



**‘CONNECTING 100 TRADITIONAL WEAVERS TO THE EXPORT MARKET’**

*August, 2012 Report*

Submitted to COMPETE  
*September 5, 2012*

**Center for African Women Economic Empowerment (CAWEE)  
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia**

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## 1. Introduction

The major activities during this reporting month of August 2012 focused on the following five areas of focus:

- Progress of the Training,
- Breakfast Meeting Held at the Project Site with Potential Employers,
- Video Recording Activities,
- Preparations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Training Phase and
- CHEMONICS Team Visit.

As the project is entering its final stage of the first training phase, in the month of August, most of the activities performed by CAWEE and Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers focused more on refining the skills of the trainees and preparing them to the work environment by providing them trainings on cultural awareness and about the challenges and the benefits of working in such an environment.

During this reporting month, CAWEE has also managed to organize a breakfast meeting at the training site, with women owned and managed companies that are involved in hand weaving, creating opportunities to be able link the trained weavers with the potential market through different methods, where such a meeting was very instrumental for the companies to visit the weavers on site while in training and show their interest of employing some of the trainees.

Continuous video recording was taken during this reporting month. As the training of the first phase is expected to end up in mid September 2012, preparations have already started in recruiting potential trainees for the second training round.

During the month of August, CAWEE had the opportunity to meet and discuss with CHEMONICS team and also to organize visit to the CHEMONICS team to the training site.

## 2. Progress of the Training

The skills up-grading training continued during the month August, focusing more on:

- Polishing the technical skills of the trainees,
- Improving the trainees effectiveness and efficiency,
- Reducing the time the trainees take to produce one product without losing their focus,
- Product cost (considering the different inputs that the trainees need to know - price of raw materials, overhead costs and labor used to produce) and
- Calculating profit margins.

The other part of the training focused on awareness creation/sensitization, where in the reporting month of August, three sessions were conducted.

The main ideas that were raised and discussed on the first session were:-

- i. Traditional attitude towards weavers and other crafts people,
- ii. The importance of the weaving skill as a national heritage and the status and future development of the trade as an important export commodity,

- iii. How trainees compare what they are learning now to their traditional weaving,
- iv. How the trainees envision the new skill to improve their livelihoods and improve their status as weavers.



*Almaz Fesseha delivering the session*

On the second session on awareness creation/sensitization, ideas more practical to what the skills up-grading training is providing were discussed and the main discussion points that came out were:-

- i. The trainer used Abraham Maslow’s ladder of human needs to discuss the hierarchy of needs, the trainees tried to put their human needs on the ladder from the perspective of their own reality,
- ii. The facilitator encouraged the trainees to speak out and contribute to the discussion where they see themselves on the ladder and to express issues of marginalization if any,
- iii. Trainees were divided in small groups to explore and find out institutions and individuals affecting their livelihood and their places in society/community in both positive and negative ways.



*Partial views of participants during the training*

So far from the sessions covered on awareness creation/sensitization, changes are seen in the attitudes, character and behavior of the trainees, which can easily be observed, when compared to the time of their start of the training, the change of their mind-set, where personal interviews with some of the trainees has also revealed that.

On the third session, trainees were divided in small groups to discuss on challenges affecting their day to day activities and livelihoods. According to the trainer, the main issue seems to be more of economic security than the traditional marginalization.

Furthermore, the issue of finding rental houses to produce their products was identified as one of the weavers' problems. This means the land lords do not want to rent their houses to weavers because weavers usually dig holes in a room to set up their weaving looms, which is usually unacceptable by the house owners.

The biggest worry, as the trainees put it is their future, "after the training" and the economic problem that they are expecting to face. Following the group discussions, in the plenary discussion that the trainees had, the following major issue areas came out concerning the main reasons why they are unable to receive fair prices for their products: -

- Lack of place to sell their products,
- The role of the middle men who take about 30% of their earnings,
- The ever increasing price of raw materials,
- The weavers sell their end products for very low prices because the merchants have big influence on the market.

On another note, the discussion came out with the following other constraints that the weavers/the weaving profession faces:

- The rainy season has big impact on the production of traditional clothes, as the warp has to be prepared outside the weavers houses, in the open air and it is very difficult to produce much in such a season and for this reason they earn very small amount of income.
- In the weaving profession, the trend is that, fathers do not want to train their children this art of weaving. They rather prefer their children to be involved in other professions, which they believe are paying.

The session conducted on awareness creation/sensitization was observed to be very instrumental in changing the attitude and mind set of the trainees and the trainees have started appreciating the weaving profession and are now more focused targeting the change of their lives.

