



PHOTO & CAPTION

Making the Best of Hard Times



Photo: IOCCI/Stefanos Roulakis

Muti Tolcha has learned many lessons in his lifetime, the most important being knowing how to make the best of a difficult situation.

While he was in prison, he learned to weave traditional white Ethiopian cloth called *gabi*. After he was released, he found out he was HIV positive and went to the Hope Center, a USAID-funded organization that is working to prevent the spread of HIV/

After being released from prison and testing positive for HIV, Muti Tolcha turned his life around when he received help from a USAID-sponsored project. He started his own business weaving traditional cloth and has hired two assistants to help with the growing workload.

AIDS. The center also helps individuals who have contracted the virus by providing emotional support networks, training sessions, and seed money for starting a business. Muti received counseling and a \$115 donation to start a business.

Now, he spends his days weaving and selling his beautiful fabric. He has so much work that he even hired two assistants to help. The program has given him a future, and now he wants to give back by helping others avoid having to deal with challenges he has faced. "My hope is to live long to educate my children," says Muti, "to teach people about the consequences of stigmatizing people with HIV, and to teach people to be tested for HIV."