

## EP06

---

0:00:06

**(Dr. Kassahun Tegegne Gesese Vice-President for Academic Affairs | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

Universities have to work hard in order to create an equitable environment, since education is a human right.

0:00:15

**(Zalalem Demeke Alumni | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Queen's University, Canada)**

If we don't include all people, we lose talent, we lose diversity.

0:00:19

**(Reeta Roy Former President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)**

It is incredibly important that we ensure that bright minds have an opportunity, regardless of the circumstances.

0:00:28

**(Dr. Asrat Atsedeweyn President | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

When universities embrace inclusion, they are not only changing lives, but they change the system.

0:00:36

**(Dr. Heather Aldersey Professor | Queen's University, Canada ♿)**

When we all partner we learn from one another and together we do a better job of advancing disability inclusion.

0:00:43

**(Betelhem Ayalew Mastercard Foundation Scholar | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

Some people have negative outlooks towards my disability and due to that I lost my confidence.

0:00:51

**(Mekides Melese Inclusive Educator | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

They have passed through a loop to reach this level. We can make it easier for them to achieve their life goal and to be more successful and effective.

0:00:59

**(Dr. Peter Materu Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation)**

MasterCard Foundation Scholars Program aims to take young people from very, very disadvantaged backgrounds, the ones that would never step out when you go out on the street and say, I have a scholarship. Looking for those.

0:01:31

**(VO)**

Education is often spoken about as opportunity, but sometimes the more important work is to pause and look at who that opportunity actually reaches.

0:01:44

**(Reeta Roy Former President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)**

When we think about education and the opportunities for education, we really need to ask ourselves, who's here and who isn't? And for us at the Mastercard Foundation, our minds immediately travel to young people who have had to flee their homes because of conflict, young people who are refugees, who are displaced, and young people who, in some cases, may be hidden at home because they're living with a disability.

0:02:17

**(Dr. Peter Materu Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation)**

We believe strongly that everyone, everyone, irrespective of his or her beginnings, should have the opportunity to learn and prosper. And you will find that young people who are talented but they come from disadvantaged backgrounds don't get the opportunity to learn. They don't get the opportunity to get a quality education. And so they don't get the opportunity to really bring out their best to transform their lives and those of their communities.

0:02:51

**(VO)**

Turning that belief into something practical meant working with institutions that were already asking similar questions.

0:02:58

**(Dr. Heather Aldersey Professor | Queen's University, Canada 🇨🇦)**

Queen's University has an international centre for the advancement of community-based rehabilitation. It's been at Queen's for the last 30 years and we submitted about 10 years ago a project proposal to the MasterCard Foundation to implement work that we wanted to do in partnership with the foundation.

The foundation got back to us and said there was an institution in Ethiopia that had a similar center and had recently submitted a similar type of proposal to them. So they said, would we be interested in speaking to one another and figuring out what good work we could do together, so we said absolutely. The MasterCard Foundation was a matchmaker of sorts, and the rest is history. So we've worked with the University of Gondar to create a project that speaks to both our institutional priorities and the priorities of the University of Gondar.

0:03:52

**(Dr. Asrat Atsedeweyn President | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

The University of Gondar, since its inception, in 1954, has educated more than 110 ,000 students from all over Ethiopia and beyond. And these students came from different cultures, different languages, and different academic life. And this diversity has increased or enriched our inclusive culture.

But the breakthrough inclusive culture came after we partnership with MasterCard Foundation and Queen's University. After this partnership, we able to build a system, inclusive education system. And because of this, University of Gondar became a university of choice by students, especially students with disability.

0:04:57

**(VO)**

That work at the institutional level shapes the environment students step into, but its meaning becomes clearer when you listen to the people moving through those spaces, and what inclusion looks like from where they stand.

0:05:11

**(Betelhem Ayalew Mastercard Foundation Scholar | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

I grew up in the rural area. My parents are farmers. Inclusion for me is being accepted and getting equal access for opportunities, education, trainings, job and participating in social life without being judged by my disability I have.

0:05:43

**Dr. Kassahun Tegegne Gesese Vice-President for Academic Affairs | University of Gondar, Ethiopia**

Most of the people with disability, they didn't get quality, equitable education like people with non -disability. Because of this, we have an agreement with the Mastercard Foundation Scholarship Program since 2016 because of the gaps that we have identified that there is no higher institution that provides equitable education for all marginalized, especially for people living with disabilities.

