



## **Operation Rescue Ethiopia Youth Economic Empowerment Project Progress report (August1-September 26, 2017)**

Since the project was officially kicked off in the last August, a lot of sequential activities were taken according to the action plan of the project. The following subsections present the main activities undertaken by the project.

### **Activity 1: Beneficiary Selection**

The first and critical task of the project was selection of beneficiaries who are in real need of financial support to start small scale joint business. Reintegration of Saudi-Arabia returnees is the most serious and currently attention seeking challenge in Mekelle. In our formal consultation with the government bodies, the government recommended us some of the beneficiaries to be from returnees of Saudi-Arabia who seek financial support to reintegrate and to secure source of income. Based on this, labor and social affairs office of two sub cities of the town took the mandate of selecting 30 beneficiaries with support of project coordinator. The left 20 beneficiaries were selected from youth who were grown up with support of Operation Rescue Ethiopia and who are currently jobless after completing their higher education. The selection process has passed under tight scrutiny so as to select beneficiaries with physical and mental readiness to run concrete block production business, and who are in shortage of startup capital to start such kind of business. Finally the project selected 50 young beneficiaries who are all under the age of 35 of which 28 are women. Once the youth beneficiaries are selected, the overall project was debriefed by the general manager of Operation Rescue Ethiopia so as to create a clear picture of the entire project within the youth and to ensure that the beneficiaries has real interest convenient to the project.

### **Business startup training**

After beneficiaries are duly selected, we sought that basic business skill training is mandatory to these youth before starting business so as to enable the youth to have

business know how and to equip them with basic business management skills. Business startup training was prepared in cooperation of Digital Opportunity trust –a Canadian based nonprofit organization which works in providing business development services to youth. The training which lasts for 10 days was delivered in two groups based on their level of education. This smartly delivered activity based training was really inspiring and informative to the trainees. At the end of the training, the youth have developed their own business plans



*Trainees presenting their group activities on 'resource identification'*

The youth have also taken half day orientation on gender equality and gender roles to create an understanding of the biased gender roles in the community. The training was aimed at initiating the female youth to face gender related challenges bravely.



*Trainees after receiving certificate of attending business startup training*

One of the determining factors that youth in our locality lack is the ability to take calculated business risks and failure to develop intrinsic motivation. This mainly owes to absence of high profile people who disclose their secret of success to the young. With an understanding of this fact, the project has accessed the youth with successful professionals and business people. Ato Tekle G/slasie and Mr Steve Moore who have been working in top socio-economic and political advisory positions in USA and in many international organizations were invited by Ato Getachew Tesfay, the manager of Operation Rescue Ethiopia to inspire the youth. Those two guests spent about two hours motivating the youth to embark on new business and new life. They have elaborated them how to tackle business challenges and demystified how others have prospered.



*Mr Steve Moore, offering business advice to the youth with the help of Ato Tekle as a translator.*

*Ato Tekle, at the end of his words firmly stated “you are on the critical age just now. The value you give to each micro second will determine your entire life. This is the right time to*

*exploit your energy and time. When you want to make changes in your life, you have to be determined to make your energy and time a sacrifice. Be sure.... you can....you can change your life.”*

on another session, a successful business women, W/ro Alem Desta who have started her business with production of hallow concrete block and who has scaled up her business to terrazzo tile production has shared her successful experience to the youth. The experience sharing program was effective in empowering the female to cope up with the gender related business challenges.



In addition to the fundamental business management training the youth has already got, we are working to provide training the skill of concrete block making. We are communicating with private college to get the training in the coming week.

### **Activity 3: team creation of the youth**

The youth spent 10 days together taking the business startup training program. After the was completed, believing that the youth have known each other, they created their own

teams by themselves after receiving one day training about team work and joint business ownership. Currently the teams are on a process of gaining their legal personality.

#### **Activity 4: Land and other working premises**

Acquisition of working land is also other mandatory prerequisite to start business. The project had planned to secure the youth joint businesses to secure a land rent for six months. However, the project preferred to lobby the government for provision of working land to the youth at free in order to enable the youth equip permanent working land. After continuous communication with the government, the small scale and medium manufacturing enterprises office of the sub cities are exploring free spaces and we are hopeful the government will provide ample working land for all the youth in the coming few weeks.

On the other hand, finance and administrative division of Operation Rescue Ethiopia is on the process of purchasing all necessary machines and equipment. Generally the project is working to enable the youth start their first production on the half of October.

#### **Upcoming activities**

The project will arrange for 3-4 days technical training on how to produce hollow concrete blocks in the coming week. We are also hopeful that the government will transfer working land to the youth in the coming two weeks. Our finance and administrative division will surely prepare all machines and equipment in the coming two weeks. Therefore, the project is expecting to see the first product of the youth on half of October.