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USAID TEKI PROGRESS REPORT YEAR I

FY2022 DECEMBER 20 2021 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2022



FIGHTING PLASTIC BAGS WITH SIGN LANGUAGE ACTIVITY

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DETAILS

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ACTIVITY DETAILS	
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ACRONYMS

AACA	Addis Ababa City Administration
AAU	Addis Ababa University
AEDB	Addis Ababa Enterprise Development Bureau
B&M	Branding and Marking
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibilities
DPU	Decentralized Production Unit
MoE	Ministry of Education
MSEB	Micro and Small Enterprise Bureau
SSDP	Soft Skills Development Program
OPD	Organization of Persons with Disability
TPBs	Teki Paper Bags
YWD	Youths Living with a Disability

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

USAID TEKI Fighting Plastic Bags in Ethiopian Sign Language is a 3-year Activity (2021-2024) implemented by Teki Paper Bags PLC (TPBs) that aims to empower youth with disabilities (YWD) to produce environmentally friendly paper bags and revolutionize the fight against bag pollution plastic by turning it into a national inclusion solution.

The philosophy of the USAID TEKI Activity for the first year of its implementation is based on four objectives: First, to create jobs for young people living with disabilities in Addis Ababa. The second generates an environmental impact by combatting plastic bag pollution with our TEKI eco-friendly paper bags. Third, we focused on education, training, and the transfer of soft skills. The fourth and final pillar is related to communication and awareness through the development of new practices based on social media to raise awareness about plastic pollution, inclusion, and the rights of people with disabilities. The Mission Goal of the USAID TEKI Activity is to serve as a catalyst to convince the Ethiopian Government to reserve by law the production of paper bags to create jobs for YWD. Then, the day Ethiopia bans the use of plastic bags, TEKI will have solid foundations to transform the fight against plastic bags into a national inclusion solution capable of creating 30,000 rewarding jobs dedicated to people with disabilities to produce millions of paper bags.

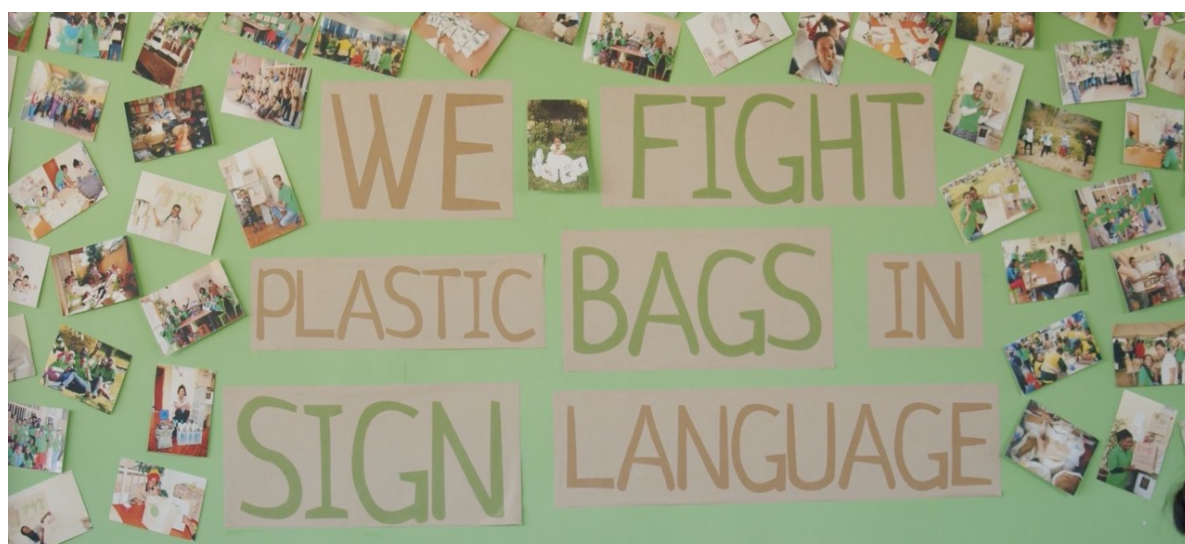
In the first year of the USAID TEKI project covered by this annual progress report, the TPBs team worked to create seven sustainable jobs for young Deaf women. The seven new positions were created in May 2022 and include an immersive two-month training program that provides coaching, interpretation services, and soft skills development activities. Due to the difficult conditions following the loss of the original space of 200 m² allocated by the Addis Ababa City Administration (AACAA) for the expansion of the TPBs, we could not create the 18 remaining jobs for YWD planned in August 2022. This delay in completing the job is due to a lack of space at our current headquarters, which prevented TPBs from creating the scheduled jobs for YWD during Year I.



The TEKI team during a training on creativity and pictures taking

To solve this lack of space as quickly as possible, the TPBs team has been working since April 2022 with the AACAA, selected woreda, and the Micro and Small Enterprise Bureau (MSEB) to be awarded a subsidized space to create the scheduled jobs. The office space requested by our company intends to replace the previously allocated location of 2000 sqm by smaller decentralized production units located across the city and dedicated to empowering YWD.

The Seven new employment opportunities created for YWD during Year I of our USAID Activity helped TPBs increase production capacity by 55% compared to 2021. This increment in the number of bags the USAID TEKI Activity produces monthly allowed TPBs to replace more plastic bags with eco-friendly paper bags compared to 2021, thereby enhancing the overall environmental impact of our action against plastic bags in Ethiopia. In addition to the inclusive jobs created, the USAID TEKI prioritized efforts to generate direct education output dedicated to YWD benefiting from the Activity. The TPBs team built tailor-made training programs to enhance the education of YWD as well as transfer relevant soft skills to the activity beneficiary in collaboration with partner organizations. The total number of inclusive training conducted by TPBs during the Year I of the USAID TEKI Activity is two half-day programs covering the following topics of health and Feminism. To ensure the full accessibility of the training provided, the two events were interpreted into Ethiopian Sign Language by the TPBs-certified interpreters for our Deaf employees.



The USAID TEKI Activity moto written on the wall

To further maximize the USAID TEKI Activity outreach and awareness, the TPBs communication team played a critical role in developing and strengthening the Activity's positive image and visibility among key stakeholders and the general public through the use of Social Media. This is by creating engaging, innovative content focusing on environmental awareness, disability rights, inclusion, and Ethiopian Sign Language teaching videos. Moreover, to ensure a maximized reach and extended attention of the targeted audience, the USAID TEKI Activity produced its content in Ethiopian Sign Language to stand out from conventional awareness-raising practices. Following this approach, the USAID TEKI Activity successfully leveraged positive media coverage in Amharic, French, Arabic and English on various platforms such as newspapers, news websites, and local & international TV channels. In addition, the USAID TEKI Activity initiated an innovative partnership with the private sector by creating an inclusive

promotional video campaign organized by Shega.com and Kefiya Technology PLC. The produced video starred Mimi Legesse (TPBs Deaf Co-General Manager), TPBs, and was entirely filmed in Ethiopian Sign Language with the support of the TPBs certified interpreters.

The highlight of Year I was the TEKI USAID Activity launch event ceremony held in the TPBs office on June 02, 2022 with Ambassador Jacobson, USAID Ethiopia Mission Director Sean Jones and Kokeb Misrak from the Ministry of Finance. The launch event highlighted the US government's support for YWD and the protection of our environment by creating job opportunities, promoting economic inclusion of YWD, providing soft skills development, raising environmental awareness, and enhancing entrepreneurship skills among YWD. The event was attended by numerous journalists who broadcasted the event for the following media: The Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), Voice of America (VOA), CGTN Africa, and Sky News Arabic, offering to the USAID TEKI Activity extended visibility to raise awareness about plastic bag pollution inclusion and disability rights.

In addition to the achievements stated above, the TPBs team completed numerous milestones during the USAID TEKI Activity launching phase (Dec 2021 to April 2022), including identification and recruitment of staff for project start-up, as well as developed and submitted various plans such as the Annual Work Plan, the LME Plan, the Life-of-project Plan, and the Branding and Marking Plan, in collaboration with USAID and our AOR. Furthermore, the TPBs team effectively led the quarterly reporting process and development of the LME plan, as well as created the tools and instruments needed for the Activity data collection as well as the formats for monitoring and reporting of the USAID TEKI scope of interventions in accordance with the Standard and custom indicators selected with our AOR.

Building on the foundations developed in the first Year, the USAID TEKI Activity will continue its efforts in the second Year by creating jobs for YWD, raise environmental awareness, provide soft skills training for YWD and enhanced the visibility of our work with the use of innovative communication practices via Social Media.



