Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) Education Program Success Stories

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
May 2020

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Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) Education Program Success Stories

Executive Summary

The Ethiopian Education Statistical Abstract, 2014/15 indicates that 1.03 million children of official school age were not in primary education, and even when adjusted net enrolment is considered nearly one million children were excluded from the education system and are considered as out-of-school children (MoE, 2016).

Since its establishment in 1997, Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) has been working to contribute to improved access to and quality of education in the target areas in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The success stories in this document were selected from the EDA interventions in North Shewa Zone of Amhara Regional State. However, the number of ABE Centers and primary schools established include Akaki Kality sub city of Addiss Ababa.

EDA has established 45 Alternative Basic Education (ABE) centers and 63 primary schools in Amhara Regional State and in Akaki Kality Sub City of Addis Ababa City Administration. Some of the students who started their education in the ABE schools have now graduated from universities and colleges, and others are attending higher education. Students who could not continue their education due to various reasons could at least read and write. ABE teachers got three years of teaching experience besides the start-up training; continuous backstopping support and capacity building training as well as summer certificate and diploma level education.

Early grade reading and writing programs have transformed many students especially girls from shy and slow readers to book lovers and active participants in the classroom, which will have positive effects on their journey to continue learning. Since 2012, all government schools in EDA intervention areas have allocated a weekly reading period as part of the school curriculum. Girls' confidence has been boosted. In a reading competition organized in 2018 for 4680 students (2385 male, 2295 female) in *Shewa robit* and *Kewot woredas,* girls outperformed boys, which is unusual in many schools in Ethiopia where most of the time boys have an upper hand.

EDA employed the Community Based Reading Centers (CBRC) approach to enhance children's access to reading and develop the reading culture of both children and the community. According to the assessment carried out by the targeted schools yearly, children who attended the reading centers regularly ranked between 1st and 10th in all the schools. Children from all the reading centers (Grade 1 to 4) have passed the standardized woreda exam on reading speed per minute, which is usually conducted at least twice every year. The intervention has also contributed towards creating job opportunities for the facilitators by providing them with capacity building training.

Four centers of excellence were established in four target woredas of North Shewa zone at cluster school level with sufficient and latest reference books, computers, different lab-assistant application software, and other materials. The aim was to contribute to the quality of education by minimizing the challenges faced. A total of 4480

students and 68 teachers benefited from the center of excellence in four targeted schools. Science and mathematics teachers have expressed satisfaction in the teaching and learning process. Previously, teaching science and technology-related subjects was considered difficult as the process was not supported by practical experiments and the use of IT. Students are becoming more committed and developed confidence because their language competence has improved much and their science and mathematics skills exceed beyond their class level. Above all, their study habit is showing a tremendous increase. Teachers say that centers of excellence have greatly contributed to improved access to and quality of education.

EDA has intervened in school management capacity building to minimize the gaps related to school management bodies' capacity identified by the assessment done by EDA in 2012. The assessment conducted by International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR) and EDA in November 2019, have shown that as the result of the interventions in the project target areas17,802 children of ages 4 to 6 years have benefited from the ECCE centers since 2012, a total of 37 child-friendly ECCE centers have been equipped with the required indoor and outdoor playing materials as well as water and sanitation facilities, eighty-six ECCE facilitators have been equipped with the required knowledge, skills and follow up support, the communities have been capacitated to manage and support the centers. According to the school teachers interviewed in *Chira Meda* Primary schools no preschool and primary school student is missing class or dropping out of school for lack of basic services in the schools (water and sanitation facilities).

Girl's education and female students' empowerment is one of the thematic areas EDA has been working on in Minjar Shenkora, Kewot, DebreBirhan, ShewaRobit, and Tarma Ber districts benefiting a total of 71,557 students (36,495 male 35,062 female) in 36 schools. As the result of the joint efforts of EDA and its stakeholders, girls' participation in school co-curricular activities and leadership has increased from 57 percent in 2016 to 72 percent in 2019. Girls' dropout rate has decreased from 3.2 percent in 2016 to 0.5 percent in 2019, Fifty at risk of dropping out girls who got small ruminant support have completed their academic year successfully. Girls' club has been strengthened and working various issues like; girls' absenteeism, gender based violence, girls' academic performance, and so forth by their own initiative. Out of the 1,200 mentored girls, 100 percent of them have continued their education without dropout. Enhanced community awareness about girls' education in the target intervention areas is also one of the key results that the education program has impacted positively.
EDA has learned that consultation with parents and community leaders, stakeholders' ownership, long term interventions with the integrated approach are key to success in improving access to and quality of education.

