



INCLUDE-ETHIOPIA E-NEWSLETTER

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION NO. 1

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WELCOME TO THE INCLUDE-ETHIOPIA NEWSLETTER!

On January 23, 2025, FSS hosted a roundtable discussion at the Best Western Plus Hotel on **“Promoting Equity and Inclusion in Ethiopia’s Textile and Garment Industry.”** The event brought together key stakeholders to discuss challenges, opportunities, and policy solutions for a more inclusive sector.

This discussion was part of **“Productive Employment and Decent Work for Youth and Women in the Textile and Garment Manufacturing Sector in Ethiopia,”** an initiative by FSS and INCLUDE under the African Policy Dialogues in Ethiopia (APD-Ethiopia), aimed at bridging research and policy.

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This roundtable explored the textile sector’s role in employment generation, challenges in equity and inclusion, and potential policy solutions. Bringing together diverse stakeholders—including workers, employers, legal experts, policymakers, and industry specialists—the discussion generated valuable insights and laid the groundwork for ongoing dialogue and action.



WORKSHOP PROCEEDINGS

- Dr. Yeraswork Admassie (APD Lead), Dr. Ezana Amdework (Project and MEL Lead), and Dr. Assefa Admassie (Lead Researcher) from the INCLUDE team welcomed participants and delivered brief remarks on the roundtable's purpose.
- Dr. Degnet Abebaw then outlined the discussion points for the upcoming session, explaining the team's objectives for the workshop. He reviewed topics including:
 - The current and potential role of textile and garment manufacturing in employment generation.
 - Equity and inclusiveness in employment opportunities, including progress and challenges.
 - Disparities and sector-specific challenges affecting demographic groups, particularly women and youth.
 - Creating an enabling environment for inclusive employment through national and sectoral policies, legal frameworks, and regulations.
 - Key lessons for policy, practice, and research.
 - Collaborative approaches to fostering inclusion in the labor market.

MAIN THEMES & INSIGHTS

1. Employment Generation and Sector Potential

The discussion underscored the significant employment potential of Ethiopia's textile and garment industry. Industry representatives noted that the sector's low capital requirements and ease of establishment have driven its growth, even as it competes with international markets like China and Vietnam. However, challenges such as dependency on imported raw materials, financial constraints, and infrastructural issues (e.g., power outages) were highlighted. Employers and industrial zone developers also pointed out that while the sector is a major employment generator, its full potential remains hindered by skill gaps—especially among women and youth—and weak linkages with technical and vocational training institutions.

2. Equity and inclusiveness in employment opportunities

A core theme was the need for more equitable and inclusive employment practices. Workers emphasized that despite the industry's modernization, low starting salaries, productivity-based wage systems, and inadequate overtime compensation continue to undermine decent work conditions.

They raised concerns over discriminatory practices and the limited support available for women, who often enter the industry without prior skills. Public representatives reinforced these points by drawing attention to the absence of workplace daycare facilities, insufficient maternity leave policies, and the broader impact on workers' families. Meanwhile, gender and legal experts highlighted issues like sexual harassment, unclear employment contracts, and the lack of effective reporting mechanisms, urging the implementation of comprehensive anti-discrimination policies.

3. Creating an Enabling Environment: Policies and Legal Frameworks

Discussions also centered on the importance of strengthening the policy and legal environment to support sustainable and inclusive growth. Employers called for dynamic wage-setting measures—such as collective bargaining and the long-overdue wage board mandated by labor proclamations—to balance fair worker compensation with business profitability. Labor Organization representatives and private NGOs stressed that while Ethiopia's labor legislation is robust on paper, enforcement remains a critical gap, affecting both job retention and the country's international image. They argued that improving monitoring

mechanisms and rebuilding trust with foreign investors are essential for the sector's competitiveness. Public representatives further advocated for more inclusive stakeholder engagement, urging that groups such as disabled workers be actively involved in shaping future policies.

Conclusion

The roundtable provided a rich tapestry of insights by linking overarching themes with stakeholder-specific perspectives. From acknowledging the sector's potential in job creation to addressing critical equity issues and policy enforcement challenges, the discussions laid a strong foundation for ongoing dialogue and collaborative action. By integrating the voices of workers, employers, legal experts, and community advocates, the event underscored that a multifaceted and inclusive approach is key to transforming Ethiopia's textile and garment sector into a model of sustainable growth.



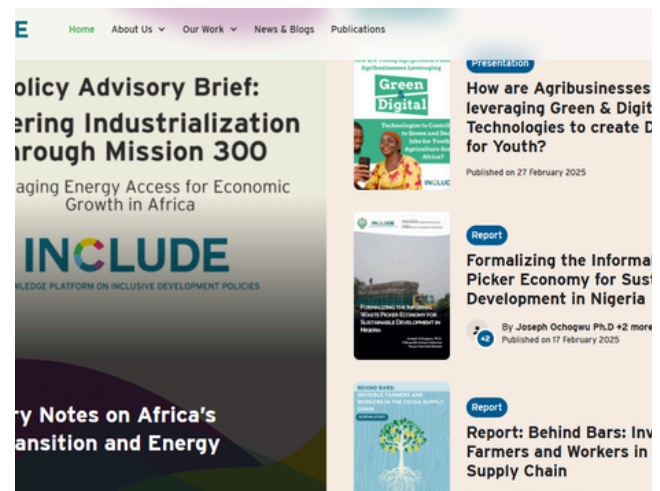
NEXT STEP & FUTURE ENGAGEMENTS

- **Future Roundtable Discussions:**
Additional sessions will be held to further explore key issues and solutions.
- **Research Report & Policy Brief:**
With data already collected, research findings will be synthesized into a detailed report and policy brief for stakeholder and public use.

Visit the INCLUDE platform website for more information!



<https://includeplatform.net/>



ABOUT FSS

The Forum for Social Studies (FSS), an independent Ethiopian organization, has been conducting development-related research and policy dialogue since 1998. Over 25 years, FSS has produced publications and managed a public education program through FM radio and newspapers.

ABOUT INCLUDE

INCLUDE, founded in 2012 by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, is an African-Dutch platform uniting researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to advance inclusive development in Africa. It promotes evidence-based policies through research, dialogue, and collaboration between African and Dutch policymakers.

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This newsletter is a publication of the INCLUDE-Ethiopia project, dedicated to promoting productive employment and decent work in Ethiopia's textile and garment sector.