

ADEY

IMPACT STORY BULLETIN

VOL. 1

**AGRICULTURE-FOCUSED
DIGNIFIED EMPLOYMENT
FOR YOUTH
IN ETHIOPIA (ADEY)**



Ethiopian  **ATI**
Agricultural Transformation Institute
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 **20**
YEARS
Creating impact together.

2026

ABOUT ADEY

The Agriculture-focused Dignified Employment for Youth in Ethiopia (ADEY) Program is designed to address the challenges of youth unemployment and increase their participation in the labor market, particularly in the agriculture sector. The ADEY program is implemented, in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation, in eight regional states including Amhara, Central Ethiopia, Oromia, Southwest Ethiopia, Sidama, Somali, South Ethiopia, and Tigray, and in collaboration with six implementing partners (IPs). The IPs include Ethiopian Catholic Church Social Development Commission (ECC-SDC), Ethiopia Somali Development Association (EDSA), HUNDEE-Oromo Grassroots Development Initiative, Oromo Development Association (ODA), Organization for Rehabilitation and Development in Amhara-Ethiopia (ORDA-Ethiopia), and Relief Society of Tigray (REST).

The program aims to create **611,000** dignified jobs for youths (**80% women**) through interventions including mindset change, agribusiness and enterprise development in crops and livestock, input production and supply, digital agriculture and financial services, market linkage and creating enabling policy environment for youth employment in the sector. The participants also include youths with disabilities (**4%**) and internally displaced youths (**6%**). In terms of geographic targeting, the participants are categorized into rural (**70%**), peri-urban (**20%**) and urban (**10%**). The program will establish and strengthen a total of 15,000 youth enterprises (**60%** new and 40% existing) in agribusiness activities.

The program interventions are designed to enhance youth engagement in various agribusiness activities, and their individual and enterprise capacity development that will lead to dignified jobs through wage and self-employment pathways

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From Displacement to Determination

Before conflict uprooted her life, Birtukan Godefay, 34, had everything she and her family had worked hard to build. Living in Humera town, Tigray region, she ran a thriving cafeteria while her husband operated a garage. Together, they cultivated farmland that provided both food and income, creating a stable future for themselves and their two children.

That future disappeared almost overnight during the conflict in Tigray in 2021.

As violence spread, Birtukan and her family were forced to flee their home, leaving behind their house, businesses, farmland, and nearly everything they owned. In the chaos, her family was separated—her husband fled to Sudan while she escaped with their two children to Tekia Kebele in Emba Alaje Woreda, Tigray region.

"The situation became very frightening. We could hear gunshots all around us, and it was no longer safe to stay. We did not have time to collect our belongings. We simply left because saving our lives was more important than anything we owned."

Separated from her husband and carrying the responsibility of protecting her children alone, Birtukan faced one of the most difficult periods of her life.

I woke up every day wondering how I would feed my children. Everything we had worked for was gone, and we had to start again from nothing.

”



Birtukan on her way to vaccinate chicks.



Birtukan with her friends providing vaccination services

"I used to wake up every morning thinking about how to grow my business and improve our family's life. After we were displaced, I woke up every day wondering how I would feed my children. Everything we had worked for was gone, and we had to start again from nothing."

The emotional toll of displacement was immense. Beyond losing her livelihood, she had lost the confidence and security that years of hard work had provided. Yet despite the uncertainty, she refused to let displacement define her future.

Her turning point came

when she joined the ADEY Program.

Through the program, Birtukan received life skill, business skill and enterprise leadership training and support that enabled her to rebuild her livelihood alongside eight other young women who shared a common determination to create a better future. Together, they established the Birtukan and Birnesh Partnership, a poultry vaccination enterprise, with an initial capital of just ETB 10,000.

Starting the business was far from easy. Convincing poultry producers to trust a newly established enterprise required patience, persistence, and consistent service. Under Birtukan's leadership, the team worked tirelessly, travelling to farming communities, providing reliable poultry vaccination services, and gradually earning the confidence of local farmers.

As trust grew, so did demand for their services.

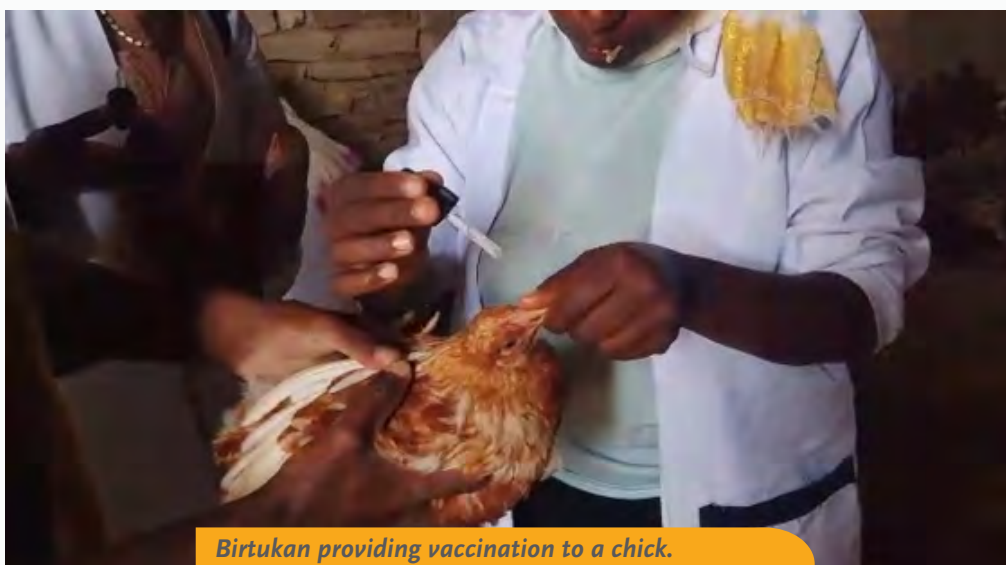
Today, what began as a small enterprise has become a thriving business. Through careful financial management and strong teamwork, the members have accumulated ETB 250,000 in a common savings account. Beyond improving their own livelihoods, the enterprise has helped local poultry producers protect their flocks, contributing to healthier poultry production and stronger household incomes across the community.

For Birtukan, however, the greatest achievement cannot be measured in savings alone.

The enterprise restored something she feared she had lost forever—her independence, confidence, and hope for the future. Once again, she is leading a business, making decisions, supporting her family, and demonstrating that even after losing everything, it is possible to rebuild.

