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Africa Social Work Network



# History of social services and social work in Ethiopia

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## **Community support system**

Ethiopians have the tradition of a community support system. Needy individuals, such as beggars, people with disabilities, orphans, elders, and patients have obtained support from their community. Community-based institutions like Churches, Monasteries, and Mosques were providing food, clothes, shelters, and spiritual supports to needy members of the community. Moreover, the community members always remember destitute individuals during social events and holidays. For example, the community members will share their foods during Mahber, wedding ceremonies, funeral; encourage traditional saving through Iqqub, uphold group work via Debo and Jigie and Iddir which provides funeral and traditional bereavement counsel. Though these religious and community-based traditional support systems are weakening in the urban areas, they are actively practiced in the rural part of the country.

## **Pioneers**

Pioneers of social work profession in Ethiopia are Seyoum Gebreselassie and Andargachew Tesfaye. Then my instructors at Addis Abeba University, such as Wassie Kebede (PhD), Abebe Assefa (PhD), Messeret Kassahun (PhD), Debebe Ero (PhD), Zena Berhanu (PhD), Ashenafi Hagos (PhD) messay Gebremariam (PhD), Fasil Nigussie (PhD), Dessalegn Negeri (PhD), Tenagne Alemu (PhD), Mengistu Legesse (PhD), Emebet Mulugeta (PhD), Mindahun Gebretsadik (PhD), Adamnesh Atnafu (PhD), Hailemichael Tesfahun (PhD), Firehiwot Jebessa (PhD), Yania Seid-Mekiye (PhD) and Demelash Kassaye (PhD) are contributed a lot for

the expansion of the profession in Ethiopia.

### **University education**

In Jimma University, School of Social Work, Addisu Tegegn (MSW), Tulu Hajji (MSW), Wubshet Hailu (MSW), Yigermal Demssie (MSW), Ruhama Gudeta (MSW), and Hunde Doja (MA) have played the lion share in founding the school of social work in 2014 G.C.

As the current data indicates, in Ethiopia several universities have been providing social work education, such as Addis Ababa University, University of Gondar, Jimma University, Wollega University, Ambo University, Mizan Tepi University, Bahir-dar University, Jigjiga University, Arsi University, and etc. Addis Ababa and Gondar universities are the only institutions providing doctor of philosophy in the social work programs. In the Ethiopian context, Addis Ababa University takes the lead for the expansion of social work education since the emperor's reign. During emperor Haileselassie, I in 1959 and during EPRDF time in 2004, the social work education program was commenced in Addis Ababa University.

### **Professional association**

The social work profession in Ethiopia has no association until recent time. However, currently, it has a newly established Ethiopian Social Worker Professional Association (ESWPA) and involves university social work instructors, practitioners, and social work students. Before the establishment of the association, interested social work professionals were engaged in the association called ESSWA (it means a joint association named as “Ethiopian Society of Sociologists, Social Workers and Social Anthropologists”).

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