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FEB, 2026

AAU CONNECT

VOLUME XII





12 VOLUMES of AAU CONNECT

EST. MAR 2025

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ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



MAJOR EVENTS IN MARCH

JICA Chair Lecture
Mar 3, 2026

Chinese Film Festival
Mar 8, 2026

International Women's Day
Mar 8 ,2026

Cardiac Campaign by Norwegian Team
March 10, 2026

Graduation Ceremony of Medical Doctors(MD)
Mar 14, 2026

Message from the President

Dear Members of the AAU Community,

I warmly congratulate the AAU Connect team on a remarkable first year of continuous publication. Over the past twelve months, the newsletter has grown beyond a monthly update to become a vibrant chronicle of our university's research, innovation, student achievements, and global partnerships. It has created a meaningful platform through which the many dimensions of Addis Ababa University's academic and institutional life are thoughtfully documented and shared.

From highlighting major institutional initiatives and reform efforts to showcasing impactful research and innovation, AAU Connect has provided valuable insight into the work taking place across our colleges, institutes, and campuses. It has also brought forward the inspiring stories of our students and alumni, whose achievements reflect the strength, resilience, and promise of our academic community. In doing so, the newsletter has helped bridge communities within the university while strengthening our engagement with partners beyond it.

AAU Connect has celebrated the voices and accomplishments that define Addis Ababa University, connecting our community while inspiring the next generation of scholars and leaders. I thank the editors, writers, designers, and contributors for their dedication, creativity, and commitment to excellence. Their collaborative effort has ensured that each issue is not only informative, but also engaging and reflective of the university's values and aspirations.

Through its stories, AAU Connect has documented our university's journey and strengthened our sense of shared purpose, highlighting the innovation, talent, and collaboration that drive Addis Ababa University forward. Each issue reflects the heart of our institution and the bright future we continue to build together, reinforcing our vision of becoming a leading research university in Africa.

As we mark this important milestone, I encourage the entire AAU community to continue supporting and contributing to this important platform. Its success depends on the collective voice and participation of our scholars, students, and staff.

Congratulations once again on this achievement. I look forward to seeing AAU Connect continue to grow, evolve, and share our stories for many years to come.

Samuel Kifle (PhD)
President
Addis Ababa University (AAU)

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



12 MONTHS OF STORIES AND SCHOLARSHIP, AND SHARED VISION

(ANNIVERSARY EDITION FLAGSHIP FEATURE)

When the first issue of AAU Connect was released in early 2025, it marked the beginning of a new chapter in institutional storytelling at Addis Ababa University. Designed as a monthly platform to highlight research, academic achievements, partnerships, and student life, the newsletter set out to capture the diverse voices and accomplishments that define Ethiopia's premier university. Twelve months later, AAU Connect has become much more than a newsletter. It has evolved into a chronicle of the university's intellectual life that documents the work of its scholars, the aspirations of its students, and the global connections that shape the institution's future.

From the outset, AAU Connect sought to provide a window into the many activities unfolding across the university's colleges, research institutes, and campuses.

The April 2025 issue (Volume II), for instance, introduced one of the year's most ambitious institutional initiatives through the feature article "The Vision Behind the University Village of Addis Ababa." The university leadership described the planned transformation of the Arat Kilo–Shiro Meda corridor into an integrated hub of learning, culture, and innovation. The proposed "University Village" project reflected a broader institutional reform agenda aimed at strengthening research infrastructure, student life, and global partnerships.

A particularly notable moment in the first year of AAU Connect was the May/June Special Edition titled "Inside the Reform Journey." This issue was entirely dedicated to documenting the university's ongoing reform process, presented uniquely through the voices of the institution's Vice Presidents. Each contributed a perspective from their respective portfolios, academic affairs, research and technology transfer, administration, and student services, offering readers a rare, insider view of the vision, challenges, and progress of the reform agenda. By bringing together these leadership voices on one issue, the edition stood out as a landmark in institutional transparency and collective leadership, reinforcing AAU Connect's role as a platform for both reflection and accountability.

