

Inter-University Partnership Helps Create First MSW Program in Ethiopia

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC), Addis Ababa University (AAU), Council of International Programs USA (CIPUSA), and a network of government and nonprofit agencies in the greater Chicago area have partnered to strengthen the undergraduate curriculum in social work and establish a master's degree in social work at AAU. The Social Work Education in Ethiopia Partnership (Project SWEEP) functions in collaboration with numerous Ethiopian governmental and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to assess and build Ethiopia's educational and social service capacity. Partners in the project work with local groups to understand the existing needs and cultural context, and help transfer technology from the knowledge base developed in the United States to institutions in Ethiopia.

UIC faculty executing the project include Alice K. Johnson and Nathan Linsk of the Jane Addams College of Social Work. AAU representatives are Melese Getu, Seyoum Gebreselassie, who are University of Michigan doctoral program graduates from the early 1970s, and Andargatchew Tesfaye. The team has constructed a 2-year, 4-phase plan that began in October, 2002.

The first phase of the plan consisted of site visits, research, and interviews in Ethiopia conducted by project partners to assess current methods of training social welfare officials, community health workers, and staff and administrators of local NGOs. The second and third phases, intended to establish an ongoing process of curriculum development and faculty exchange, involved sharing of syllabi and curriculum resources to formulate a master's curriculum and strengthen the undergraduate program. The project team gathered information through structured interviews with AAU faculty, administration, and students, and with NGO staff to determine the needs and direction for educational program development. CIPUSA sponsored a 6-week faculty exchange to provide individualized training for two of the Ethiopian project representatives, leading to a final outline of the AAU graduate curriculum, course descriptions, and policies and procedures for program implementation.

In the last and current phase of Project SWEEP, AAU has begun procedures to adopt an official curriculum and policies and procedures "for recruitment and matriculation of students, course scheduling, teaching assignments, fieldwork development, administrative supports, and other necessary operations," Johnson says. Also during this phase, social work faculty from UIC will be matched with colleagues at AAU according to areas of expertise.

International higher education partnerships are part of the Ethiopian government's focus on building the country's capacity to reduce widespread poverty, adult illiteracy, HIV/AIDS, and other problems facing a war ravaged and frequently drought- and famine-plagued nation, Johnson says. Citing World Bank and international social work literature, Johnson explains that workforce development of trained social workers is consistent with Ethiopia's national priority to create effective systems to "help people help themselves." For more information on Project SWEEP, contact Alice K. Johnson at (312) 996-0036 or akj@uic.edu

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Online Social Work Education in Ethiopia Partnership: <http://www.aboutsweep.org/>