Looking ahead, Birtukan and her fellow members plan to expand their business into livestock feed supply, creating additional employment opportunities while continuing to serve livestock producers in their community.

Her journey is a powerful reminder that while conflict can take away homes and livelihoods, it cannot extinguish determination. With the right opportunities and support, resilience can become the foundation for a new beginning.



Birtukan providing vaccination to a chick.



The growing demand made Birtukan and her friends to travel a lot.

Sowing Change, Reaping Power

How a young mother found dignity, purpose, and prosperity through a youth-led agribusiness

The morning sun rises gently over the vast plateau of Dalocha Woreda in Ethiopia's Silte Zone, casting a golden glow across fields of ripened wheat. A light breeze moves through the grain, creating waves that stretch toward the horizon. Standing in the middle of the field, 22-year-old Kidamera smiles as she runs her hand across the heavy heads of wheat.

For many people, this is simply another harvest. For Kidamera, it is the harvest of a new life.

Only a year earlier, she had no job, no income, and little hope of changing her future. As a young mother raising two children in Enkataga Kebele, she spent her days searching for work that never came.

"I used to wander around jobless in my place," she remembers. Like thousands of young women across rural Ethiopia, Kidamera wanted nothing more than an opportunity—not charity, but a chance to work, provide for her family, and build a better future with her own hands. That opportunity arrived unexpectedly when community mobilizers visited homes throughout her village, introducing young people to an agribusiness initiative supported through the ADEY program.

"They came door to door and told me about this opportunity," she recalls. "I participated, and now after sowing this, I'm so happy. I believe young people can change their lives if they participate like I did."



***I believe young people
can change their lives if
they participate like I did***



Kidamera, standing inside Sojat enterprise farmland

That single decision changed the course of her life.

Kidamera became one of 35 young women and nine young men who established Sojat, a youth-led wheat-producing micro, small and medium enterprise (MSME) in Dalocha Woreda. Situated on one of Central Ethiopia's fertile agricultural plateaus, the area possesses enormous farming potential. Yet for many unemployed young people, productive land, financing, agricultural inputs, and technical knowledge remained beyond reach.

The partnership between the Woreda Job Creation and Enterprise Development Office and the ADEY program helped remove those barriers. The Office allocated 7.4 hectares of farmland to the newly established enterprise and facilitated a 100,000 Ethiopian Birr loan, giving the young entrepreneurs the foundation they needed to begin. ADEY complemented this support by providing 10 quintals of improved wheat seed, fertilizer for 7.5 hectares of land, including 11.25 quintals of urea fertilizer, as well as comprehensive technical training and continuous advisory support throughout the production season.

For Kidamera, those investments represented far more than farming inputs. They represented trust.

"They gave us training, seed and fertilizer," she says. "I really wanted to thank ADEY for the support we received."

The training transformed the way the young entrepreneurs approached agriculture. Rather than relying on traditional practices alone, they learned modern production techniques—from land preparation and planting to fertilizer application, weed management, disease control, and safe pesticide use.

"We've received technical skills on how to plough, seed, weed and spray pesticides," Kidamera explains. "We've learned every detail, and ADEY has provided us with lots of training."

Knowledge soon became confidence.

Throughout the growing season, members of Sojat Enterprise carefully applied what they had learned. They weeded their fields, managed crop diseases, applied fungicides, and repeatedly controlled invasive weeds to protect their investment.

Every stage demanded discipline. Every decision mattered.

"I believe if you have commitment to the work and do everything that's needed, like careful weeding, you'll succeed," Kidamera says.

Months of hard work slowly transformed empty farmland into a sea of healthy wheat.

Standing among the crop, she smiles with quiet pride.

"Now the harvest looks beautiful."

Yet perhaps the most remarkable transformation has taken place within the enterprise itself.

Agriculture has traditionally been viewed as physically demanding work better suited to men, particularly commercial farming. At Sojat Enterprise, those assumptions are being challenged every day.

Women and men share responsibilities equally, make decisions together, and contribute side by side throughout the production cycle.

"Now we women work equally," Kidamera says proudly. "There's nothing much difference between us. Everyone is equal at work now."

She hopes her own experience will encourage other young women who hesitate to enter agriculture.

"It isn't difficult for women as people think. What matters is getting the opportunity to work. Nothing is difficult when you actually do it. It only sounds difficult when you're thinking about it."

Her confidence is evident not only in her words but also in the pride she feels after every day's work.

"Whenever I return home after my shift in the farmland, I feel happy."

That happiness comes from more than earning an income. It comes from knowing she is building something of her own.

As harvest season approached, optimism spread throughout the enterprise. Looking across the field, Kidamera estimated the group could harvest nearly 300 quintals of wheat.

She hoped for even more. Her vision, however, extends well beyond producing grain.

The members of Sojat Enterprise are already planning their next chapter. Rather than selling raw wheat alone, they hope to establish a flour-processing business that will allow them to add value, increase profits, and create additional employment opportunities.

During the dry season, they also plan to use irrigation to diversify production by growing pepper, processing it, packaging it, and eventually reaching export markets.

"We have a plan to transform our agribusiness into flour production," Kidamera explains. "During the dry season we also want to use irrigation. We can plant pepper, process it, package it and export it."

Like many emerging businesses, the enterprise continues to face challenges.

Limited access to water threatens year-round production, while the absence of processing machinery restricts opportunities to expand into value addition.

"We need machinery, and we also have water shortages," Kidamera explains. "If we plant pepper as planned, it needs more water. After harvest, we also need machinery for processing and packaging."

Even while describing these challenges, she remains deeply grateful for the support that has brought the enterprise this far.

"My message to ADEY is one of sincere appreciation," she says. "If there is any possibility, we ask for support during the dry season."

Two months after this interview, Kidamera's confidence proved well founded.

The members of Sojat Enterprise harvested 323 quintals of wheat, surpassing their expectations. The harvest was estimated to be worth more than two million Ethiopian Birr, marking an extraordinary milestone for a youth enterprise established by young people who, only months earlier, had been searching for work.

For Kidamera, however, the greatest achievement cannot be measured in quintals or Birr. It is the confidence to dream beyond survival.

The confidence to lead. The confidence to believe that agriculture is not simply a means of making a living, but a pathway to building a future.

Her journey demonstrates what becomes possible when young people receive access to productive resources, practical skills, and sustained support. It also shows the transformative power of investing in young women—not merely as beneficiaries of development, but as entrepreneurs, decision-makers, employers, and leaders of rural economic transformation.

