

Fall 2022 Professional Fellow

Name: Emebet G Lema
Country: Ethiopia
Job Title and Employer: Disability Inclusion Officer, Light for the World-Ethiopia Office
Project Title: Increasing Employment Opportunities for University Students with Disabilities in Ethiopia through Employability and Life Skills Training

Problem: Though highly skilled, university graduates with disabilities face significant barriers to economic and social engagement in Ethiopia resulting in low employment and self-esteem. This problem is exacerbated by a lack of disability support services and career services for students with disabilities at institutes of higher education in Ethiopia.

Project Objective: Emebet, building from her own life experience, proposes to create an extracurricular training program at universities that will help students with disabilities develop critical employability and life skills required for transition to work and career after graduation.

Project Description: Emebet will work with students from Addis Ababa University, university leadership, university student disability services, and disabled persons' organizations (DPOs) to create an extracurricular training program that addresses both employment and life-skills training. DPO engagement is important; the Ethiopian government charges DPOs with monitoring disability access at public institutes of higher education.

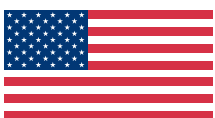
Emebet chose Addis Ababa University as her intervention site because it is a public university and has a dedicated Special Needs Support Office. The office helps students with disabilities pursue academic studies and engage in student activities in the same way as students without disabilities. Its leadership reports directly to the academic vice president of the university. In 2016, Addis Ababa University had 400 enrolled students with disabilities, which is the "largest number of disabled students among East African universities" (Addis Ababa University, 2016).

Emebet plans to engage university leadership, staff from the Special Needs Support Office, faculty and staff from other university departments (such as management, special education), students with disabilities, and DPOs in the development of this program. She aims to pilot the program with 20-30 students. Based on the success of the pilot, Emebet will expand the program to additional universities.

References

Addis Ababa University (2022). Special needs support (website). Retrieved from: http://www.aau.edu.et/offices/v_president-office/office-of-the-academic-vise-president/special-needs-support-office/

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