Deaf women producing paper bag at TEKI

Challenges Encountered:

- The loss of the initial space of 2,000 m2 allocated by the Addis Ababa City Administration for the expansion of TPBs.
- The impact of inflation and shortage in the local market affecting TPBs raw material supply chain.
- The third wave of COVID-19 in Ethiopia and the need to implement effective protective measures against COVID-19 to protect the YWD employed by TPBs in a limited space environment.
- The impact of inflation and the cost of living on the well-being of our employees and the cohesion of our team.
- TPBs inability to offer print services to our customers at this time reduces our ability to increase revenue and convincing more new clients.
- The lack of accessibility of meetings and conferences for the Deaf community.

Actions Taken:

- The USAID TEKI team revised its entire paper supply chain locally and conducted market research to find suppliers to import paper temporarily to reduce our exposure to shortages in the local market and hyperinflation.
- To balance the rise of the 3rd wave of COVID-19 in Ethiopia, the USAID TEKI team decided to reduce the number of jobs to be created in our head office from 12 to 7 to be able to implement social distancing efficiently. In addition, the USAID TEKI Activity continued the distribution of a monthly covid mitigation package for our team.
- To ensure the well-being of our employees impacted by inflation and the high cost of living in the city. The TPBs staff salaries were increased twice during the Year I of the TEKI Activity.
- To begin offering print services as soon as possible, TPBs started importing a DigiFlex printer in partnership with USAID Ethiopia and Rollenco, the selected supplier. The ordered printing machine is expected to be delivered to Ethiopia in December 2022.
- To ensure that all meetings and conferences we attend are inclusive, USAID TEKI's team of certified interpreters are always here to help our Deaf employees when organizers do not provide Sign Language interpreters.

Lessons Learned:

- While developing our new decentralized manufacturing strategy following the loss of previously allocated space, USAID TEKI Activity has shown great adaptation and resilience skills in developing this innovative alternative tailored for YWD. Our team should prioritize creating such quality in the coming years.
- In a time of economic instability, it is fundamental for a private manufacturing company like TPBs to possess multiple strategies to minimize our structure's exposure to shortage and fluctuating prices. Moreover, particular attention needs to be given to the pricing strategy of our paper bags to anticipate shortage and inflation as much as possible while our products remain affordable..
- The COVID-19 pandemic isn't over, and it is crucial for our team always to be ready for the resurgence of the virus. Therefore, the need to keep providing relevant information about health that is accessible to our team is one aspect that the USAID TEKI needs to continue during the next two years of our activity.



The TEKI management team during the USAID Activity launch event on June 02, 2022

2. ACTIVITY DESCRIPTION

USAID TEKI Fighting Plastic Bags with Sign Language is a three-year activity (2021-2024) funded by USAID/Ethiopia and implemented by TPBs in the framework of Cooperative Agreement No. 72066322CA00001. The USAID TEKI Activity aims to empower Youth with Disabilities (YWD) to produce eco-friendly paper bags and turn the fight against plastic bag pollution into a national employment-intensive solution. The Cooperative Agreement is effective, as of December 20, 2021, with a total of \$550,000.00.

The following four intermediate results will be the pillars of the USAID TEKI Activity. First the creation of jobs for YWD in Addis Ababa. Second, the fight against plastic bags pollution throughout the production of our eco-friendly paper bags. Third will be focusing on education with training and school base outreach activities. The fourth and last pillar will concern communication and awareness raising via the development of innovative practices based on the use of social media to raise awareness about plastic pollution, disability rights and teach Ethiopian Sign Language classes online.

By choosing to empower YWD to produce paper bags and leading the fight against plastic pollution, the USAID TEKI Activity is the first of its kind in the world. At TEKI, we have chosen to empower YWD and use inclusion as a tool to convince the population to change. Unlike other companies that use spoken language as the primary means of communication. At TPBs, we are proud to sell, create and distribute our TEKI bags using Ethiopian Sign Language. In doing so and choosing to keep YWD at the forefront of our USAID TEKI Activity, we change the narratives of disability inclusion in Ethiopia one paper bag at a time. With the support of USAID and the American people, TPBs YWD workers can overcome the challenges of being young and living with a disability by bringing home a salary and having a rewarding job.

With the support of USAID, the TEKI Activity aims to create indirect jobs for YWD in collaboration with inclusive schools and OPD. In addition, USAID TEKI will implement new communication practices to improve awareness, skills, and attitudes about disability rights and inclusion in Ethiopia. This is to place YWD at the forefront of the movement for a plastic bag-free Ethiopia while promoting fair representation and employment for people with disabilities in our society. The four following key outcomes are be the pillars of the USAID TEKI Activity.



**Strengthen
Disability Inclusion**



**Empower
Ethiopian Youths**



**Protect the
Environment**

3. HIGHLIGHT OF ACCOMPLISHMENT BY IRs

IRI: Job Creation - Sustainable employment for YWD generated

This IR creates sustainable employment for YWDs (18 to 29 years) in Ethiopia to produce paper bags and leads the fight against plastic pollution to create a national inclusion solution. The paper bags are produced by hand to create a labor-intensive model that is easy to replicate to ensure the USAID TEKI Activity reaches YWDs in different areas of Addis Ababa. TPBs take responsibility for creating jobs, while inclusive schools and Organization of Persons with Disability (OPD) will create additional employment opportunities for YWD by developing independent paper bag production units in the framework of the TEKI TVET Program.

During the first year of the USAID TEKI Activity, our team focused primarily on creating direct jobs, finding space to develop our Decentralized Production Unit (DPU), and launching the TEKI TVET Program in YEAR II. In addition, this IR focusing on creating sustainable jobs for YWDs aims to serve as a catalyst to promote a plastic bag-free Ethiopia and raise awareness about disability rights and inclusion amongst the population.

Creation of jobs dedicated for youth with disability.

During Year I of USAID TEKI Activity (December 2021 to September 2022), TPBs created seven sustainable jobs dedicated to Deaf young women aged 18-29 to join the TPBs production team. The seven sustainable employment created by USAID TEKI for YWD were generated in May 2022 and are located at our production site in Gotera condominium. TPBs completed The recruitment process in collaboration with inclusive schools and Addis Ababa University (AAU) Special Needs Education and Sign Language Departments. The TPBs management team conducted a total of 10 interviews in May 2022, and 3 applications were rejected due to the age of the applicants exceeding the limit set in our Cooperative Agreement.

The seven Deaf employees are now employed by TPBs and benefited from a two-month training program delivered by the TEKI team in June and July 2022. Our production managers provided this training in collaboration with our Deaf employees and Sign Language interpreter. The topics covered include paper bag production, selling & marketing process, environmental awareness, disability rights, and soft skills development. The seven jobs created during Year I of the USAID TEKI Activity were reserved for women aged between 21 and 29.

The YWDs employed by TPBs during Year I of the USAID TEKI project were previously unemployed and of various educational levels. For example, three out of seven Deaf girls graduated from the Department of Sign Language and Special Education at AAU. Still, they could not find a job for more than a year. The other four TPBs Deaf women selected had completed grades 10 and 12, but all had been unemployed for at least two years. Their primary reason for unemployment was communication barriers. To get a job in a company or organization, a Deaf person needs a Sign Language interpreter

to communicate. Unfortunately, due to the cost of an interpreter, no company or government agency in Ethiopia is willing to accommodate Deaf youth in their facilities. In addition, communication in Sign Language follows different codes, which makes it difficult for Deaf youths to adapt. Therefore, TPBs will continue to strive for the second year of the USAID TEKI Activity to allow Deaf youth to use Ethiopian Sign Language to fight plastic bag pollution.

Each of the seven beneficiaries is now happy and fully integrated into the TPBs production team. Now, they receive a salary and face no communication barriers at work, allowing them to regain the self-confidence their unemployment has affected.

The initial targeted number of jobs to be created by TPBs in its head office located in Gotera condominium was 12. However, this number was reduced to 7 during Q3 due to the rise of the third wave of COVID-19 in Ethiopia. The TPBs team made this decision to have the necessary space to implement social distancing measures to protect everyone effectively from this virus. Considering this, TPBs will relocate the five jobs within the scope of our DPU, increasing the number of jobs to be created by this new structure from 13 to 18.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- Creation of 7 sustainable jobs dedicated to young Deaf women who joined the TPBs production team in our office located in Gotera Condominium



Yitayish and Martha two of the new Deaf women recruited by TEKI

Select and develop the space for TPBs Decentralized Production Units (DPU).

Following the confirmation in March 2022 of the loss of the initially allocated space by the AACA for TPBs expansion, we decided to revise our implementation strategy. We opted to create smaller DPUs located in different city districts to create jobs for YWD. Unfortunately, obtaining space from the Ethiopian Authorities is taking longer than expected.