In the fertile fields of Dalocha, wheat has become far more than a successful crop.

It has become a symbol of opportunity planted, confidence cultivated, and futures harvested.

For Kidamera and the members of Sojat Enterprise, every grain tells the story of young people who were given a chance—and proved exactly what they could accomplish.

Where the Blue Nile Nurtures More Than a Farm

On the shores of Ethiopia's legendary Abay River, one young family is proving that when nature works in harmony, agriculture becomes more than a livelihood—it becomes a cycle of opportunity.

The first thing visitors notice is not the farm. It is the landscape.

The mighty Abay River—known to the world as the Blue Nile—winds gracefully through the lush countryside, carrying waters that begin their remarkable journey from nearby Lake Tana before flowing thousands of kilometers across Africa. Along its banks, fishermen cast their nets into the calm waters while birds glide over fertile fields that have sustained generations of farming families.

As you cross the bridge overlooking the river, another sight captures your attention.

Spread across nearly 7,000 square meters of fertile riverside land is a vibrant patchwork of fruit trees, vegetable gardens, fishponds, livestock shelters, and a welcoming café buzzing with customers. It is an unexpected oasis where every corner seems alive with purpose.

This is the home of Aysheshum and his family.

At just thirty years old, Aysheshum is already leading a family enterprise that is quietly redefining what modern farming can look like in rural Ethiopia.



Aysheshum standing near his fish pond with his family and employees

"We have always been farmers," he says with a smile as he welcomes visitors into the compound.

His journey began much like that of countless young people raised in farming communities. Growing up, he learned agriculture from his parents, spending his childhood working alongside them in the fields. Although he completed high school, he never imagined abandoning the land that had shaped his life.

Instead, he dreamed of transforming it. That dream, however, was born from disappointment. For

The biggest change was not only what we received, It was how we learned to think. ADEY's trainings completely changed how we manage the farm.

9 years, the family

depended largely on khat cultivation. While it provided income for a time, fluctuating markets and the disruptions brought by the COVID-19 pandemic made the business increasingly unreliable.

"There came a point when we realized we couldn't continue doing the same thing and expect different results," Aysheshum recalls. So the family made a bold decision.

Together with his wife and cousins, they abandoned the old approach and began building something entirely different—an integrated farming enterprise where every activity would support another and nothing would go to waste.

Walking through the farm feels less like touring separate businesses and more like discovering pieces of a carefully designed ecosystem.

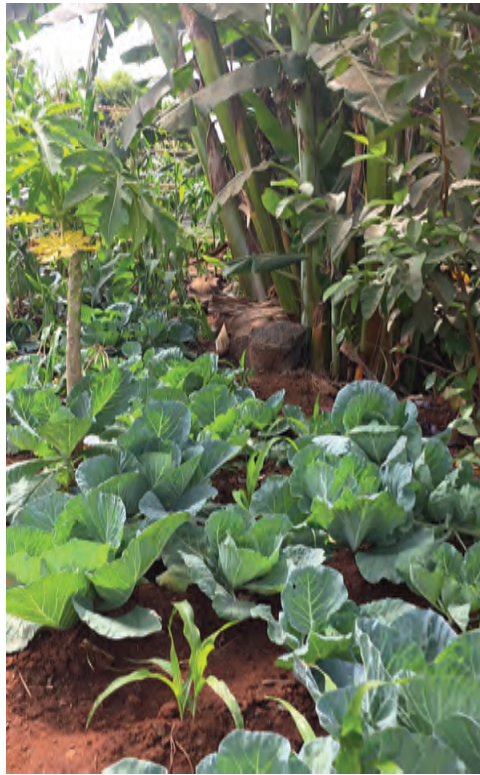
The journey begins at the family café.

Inside, customers enjoy traditional Ethiopian dishes prepared using ingredients harvested only a few steps away. Fresh vegetables, eggs, fish, coffee, and seasonal fruits all come directly from the family's own fields.

"The café is our showroom," Aysheshum says. "People don't just eat here—they experience what our farm produces."

Behind the café, the story unfolds one step at a time.

Two shimmering fish ponds reflect the morning sky while thousands of fish glide beneath the surface. Nearby, chickens cluck inside neatly



A glance of the integrated farm

arranged poultry houses producing around 800 eggs every day. Beyond them, rows of banana, mango, papaya, avocado, cabbage, carrots, beetroot, lettuce and coffee stretch across the riverside landscape, their leaves swaying gently in the breeze from the Blue Nile.

A few beehives stand quietly beneath the trees, while sheep, goats and cattle graze peacefully nearby.

At first glance, these appear to be independent farming activities.

They are not.

"This farm is like one living system," Aysheshum explains.

He points toward the fishponds.

"The nutrient-rich water from the ponds irrigates our crops."

He gestures toward the poultry houses.

"The poultry manure feeds the fish."

A few steps farther, livestock waste is transformed into compost that nourishes the horticulture fields. Banana stalks become livestock feed. Vegetable residues return to the animals and fish. Even leftovers from the café are carefully reused instead of being discarded.

"There is almost no waste here," he says proudly. "Everything becomes a resource for something else."

It is this circular system that has become the foundation of the family's success.

The results are visible everywhere.

The first mango harvest produced eight quintals, while avocado yielded twelve quintals. Bananas are sold directly to travelers passing along the nearby roadside as well as through the café. Fruit production alone has already generated nearly half a million birr.

Fish farming has become another thriving enterprise.

Beginning with only 6,500 fingerlings supplied by the Bahir Dar Agricultural Research Institute, the family has already sold more than 4,000 market-ready fish through their café while supplying approximately 6,000 newly bred fingerlings back to the institute. Today, their ponds contain nearly 40,000 fish, creating one of the area's most promising small-scale aquaculture businesses.

Meanwhile, what started with just three sheep and two goats has steadily grown into a larger livestock operation that continues to support both household consumption and additional income.

Yet, as Aysheshum walks across the farm, he speaks less about profits than about possibilities.

"This is not only about earning income," he says. "It is about creating something that can continue growing."

Already, six young people have found employment through the enterprise.

The family is now planning to expand the café into a larger restaurant capable of employing at least fifty additional young people while creating stronger market opportunities for local fish producers around Lake Tana.

Every member of the family contributes to the business.

Aysheshum oversees the enterprise as General Manager, while his wife manages the finances. Together with their relatives, they have built a business rooted not only in agriculture, but in shared responsibility and shared ambition.

