

Council of International Programs U.S.A

Development of a Community Work and Life Center at Addis Ababa University

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FINAL REPORT

I. Program Overview - The Council of International Programs USA (CIPUSA), in partnership with a consortium of six organizations including Addis Ababa University (AAU), the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Cleveland State University (CSU), the African AIDS Initiative International (AAII), the Ethiopian Employers Federation (EEF), and the Christian Relief and Development Association (CRDA) proudly submits this final report describing the successful development of the Community Work and Life Center Program (CWLC) at Addis Ababa University. The development of the Community Work and Life Center builds on the university to university alliance established between UIC, CIPUSA and AAU in 2002 through the Social Work Education in Ethiopia Partnership, *Project SWEEP*, (www.aboutsweep.org) that established a new school of social work, a Master's in Social Work (MSW) and a PhD program in social work which is now beginning at AAU. The CWLC is now fully operational, offering university graduates a range of services including:

- Internship placement;
- Career advising and job-placement assistance,
- On and off campus job postings;
- Cover letter, resume writing and interviewing skills training/orientation for more than 300 students;
- Individual and group counseling services for more than 200 students;
- HIV/AIDS prevention and family planning education workshops and guidance services.
- Resource materials to assist individuals in the carriers-decision making and career search process are available on a self-service basis in the career resource center.
- A Weekly Life Talk Show Program for large numbers of undergraduate students launched in the AAU Cultural Center. The program covers major life skill challenges of the student in the campus with the aim of building student capacity to identify problems and find workable solutions. Every week, 600-800 students have attended the program. Since the new and unique program was initiated by students and launched with the professional support of the CWLC staff, it has been given media coverage through TV, radio and also newsletters. The program includes community conversations, a talent show and music as educational tools. It is a kind of edutainment (educational entertainment).

The CWLC began operations in a small 4th floor office in the Graduate School of Social Work on the Main Campus (Sidist Kilo campus) at Addis Ababa University. In early 2005, the CWLC moved to a somewhat larger but still tiny two-room office near the Dean of Students. This

ground level location made it easier to students to access services at the CWLC, and expanded the space for staff and the resource library. In 2006, the CWLC moved to larger quarters on the first floor of the newest building on campus. The expanded space and its primary location make the CWLC very accessible to students in law, education, journalism, social work, psychology, sociology and the other social sciences. In 2006, a satellite CWLC office was opened at the Science and Technology campus (Arat Kilo campus).

The Main Campus staff of 3 consisted of Emebet Mulugeta Ayele, Center Director; Abebe Assefa Abate, Director of Life Skills Program; and Moges Tafesse Wallelu, Director of Documentation and IT, in addition to many student volunteers. (The satellite office has a Secretary on staff, who coordinates and links the satellite office to the Main Campus.) The CWLC markets its services to students through its web page at <http://www.aau.edu.et/communityworks/index/home.htm>, in informational brochures and in postings throughout the campus. Services are available by appointment and on a walk-in basis. Some of the student expectations go beyond objectives of the Center. For example, more than 20 students who visited the Center request advise on project design and thesis writing. In these cases, the Center staff provided informal but thorough advice on these topics.

CWLC's Technical Advisory Committee, which consists of both academic and private sector professionals, continues to monitor and adapt CWLC services to the employment needs of Ethiopia's growing private, nonprofit and business sectors. On May 8, 2006, AAU hosted a CWLC sponsored Job Fair, a first in Ethiopia, bringing together about 2500 students with over 40 employers from multiple sectors. The Job Fair will be an annual event as part of expanded efforts to integrate AAU education and services with the "real world" labor and employment requirements of the surrounding community.

The CWLC program has progressed since it was originally conceived and the initial needs assessment activities began in mid-2004. The advisory teams that were convened during the planning phase, consisting of Ethiopian stakeholders and American advisors, have remained passionately committed to the program and have continued to be the impetus for a lasting and still evolving partnership. All of the stated goals and objectives of the program have been successfully achieved according to the phased approach outlined in the original project proposal.

Phase I: Needs Assessment/Planning – The needs assessment and planning phase of the program from May 2004 through May 2005 relied heavily on the previously established relationships and collaborations from Project SWEEP. Representatives of all partnership organizations and the administrative leadership at AAU formed an advisory committee in Addis Ababa that met regularly and assumed responsibility for designing the basic structure and needs of the career center and for the selection of the program participants. Ongoing communications between all parties insured that a training curriculum was designed for the Ethiopian participants in the U.S. that would be directly responsive to the needs of students, while providing a framework for the design of a career center structure relevant to the Ethiopian context.

