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# SOS Addis: Who we are

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## **SOS Addis – who we are**

### ***General aims and purpose***

To increase community awareness on the impact of plastic waste and air pollution on the environment, the ecology and the health of the population.

To realize a clean and healthy environment.

To facilitate and encourage ecologically sound means of plastic waste management.

To create environment-related livelihoods for vulnerable members of the community, especially women.

To partner with concerned stakeholders to promote an environment free from plastic waste and air pollution.

To influence government policy and programs towards the reduction of plastic waste and air pollution.

### ***Target constituency that the organization serves***

All beneficiaries are based in Addis Ababa.

Beneficiaries receiving skills and business training, and an income from plastic waste collection or eco-friendly bag production:

- Women with no household income
- Women with a low chance of being employed, e.g. those with low literacy
- Women with children to support
- Women living with HIV or AIDS
- Women living in polluted areas
- Men and youths in the above circumstances

Beneficiaries of tree-planting:

- The general community

Beneficiaries of compost training and vegetable garden creation:

- Primary school students

Beneficiaries of the education and campaigning programme:

- School students of all ages
- The general community

### ***Problems and issues that the organization seeks to address***

Waste management in our cities is a huge problem: individuals and businesses burn rubbish in compounds and streets, or throw it into rivers untreated. The result: the general public breathes in toxic fumes; animals choke on plastic bags; and water supplies become disastrously contaminated. Households even use plastic waste as a catalyst to start their wood-burning stoves. Due to the rapid growth of the population the issue of waste management has reached crisis point in Addis Ababa. Plastic is one component of the rubbish that is discarded but, being virtually indestructible, it is plastic primarily that blocks up rivers, kills animal life and chokes plant life. In the city of Addis Ababa the stench from organic waste, trapped by the accumulation of plastic, is omnipresent and overpowering.

SOS Addis is working to change this. Since our inception we have been campaigning, educating, empowering and working practically to rid the streets of Addis Ababa of plastic waste. To this end, we are currently working in three main areas: plastic waste collection; youth education and mobilization; and the training and education of disadvantaged women.

As an indication of the scale of the problem: more than 25000 Kg of plastic waste – about 27 million plastic bags – is collected by SOS Addis each year in just two *kebeles* (city administration zones). Addis Ababa has 99 *kebeles* – we would love to have the resources to collect in all of them, and provide income for the most needy at the same time.

### ***Raising public awareness***

SOS Addis is raising public awareness through the following activities:

- Annual anti-*festal* (the Amharic term for a flimsy plastic bag that is too thin to be used more than once) pollution week campaign and city-wide march
- Regular panel discussions featuring city officials, academics and environmental activists
- Schools *festal* collection competitions
- Essay competitions for students, on environmental subjects
- Anti-*festal* advocacy and education in schools
- Environmental forums, campaigns and events, for example:
  - Attending the Ethiopian Public Health Association Conference
  - Delivering presentations at environmental workshops
  - Attending local World Environment Day events
  - Attending meetings and workshops at the CRDA and the Urban Development Forum
  - Attending Clean and Green Addis Ababa Association workshops
- Communicating the anti-*festal* message through local press, radio and television
- SOS Addis website
- Tree-planting campaigns in forests around Addis Ababa
- Producing and selling reusable eco-friendly bags and promoting their usage to replace disposable plastic bags

### ***Delivering a service to the targeted community***

SOS Addis employs local people who have little income to collect and separate plastic waste for recycling. These individuals can supplement their income with reliable money on a regular basis by helping to clean up their own community: the environment benefits directly and so do they and their families.

We also provide craft and business skills training to selected beneficiaries, culminating in employment to produce reusable eco-friendly bags and consumer goods promoting our environmental messages, as well as fuel conserving traditional bread stoves for domestic use. SOS Addis provides these people with a regular income, a safe and healthy working environment, and prospects for the future.

We would like to train more people and we would like to provide further business skills training and facilities for our existing beneficiaries to set up cooperatives and individual businesses – helping them to ensure a secure future for themselves and their families.

### ***Accountability mechanisms***

SOS Addis employs supervisors and assistant supervisors to manage the collection of plastic waste and its delivery and processing at the recycling centre. These officials ensure that the beneficiaries receive a fair and correct price for the amount of waste they collect.

The viability of the fuel-conserving stoves was tested by a pilot project in which 10 stoves were distributed in the community, and feedback was received on how well they worked and opinions on their cost etc. Following this pilot, it was evident that the stoves were easy to make, easy to use and achieved the required reduction in wood fuel burning and the consequent benefits to the environment.

The waste collection and training projects are monitored by the local *kebele* (local government administration) officials in the Environmental Control and Women's Affairs sections. They are assessed against the following criteria:

- Environmental impact
- Social impact
- Economic impact
- Appropriateness of the technology (whether it is easy to be used, can be maintained, causes no harm to the user or the environment etc)
- Health and safety procedures

### ***Achievements***

**We are proud to inform you that SOS Addis won 1<sup>st</sup> prize both in the Addis Ababa City Administration and the Ethiopia National Green award in 2009. This follows the second-prize win in the 2008 Addis Ababa City Administration Green Awards.**

Since starting the work in February 2006, SOS Addis beneficiaries have collected over 116000 Kg of waste plastic bags.

Achievements in 2009:

14 women in the target constituency received training in sewing and weaving skills. These women will go on to use their skills in cooperatives that they will set up with the help of SOS Addis. We have also trained 5 women in silk-screen printing to print environmental messages on our eco-friendly bags.

5 vulnerable women and youths were trained in production of fuel-efficient *injera* (local bread) stoves to reduce the work burden of women on *injera* cooking and to discourage deforestation for fuel wood purposes.

1600 reusable eco-friendly bags were sold to replace *festal* use. Each bag carries the SOS Addis name and environmental message.

25 women were employed to collect plastic waste for recycling. These women now have enough income to send their children to school, to pay their house rent and to contribute to household expenses. They have gained self-confidence and have used their experience to diversify into waste collection with other organizations, increasing their earning potential. They have even set up their own local waste collection economies, employing sub-contractors to collect waste on their behalf. As a result, plastic waste has become perceived as a commodity within the community and is no longer readily thrown away. This can be seen by the decrease in waste evident in rivers and sewerage systems to the extent that the collectors have had to move further and further field to collect waste. SOS Addis organized school environmental clubs as a model for different awareness raising campaigns on environmental topics in general and on the cause of SOS Addis in particular through the following ways:

- Disseminating information through the respective Mini-Media (public address)
- Conducting focus group discussions
- Creating different ways of awareness-raising, via theatre production, for example
- Compost making, vegetable gardening and tree planting in two schools

SOS Addis conducted its annual Anti-Festal pollution campaign for the fourth consecutive year, involving educational institutions and both public and private sectors.

In the 2009 Anti-Festal Campaign, activities included:

- Panel discussions involving experts on environmental issues
- Mobilizing up to 15 schools for the panel discussion and street march, and 6 schools for cleaning campaigns and waste plastic collection competitions
- A public awareness street march from Menelik Square to Meskel Square