### **3. Breakfast Meeting Held at the Project Site with Potential Employing Companies**

The main purpose of the training is to upgrade the skills of the traditional weavers and connect them to the export market. So far from what is observed from the training, great improvement is seen in each of the trainees skills, comparing what they were producing before and what they are producing this time. Being equipped with such skills, the trainees wanted to know the next step and they keep on asking about what will happen to them after the training ends.

So, to answer the question of the weavers, CAWEE in collaboration with Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers organized a breakfast meeting. The meeting involved ten women owned and managed companies led by the respective company owners, where most of them are already in export and some of them are ready to enter the export market, who are expected to be potential employers of the trained weavers.



*The Company owners together with Sara and Nigest at the training hall*

The company owners were given a tour in the training hall and had the chance to see the trainees while in action and they expressed their impression and joy to see such a project being carried out. According to the company owners, their biggest challenge to expand/join the export market is lack of skilled weavers.

The list of the companies present during the breakfast meeting were:

No.	Name	Organization	Tel	Email
1	Mekdes Hawze	Hawaz's Design	911625866	<a href="mailto:Mekdifwfu@yahoo.com">Mekdifwfu@yahoo.com</a>
2	Aster Seme	ADU Women's Clothing	921388533	<a href="mailto:Astuiya@yahoo.com">Astuiya@yahoo.com</a>
3	Rihan Ali	Ricoh Gift Shop	930000119	<a href="mailto:rihan_ali_1@yahoo.com">rihan_ali_1@yahoo.com</a>
4	Eyerus Taye	Gerry Design	911698369	<a href="mailto:eyeruse-taye@yahoo.com">eyeruse-taye@yahoo.com</a>
5	Martha Debouch	Sara Yarrow Hand Woven Design	911468176	<a href="mailto:dejeffu@yahoo.com">dejeffu@yahoo.com</a>
6	Shitaye Kinfe	Yoas Tibeb	911165560	<a href="mailto:shitaye_2005@yahoo.com">shitaye_2005@yahoo.com</a>
7	Genet Kebede	Paradise Fashion	911456228	<a href="mailto:paradisef@gmail.com">paradisef@gmail.com</a>
8	Elizabeth Kassa	Trio Craft	911641949	<a href="mailto:kassaelsa@hotmail.com">kassaelsa@hotmail.com</a>
9	Aster Retta	Negist Ethiopia	911216944	<a href="mailto:sammya@yahoo.com">sammya@yahoo.com</a>
9	Nigest Retta	Negist Ethiopia	924431718	<a href="mailto:sammya@yahoo.com">sammya@yahoo.com</a>
10	Hiwot Gashaw	Abugida Fashion	910360316	<a href="mailto:abugidafashion@gmail.com">abugidafashion@gmail.com</a>

The company owners and managers expressed their happiness that, this project will be very instrumental in solving their problems, which can definitely facilitate their work, where those trained weavers can easily follow the exact design and at the same time be effective and efficient in producing the quality products needed for the export market.



*The company owners in tour in the training hall, guided by Sara*

Following the visit was a discussion session with the company owners, where Sara and Nigest provided discussion points, focusing on the overall project objectives, the training cycle and requesting the company owners on their opinion of employing those trained weavers.



*Sara Abera explaining about the training cycle*

Following the discussion, mainly on the issue of employing the trained weavers, five companies have shown interest to employ trained weavers, they have expressed their interest and have promised to inform CAWEE the number of weavers they wanted to employ, at the beginning of September 2012.



*Aster Retta, Owner and Manager of Negist Ethiopia*

According to Aster, the problem of the weaving sub-sector, not to grow as much as expected is lack of skilled weavers. After seeing the project site and the progress of the training, she believes the problem of lack of skilled weavers will be solved soon, which also improves the acceptability of hand woven product. She also expressed her impression about the ‘women weavers’ that are involved in the training, because changing the lives of women has the biggest impact on the family’s as well as the country’s economy.

Aster emphasized the importance of the training program in solving the problem of skilled weavers. She further expressed her view that the training is also instrumental in changing the lives of the weavers themselves, where a family of a weaver on an average has 8 family

members and this project training 100 traditional weavers will be changing the lives of 800 family members, which is a huge number to be considered.



*Genet Kebede, Owner and Manager of Paradise Fashion*

Genet has 20 years of experience in the hand weaving products and in all these years she hasn't seen such kind of training and success. Earlier, there were different trials to change the work habits and the mindset of the traditional weavers, but it was not that successful so she expressed her joy of seeing such a training that changes not only hand weaving skills but also the total mind set of the weaver, therefore her wish is to see the successes of those trained weavers.

For the companies that are involved in hand weaving, Genet believes that it will provide skilled weavers that are capable of producing quality products that can meet the standard of the export market. In addition she also advised the weavers to work hard and to respect their profession and it's her wish for the training to continue and produce as many skilled weavers as possible.



