



**WISE**  
Organization for  
Women in Self  
Employment



International  
Labour  
Organization



Better  
Regional  
Migration  
Management



# SUCCESS STORIES

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# Table of Contents

Introduction .....	1
1. Immigration often does more harm than good. Many see it as a shortcut to a better life, but the reality is quite the opposite!.....	2
2. WISE taught me to justify the truth in the saying, ‘To those who have, more will be given. ’ We often think we have nothing, but once we recognize our abundance, even more, comes our way .....	5
3. I always think today is better than yesterday, and tomorrow is another day!.....	11
4. Up until now, I’ve been wasting my energy and time. A little business knowledge truly goes a long way! .....	15
5. With strong determination and helpful training, I improve my family’s income and inspire my community.....	17
6. I can’t let this moment pass without telling Assela young people how much I’ve benefited from the training.....	19
7. Investing the initial resources, working hard, and collaborating will elevate you to great heights!.....	20
8. The training reassured me; it reminded me to stop wasting money and that saving is the key to a stable life!.....	23
9. It has given me an opportunity to improve both my business and my family’s life!.....	25
10. How I Found Peace of Heart and Life: A Journey of Resilience.....	26

# Introduction

Organization for Women in Self-Employment (WISE) was established in August 1997. For the past 27 years, it has been a civil society organization empowering low-income women through training, financing and organizing to enable them transform their lives and contribute positively to their community and country, while also building a strong financial foundation. Since its inception, WISE has provided numerous opportunities for women. As a civil society organization, it receives financial support from various foreign and domestic organizations to facilitate its training and knowledge programs. Notably, the International Labor Organization (ILO) and the British government have been key supporters, providing essential financial assistance.

At WISE, various skills and financial training programs are provided. Over the past five months, with support from the UK government and the International Labor Organization (ILO), multiple rounds of training have been conducted for Ethiopians who have returned from Middle East, and Sudan Arab countries and potential Migrants. These trainees were admitted to the program based on evidence and letters of support from their respective Woredas.

Many enthusiastic female and male trainees are actively participating in our training sessions, which cover essential topics such as Generating business ideas, Starting your business, life skills, and financial education. Additionally provided business development services with three rounds and facilitated business plan competition event. The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive, with many expressing great satisfaction with their experiences. We are excited to introduce some of the trainees who have embraced the training and made significant improvements in their lives.

**“Immigration often does more harm than good. Many see it as a shortcut to a better life, but the reality is quite the opposite!”**

My name is Abby. I was born in 1987 in Addis Ababa’s Gulele sub-city, in an area called Semen Mezegaja, Dera Sefer. As the youngest child in my family, I have one older sister and one older brother. Our family’s main source of income came from my father’s irregular jobs, while my mother dedicated herself to taking care of our family until she passed away two years ago. I married my husband in 2014, and we have an 8-year-old son and a 4-year-old daughter.

As a teenager living with my family, I decided to embrace the life of exile. It was 2005 when I first dropped out of high school in the 9th grade and left the country. At that age, I didn’t have any particular focus or purpose, including my studies. In our city, it had become trend for women to migrate to Arab countries. I saw many young girls from the neighborhood fleeing the country, and my own elder sister’s migration was enough reason for me to follow the same path.



My journey began in 2005 when I emigrated to Syria, where I worked for three years. In 2008, I returned home for a vacation, reuniting with my family for four months. After that, I moved to Kuwait and spent another two years abroad before coming back home once more. Upon my second return, I got married and welcomed my first son into the world. Despite settling into married and family life, I ventured to Dubai, my third country of residence, and worked there for three years. Eventually, I decided not to work abroad again and returned home from Dubai for the third time. Later, while living in my country, I gave birth to my second daughter.



After returning to my country from migration, I found myself uncertain about what kind of work I would take up. I mistakenly believed that I would end up changing jobs frequently, which only added to my uncertainty and made migration a recurring choice in my life. As a migrant worker, I consistently sent money to my family every month. When my father became seriously ill, I had to shoulder a significant portion of his medical expenses. Without the initial capital to start a business in my country, migration remained the only viable option for me.

Even after the birth of my second daughter, I couldn't find work in my country. Our life depended solely on my

husband's income from his driving job. This unemployment made me reliant on him, so after three years in Addis Ababa, I left my one-year-old daughter with my mother and migrated to Dubai for the fourth time. Shortly after arriving in Dubai, I received the devastating news of my mother's death and had to return home. Without my mother, I struggled to find someone to care for my daughter. I remember that after her death, my life was marked by periods of severe trials and resilience. While I was at home without a job, a close neighbor suggested we start baking bread and selling it to local shops.

We gave it a go, but after some time, we realized it wasn't aligning with our goals, so we had to stop. Not wanting to stay idle, I took a job in product packaging at a cosmetics factory. However, due to concerns about exposure to chemicals and potential health risks, I decided to quit.

Feeling unemployed and dependent at home, I first heard about WISE and their training for citizens returning from abroad from a woman in my neighborhood who had been a WISE trainee. Curious, I registered through our district and became a training participant. The process was smooth, and I encountered no issues in becoming a participant and user of WISE's training services.