One of the defining strengths of AAU Connect has been its consistent focus on research and innovation. Throughout the year, the newsletter brought readers into the heart of research at the university, showcasing work that bridges science, society, and innovation. From studies of Ethiopia's rich medicinal plant heritage, where biodiversity meets generations of indigenous knowledge, to efforts aimed at making diagnostic imaging safer and more effective, the newsletter highlighted research grounded in real-world impact. Other features explored how local knowledge systems can inform biodiversity conservation, health, and food security, while also shedding light on complex social challenges such as forced displacement and migration.

At the same time, applied research stories demonstrated tangible solutions for national development, including advances in controlling bovine tuberculosis through vaccination, combating coffee wilt disease with bio-fungicides, and developing locally produced yeast to support Ethiopia's bakery and bioethanol industries. Together, these stories reflected a research ecosystem that is both deeply rooted in local realities and responsive to global challenges.

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



12 MONTHS OF STORIES AND SCHOLARSHIP, AND SHARED VISION

CONTINUED . . .

Throughout its first year, AAU Connect also highlighted the achievements of students whose creativity and determination exemplify the next generation of Ethiopian innovators. A standout story profiled Lidiya Mamo, a fourth-year Software Engineering student who helped lead a team of Ethiopian students to victory in Huawei's global Seeds for the Future Tech4Good Competition. Their project, "Early Vet," developed a smart livestock monitoring system using sensor technology to track animal health, an innovation with significant implications for Ethiopia's agricultural economy.

AAU Connect also featured the journey of the AAU Robotics Club as they prepared to compete in the prestigious VEX V5 High Stakes Game. By showcasing student achievements such as these, AAU Connect has highlighted the dynamism and creativity that characterize the AAU student community.

The newsletter's Alumni Spotlight section has become one of its most inspiring features. The section has highlighted the remarkable breadth and reach of AAU graduates, spanning fields from engineering and science to the arts and entertainment. Over the past year, AAU Connect has featured alumni across generations, from some of the university's earliest graduates to current PhD candidates, demonstrating the enduring impact of an AAU education and the diverse paths its graduates continue to pursue. Stories like this underscore the transformative power of an AAU education and the far-reaching influence of its alumni.

Another defining theme of the newsletter's first year has been the importance of partnerships in advancing the university's mission. Each month, AAU Connect has featured a "Partner of the Month," highlighting the collaborations that continue to position Addis Ababa University as a truly global institution. Through these stories, readers have gained insight into the diverse networks that support teaching, research, and innovation across the university. These partnerships span international universities, research centers, and development organizations, creating opportunities for academic exchange, joint research, and capacity building. They reflect a shared commitment to addressing global challenges while strengthening local impact.

The November 2025 issue specifically published under the theme "AAU @ 75: Partners in Excellence" celebrated the university's seventy-five-year legacy while highlighting collaborations with international institutions and development partners. These partnerships support research training, academic exchange, and collaborative innovation, reinforcing AAU's position within the global academic community.

Taken together, the stories published over the past year paint a portrait of a university in motion, an institution that continues to expand its research capacity, strengthen its global partnerships, and nurture the next generation of scholars.

As AAU Connect celebrates its first anniversary, the publication stands as a testament to the power of storytelling in building a vibrant academic community.

The year ahead promises new discoveries, new partnerships, and new stories waiting to be told. As the university continues its journey toward becoming a leading research university in Africa, AAU Connect will remain a platform where those stories are shared, connecting minds, celebrating achievements, and inspiring the future.

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



AAU's Centre for Sustainable Development(CDS) Admits 3rd Cohort of PhD Students from a Highly Competitive Pool

The Centre for Sustainable Development (CDS), under the College of Social Sciences, Arts, and Humanities at Addis Ababa University, has officially welcomed its third cohort of PhD students.