The American Advisory group also communicated on a regular basis, meeting in Chicago with members from the Ethiopian Advisory Committee. Alice Johnson Butterfield and Nathan Linsk, as well as other faculty from the University of Illinois at Chicago were in Ethiopia at various

times throughout the year teaching classes at the Graduate School of Social Work at AAU. During those trips they donated their time to guide and encourage the process of the CWLC development.

Phase II: U.S. Based Training Program - The U.S. based training phase of the program in July 2005, was designed to develop a working group, create action plans and provide practical and theoretical training around the creation of a Community Work and Life Center. CIPUSA and its local affiliate office in Chicago provided logistical and support services for the exchange visitors and also scheduled a comprehensive itinerary of educational, professional and cultural experiences relevant to project goals. Three weeks of seminars, site visits and observational learning sessions were held at the University of Illinois at Chicago at UIC and focused on career center services and structure. Participants also spent significant time visiting HIV/AIDS organizations and talking with service providers in the greater Chicago area about multiple American approaches to HIV as it relates to employment. During the third week, participants traveled to CIPUSA affiliate cities in pairs for observational internships focused on each of the participant's stated professional objectives. Dorothy Faller facilitated the first week and the final week of training which focused on team building and developing personal and collective Action Plans for implementation of the CWLC in Ethiopia. The training in action planning was particularly important in building group cohesiveness and developing a comprehensive development agenda that contributed to the ultimate success of the initiative over the subsequent implementation phase and all future planning.

Phase III: Physical Creation of the CWLC - Throughout the fall and winter of 2005, the Ethiopian Technical Advisory Committee and Ethiopian training participants, (many participants were committee members) continued to meet monthly and communicate with American colleagues in their efforts to implement their action plans. Despite significant challenges, including the closure of the University until December due to a terrifying period of civil unrest, the Ethiopian team, Advisory Group and CWLC worked tirelessly to build the CWLC based upon previous planning and to provide the highest quality services to AAU students. A total of 43 students were served at the CWLC from August - November 2005.

Three graduate students from the Graduate School of Social Work staffed the CWLC on a part-time basis and developed the necessary tools to succeed at program implementation. A *Student Life Skills and Career Survey* was developed to acquire baseline information about the career needs of students. Following feedback from the survey, three focus group discussions with undergraduate students helped CWLC staff and advisors to clarify student needs. An additional survey directed to employers, served to assess prospective employer needs related to the employment of new graduates. Out of a total of 60 questionnaires distributed to prospective employers at international organizations, government offices and private businesses, 31 were returned and evaluated. Information gathered from these surveys was collected and entered into a database for analysis and broad distribution and to guide future programming efforts. Input derived from the baseline questionnaires, combined with hands-on observational training in the U.S., and assisted the Ethiopian Advisory Committee in the creation of a solid structure for the new program at CWLC.

Internship placement and referral through CWLC also began during this period. The CWLC

facilitated the placement of AAU interns at PACT Ethiopia, Ethiopian Interfaith Forum for Development, Dialogue & Action, and the Christian Relief & Development Association.

In December 2005, the American training team, consisting of Dorothy Faller, Paul Klein, Yolanda Burt, and Suzanne Carlberg-Racich, specifically selected by our Ethiopian participants from the group of American presenters they worked with while in the U.S., traveled to Addis Ababa for Train the Trainer (TOT) workshop training. The three-day workshop training curriculum was based upon the expressed interests of the Ethiopian team. Two full days of the workshop focused on the organization, design and execution of a career services center and one full day addressed HIV/AIDS prevention and workplace considerations. Additional key management and operations issues such as staffing, trouble-shooting, fiscal management, marketing to the community and sustainability of the CWLC were also topics discussed between the partners. Over 50 attendees participated in each workshop. Attendees represented multiple community sectors including academic, business, NGO and government.

