In August, professor Awash Teklehaimanot, a health expert with the Earth Institute at Columbia, and member of the Center for National Health and Economic Development, launched the Center for National Health Development in Ethiopia, a project of the Earth Institute in support of accelerated expansion of primary health care facilities in Ethiopia.

The current status of Ethiopia’s health care plan is very ambitious, as the government realizes that improved health is essential for growing other areas of the economy,” Teklehaimanot said.

The government of Ethiopia has committed to training up to 25,000 health workers over five years to provide basic health services throughout Ethiopia. After a one-year training period, the graduates will be placed in 15,000 villages.

In addition to the training and placement of these health workers, the government plans to build and upgrade nearly 5,000 new primary health care centers and construct thousands of basic care facilities called health posts. The estimated total investment required to implement this plan is $1.3 billion. The Center for National Health Development in Ethiopia will provide a critical boost to the capacity of Ethiopia’s Ministry of Health, helping it to succeed in its bold plan. The center is staffed by Ethiopian professionals with extensive experience and training in planning and health systems development, epidemiology, vector biology and prevention and control of infectious diseases. The center’s staff has a special focus on malaria, HIV/AIDS, data management and program evaluation.

Ethiopia’s health care system is in total, as much as 90 percent of the health problems in Ethiopia are due to preventable communicable and nutritional diseases.

Among the least developed in sub-Saharan Africa, the current government’s health care system has recognized that health of a fast-growing population, now more than 70 million, is an impediment to social and economic development. The government has chosen to strengthen primary health care as a strategic approach, to address the health needs of the population and to create basic health care facilities in rural areas.

Widespread poverty, poor nutritional status, low education levels, and poor access to health services have contributed to the high burden of ill health in the country. Life expectancy at birth is currently about 44 years and is expected to decline to 46 years if the present HIV infection rates continue. Malaria is the primary health problem in the country. It is the leading cause of outpatient visits and is responsible for 8 to 10 million annual clinical cases and a significant number of deaths.

Teklehaimanot’s long history of working on health issues in Ethiopia, particularly on malaria, has given him an opportunity to work closely with the Ethiopian government in designing this program and assessing what outside support is needed. Providing this support will be the mission of the Center for National Health Development in Ethiopia.

The center will assist Ethiopia’s Ministry of Health in resource mobilization, and will provide technology for evaluation, data management, and analysis that will contribute to operations management and quality control. The center will also provide technical support to facilitate work with civil society, the government, the donor community toward the accelerated expansion of primary health services in Ethiopia.

The Ministry of Health in collaboration with the Ministry of Education initiated the program by selecting some 85 trainers, whose education began in 2003. The one-year training of the first 2,800 people destined to become rural extension health workers is being undertaken this year. In technical and vocational education training centers.

**Earth Institute Helps Boost Health System in Ethiopia**

By Jennifer Freiman

**In the Community**

**Harlem Artists Win Columbia 250 Community Poster Festival Contest**

By Marisa Sills

Artists of all mediums speak for their communities. So when designer Norman Messiah, a longtime Harlem Arts Alliance member, won first prize in a judged art competition to create the artwork for a commemorative poster representing the upcoming Columbia 250 Community Festival, he was especially honored. Messiah will be awarded a $500 cash prize and his work, “Community Block Party” on canvas, 36” X 24,” will serve as the basis for a poster commemorating this historic occasion.

“I am so honored—I am tickled pink. I cannot explain how exhilarating it is to win something from Columbia,” said Norman Messiah, a very respected creative force in the Harlem community, and the judges were delighted that his vision fit the theme, “Community Living and Learning with Neighbors,” said noted artist and Art Director for Harlem Arts Alliance Ademola Ojuigbele, and four judges on the panel not affiliated with Columbia.

In July, the University reached out to local non-profit and neighboring communities to participate in a contest to create the artwork for a commemorative poster representing the Columbia 250 Community Festival. Artists of any age, professional or amateur, were encouraged to submit entries.

The submissions were so good that the judges decided to award two additional prizes. Jeffrey Sisco, second prize, and Jared Presley, a 12-year-old student at the Children’s Art Carousel, were awarded third prize.

The judges, in addition to the panel of professional artists from Upper Manhattan as well as representatives of the Columbia Community Festival. The selection criteria were creativity, suitability for a poster and relevance to the theme.

The judges in addition to Oluphype Bynum, director of The Children’s Art Carousel; and Camille Girard Alger, president and CEO of Harlem School of the Arts.

On Saturday, Sept. 18 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Columbia has invited its neighbors, students, faculty, staff and administration to the Columbia 250 Community Festival: a darling celebration on Columbia’s Morningside campus. Barnard College campus and in Morningside Park.

The artwork of all the finalists will be displayed on the day of the Community Festival and throughout the week following the event on Columbia’s campus.