Therefore, TPBs could not create the 18 direct jobs dedicated to YWD planned for August 2022. This delay in completing the task is due to a lack of space in our head office (37 actual jobs in 127 sqm), making it impossible for TPBs to create more jobs for YWD without additional space. Therefore, to solve this lack of space as quickly as possible, the TPBs team has been working since April 2022 with the Addis Ababa City Administration (AACA), selected Woreda, and the MSEB to be awarded a subsidized space. The space required by our company intends to replace the previously allocated location of 2000 sqm that is now in use by the Ethiopian Government with smaller production units more adapted to YWD.

In April 2022, TPBs formed a task force to look for different spaces and meet the Nifas Silk and Akaki Kality Subcity concerning this matter. After 2 weeks and numerous meetings, our team met with the respective person responsible for allocating available space in the Subcities. In May 2022, after four additional meetings conducted with Nifas Silk and Akaki Kality Subcity managers, both were willing to offer working spaces to TPBs. As a result, in May 2022, Nifas Silk Subcity wrote a letter directly to the Addis Ababa City Administration Enterprise Development Bureau (AEDB), mentioning their support for giving available space for TPBs to open its first DPU and creating the 18 direct jobs for YWD.

In June 2022, Following Nifas Silk's letter to the AEDB, Mr. W/ro Eskedar and Mr. Belachew from the AEDB visited TPBs to inspect our workplace and control if our company needed additional space. After their visit and a deeper discussion with the TPBs staff, they expressed their happiness concerning TPBs work and our USAID TEKI activity plans. They support our initiative and are now willing to help us create jobs for YWD, but the process is taking time.

In July 2022, the next step was to provide a letter and a minute from the Woreda and the Subcity, Mr Messay from the MSEB visited TPBs. Mr. Messay was impressed by our work and agreed to deliver the needed supportive letter to continue the process. But unfortunately, he wasn't able to make it on time, and we waited until September 2022 for the document.

In September 2022, once TPBs received the supportive letter from MSEB, we submitted it to the Subcity with our previous correspondence. While submitting our letter to the Kirkos Subcity in September 2022, the TPBs team had a chance to meet with Mr. Abdi, head of the Small and Microenterprise Office in that particular woreda. Following our meeting, Ato Abdi was convinced to write an additional letter to support our case, but we are still waiting for the promised letter and are following up weekly. To accelerate the process, we have been trying to meet Mr. Kokeb from the Ministry of Finance to see if he can somehow support us, but he wasn't available.

In addition to this process, TPBs is actively looking for a suitable place to rent around our office. We have found a space of 117sqm inside the Gotera Condominium, which is owned by the Ethiopian

Postal Service Enterprise and is under the process of being rented soon through an auction system. TPBs submitted an offer of 305 ETB per sqm, supportive letters, and more information about our concept. Based on our knowledge, TPBs chances to win the auction are high, but how long the process can take needs to be clarified.

As mentioned during the weekly meetings with our AOR, the TPBs team is confident that the Ethiopian Authorities will allocate us space in the coming weeks. The main problem resulting in this delay is the bureaucratic system in place to obtain such subsidized space in Ethiopia. However, we are conscious of space's importance in achieving the goal of the USAID TEKI Activity.

Therefore, TPBs is already looking at different solutions, such as renting a temporary space from the private sector to achieve our objectives on time for Year II of our USAID TEKI Activity.



The TEKI management during a meeting in Sign language concerning the need of space to create jobs

Empowering YWD with a turnkey TEKI TVET program

Based on our research and observations conducted during the first year of our USAID TEKI Activity, TPBs have identified numerous inclusive schools and OPDs in Addis Ababa that aim to develop sustainable TVET programs for YWD to teach them relevant business skills. Three of the five organizations TPBs visited in the fourth quarter have space allocated for TVET programs that have been unused for years or underused.

During our initial assessment conducted as part of the USAID TEKI Activity, the TPBs team found that OPD and inclusive schools are deeply interested in supporting YWD to acquire entrepreneurial skills and create income-generating businesses. Unfortunately, developing sustainable TVET programs dedicated to YWD is a challenge for them, and support like ours would be welcome. However, based on our research conducted in the fourth quarter, we found that many inclusive schools and OPDs need more help and, most importantly, market creation knowledge to achieve economic sustainability. The TPBs team identified that the absence of market niches and a global corporate vision led to the failure of previous TVET empowerment programs dedicated to YWD. Considering this critical point and based on the results of our research, combined with the size of the growing market for paper bags in Ethiopia this approach seems particularly interesting. Therefore, during Year I, TPBs developed the foundation and manual of the future TEKI TVET program.

This TVET program is expected to be implemented in December 2022 during the second year of USAID TEKI Activity to train and empower YWDs to manufacture paper bags and join the growing USAID TEKI movement for a plastic bag-free and inclusive Ethiopia. Additionally, by implementing the TEKI TVET program, TPBs will have the opportunity to reach more YWDs and open up our unique concept to accommodate other disabilities in collaboration with inclusive schools and OPDs. On 5 August 2022, the TPBs team obtained the support of Alpha School for the Deaf and a letter indicating that 48 m² will be allocated to TPBs to open the first TEKI TVET program, which will be inaugurated in December 2022. YEAR II of USAID TEKI activity.



The TEKI team with the Alpha School for the Deaf management team after a meeting concerning our TVET

IR2: Environmental impact use eco-friendly paper bags to combat plastic bag pollution and protect our environment.

This IR creates a direct environmental impact for Addis Ababa residents by replacing harmful plastic bags with environmentally friendly solutions manufactured by YWD. TPBs produce the paper bags manually to create a labor-intensive concept created to allow YWD to produce paper bags and lead the movement towards a plastic bag free and inclusive Ethiopia.

Increase the annual number of paper bags produced and distributed.

During the first year of USAID TEKI Activity, TPBs maintained their production of paper bags and managed to increase their production capacity by creating seven jobs for YWD (IR 1). This additional employment dedicated to YWD helped TPBs better respond to the growing demand for eco-friendly bags in Addis Ababa. Additionally, this growth in our production capacity has enabled TPBs to attract new relevant customers and replace more plastic bags than in 2021.

From December 20, 2021, to September 30, 2022, for USAID TEKI Activity Year I, TPBs saw an overall increase in their production and sales capacity of 61% compared to the same period in 2021. The total amount of raw materials used by the USAID TEKI Activity during the reporting period is 9,343 Kg of paper. This represents a 67% increase in the use of raw materials compared to the same period in 2021. Due to the popularity of our paper bags, TPBs has yet to be able to increase its internal inventory of finished paper bags as initially planned. However, this inability to increase our internal stock can be seen as a positive point as TEKI received more orders than we have been able to produce during the year. With this in mind, TPBs in the first quarter of USAID TEKI Year II must focus on obtaining the space to open our DPU to create more jobs and continue to increase our production capacity to meet the growing demand we create for our products.



The TEKI team producing paper bags for a client together



Mimi Legesse and Ketyakal Girma on their way to visit a client

In addition, the import and installation of the Digiflex printer during USAID TEKI Year II will significantly help TPBs continue its expansion and increase its market share by creating more jobs for YWD. In July 2022, following the attention on our work generated by the media coverage of our USAID Activity launch event, TPBs was able to secure partnerships and collaborations with two large private Ethiopian companies, SafariCom and Shega.com (Kefiya Technology). They are now supporting our action to turn the fight against plastic pollution into a national inclusion solution. For example SafariCom has already placed an order for 200,000 paper bags from TPBs to be delivered once TPBs installs the Digiflex printing machine in Ethiopia.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- Total production capacity and sales increased by 61% compared to 2021.
- Total quantity of raw used material increased by 67% compared to 2021.
- New commercial partnership with Safaricom and Shega.com ((Kefiya Technology)



The TEKI team showing their paper bags

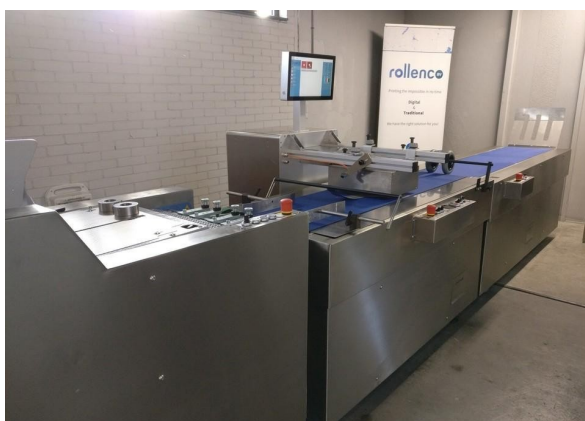
Importation and installation of the newly purchased digital printer

To increase TPBs market share and sales, offering print services is critical to being financially viable as a company. Therefore, after conducting detailed market research, TPBs selected, in collaboration with USAID-Ethiopia, the Digi-flex printer produced by Rollenco in the Netherlands. The Digi-flex is the best printing solution to meet the needs of TPBs and offer TEKI a critical strategic advantage to create jobs for YWD and convince more clients to join our fight against plastic bags in Sign Language.

