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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY

VOLUME XIX

AAU CONNECT

CONTINENTAL RECOGNITION



SEPTEMBER, 2026

Message from the President



September ushered in the Ethiopian New Year and the 2026/27 academic year, opening a new chapter for Addis Ababa University. As I emphasized in my New Year message to our university community, this must be a year of consolidating our successes, addressing our challenges with determination, and raising the bar of excellence.

We begin this academic year on the foundation of two historic milestones the celebration of our Diamond Jubilee and the successful conclusion of our transition to institutional autonomy. Our 75th anniversary offered an opportunity to reflect on generations of scholarship, service, and contribution to Ethiopia and beyond. Autonomy now gives us greater scope to shape our future, accompanied by a greater responsibility to uphold accountability, integrity, and effective governance.

In this edition of AAU Connect, we spotlight the AHEFT Prize. This recognition invites us to celebrate our collective achievements while looking ahead to the work required to sustain and build upon them. It also reinforces the importance of connecting academic excellence with societal needs, ensuring that our teaching, research, and partnerships create opportunities and contribute to people's wellbeing.

Our achievements are a foundation upon which we must continue to build. In the year ahead, we must deepen the quality and relevance of education, strengthen research that responds to national and global challenges, expand meaningful partnerships, accelerate digital transformation, and mobilize resources responsibly. The value of our autonomy will be demonstrated through the improvements we make in the experiences of our students, the work of our faculty and staff, and the services we provide to society.

To our new students, I extend a warm welcome to a community with a proud history and an ambitious future. To our returning students, faculty, and staff, I invite you to bring renewed energy and shared purpose to this academic year. Each of us has a role in nurturing AAU's culture of excellence, integrity, inclusiveness, collegiality, innovation, and service.

I thank our university community, alumni, partners, and friends for the dedication and confidence that continue to strengthen Addis Ababa University. Together, let us translate the promise of this new chapter into lasting progress for our University and our nation.

Samuel Kifle (Ph.D)
President
Addis Ababa University

Continental Recognition as AAU wins USD 3 Million AHEFT Prize

Recognized among Africa's inaugural higher education transformation laureates, Addis Ababa University is building on its strengths in medical education, research, and patient care to advance the future of healthcare.



Addis Ababa University (AAU) has been named one of five inaugural laureates of the Mastercard Foundation's Africa Higher Education for Transformation (AHEFT) Prize, receiving USD 3 million in recognition of its contribution to research, innovation, and national development.

Awarded under the Excellence in Research and Innovation category, AAU was recognized for its ability to align research with national priorities, strengthen workforce development, and translate scientific knowledge into improved public services, economic opportunities, and community wellbeing.

Central to this achievement is the University's longstanding contribution to Ethiopia's healthcare system through its College of Health Sciences (CHS) and Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital (TASH). As one of Ethiopia's leading specialized teaching and referral hospitals, TASH serves approximately 884,000 patients annually, providing an important platform for medical education, clinical research, and healthcare delivery.

This integration of education, research, and clinical practice has enabled AAU to train generations of healthcare professionals, advance scientific knowledge, and contribute to addressing the country's healthcare challenges. The AHEFT Prize recognizes these achievements while providing an opportunity to further strengthen the University's institutional capacity and impact.

Continental Recognition, New Opportunities

AAU's achievement was celebrated at the inaugural Higher Education Transformation Convening held in Accra, Ghana, in September 2026. The University joined four other laureates from Burkina Faso, Ghana, Uganda, and Rwanda, each receiving USD 3 million to advance institutional transformation.

In a recorded message delivered to the Convening, AAU President Dr. Samuel Kifle emphasized the responsibility of African universities to equip young people not merely to participate in the future, but to shape it.

The AHEFT Prize, backed by a USD 500 million commitment from the Mastercard Foundation over its first decade, seeks to recognize and support at least 150 African higher education institutions demonstrating transformative impact.

Building on Excellence Through Institutional Transformation

Through the three-year AHEFT Project, AAU plans to undertake a series of interconnected interventions aimed at strengthening clinical excellence, academic quality, research capacity, and institutional effectiveness. Together, these investments are intended to create lasting improvements in how the University educates healthcare professionals, conducts research, and responds to national healthcare priorities.