Several meetings were held during this week between the American team and the Technical Advisory Board to evaluate the TOT workshops, plan for the upcoming Job Fair, and to plan for the future of the Center by firming up the linkages between the partners. Serious discussion and planning time was given to the issue of sustainability. Working sessions were held with the Technical Advisory Board and CWLC staff to conceptualize a funding proposal to be submitted to the Ministry of Education (MoEd) in Ethiopia, which is administering the Development Innovation Fund for higher education from the World Bank. Our American team took an active role in assisting with the creation of this proposal with our partners. The major responsibility of writing the proposal was taken by the social work student staff of the CWLC. The proposal is completed, and has approvals from AAU for submission to the next round of funding in January, 2007. It has a high degree of probable success because the concept of the CWLC has also been incorporated into another ongoing process at Addis Ababa University. Continued development of the current program and expansion of the CWLC concept at is now clearly situated in AAU's Strategic Plan—a process headed by Dean Abye Tasse, with participation from the staff of the CWLC with university leaders.

Phase IV: Center Opens/Follow On – As indicated above and in progress reports previously submitted to the State Department from the CWLC Advisory Committee, the CWLC has been fully operational since August 2005. Addis Ababa University has slowly built capacity and expanded services as resources and new information have become available.

Phase four implementation of the participant exchange component of the CWLC program was altered slightly from the way it was original planned and described in the original proposal. The partners decided to split the proposed 10 American participant/trainers into two teams, one traveling in December to present TOT workshops and the other to participate in a follow-on activity that would include a new element, the first Ethiopian Job Fair on May 8, 2006. It was decided that an AAU-sponsored job fair would be an excellent way to introduce the CWLC to the community while laying the groundwork for a network of connections between prospective employers and new graduates.

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 to evaluate the success of the Job Fair, plan for the long term sustainability of the CWLC and to discuss future partnership initiatives.

II. Outcomes and Accomplishments

A. Replicable Model of Community Work and Life Center Development – The collaboration of Ethiopian and American partner organizations and professionals in the successful development of the CWLC at AAU presents a successful model for the replication of additional university-based career centers at locations throughout Ethiopia and other developing regions. In addition to the project website which provides initial information, resources and links for the advancement of career development skills, the CWLC resource center and a “How to Do It” project video that provides specific strategic guidelines for career center development is presently in preparation. Over the past two years, project partners have greatly enlarged the tactical toolkit for workforce development in Ethiopia. Other interested stakeholders can now draw upon tested techniques of needs assessment, collaborative planning, TOT training and marketing methods to build their own community-based career resources center.

Of critical importance in retrospect was the choice of the Ethiopian partners coming to the US for training together. Most of these AAU representatives and community level persons originally did not know each other. Using social work skills to help the participants bond together as a group while in the United States was extremely important in setting the foundation for all of the future work together, which is still continuing. This high-level of cooperation achieved through this project is now extending to other projects which will benefit the university and the community.

Another critically important accomplishment was the choice of the exceptionally gifted student staff members of the CWLC from the social work school. They were often the inspiration for innovations at the Center and the force which got the Center off to the right start under some difficult circumstances. Also, in addition to the 3 social work graduate students who staffed the Center, 4 other students did their field placements in conjunction with the Center. These include: 2nd year students, Mesele Mengisteab, Uthman Hassan, and Meseret Kassahun; and 1st year students: Yusef Ferej and Mulu Yeneabat. It is expected that social work graduate students will continue to work as staff and interns with the CWLC in the coming year and the future.

B. Baseline Needs Assessment Methodology and Data – One goal of the CWLC program, the first comprehensive university-based career center in Ethiopia, is the assessment of the current career needs of students and employment needs of the public and private sectors within the country, with special attention to preparing students for anticipated employment demands. The structure and methods utilized by CWLC in gathering and recording relevant employment data provides both a guideline for future efforts and planning and a resource for expanded future career development initiatives. Two of the students in the Graduate School of Social Work also carried out extensive thesis research on the Center, giving theoretical background, historical

perspective and current research and analysis of the beginning activities at the Center. The research is the first of its kind on the topic of career services and job preparation skills, and comprises hundreds of extra hours of voluntary service on the part of the CWLC staff. These thesis documents are available for discussion and dissemination. The topics of their thesis research are:

- Mulugeta, Emebet. (2006). *Workforce Development: Career Development, Preparation and Readiness of Undergraduates to Join the Workforce: The Case of Sociology and Social Anthropology and Psychology Students in Addis Ababa University*. Masters Thesis, Graduate School of Social Work, Addis Ababa University. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- Abate, Abebe Assefa. (2006). *Life Skills and its Contribution to Competent Workforce Development: The Case of Sociology and Social Anthropology and Psychology Undergraduate Students in Addis Ababa University*. Masters Thesis, Graduate School of Social Work, Addis Ababa University. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

C. Functional Career Center and Trained Staff – The CWLC and its satellite office are now fully operational units at AAU, providing comprehensive career development opportunities and HIV/AIDS education services to undergraduate students in collaboration with university and community partners.