I am currently a third-round trainee in a program organized by WISE, designed for citizens who have returned from migration. The lessons I've received from the highly qualified trainers at WISE have been truly life-changing. My attitude has undergone a significant change after participating in the trainings. After the training, I realized that it is possible to work in my own country and make a difference. I learned not to despise any kind of work, understanding that every field is honorable. I also improved my mindset about what others say to me and recognized the importance of working with purpose and dedication. I came to understand that I am responsible for my own life and gained a broad perspective on these issues.

For instance, when I was in the business of baking and delivering bread, I used to feel ashamed and inferior. Looking back, I regret those feelings. WISE trainers encouraged us to share our experiences and express our thoughts freely. We completed the training program feeling honored, inspired, and humbled.

Through the training and discussions at WISE, I was able to change my perspective and develop my potential.

With this new beginning, my best friend and I ventured into the candle-making business, something we had previously only seen on social media but never took seriously. We decided to dive into this work while still on the 10th day of WISE training. Each day after training, we would go home and discuss how to start our business, fueled by the motivation the training provided.

Our plan came together. With a 50,000 Birr loan from an individual, supplemented by our own funds and the allowance from the training, we bought a machine and started working. It has now been three months since we began, and we are successfully delivering our products to traders in Merkato, Addis ABABA.

If God is willing, our future plans in the work sector look promising. We aim to repay what we have borrowed from individuals and buy our own work machine. Although it is possible to work from home, we plan to arrange an alternative workplace to focus better and not burden our home tasks. We also hope to hire other workers. Our main dream is to join "Yichalal" Saving and Credit Cooperatives of WISE, in order to save, and continue the work we started with a loan.

We envision expanding and continuing our business by saving and borrowing as members of the savings and Credit Cooperatives.

“... Basically, migration does more harm than good. We think that it is a shortcut for us to earn a living for now, but the truth is the opposite!”

I can witness that migration doesn't need to be an option. If we live here in our country with our families, work hard, and make saving a part of our culture, it is possible to earn, change, and sustain a living. The key is not to despise any work or become complacent. It's essential to have self-confidence and self-belief, to develop a positive attitude like the popular saying, “I can do it,” and to gain experience through trainings.

**Beletshachew Abi**

**“WISE taught me to justify the truth in the saying, ‘To those who have, more will be given.’ We often think we have nothing, but once we recognize our abundance, even more, comes our way.”**

My name is Aster Dosha. I was born on September 24, 1991, in an area called Shiro Meda, Addis Ababa. I am the fourth child and fifth daughter in my family. Besides me, my family includes one son and four daughters.

I attended Amaha Desta Primary School and later went to Etege Menan Secondary School until I dropped out in 10th grade. Currently, I am married and living with my husband.

Reflecting on my earlier life, my family raised me and my siblings with very limited resources. Witnessing these challenging times was the primary decision to drop out of school in the 10th grade in 2007 to support my family. Being young, I realized that finding work and earning money in my hometown would be difficult. So, I decided to explore job opportunities in the Arab countries, inspired by stories from my neighbors.

However, I faced a significant hurdle: I didn't have the money for a passport and transportation, and my family was struggling to make ends meet. After discussing it with my mother, we decided to take a bold step. She agreed to send her gold as collateral for a loan of 10,000 Birr to cover the costs. With this, I embarked on my journey and arrived in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

I worked as a domestic worker (nanny) in Dubai and lived as a migrant for two years. After that, I returned to my country and spent a year with my family. During this time, I got married. While working abroad, I supported my family every month, so I didn't have any savings when I came back home. Married life was challenging, and I struggled to find a suitable job. Consequently, I decided to return to the Arab countries to work for a few more years, and that's exactly what I did. It was during the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic that many Arab countries stopped accepting refugees. Dubai, in particular, closed its borders to immigrants. Seizing the opportunity I had, I started working as a migrant for the second time in Beirut, Lebanon. After working in Beirut for two years, I returned to my country and family, taking a two-month vacation.



In 2020, when I was just four months away from completing two years of my return to Lebanon, the explosion of the city's main oil storage depot plunged the country into a severe economic collapse. The disaster had a strong impact on us refugees. The woman who employed me at the time said, "My company is not paying me, so I no longer have money to pay you, and I cannot cover the cost of transportation to send you to your country."

Then she threw me out of her house and left me at the door of the Ethiopian Embassy. Many Ethiopians like me, working in Beirut and facing the same fate, were being dumped at the embassy door without money. The Ethiopian Embassy also closed its doors, stating that they could not afford to cover the transportation fees for all of us, so we had to find and use our options.

After a few days of living on the streets of Beirut, we turned to social media, reaching out to dedicated Ethiopian activists with a video detailing our plight. Thanks to Tamagn Beyene, who used aid money collected for Ethiopians affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, he rented us a dormitory hall. A few weeks later, through the efforts of this sincere countryman, the transportation expenses for all Ethiopians were covered, and we safely returned to our country and our families.