Their journey took another important step forward when they joined the ADEY Program.

"We had already planned to start poultry farming before meeting the ADEY team," Aysheshum remembers. "When they visited our farm, they encouraged our vision."

Through the program, the family received 200 chicks, fisheries equipment, and practical technical and mindset training that strengthened the enterprise far beyond the material support itself.

"The biggest change was not only what we received," he reflects.

"It was how we learned to think."

Today, every activity on the farm is planned. Daily production records are carefully maintained. Decisions are guided by data rather than assumptions.

"We now plan our work, monitor our progress, and make improvements based on what we record every day. Those trainings completely changed how we manage the farm."

As the afternoon sun settles over the Blue Nile, the farm begins another quiet cycle.

Customers gather at the café. Workers harvest vegetables for tomorrow's market. Fish ripple beneath the water's surface. Livestock return to their shelters.

Everything continues moving in harmony.

Just like the waters flowing from Lake Tana into the Abay River, every part of this enterprise feeds another, creating a cycle that sustains both the land and the people who depend on it.

For Aysheshum and his family, integrated farming has become more than a business model.

It has become a way of thinking—one that is creating jobs, restoring the value of every resource, and proving that with innovation, determination, and the right support, agriculture can become a lasting engine of opportunity for Ethiopia's young people.

Turning Adversity into Collective Strength

In Seka Chokorsa woreda, Seka town, Oromia region, 27-year-old Fuad Zinab is known not just as a young man with a disability but as a determined leader who turned his personal struggle into a source of empowerment for others.

Life was simple and joyful for Fuad until one day, everything changed. He was in grade two when a car accident left him with a permanent physical disability. “I still remember how it felt,” he recalls. “It took me nearly two years to walk again, but nothing was ever the same.”



As the eldest child, Fuad felt he had to stay strong; for himself and for his younger siblings. Yet, the hardest part was not just the physical pain, but how people around him began to see him differently. “The community sympathized with me,” he says, “but sympathy doesn’t help you stand on your own feet.”

Refusing to be defined by the limitations, Fuad focused on his education and completed high school and later earned a Level IV diploma in Hardware and Networking Services. But he soon realized that others like him in Seka Chokorsa were still struggling; isolated, unheard, and without opportunities.

I used to think strength meant walking again. ”

with the help from the woreda administration and determined to change that, Fuad and a few friends formed the Seka Chokorsa Persons with Disabilities Association. “We wanted to bring everyone together,” he explains. “Alone, we’re vulnerable. Together, we can be powerful.”

Their initiative drew attention from the woreda administration, which allocated 360 acres of farmland to the association. With technical and training support from the ADEY Program Support came from the ADEY program through the ATI the team provided life skills and agricultural training, as well as 400 banana suckers to help the group start their first joint farming venture. “We learned not only how to plant and care for the banana seedlings,” Fuad says, “but also how to work as a team, how to manage resources, and how to plan for the future.”

Today, the results are tangible. Their banana plants are thriving; 90% of them growing well and expected to bear fruit in six months. Even before that, in October 2025, the group harvested 300 kilograms of maize, which they are now preparing to sell in the local market. Though the profits haven’t started coming in yet, Fuad remains confident that with time and persistence, the fruits of their labour will begin to show; a year from now, he believes their story will be entirely different.

Beyond farming, Fuad dreams of building a small IT business that can operate in both Seka and Jimma towns. But his bigger dream is collective; to see the association grow into a horticulture-based agro-processing enterprise that creates jobs and dignity for persons with disabilities. “I used to think strength meant walking again,” Fuad reflects with a smile. “Now I know real strength is walking together, helping each other stand tall.”

With support from ADEY program, Fuad and his group are proving that inclusion isn’t about sympathy; it’s about opportunity. And as their banana plants stretch higher each day, so too does the hope that persons with disabilities in Seka town will continue to stand tall, together.



Members of Fuad, Kerida and Friends MSME

Reclaiming Independence

Every morning, before heading to school, 11-year-old Haftom Brhane had another responsibility.

Instead of simply picking up his school bag and joining his classmates, he first became his mother's guide.

Holding her hand, he helped her navigate the streets of Axum—crossing roads, visiting the market, and reaching places she could not safely access alone. Some days, the journey took longer than expected. Other days, it meant arriving late to school or missing classes altogether.

For Haftom, helping his mother came before everything else.

For his mother, Letay Seyfu, the hardest part of losing her sight was not the blindness itself. It was knowing that her son was paying the price for her dependence.

"I became blind when I was seven years old," Letay recalls. "It happened suddenly during a storm."

Now 32, Letay has spent much of her life refusing to let disability define her future. Determined to earn an income with dignity, she joined Rahma and Kidan Partnership, a group of 20 women with disabilities supported through the ADEY program. Together, they recently launched a poultry enterprise, raising 450 chickens as the foundation for a sustainable business. The enterprise has expanded its poultry business and currently owns 550- 45 days old chicken. In addition, the members have accumulated 240,000 ETB in their common saving account.

But while the business created new economic opportunities, one challenge continued to limit Letay's independence.

Without a white cane, moving safely from one place to another meant relying on others—most often, her young son.

On December 27, 2025, the ATI, through the ADEY program, handed over assistive devices to persons with disabilities engaged in agribusiness. The devices were intended to enhance mobility, independence, and participation in both daily life and work activities. Letay was among the participants, receiving a new white cane.

"I hoped the assistive device provided by the ADEY program would help me become independent and stop relying on begging," she says.

When she received her white cane, everything changed.

Having used one during her school years, Letay quickly regained the confidence to travel on her own.

"Receiving a white cane has significantly

improved my mobility and

independence," she says. "Now I can

move safely from one place to another without relying

The change reached far beyond Letay.

"I am happy that I can now move

everywhere by myself using my white

cane," she says. "And my son can attend

his classes."

For Haftom, the impact is simple but

profound.

"This helps me attend my classes actively, as my mother can now move by herself."

What appears to be a simple mobility aid has transformed an entire family's daily routine. A mother has regained her independence. A child has reclaimed his education. And together, they are looking toward a future shaped not by dependency, but by opportunity.

As Letay continues building her poultry business with the other women in her cooperative, each step she takes with her white cane is a reminder that inclusion is not only about providing support—it is about restoring dignity, expanding opportunity, and allowing people to move confidently toward the future they choose.