TEKI has selected the Digi-flex produced by Rollenco for the following reasons: First of all, unlike other printers on the market, the Digi-flex is made especially for printing on paper bags and boxes. Secondly, the Digi-flex will offer TPBs the ability to print on paper bags once they are already made and thus reduce production time from 10 days to 2 or 3 days, creating a competitive edge over other companies. Third, the Digi-flex is extremely simple and safe, offering the perfect printer to empower YWDs in our printing process.

During the third and the fourth quarter from May to September 2022, with the support of USAID TEKI AOR, TPBs management team initiated the procurement process to import the printer to Ethiopia. Then, in August 2022, during the fourth quarter, the TPBs team held a video call with the USAID-Ethiopia procurement team and Rollenco personnel in the Netherlands. The purpose of the meeting was to approve the selection process and finalize the purchase order and the terms & conditions of the contract. After this meeting, TPBs prepared the final PO and T&C and submitted them for approval to the USAID-Ethiopia office for the final phase. The total cost of the Digiflex printer selected by TPBs is 57,700.00 Euro.

For TEKI to offer uninterrupted continuous printing services to our customers, a stock of 20 additional ink packs has been added to the final printer purchase order submitted for approval to USAID / Ethiopia. Based on our projections, the selected amount of ink required will be sufficient for 12-18 months of operation, depending on the number of hours TEKI will use the machine daily. Concerning the payment terms stated in the PO, It has been agreed that the machine will be purchased in Euro by USAID and imported by TPBs with the support of PanAfric Global, a renowned transit air company in Ethiopia that previously worked with USAID. The printing machine is expected to be imported into Ethiopia and installed at TPBs during the first quarter of the USAID TEKI Activity Year II.



The Digi-Flex Printer produced by Rollenco

IR3: Educational Impact-youth awareness, skills, and attitudes on environmental protection, disability rights, and inclusion improved.

During USAID TEKI's first year of operation, this IR generated a direct educational impact dedicated to improving YWD education on the following topics: environmental awareness, rights & inclusion of people with disabilities, entrepreneurship, as well as soft skills training to increase self-confidence and employability of YWD. This education-oriented IR has ensured tangible results for USAID TEKI Activity by providing school education and outreach to YWD.

Deliver training to the newly employed youth with disability.

This activity provided dedicated technical support and soft skills training to the seven YWD new hires (18- 29) who joined the TPBs production team during Year I of the USAID TEKI Activity. This 60-day personalized, immersive training was held during the third and fourth quarters of our Year I. The training covered the following topic: technical skills training for paper bag manufacturing, environmental awareness, and various soft skills training courses, including communication, sales, and marketing. This mix of technical and soft skills prepared YWD for their jobs at TPBs and taught them relevant soft skills to benefit their future careers. During the 60 days of this immersive training program, an emphasis was given to ensuring that the soft skills acquired by YWD are relevant to other employers and industries wishing to hire YWD. Additionally, this two-month immersive program positively impacted the self-esteem and confidence of the YWD who joined our workforce, which was low due to their prolonged unemployment before joining TPBs.



The TEKI production team training the 7 new employees recruited

This training program for the seven YWD new hires took place in June and July 2022 (third and fourth quarters) and was mainly provided by TPBs production team composed of young Deaf women in collaboration with our production managers. For someone who is Deaf, like the seven recruits who joined TPBs during Year I of USAID TEKI Activity, it was particularly appreciated by the beneficiaries that the training was provided in Ethiopian Sign Language, helping them to facilitate their integration in our team. This training program was created by TPBs as part of USAID TEKI Year I Activity and included the following topics listed below:

- Training in technical skills for making paper bags.
- Environmental awareness raising
- Soft skills training
- Communications,
- Sales and Marketing

In addition to the two-month training, each of the seven new TPBs employees was assigned a personal coach/mentor on arrival selected amongst TPBs employees who are also young Deaf women. This bespoke mentoring program helped the newly recruited Deaf women adapt quickly and regain self-confidence by building friendships.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- 2 months immersive integration and training program provided for the 7 new Deaf women recruited
- 2 months Individual mentoring program implemented for the 7 new Deaf women recruited
- Specific training provided in Ethiopian Sign Language by the TPBs management team on key topics such as workplace rules, plastic pollution, disability rights and communication.

Deliver training to the newly employed youth with disability.			
Period	Q 2	Q 3	Q 4
Number of YWD participating in the 2 months training	0	7 (45 Days completed)	7 (15 days completed)

Coaching, personal support and weekly informative meeting in Sign Language

The seven young Deaf women recruited by USAID TEKI in May 2022 now benefit from the personal support and training our team of certified Sign Language interpreters provides to all of our Deaf employees. As a company run by the Deaf community, TPBs management team is always available to help our employees with any problems that require the intervention of an interpreter (phone calls, administrative tasks, medical appointments or family problems). For a young Deaf person, having the opportunity to request the support of a Sign Language interpreter daily can change their lives towards greater independence and thus increase self-confidence and life prospects.

To ensure team cohesion during USAID TEKI Year 1, the TPBs team organized 40 weekly group meetings in Ethiopian Sign Language, held every Monday at noon for 30 minutes. The agenda for each meeting is decided in advance and covers various questions or requests made by the team. During the final 10 minutes of the meeting, the production managers present the plan for the coming days and set weekly goals to ensure that the quality and performance of the group are maintained. If necessary, the meeting is extended by 10 minutes to allow time to answer each question clearly with everyone. These group meetings are organized and conducted in Ethiopian Sign Language so our entire team can access them.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- Personal support and coaching session provided by the TEKI Activity team of certified Sign Language interpreters to benefit our 27 our Deaf employees
- 40 Weekly group meeting in Ethiopian Sign Language conducted to our team



Mimi Legesse providing training in Ethiopian Sign Language

Organize by-monthly capacity building training with partner organizations

During Year I, USAID TEKI Activity hosted two half-day soft skills training courses dedicated to the YWD employed by TPBs. This soft skills development training organized in August and September 2022 helped YWDs to obtain relevant information on health and women's rights provided in Ethiopian Sign Language. The two training courses were organized within the TPBs office and taught by experts from Yetena Weg (Health) and the Setaweeet Movement (Women's Rights).

On August 20, 2022, Yetena Weg organized the first training to provide helpful information in Sign Language for YWD on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) with a focus on contraception and sexually transmitted infections (STIs). Yetena Weg is a volunteer network of healthcare professionals and experts committed to promoting health awareness by creating a platform for healthcare professionals to teach and share their experiences. The first part of the training was given by Dr. Selam, from the Paulos Hospital, on family planning and contraceptives. Dr. Selam explained each topic in detail with the support of TPBs Sign Language interpreters. After the presentation, the YWD employed by TPBs asked many questions and shared their personal experience with the training doctors. After a 15-minute coffee/tea break, the second part of the training was led by Dr. Kidist on the topic of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). Our Deaf employees have requested this topic to get more precise information on these vital issues. Unfortunately, many Deaf youths cannot access detailed information due to language barriers. Therefore, asking Dr. Kidist direct questions with the support of Sign Language interpreters was an essential aspect of this training. At the end of the program, the TPBs team gave our guests a short Sign Language lesson, and we all went home to enjoy a well-deserved weekend. It is planned that these health training courses, in partnership with Yetena Weg, will continue with a frequency of 2 activities per year covering several topics selected by the YWD employed by TPBs. The total number of YWDs who have attended this training is 25.



Dr. Selam from Yetena Weg providing Health training to the TEKI team

The second training organized by the USAID TEKI activity took place on September 17, 2022, inside the TPBs headquarters in the Gotera Condominium. The Setaweet Movement organized the training courses on Gender and Women's Rights. Setaweet (meaning "woman" in Amharic) is a feminist movement that aims to articulate Ethiopian feminism and create a space for dialogue, research, and activism by Ethiopian women and men. The training provided to TEKI focused on gender, violence, women, and the rights of people with disabilities. During the first part of the training, Yasmin from Setaweet explained what gender means and the difference between women and men. All Deaf women employed by TPBs actively participated in this conversation, as many are married, and shared personal stories to seek advice from the trainers.



The TEKI team asking questions during the training organized by the Setaweet Movement

The second part of the training organized by Setaweet focused on the different types of violence faced by women, with particular attention given to youths with disabilities. This training was particularly relevant to the YWDs employed by TPBs due to the vulnerability created by their handicaps. The YWDs asked many questions with the support of TEKI interpreters. In addition, the Setaweet team showed several videos and training material which was helpful for our team to better understand all the details of these topics. The third part of the training was a game-based activity created to show how women can overcome their fears and challenges once they are aware of their rights.

