

## Ethiopia Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs and European Union train 2 250 women and help them find a job

Addis Ababa, 13 February 2014

From 4-7 February 2014, 600 women in Jijiga, Dire Dawa and Addis Ababa received their graduation certificate for having successfully completed a three-month long training in construction (plumbing, painting, and plastering) and entrepreneurship. The training has provided vulnerable women with skills and opportunities that can help them create a better future for themselves and their families. The training is part of the 'Women Empowerment and Gender Equality' program (WEGE), a pilot project financed by the European Union and implemented by the Federal Ministry of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (MoWCYA).



Woman from the construction training in Jijiga proudly showing her graduation certificate



Minister of Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Zenebu Tadesse, praising the graduates in Dire Dawa for having successfully completed the construction training

Minister for Women, Children and Youth Affairs, Zenebu Tadesse, and State Minister, Frenesh Mekuria, who chaired the graduation ceremonies, praised the women for their achievement and encouraged them to be just as committed in their search for a job or in setting up their own business as they have been in completing the training. The regional Bureaus of Women, Children and Youth Affairs (BoWCYA) in the three project locations are assisting the women in finding a job. Contacts have been facilitated with construction companies, potential employers, and the women trained as plumbers in Addis Ababa have already been offered a job. "And we need more skilled female workers", says Ms Bizunesh Meseret, Head of the Women Bureau in Addis Ababa. "There is a construction boom in the country, and there is a high demand for skilled construction labourers", she continued. BoWCYA is also engaging micro-finance institutions that can give loans to the women who decide to set up their own business.



Thomas Huyghebaert, Head of Section, European Union, giving a speech at the graduation ceremony for the construction training in Addis Ababa

One of the graduated women confirmed this. Marta Kebede, 39, said:

*"I am the poorest of the poor. I am working as dish washer in a small restaurant and baking "Enjera" to some families in my neighbourhood in Bole Sub-City of Addis to raise my five children. My husband is an old sick man who is totally dependent on me. My life is so miserable, a back-breaking everyday task of securing at least one meal a day to my family. Now, I have participated in this programme and completed the training in painting. I am organised with 12 fellow women trainees and we have already approached the Addis City Administration for micro financing to start our own business in the construction sector. There is a construction boom in Addis and I am dead sure that we will capitalise the opportunity*

*and we will thrive in our business. If this will fail, I am sure that I will easily find a job as painter in one of the construction projects. As a skilled woman, my future is now very bright”.*

The graduation ceremony in Dire Dawa on 5 February 2014 was held at the Ras hotel. Serving at the ceremony were 20 out of a total of 500 women who had been trained last year by the WEGE project in hospitality services (food preparation, food and beverage services). The female waiters were a great example for the graduates from the construction training, proving that the training had given them a job as a skilled worker and improved their living conditions.



Head of the BoWCYA in Dire Dawa, Aziza Abdi, accompanied by five women who successfully completed the hospitality training and are now working at Ras Hotel

The technical and vocational training sessions are key components of the WEGE project which includes an entrepreneurship component, enabling the women to organise themselves to set up a business.



Women following the plumbing training in Addis Ababa

The WEGE project aims at addressing the lack of economic opportunities faced by women in Ethiopia and providing training in sectors experiencing a growing demand in the country. In addition to the 1 100 women already trained in construction and hospitality services, the project will train 1 150 women in hairdressing services. In total, 2 250 vulnerable women in Addis Ababa, Dire Dawa, Jigjiga and Harar will be trained. The WEGE project includes a capacity building component to help overcome the institutional capacity constraints of the Women's Affairs structure.

The experience gained in the WEGE pilot project will feed into a bigger follow-up project, the 'Women's Breakthrough Project', with a budget of 166 440 000 birr (6.4 million euros). The financing agreement for this new project was signed by the MoWCYA and the European Union on 5 February 2014, and the project implementation will begin towards the end of 2014. This new project will take place in four regions, Oromia, SNNPR, Gambella, and Benishangul Gumuz. It will help improve women's entrepreneurial and vocational skills and provide financial resources and management support to start-up or expansion of micro- and small enterprises. It will also help establish networks among female entrepreneurs and strengthen the capacity of Bureaus for Women's Affairs.