***Now I can move safely
from one place to another
without relying heavily on
others.***

“

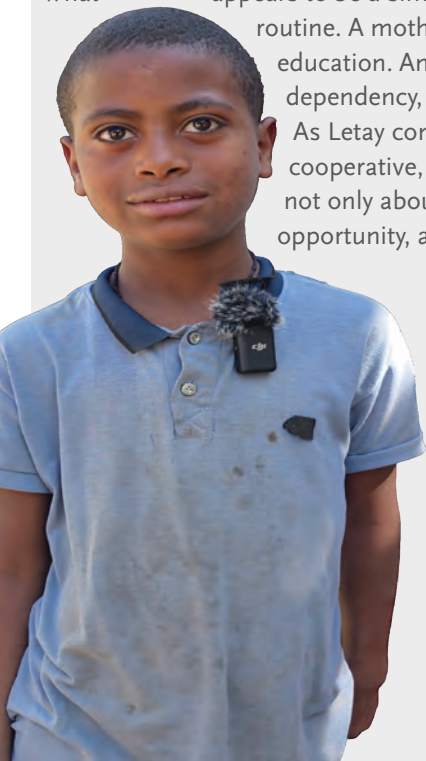
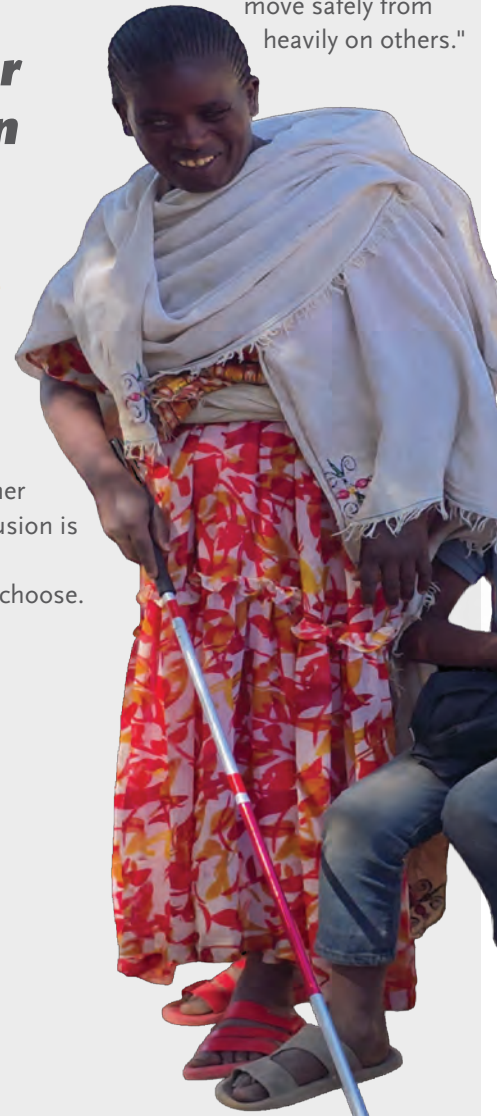
Letay Seyfu, Member of Rahma and Kidan Enterprise

***This helps me attend my
classes actively, as my
mother can now move by
herself.***

Haftom Birhane, Letay's son

”

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heavily on others."



From Returnee to Agripreneur

At 27 years old, Asnakech Tadesse has discovered that the road home can sometimes lead to the greatest opportunities. Living in Bishoftu Town in Ethiopia's Oromia Region, she once searched for a better future beyond her country's borders. Like many young people facing limited employment opportunities, Asnakech migrated to an Arab country in hopes of building a better life. But the work she found was far from fulfilling. Instead of achieving the future she had envisioned, she returned to Ethiopia determined to rebuild her life on her own terms. Today, Asnakech is a proud member of Buura Boruu, a youth-led agricultural micro, small, and medium enterprise (MSME) that is



The training helped us become mentally prepared for business

Asnakech Tadesse, standing inside the farmland

transforming not only the lives of its members but also the wider community. What once seemed like an uncertain future has grown into a business that generates income, creates employment, and inspires hope for long-term prosperity. Before joining the enterprise, Asnakech relied on various small jobs to earn a living. While these activities helped her survive, they offered little stability or opportunity for growth.

Becoming part of Buura Boruu enterprise gave her something she had long been searching for a chance to build a sustainable livelihood alongside other young entrepreneurs who shared a common vision.

Today, members of the enterprise earn both monthly payments and a

share of the profits generated through their farming activities. Their success reaches far beyond the enterprise itself. During peak farming seasons, Buura Boruu creates employment opportunities for more than 300 daily laborers, demonstrating how youth-led agribusiness can stimulate local economic growth while creating dignified work for others.

According to Asnakech, the Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI), through the ADEY program, has been a trusted partner from the very beginning of the enterprise's journey. The support started with essential agricultural inputs, including improved teff seed and fertilizer, enabling members to establish productive farming operations. Yet the program's impact extended well beyond agricultural inputs.

Through a series of practical trainings, Asnakech and her fellow enterprise members strengthened both their technical knowledge and their confidence as entrepreneurs. They learned improved seed planting techniques and farm management practices that helped them increase productivity. Equally important, they developed a new way of thinking about business.

"The training helped us become mentally prepared for business," Asnakech explains. "When starting any work, you need to know what you are doing. We shouldn't start a business randomly."

For Asnakech, this shift in mindset has been one of the most valuable outcomes of the program. Rather than simply working to earn an income, she and her colleagues now approach entrepreneurship with careful planning, discipline, and a shared commitment to long-term success.

The ADEY program also equipped the enterprise with knowledge that extends beyond production. Through safeguarding training, members learned how to recognize workplace challenges and where to seek support when problems arise. Training on gender equality reinforced the importance of treating everyone fairly and ensuring equal opportunities within the enterprise, helping to create a respectful and inclusive working environment for all.

These experiences have shaped not only the enterprise's performance but also its culture. Asnakech says the members have become more disciplined in managing their time, working collaboratively, and building a strong work ethic. Their focus is no longer limited to earning today's income—they are laying the foundation for a sustainable business that can continue growing for years to come.

Looking to the future, Asnakech and her fellow entrepreneurs have ambitious plans. They hope to expand their operations, collect produce from the many laborers they engage, and eventually export their agricultural products independently. Their vision reflects growing confidence in their ability to compete in larger markets while creating even greater opportunities for young people and farming communities.

