



Quality, Affordable and Accessible Emergency Care: Ethiopia’s First Private Emergency Medical Service System (EMSS) Company

September 2024



The first cohort of the Tebita Paramedic College with the CEO of Tebita Ambulance and the PFC Director
Photo credit: Tebita Ambulance Communication Office

This case was prepared by Cynthia Rayner, a Visiting Fellow at the Skoll Centre, University of Oxford. It was reviewed and approved before publication by a company designate. Funding for the development of this case study was provided by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) in the context of the [Global Innovation Index 2024](#): Unlocking the Promises of Social Entrepreneurship. The case was developed for research and learning purposes. It is not intended to serve as an endorsement, source of primary data, or illustration of effective or ineffective management. Copyright © 2024 Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship

CASE STUDY

Quality, Affordable and Accessible Emergency Care:
Ethiopia's First Private Emergency Medical Service System
(EMSS) Company

AT A GLANCE

Company	Tebita Ambulance Pre-Hospital Emergency Medical Service PLC (Tebita Ambulance)
Social theme(s)	Health
Geography	Ethiopia, with a plan to expand to East Africa
Year founded	2008
Revenues	€500,000 annually
Legal structure	For-profit organisation
Clients	Patients needing 24/7 ambulance transport service; Multinational companies providing health services to employees; Healthcare facilities requiring emergency personnel training, Companies requiring First Aid training.
Business model	Tebita Ambulance has a cross-subsidy business model that subsidizes 24/7 ambulance transport service with corporate remote ambulance services, commercial health and safety training, first aid kit production, and paramedic training
Product/services	24/7 ambulance transport service; Remote ambulance service; International evacuation; First Aid and safety training; First aid kit production; Paramedic training; Ambulance refurbishment; Continuous professional development (CPD) training
Impact reach	To-date, Tebita Ambulance has responded to 100K+ emergency calls and has a response time of 19:00 and 21:00 minutes median and mean, respectively, in its 2023 evaluation. Tebita has also trained nearly 300K clients & professionals, and facilitated 5K international evacuations

Background

Emergency medicine is a critical component of healthcare systems, yet emergency medical services are nascent or non-existent in many countries. Estimates show that in low- and middle-income countries, effective emergency care could relieve more than half of deaths and one-third of disabilities.¹ In fact, the vast majority of injury deaths worldwide are in countries with insufficient emergency care.² Investments in emergency medical services include specialized training, transport vehicles, equipment and planning and coordination systems. However, in many countries, public sector investments are insufficient and national systems are unable to provide timely care for the entire population. At the same time, private services provided by companies and nonprofit organizations may not reach all populations due to costs and coverage.

¹ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK525289/>

² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240064317>

About the Company

Tebita Ambulance was founded by **Kibret Adebe**, a nurse anesthetist who previously worked in the biggest teaching and referral hospital in Ethiopia for 17 years. During this time, Abebe became aware of the high number of needless casualties due to not accessing quality emergency care on time. Abebe left his public medical career to found Ethiopia's first private emergency medical service, receiving the first ambulance license in the country and responding to calls 24-hours a day and 7 days a week from all over the country and neighboring countries (Eritrea, Somalia, Kenya, Djibouti). Tebita has also expanded to include manufacture of first aid kits, refitting of ambulances, first aid and safety training as well as a 20-month training for paramedics, a profession which did not previously exist in the country.



The founder, Kibret Adebe
Photo credit: Tebita Ambulance
Communication Office

Sources of Impact

Customers: Who is served?

Tebita serves **emergency patients**, regardless of their ability to pay. Tebita cross-subsidises this with services and training to **multinational companies**

Workforce: Who is employed?

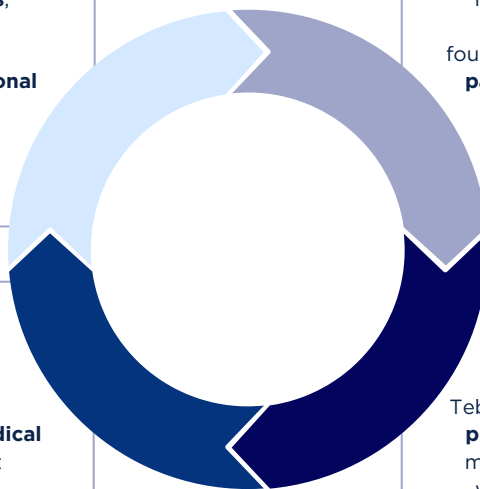
Tebita employs **103 full-time and 27 temporary staff**. Tebita has also founded a paramedical college to train **paramedics** and grow the profession in Ethiopia

Product/Service: What is delivered?

Tebita delivers **24/7 emergency medical services and remote medical assistance**. Tebita also gives short term **first aid and safety trainings**, **manufactures first aid kits**, **refits ambulances**, and **provides emergency medical training**

Eco-System: What relationships are developed?

Tebita works closely with **government policymakers** to develop emergency medical standards. Tebita also works with **training partners & evacuation services** worldwide



Innovation Activities

Tebita Ambulance engages in several activities that drive innovation, both in the communities they serve as well as the larger eco-system:

INNOVATION ACTIVITIES



Building a cross-subsidy business model: Tebita does not deny services to patients who cannot pay, but rather cross-subsidises its revenue with remote medical assistance services to multinationals, manufacturing of first aid kits, and commercial first aid training



Continuous improvement of response times: Response times are often hindered by road traffic. Tebita is working to reduce its response time through different activities: sending an advance motorbike to arrive on site faster; public campaigns to change driver behaviour to make way for ambulances; and using ISO standards to continuously improve quality management systems



Advocating for policy development and standards: Tebita works closely with government policymakers to improve emergency medical standards and bring them in line with international benchmarks. Founder Kibret Adebbe, the current President of SEE has established “Social Enterprise Ethiopia” (SEE) to advocate for better legal frameworks for social enterprises

Key Innovation Challenges & Learnings

Tebita Ambulance is filling a significant gap in public service provision, ensuring that emergency medical services are affordable, accessible, and high quality. This has included several challenges and learnings:

- **Creating a new industry from scratch:** When Tebita Ambulance started, there were no licensing standards for ambulance service provision in Ethiopia. In 2007, Tebita Founder Kibret Abebe assisted the Addis Ababa Health Bureau to write the first Emergency Medical service (EMS) standards and received the first license. He also sold his only house to buy three basic life support (ALS) ambulances. During this time, there were also no ambulances for sale in the country, so Abebe identified an ambulance manufacturer and traveled to the UAE to procure vehicles, bringing the first Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances to Ethiopia. Tebita now has 15 ambulances In which 75 % are BLS and 25% of them are advanced life support (ALS) ambulances
- **Expanding its range of products and services:** Tebita has remained creative and responsive in its revenue model, continuously identifying new products and services to grow the emergency medical service market. During COVID-19, Ethiopia couldn't procure protective equipment (PE) so Tebita began manufacturing masks and PE. Ethiopia also has a shortage of fully-equipped ambulances, so Tebita has begun refitting ambulances with advanced equipment so that on-site care is more effective

Featured Project: Tebita Paramedic College

When Tebita started, the company employed licensed nurses to staff their ambulances. However, their emergency medical training was highly valued and they were quickly recruited into public hospital jobs.

In 2018, Tebita opened the first paramedic college in Ethiopia with a grant of US\$40K from Norwegian NGO, Partnership for Change (PFC). Since that time PFC sponsored the first three batch and Tebita has graduated 160 EMT and created a new class of health professionals in Ethiopia.



Graduation ceremony of the second cohort of the Tebita Paramedic College
Photo credit: Tebita Ambulance Communication Office