliate locations.

Each affiliate organization prepared a schedule for participant training in their community and made arrangements for host family living. Affiliate training experiences combined the specific participant's interests with the goals of the workforce development project. The participants also stayed in host families, providing them with direct exposure to American life and its varied communities. All the participants truly enjoyed the experience and described host family living as one of the highlights of their visit to the U.S. (See evaluations).

Upon the participants' return to Chicago, a half-day session was dedicated to discussion and processing of the affiliate cities experience. The purpose of this "de-briefing" session was to acquaint the whole group with each member's experience and to share insights with the team about how their individual learning experiences can apply to and benefit the CWLC project.

The last component of the training program consisted of a two-day "action planning" workshop. Action planning sessions were geared toward creating an action-planning document outlining the specific steps needed to open the center and start providing services to the students, including objectives, outcomes, time lines and roles of each team member, (See planning for the center document).

2. Overview of Administrative Activities

3. Outcomes

[Phase 1] Needs Assessment:

- 1- *Talk to the President of AAU about needs of the University, space availability and resource availability*

Two spaces have been identified but the discussion is ongoing regarding where the Center will be established. Currently, it is temporarily housed at the Graduate School of Social Work (See Planning and Needs Assessment Report-September-October 2004).

- 2- *a- Talk to undergraduate and graduate students at AAU to determine their needs around workforce readiness and life skills*
b- Talk with faculty at the undergraduate and graduate levels to determine their needs around workforce readiness and life skills and their perceived student need.
c- Talk with staff at different levels to determine their needs around workforce readiness and life skill

Surveys have been conducted by the staff at CWLC to determine and understand the workforce readiness and support needs of students, faculty and staff at Addis Ababa University, (See baseline survey document). Survey results are still coming in and are being entered into the database.

- 3- *Two trainers travel to Addis Ababa to meet with organizations and potential participants traveling to the U.S. for training. The trainers will refine the initial needs assessment and modify as appropriate.*

In October 2004, Dorothy Faller and Dr. Alice Johnson traveled to Addis Ababa and conducted a needs assessment study and also met with all the Ethiopian partners to further identify needs and refine goals (See Planning and Needs Assessment Report-September-October 2004)

[Phase 2] U.S. based training program

- 1- *Design and execute an orientation to Chicago and the United States including U.S. government, economic and social systems and U.S. culture:*

Participants received orientation folders containing information about U.S. culture, customs, values and norms, as well as information regarding the “changing face” of the American population and the importance of diversity in U.S. culture and workplace. These topics were addressed with the participants and trainers provided opportunities for dialogue around these issues.

Chicago International Program board member and former director provided a comprehensive orientation to Chicago and handed out materials highlighting the major events and attractions around the Chicago area. The group also took a tour of the UIC area and the city of Chicago.

2- *Design and execute an introduction to the training program, describing mutual expectations and learning opportunities and intended outcomes.*

This was executed on two levels: 1) During orientation, time was dedicated to describe the project design, goals, objectives and expectations and participants had time to ask questions and voice concerns regarding all aspects of the training program and schedule.

2) Team building sessions included discussions about participant concerns and fears as well as their interests in and passion for the project.

During both sessions, intended outcomes and learning opportunities were described and clarifications were made about project and expectations.

3-*Design classroom based sessions in areas of workforce development and preparation, program design, client centered approach to service, teaching workforce readiness, teaching life skills and learning about appropriate technology.*

On July 13th and July 14th, the participants met with Andres Garza, the Director of the Office of Career Services at UIC and with Mary Anne Buckman, the Vice President of the Alumni Career Center at UIC. The meetings were held at the office of Career Services at UIC and the group was able to thoroughly observe how the office is organized and talk to staff members who deal directly with students and employers (See evaluations for this segment of the training)

The sessions helped identify what a career center really is and how it is structured.

The classes provided clarification around what a career center does, what its mission is and the kinds of services it provides. Andres and Mary Anne also identified the challenges that a career center faces and discussed their own experiences developing, expanding and modernizing the center (in Andres' case) and creating a career center from scratch (in Mary Anne's case). A long, detailed discussion was also held around issues of sustainability and the importance of marketing the center to ensure its viability and success.