The training concluded with a powerful speech from Yasmin, who explained that women have potential and can be leaders. But to bring about such a change, we must unite and raise awareness. She then highlighted the role USAID TEKI Activity can play as a role model in Ethiopia, demonstrating that women with disabilities can lead by example, take responsibility, and make decisions. The total number of YWDs who have attended this training is 25.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- 2 Tailor-made training provided to YWD in Ethiopian Sign Language about reproductive health, women's rights, and disability rights. Organized in collaboration with Yetena Weg and the Setaweet Movement.

Tailor-made training provided to YWD			
Date	Name of the organization	Topic covered	Number Of YWD attending
20/08/2022	Yetegna Weg	Sexual and reproductive Health	25
17/09/2022	Setaweet Movement	Women and disability rights	25



A group picture taken at the end of the training on feminism and women's rights

IR4. Awareness-raising innovative environmental and inclusive communications practices developed to reach the population more efficiently.

This IR is intended to generate media and public attention on the work of USAID TEKI Activity to raise awareness concerning plastic bag pollution and the need to include people living with disabilities in our society. Additionally, to ensure that the USAID TEKI message stands out and reaches a broader audience. TPBs have implemented, during Year I, an innovative communication strategy based on the production of content in Ethiopian Sign Language, empowering the YWDs employed by TPBs

Use of social media to design ingenious communication tools generating extended reach.

During the first year of the USAID TEKI Activity, one of the pillars of our intervention was to attract public attention through the production of innovative content created to raise awareness on plastic bag pollution, as well as on the rights of people with disabilities and inclusion. To achieve this, USAID TEKI used the existing social media channels operated by TPBs to raise awareness in a cost-effective way with an emphasis on reaching out to youths and young adults. Therefore, during Year I of the USAID TEKI activity, the total number of interactions generated by the different contents published by TEKI on social networks was 1,888,370 views and impressions (see details in the tab below). The above view count is 100% organic and was not created using any advertising campaign to increase post likes and reach.

Here is listed below the different Social Media platform used by the USAID TEKI Activity during Year I:

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/TekiPaperBags>

TikTok: <https://www.tiktok.com/@tekipaperbags>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/TekiPaperBags>

LinkedIn: <https://www.tekipaperbags.com/>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/teki_ethiopia/

By choosing to be active on different platforms and sharing lots of milestones, photos, and videos on social media, TPBs has successfully increased the sense of belonging among its supporters and built strong community support behind our movement to amplify our overall impact. Additionally, the unique content produced by TEKI helps the activity attract the attention of politicians, business and opinion leaders. In the coming months, such an approach will be helpful for the USAID TEKI Activity to convince the Ethiopian government to turn the fight against plastics pollution into a national inclusion solution.

To ensure that our message reaches the population more efficiently, TEKI has developed the following

segmented communication approach to run its different social media channels based on their particular audience and best practices:

First, TEKI used Facebook primarily to reach the general Ethiopian audience between the ages of 25 to 50 years old. The publication frequency was 3-4 posts per week, all including images or videos in Ethiopian Sign Language produced by the Deaf women employed by TEKI. The total views and interactions generated by TEKI's Facebook page during the first year of our USAID Activity are 287,130 views and impressions.

Second, TEKI used Instagram and TikTok to raise awareness amongst youths between the ages of 15 and 30. Considering that these two platforms are more popular amongst young people in Ethiopia than Facebook, TEKI developed a particular strategy more adapted to this specific audience to maximize reach. For example, TEKI used TikTok and Instagram to post short Ethiopian Sign Language learning videos, which are very popular amongst our younger audience. The publication frequency was 2-3 posts per week, with an emphasis on video. The total views and interactions generated by the TEKI TikTok page and Instagram during the first year of our USAID Activity are 1,376,960 views and impressions.



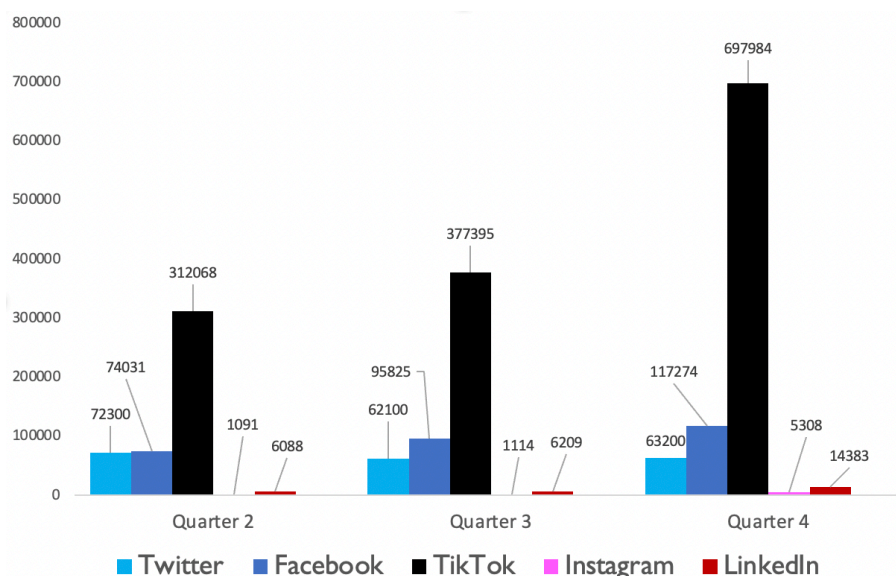
A screenshot taken from the TEKI TikTok social media account

Third, a more targeted strategy has been implemented on Twitter and LinkedIn, where our audience is more specialized and not only located in Ethiopia. TEKI used this specific strategy to attract the attention of journalists, opinion leaders, government officials, and the business community with a more corporate approach and direct messages to reach the right interlocutors who can support TEKI. The publication frequency was 2-3 posts per week, all including images or videos. The total views and interactions generated by the TEKI page on Twitter and LinkedIn during the first year of our USAID Activity are 224,280 views and impressions.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- 1,888,370 Total views and impressions generated amongst the 5 selected Social Media platforms operated by the USAID TEKI Activity during Year I

TEKI total social media reach YEAR I						
	Twitter	Facebook	TikTok	Instagram	LinkedIn	Total
Quarter 2	72,300	74,031	312,068	1091	6088	465,578
Quarter 3	62'100	95,825	377,395	1114	6209	542,643
Quarter 4	63'200	117'274	697'984	5308	14'383	880'149
Total	197'600	287'130	1'369'447	7513	26'680	1'888'370



TPBs YWD Employees Trained in Photography and Video Production

TEKI does not employ professional photographers or videographers and prefers to train and empower its team of YWD to produce photos and create videos in Ethiopian Sign Language. This photography and social media training has been a very effective tool for building team spirit and helping to rebuild the self-confidence of YWD. In addition, Sign Language has become an advantage on social media that creates unique content and generates numerous shares, comments, and reactions that help our Deaf employees realize that many people want to help and support them. Recognizing their abilities is key to successfully empowering YWD and changing the narratives about inclusion.

This ongoing specific training that TEKI provides to its YWD employees during the Year I of the USAID TEKI Activity was organized in Ethiopian Sign Language by TEKI's social media team, made up of YWD, who are already in charge of producing our content for social media. The duration of the initial training was one month. However, this process is an ongoing part of our work at TEKI, as we always find ways to improve and learn new ways to highlight our story through creative methods so that our fight against plastic bags continues to move forward. At the same time, we also raise awareness of the rights of people with disabilities. For example, four of the seven Deaf women recruited by TEKI in Year I are already participating in our Sign Language teaching video. Additionally, the four YWD are now active members of our creative social media group, which meet once a week for 45 minutes to share ideas on producing new content.

Please note that participation in videos and images is never an obligation for our Deaf team members; it is an optional activity based on individual interests.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- Training on picture taking and video production delivered to the seven Deaf women who have joined TEKI
- Introduction training to the different social media platforms already used by TEKI



Example of pictures taken by the Deaf women employed by TEKI

Enhance exposure of the USAID TEKI activity by collaborating with journalists

The fastest way to raise awareness efficiently for a unique project like the USAID TEKI Activity is by attracting the attention of local and international media. By generating media coverage, the USAID TEKI Activity can gain valuable exposure at a minimal cost to amplify our message and broaden our overall impact. During Year I, the TEKI management team has successfully generated numerous media coverage from local and international media that have spotlighted our work and plans.

The US Embassy in Ethiopia's press release of the Official launch of USAID TEKI Activity on the 3rd of June 2022, shared amongst mainstream media, helped TEKI to highlight our work significantly with coverage such as EBC, CCTV, SkyNews Arabic.

