

Turning the Tide in Hawassa: How Recycling Supports a Fishing Community

Hawassa's largest, cooperatively run fish market sits right on the shores of Lake Hawassa, on the western edge of the city. Fisherman Daniel guides us through the bustling, fast-moving market. Voices rise as traders call out, bargains are struck, goods are bought and sold.



At Hawassas largest fish market

Inside the semi-open processing hall, Daniel shows us how the local Nile tilapia is prepared and attractively arranged – ready for visitors to enjoy on the spot, typically served with a fiery chili paste.



Daniel shows us how to prepare the fish



Fish ready to eat with hot chili paste

Lucas, the chairman of the fish market, tells us that part of the hall's roof is missing – something we can now see for ourselves. With the rainy season approaching, this poses a serious hardship for the fishermen who display and sell their goods here. Habtamu agrees to arrange for the missing roof panels to be produced.



Chairman Lucas in front of his office



The missing roof panels

They can be made locally in Hawassa from recycled plastic waste. All that is needed is a simple press to heat the material and shape it accordingly.



The heatpress for the roof panels

But our work at the fish market is not yet done. Ayu, a food stall owner, needs a new stove to cook her fish soup. Habtamu has promised to build one for her.



The food stall owner Ayu

Here, too, reclaimed materials prove useful. From a nearby demolition site by Lake Hawassa, volunteers have collected old bricks, which we now put to use for the new stove. The mortar mixed by craftsman Kookoo includes another recycled component – biochar made from waste. Gradually, the new stove takes shape.



The demolition site by Lake Hawassa



Craftsman Kookoo building the brick stove

This brings our two-day visit to the fish market to a close. We hope everyone is satisfied with the results – we certainly are. What we have shown is this: every piece of waste can be put to use, even if it may not seem so at first glance.