I still remember that time, enduring the harsh realities of being away from home. I never believed I would set foot in my country again. The psychological scars from that period remain with me to this day. Meanwhile, when I returned to my country, I was empty-handed, with no money or possessions. Everything I had worked for over the years, I sent to my husband and family each month, leaving me with nothing.

Despite this, I didn't want to be unemployed because life away from home had taught me strength and determination. Additionally, Ethiopian neighbors have high expectations for someone who has worked abroad.

Determined not to sit idle at home, I reached out to my older sister, who was working in Dubai. I shared with her the psychological damage I had suffered and asked if she could lend me some money to start a business. My sister, having already consulted with our mother, decided to send me a small amount of money from Dubai to help me get started.

I didn't spend much time debating what kind of business to start. Growing up around weaving and clothing, I decided to dive into sewing. With my savings, I bought a sewing machine and began attending vocational training in sewing. After three months of hard work, I mastered skirts, pants, shirts, and gowns, and completed the training successfully. Next, I rented a small workshop and began sewing and mending old clothes. The job wasn't very profitable; sometimes, it didn't even cover the monthly rent of the workspace. But it was better than sitting at home. In my free time, I focused on improving my professional skills by watching various sewing videos on Interent, especially on Google and YouTube.

One day, while browsing YouTube, I stumbled upon a sewing video that completely transformed my perspective. The video showcased how to make women's sanitary pads using a sewing machine, with high-quality materials and modern equipment. Inspired by what I saw, I decided to give it a try. I sewed my first sanitary pad and tested it myself. Excited by the results, I shared my creation with my sister and mother, showing them how to use it and asking for their feedback. Their constructive comments motivated me to take the next step: promoting my product to my neighbors, friends, and other women in my community. Slowly but surely, the local women began to embrace my product.

They offered valuable suggestions for improvement, especially regarding the quality of the cloth. By incorporating their feedback, I was able to refine my product and ensure I didn't lose my growing market.

I was working hard and had become quite familiar with the market. But then, out of the blue, I was told to leave immediately because the rented workplace was about to be demolished for development.

Fear took hold of me as I thought about losing the market I had grown used to. I tried to continue working from home, but it didn't work out.

My motivation started to fade, and the idea of going back to the migration I had left behind filled me with dread.

In a moment of reflection, I found myself thinking back to a conversation I had with a Woreda workers. This was during a period when I was managing immigration returnees and unemployment IDs. The worker had shared something about WISE that left a lasting impression on me.

Their words still resonate: "Most of the trainees who went for training came back encouraged, their morale renewed, even if they were initially disappointed. You should go for training there; the institute is located in Saris." When my turn for training finally arrived, I got the call to start. Stepping onto the WISE campus for the first time, I was greeted by a lively scene of people—workers and refugees alike. The sight filled me with joy and a sense of renewal. It felt as though my spirit was being lifted just by being there.

When I arrived at WISE for training, one of the first things I learned was the strong belief that every person has a special talent or potential. This idea connected with me and shaped my entire experience there.

“WISE showed me the truth in the saying, ‘To those who have, more will be given.’ We often think we have nothing, but in reality, we possess so much. Once we recognize what we have, even more, will come our way.”

From my training at WISE, I discovered that everything in my hands is a form of wealth. I learned that saving starts with small things, how to make use of available options, and that women are incredibly strong. I realized that motivation and determination are essential in any job, and that it’s important to take on and fulfill responsibilities. I understood that if I work hard, I can open new career doors and achieve many other good things.

The training spread awareness and led to my personal improvement. WISE training provided me with more than just professional knowledge; it significantly benefited my mental health. It truly brought me back to my childhood. When I first arrived at WISE, I even went out and gave a speech. My confidence soared. To be honest, the training at WISE was incredibly uplifting. We were being treated as we were being trained.

Imagine this: If a doctor simply hands a patient some medicine, the medicine alone might not save them.

If the patient doesn’t know how to use it, it could even be harmful. But if the doctor explains how to use the medicine and gives it to the patient with hope and encouragement, the patient might start feeling better even before taking the first dose. In truth, WISE did the same for me. The trainers at WISE are exceptional. They tirelessly humbled themselves, truly understood and listened to our feelings, and provided us with immense support and strength for our lives. Their encouragement was transformative. When someone is encouraged, they can reach great heights and not fail.

After completing the training period at WISE, I took on three different jobs. First, I continued my sanitary pad sewing business from home, making my products accessible to the women in my community and generating income. Second, the training instilled in me a belief in my ability to support others.



With this newfound confidence, I started working with my younger sister, who was unemployed. She now handles quality control, fixing any issues with the stitched pads and making them marketable. Lastly, I used to discard fabric scraps when buying from a market place called Mercato. However, I realized through the training that nothing should go to waste. Now, I collect those fabric scraps and turn them into pillows, creating an additional source of income.

“I no longer dream of moving to Arab countries. My heart is set on working hard to transform my own country. I have big dreams, and I’m determined to make them a reality!”

In the future, with God’s will, I plan to buy a cutting machine to import raw materials in bulk and mass-produce feminine sanitary pads. My goal is to expand my market reach and achieve my dreams and plans.