0:06:23

**(VO)**

That gap isn't only about access to a university, it's about what happens after students arrive, whether they are actually able to take part, to learn and to contribute.

0:06:40

**(Reeta Roy Former President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)**

Inclusion, it's not just taking a box and a segment of the population is present. It's going way beyond to understand how can you really participate and what it will take to contribute and enabling that to happen.

0:06:56

**(Dr. Heather Aldersey Professor | Queen's University, Canada ☐)**

A strategic priority of the University of Gondar was to have more faculty members educated at a PhD level. So, with the University of Gondar, we welcomed 44 of their faculty members to come to Queen's to do PhDs in a range of different disciplines, with the uniting feature that all of the dissertations with those PhDs had to be related to disability inclusion in Ethiopia or in Africa more broadly.

So, we've welcomed faculty members from education, rehabilitation science, nursing, engineering, a whole range of disciplines because disability inclusion really needs to take a holistic approach.

0:07:39

**(VO)**

Over time, that approach started to show in the people who were part of the work. in how they were trained, supported, and how they carried it forward once they returned.

0:07:51

**(Dr. Asrat Atsedeweyn President | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

The first thing we did is investing heavily in training, exchange programs, and participating in planning and evaluating of the program. The other thing is we used the faculties and the staffs who took their training in Queen's. So these faculties and staff who did their Masters and PhD at Queen's University are returned and they are now the champions of inclusive education.

0:08:34

**(VO)**

That kind of investment changes how teaching happens day to day.

0:08:41

**(Mekides Melese Inclusive Educator | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

Before taking the training on inclusive education, I was not able to understand pedagogical accessibility. So after taking the training, I am able to take into consideration how to make my classroom accessible for students, like my teaching methods, the assignments that I give, the exams that I provide, and even the grading system.

0:09:05

**(Zalalem Demeke Alumni | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Queen's University, Canada)**

A lot of Opportunities and possibilities came because of this partnership. I got the chance to study there in occupational therapy, which was not available in my country. So, after studying there, we came back and started establishing the department.

And we graduated the first batch of PSSE in occupational therapy students. I lead a social enterprise called Grand Assistive Technology Center, where we work to improve access to assistive technology and assistive services for kids with disabilities and use with disabilities and their caregivers.

0:09:49

**(Betelhem Ayalew Mastercard Foundation Scholar | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

After I came to University of Gondar and I joined University of Gondar, I got so many opportunities like training, academic support and mentorships. So, due to that my lifestyle and my confidence have changed.

0:10:20

**(Dr. Heather Aldersey Professor | Queen's University, Canada □)**

The University of Gondar was a leader in establishing physical therapy in the country. They were the first institution to have a training program for physiotherapists, and they wanted to also do the same for occupational therapy.

So, they worked together with Queen's University occupational therapists and others to develop the first ever undergraduate occupational therapy curriculum at the University of Gondar. And that curriculum is now approved by the World Federation of Occupational Therapists.

So that's a really exciting piece because we're building this cadre of experts in rehabilitation and inclusion and accessibility and assistive technology and it's wonderful to see their passion for inclusion and that's only going to grow in the country as we graduate more and more professionals.

0:11:05

**(VO)**

Alongside that work, there was a need to listen more closely to the young people these systems were meant to support.

0:11:13

**(Reeta Roy Former President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)**

We have enlisted many young people who live with disabilities, with enlisted organisations, in some cases run by young people living with disabilities, to get their input about what would inclusion mean. And for many, that means not only just being able to come to school and to get that input, but perhaps in some cases having the right kind of assistive technology.

If they're visually impaired, if they have a hearing impairment, but the right kind of technology that enables them to just participate in the classroom, participate in learning and contributing to the classroom. For some, it's somebody else, who might be able to actually write what they are saying, so that their ideas could be conveyed.

0:12:10

**(Mekides Melese Inclusive Educator | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

When we talk about inclusion, it's not only about for students with disability. What we have to remember is like our students might have different needs depending on their background and their experiences in learning.

So, in my experience, there were students that were like students with disability and they have different types of needs. I started planning my assignments, my classroom teaching lessons, and also my exams and quiz to be like accessible for all individuals in the classroom. In that way, it will be supportive not only for the students, but also for me, since I will be able to deliver a course that's being understood by all the students.