Highlighting the program's extreme competitiveness, only 9 candidates were selected from a massive pool of 173 applicants, with two female scholars among the elite group of admittees.

Dr. Aklilu Amsalu, Head of the Centre for Sustainable Development, stated that the selection process followed rigorous university standards, including document verification, written examinations, and oral interviews. "Given the overwhelming number of applicants, the selection process was challenging, but it ensured that only the most exceptional candidates were admitted," Dr. Aklilu noted.





The PhD program is a collaborative initiative between Addis Ababa University, the University of Oslo (Norway), and the University of Malawi.

As a multidisciplinary program, it attracts professionals from diverse academic backgrounds. With 22 students already enrolled in the first two rounds, the addition of the 9 new candidates brings the total number of PhD researchers at the Centre to 31.

The orientation event concluded with an introductory session where the new candidates met with senior students and faculty members.

The program continues to play a pivotal role in fostering advanced research and building national capacity in sustainable development.

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



AAU's College of Health Sciences Showcases Collaborative Health Performance Progress to Spanish Global Health Ambassador

In a significant move to elevate Ethiopia's healthcare landscape, the Addis Ababa University (AAU) College of Health Sciences hosted a high-level delegation, February 13, 2026, to review and expand the Joint European Initiative to Strengthen Specialized Medicine.

The visit, led by H.E. Mencia Manso de Zúñiga, Spain's Ambassador-at-Large for Global Health, focused on the achievements and future trajectory of the partnership at Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital (TASH), the nation's premier referral center serving over 120 million people.

Welcoming the delegation, Dr. Rahel Argaw, Chief Executive Director of the College of Health Sciences (with the rank of Vice President), emphasized the initiative's impact.

"At Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital, we are already witnessing the impact of this collaboration," Dr. Rahel stated. "With support for specialty programs in psychiatry and surgery, twelve in-service training missions have been successfully conducted. In addition, biomedical training and equipment maintenance are being strengthened, ensuring that our hospital can deliver care with greater efficiency and reliability."

For the past two years, the partnership has anchored its efforts in critical departments. Dr. Feron Getachew, Deputy Executive Director of TASH, detailed the successes in Thoracic Surgery, Psychiatry, and Biomedical Engineering.

"Our work with Spanish Cooperation has not only provided equipment but has sustained us through training missions and fellowships," Dr. Feron noted. Given the tangible results, Dr. Feron revealed that the hospital has officially requested to expand the scope of the partnership to include additional specialty and sub-specialty fields, ensuring that the most complex medical needs of Ethiopians are met locally.

The delegation conducted a comprehensive tour of the hospital's Cardiology Department and Biomedical Workshops. These visits allowed the partners to see firsthand the impact of the 12 in-service training missions conducted so far and the improved maintenance of life-saving medical machinery.

Following the site visit, H.E. Mencia Manso de Zúñiga expressed her deep appreciation for the progress made. She reaffirmed Spain's commitment to standing beside Ethiopia in its journey to transform specialized medicine, ensuring the partnership continues to grow in a helpful and sustainable way.



አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



Public Lecture Explores Byzantine Legal Sources and Fetha Nägäst

On February 16, 2026, Addis Ababa University's Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) hosted a compelling public lecture presented by Valerio Massimo Minale, Associate Professor of Roman Law at the Federico II University of Naples. The lecture delved deeply into the intricate relationships between the Fetha Nägäst, the Arabic Nomo canon, and Byzantine legal principles, highlighting their profound implications for Ethiopia's historical and contemporary legal landscape.

Professor Minale opened the lecture by contextualizing the Fetha Nägäst within the historical frame of the Aksumite Kingdom and its connections to Byzantine law and Egypt. He underscored the significance of King Ezana's Christianization, particularly the renowned Nine Saints movement in Ethiopia, which played a crucial role in shaping the region's legal and cultural identity.