The award represents both recognition and responsibility. By building on its strengths in clinical education, research, and patient care, AAU aims to translate continental recognition into stronger institutional capacity, improved healthcare outcomes, and greater opportunities for future generations.

African Water Security Conference 2026 held in Addis Ababa



Policymakers, scientists, academics, and diplomats had gathered in Addis Ababa for the inaugural African Water Security Conference 2026, convened under the theme of advancing collaborative solutions to Africa's growing water security challenges.

The three-day international conference, held from September 21–23, 2026, at the Adwa Victory Memorial Museum Hall, was organized through a strategic partnership between Addis Ababa University's Africa Center of Excellence for Water Management (ACEWM) and the Ethiopian Ministry of Water and Energy.

Speaking at the opening of the conference, Dr. Bikila Workneh, Executive Dean of the College of Natural and Computational Sciences at Addis Ababa University, said the conference provides an important platform for addressing critical challenges related to climate resilience, transboundary water management, and equitable water governance across Africa.

WHERE GENERATIONS OF ETHIOPIAN SCHOLARS BEGAN THEIR JOURNEY

The opening ceremony brought together high-level government officials, diplomatic representatives, academic leaders, researchers, and water-sector professionals. Dignitaries in attendance included the Minister of Water and Energy; the Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Ethiopia; Professor Worash Getaneh, Vice President for Research and Innovation at Addis Ababa University; Special Delegate of the AAU President, Dr. Bikila Workneh; and Professor Feleke Zewge, Director of ACEWM.

Opening speakers underscored the importance of cooperation across national, institutional, disciplinary, and geographic boundaries in addressing Africa's water challenges. Emphasizing the value of collective action, organizers invoked the Ethiopian proverb, "If spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion," highlighting the importance of collaboration in securing the continent's water future.

The conference is structured around three interconnected pillars: Science, Policy, and Practice. According to Professor Feleke Zewge, Director of ACEWM, participants will engage in keynote presentations, high-level panel discussions, and scientific sessions addressing key dimensions of water security.

In his remarks, Professor Worash Getaneh, Vice President for Research and Innovation at Addis Ababa University and Special Delegate of the AAU President, highlighted the significance of holding the conference at a time of national and continental renewal. He noted that the event comes amid Ethiopia's New Year celebrations and broader national developments, providing an opportunity to strengthen commitments to sustainable development, regional cooperation, and stability.

Professor Worash further emphasized the role of ACEWM in connecting academic research with practical solutions. He noted that the Africa Center of Excellence for Water Management, established with the support of the Government of Ethiopia and the World Bank, continues to advance research, education, innovation, and capacity building in water management.

The African Water Security Conference 2026 is expected to provide a platform for researchers, policymakers, development partners, practitioners, and other stakeholders to exchange knowledge, strengthen partnerships, and identify practical approaches to Africa's water security challenges.

Through the conference, Addis Ababa University and ACEWM reaffirmed their commitment to advancing research-driven solutions, strengthening regional collaboration, and contributing to sustainable water management across Africa.

Addis Ababa University Inaugurates Model Community School



Addis Ababa University (AAU) has officially inaugurated its Model Primary School, marking a significant step in the University's longstanding commitment to contributing to the advancement of quality education at the primary school level.

The inauguration ceremony, held in the presence of AAU leaders, government officials, students, parents, and members of the University community, also featured a graduation ceremony celebrating the achievements of the school's students.

Speaking at the occasion, AAU President Dr. Samuel Kifle said the establishment of the Model Primary School represents the realization of a long-held vision of the University.

Dr. Samuel noted that the school is envisioned as a leading educational institution that provides a modern and supportive learning environment. The school is designed to feature modern laboratories, physical activity centers, well-equipped classrooms, and facilities that support students' academic and personal development.



According to the President, the Model Primary School will play an important role in nurturing the next generation by providing students with quality education while creating opportunities to develop knowledge, skills, creativity, and critical thinking.

Representing the Addis Ababa Education Bureau, Mr. Samson Melesse said the establishment of the Model Primary School demonstrates AAU's commitment to contributing to the development of the next generation not only through higher education but also by supporting quality primary education.

He further noted that, as a community-oriented school established by Addis Ababa University, the institution is expected to go beyond academic achievement by emphasizing innovation, practical skills development, creativity, and holistic student development.