In addition to the media coverage generated by the TEKI Launch event, TPBs also managed to create additional media coverage from Walta TV with an interview of Mimi Legesse in Ethiopian Sign Language organized by Natanel Shifewa, a young Deaf activist. The discussion in Ethiopian Sign Language covered various topics concerning entrepreneurship, disability empowerment, and inclusion. Moreover, in July 2022, to celebrate disability pride month, the TEKI team was interviewed live on ABC News the American national channel, to highlight our work here in Ethiopia. Finally, in August 2022, a portrait of the TEKI Deaf Co-General Manager Mimi Legesse was also broadcasted on the French national channel France 2 in the framework of a program called "100 PORTRAIT D'AFRIQUE" dedicated to presenting the work of young African entrepreneurs from different counties across the continent.

The below table presents the different international and local media platforms that highlighted the work of TEKI during Year I of the USAID TEKI Activity.



A screenshot of the media coverage generated by the USAID TEKI Activity launch event

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- Numerous TV and press coverage generated by the USAID TEKI Activity launch event

USAID TEKI media coverage Year I		
Media Name	Link	Type of coverage
CGTN	https://africa.cgtn.com/2022/06/04/eco-friendly-bags-Deaf-women-in-ethiopia-fighting-plastics-pollution/	Article + TV coverage
Sky News Arabic	مروشح عيده فستلا عاضة ان كيا لاسابلا ستيكية . ايتوبيا ايتوبيا _ اي # اي _ اسلو # الورقية	TV coverage
EBC	https://fb.watch/dRDaAPgU-R/	TV coverage
VOA	Link unavailable	Radio Program
Capital Newspaper	Link unavailable	Press
The Reporter Newspaper	Link unavailable	Press
Addis Standards	https://addisstandard.com/news-usaid-launches-new-partnership-to-employ-over-200-Deaf-women-in-addis-abeba/	Website Article
newbusinessethiopia.com	https://newbusinessethiopia.com/tag/teki-paper-bags-plc/	Website Article
newscentral.com	https://newscentral.africa/2022/06/03/usaid-launches-new-partnership-to-employ-200-Deaf-women-in-ethiopia/	Website Article
AllureEthiopia	http://allureethiopia.com/2022/06/08/usaid-partners-with-teki-paper-bags-plc-to-employ-over-200-Deaf-women/	Website Article
Ethiopia Today	https://ethiopianstoday.com/2022/06/04/usaid-launches-new-partnership-to-employ-over-200-Deaf-women-in-addis-ababa/	Website Article
Walta TV	Link unavailable	TV coverage
France 2	Link unavailable	TV coverage
ABC News	https://fb.watch/gAQV_I6YHo/	TV coverage
Shega.com	https://fb.watch/gAQRvQbbHX/	Commercial Advertisement

Produce short, impactful pedagogic videos to teach Sign Language on social media.

During Year I of the USAID TEKI activity, to increase social media visibility and raise awareness concerning the communication gap faced by the Deaf community. The TPBs team has produced XXX short videos to teach Ethiopian Sign Language on social media. The posting frequency during the period covered by this report was from 1 teaching videos per week. The total number of views generated by the TEKI Sign Language Lesson during year I of the USAID TEKI Activity was 780,009 views.

This fun and educational way to raise awareness help the public learn basic Ethiopian Sign Language to bridge the communication gaps between the Deaf and the hearing world in the country. To be more accessible to an Ethiopian audience, the videos were produced in Amharic and made in-house by the TEKI social media team composed of YWD. The production and dissemination of those videos teaching Ethiopian Sign Language on social media will continue in years II and III of the USAID TEKI activity.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- 36 short Sign Language videos produced.
- 780,009 views on social media generated.



The Ethiopian Sign Language teaching video produced by TEKI on social media

COVID-19 Mitigation package and protective measures

To protect all members of the USAID TEKI during Year I of our USAID Activity, TPBs distributed a monthly covid mitigation kit to all of its employees. This package includes face masks, soap, and hand sanitizer for office and home use. During the first year of USAID TEKI activity, the total number of materials distributed among our team members was 3,250 face masks, 60 liters of hand sanitizer, and 300 antibacterial soaps. Additionally, several COVID-19 measures have been implemented inside the TEKI workplace, such as social distancing, hand washing, and temperature control (for guests and employees). These actions have helped TEKI better protect its employees from the spread of COVID-19 during Year I of USAID TEKI Activity.

To balance the need for greater access to up-to-date information on COVID-19 in Ethiopian Sign Language, our team of interpreters provided COVID-19-related information during our weekly Sign Language group meetings. These weekly discussions in Sign Language were significant for the YWD employed by TEKI as many have limited access to relevant information concerning COVID-19 in Ethiopian Sign Language.

Furthermore, to efficiently implement social distancing measures during the third wave of covid 19 in Ethiopia in May and June 2022, the TPBs team decided to limit the job creation in our headquarters from 12 to 7 to implement social distancing measures efficiently and effectively while having limited space. For years 2 and 3 of the USAID TEKI activity, our management team will continue to closely monitor the covid-19 situation in Ethiopia so that we can respond quickly to a possible resurgence of the virus. This to ensures the best protection for the YWD employed by TEKI, who are among vulnerable groups in the population.

SUMMARY OF MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENT

- Monthly Covid-19 mitigation package distributed to the YWD employed by TEKI
- Specific training provided by the TEKI interpreters to make COVID-19 information accessible for the Deaf community



Pictures of the TEKI team during the 3rd wave of COVID-19 in Ethiopia

4. LEARNING MONITORING AND EVALUATION

During USAID TEKI Year I, TPBs management team developed the Theory of Change, which explains how USAID TEKI will create change and illustrates the different relationships between actions and results of our activity. This is to learn and identify best practices and how they can work together to create the desired change.

To successfully implement USAID TEKI Activity theory of change. TPBs has developed a multi-angular and transverse approach in which the inclusion of YWD acts as a catalyst to improve the environmental impact generated and vice versa. This unique and multifaceted approach to the crossroads of disability inclusion, environmental awareness, women's empowerment, and youth entrepreneurship aims to present a new method to combine environmental action with disability inclusion instead of addressing them individually. This is in pursuit of the mission of transforming the fight against plastic bag pollution in Ethiopia into a national inclusion solution dedicated to creating rewarding work for YWD.



**Create Jobs for
Youths with Disability**



**Fighting Plastic
Bags Pollution**



**Education and
School Activities**



**Awareness
Raising**

TEKI Activity Components	
Component 1	Job Creation - Generate sustainable employment for YWD
Component 2	Environmental Impact - Strengthen the use of eco-friendly paper bags
Component 3	Education input - Improve youth education on environmental protection and disability rights
Component 4	Awareness-raising - Develop innovative communications practices

LME TASK 2: Develop the USAID TEKI Activity LME Plan

The USAID TEKI Activity LME Plan was prepared and submitted in April 2022 by the TPBs team to our AOR. The designed LME plan includes ten performance indicators selected to measure the results of the USAID TEKI Activity. The ten indicators are composed of 5 Standard indicators chosen in collaboration with USAID/Ethiopia and five custom indicators designed by TPBs to best measure the outputs in learning monitoring and evaluating the USAID TEKI Activity performance and results.

Standard Performance Indicators	
ES.4-1	Number of vulnerable persons benefiting from US Government supported social services
EG.5.15	Percentage change in sales of firms receiving USG-funded assistance
EG.6-12	Percent of individuals with new employment following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs
EG.6-13	Percent of individuals with improved soft skills following participation in USG-assisted workforce development programs
EG.6-14	Percent of individuals who complete USG-assisted workforce development programs



Ababesh Gashew collecting data for reporting purpose

LME TASK 3: Monitoring, data analysis, progress review and Reporting

During the Year I of the USAID TEKI Activity, To report the accurate numbers of our different yearly indicators presented in our LME plan. The TPBs management team conducted three internal surveys at the end of each quarter of the TEKI USAID Activity Year I to organize the data collection and obtain all the relevant information related to our standard and custom indicators. In addition, on October 2022, TPBs conducted an annual assessment to control all the collected data and combine the quarterly data into yearly results before preparing this annual progress report. As a result, the data collected by the TEKI management team in charge of Monitoring Learning and Evaluation are ready to be uploaded to the DIS platform following the approval of this report. This includes the number of jobs created for YWD, the number of paper bags produced & sold, the number of participants in our different soft training activities, as well as the number of views generated by the different TPBs social media channels.



The TEKI management team working on the Quarterly Report in July 2022

LME TASK 4: Creation of the USAID TEKI Activity DIS Platform portal

During Year I of the USAID Teki Activity, the TPBs team in charge of the learning, monitoring, and evaluation successfully created the TEKI Activity DIS platform in collaboration with our AOR and the USAID monitoring department. As a result, the TEKI portal is now fully activated on the DIS platform and operational in order to allow TEKI to upload all the relevant data obtained during the Year I of our USAID Activity.

5. PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND OPERATIONS

Project management and staff recruitment

During year 1 of the USAID TEKI Activity, the TPBs team recruited a project manager, a project accountant, and an administrative assistant. In addition, following the recruitment of Tigist Alemayehu TEKI's new Deaf project manager, TPBs recruited an additional Sign Language interpreter with the role of personal assistant to the project manager. This allowed Tigist Alemayehu to complete the different tasks related to her new responsibility at TEKI without facing a language barrier due to her deafness.