My long-term vision is to open a large factory that manufactures a variety of products, not just sanitary ware. I want to create job opportunities for young refugees like myself and benefit my sisters and the entire community. To my sisters, I say: recognize the wealth around you and use it. With hard work, we can transform ourselves in our country. Let’s always develop the mindset of what our country expects from us.

**Stay positive! Don’t be afraid! Stay strong!**

**Aster Dosha**

**“I always think today is better than yesterday,  
and tomorrow is another day”**

My name is Feiza Wajra. I was born in a place called Getto in the southern region of Ethiopia, in Gurge zone. As the youngest of six children, I have five older brothers. Tragically, I lost my mother when I was just a year old, so I grew up with my father and brothers until I was 15. My father’s modest income from agriculture was our family’s sole source of support, which often left us vulnerable to various socio-economic challenges.

At the age of 15, I dropped out of 6th grade with the hope of migrating to Addis Ababa or Arab countries to support my family, especially my father, financially. Growing up, I watched my peers leave primary school and migrate to Arab countries to provide for their families. This had a profound impact on me, making me believe that migration was my only option. While waiting until I was old enough to travel abroad, I moved to Addis Ababa, where I worked and lived with my aunt.

After spending two years with my aunt, my eagerness to start my journey led me to attempt getting a passport at just 17 years old.



However, it wasn’t until I turned 18 that I met all the necessary conditions and finally immigrated to the city of Beirut for the first time.

I migrated to Beirut with the hope of changing my father’s life, but I was still very young. Fortunately, God saw my youthful heart and led me to a compassionate employer. As my employer got to know me and learned about my story, she was deeply moved. She increased my salary and even added extra money to the amount I sent to my father each month. Although I never knew my mother, my employer’s kindness made me feel like I had found a mother figure in her.

After two years abroad, I returned to my country with a plan to start a business using the small amount of money I had saved. I consulted my older brother and decided to rent a shop in the Piazza area of Addis Ababa, where he was already working in the glasses business.

However, after just four months, I had to stop the business. The income was less than what I spent, and the rent for my shop increased. I handed over some of the items in my shop to my brother and flew to Dubai to seek migration work once again.

I worked in Dubai for a total of four years as a migrant worker. After my second year, I returned to my country for a three-month rest. During that time, I got married to my husband, who is a soldier. While I was home, a close friend through my aunt gave me some valuable advice. Instead of putting my money in the bank, she suggested I buy land and build a house, ensuring I would have a place to stay when I returned. This advice resonated with me, so I bought a piece of land in an area known as Haile Garmnet and began building a five-room house. When I first returned home, my main focus was on finishing our house. I was so sure that once it was done, my husband and I would finally live there together, and I could rent

out the extra space for a steady income. But even after the house was completed, things didn't go as planned. My husband was often away, forced into labor, and I found myself spending most of my time with my aunt because I was pregnant.

I was eight months pregnant and at the hospital for my routine prenatal care when I received an urgent call. The voice on the other end was frantic, urging me to hurry because they were demolishing my house.

After my treatment, I rushed home, only to find my furniture strewn outside and my house completely destroyed. In disbelief, I asked why this was happening. They curtly explained that my home was deemed illegal. They had even dug up the foundation stones and loaded them onto trucks. The place I once called home was left completely barren. I had invested about 1.5 million Birr in the land I bought, and when it was all taken away, I felt utterly hopeless. The thought of ending my life crossed my mind. With just one month left until my due date and nowhere to go, I stayed close to my aunt. A few weeks later, I gave birth to my baby in her house.

When my son turned three months old, I decided to take matters into my own hands and went to the Woreda's women's affairs office, hoping to find a solution. I explained the challenges I was facing and my current situation, but they told me it was beyond their capacity to help and directed me to the Gulele sub-city office. There, I shared my story with the city professionals, mentioning that I had returned from migration. I left my phone number and was told they would call me when support became available.

I vividly remember the day I met WISE. My son was just four months old, and I had recently moved out of my aunt's house. My brother had rented a small place for me near Asko, but without any income, I found myself begging for food from the local houses. Loneliness had settled in, and hope seemed like a distant memory. I avoided conversations with people, feeling overwhelmed and mentally exhausted. One day, during this dark time, I received a call from the Woreda's office. They informed me about a training program for returnees at an organization called WISE.

When I first came to WISE for training, I faced numerous personal challenges. My body was still recovering from childbirth, and I wasn't strong enough yet.



With no one to help care for my baby, I had to wake up my four-month-old every morning, prepare lunch, and then head to the training. Living in the Asko area, I had to get up very early to make it on time, and transportation was always an issue. With my 4-month-old baby on my back, I began WISE's training. From the very first day, I knew that no matter what challenges came my way, I was determined not to miss a single session. As the training began, the other female trainees went out of their way to support me. They took turns holding my son, allowing me to fully engage in the training.