One of the key themes of Professor Minale's lecture was the Fetha Nägäst as the "law of the kings," a foundational legal text for Ethiopian governance. The professor emphasized that the Fetha Nägäst, stemming from its Arabic origins, encompasses a wide array of issues that merit thorough scholarly examination. Its status as a vital source of law continues to resonate in contemporary Ethiopian governance, with successive generations of national leaders recognizing its importance as a legal document.

The Professor's insightful presentation not only illuminated the interconnections between Byzantine legal thought and Ethiopian law but also established the enduring legacy of the Fetha Nägäst in shaping Ethiopia's legal framework. The lecture fostered a rich dialogue among attendees, setting the stage for further exploration of these critical historical intersections.

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



AAU Hosts Inagural SSS2026 Conference: Driving Smart Solutions for Digital Ethiopia 2030

Addis Ababa University (AAU) launched its inaugural Smart Systems Solutions Conference (SSS2026) at the Department of Computer Science, under the theme "Code. Connect. Sustain: Towards Green Economy." The event coincides with two historic milestones: the 80th anniversary of the ENIAC (the first general-purpose computer) and the 40th anniversary of AAU's Computer Science Department.

Dr. Wondwosen Mulugeta, AAU Vice President for Digitalization and Infrastructure, emphasized that since transitioning to an autonomous institution, AAU has placed digitalization at the heart of its strategic roadmap. "Our goal is to automate operations and implement Smart Campus and Smart Classroom initiatives. We are aligning our computing curricula with national priorities to guide researchers and students toward impactful innovation," Dr. Wondwosen stated.

He further noted that AAU is moving toward mandatory blended and online learning for all programs. This digital shift is designed to support the Digital Ethiopia 2030 vision by fostering smart solutions in critical sectors such as Agriculture, Healthcare, and Education through strong local and international partnerships.

Dr. Amsal Zelalem, Head of the Computer Science Department, highlighted the department's four-decade legacy in shaping Ethiopia's ICT landscape. The conference featured research presentations and innovative prototypes, showcasing AAU's readiness to adapt to the rapidly evolving landscape of Artificial Intelligence (AI). The event serves as a bridge between academic research and the practical implementation of smart technologies needed for Ethiopia's future prosperity.



አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



Second Ethiopia E-Mobility Ecosystem Dialogue Forum Held

The Second Ethiopia E-Mobility Ecosystem Dialogue Forum was held with the aim of strengthening collaboration among key stakeholders in the country's electric mobility sector.

The forum was jointly organized by the College of Technology and Built Environment at Addis Ababa University, in collaboration with the World Resources Institute.

The dialogue platform brought together government institutions and private-sector actors engaged in Ethiopia's e-mobility ecosystem. Discussions focused on the overall status of e-mobility in Ethiopia, ongoing initiatives, and infrastructure development for electric vehicles.

Delivering the opening remarks, Dr. Zerihun Getaneh, Executive Dean of the College of Technology and Built Environment at Addis Ababa University, highlighted the university's long-standing contribution to producing skilled professionals. He emphasized that the university is ready to play its role in supporting policies and implementation efforts led by the Ministry of Transport and Logistics to promote sustainable transport systems in Ethiopia.

Dr. Zerihun noted that the dialogue forum itself is a clear example of the university's commitment to the sector. He also revealed that preparations are underway to establish a Center of Research Excellence dedicated to e-mobility, which is expected to generate new knowledge and help address existing gaps in the field.

State Minister of Transport and Logistics, Ato Baro Hassen, who attended the forum, stated that the platform was timely and valuable for reviewing the growing number of electric cars in Ethiopia and assessing their operational trends. He underlined that the expansion of e-mobility contributes significantly to the country's green development agenda.

He further explained that Addis Ababa University is working closely with the Ministry on infrastructure design for electric cars, as well as in research and study initiatives aimed at strengthening the sector.



አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII

AAU Hosts AICS Conference to Advance Excellence in Health Professions Education



Speaking at the event, Dr. Dawit Wondimagegn from the College of Health Sciences, Addis Ababa University, noted that the African Health Collaboration (ACH) is a partnership program established by eight African universities, including Addis Ababa University, in collaboration with the University of Toronto. The initiative aims to transform Africa's healthcare ecosystem by developing skilled health professionals, expanding access to quality education, and strengthening graduates' employability and entrepreneurial competencies.

Prof. Biruk Lema, a biology researcher and lecturer at Addis Ababa University, highlighted the importance of an upcoming discussion forum that will bring together universities from Canada and across Africa. He emphasized that the platform will foster the exchange of knowledge and experiences, while further enhancing ongoing teaching and research initiatives.

Prof. Biruk noted that such forums, particularly in the field of health, go beyond strengthening cooperation among African, European, and Canadian institutions. They also create opportunities to launch joint research projects, generate knowledge that benefits Ethiopia, and develop scientific solutions to pressing health challenges.

Reflecting on Ethiopia's long-standing international partnerships, the professor pointed out that the Swedish government has been actively engaged in the country since the 1950s. Its contributions span health, education, child nutrition, forestry, and conservation, with sustained efforts continuing for more than two decades in rural areas. He underscored that the friendship between Ethiopia and Sweden remains strong and that this collaboration is expected to endure well into the future.

As highlighted during the conference, this year's AICS gathering focused on examining the opportunities and challenges of internationalizing higher education, with particular emphasis on health sciences. The program featured paper presentations and panel discussions that encouraged critical dialogue and knowledge exchange.

The conference brought together participants from partner institutions, higher education leaders, policymakers, health professionals, and researchers from both local and international institutions, fostering collaboration and shared commitment toward advancing health professions education in Africa.



አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



AAU Hosts First Round of Ethiopian National Mathematics Olympiad, Welcomes Over 700 Students

The Department of Mathematics at Addis Ababa University, under the College of Natural and Computational Sciences, has successfully organized the Ethiopian National Mathematics Olympiad for secondary school students as part of its community engagement initiatives. The competition was conducted in collaboration with the Ethiopian Mathematics Professionals' Association and the STEAM Desk of the Ministry of Education.

This first round was successfully conducted on February 21, 2026. Addis Ababa University proudly served as one of the official examination centers. At the College of Natural and Computational Sciences alone, more than 700 students from secondary schools across Addis Ababa took part in the rigorous intellectual contest.

Designed to identify and nurture outstanding mathematical talent, the prestigious Olympiad is being administered across 47 universities nationwide, with approximately 9,000 students expected to participate. The competition is structured in three stages, with national winners receiving various awards and the opportunity to represent Ethiopia at the Eastern Africa Mathematical Olympiad and other international mathematics competitions.



አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



FEBRUARY'S ALUMNI - SPOTLIGHT ZERESENAY ALEMSEGED

Zeresenay Alemseged is a distinguished Ethiopian paleoanthropologist and faculty member at the University of Chicago. He began his professional journey as a geologist after earning a BSc in Geology from Addis Ababa University in 1990. He subsequently joined the National Museum of Ethiopia's Palaeoanthropology Laboratory as a Junior Geologist, marking the start of his career in human origins research.

Zeresenay Alemseged is an internationally renowned Ethiopian paleoanthropologist best known for his groundbreaking discovery of "Selam," the remarkably complete 3.3-million-year-old child fossil of Australopithecus afarensis, found in Dikika, Ethiopia, in 2000. The discovery, one of the most significant in human evolutionary studies, provided unprecedented insight into early hominin growth, brain development, and locomotion.

Born in Axum, Ethiopia, Alemseged earned his academic training in geology and paleoanthropology before holding research and leadership positions in Ethiopia and abroad. He is currently a professor at the University of Chicago and has previously served as Curator and Chair of Anthropology at the California Academy of Sciences.

Through decades of fieldwork in the Afar region and other parts of Ethiopia, Alemseged has significantly advanced global understanding of human origins. His work continues to highlight Ethiopia's central place in the story of humanity and to inspire a new generation of African scientists.