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Despite, all the efforts the federal and regional governments of Ethiopia have been making for years to improve the quality of education in Ethiopia in the lower and upper primary grades and beyond, not so much has been achieved so far. Creating access to education for all children was a government priority until the government declared that schools' coverage reached 94% in the country in 2009. Early Grades Reading Assessment (EGRA) that USAID conducted in 2010 at the national level as well as a small scale assessment the Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) conducted in 2011 focusing on 20 government schools in the North Shewa Zone of Amhara Region supports the finding. The target *woredas* where EDA conducted the assessment were Debre Berhan, Shewarobit, Kewot, and Minjar Shenkora.

In Ethiopia, girls' school enrollment and engagement is low. Girls lack access to basic education. The Ethiopian Education Statistical Abstract, 2016/17 indicates that 1.6 million primary and secondary school-aged girls are out of school; Seventy-five percent (75%) of secondary school age girls do not attend secondary school. Fifty-three percent (53%) of girls complete primary school, and only an estimated 10% enroll in college. Girls face several challenges in attending safe schools with quality education (UNICEF Fact Sheet –Girl's Education, 2018).

Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) is a not-for-profit organization operating in four regions of Ethiopia; namely Amhara, Oromia, Southern Nations Nationalities and Peoples (SNNPR) Regions, and the Addis Ababa City Administration. Since its establishment in 1997, EDA has been working to contribute to improved access to and quality of education in the target areas in collaboration with stakeholders.

The first phase of EDA's education project focused on creating access to education for vulnerable children by using the Alternative Basic Education (ABE) approach. The project was implemented from 2003 to 2009 in Tarma Ber and Debre Berhan woredas in North Shewa Zone and in Akaki Kality Sub City in Addis Ababa City Administration.

In 2009, EDA made a strategic shift based on the reality on the ground and in line with the priorities identified by many international NGOs and the Government of Ethiopia to improve the quality of education. However, EDA has continued to work to create access to education for marginalized children. During this period, EDA has implemented different education interventions including the Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) program that benefitted 12,357 (6,252 male; 6,105 female) school children directly and 22,165 community members indirectly in four districts of the Amhara Region.

The Lead for Education Achievement and Progress (LEAP) that was funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and Canadian Feed the Children

(CCFC), which was implemented in the Amhara region; Community Cased Child Development with special emphasis on the ECCE program, funded by Canadian Feed the Children (CFTC) and implemented in Akaki Kality Sub City of Addis Ababa City Administration have all contributed to improved access to and quality of education in the intervention areas.

Emmanuel Development Association has established 45 Alternative Basic Education (ABE) centers and 63 primary schools in Amhara Regional State and in Akaki Kality Sub City of Addis Ababa City Administration in partnership with international donors, government structures from regional to Kebele level, local communities, and other relevant stakeholders. All the ABE centers were upgraded to the primary school level and were handed over to the local governments.

Over the past four of the five-year strategic planning period, the EDA Education Program was able to provide educational opportunities for about 90,664 non-formal learners, 215,346 formal school children, and 4,750 adults. With financial support from an anonymous donor, Emmanuel Development Association has constructed and renovated over 30 classrooms and 20 toilets in the Amhara region of Oromia and Akaki Kality Sub City of Addis Ababa City Administration.

The success stories in this document were selected from the projects implemented in the North Shewa Zone of Amhara Regional State. The International Institute of Rural Reconstruction (IIRR-Ethiopia) led the development of success stories using an intensive and participatory approach known as “Writeshop”. Business process owners and experts from project woreda education offices, target schools, EDA, and IIRR-Ethiopia participated in the pre-writeshop, write shop sessions, fieldwork, and provided valuable input at all stages.

This publication is the result of cooperation between EDA and IIRR-Ethiopia. The aim of producing this documentation is to enhance learning within the organization by sharing the experiences of all the key stakeholders for further innovative implementation and scaling up.

The document is designed to be used by individuals, like-minded organizations, partners, etc who are interested to know more about EDA’s education program implementation and the impact it has made in its target areas in Ethiopia. We believe that this will encourage many non-governmental organizations and the government to design and implement even more successful education programs learning from EDA and its partners’ experiences in the sector.

This documentation is organized as follows: Chapter 1 presents the introduction part of the publication. Chapter 2 discusses Alternative Basic Education. Chapter 3 deals with early grade reading, and Chapter 4 presents community-based reading centers. Chapter 5 discusses the center of excellence schools and their contribution to neighboring schools, while Chapter 6 deals with bridging capacity rifts to succeed in education projects. Chapter 7 presents girls’ education and female students’ empowerment.

