

Dilla University (DU), Ethiopia, showcased its commitment to translating cutting-edge research into actionable policy solutions at a significant workshop held June 27, 2025 at its Oda Ya'a campus. This externally as well as institutionally funded research project findings policy brief workshop was organized by the Office of the Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer: Research Publication, Ethics, and Dissemination Office. The event brought together researchers, policymakers, and community stakeholders to discuss policy briefs derived from several of the university's large-scale research projects.

The workshop opened with remarks from Dr. Misganu Legesse, Director for Research, Publications, Ethics, and Dissemination, who celebrated a year of major accomplishments. He highlighted the university's extensive research output, successful national and international conferences, targeted training programs, and significant efforts to modernize its research ecosystem. Key initiatives included digitizing the research management system, aligning research with Dilla University's applied science mission, and boosting the profile of its journals—AJHSM, DJU, and EJED.

In his keynote, Dr. Habtamu Temesgen, Vice President for Research and Technology Transfer, reaffirmed the university's role as a driver of progress. He emphasized that the five presented policy briefs reflect Dilla University's mission to address real-world challenges through impactful, evidence-based research. Dr. Habtamu stressed the importance of modernizing research infrastructure, citing the university's adoption of a digital research management system to promote transparency and accountability. He also noted a key milestone: receiving a global quality assurance certificate in Good Financial Grant Practice—proof of the university's commitment to excellence and continental development goals.

Representing the Ministry of Education, Mr. Shimelis Lemma praised the university's leadership. He highlighted a national shift from a teaching-dominated higher education model to one focused on high-impact research—pointing to Dilla University as a key contributor and the workshop as a model for shaping policy in sectors like education, health, and agriculture.

At the policy brief workshop, Dr. Berhanu Mekonnen and Mr. Adane Hailu presented findings from five major studies. Their brief, *"Human Capital Development in Ethiopia: Sustaining the Unsustainable,"* highlighted that high graduate unemployment stems from a mismatch between academic training and market needs—not a lack of graduates. They called for a strategic overhaul of higher education to develop demand-driven curricula, enhance inclusivity, and establish a framework to track employability. Coordinated reforms, they emphasized, are key to transforming human capital into a driver of national economic growth.

Secondly, Mr. Fetene Balise has also presented his team's externally funded research output titled "Bridging Governance Gaps and Adapting to Change: Climate-Resilient and Institutional Pathways to IWRM in the Genale Dawa River Basin." The summary of the key messages for policymakers is addressing the water crisis, stopping water pollution, protecting the water source, supporting pastoral livelihoods, building climate resilience mechanisms, improving management to prevent, and driving coordinated action through implementing basin plans.

Dr. Henok Mekonnen presented a policy brief titled “*Strategic Water Management in Abaya-Chamo Sub-Basin: Ensuring Equitable and Sustainable Allocation through Modeling-Based Scenarios.*” The brief emphasized that while the sub-basin has enough water to meet growing needs, mismanagement, inefficiency, and lack of coordination are driving a mounting scarcity crisis. The report urges immediate, deliberate action—calling for improved water storage infrastructure, upgraded irrigation systems operating at below 50% efficiency, implementation of Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), and better planning, monitoring, and data availability. It also highlights the need to empower local institutions, which often lack the capacity to enforce sustainable strategies. The authors stress that taking these steps now is vital to ensure water supports equitable growth and climate resilience into the future.

Dr. Abiyot Legesse (PhD, Assoc. Prof.) presented his team’s policy brief, “*Reserving the Konso Cultural Landscape World Heritage Amidst Internal and External Challenges,*” supported by the Volkswagen Foundation and conducted with ZEF, Dilla University, and Kenyatta University. The Konso Cultural Landscape—a UNESCO World Heritage site known for its terraced agriculture—is facing severe threats from environmental, socio-economic, cultural, and institutional pressures. Without urgent action, this unique cultural and ecological legacy could be lost. The brief calls for a coordinated strategy that strengthens governance, fully implements the management plan, enhances climate change adaptation, and integrates heritage into education and planning systems.

Finally, the workshop concluded with closing remarks from Dr. Habtamu Temesgen, who thanked all participants for their constructive input, reaffirming DU’s ongoing dedication to ensuring its research creates a lasting, positive impact on society.