Their genuine sympathy and encouragement were deep. Seeing their support, I made a promise to myself: I would participate fully and complete the training, no matter what. Reflecting on my past, I have found a way to heal from the psychological damage I experienced during the training. This journey has opened my eyes, helping me realize that everything will eventually turn out for the best, allowing me to leave behind the difficult times. The consistent trainer has significantly deepened my understanding of business fundamentals, from starting and improving a business to the benefits of life skills. It has also renewed my motivation for a new career through WISE's training. Each day feels better than the last, and as I look forward, I find myself thinking, "Today is better than yesterday, and tomorrow is another day.!"

With the transport allowance I received from WISE during the training, I immediately put it to good use. I started making Erteb (potato sandwiches) at home and delivering them to two shops. Gradually, my business began to take off, and I started earning a moderate income. I prepare sandwiches at home both in the morning and at night, and in my spare time, I work as a cleaner.

Looking to expand my sources of income, I plan to use my free time on Saturdays and Sundays to finalize the steps for starting a shoe-slippers business. I aim to start trading shortly.

Before starting any business or spending money, it's crucial to carefully consider all options. My personal experiences have taught me to be resilient and never give up. After all, isn't it the person who invented the light bulb who succeeded because he didn't give up hope despite many failures? This lesson of determination is something I want to share with my sisters and the children of my country.

**“Stay strong, keep pushing forward, and never give up on your dreams.”**

**Feiza Wajra**

**“Up until now, I’ve been wasting my energy and time. A little business knowledge truly goes a long way!”**

My name is Martha Bekele. I was born in 1984 in the Beklo Bet area of Addis Ababa, and I’m the fourth child in my family. I attended my primary education at Fana School and Abyot Kirs School up until the 12th grade. After finishing school, I spent several years working in various jobs, primarily as a waitress and in sales.

In 2008, I decided to migrate to Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates. My goal was to support my family’s modest economy, as my years of hard work in my home country hadn’t brought about the change I had hoped for. The journey of migration was filled with challenges. Adapting to a new climate, learning a different language, and getting used to unfamiliar food were all difficult. On top of that, the labor-intensive job exposed me to various health issues, making the experience even more demanding. After spending three years working in Abu Dhabi, I returned to my home country. During the two years after my return, I got married, had a son, and began living with my family. While I was abroad, I struggled to save enough money to start my own business. Each month,



I supported my parents financially and also had to repay the transportation costs I had borrowed for my journey to Abu Dhabi. This made it difficult to set aside any savings for my entrepreneurial dreams. After two years back home, I decided to return to Abu Dhabi. I discussed it with my father and my husband, and we agreed that I needed to earn more money to eventually settle and work permanently in my country. However, in 2019, my son was diagnosed with diabetes. After working in Abu Dhabi for just one year, I came back home to take care of him.

By 2020, my son's health had improved a lot. During my time in Abu Dhabi, my father saved the money I sent him. With those savings, I immediately opened a small breakfast house and started working for myself. I chose to open a restaurant because I had experience working in the area and believed I could succeed in a business I was familiar with. Even though I was running a business before joining WISE, it wasn't one that I had planned out or managed effectively in terms of tracking expenses and income to increase wealth. I first heard about WISE from one of my customers, a woman from the neighborhood. She told me that the organization mainly provides training for refugees returning from Arab countries and helps them become members of Savings and Credit Cooperatives. Curious, I went and registered the very next day.

I was invited to participate in WISE's training, and I eagerly took part in various sessions. This experience provided me with a wealth of knowledge and understanding. Before this, I hadn't paid much attention to alternative sources of credit or resources for expanding my business. However, after completing the training, I began to see new opportunities in my area. I realized that my clients themselves were valuable resources, and I had been wasting my energy and time by not recognizing this earlier.

*“A little business knowledge truly goes a long way!”*

The training helped me reconcile the energy and time I had previously spent with the new insights I gained. Most importantly, I learned from WISE that a business needs continuous improvement, fixing, and maintenance to thrive.

Being a member of WISE's 'Yichalal' Savings and Credit Cooperatives has really helped me stay on top of my savings. I make sure to keep detailed records of all my business expenses and income, which gives me a clear picture of my financial health. I also spend time studying the procedures and prices of my competitors and similar businesses in the area, as well as keeping an eye on current market prices. This helps me stay competitive and make informed decisions. To keep things running smoothly, I've hired two more employees. This has been a game-changer, as it allows me to avoid overlapping workloads between food preparation and serving. Overall, I feel like I'm managing my food business with a clear plan, and it's rewarding to see my efforts pay off. I've always had big dreams for the future, but life has tested me in ways I never imagined, especially through my son's diabetes. This journey has been challenging, but with the strong support and guidance of God, I've found a new purpose.

I dream of opening a large center for young diabetics in Ethiopia. This center will not only provide essential diabetes treatment and comprehensive care but also offer a sanctuary where these young warriors can escape their pain, have fun, and truly relax.

To my sisters who understand the life of a migrant as I do, I want to share a heartfelt message. If we channel the energy and time we often feel is wasted abroad into our own country, and if we persevere, we can achieve incredible things. From my own life experience, I urge those who feel they have no choice but to migrate to gather all the information they can before leaping. Work with a purpose, strive for change, and make saving a habit. Together, we can reach new heights.