The Model Primary School has opened its doors to students from the wider community, in addition to children of AAU employees. The school has officially commenced its educational services, providing students from diverse backgrounds with access to a learning environment supported by the University's academic and institutional resources.

The establishment of the Model Primary School reflects Addis Ababa University's broader commitment to contributing to the development of Ethiopia's education system and supporting the development of future generations through quality, innovative, and inclusive education.

U.S. Embassy Hands Over Field Vehicles to AAU to Strengthen Earth and Volcanic Research

The U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia has handed over two Toyota Land Cruiser field vehicles to Addis Ababa University (AAU) to support field-based research and monitoring activities related to earth movements, geological processes, and volcanic events in Ethiopia and the wider Horn of Africa.

The vehicles were formally handed over by Mr. Jonathan Ross, Foreign Assistance Counsellor at the U.S. Embassy in Ethiopia, to AAU President Dr. Samuel Kifle. The handover ceremony brought together researchers and staff from AAU's Institute of Geophysics, Space Science and Astronomy (IGSSA).

Speaking at the ceremony, AAU President Dr. Samuel Kifle expressed his appreciation for the continued support of the U.S. Embassy, describing the assistance as part of a longstanding partnership between the Embassy and the University.

Dr. Samuel noted that the partnership has evolved over the years, including during AAU's transition toward institutional autonomy. He also highlighted the Embassy's continued engagement with the University over the past three years through its Public Diplomacy Section and other programs.

Mr. Jonathan Ross, Foreign Assistance Counsellor at the U.S. Embassy, said the Embassy was pleased to provide the vehicles to AAU, emphasizing the longstanding relationship between the University and the U.S. Mission through assistance programs administered by the U.S. Department of State and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).

Mr. Ross said the vehicles are expected to enhance AAU's capacity to conduct field research and collect reliable scientific data not only across Ethiopia but also in the wider Horn of Africa. He emphasized the importance of field-based scientific information in understanding geological events, including earth movements and volcanic eruptions.

Professor Atalay Ayele, a researcher at AAU's Institute of Geophysics, Space Science and Astronomy, said the donation addresses a key logistical challenge faced by researchers in conducting field investigations.

According to Prof. Atalay, the U.S. Embassy's understanding of these practical challenges contributed to the provision of the two field vehicles, which are expected to facilitate the Institute's research and field-monitoring activities significantly.

The handover marks another milestone in the longstanding cooperation between Addis Ababa University and the U.S. Embassy and is expected to strengthen AAU's capacity in earth science research, field observation, and scientific knowledge generation.













Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital Launches “Yes for Good Deeds” Blood Donation Campaign

Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital, a teaching hospital of Addis Ababa University (AAU), has launched a blood donation campaign under the theme “Yes for Good Deeds” (እሺ ለበጎ ተግባር) to help meet the demand for blood and support patients requiring specialized medical treatment.

The campaign was organized by the Students’ Association of Addis Ababa University’s College of Health Sciences in collaboration with the Ethiopian Health Professionals Association as part of the annual summer volunteer service program.

Speaking at the launch, Dr. Birhanu Sendek, Head of Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital, emphasized the critical role of blood donation in saving lives. He noted that the hospital receives patients referred from across Ethiopia for highly specialized medical services, making a reliable blood supply essential for emergency care and other life-saving treatments.

The initiative follows a previous summer community outreach program conducted in Bole Sub-City, where free medical screening services were provided to residents. According to Dr. Samuel Zerihun, a board member of the Ethiopian Health Professionals Association, the blood donation campaign is another important contribution to the association’s ongoing efforts to promote public health and community service.

Professor Biruk Lapiso, among those who participated in the campaign by donating blood, underscored that blood is an indispensable medical resource that cannot be artificially manufactured. He emphasized that voluntary blood donation remains vital to saving the lives of patients who depend on transfusions.

He also highlighted that blood donation, when conducted in accordance with appropriate medical guidelines, can be beneficial to recipients while remaining safe for eligible donors.

The campaign has brought together students from AAU’s College of Health Sciences, healthcare professionals, and academic staff of Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital, demonstrating a shared commitment to humanitarian service and community well-being.

Organizers announced that the campaign would continue for an additional two days, offering more volunteers the opportunity to donate blood and contribute to this life-saving initiative.

Through initiatives such as “Yes for Good Deeds,” Addis Ababa University continues to encourage volunteerism, strengthen community engagement, and promote a culture of compassion and social responsibility in support of public health.

