

## Message by DASSC Director

The fundamental truth as inscribed in the Scripture is that all human beings are created in the image of God, and carry his image irrespective of their skin colour, race, sex, creed, etc. The existence of this image or its visibility does fade with physical or mental disabilities or other features of a person, as it is a gift for all person by the Creator.

Both the International and our country law codes mandate equal rights for the persons with disabilities; however mechanisms to enforce these rights are not well established and persons with even minor disabilities sometimes complained of discrimination on job opportunities. A survey on disability in Ethiopia indicated that 60 per cent of persons with disabilities in the country were unemployed in 1995; of whom two-thirds were self-employed in rural areas and none of the surveyed had reported to be employed in administration or management position.

Although, the Constitution provides for rehabilitation and assistance to person with physical and mental disabilities, resources devoted to these purposes are very few, limiting the actual service to these most needy citizens. According to the population and housing census of 1994, of the total population 53,477,265 there were 988,849 people with disabilities in Ethiopia (1.85% of the population). But, the 1994 census is acknowledged to have underestimated the number of disabled persons in the country. According to most conservative estimates of the World Health Organisation (WHO), at minimum, people with disabilities comprise 10 % of any population.

In 2003, it was estimated that there were over 5 million children, adults and elderly people with disabilities in Ethiopia, representing 7.6 per cent of the population. Some reports estimate that there are more than 6 million persons with disabilities in Ethiopia which is closer to WHO estimate.



Handing over the new workshop building in June 2000  
From left to right: Contractor Engeneer Michael, Ato Feyissa (former DASSC Director), Dr. Megerssa and W/ro Adanech

It was envisaged that the combination of poverty, ignorance, war, famine and drought with absence of adequate preventive and rehabilitation service could produce high prevalence of disabilities in the country. Causes of disabilities in the country thus include low standard of living, malnutrition and under nourishment; hearing, mobility and multiple disabilities.

Inspired by God's love to humanity and her mandate to serve the "whole person"; the EECMY care and support to children with disabilities, which is today commemorating its 20th Anniversary, started as a small Care Centre in Kazanchis sub-city in Addis Ababa, with only 8 children with disabilities in 1985. Thanks to the Almighty and our esteemed partners in this vital scheme, the number of children with disabilities we are serving today, from Early Care to Life and Work Skills Training, has reached 350 in this particular Centre.

On behalf of the Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus Development and Social Commission (EECMY-DASSC), the body responsible for all the development work and humanitarian activities of the church, I extend my heart-felt gratitude to all those who continued to stand with us and are making invaluable contributions through their prayers, technical and financial and otherwise; and I encourage them to continue their support to this great service of transforming lives of the most needy, the neglected and vulnerable segment of our society in particular to children / persons with disabilities. I

also upon those who just learned about this undertaking, to join us to make unimaginable difference in the lives of many more vulnerable sisters and brothers in Christ seeking our support.

*Deed Jaldessa*  
Director, EECMY-DASSC