This gave the participants the opportunity to reflect upon how they can start the center at AAU.

The sessions held on July 14th were centered on the specifics of programs and services that career centers usually offer. Most services were discussed except counseling as it was agreed that this is not an area that can be taught in one short session. Also, it was decided that since the CWLC will be starting from scratch and with limited resources, it would be best if its focus was only on the provision of two out of the three major areas of services mainly workforce preparedness skills and linking graduating students with employers.

4-*Plan site visits to local universities and workforce readiness and life skills organizations in Chicago*

On July 15th, the group traveled to Joliet, Illinois to visit one of America's oldest public community colleges and gain exposure its Career Center's services; a slight departure from UIC career center's work.

This visit helped further define the concept of a career center as it offered the opportunity to understand how the Center at JJC serves the community too, a service that AAU's Career Center may very well provide. Additionally, the site visit at JJC involved joint presentations from the offices of Student Life and the Career Center which helped the group understand the dynamics and relationships between the two organizational bodies. JJC also offers a very unique program that is very similar to what the CWLC at AAU is seeking to achieve: a holistic/wellness center for students focusing on a broad array of issues ranging from stress and time management to alcoholism prevention, drug addiction and STD awareness and prevention.

5-Participants travel to CIPUSA's nine affiliate offices for observational internships in career and life skills centers at universities and in communities.

Between July 21st and July 31st, the group was divided into pairs and went to four of CIPUSA's affiliate offices for a more focused, hands-on training. No specific program was imposed on the affiliate organizations as each office designed its own program based on knowledge of the training goals and the participants' profiles. There was a mix of training experiences that varied with each affiliate office's availability of training organizations and ideas regarding program design (See affiliate office training schedules).

In Cleveland and Chicago, the program was designed to impart the participants with a more focused idea of career centers and their operational details. An emphasis was also placed on exposing the participants to various approaches to workforce development that extend beyond the University setting thus providing them with a more encompassing view of the different facets of workforce development. This combination of various techniques and ideas can help the participants shape and create their unique idea for their center as opposed to copying someone else's model.

Also, the participants were introduced to growing organizations in the Northeast Ohio area working to prevent "brain drain", an issue that is all too familiar and problematic in Ethiopia. This proved to be very useful as they both remarked on the important role internships play in keeping new graduates in the area.

In other cities such as Columbus or Kalamazoo, the training was modeled on each participant's areas of interest and entailed a long internship in one place as opposed to shorter focused visits. For instance, Tesfaye spent 10 days at the Columbus AIDS Taskforce and Abebe spent four days at the Habitat for Humanity in Kalamazoo.

By the end of the affiliate city training, most participants expressed having acquired an even deeper understanding of the career center concept and its functioning on three different levels: 1) Resume writing, interview skills, networking – 2) Interacting and working with the employers - 3) Marketing the center to students, faculty and employers and integrating the work of the career center with that of student life and the university as a whole.

6-Participants return to Chicago to process their experiences, share their new ideas and design an action plan for AAU's Community Center for Work and Life

Following the affiliate cities experience, the group returned to Chicago and participated in a two day action planning workshop. Through action planning modules and team work, the group created a plan outlining the necessary goals and objectives of the Center and using timelines and assigning responsibilities for each of the different steps that need to be undertaken to reach the specified goals (See planning for the center document). The document created will serve as a guideline for the Center's creation and subsequent development stages.

[Phase 3] Physical creation of the community Work and Life Center at AAU

1- Meet with Partners and Stakeholders in Addis Ababa to process U.S. experience and agree on goals and timeline for the Center.

Communication with stakeholders will remain active through emails and phone conversations/conference calls as the timelines and the planning have been set with the training team that came to the U.S.