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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY LAUNCHES FREE HEALTH SCREENING PROGRAM FOR EMPLOYEES

Addis Ababa University (AAU), in collaboration with Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital (TASH), has launched a three-day free health screening program for university employees at its Main Campus in 6 Kilo, aiming to promote preventive healthcare and improve staff well-being.

Organized by AAU's Office of Innovation and Engagement, the program offers nearly 14 types of free health screening services, enabling employees to access essential healthcare services conveniently at their workplace.

Speaking about the initiative, Dr. Solomon Kiros, Director of the Office of Innovation and Engagement, said the program is conducted twice a year to improve access to healthcare for university employees.



According to Dr. Solomon, the University administration, in collaboration with the College of Health Sciences and Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital, established the program to help employees receive health screening services without the need to travel to external healthcare facilities.

He noted that previous screening programs had helped identify health conditions, including breast and cervical cancer, at early stages, enabling affected individuals to seek timely medical care. He emphasized that early detection and appropriate medical intervention are essential to preventing complications and improving health outcomes.

The program coordinator, Sister Nohel Fikre, said health professionals had also been providing voluntary screening services at various locations during the summer to improve access to healthcare for members of the wider community.

She explained that health professionals are currently providing screening services to employees at the University's 6 Kilo Main Campus. Information about the program has been communicated to university departments through email to encourage staff participation and ensure that employees are aware of the available services.

Throughout the three-day program, employees have the opportunity to receive health examinations, professional medical advice, and guidance on preventive healthcare and the early detection of potential health conditions.

The initiative reflects Addis Ababa University's continued commitment to employee welfare, preventive healthcare, and community engagement. By bringing essential health services directly to the workplace, the University is working to encourage regular health checkups and promote a healthier university community.

AAU OFFICIALS HOLD DISCUSSIONS WITH TANZANIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION STUDENTS' LOANS BOARD DELEGATION

Senior officials of Addis Ababa University (AAU) have held discussions with a delegation from Tanzania's Higher Education Students' Loans Board (HESLB) to exchange experiences on student admission, support services, and opportunities for future academic collaboration between Ethiopia and Tanzania.



The meeting focused on sharing institutional experiences and practices in student admission procedures, student support systems, and the delivery of higher education services. The two sides also explored potential areas of cooperation to strengthen academic and institutional ties between the two countries.

The discussions were led by Dr. Jeilu Oumer, Vice President for Academic Affairs at Addis Ababa University, who outlined the University's admission procedures for undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs.



Members of the Tanzanian delegation shared their experiences in providing financial and other forms of support to students pursuing higher education in Tanzania, highlighting practices aimed at facilitating students' access to and participation in higher education.

Speaking during the meeting, Mr. Alula Mebratu, Head of the Innovation and Engagement Office at AAU's College of Technology and Built Environment, emphasized the importance of strengthening partnerships between Addis Ababa University and other leading African universities.

He noted that, as one of Africa's longstanding higher education institutions, AAU has an important role to play in promoting academic cooperation, institutional partnerships, and knowledge exchange across the continent.

Mr. Alula further described the meeting as an initial step toward establishing stronger cooperation between Addis Ababa University and Tanzanian higher education institutions. Potential areas of collaboration include student and faculty exchange programs, academic cooperation, and joint institutional activities.

The discussions reflect a shared interest in strengthening higher education cooperation between Ethiopia and Tanzania. The engagement is expected to provide a foundation for exploring future partnerships that promote knowledge exchange, institutional development, and opportunities for students and academic staff.

AAU ACADEMIC DELEGATION PARTICIPATES IN CHINA SEMINAR ON DIGITAL LITERACY AND HIGHER EDUCATION DEVELOPMENT



Academic Directors and Vice Deans from Addis Ababa University (AAU) participated in the Seminar on Capacity Building for University Teachers from Developing Countries, held from September 1 to 14, 2026, in China. Organized by Northeast Normal University (NENU) with the support of the Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, the seminar brought together university educators and academic professionals from developing countries to exchange experiences and explore emerging approaches to higher education development.

A key focus of the seminar was digital literacy and the transformation of higher education through technology, innovation, and effective academic leadership. The program featured expert lectures, institutional visits, classroom observations, group discussions, and experience-sharing sessions designed to expose participants to contemporary practices in university education and management.