Asnakech's journey—from an unfulfilling job abroad to becoming a confident agripreneur at home—shows that meaningful employment is about more than earning a living. It is about having the knowledge, confidence, and support to build a future with dignity. Through the partnership between ATI and the ADEY program, she has found not only a livelihood but also a renewed sense of purpose, proving that sometimes the most rewarding journey begins with coming home.

From One Hectare, Surplus Bananas

On a one-hectare plot in Sokoru Woreda, Jimma Zone, rows of young banana plants sway gently in the breeze. To many, they are simply crops waiting for harvest. But for ten young entrepreneurs, they represent independence, confidence and a future they once thought was out of reach.

For Zulfa Temam, that future seemed uncertain after she completed high school. Unable to continue her education or find employment, she remained at home, waiting for an opportunity that never came. Marriage brought new responsibilities but little financial independence. Like many young women in rural communities, she depended on her husband's income to meet even her personal needs.

"I knew I wanted to do something with my life," Zulfa recalls. "I didn't want to spend my days waiting for someone else to provide for me."



The enterprise members finishing their daily work.

Determined to change her circumstances, Zulfa joined hands with friends who shared similar experiences—young women, many of them mothers, who were unemployed and eager to build a better future. Through the support of the Sokoru Woreda Skill and Job Creation Office, the group connected with the ADEY Program. That connection marked the beginning of a new chapter.

Today, Zulfa serves as the secretary of the enterprise, working alongside Chairperson Momina Kedir, Treasurer Asha Aba Temam and seven other young entrepreneurs. Together, they transformed one hectare of land into a thriving banana enterprise and demonstrated that agriculture can offer dignified and fulfilling employment for rural youth.

The journey began with one hectare of fertile land allocated by the local administration. Through the ADEY Program, the group participated in mindset change and technical training and received improved banana seedlings, equipping them with both the knowledge and resources needed to establish their business.

Looking across the plantation today, Zulfa still remembers her first impression.

"When I first saw the banana seedlings, I never imagined they would grow this tall."

The towering plants have become a symbol of much more than a successful harvest. They reflect the personal growth of the young entrepreneurs who nurtured them.

"Since joining ADEY, everything has changed," Zulfa says. "Our mindset has changed. We gained agricultural skills and knowledge, learned how to work together as a team, and built the confidence to start and manage our own business."

Their efforts began paying off sooner than expected. Even before harvesting their first bananas, the enterprise generated ETB 70,000 by selling banana suckers to neighbouring farmers. For the group, this first income was more than a financial milestone—it was proof that

their business model worked and that agriculture could provide a reliable source of income.

To strengthen production, the group secured a water pump valued at ETB 50,000 through a credit arrangement facilitated by the Sokoru Woreda Office of Agriculture, with repayment planned after the first major harvest. Reliable irrigation has since given the plantation a



When I first saw the banana seedlings, I never imagined they would grow this tall.

Zulfa Temam

Ready for harvest; the promising farmland

stronger foundation for continuous production and future expansion.

For the women in the enterprise, the greatest transformation cannot be measured in birr alone.

“This business has helped us stand on our own feet. We no longer depend on our husbands or families for our personal needs.”

Those simple words capture a profound shift. The enterprise has given them not only an income but also greater confidence, independence and a stronger voice in their households and community. Agriculture has become more than a livelihood—it has become a pathway to dignity and self-reliance.

Choosing banana cultivation was a strategic decision. As a perennial crop, bananas continue producing fruit and planting materials for years, creating multiple income streams and offering long-term financial security. What started as a single hectare is steadily growing into a business with lasting potential.

Today, the group plans to lease additional land, expand banana production, supply larger regional markets and, one day, develop a branded product for export. Their ambitions extend far beyond the boundaries of their village.

Reflecting on their journey, the young entrepreneurs credit the ADEY Program for helping turn their vision into reality through practical training, quality planting materials, technical guidance and continuous encouragement. More importantly, they say the experience has changed the way they see themselves—not as job seekers, but as business owners creating opportunities for others.

Like the deep roots of the banana plants they carefully tend, their hopes are firmly anchored. What began with one hectare of land has grown into far more than a banana enterprise—it has become a story of resilience, women’s leadership and the power of young people to shape their own future.

From Ashes to Abundance

On the cool highlands of Atsbi in the Tigray region, potato farming has long been more than a source of food. It is a source of income, resilience, and hope. For the members of the Shewit Potato Seed Multiplication Cooperative, it was also a shared dream. Established almost 20 years ago in 2007, the cooperative was created to address the chronic shortage of improved potato seed in the region. Located in a high-altitude agro-ecological zone ideal for producing high-quality, disease-resistant seed potatoes, Shewit became an important supplier for farmers across Tigray.

Then came the conflict.

In 2021, everything the cooperative had built came to a standstill. Operations ceased completely. Seed stocks worth approximately ETB 12 million were lost. Buildings and equipment were damaged or looted, and years of investment vanished almost overnight. What had once been a thriving cooperative became dormant, leaving its members uncertain whether they would ever recover.

Yet despite losing their assets, the members refused to let the cooperative disappear. They kept it legally intact, believing that one day they would have another opportunity to rebuild. As they often said, "There is a remedy for that which has not died."

That opportunity arrived in 2024.



ADEY is like a mother to us. They provide us with fertilizer and financial support, and now as you can see we have successfully produced this potato.- Lemlem Mechie ”

Recognizing Shewit's potential, the ADEY Program selected the cooperative as one of the conflict-affected organizations to revive. Rather than simply replacing what had been lost, the program focused on rebuilding the institution from within—strengthening its leadership, restoring members' confidence, reconnecting the cooperative to markets, and helping it regain its place in the regional agricultural value chain.

The support included comprehensive organizational re-mobilization and capacity building for cooperative leaders, life skills training, an initial ETB 65,000 in catalytic seed capital, fertilizer, access to elite potato seed sourced from Bahir Dar, and formal market linkages.

For the members, however, the support meant much more than technical assistance or financial investment.

"ADEY is like a mother to us," recalls Lemlem Mechie, cooperative member with a smile. "They provided us with fertilizer and financial support, and now, as you can see, we have successfully produced these potatoes."

Those simple words reflect the deeper impact of the intervention. After years of uncertainty, the members regained something that had

almost been lost alongside their assets—the confidence to farm again.

