



THE HANDS BEHIND THE SILK....



Tadesse, Weaver

Tadesse at 63 years old is Sabahar's oldest weaver and one of the most experienced. Tadesse's wife is a spinner, and together they support their six children. Tadesse grew up in a family of farmers in Chench, an area near Arba Minch. Before working for Sabahar Tadesse was employed by one company for 33 years:

"The conditions were not good. Long hours, unfair pay, dirty work conditions. Now, working at Sabahar, my life has changed for the better. I feel secure and happy. The staff are kind and we all respect one another; the grounds and work environment make it a nice place to come every day."



Kalema, Spinner

Before working at Sabahar Kalema, and her daughter lived with her mother and sister, where Kalema worked as an unpaid employee.

"I wasn't allowed to leave the house very often back then and felt trapped. I wanted more for my daughter."

After beginning work at Sabahar, Kalema says she feels empowered for the first time in her life,



"I get to go to work, I get to go to a place where I am needed. I can provide for my daughter, for myself. What I do feels important. It has made me feel important."

Today, she and her daughter live in their own home and Kalema is financially independent.

Bidulu, Weaver

Bidulu, 22 years old, has been working at Sabahar for the past two years. He grew up in the southern countryside, born to a family of peanut and wheat farmers. As a teenager he made his way to Addis Ababa where he was hired and trained as a weaver. For the years before working at Sabahar Bidulu wove on his own loom in his small home in Sheramida, the weaving district in Addis Ababa.



"Life was harder then, when you weave for yourself you don't have the same security. You're worried about shortages of raw material, you're worried about not having enough money to buy the raw material that is available, you're worried about price changes, you're worried about your loom breaking..you're worried a lot."

Bidulu supports his wife and two young children with the income he earns at Sabahar.

"Working at Sabahar has improved my family's lifestyle. I no longer need to worry; I get paid a good consistent price everyday without fail. I work hard and I get rewarded and acknowledged for it."



Etalemaw, Spinner

Etalemaw, now 28 years old, recalls when her family fled to the capital nearly twenty years ago because of violence and instability in her birthplace, the Oromo region.

"We used to be farmers. Wheat, sorgum, tef, barley, but with war in our area, we had no choice but to abandon it all."

Today, Etalemaw is married with one daughter.

"My daughter is in the 8th grade and doing very well. It is wonderful to see that she is learning."

Etalemaw has worked at Sabahar for nearly six years and worked in spinning as well as other areas.

"I feel really lucky to have such a wonderful place to work. The staff, the surroundings, the textiles. But more than that, I feel happy to work outside the home, to have a place to come to every day."



Yeshewa, Finisher

Yeshewa, 28 years old, was one of many women who were given skills training in sewing & finishing through a local NGO. The goal of the NGO was to provide disadvantaged women with basic skills that would allow them the opportunity to enter the workforce. Sabahar, who was put in touch with the NGO, was connected with women who completed the program - Yeshewa being one of them.

"Before coming to Sabahar I was worried about how I was going to support myself and two daughters all on my own. I am very grateful for the support I received from the NGO, and very happy to be working at Sabahar today."

Yeshewa rents her own home not far from the Sabahar compound, and both her daughters are enrolled in the local primary school.

Getachew, Production Manager

Getachew, 30 years old, has been the Production Manager at Sabahar for the past year and a half. Having studied textile engineering in his home town of Bahir Dar, in northern Ethiopia, Getachew made his way to the capital in search of employment. While working for a large-scale factory, Getachew began to search for a position that would allow him more growth; when he saw the position posted in the local paper to work at Sabahar he knew it was meant to be.



"Working at Sabahar has really been a blessing. At my previous job I was in charge of one specific area. At Sabahar the work has far greater meaning; it is varied, I have a wide range of responsibility which means that I am constantly learning and helping to grow myself and Sabahar. If I want to get involved in a new area, I am always encouraged."

Getachew comes from a textile family, both his parents run machines for a large factory back home in Bahir Dar.

"My parents were not given the opportunity to advance their skills, to move beyond operating the machinery. I know they are proud to see that I am in a management role and advancing myself."



Tigest, Dyer



Every day after work Tigest walks to a local school not far from the Sabahar compound to attend evening classes.

"I was never given the chance to go to school when I was young. My mother died when I was a baby and I was brought to Addis Ababa from the countryside to work for my aunt"

Tigest, now 20 years old, is currently making her way through the 6th grade.

"I came from a place where I wasn't given any opportunities. Now that I am old enough and working, I am finally in a position to be able to think about my own future in a wonderful way."

Tigest has big dreams for herself,

"I will study every day for as long as I can. I love learning. I hope to be a designer one day."

Weizero Tigest has found herself in the perfect setting at Sabahar,

"I have learnt so much from everyone about the process. Learning how to make dyes from nature, combining flowers or bark or coffee, and seeing the beautiful result is very rewarding."

Tigest supports herself and one daughter and rents a house not far from the Sabahar compound.

"Working at Sabahar has allowed me to pursue an education, to provide for my daughter, and to allow myself to dream big."