

[Taking the Fashion World by Storm](#)

Designer Fikirte Addis is taking the fashion world by storm.

A onetime child psychologist with a passion for design, Addis took a risk in 2009 by launching her own fashion brand — Yefikir Design. Since then, she has won a design competition in Mauritius, received standing ovations at African Fashion Week in New York, and in Paris joined the ethical fashion scene, a movement akin to fair trade.

In the words of fashion-focused *Zen Magazine*, “Designer Fikirte Addis is taking the fashion world by storm. Her 2013 collection ‘Timeless Girl, Modern World’ is shining bright this summer.”

In 2010, Addis launched Yefikir, which offers a “cultural touch for the modern-day woman.” The trade hub provides technical assistance to African firms and governments to help them compete in global markets and helps businesses take advantage of trade opportunities under the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA).

Addis employs traditional Ethiopian weavers and uses local fabrics. She is committed to strengthening the skills of her weavers and providing them with consistent, well-paid work.

Experienced AGOA exporter Wambui Njogu sponsored Addis for fashion shows hosting U.S. and international buyers. Like Addis, Njogu is a savvy businesswoman who has already adapted her product for an international market.

“Fikirte recognized the potential of the existing ‘old world’ weaving industry in Ethiopia and knew how to produce something sophisticated and special from the authentic traditional fabrics,” said Njogu.

She said that “Fikirte’s materials are “timeless,” but the “modernity of her garments means they can be appreciated outside of her traditional markets, as summarized by her aptly named current collection, “Timeless Girl, Modern World.””

Addis credits Njogu with helping her “create story lines and sketches” for her designs and prepare for her first Africa-wide fashion show, the Origin Africa Fiber to Fashion Designer Showcase in Mauritius in March 2011. The showcase was sponsored by the trade hub. Origin Africa is a branding campaign to boost trade with Africa.

Addis’s first-place finish at the Mauritius event secured her entry to Africa Fashion Week in New York and other events in Paris. She now has her own website and Facebook page, with over 6,000 views of her most recent fashion shoot, plus a platform for online shopping. She’s moved from customized pieces to ready-to-wear fashion aimed at the global market.

In 2013, Addis trained 135 weavers to cut hand-spun Ethiopian cotton for optimal comfort and to add embroidery for maximum fashion. Addis says she is getting more size-conscious and is now producing pieces for women larger than super-slim Ethiopian models.

Addis credits the East Africa Trade Hub for providing opportunity, training and exposure to become a successful designer. “This is just the beginning,” she says.

Photo credit: USAID East Africa Trade Hub