As part of the program, the AAU participants visited Beijing Information Technology College (BITC) in Beijing and East China Normal University (ECNU) in Shanghai. The institutional visits provided opportunities to learn about the universities' experiences in teaching and learning, curriculum development, faculty development, educational technology, research, and academic administration. Through discussions and observations, participants explored how higher education institutions are integrating digital technologies and innovative approaches into teaching, research, and university management.

These sessions provided participants with insights into institutional strategies for improving the quality of teaching, strengthening research systems, supporting faculty development, and responding to the changing demands of higher education. The seminar provided an important platform for the AAU delegation to exchange experiences with higher education professionals from different countries, examine innovative approaches to university education, and establish professional networks for future academic collaboration.

For Addis Ababa University, the knowledge and experiences gained through the program are relevant to the University's ongoing efforts to strengthen digital learning, innovative teaching methods, curriculum development, research capacity, faculty professional development, and international academic collaboration.

The institutional visits and academic exchanges also offered valuable perspectives on the use of digital technologies and artificial intelligence to enhance teaching and learning, research, academic administration, and student outcomes. The participation of AAU academic leaders in the seminar reflects the University's continued commitment to professional development, digital transformation, international engagement, and the advancement of innovative approaches to higher education.

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT: PROFESSOR MULUGETA BEKELE A DISTINGUISHED PHYSICIST AND AAU ALUMNUS