D. Stakeholder Engagement – The CWLC at AAU lays the groundwork for developing Ethiopia’s educational capacity to address the enormity of its social and workforce problems by establishing a central resource center for both students and employers. We have been encouraged by the variety of community stakeholders involved in the development process and the level of their commitment to success, including private sector, public sector and government leaders.

A Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted between AAU and the Ethiopian Employers’ Federation’s (EEF) to solidify their commitment to working together, through the CWLC, to prepare students for the “real world” needs of the marketplace. The EEF is an association of over 4,000 Ethiopian businesses representing both small businesses and large international corporations. In addition, Christian Relief & Development (CRDA) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with AAU. CRDA is committed to ongoing collaboration with CWLC to help recruit students in the social sciences and liberal arts for internships in non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Partners are also committed to holding information sessions for their member organizations to discuss the benefits of recruiting interns and future staff members through the University. The President of the EEF 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 EEF Business Expo with the Career Fair as an annual event.

In addition, through the informal network of the Center staff, and Dean Abye Tasse, three nongovernmental organizations (NGOs)—Global Metro City - The Glocal Forum, Ethiopian Youth Connection Foundation, and Talent Search Ethiopia—as well as a volunteer doctoral student who came from US for a vacation, used the Center to reach the graduating students, provide training workshops, and advertise for full-time and part-time job opportunities. More

than 100 students were reached by these efforts. The Center advertises the job vacancies, and arranges and provides job searching training together with Talent-Search Ethiopia. Together with the volunteer doctoral student, the Center researched career exploration and scholarship opportunities. It also collected student resumes and submits them to Global Metro City - The Global Forum organization.

III. Lessons Learned

Although we have experienced some bumps along the road, we have learned that the challenge of bringing people together who possess distinct differences in background and expertise can be overcome by a deep commitment to respecting our partner's ability to adapt Western methods to their own cultural situation rather than imposing ourselves as experts. In each and every situation, we have attempted to focus on creating a constructive process as opposed to being concerned with achieving a particular outcome, giving our partners the space to make decisions and decide outcomes that match their particular context. For example, the group process training based on social work skills was a unique training experience for the Ethiopian participants. In observation of the group meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee in Ethiopia, we observed excellent group process and decision-making skills on the part of the participants. Overall, this approach produced durable results and lasting relationships.

One caveat, however, is that on occasion the participative group decision-making approach can be time-consuming and frustrating. An example of this manifested itself related to the American team's concerns about the Ethiopian team's selection of the CWLC Director. Although we were often unhappy with the Director's level of competency, we knew that aside from expressing our concerns in a professional manner we would need to defer to the Ethiopian Technical Advisory team on all issues related to the staffing and operations of the CWLC or risk undermining our mutual trust and respect.

An area of the CWLC project that could have been improved was the implementation of the Job Fair. Although the attendance of students, faculty, and the administration of AAU was outstanding, the Job Fair did not meet the standard of Job Fairs in the USA. By this we mean that prospective employers set up booths, but for the most part, these displays presented information about the organizations and their projects. What was lacking was the opportunity for students to talk to employers regarding specific jobs or internship opportunities. Nonetheless, as a first attempt to organize and hold a Job Fair on the AAU campus, the venue was important in bringing prospective employers to campus and orienting undergraduate students to the work of the organizations. As the capacity of the CWLC expands, it is believed that the Job Fair will develop into a place where employers seek actual applicants for job positions for their organizations.

We also learned to have patience in all situations recognizing that the fast pace of the American work environment is a cultural characteristic of the United States that is not typically found in the African professional culture.

IV. Next Steps

A. Sustainability – The CWLC has been working on sustaining themselves as University Career Service Offices do in the U.S. They have been charging employers a set fee to advertise in the job fair program and to host a booth at the career fair. With the new relationship with the Ethiopian Employers Federation there can be a constant revenue flow from Employers wanting to advertise at the CWLC career fair. Also, the CWLC will also be able to provide interns to Employers.