CHAPTER 2

Alternative Basic Education: Window of Opportunity for Education and Employment

Situation

EDA, working in collaboration with Woreda/City Administration education offices, Kebele administrations, and local community introduced Alternative Basic Education (ABE) in Tarmaber and Debre Berhan woredas, North Shewa Zone, Amhara Region as well as in Akaki Kality Sub City in Addis Ababa City Administration. The aim of the program was to improve access to education.

ABE started its operation in the area in 2004/2005 to help children who were out of school. Some of the children were forced by their parents to work for families with a better income. Others did not have access to education due to the remoteness of school. Children had to walk for about an hour and thirty minutes to reach the nearest primary school. The most affected children were those children from poor families who could not afford to cover their education expenses such as expenses for stationery and uniform, among other things. Children eight years old and above were either engaged in petty trade or worked as maidservants, shoeshine boys, and porters carrying loads

Response

To address the lack of access to education in the project areas, EDA implemented the ABE program. The ABE program was a three- year program with three levels (Level 1, 2, and 3) covering the four-year regular program of schooling (first cycle primary education program). EDA started the ABE program in 2005/2006 and implemented it for three years in 17 kebeles/centers in Tarmaber woreda including Debre Sina town. The project was first implemented in three schools namely, Karafino (09), Zanjira (08), and Gango (01) kebeles and later expanded to the other three kebeles: Faji (09), Liche (08), and CherkosMaderia (08) in 2007 in DebreBirhan Woreda.

EDA recruited teachers by officially advertising a vacancy announcement in all the kebeles. Candidates were required to be from the target kebeles as it was believed they know the context and can teach better. EDA assigned teachers and a coordinator in each of the ABE schools. Their monthly salary was 300 ETB inclusive of tax. The recruited teachers took training in pedagogy for 15 days through EDA support. Moreover, they were given continuous backstopping support and on -the - job training. ABE teachers were also given opportunities to continue their certificate and diploma level education with the financial support of EDA. EDA also prepared students' books on three levels. The program was arranged in a flexible manner.

In DebreSina town, for instance, school-age children studied in the day program and others (those who were self-employed and domestic workers) attended the night shift. Moreover, EDA gave support to Grade 8 completers in the night program as they did not have the chance to continue their education once they failed the Grade 8 regional

exam. EDA also provided stationery materials and bags for all ABE students and school uniforms for other students from poor families.
In Debre Sina town, EDA renovated a building that was owned by the kebele and started ABE in one section with 30 students. In 2007, EDA constructed a building with four rooms (three classrooms and one office), a toilet, and a library with reference materials, and repaired four water facilities.

During the construction of the building and facilities, EDA provided building materials and availed skilled labor while, the community contributed free labour and provided locally available materials such as wood, stone, etc for the construction. This has created an opportunity for the schools to increase their school intake rate and improve the schools standard.

Results

Most ABE schools were transformed into primary schools and some others were dissolved as primary schools were established in the nearby areas. DebreSina ABE School is currently housing the Woreda Education Office.

Students developed an interest to continue their education as they hoped it would change their lives for the better sometime in the future. Older students performed even better. All Level 3 students who completed from DebreSina ABE School joined directly Grade 5 in the nearby primary school without having to take a pre-qualification test. Some of the students who started their education in the ABE schools have now graduated from universities and colleges, and others are attending higher education.

Students who could not continue their education due to various reasons could at least read and write. ABE teachers get three years of teaching experience besides the start-up training; continuous backstopping support and training, as well as summer certificates and diploma level education.

Jobless Citizens have become qualified teachers: Alemiye

Alemiye graduated as a certificate teacher from DebreBirhan College of Teacher Education with the financial support of EDA. Then she continued her diploma level education in the summer program and graduated as aesthetic teacher.

According to Alemiye, all the ABE teachers were employed as permanent teachers in other primary schools as the demand for trained and experienced teachers is high. Currently, Alemye is working in Chira Meda primary school as aesthetics teacher. She is also attending her degree level education in the distance program. Alemiye highly appreciates the support EDA was providing for both the students with low education access as well as for citizens who were jobless and had no qualification to teach when the ABE program was first launched.

All this Could not have been Possible without EDA, and Donors Support: Hailu Mulat

Ato Hailu Mulat is a 68-year-old merchant and lives with his family of seven (4 male and 3

female) in the Asfachew Argaga Kebele. Asfachew Argaga is a kebele located in Tarma Ber District of North Shewa Zone, Amhara Regional State. The livelihood of the communities in the kebele is dependent on farming activities, especially on crop production.

Describing the situation that existed in the kebele regarding access to education, before Emmanuel Development Association's (EDA) commenced its intervention in 2006, Ato Hailu says: "In our Kebele, there was no a single school in which our children could get education, and families were expected to send their children to Armaniya school located about 5 kms away from Asfachew Argaga Kebele". He added that during their journey to and from Armaniya, children used to face a lot of challenges including traffic accidents, and they were sometimes too tired to attend class properly. Children were expected to be at least 10 years old - until they gain physical strength to walk 10 kilometers a day to and from school - to go to the neighboring Armaniya Kebele.

