

# First Ethiopia...now for the rest of the world



In 2009 the Focus on Ability Short Film Festival began. This festival asked film makers to "Focus on the Ability" of people with a disability and tell a story on film for the world to view. The festival founder was NOVA Employment CEO Martin Wren.

Initially just for Sydney schools, the festival continues to grow annually with participants coming from more than 50 countries.

2021 saw the inaugural partnership with Focus on Ability Short Film Festival Ethiopia, that was a significant success. The FOA Ethiopia team led by Mikias Mulugeta managed to generate 33 film entries including the 2021 Best International Short Film winner.

FOA Ethiopia director Mulugeta spoke about what the partnership means for the people of Ethiopia, an East African nation of more than 115 million people.

"The partnership means so much for the Ethiopian community. It provides filmmakers with an opportunity to showcase their creative projects and

share knowledge with other countries. This initiative will also bring more international cooperation in the future, cooperation that will ultimately benefit the people of Ethiopia. By showcasing Ethiopian talent, we promote diversity and inclusion in filmmaking and empower young people with disability with the tools they need to create films of great quality.

"Focus on Ability Ethiopia is the first of its kind in the country, to focus on artists with disability and their creative rights. Through this project, they got the chance to contribute to a movement that takes away the stigma surrounding disability. The FOA Ethiopia project played a big role in raising awareness of the importance of disability and art culture, increasing access to art, and building stronger communities by supporting and engaging with one another," Mulugeta said.

To celebrate the 2021 achievements, The Vamdaz Cinema in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia played host to a two-day Focus on Ability festival. The events included a disability led bazaar, panel discussions and film screenings, that

culminated in a red-carpet awards ceremony at the Hyatt Regency hotel.

The partnership between the Focus on Ability Short Film Festival and FOA Ethiopia has continued in 2022. FOA creative director Ryan Goodwin discussed future plans for the festival with **Link**.

"The focus on ability message has been truly embraced world-wide and partnerships such as our newly formed FOA Ethiopia will enable us to reach more pockets of the globe. What once started out as a short film festival trying to influence the minds of young people in Sydney schools, now has global goals.

"We are happy to announce that the festival is returning to live events in 2022 across Australia in September and a few international dates to follow. Keep an eye on our social media for full details."

NOVA Employment is the major sponsor of the Focus on Ability Short Film Festival and FOA Ethiopia. For more details on the festival **go to:** [www.focusonability.com.au](http://www.focusonability.com.au) ●