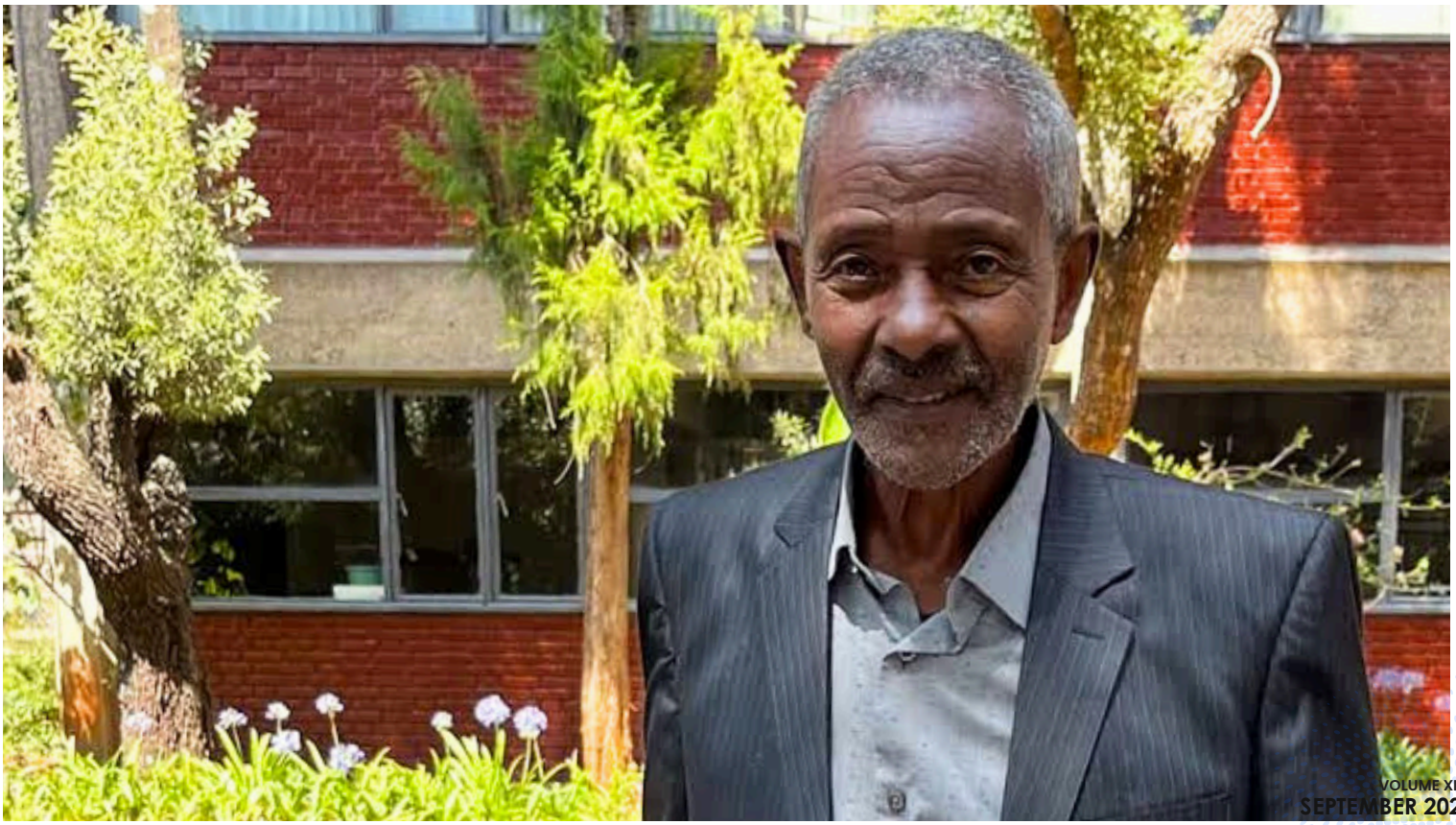


Professor Mulugeta Bekele is a distinguished Ethiopian physicist, academic, and alumnus of Addis Ababa University (AAU). Born in 1947 in Arsi, Ethiopia, he earned his B.Sc. in Physics from Haile Selassie I University, now Addis Ababa University, in 1970. He later pursued graduate studies at the University of Maryland and earned his PhD in Physics from the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore, India, in 1997.

Professor Bekele returned to Ethiopia and built a long and distinguished academic career at AAU, where he contributed significantly to the development of physics education and research. He has served as a lecturer, researcher, department head, and professor, mentoring generations of Ethiopian students and scientists. He has also been associated with international scientific institutions, including the Abdus Salam International Centre for Theoretical Physics.

In recognition of his contributions to science, education, and human rights, Professor Bekele received the 2012 Andrei Sakharov Prize from the American Physical Society. He is also a founding figure in the Ethiopian Physical Society and has played an important role in advancing physics education and research in Ethiopia.

Professor Mulugeta Bekele's journey—from an AAU physics student to a respected scientist and educator—reflects the enduring impact of Addis Ababa University alumni on Ethiopia's scientific and academic development.



Unlocking Banana Farming's Potential in Southern Ethiopia

Research by Dr. Demis Mengist and Dr. Kassahune Asres, CSSAH



Banana farming has considerable potential to strengthen household livelihoods and support local economic development in Southern Ethiopia. Realizing this potential, however, requires a clearer understanding of the production and market challenges facing smallholder farmers. A study by Dr. Demis Mengist and Dr. Kassahune Asres examines these issues in the Abaya–Chamo Basin, identifying priorities for a more productive and sustainable banana sector.

The research explores banana farming's contribution to household income, food security, livelihood diversification, and poverty reduction. It also examines how value chains, market integration, and access to agricultural technologies shape opportunities for producers. Using a mixed-methods approach, the researchers combined structured household questionnaires with interviews, focus group discussions, case studies, direct observation, and relevant secondary literature. This approach brought farmers' experiences into the analysis alongside household-level data.

The findings show that production is largely undertaken on small landholdings. Fifty-eight per cent of surveyed farmers reported holdings of 0.5–2 hectares, while about 20% had less than half a hectare. Only a small proportion held more than three hectares. These figures highlight the importance of making effective use of limited agricultural land.

Water access is another defining feature of production. Forty-five per cent of farmers reported using irrigation from Lakes Abaya and Chamo, while 48% combined irrigation with rain-fed farming. Most producers cultivated local banana varieties, and more than half sourced planting material from their own plantations. Few obtained seedlings through local markets or agricultural extension services, pointing to limited access to alternative planting material.