I also want to highlight the incredible impact that the training and awareness programs provided by WISE can have. These initiatives have the power to transform the lives of many young people, especially our sisters. By equipping them with knowledge and skills, they can offer a positive alternative to migration, helping them build a brighter future right here at home.

**Martha Bekele**

**“With strong determination and helpful training, I improve my family’s income and inspire my community.”**

My name is Amanie Adam, and I’m a 29-year-old woman living in Asela with a disability. The injury to my legs has made it difficult for me to work and support my family of four on a small income. Adding to this challenge, my blind sister lives with me, increasing our financial burden. However, I don’t see this as a defeat. Instead, I view it as a source of indomitable strength and a life experience that can inspire others to find and use alternatives.

Without hesitation, I signed up for the Generate Your Business Idea (GYB), Start Your Business (SYB), Life Skills, and Financial Literacy trainings organized by WISE and the ILO. These trainings not only enhanced my business skills but also boosted my confidence, enabling me to carve out a new path for my family.

With newfound knowledge in business management, marketing, and entrepreneurship, I felt confident to start my journey. Leveraging the skills I honed through training, I decided to bake and sell Injera, beginning with just 25 kg of teff flour.



Applying the insights from my training to my Injera business, I began to see the fruits of my labor. What started with a modest 25 kg of teff flour has now grown into a thriving operation, baking 150 Enjera daily and supplying them to three restaurants. This venture has not only flourished but also brought renewed hope for my family's future.

In addition to my bakery business, I also keep seven chickens and two sheep, both of which recently gave birth. I work hard to expand my income sources, and the

community's strong support fuels my dreams.

My ultimate goal is to establish a thriving cattle-fattening business, which is my long-term vision.

My journey isn't just about personal success; it's about recognizing and seizing business opportunities even in the face of challenges. Through relentless determination and invaluable support from training, I've not only increased my family's income but also inspired my community.

Finally, I want to emphasize how crucial business-oriented and life skills training, organized by institutions like WISE and the ILO, has been. These programs have profoundly impacted my life and the lives of my sisters, empowering us and strengthening our community. They have played a significant role in our growth and success. This is my heartfelt advice to my sisters.

**Amanie Adam**

**“I can’t let this moment pass without telling Assela young people how much I’ve benefited from the training.”**

My name is Arabu Mohammed Galato. I was born in Asla city in 1996 and spent my childhood there. I am the fourth child in a family of seven, with four brothers and two sisters. Sadly, my father passed away a year ago, and now I live with my siblings and mother.

My educational journey began at ‘Andenet,’ where I completed my primary schooling (1-8). I then continued my secondary and preparatory education (9-12) at ‘Tokuma’ school in Asela City. In 2016, I earned my first degree in Sports Science from the University of Gondar.

After struggling to find a job in my field, I decided to open a clothing store with my family’s support. I worked tirelessly for a year, but financial losses forced me to close the shop. This setback was tough. Before joining WISE, I found myself unemployed and feeling lost. The failure of my business took a heavy toll on my self-confidence and left me feeling like a burden, which was deeply distressing. One day, I found myself facing the harsh reality of unemployment.

It was then that my neighbor told me about WISE and the incredible work they do for the youth in Asala City, including the training services they provide.

The training was incredibly valuable for me. It renewed my motivation to work. Over 15 days, I got thorough training on business profit and loss, income generation, resource mobilization, and other crucial aspects of starting and growing a business. This experience empowered and inspired me to make changes. After finishing, I began to see significant positive changes in myself.

With the 20,000 birr I received from my brothers, I decided to restart my clothing business, this time focusing exclusively on women’s clothes. Drawing from the insights I gained during the training, I also began a sheep-fattening venture with my mother, utilizing the space in our house as a resource. This dual approach has helped me expand our sources of income and build a more stable future.

The training taught me that it's possible to start small and still achieve great things. With this newfound knowledge, I plan to expand my small business. Given that our homestead is quite large, I also intend to move beyond sheep fattening and venture into cattle fattening.

Going through the WISE training has truly been a life-changing journey for me. I firmly believe that this incredible opportunity should be made accessible to other young people who might not yet know about it. If WISE could collaborate with government institutions in Asela City, we could reach and save many young people struggling with addiction. I can't emphasize enough how much I've benefited from this training, and I want to share this message with all the youth in Asela: this training can make a real difference in your lives, just as it has in mine.

**Arebu Mohammed**

**“Investing the initial resources, working hard, and collaborating will elevate you to great heights!”**

Nebiyat Jibril, Meron Gethechu, and Bethlehem Nurye were born and raised in the city of Asela.. Together, they founded NMB Design and Manufacturing. At one point, when hope seemed distant, the three friends contemplated migration as a means to improve their lives and those of their families, seeking better job opportunities abroad. This story delves into their journey of life, career achievements, challenges, and aspirations.

Before their encounter with WISE, the trio had attempted to migrate and found themselves unemployed. Despite their dream of starting a business, they struggled to realize it due to a lack of motivation, courage, and various other reasons.