Internationally recognized for his scientific contributions, Alemseged was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2013 and to the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2021.

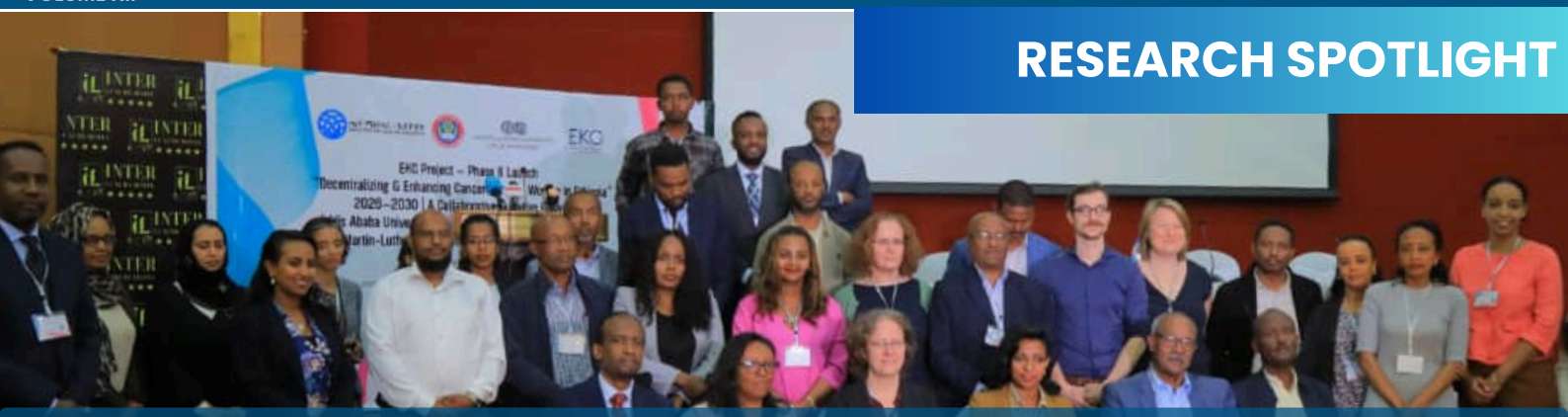
In 2022, he was appointed to the Comité Scientifique International du Musée d'Anthropologie Préhistorique de Monaco and the Pontifical Academy of Science.

Alemseged is best known for his landmark discovery of "Selam" on 10 December 2000, also known as the Dikika child or "Lucy's child", the exceptionally well-preserved 3.3-million-year-old fossil of an Australopithecus afarensis child. Often described as the world's oldest child, Selam is the most complete skeleton of a human ancestor child ever discovered. The find transformed scientific understanding of early human growth, brain development, and skeletal biology, shedding rare light on childhood in the early human lineage.

He discovered Selam while leading the Dikika Research Project (DRP), a multinational initiative he founded in 1999. Funded in part by the National Science Foundation, the project has produced numerous significant paleoanthropological discoveries and continues to conduct annual field research. Alemseged's work focuses on the discovery and interpretation of hominin fossils and their environmental contexts, with a strong emphasis on field-based research that advances knowledge of early human biology, behavior, and evolution.



አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII



RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT

Building on Success: Else Kröner Center for Cancer Care (EKCC) Project Phase II Expands One-Stop Cancer Care Services in Ethiopia

Following the successful completion of Phase I (February 2020 – January 2026), the Else Kröner Center for Cancer Care (EKCC) Phase II project (2026–2030) was officially launched on February 26, 2026. The new phase aims to strengthen and decentralize breast and cervical cancer screening, early detection, and treatment services across Ethiopia. The project continues to be jointly implemented by Addis Ababa University College of Health Sciences and Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg.