Using elite seed sourced from Bahir Dar, the cooperative cultivated just 0.5 hectares during its first recovery season. By applying improved agronomic practices and taking advantage of Atsbi Wemberta's favorable growing conditions, the members harvested 70 quintals of high-grade seed potatoes, demonstrating that the cooperative had regained its technical capacity and that the land still held enormous potential.

The next challenge was finding the right market.

With support from the ADEY Program, Shewit established formal market linkages that enabled the cooperative to sell 50 quintals of certified seed potatoes for ETB 600,000—equivalent to ETB 12,000 per quintal. The premium price reflected the exceptional quality of the seed, distinguishing it from ordinary table potatoes.

In just one production cycle, the cooperative generated an 823 percent return on the initial ETB 65,000 investment.

But the numbers tell only part of the story.

The revival restored hope among farming families and inspired many more people to become part of the cooperative. Membership grew from 14 founding members before the conflict to 54 active members, significantly expanding its social and economic reach. What had once been a dormant institution became a source of opportunity for dozens of households.

Today, the cooperative has rebuilt itself into an organization valued at approximately ETB 17 million, including cash, infrastructure, equipment, and seed stocks. It has resumed its role in strengthening seed security for farming communities across the surrounding highlands while stimulating the regional economy.

Recovery, however, is only the beginning.

To meet growing demand, Shewit is transitioning from labor-intensive farming to mechanized production. Mechanized planting and harvesting technologies are being introduced to improve efficiency and expand cultivation. Demonstration events have brought together agricultural stakeholders from across Tigray, creating broad consensus around the effectiveness of the ADEY model in modernizing cooperative production systems. The goal is to make mechanization a standard operating practice capable of supporting industrial-scale seed production.

The cooperative's vision extends even further.

Building on its current ETB 17 million asset base and growing membership, Shewit plans to move beyond seed multiplication into agro-processing. By establishing processing facilities, the cooperative aims to capture greater value within the potato value chain, strengthen its long-term financial resilience, and help position Atsbi Wemberta as a leading hub for industrialized potato production in Northern Ethiopia.

For the members of Shewit Cooperative, recovery was never simply about replacing what had been lost.

It was about proving that even after devastating conflict, determination, collective action, and timely support can transform a dormant



institution into a thriving enterprise. From losing ETB 12 million worth of seed stock during the conflict to rebuilding a cooperative now valued at ETB 17 million, Shewit stands as living proof that resilience, when matched with the right investment, can produce far more than a harvest.

Today, every sack of quality seed potatoes leaving Shewit carries more than the promise of a better crop. It carries the story of people who refused to give up, whose determination was met with opportunity, and whose journey is helping secure the future of potato farming across Northern Ethiopia.

Where Opportunity Hatched

Every morning in Asendabo Town, before the day's bustle begins, Jitu Awol walks into a poultry house where the familiar sounds of hundreds of laying hens have become part of her daily routine. She checks the birds, collects fresh eggs, and works alongside her fellow entrepreneurs with confidence and purpose.

Just a few years ago, she never imagined this would be her life.

At 21 years old, Jitu had completed her Level IV training in Building Electrical Installation, believing it would lead directly to employment in the construction sector. Like many young technical graduates, she returned home full of hope, expecting to build a career that matched the skills she had spent years acquiring.

Instead, she found herself waiting.



Jitu feeding the chicks in the shade.

Weeks turned into months with no employment opportunities. Remaining at home without work became increasingly discouraging, leaving her questioning what would come next.

"I used to hate staying at home after I finished college," Jitu recalls. "Every day felt the same, and it was frustrating to remain idle."

Finding employment in her profession proved far more difficult than she had expected. While she continued searching for opportunities, she realized that waiting indefinitely was not bringing her any closer to the future she wanted.

That opportunity arrived through the Asendabo Job Creation Office, which identified unemployed young graduates and linked them to the ADEY Program, implemented by the Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI) in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation.

Together with other unemployed youth, Jitu became a member of Misku, Leyla and Friends Poultry Enterprise.

Even then, she was not immediately convinced.

"When I first joined the enterprise, I wasn't happy to work in poultry," she admits. "I thought I needed to find a job related to my training."

Like many young graduates, she initially believed success could only be measured by working in the profession she had studied. Poultry farming seemed far removed from the career she had imagined.

But as time passed, her perspective began to change.

"I realized staying at home without work was much harder than trying something new."

Through the ADEY Program, the enterprise received 1,500 day-old chicks, together with one month's supply of poultry feed, giving the young

entrepreneurs the resources they needed to start their business. The members also participated in practical poultry production training that equipped them with the technical knowledge required to raise healthy birds and manage the enterprise successfully.

The lessons quickly translated into results.

Out of the 1,500 chicks they received, only three died, an achievement that reflects the group's careful management and the skills they acquired through the training. After the initial feed supplied by the program was exhausted, the enterprise continued purchasing feed using its own earnings, steadily building a sustainable business.

Today, the poultry house is a hive of activity.

The enterprise produces approximately 1,000 eggs every day, supplying local markets with fresh eggs while generating a reliable source of income for its members. Through disciplined financial management, the group has managed to save around ETB 300,000, even after covering the significant costs of poultry feed and day-to-day operations.

Rather than spending their earnings immediately, the members chose to reinvest in their future.

Their next ambition is to establish a hatchery by purchasing an egg incubator, enabling them to hatch their own chicks, reduce production costs, and expand the business into a fully integrated poultry enterprise.

For Jitu, however, the greatest achievement cannot be measured by the number of eggs produced or the amount of money saved.

The enterprise has given her something she had almost lost: purpose.

"I feel happy when I leave for work every morning and return home in the evening," she says with a smile. "It feels like coming back from an office."

The routine that once seemed unimaginable has become a source of pride. Instead of waiting for opportunities, she now helps create them. Her experience has also reshaped the advice she offers other young people.

"We shouldn't become a burden to our country," Jitu says thoughtfully. "We have to work wherever opportunities exist. Creating jobs may be difficult, but recognizing opportunities is the first step. I encourage young people to look for opportunities and be willing to change."

Her words reflect a powerful shift in mindset—from believing success depended on finding the perfect job to understanding that meaningful work can take many forms.

Today, Jitu no longer measures her future by whether her work matches the qualification printed on her certificate. She measures it by the confidence she has gained, the income she now earns, and the business she is helping build with her fellow entrepreneurs.

Through the ADEY Program, what began with 1,500 chicks has grown into far more than a poultry enterprise. It has become a place where unemployed young people have discovered dignity in work, confidence in themselves, and hope for the future.