Everything changed with a 15-day training program by WISE. This training equipped them with essential skills in decision-making, networking, business planning, and market assessment. Armed with this new knowledge, they transformed their personal talents into a joint business idea, laying the foundation for NMB Design and Manufacturing.

Upon completing the training, they sought alternative sources of starting capital, discussing options with their families and friends. They managed to secure a loan of 60,000 birr, which helped them overcome the financial

hurdles they faced in starting their business.

Today, the three industrious friends have established NMB Design and Manufacturing and rent a workshop where they produce and market various types of clothing and utility products using different raw materials.

Everything from design to production and sales happens in their workshop. Among their creations are women's and children's dresses, modern pillows, bags, and other accessories. Additionally, they produce and sell traditional Ethiopian coffee (Jebena Buna) in their workshop, achieving excellent results in expanding their reach and finding alternative sources of income and market opportunities.

Despite their significant progress, NMB Design and Manufacturing still faces several challenges. Key obstacles include access to finance, building strong market linkages, and acquiring superior business capabilities. However, the dedication of the three friends and their participation in training programs, such as those provided by WISE, have given them valuable opportunities to overcome these challenges.

The future aspirations of Nebiyat, Meron, and Bethlehem far exceed their current achievements. Building on the foundation they established at NMB Design and Manufacturing, they dream of expanding their business to other cities and even exporting their products internationally.

In line with their vision, they aim to empower unemployed youth by establishing a modern manufacturing company that produces and markets a wide range of products and by building training centers. The three entrepreneurial youths often tell their sisters, “Identifying initial resources, investing wisely, working hard, and cooperating will bring you to a great level!”

In the end, NMB Design and Manufacturing stands as a beacon of hope, not only for its founders but for entrepreneurs across Ethiopia. The success stories of Nebiyat, Meron, and Bethlehem highlight the transformative power of skill development, collaboration, and access to resources.



By diligently overcoming the challenges before them, Nebiyat Jibril, Meron Getachew, and Bethlehem Nurye have the undeniable potential to create jobs, empower others, and establish a successful national brand.

**Nebiyat Jibril,  
Meron Getechu, and  
Bethlehem Nurye**

**“The training reassured me; it reminded me to stop wasting money and that saving is the key to a stable life!”**

My name is Mubarak Ali Bashir. I was born and raised in Addis Ababa in a place called Chew Berenda. I completed my primary education at Arbegnoch School and my secondary education at Medhaniyalem Secondary School. As the eldest child in my family, I have two brothers and six sisters.

In 2001, I immigrated to Saudi Arabia to support my family economically. During the 20 years I spent there, I got married and had one son and three daughters. I worked in various jobs, from fattening cattle to hotel hospitality. However, it was very difficult for me to live in Saudi Arabia because I missed my parents and my country. We are currently living in Addis Ababa with my wife and four children.

When we were in Saudi Arabia, I covered all my family's expenses with the money I earned. However, because I was an illegal resident for many years and tended to waste money, I did not have enough savings when I returned home. I managed my family with only the monthly income from a rented house and a spice shop that had no market.



Because of this ( before I joined WISE ) I was thinking of quitting my spice business and was in a state of frustration and despair, fearing I would become unemployed. In the meantime, a friend from my past told me about WISE and their business training for returnees, so I joined. Three or four days later, I received a call from WISE inviting me to participate in the training. Although I went to the WISE campus as instructed, I initially felt that participating in a 15-day training program would be a waste of time, and I started the training with thoughts of quitting.

But after one week of WISE's training, I began to realize how useful it was. I gained knowledge about starting a business, managing expenses and income, finding initial capital, understanding types of losses, and other business-related topics. During my 15-day stay at WISE, I received a lot of advice that has been useful beyond the training. It was the first time I felt that someone genuinely advised me from the bottom of their heart.

"...the training reassured me; it reminded me to stop wasting money and that saving is the key to a stable life!" After completing the training, I used the knowledge I gained about starting a business and managing expenses and income to continue expanding my spice business.

I also started an incense business, which I had experience with from my time in exile. Whenever I get the chance, I talk to people about my business to outdo my competitors and attract more customers.

My short-term plan is to identify the costs and income of the two businesses I have started, generate new customers, and continue to expand.

In the future, with the will of God, I have a big dream of creating wealth for my family, especially for my children, and putting into practice the importance of savings that I learned from WISE's training.

Finally, I would like to remind the unemployed and returnees in my country that if they find opportunities to get WISE's training, it will help them overcome any challenges they may face in the future. Additionally, saving is essential for changing jobs. I also want to send a message to WISE: the content of your training and the way you deliver it is very important to people of all age groups, so you should use mass medias to expand your reach.

**Mubarak Ali**

**“It has given me an opportunity to improve both my business and my family’s life!”**

Today’s heroine is Genet Keder. Genet entered married life at the young age of sixteen. Her husband is disabled and, due to his disability, is unable to work as he pleases, resulting in a limited income. Genet is a mother of four children and lives with her family in the city of Asela.