0:13:03

**(Dr. Peter Materu Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation)**

The inclusion is a major piece of the foundations. Actually, we say it's part of the foundation's DNA, because the vision statement that everyone, irrespective of his or her beginnings, should have the opportunity to learn and prosper, recognizes that it's not only the people that are out there who can seize opportunities as they get exposed to them. But rather, everyone, even those that are not exposed to opportunities, we should make an effort to reach them and make sure that we include them in what we do.

0:13:50

**(VO)**

Living up to that commitment often comes down to the everyday choices universities make about their spaces and services.

0:13:58

**(Dr. Kassahun Tegegne Gesese Vice-President for Academic Affairs | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

The University of Gondar takes comprehensive measures to make our campus accessible for people living with disabilities. We establish a committee, that committee having a checklist to assess whether our campus is accessible for people with disabilities. And then, based on the reports that we have received from the committee, we rearrange.

0:14:34

**(Dr. Asrat Atsedeweyn President | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

The very challenging problem is changing the mindset. So the mindset in terms of disability or other forms of inclusiveness is very low. But because of the big commitment in the leadership, staff, faculties and other stakeholders, we became able to manage all those problems.

0:15:01

**(VO)**

For lecturers, those challenges are encountered in the rhythm of everyday teaching.

0:15:06

**(Mekides Melese Inclusive Educator | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

The most challenging part in delivering inclusive education is providing exams for students with visual impairment. They are taking exams outside the classroom, and someone is reading the exam for them.

So sometimes they need more time, sometimes even their reader or other might not be able to understand the concepts that are being asked. Sometimes their even audibility matters. And also sometimes there might be environmental issues, like there might be rain or there might be sunlight. So it's hard to address or to solve challenges related to providing exams, especially final exams that's being given to students.

0:15:57

**(VO)**

Living with those challenges over time affects more than learning. For many students, it begins to shape how they see themselves.

0:16:07

**(Betelhem Ayalew Mastercard Foundation Scholar | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

My biggest challenge was fear, low confidence. Due to that, I lost opportunities. because I can't change through, I can't change one time because of my past history. And then after I joined, it become, it takes time, but it changed through different trainings and life skills, workshop, networking, like trained friends, the society and my teachers help and my staff is good to that. It changed currently. Almost I am good.

0:17:05

**(VO)**

Experiences like this don't end with one student. Over time, they prompt bigger questions about the kind of education systems being built.

0:17:15

**(Zalalem Demeke Alumni | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Queen's University, Canada)**

Education in Ethiopia, in Africa, also, I think it should not be so much theory focused, but it should be based on and rooted on local realities and contextualized, and also should be inclusive and practical. That way, we can be able to solve problems and that we can be leaders but not followers.

0:17:50

**(VO)**

And as more students begin to seek out inclusive spaces, new pressures emerge.

0:17:55

**(Dr. Kassahun Tegegne Gesese Vice-President for Academic Affairs | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

A brain drain. Some of the masters, they have already completed their master's programme, but they didn't return back to Ethiopia, the University of Gondar. That's an unexpected problem. And the other thing, now, students with disability all over the country, all over the University of Ethiopia, when they are assigned from these 47 universities, public universities in the country, all they requested to come to Gondar.

This attraction brings a challenge, resource challenge. There are students who get support from the Mastercard Foundation program, but there are also other students who didn't get this support. So, there is a problem to make this align each other.

0:18:49

**(Dr. Heather Aldersey Professor | Queen's University, Canada ☐)**

The partnership between Queen's and University of Gondar is really special because we both are bringing things to the table and we're both learning from each other. Queen's has areas where we need to improve and Gondar has really caused us to think critically and work on areas on our own.

And similarly, Queen's has brought ideas and expertise to University of Gondar that they might not have had otherwise. So, I think when we all partner, we learn from one another and together we do a better job of advancing disability inclusion.

0:19:22

**(Dr. Asrat Atsedeweyn President | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

Students with disability prefer to join the University of Gwinder because of the initiatives we took and because we took inclusiveness as one of our priority areas. And students and faculties are more empathic, collaborative, and socially aware.