Furthermore, as a company empowering the Deaf community, it was imperative that TPBs entrust the TEKI project management responsibilities to a Deaf person to keep the Deaf community at the forefront of our work and not implement an ableist approach. The newly hired staff helped the previous TPBs team to ensure the successful implementation of the USAID TEKI Activity.



Mimi Legesse and Tigist Alemayehu TEKI the Deaf managers of TEKI together

The use of Ethiopian Sign Language as the main language of the USAID TEKI Activity

During the Year I of the USAID TEKI Activity, TPBs successfully used Ethiopian Sign Language as our primary language of communication. However, using Ethiopian Sign Language as our primary language takes more time than using spoken language. This is particularly true regarding technical documents or virtual meetings that are much harder to interpret in Ethiopian Sign Language for our team of interpreters. As a result, physical meetings and discussions take longer, and the time allocated by the interlocutors often needs to be adapted to the use of Sign Language. But in the other hand, besides the additional time we need, using Ethiopian Sign Language also makes the work of TEKI unique in the eyes of the people we meet, and this reveals to be a priceless advantage for the implementation of the USAID TEKI Activity. Moreover, this is inclusive and helps TEKI to raise awareness and obtain higher results in terms of public engagement, especially on social media and during meetings with government officials.



The TEKI management team during a meeting conducted in Sign Language

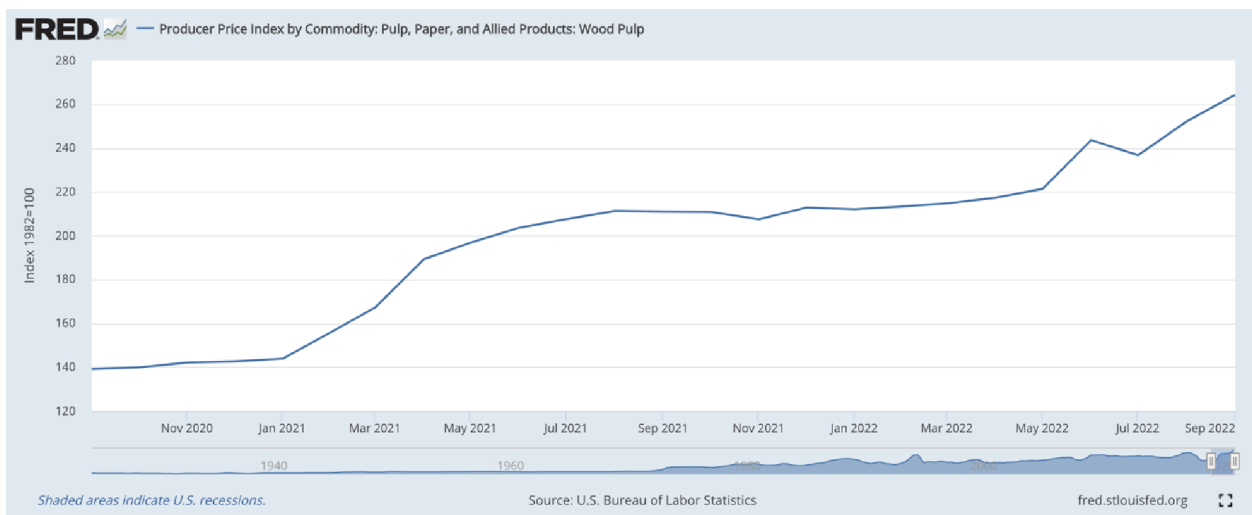
Based on our observation and experience, we have calculated that choosing to use Ethiopian Sign Language over English or Amharic multiplied by three the time needed to achieve a task. Although this additional time required by the TEKI team can be seen as a weakness, it is the reality when building an inclusive organization dedicated to the Deaf community. Therefore, our progress should not be compared to conventional company progress timeframe and needs to be seen from a different angle taking in consideration the time Sign Language takes to achieve tasks.

Risk of global recession and its impact on the Ethiopian economy

As a social enterprise registered in Ethiopia, TPBs cannot underestimate the impact of the conflicts in the north of the country and the global economic difficulties due to the crisis in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the past few months, commodity prices have been reaching record highs, and unprecedented inflation is hitting the Ethiopian economy. If prolonged, this situation might affect the cost and availability of raw materials used by the TEKI USAID Activity to produce our paper bags. Furthermore, this hyperinflationary trend will impact the financial resources of our customers and suppliers, which are vital for TPBs economic development.

For example, our former leading paper supplier, Merahi International PLC, filed for bankruptcy in 2022, forcing TPBs to overhaul its supply chain. Following these changes, TPBs is now working with Almol PLC but cannot find any other suppliers currently, putting our company at risk of shortages. Furthermore, for Almol PLC to produce paper, chemicals are still needed and must be imported. These chemicals are critical for increasing the strength of the paper and making it strong enough to produce paper bags. Therefore, if Almol PLC encounters difficulties in obtaining foreign currency to import the necessary chemicals, this could lead to a paper shortage in the country. The second raw material USAID TEKI Activity used to produce paper bags is glue. TPBs have been purchasing glue locally since our start in 2016. Unfortunately, the price of glue is now heavily affected by inflation. Based on our inventory reports, a 123% increase in glue price was observed from January to September 2022.

Taking these risk factors into account, TPBs began its market research to find overseas suppliers from which we could potentially source our raw materials to temporarily reduce our exposure to local market inflation and possible shortage.



The impact of inflation and COVID-19 on the price of wood pulp since September 2020

6. SUCCESS STORY

MARTA GUDINA



Martha Gudina in the TEKI office

Marta was born at Nekemt in 1998 to a hearing family. She has two sisters and one brother. All of them are born Deaf. Sign Language is the primary communication at home. Her families communicate with them using cultural Sign Language that the family themselves creates. From grade 1 to 8, Martha had the chance to go to a Deaf school where she learned with Deaf students. Deaf schools are always preferable for young Deaf students, including Sign Language interpreters and teachers who know Sign Language.

But when she joined grade 9, everything changed. No Sign Language interpreter or teachers knew Sign Language like in her previous Deaf school. The difficulties began when she joined the hearing curriculum; she could not understand when the teachers spoke or when the students

asked questions. Only she used her eyes to try to understand what was written on the blackboard. But when she returned home, she read her exercise book repeatedly to understand the day's lesson. Her elder Deaf sister used to help her when she had an assignment. While unable to understand her teachers and classmates, Martha managed to graduate from grade 12 and join the university. This success made her happy because she worked hard to get this result.

The only university with access to Deaf students is Addis Ababa University. So when Deaf students join university, they have only two options: Ethiopian Sign Language and Deaf culture or Special needs education. If their interest is to study social work or another field of study, it is not acceptable because there is no access to other curriculums. So Marta's last choice was Special Needs Education. After four years of study at Addis Ababa University, she graduated in June 2020, full of hope that she would find a job.

Unfortunately, unlike many young Deaf women, finding a job was not as easy as she hoped. She faced another challenge. in Addis Ababa; she rented a house with her two sisters; not only Marta both her sisters are graduates of Addis Ababa University, but none of them could find a sustainable job. So they

need an income for the house rent, food, sanitation, etc. One of her sisters is now hired at a hair salon (dressing), so she started supporting her sisters by trying to cover the living costs. Their brother lives with his family in Nekemte and helps his father and mother.

Marta joined TEKI paper bags on May 23, 2022. She was so happy having a job with no communication barriers and having her own income (salary). Marta is now sharing her experience with the team and learning from them. She was signing even though she studied and worked hard with many challenges; she could not find a job. The USAID TEKI Activity is creating sustainable job opportunities for Deaf youth, especially women, and this means so much to Martha.

YITAYISH TILAHUN

Yitayish was born in 1992 at Injibara. She is 22 years old. She went to Injibara primary school with Deaf students up to grade 4. But from grade 5 to grade 11, she studied with hearing students and teachers without no access to Sign Language. She struggled a lot because she was the only born Deaf in her family. She has two sisters and one brother. Her father is a farmer, and her mother sells vegetables in the market. After grade 11, Yitayish couldn't continue her education because the school was not accessible for her, and the lessons were getting too difficult to understand without access to a Sign Language interpreter so she had to quit school.



Yitayish Tilahun showin the I Love U international sign

Yitayish traveled from Injibara to Addis Ababa with the hope of finding a job. As a Deaf long-distance runner athlete, Yitayish loves sport and participated in various school run competitions when she was at Injibara School. She won three times the 5000m, the 4000m, and the 3500m running competitions. She now dreams of one day having the chance to represent Ethiopia in a world Deaf sports competition.