Jitu's journey is a reminder that employment is not always about following the path we first imagined. Sometimes, the greatest opportunities emerge when young people are willing to embrace new possibilities. With the right support, practical skills, and determination, they can transform uncertainty into enterprise—and build futures that are every bit as rewarding as the ones they once dreamed of.



“I never thought I would work in poultry,”

At the foot of the graceful Gara Bushu mountain, behind Gelan woreda, Sheger city, Oromia region, scattered shades of agribusiness stand quietly against the landscape. From afar, they look like nothing more than modest tin roofs and wooden frames. But within them, young people are rewriting their futures; one chick at a time. Among these shades is the poultry enterprise of Birtukan, Tadesse, and friends, a group of twenty youth, fifteen women and five men, who chose to confront unemployment not with despair, but with determination.

The path, however, was anything but easy. When the group first received their shade a year ago, they had no capital to begin operations. They built it with their own hands, but discouragement set in quickly. At one point, they even considered giving it back to the woreda office. “But we chose perseverance,” recalls Tadesse, 28, married and a father of one, who’s a veterinary graduate and one of the founding



Birtukan Tadesse and her friend, standing inside the shade

members. That perseverance brought an unexpected turning point. One year later, the enterprise was introduced to the ADEY program, implemented by the Agricultural Transformation Institute (ATI) in partnership with the Mastercard Foundation. To their surprise, they received 1000 chicks and to begin their poultry farming journey. “We thought it was a joke until the day the chicks arrived at our shade,” Tadesse recalls with a laugh.

For the group, those 1000 tiny birds were not just livestock; they were a lifeline, a living symbol that their dream could take flight. Along with the chicks came three months’ worth of feed, as well as practical training in poultry farming, ensuring the members had both the knowledge and the resources to begin their journey with confidence.

From Doubt to Confidence

For Birtukan Regassa, 28, married and a mother of three, the journey into poultry farming was never part of her plan. A diploma holder in IT, she once imagined herself working behind a desk in the city. Instead, she found herself in a dusty poultry shade. Birtukan is one of the founding members of the enterprise. “When we began the business, I was afraid. I wasn’t sure if it would work out,” she recalls. “Now the chickens are like children to me.”

Scepticism surrounded her. Neighbours and family often questioned her decision. “Why do you work here? You’re educated, a young city girl. Why waste your time in the shades?” they would ask. Yet Birtukan, instead of retreating, leaned into the unknown. She and her friends travelled to Adama, where they received training on poultry farming by the ATI. What looked simple on paper turned out to be demanding work, requiring vigilance, technical knowledge, and constant care for the health of their chicks. But the effort reshaped her life.

“What this job brought me is confidence,” she explains. “Before, I was just a housewife, too timid even to leave the house. Now I interact with people every day, building networks, meeting people significant to my journey. Coming here from the city to work with my colleagues feels better than being hired or staying at home without purpose.”

Finding a New Beginning

Her friend Bizunesh Bacha, 23 and a mother of two, shares a similar story of transformation. She had completed a diploma in crop production, but with no job in sight, she was left frustrated and hopeless. “I never thought I would work in poultry,” she admits. “I was jobless and desperate.”

Though she remained housewife for some time, she determined to change the course of her life and decided to try something new. One day, while registering as unemployed youth at a government office, she met Birtukan and Tadesse. Inspired by their vision, she joined them. Soon after, Bizunesh took poultry training alongside the group. Today, she speaks with pride about rushing into the shade in her gown and boots, tending the chickens with her peers. “This enterprise gave me a new beginning,” she says with conviction.

Brewing Dreams

Tucked inside the Seka Chekorsa Woreda administration compound, along one of Kersa town's bustling streets, a small juice and coffee shop has become a lively hub. Behind the counter, three young women run the business with energy and determination, capturing the attention of everyone who passes by.

Six months ago, five young women came together with a shared dream and the courage to create something of their own. Each of them, armed with a Level 4 diploma and fuelled by determination, set out to turn knowledge into opportunity. With a loan of 200,000 birr secured from local supporters, they launched a small agro-processing enterprise that now serves coffee, juice, tea, and milk; proving that education and resilience can transform ambition into reality.

Fetiya and her Friends Agro-processing Enterprise is more than just a business; it is a place where people gather, relax, and enjoy good service in a beautiful setting. Its location at the centre and public area of Kersa, right next to the public meeting hall, created a nice place for hangout and market opportunity. The steady flow of customers from daily activities and public events gave the young women an early breakthrough, and they quickly built a loyal base of clients who return again and again. The open-air seating they created with their startup capital adds charm to the space, making it an inviting place for the community.

For Fetiya Aba Rayya, 25, unmarried, the chairperson, commented that this journey would not have been possible without the mindset and business training provided by the ADEY Program. She said, "Those early lessons gave us confidence, equipped us with money management skills, and we learned about the value of teamwork". The group also continues to benefit from technical and business advice from local offices of Agriculture and Labor and Skills, which they describe as essential to their success. As the young women emphasize, support has come not only through finance, but also through knowledge and encouragement that kept them moving forward.

Fetiya, 28, a level-4 IT graduate, remembers how her difficult journey of life turns into an opportunity. "Landing a job is unimaginable, especially in remote area like Seka Chekorsa.", said Fetiya. She added "After graduation, everything was gloomy, I was sitting home idle, and it was a bit depressing"

Their hard work is already paying off. The enterprise generates a net income of about ETB 45,000 every month. From this, they repay ETB 18,000 toward their loan, while the remainder is shared among members and partly saved. In just six months, they have already repaid half of their initial ETB 200,000 loan and are on track to settle the balance within the next six months. Their pride and joy are clear to anyone who steps into their shop.

Yet, what makes their story even more inspiring is their vision for the future. They are not satisfied with simply running a small shop. In the short term, they want to expand their services, improving the space and offering more to their customers. Looking further ahead, they dream of owning a standard restaurant and growing into larger investments. Their ambition is to build something that lasts; not only for themselves but also to create jobs for others and contribute to the development of their town.

The story of these five young women is a reminder of the importance of access to opportunities and motivation. With the right skills, small startup supports, and determination, they transformed a simple idea into a successful business that is changing their lives. From brewing coffee to brewing dreams, their journey shows what is possible when young women are empowered to manage and lead a business. Their enterprise has already become a symbol of hope in Kersa, and their story is only beginning.

Those early lessons gave us confidence, equipped us with money management skills, and we learned about the value of teamwork.

