

### **Engagement discussion with Mehal Gedam Car Washers Association**

The Mehal Gedam Car Washers Association is organized in May 2007 with a total membership of 23 with 18 male and 5 female members. But now its membership has increased to 65 (with 54 males and 11 females). According to the members, forty percent of the members are ex-convicts who admit that their past experience was unacceptable by all standards, but now are ready to be healthy and peaceful productive citizens. What they need is positive attitudinal and material support from government officials and the community at large. Their association has a written bylaw. They have submitted a document to the kebele administration and government offices to be registered as an association and have a legal status, but still waiting for approval.



Up to now they earn their income by washing cars and also parking cars at night (guarding) within their neighborhood. But since their association is not registered as a legal entity their customers are very few. If the kebele gives them a legal status and secures them a plot of land within their neighborhood or elsewhere, they are aspiring to continue their car washing and parking services in organized manner.

The participants were briefed that the Gedam Sefer University Community Partnership do not have a project nor budget for projects, but all the projects, activities, and other relevant details are going to be designed and prepared by them. They have to identify their strengths, assets and gaps. They have to prioritize their needs and plan accordingly, on which they agree and are ready to work with the Community University partnership.

The Car Washers believe that they have strengths for their future development. They point out that the following are among the much strength that they have:-

- Attitudinal change to be ready to live by their toil
- They have rehabilitated themselves morally, and ready to be accepted by the community as a productive citizen.
- Devotion for the last seven months in following their appeals to the kebele officials to give their association a legal status and also grant them a plot of land is an asset by itself.
- Their association has bylaws governing their activities and responsibilities.
- They do not have an income to share for the last seven months, but are hoping to have the legal status and earn a living
- Motivated to work
- They have cleared the garbage in the area hoping that the place will be their source of income
- Each of them have their own different talents
- In addition to car washing and car parking services, they have future plans to include other income generating schemes.

The meeting participants agreed that they will work together with the partnership to bring change for themselves and to the community. Then, after they elected 4 members to serve as a Core Committee members and also attend the ABCD training.