Yitayish tries to communicate using traditional Sign Language; she can also read and write in Amharic and use lip reading on the streets. Unfortunately, upon her arrival in Addis Ababa, she couldn't find a sustainable job, and running didn't provide any income. Sometimes she runs 2 or 3 times a year, and she gets a tiny amount of money as an award when she wins. So she always wanted a job that could change her life while she could keep training her running. Yitayish now lives alone with the income she received monthly from TEKI. Yitayish joined TEKI in May 2022. She is energetic and eager to learn something new; she hates sitting at home without a job. It is a pleasure for the TEKI team to have her.

USAID TEKI ACTIVITY LAUNCH EVENT

On Thursday, June 02, 2022, Ambassador Jacobson, USAID Ethiopia Mission Director Sean Jones and Kokeb Misrak from the Ministry of Finance and TEKI team officially launched the USAID TEKI Activity. TPBs organized the launching ceremony in its main office located in Gotera condominium. Numerous journalists were invited and broadcasted the event for the following media: Ethiopian Broadcasting Corporation (EBC), Voice of America (VOA), CGTN Africa, and Sky News Arabic.

At 11 am, the U.S. Ambassador and USAID mission director arrived and were welcomed in Sign Language by Tigist Alemayehu, the TEKI Project Manager, and Mimi Legesse, TPBs Co-General Manager. The all TEKI team was surprised to see Ambassador Jacobson fingerspelling her name in ASL (American Sign Language) in front of our team composed of young Deaf women. After welcoming the guests, a short visit to our workplace was given by Mimi Legesse before everyone started to sit together for a discussion in Ethiopian Sign Language with the support of TEKI's certified Sign Language interpreters.

The TEKI team thanked USAID and the American People for this key support for the Ethiopian Deaf community. Marta, one of the newly hired Deaf, Deaf women employed by TEKI who graduated from university, shared her story and explained how being Deaf has a big impact on finding a job even when they complete their education. She shared how happy she was to have joined TEKI with the support of USAID and the American people.



Ambassador Jacobson, USAID Ethiopia Mission Director Sean Jones and Kokeb Misrak during the TEKI launch event

Tigist Alemayehu, the USAID TEKI Activity project manager, explained the four pillars of our USAID Activity: creating jobs, educational input, environmental impact, communication, and raising awareness. Tigist Alemayehu explained the importance for the Deaf community worldwide to benefit from role models like TEKI. Sustainability is our motto. Mimi Legesse then presented the different challenges faced by TEKI since 2016 and how important the fight against plastic bag pollution can be to create sustainable jobs for YWD.

Ambassador Jacobson, USAID Ethiopia Mission Director Sean Jones, and Kokeb Misrak from the Ministry of Finance then participated in a paper bags-making activity with the support of the TEKI Deaf employees to assist them. The Ambassador finished first and said, “this is women's power” for sure a moment, all of us will not forget. The program ended with a traditional coffee ceremony, and the time to say goodbye was already there.

This launch event was significant for TEKI and our team of Deaf women to help them understand the new responsibilities laying on our shoulders to create more jobs for the Deaf with the support of USAID/Ethiopia.



Paper Bag making activity for the guests



Mimi Legesse During an Interview in Sign Language

The Ethiopian Blood Bank campaign in Ethiopian Sign Language

On September 6-7, 2022, to celebrate the month of Pagume in the Ethiopian calendar, the USAID TEKI team, composed of YWD, participated in a blood donation promotion program organized by the Ethiopian Blood Bank and Yetena Weg at the Ministry of Health. The goal of this program was to promote blood donation through the use of Ethiopian Sign Language and inclusion, as well as collect donations of school supplies for vulnerable children in partnership with Sele Enat Mahiber. Furthermore, by participating in this innovative blood donation campaign, the TEKI team, composed of YWD, was able to lead by example and show that people living with a disability can be active leaders in positive social change.

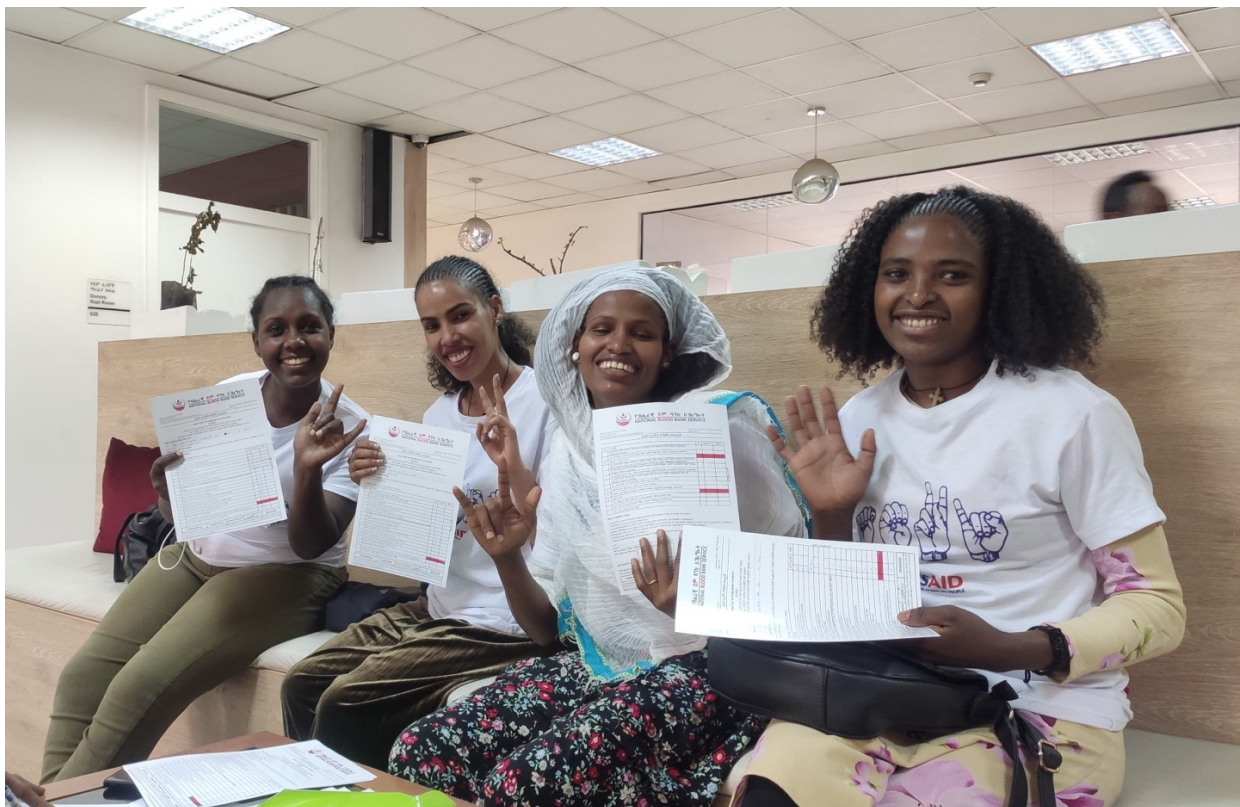
On the first day of the program, USAID TEKI team produced a short video in collaboration with the Ethiopian Blood Bank donation team to promote this campaign on social media using Ethiopian Sign Language. Mimi Legesse made the short video with the support of Zinet Yeha, TPBs social media content producer. TPBs then published the video on the social channels managed by TEKI and Yetena Weg. This innovative way of promoting blood donation implemented by Yetena Weg and TPBs has successfully managed to increase the number of participants.



The Teki team during the Ethiopian Blood Bank campaign

Additionally, USAID TEKI team provided a 30-minute training to Ethiopian Blood Bank employees to teach them essential health-related Ethiopian Sign Language. Therefore, they can now provide the necessary information in Ethiopian Sign Language to Deaf people willing to donate blood without encountering communication barriers. In the afternoon, the USAID TEKI team had the opportunity to meet with Mr. Assegid Samuel, the Ethiopian Ministry of Health director. During our Sign Language conversation with him we had the opportunity to raise an important issue about the accessibility of health information for the Deaf community. He particularly appreciated our comments and informed us that the Ministry of Health was working on a new program to make basic health information in Sign Language more accessible.

On the second day of this blood donation campaign and after a short medical examination to ensure eligibility, 8 TPBs employees set an example by donating blood. This blood donation was the first for seven members of our team. The Ethiopian Blood Bank staff took the time to explain to our Deaf team the different blood types and why donating blood is so crucial in saving lives. Five of the eight TPBs members were unaware that blood is different for everyone. This shows again how the USAID TEKI collaboration with Yetena Weg is crucial to providing accessible health training dedicated to YWD. Upon completing this incredible program, the USAID TEKI team donated three packs of pencils and three packs of exercise books to Sele Enat Mahiber to support vulnerable children.



Four of the TEKI Deaf employees who made their first blood donation



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