

## Self defence as an empowerment tool for young disabled women in Ethiopia by Lydia la Rivière Zijdel IWG member

In the light of an development exchange program between Dutch disabled youth and Ethiopian disabled youth I was able to teach a group of 20 disabled (young) women self defence and work with several women and sport organisations on the development of sport as an empowerment tool in Ethiopia.

The Dutch disabled young women had to learn from the circumstances their disabled Ethiopian 'sisters' are living in, in order to become ambassadors for promoting the full inclusion of women and girls with disabilities and into the Millennium Goals and in this way



*Etanish*

to ameliorate the lives of this most marginalized group of women and girls in the world.

The ultimate aim of this encounter is to create more awareness in the industrialised countries about the shocking circumstances disabled girls/women live in within developing countries, like for instance Etanish. She lives as a disabled woman after a polio attack in a Leprosies centre, where she shares with 39 other young women 20 bunk beds in a small barrack with only half a meter in

between the beds. They have seldom electricity and often water shortages. The power she and her 'sisters' got through the two days of self defence made her challenge the institute and lead to a better water supply already and the attention of two development agencies to create a more human living surrounding.

Or the story of Mulumubet, a young disabled mother (19) whose partner left after the conception. Mulumubet wants to become a sport teacher and she is earning some money by wheelchair dancing and racing.

Every day she has to struggle to earn some money to pay for the food for her child. Through the self defence program, through which she became inspired, she will now be able to get further



training to become a physical activity trainer A.



*Disabled women shelter*



*Mulumubet and daughter*

The media coverage, the co-operation of the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the many development organisations that have been drawn into this program will now lead to a teachers

training program to be started in March, leading to Physical Activity Trainer A (teaching at cluster and special education schools).