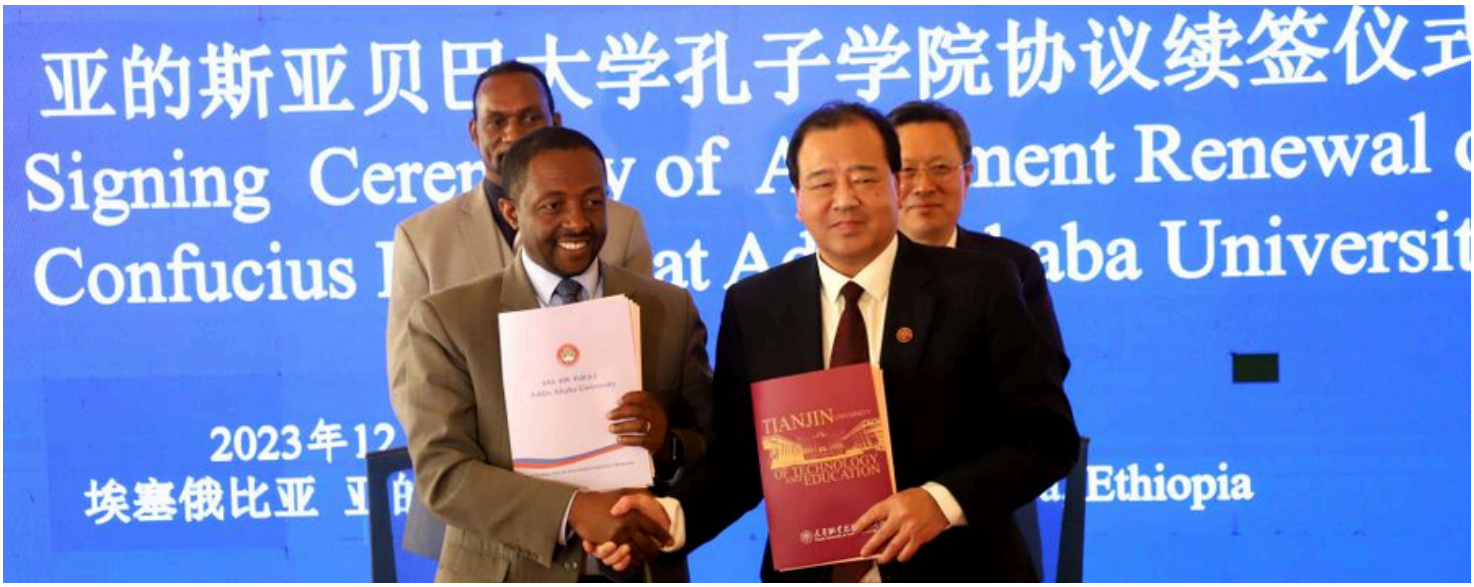
Farmers identified several interconnected constraints: shortages of farmland, declining soil fertility, increasing pests and diseases, inadequate access to improved varieties, weak supply chains, insufficient government support, and declining productivity. Together, these challenges affect both production and marketing, limiting opportunities for farmers to strengthen their livelihoods through banana cultivation.

The study recommends improving access to better seedling varieties and strengthening institutional support to connect producers with domestic and international markets. Its findings draw attention to the need to address farm-level constraints alongside the systems through which bananas reach buyers.

For policymakers, extension providers, and development partners, the research offers a locally grounded account of farmers' priorities. It shows why efforts to support the sector must consider planting material, land productivity, institutional assistance, and market connections together. Addressing these needs could help banana farming make a stronger contribution to sustainable livelihoods and poverty reduction in Southern Ethiopia.

CHINA – CONNECTING EDUCATION, RESEARCH, CULTURE AND INDUSTRY

PARTNER OF THE MONTH



Addis Ababa University's engagement with China encompasses a growing network of relationships with universities, research institutions and businesses. Together, these connections bring education, scholarship, cultural exchange and industry engagement into a broad partnership landscape. This month, AAU recognizes China as its Partner of the Month, celebrating the institutions and individuals whose engagement continues to create possibilities for cooperation and mutual learning.

Academic relationships form an important foundation of AAU-China cooperation. Engagement with Chinese universities creates opportunities to connect academic communities, exchange institutional experience and identify shared priorities in teaching and research. These relationships provide avenues for developing joint initiatives, exploring student and staff mobility, and strengthening connections across disciplines. For AAU, their value lies in building sustained collaboration that responds to the University's educational mission and Ethiopia's development priorities.

The Confucius Institute contributes an essential linguistic and cultural dimension to this engagement. By supporting Chinese language learning and engagement with Chinese culture, the Institute helps bring people closer together. Language competence can open doors to further study, professional relationships and collaboration, while cultural understanding supports more informed and meaningful interaction. The Institute therefore occupies an important place within AAU's wider engagement with China, complementing institutional cooperation with connections grounded in communication, curiosity and mutual respect.

