

# Empowering women through employment and enterprise

## *Personal*

- My name is Salem Kassahun.
- I am a mother of two sons and a daughter; the wife of a good man, a daughter to an 82 year old woman, and a sister.
- Born and raised here in Ethiopia, I am very aware of the lives of Ethiopian women both rural and urban. In an under-developed agrarian society, we are all bound to witness the challenges of our mothers, aunts, sisters face.
- About ten years ago, I started a handcraft business here in Addis Ababa.



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## *Salem's Ethiopia – a Social enterprise*

### *Who we are:*

- Salem's Ethiopia is a social-enterprise born out of a desire to not only produce high quality products based on traditional Ethiopian materials, designs and methods but to also employ and empower local artisans.
- In addition to on site production, we also stock products from cooperative groups, providing them with wider market access.
- We believe in the strength and dignity that comes with earning for ones livelihood. We work in three areas of handcrafts for todays purpose – the focus will be women artisans in the basketry section.
- We believe women have inherent desires to be creative and entrepreneurial. They just lack opportunities.



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### **How we started:**

Due to my husband's career as a development worker, I was well exposed to the world of charities and aid and its benefits and challenges.

Learning from that, we believe that enterprise is one of the stronger tools to alleviating poverty and to empowering women through employment while maintaining and strengthening their dignity. And hence the creation of Salem's Ethiopia.

I believe we are all created with a capacity to create. We just need to un-lock the hidden talents, to nurture them and to polish them. Salem's is committed to that.



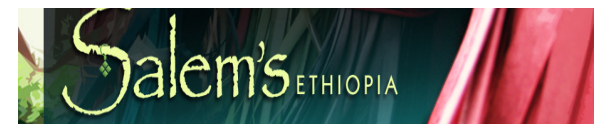
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### **How do we work:**

We employ marginalized women from within Addis Ababa. We offer training and employment to any woman who is willing to be trained and to earn an income. Once trained, they have the option to work with us in our premises or they can work at home and bring the finished products every Friday. Staying at home allows women to look after their young children or old parents. We provide them with the design and the material.

We have also approached our local wereda and asked for number of marginalized women who can be trained. In addition to our local wereda, we have trained women in the Kotebe and Kaliti areas.

We have also trained women's cooperatives in the regions towns and villages. So far we have worked with women in Axum, Bahir Dar, Wukro, Butajira, Hossana and Gambella and the result has been very successful.

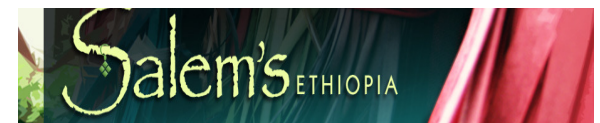


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### How do we work (2)

The trained women's groups outside of Addis Ababa are mostly rural and marginalized women who have established themselves as co-ops allowing for easy follow-up and strengthening of team work.

A success story we are proud of is the agreement of Salem's Ethiopia with Ethiopian Airlines in supplying them with fruit baskets made by one of these rural/small town artisans that were trained by us. Women who not only earn monthly incomes, but who are also proud to claim their beautiful products will be great role models for their daughters and neighbors.



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### Hiring

Our hiring process for women artisans doesn't require any previous work experience or certification.

All we need is their willingness to be trained and a sincere desire to work and change their lives.

Appropriate trainings and opportunities given to these women enhance their skills and makes them qualified artisans.



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- The availability of a steady income has not only allowed them to nurture their families and themselves but it has also given them the **decision-making** power and has earned them respect from their families.
- All sorts of subjects, from nutrition to children's educations are discussed. Advises, ambitions and plans are shared.



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### Keneni -

- A mother of twin girls, she is a capable and proud mother and an expert in dying plant fiber.
- When starting with us she did not have a home and was running away from an abusive husband trying to secure a home for her children and herself.
- Her steady income has not only secured a home for her but has also allowed her to furnish her home. The latest addition being a satellite dish.
- Her testimony was that, her children are well fed, well dressed and she has no worries of where the next rent money comes from. She even said that her daughters do not go to the neighbor's now to watch TV. They have their own sofas and TV.





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### Banchi

- Who was fully dependent on a visually impaired and yet abusive husband has been the sole bread winner for her family of 6 for the past 10 years.
- A monthly visit to the bank to withdraw her salary has given her such self confidence that she inquires about her balances and transactions.
- She has earned the respect of her husband and she knows it.

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- Through employment at Salem's, Alemnesh, who creates these baskets has managed to finish high school and is now enrolled in College. She supports her ailing mother and is the sole bread winner for her family.

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- Employment is not the only benefit our artisan women have.
- The community that is created in the work environment allows for information sharing and the traditional savings and loan method of “Equb”.
- Looking after each other’s interests and well beings and daily encouragements from one another replaces the worries and lack of self-worth and fear they face.
- A pleasant and comfortable working environment, where they are constantly visited by internationals and exposed to various influences also benefits them socially.

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Employment for these women artisans, empowering as they may be are not without their challenges.

- The main challenge is lack of education. Lack of education hinders their thinking where religious practices can take priority over daily necessary work activities.
- Through their lack of education, monitoring and follow-up of their children's education becomes impossible.
- Empowering through employment is only for women who are willing to be trained and willing to work.
- Although the booming construction sector has provided women employment mostly as daily laborers, working conditions are hazardous. But most women would rather collect daily pays instead of train and get monthly salaries.
- The desire to go overseas as domestic workers by far excites most women.



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**Thank you**