Genet faced various challenges in managing her family. Her husband’s disability and the family’s limited income, combined with the high cost of living in our country, put great pressure on her to meet her family’s economic needs. The stress she was under caused her psychological distress, leading her to take an illegal trip to Middle East countries and engage in migrant work as the only solution she could find.

A few weeks before Genet took part in the training organized by WISE for returnees in Asela City, she completed the necessary prerequisites for engaging in illegal immigration, such as obtaining a passport and gathering information for her trip.



However, the information she received about the business skills training offered to migrant returnees by WISE in Asela City caught her attention. She decided to put aside her plans to work as a migrant worker and participate in the training organized by WISE for the time being.

Genet was able to participate in the 15-day business skills training provided by WISE. The valuable skills and knowledge she gained during the training not only reversed her decision to engage in illegal immigration but also included generating business ideas, starting a business, understanding profit and loss, income generation, wealth accumulation and management, as well as basic life skills and other topics related to starting and expanding a business.

This training significantly improved her perception of her surroundings.

Therefore, she changed her decision to work abroad and decided to start a small business in her country. Using the money she had saved for migration and the modest transportation fee she received from the training, she started an Injera and bread (Ambasha) business in the city of Asela.

Currently, her business has borne fruit, and she sells 50 to 65 loaves of Injera and bread (Ambasha) a day, earning an average of 600 birr per day. This income has enabled her to take good care of her disabled husband. In addition, the business idea she generated and the business plan she developed, which enabled her to achieve excellent results in both quality and quantity, was recognized in the WISE business plan competition and the project implemented in Asela City. Finally, today's storyteller, Genet Keder, expresses her happiness with the recognition and award given to her by saying, "...the recognition and award I have received have given me an opportunity to improve my business and my family's life even more!"

**Genet Kedir**

## **“How I Found Peace of Heart and Life: A Journey of Resilience”**

When I reflect on the ups and downs I've faced in life, I'm truly amazed at how much I've experienced. Overcoming the challenging journey of life and standing here today to share my story, I feel that my name and my father's name are deeply intertwined with the story of my life. My name is Buzuayhe Tasewu. I am married and a mother of three beautiful children. I was born in 1989 and grew up in Addis Ababa, in the Gulele sub-city, in an area called Kechene Beha. As the third child in my family, we lost our father when I was young.

After my father passed away, our mother raised us alone. As time went on, life became very difficult, so my mother married someone she thought would support us financially. However, after she married him, things didn't change for her. Especially for me and my siblings, the situation at home became challenging and difficult. I decided to get married at the age of seventeen, while I was in the eighth grade, thinking it would be an escape from my difficult life. But the marriage I entered into at a young age brought its own problems and challenges.



After the birth of my first child, I had no job or income of my own, and because our standard of living was not improving, I was always angry and disagreeing with my husband. With the idea of changing my life and running away, I dropped out of school in the 10th grade and started my first migration journey. With money I borrowed from people, I made a desperate journey by car through the desert of Libya to enter Sudan.

Finally, when I arrived in Sudan and worked for two years, I was unable to continue working due to health problems I developed during migration.

With the help of my fellow countrymen, I collected enough money to return to my country. After I came back, I started living with my husband and gave birth to my second child. Unfortunately, my second child also had limited mental development. Driven by the dream of saving my child and changing my life, I decided to emigrate again. I left my child in my mother's care and set out on the same journey for the second time.

After I returned, I took back my child from my mother and started living with my husband and two children. Determined to save my child, I hoped for a change. However, without any money or work, I became isolated from my friends and family. I was not close to anyone, locked up in my house, and dependent on my husband. This situation led to me being diagnosed with mental disorders and illness. It didn't end there; I became a woman with no confidence and felt utterly hopeless. I gave birth to my third child while in a state of great emotional turmoil. Upon returning from exile, I was registered as a refugee returnee in my district. Soon after, I was invited to WISE's training. Despite my inner fears, I hesitantly went to WISE, driven by a stronger desire to find someone and achieve peace of mind, which outweighed my despair and fear.

After I arrived in WISE, everything changed. Meeting my sisters who had also returned from exile brought me inner peace. What more can I say? From that day on, I took my 6-month-old daughter, my third child, with me.

With the knowledge and confidence, I gained from the training, I revived my hope. I utilized my prior sewing skills and a sewing machine that had been sitting unused in my house. Using the money provided for transportation, I bought raw materials to sew various traditional clothes. I started by making traditional clothes for my friends and promoting my work to family and locals. After selling my first pieces, I rented another sewing machine for 1500.00 birr per month and began making traditional clothes on order, delivering them to shops in Shiro Meda. As a startup, I am making a decent profit.

In the future, I plan to expand my work and become a member of the Yachalal Savings and Credit Cooperatives to increase my savings and take a loan. I intend to buy more sewing machines and open my own shop to improve my work and create employment opportunities for women facing similar challenges.



For my sisters who have returned from exile, there is hope. Your circumstances can change. It's never too late to start working and make a difference. To my sisters considering exile, remember that we can work and thrive in our own country. Don't let the world of immigration overshadow the abilities and potential we have within us. We can achieve great things right here.

**Bizuayehu Tasew**