Research collaboration adds further depth to these relationships. AAU's engagement with the China-Africa Institute, including work toward the China-Africa Research Center within the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities, provides a foundation for scholarly dialogue and knowledge exchange. Such cooperation offers space for Ethiopian and Chinese scholars to examine questions of shared interest, contribute different perspectives and develop research relevant to Africa-China relations. It also presents opportunities to connect academic inquiry with policy discussions and development challenges, ensuring that collaboration reflects the experiences and priorities of both sides.

Beyond academic and research institutions, AAU's engagement extends to Chinese businesses in engineering, technology, healthcare and other sectors. These relationships broaden the University's partnership network and create avenues for connecting academic expertise with professional practice. Cooperation with industry can support dialogue around workforce needs, skills development, applied research and innovation. It also offers possibilities for students and staff to engage with practical challenges and explore how knowledge developed within the University can contribute to solutions beyond the campus.

The breadth of these connections is a distinctive strength. Universities, research institutions, the Confucius Institute and business partners each contribute a different dimension, while together offering a foundation for cooperation that reaches across disciplines and sectors. Developing connections among these engagements can help AAU identify complementary strengths and shape initiatives with clear institutional and public value.

Recognizing China as Partner of the Month acknowledges this diverse community of collaborators. It is also an opportunity to reaffirm the importance of reciprocity, sustained engagement and shared ownership in building effective partnerships. AAU looks forward to deepening these relationships and translating common interests into meaningful opportunities for students, staff and the wider community.

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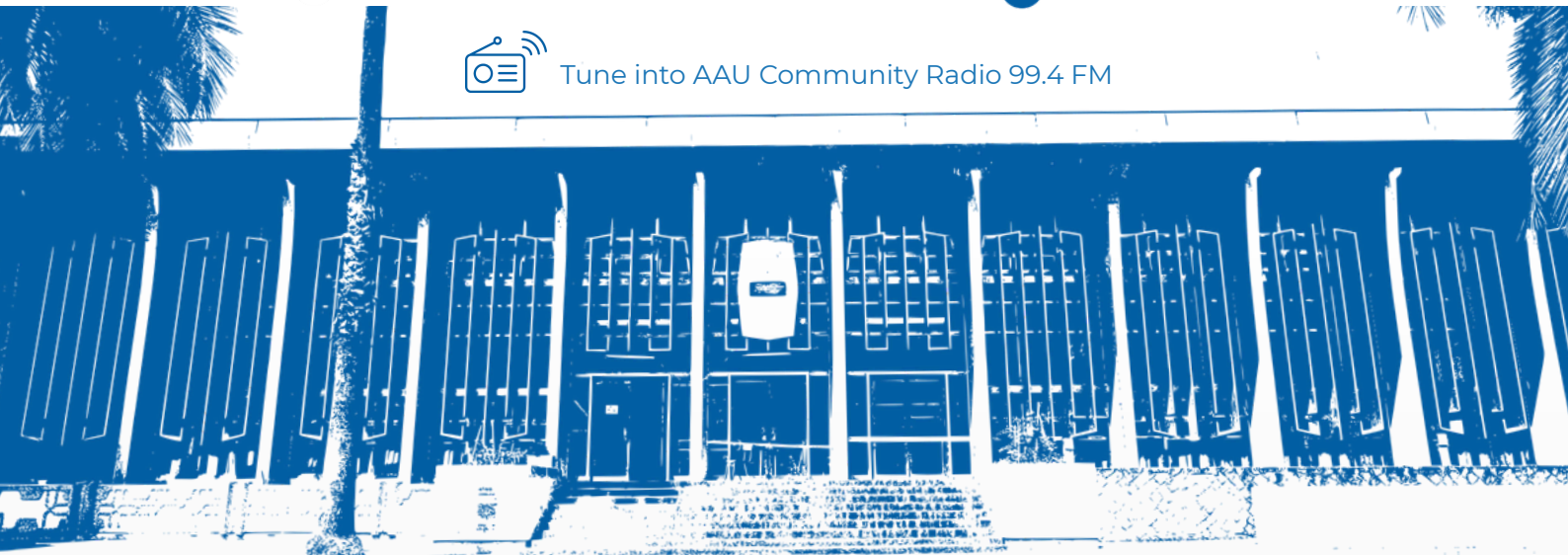
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