

Empretec Women in Business Awards
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Ethiopia

Selamawite Tomas

Owner and CEO, Cool Plastic Recycling
(Women owned)

Ethiopia

Website: <http://coolpra.com/>



"Changing trash into cash".

Selamawit founded her recycling company, Kuuli Pilaastiki (Cool Plastic), in 2018 moved by the desire to become independent and her own boss after working for 6 years in a factory. A chemist by profession, she knows how important it is to recycle plastic and reprocess it into new products to reduce its impact on the environment.

As a young entrepreneur, conscious of the ailing situation of our planet, Selamawit is addressing environmental, social and economic problems by producing raw material for other plastic industries and substituting imported products. Her action contributes to reducing plastic pollution and the carbon footprint of manufacturing plastic from fossil fuels, providing income to waste collectors, and reducing dependence on import of certain industrial goods. This way she is creating sustainable employment for herself and others.



At the core of Selamawit's company operations is proper plastic waste management and environment protection. The company turns used plastic items into products for multiple purposes, including polythene tubes.

In southern Ethiopia, recycled plastic covers just 0.4% of the demand. Her factory is the first of its kind located in the southern part of Ethiopia and can offer competitive prices.

The number of employees – 70% women – almost tripled in the last three years, reaching 65, while sales have skyrocketed from 17,000 USD in 2020 to 240,000 USD in 2022.

Her most important client is the Government and its Agricultural and Environmental Office. Under the Green Legacy Initiative, the Government planted 25 million seedlings and committed to plant additional 25 million forest, agroforest and fruit seedlings in the coming four years, needing billions of polythene tubes annually. Other customers are NGOs working in the agricultural sector, also requiring polythene tubes and other plastic items.

Selamawit attended the Empretec Entrepreneurship Training Workshop (ETW) in 2021 and considers that it most of all gave her a great chance to “*think out of the box*”. The most important competencies she learnt and she keeps using are information-seeking, opportunity-seeking, systematic planning, problem solving and taking calculated risks. All have helped her company thrive.

With a view to manufacture other plastic items out of recycled bottles, Selamawit is about to start a new project to produce irrigation pipes and, in the next couple of years, open two new PET plastic recycling centers to other regions of Ethiopia.