During the past five years, the EKCC project has made significant contributions to improving cancer prevention and care by expanding services to the primary health care (PHC) level. A major milestone was the establishment of the One-Stop Cancer Care Center at Churchill Health Center, in collaboration with the Addis Ababa City Administration Health Bureau and Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital. Through a multidisciplinary team approach, the center has provided breast and cervical cancer screening services to more than 10,000 women, established a referral network linking 25 health centers across Addis Ababa, performed over 300 major breast surgeries, and introduced chemotherapy services.





Beyond the Addis Ababa, the project supported around 30 health facilities in Oromia Region and Southern Nations, Nationalities, and Peoples' Region, reaching over 30,000 women with breast and cervical cancer screening services. The initiative also strengthened the health system through facility renovations, provision of essential medical equipment, and training for health professionals.

The project further contributed to national cancer control efforts by supporting the development of breast cancer guidelines and the revision of national cervical cancer guidelines. Community awareness campaigns and psychosocial support services at Tikur Anbessa Specialized Hospital, in collaboration with the Nigat Breast Cancer Survivors Support Group, have also helped improve patient support and promote early detection.

Building on these achievements, EKCC Phase II will scale up the One-Stop Cancer Care model, expand collaborative services for breast and cervical cancer care, strengthen palliative care and patient empowerment initiatives, and advance implementation research. These efforts aim to promote sustainable and equitable cancer care and reduce preventable cancer deaths among women in Ethiopia.

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII

AAU & ETHIOPIAN CUSTOMS COMMISSION BUILDING THE FUTURE TOGETHER

PARTNER OF THE MONTH





The partnership between Addis Ababa University (AAU) and the Ethiopian Customs Commission (ECC) has evolved into a model of enduring strategic collaboration, rooted in a shared vision "strengthening national institutions and advancing Ethiopia's development through knowledge, innovation, and human capital."

At the center of this partnership lies a transformative initiative, the establishment of the Ethiopian Customs Commission Center of Excellence at AAU's College of Business and Economics. More than a training facility, the Center represents a long-term investment in institutional capacity. Designed to support the Commission's ongoing reform efforts, it delivers tailored programs that enhance leadership, technical expertise, and professional standards. Its launch marked a significant step in embedding continuous learning and evidence-based practice within the customs system. The first cohort of customs leaders and professionals has already begun benefiting from specialized training modules developed jointly by the two institutions, signaling a strong foundation for sustained capacity development.

Building on this foundation, the partnership has demonstrated its scale and national relevance through large-scale workforce development initiatives. In 2025, AAU undertook the training of more than 3,300 newly recruited customs personnel from across the country. This nationwide program reflects not only the trust placed in the University but also the critical role it plays in shaping Ethiopia's public sector workforce. By equipping new recruits with the knowledge, discipline, and professional ethos required for modern customs administration, the initiative contributes directly to the creation of capable, efficient, and accountable institutions. It is a clear example of how higher education can respond to national priorities in a practical and impactful way.

Complementing these efforts is a forward-looking collaboration on infrastructure and institutional transformation, the design and development of a smart and sustainable headquarters complex for the Ethiopian Customs Commission. Envisioned as a "smart customs village," the project integrates advanced technologies, modern workspace design, and environmental sustainability. It reflects a shared ambition to create a future-ready institution that can effectively support Ethiopia's growing trade and logistics ecosystem. AAU's multidisciplinary expertise plays a central role in shaping this vision, ensuring that the project is not only innovative but also grounded in local knowledge and long-term sustainability.

Together, these initiatives tell a larger story, one of a partnership that goes beyond individual projects to form a comprehensive, evolving alliance. From building human capacity, to training the next generation of professionals, to designing the physical and technological backbone of a key national institution, AAU and the Ethiopian Customs Commission are working hand in hand to drive systemic change.

This enduring partnership underscores a powerful idea that sustainable national development is best achieved when knowledge institutions and public sector leaders collaborate strategically, combining their strengths to build institutions that are capable, modern, and resilient.