B. Growth and Expansion – Initially, the Community Work and Life Center includes one office at the Main Campus (Sidist Kilo), and a satellite office at the Faculty of Science and Technology. The DIF proposal will expand the offices of the CWLC to the Faculty of Technology North, the Faculty of Business and Economics, and the Faculty of Medicine and the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine. This proposal will be submitted to the next round of funding proposals in January 2007. In the meantime, the CWLC and its satellite office are operating under the general budget of funding of the offices of the Dean of Student Affairs at the Main Campus and the Faculty of Science and Technology. Since the DIF program funds innovative educational projects for up to \$150,000 USD for 3 years, it is expected that this funding will materialize in 2007. DIF funds will provide expansion of the CWLC to the other AAU campuses, as well as provide computers, supplies, resource materials, and additional staffing for the centers.

C. Ethiopian Workforce Entrepreneurship and Training Program – Beginning in October 2006, Addis Ababa University, Ethiopian Employers Federation (EEF), and Christian Relief & Development Association (CRDA), previously partners with CIPUSA in the Community Work and Life Center (CWLC), are collaborating once again with Cleveland State University's Career Center and Cole Continuing Education Center. This new project is possible through a new workforce development grant from the U.S. Department of State to CIPUSA. The program's objective is to strengthen the workforce in Ethiopia through workforce preparation and life skills development in addition to providing opportunities to expand the skills of business entrepreneurs and managers. CIPUSA and its partners propose a program that provides hands-on training and observational internships in the U.S. for ten Ethiopian professionals and TOT workshops in Ethiopia, facilitated by American experts in the design and implementation of workforce development programs. The Ethiopian Workforce Entrepreneurship and Training Program (EWETP) will design an infrastructure, program and curriculum for the new business center operated by EEF and link AAU students more closely to the business community through internships and access to jobs in the business sector through the CWLC. This project builds sustainability to the CWLC through ongoing training and program development.

D. Conflict Mediation Project – The AAU-USA collaborative team is working on a new initiative towards conflict resolution among the diverse student community at Addis Ababa University. The proposed project appears to be timely and highly relevant. With ideas beginning in 2004, a preliminary discussion was made on June 19, 2006 between Dr. Anthony Fischer, Counselor of Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Addis Ababa and Ms. Tina Malone, Press and Information Officer at the Embassy and the dean of students of the different faculties of AAU together with the Dean Abye Tasse, Dean of Social Work and Associate Vice President for International Affairs of AAU. The decision reached at the discussion was drafting a proposal

addressing conflict resolution. Follow-up discussions were made by Alice K. Johnson Butterfield with Ms. Malone and Dean Abye Tasse in August 2006. Dr. Johnson Butterfield of the University of Illinois at Chicago and Fisseha Itanna of Addis Ababa University are working on the draft proposal. The discussions and suggestions for this proposal include:

- Inclusion of Conflict Resolution Courses in University Curricula: Courses focused and designed for the purpose of conflict resolution need to be part of the curricula at the different faculties as they see it fit. This may give the opportunity to involve local and expatriate educators qualified to do the job.
- Public Lectures Series: This lecture series and panel discussions would include experienced, knowledgeable, and transparent public and religious leaders. As mentioned above, every member of the University needs to be educated on issues of conflict resolution and living in harmony with diverse community. Indigenous and exotic knowledge on this subject is very useful. Hence, periodical lectures or panels by reputable and balanced personalities should be institutionalized as part of the cultural milieu at AAU.
- Research on Conflict Resolution: As has been pointed out earlier, the execution of joint projects between Ethiopian and the US teams drawn from different universities and institutions has brought about fruitful outcomes in the University thinking. Similarly, the US as a country of diverse cultures and a reputation of good governance among its diverse population would be an example to emulate. Hence, the experience to be gathered from there undoubtedly will be very instrumental in achieving the currently desired goals in conflict resolution at AAU.
- Training on Conflict Resolution: Discussions are underway with faculty at the Jane Addams College of Social Work at the University of Illinois at Chicago regarding the PEACE POWER! training program. This TOT approach deals with student conflict through developing a positive campus-based culture of nonviolence and the acceptance of diversity.

Hence, taking the background of our collaboration as a basis for future work, we plan to develop a conflict resolution project by jointly working together as a US-Ethiopian group that cooperated during Project SWEEP and the CWLC establishment with the Public Affairs Section of the US Embassy in Addis Ababa and related offices.

This Final Evaluation Report is submitted by:

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