*Elizabeth Kassa Owner and Manager of Trio-craft*

Elizabeth expressed her gratitude to see such dying craft getting an great attention and also for the art to be transferred to the young women and men. She believes that the training will alleviate the problem of skilled weavers and address one of the biggest challenges for the weaving sub-sector of this country.



*Shitaye Kinfe, owner and manager of YOAS Tibeb*

Shitaye is one of the young designers emerging in the country having made a breakthrough in the export market. The reason of her visit was to see the weavers while they are in the training and also to decide for herself how many weavers she can be able to employ.

Earlier there was no emphasis on the standard, quality and delivery time of the weaving products, but in thinking of joining the export market these things should be met as Shitaye states that. In the breakfast meeting, she was able to discuss together with the other company owners and network and overall get the chance to see the training in progress.

As all the designers in the country do, she also faces a problem of skilled weavers, so it's her wish for the training to continue and solve such a huge problem. Because the availability of skilled weavers will enable the designers to meet the needed standard of the export market.

Shitaye concluded that, this breakfast meeting has created a great opportunity in encouraging her to think of employing few weavers, the number which she promised to inform CAWEE soon, where it also has given her the chance to create employment opportunities for some of the trained weavers. She thanked the donor of the project in availing such an opportunity to companies like hers and she also thanked CAWEE in creating such a forum and a visit, which was very instrumental for her company growth and expansion.

To conclude, most of the company owners and managers have expressed their desire to hire weavers from the training, where some of them have already decided to take form the existing training batch and some form the second round batch.

#### **4. Video Recording**

The video recording task took place during the reporting period, with a focus to interviewing trainees on the training site, where those recordings will serve as a materials for the preparation of the documentary film.

#### **5. Preparations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase Training**

As the first phase is now coming to an end, expected to be mid September 2012, the selection of the second group trainees is under process. At this reporting period sixty six (66) traditional weavers in total are registered and recruited, where 30% are women), this number is expected to include potential trainees for the waiting list.

#### **6. CHEMONICS Team Visit**

CHEMONICS team which involved - Lisa Ku – Regional Representative, East Africa Region, Andrew Chapin - Consultant, East Africa and Nicole Cupp.

As per the team's request, the team had discussion at CAWEE's office focusing on the DFID bidding the CHEMONICS has planned to bid and the possible partnership with CAWEE. CAWEE represented by its Executive Director provided all the relevant information and documents to the team and the Center assured its availability and willingness to collaborate with CHEMONICS on that.

The CHEMONICS team, guided by the assistant project coordinator Mr. Robel and led by Sara, visited the training site at Sebeta and they were very much impressed by the progress made by CAWEE and its partner Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers and the trainees. The CHEMONICS team also had a chance to discuss different ideas with Sara Abera the owner and General Manger of Sara Garment Designers and manufacturers, who was also available at the training site during the visit.

Some of the ideas that were raised during the team’s discussion with Sara were:-

- About the progress of the training,
- What inspired Sara to create the different designs,
- About export market and its challenges,
- About Sara’s involvement in the international trade fairs up to now, and
- About US market being her biggest market and her plan to expand to other markets like Europe and Japan.

After the discussion with Sara, the CHEMONICS team visited the training class in progress.



*The COMPETE team taking a tour in the training hall*

## **7. Constraints Faced During the Reporting Period**

During the reporting period, starting the first day of August 2012, 4 women trainees stopped the training; CAWEE was informed from their colleagues that they have gone to Arab countries, where most women this time are traveling to work as house helpers.

Sara Garment Designers and Manufactures (SGDM) tried its level best to replace other four women trainees but it was not possible to get women potential trainees that time and the project team was forced to agree and replace them with four men trainees, who were already on the waiting list and believed that they can catch up what they have missed.

In this reporting month, SGDM tried its level best in providing crash courses to the new four trainees, using all their spare times available and the team of the trainees believes that in the rest of the training days, the new trainees will be able to catch up and get graduated acquiring the required skills.

## **8. Conclusion**

This monthly report, that covers the period of one month i.e. August, 2012, provides brief summary on the activities carried out during the reporting period by the Center for African Women Economic Empowerment (CAWEE) and its project partner Sara Garment Designers and Manufacturers.

In the reporting period, the project team was involved in five major activity areas – continuing the training, organizing breakfast meeting at the project site with potential employers, conducting video recording activities, preparations for the 2<sup>nd</sup> training phase and organizing meeting and visit to CHEMONICS team.

## 9. Photo Gallery



*Training on Awareness creation*



*Visit by CHEMONICS Staff*



*Briefings for company owners and managers by Sara and Nigest*



*The visit of the training site by company owners and managers*