2- Identify physical location of Work and Life Center

This issue was discussed in the U.S. and again in Ethiopia as the team members met with the Center staff. Mulugeta Naizghi, the Dean of Students was assigned to find available space for the Center (see August 11, 2005 meeting CWLC office)

3- Identify and seek out material resources needed to create the Center i.e. computers, office supplies, desks, chairs, books

This has been identified as the responsibility of the team and will be conducted by the Center's staff with the support of the entire team (See action planning document)

4- Identify additional staff members and train all staff

This issue was discussed during the action planning session and consensus was reached regarding the need to hire one more staff member. It was subsequently decided that this procedure is to be delayed as the tight funding makes any additional hiring difficult at this time. An additional graduate student will therefore be assigned to work at the Center on a voluntary basis (See August 11 meeting minutes CWLC office)

5- Work with IT professionals to establish databases and computer resources.

Due to the limited resources, the Center's staff is doing all IT related work. The SPSS program has been loaded onto the computers to gather and analyze data for the needs assessment baseline survey. Other programs such as Adobe premier and Adobe Photoshop are also now loaded on the computer and ready to use for marketing publications and brochures. (See August 1-6, 2005 progress report)

6- Marketing effort to launch the new Center and promote its services begins.

Marketing efforts have so far been scarce but information regarding the Center is being disseminated through word of mouth and informal marketing means. Formal ways of marketing are to begin soon as the Center's staff starts working on creating brochures and marketing materials.

7-Center opens

The Center has already been open all summer. It has even provided a workshop session to undergraduate students with focus on resume writing and interviewing. The center has also already made contact with employers and provided internship placement for a student at the Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development Dialogue and Action. (See Progress report July 11-July 16, 2005 and Progress report August 1-August 6, 2005)

Future plans

The American team consisting of Lisa Purdy (CEO, CIPUSA) Libby Ellis (CIPUSA Program Director), Alice Johnson (UIC), Nada Touma (Project Manager) and Dorothy Faller (Action Planning trainer) has already met and talked about the U.S. training outcomes and impressions. The team will be meeting again on Friday, September 16th to discuss the Center's needs and its development progress. The American team maintains consistent communication with the partners and stakeholders in Ethiopia through calls and email communication with Dean Abye Tasse, Elleni West, and the team that trained in the U.S. as well as with the current Center staff to remain in touch with their needs and track any work progress and/or difficulties.

The American team will also discuss the follow-on program as well as the budget needs and constraints. Trainers going to Ethiopia will be identified and contacted and follow-on program planning will begin.

There is certainly a great need for the trainers as the center prepares for its first job fair. The American team will identify whether the trainers should go to Ethiopia before the job fair and help in the preparation or during the job fair and help with the implementation. Perhaps two smaller groups will be sent as opposed to the original larger one.

Final notes and recommendations

- Participants find it extremely important to be in touch with their home country. In this case, the need was even more accentuated as Ethiopia was going through turmoil and participants needed to connect with their families on a daily basis. We faced some problems with the UIC bureaucratic system and it was very difficult to obtain internet connection and have a phone line ready for the participants to use. Many attempts were made to provide the above mentioned services and internet access was finally made available toward the end of the visit through our contacts with the Dean's office. As far as the phone is concerned, CIPUSA had to buy a cell phone and a temporary plan for the group as public phones were non-existent near the dorm area. This did not prove to be a permanent solution as the phone could only be used for calls inside the U.S.
- Pursuant with the participants' recommendations, the training program conducted at the affiliate offices needs to be monitored more tightly by CIPUSA. Affiliate offices were briefed on the program and its objectives but the planning and design of the program was not imposed by CIPUSA which in some cases created a gap between the training program and the participants' expectations.

- It is important for CIPUSA to communicate better with the partners in Ethiopia and expedite the application process. CIPUSA obtained the applications relatively late, which made the affiliate assignment and the subsequent host family assignment more complicated than necessary.

- Despite the cohesiveness, commitment and professionalism of most participants that were chosen, it is preferable that CIPUSA send a team to Ethiopia to conduct the recruitment and the pre-departure orientation. As the grant writer and implementer, CIPUSA has the deepest understanding of the project objectives and long-term goals and is better placed to choose candidates that it feels would best fit the project needs.