

Committed to Fight Flimsy Plastic Bags in Addis Ababa

On May 31st 2008, around 300 men and women from different parts of the world, including the Japanese Ambassador and a representative from Austrian Embassy, gathered at Addis Ababa Municipality Cocktail Hall to support the fight against pollution by flimsy plastic bags.

The event, “Save Addis from Festal’ Luncheon and Bazaar,” was organized by SOS Addis, a local NGO, to raise fund for its activities. (“Festal” refers to flimsy plastic bags in the local language.) Founded in March 2004 by 5 women, SOS Addis has been working to reduce the pollution by waste plastics, while creating employment opportunities to financially disadvantaged women. Its major activities include collection of flimsy plastic bags from streets for recycling by a plastic manufacturer, production of eco-friendly bags to replace the plastic bags, and organization of yearly “anti-festal” campaign to raise public awareness.

Reflecting the growing concern on this issue, the event was supported by more than 20 organizations and individuals, including Addis Ababa Municipality City Administration, Air France/KLM, Blue Nile Trading, OMEDAD P.L.C., and Mr. Shinshaw Tiruneh.

After Mrs. Wudie Hiruy, an SOS Addis member and Master of Ceremony, has opened the event, Mrs. Menbere Zena, an SOS Addis board member, has made a brief introduction about activities of SOS Addis. She has explained that women and children are the primary victims of the pollution by flimsy plastic bags, and that SOS Addis is determined to continue partnering with its female beneficiaries to improve the situation. She asked the guests and government for stronger support to SOS Addis, which is committed to tackle such a big issue, but actually is still looking for basic things such as a permanent office space.

Guest speakers of the event were the Japanese Ambassador H.E. Mr. Kinichi Komano and Mr. Seifu Legesse Sinaba, the Head of the Department of Environmental Legislation, Education and Impact Assessment. H. E. Mr. Kinichi Komano has stressed the importance of thinking globally but acting locally. Although the issue of flimsy plastic bags is a global issue, the only way to solve the problem is for each community to start acting in their surroundings. Mr. Seifu Legesse Sinaba has expressed appreciation for activities of SOS Addis, in conducting many events to create awareness at local and international levels.

During the event, the association tried to address the issue of pollution in different

forms, with the help of its partner organizations. One of the forms was an energetic musical performance by children and youths of “Tena Kebna Genflen Enatsda Mahiber,” urging the guests to “clean Addis together.” The other form was a drama by Cathedral School Environmental Club, delivering the encouraging message that although the issue of environment is difficult to tackle and oftentimes not even understood by people close to you, it should be possible to come up with a solution by working together.

From the event, the association has raised around 2,700 USD, which is more than 10% of association’s annual income in the year 2007.

In all, the event was a good opportunity for the guests to find out more about the issue of flimsy plastic bags, and also to simply enjoy the buffet and shopping at a bazaar by 14 NGOs. And of course, this was probably the first bazaar in Addis Ababa, in which no stand was giving out the hazardous flimsy plastic bags!



Partial View of the Guests



The Japanese Ambassador Mr. Kinichi Komano addressing the guests



Eco-friendly bags of SOS Addis on display at the bazaar



Guests enjoying the buffet by Ayu Restaurant & Bar