0:19:39

**(Mekides Melese Inclusive Educator | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

In teaching procedures, students actually enjoy inclusive education. The only thing that they might not enjoy is about the assignments. I might assign students with disability with others without disability, and they might not be able to communicate well. That's the thing that needs to be currently worked on. But The rest of the issues, they are accepted by students and they even enjoy it mostly, like they say it's a good way.

0:20:22

**(VO)**

Those classroom experiences point to a bigger question. What needs to be in place, beyond the classroom, to support learning fully? What needs to be in place, beyond the classroom, to support learning fully?

0:20:31

**(Zalalem Demeke Alumni | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Queen's University, Canada)**

I aspire to see that all people with disabilities, learners with disabilities, children with disabilities, youths with disabilities, have access to assistive technology that they require. I would like to see that assistive technology is being recognized as an essential health product that is integrated into health systems, education systems, and all systems across life. And policy change is needed. For example, it should be recognized. I want policy to recognize assistive technology as essential.

0:21:13

**(Zalalem Demeke Alumni | Mastercard Foundation Scholars Program, Queen's University, Canada)**

A policy change would help, for example, to support local innovators, local social enterprises, to work on manufacturing and distributing and all assistive technology services. Investing on inclusive education brings quality in the University of Gondar, not only in the University of Gondar, but also in all universities in the country.

0:21:29

**(Dr. Kassahun Tegegne Gesese Vice-President for Academic Affairs | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

Investing in people with disability means including all the different people and bring in one table so that that encourages competition among the different people, competition among the different perspectives, competition among the different people who have different philosophies of life. That increases quality in the university.

0:22:09

**(VO)**

On the ground, it comes back to paying attention, to people, to context, to what's actually there.

0:22:21

**(Mekides Melese Inclusive Educator | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

Anyone who is willing to practice inclusive education first have to understand the type of the disability of a person and the type of students that they are teaching. The first thing that's important is not what we think. What's important is what's in the environment, like the reality. So what type of needs do they have? What type of available materials?

What type of available knowledge do we have? So by incorporating what we know, what we have and what the students need, there might be a better inclusive education setup for students and also for teachers.

0:22:58

**(Betelhem Ayalew Mastercard Foundation Scholar | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

I have to give advice for my friends and learners challenging with similar difficulties like me. Look at me, I reached this level and I am continuing. So never give up even you are struggling with so many difficulties.

0:23:27

**(VO)**

That encouragement carries real weight. It also points to the importance of having real opportunities beyond education.

0:23:37

**(Dr. Kassahun Tegegne Gesese Vice-President for Academic Affairs | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

They do have the right to get quality education. They do have the right to get equal education. They do have the right to get any kind of education that the non -disabled people who get. So that is our social responsibility is to create justice and equal opportunities for all.

0:24:01

**(Dr. Heather Aldersey Professor | Queen's University, Canada 🇨🇦)**

I hope that in the future all children with disabilities have access to education and that they're able to study in the disciplines of their choice for as long as they want to be in school. And I also hope that scholars with disabilities get the jobs that they want afterwards and have opportunities to contribute to society on the same level as anyone else.

0:24:25

**(VO)**

The focus then turns to how more institutions might begin to see their role in the same way.

0:24:32

**(Dr. Peter Materu Chief Program Officer | Mastercard Foundation)**

My vision, My hope is that over time we will see more and more institutions in Africa and globally recognize this segment of young people from very disadvantaged backgrounds as a key segment of students they need to bring in, but also the environment within the institutions make it such as to be supportive to this type of learners so that many more of them can come in.

0:25:03

**(Dr. Asrat Atsedeweyn President | University of Gondar, Ethiopia)**

Other universities can learn a lot from the University of Gondar. The most important thing is inclusive transformation is possible through the right partnership with the right leadership and commitment.

0:25:24

**(VO)**

In the end, inclusion changes how institutions see possibility and who they choose not to leave behind.

0:25:33

**(Reeta Roy Former President & CEO | Mastercard Foundation)**

They are speaking about the pride that it provides them to know that they are not leaving behind talented, smart, brilliant minds, and that they too are in some cases adapting classrooms, creating centers of excellence, not just for MasterCard Foundation scholars who may be living with a disability, but for all scholars. and in so doing, all students at the institution.

And in so doing, we are normalizing, if I could use that word, what it means to have all segments of society participate at an institution like a university, but largely to participate and to contribute to the betterment for all of us.