አዲስ አበባ ዩኒቨርሲቲ
ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY
FEB, 2026
AAU CONNECT
VOLUME XII

BEHIND THE PAGES: THE MAKING OF AAU CONNECT

A conversation with Lea Mehari and Dr.Elias Worku, Co-Editors of AAU Connect

Every month, AAU Connect arrives in inboxes and on screens as a polished collection of stories, highlighting research breakthroughs, celebrating alumni achievements, and documenting the life of Addis Ababa University. But behind every issue is a process shaped by collaboration, creativity, and commitment.

In this special anniversary feature, we speak with Lea Mehari and Dr. Elias Worku, co-editors of AAU Connect, about what it takes to bring each issue to life.

Q: Let's start at the beginning, how does each issue of AAU Connect take shape?

Lea Mehari:

Every issue really begins with a simple but important question: What stories best represent the university this month? From there, we start gathering ideas from across the university, colleges, research institutes, administrative offices.

These can range from major institutional developments, like the "University Village" initiative we featured early on, to research breakthroughs, student achievements, or upcoming academic events.

Dr. Elias Worku:

The key is balance. We want each issue to reflect the breadth of the university, academically, geographically, and in terms of people. It's important that readers feel the diversity of AAU in every edition.

Q: Once you have the stories, what comes next?

Dr. Elias Worku:

The next step is reaching out to the people behind those stories. That's where the real work begins. We conduct interviews with researchers, students, alumni, and administrators. These conversations are essential, they allow us to move beyond announcements and really understand the human side of each story.

Lea Mehari:

Exactly. Whether it's a researcher explaining their work, a student describing an innovation project, or an alumnus reflecting on their journey, these interviews are what bring the stories to life. They transform institutional updates into something relatable and engaging.

Q: How do you approach writing and editing the stories?

Lea Mehari:

Once we have the material, the writing process begins. Each article goes through several stages, drafting, editing, fact-checking, and refinement.

We're always trying to strike a balance between maintaining academic credibility and making the content accessible to a broad audience.

Dr. Elias Worku:

Clarity is very important. We want someone outside a specific field to understand and appreciate the story, while still respecting the depth of the work being presented.

BEHIND THE PAGES: THE MAKING OF AAU CONNECT

Continued . . .

Q: The newsletter is also visually engaging. How does the design process work?

Dr. Elias Worku:

Design is a critical part of storytelling. Once the content is finalized, we focus on how it will be presented visually.

Lea Mehari:

We carefully select images from events and archives, and we think about how readers will move through the pages. Creating a clear visual hierarchy is important, as is maintaining consistency with the university's identity. The goal is to make each issue not just informative, but also inviting and enjoyable to read.

Q: It sounds like a highly collaborative process. Who else is involved?

Lea Mehari:

It's definitely a team effort. We rely on contributions from across the university.
Colleges and research institutes provide story leads, the Office of Research Administration connects us with researchers, and the alumni office helps identify graduates whose stories we can share.

Dr. Elias Worku:

Without that collaboration, the newsletter wouldn't be possible. AAU Connect really belongs to the entire university community.

Q: What are the biggest challenges in producing a monthly publication?

Dr. Elias Worku:

Time is always a challenge. We work within tight monthly deadlines, and everything, writing, editing, design, approvals has to come together on schedule.

Lea Mehari:

The final days before publication are usually the most intense. There are last-minute edits, layout adjustments, and quality checks. But it's also the most rewarding part, because you can see everything coming together.

Q: After one year, how do you see AAU Connect?

Lea Mehari:

It has grown into something much more than a newsletter. It's become a platform for documenting the university's journey and celebrating its people.

Dr. Elias Worku:

Yes, and I think it has also helped strengthen a sense of connection within the university. People see their work, their colleagues, and their achievements reflected in it.

Q: And what about the future?

Dr. Elias Worku:

We want to keep evolving exploring new formats, expanding coverage, and bringing in more voices from across the university.

Lea Mehari:

But one thing will remain constant: our commitment to telling meaningful stories. At the end of the day, that's what AAU Connect is about, sharing the stories that connect the AAU community.



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