Ato Hailu further said: "Believing in the power of education to change life for the better, I initiated community mobilization and consultation on Alternative Basic Education (ABE) in Asfachew Argaga Kebele in collaboration with the kebele Administration. I personally always regretted to have dropped out of school when I was a Grade 4 student in order to support my parents financially. May be this is why I am determined to prevent this from happening to other people."

According to Ato Hailu, the communities were mobilized for ABE school construction through '*edirs'* (community based organizations) to solicit their contribution in terms of finance, labour and local materials. We managed to build two classrooms using locally available materials. I contributed 2000 birr myself. Fortunately for us at that time i.e. in 2006 EDA came to our *kebele* to work in the education sector and they supported us to construct a standard classroom and latrine. Local communities contributed their labour and time. In addition to the construction of classroom and latrine, EDA assigned facilitators, and provided tables, chairs, exercise books, pens and recreation equipment. The committee consisting of seven managed the construction and operation of the ABE until 2010 when it was handed over to the government and transformed to a formal school. Currently, the committee is closely working with government in managing the schools".

Ato Hailu mentioned that the number of students studying in the school from grade 1-8th increased from 50 in 2006/2007 school year to 230 students (129 male, 101 female) in 2019/2020. He further said due to the establishment of ABE in the kebele, children could enroll at the age of 4 or 5 years and attend their school properly without risking their safety. Moreover, the students could allocate more time to their studies as they no more needed to travel long distances to and from school. This had a positive impact on their academic performance.

"Many former students who attended ABE have already graduated and got jobs. Some are pursuing their studies at universities and colleges. Four of my children and three members of my extended family attended the ABE in the past, Ato Hailu concluded saying "This year [2019] the school has started teaching Grade 7 and Grade 8 students, and we are determined to continue working with government and other stakeholders to upgrade the school to general secondary school [grade1-10th] in the soonest time possible. I would like to

thank EDA and all the donors as all this could not have been possible without their generous support".

CHAPTER 3
Early Grade Reading: Foundation for Nation Building

"Pre-primary education is foundational for our children's success in primary and secondary education, yet too many children in Ethiopia are denied this opportunity. This increases the risk of repeating grades or dropping out of school altogether and relegates them to shadows of their fortunate peers" Gillian Mellsop UNICEF Ethiopia Representative.

UNICEF's (2019) report indicates that worldwide, over 175 million children are dropping out of pre-primary education and the same report shows that more than half of pre-primary age children in Ethiopia are excluded from early childhood education. As a result, Ethiopian children are missing critical opportunities that will risk them developing inequalities as they develop. Preprimary education gives children a jump start to early literacy and numeracy which will chart their success in primary and secondary schools. Unfortunately, success in pre-primary education is determined by family wealth, parent's education, distance from home to school, availability of trained teachers, and supportive policy with adequate resource allocation.

Although Ethiopia has a national policy framework for Early Child Care and Education, lack of adequate resource allocation and other factors pose serious challenges, especially for children of rural households.

"If today's leaders want their taskforce to be comparative in tomorrow's economy, they need to be investing more in early childhood education." Gillian Mellsop, UNICEF Ethiopia Representative.

Early Grade Reading in the Intervention Areas

Early Grades Reading Assessment (EGRA) conducted by the USAID in 2010 and Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) in May 2011 in 20 government schools in four districts (DebreBerhan, ShewaRobit, Kewot, and MinjarShenkora in North Shewa Zone of Amhara Region) reveled that:

- With the exception of few private schools, there was no Early Childhood Care and Education program at any government School across the region.
- According to EDA's EGRA report 2011, and another informal assessment, about 85 % of grades 1-4 children joined primary schools without attending the pre-primary which is a foundation for primary grades.
- EGRA assessment in the project area revealed that 42% of Grade 2 children read zero per minute in their mother tongue and the result was almost similar for Grades 3 and 4. However, it is not expected to conduct EGRA at Grade 4 in schools that perform the expected standard at grades 2 and 3 (i.e. 60 words per minutes)

- School teachers didn't have adequate knowledge on teaching children reading and how to assess and measure children's reading performance.
- Teachers and parents lack tools at hand to measure children's reading skill whether it is to the appropriate grade level skill or not.

In addition to unavailability of the Early Childhood Care and Education centers in the region, lack of family support at home due to illiteracy, poor teaching skills of teachers, unavailability of age-appropriate reading materials, poor school leadership and administrations were all the contributing factors for the poor performance of children's reading skill.

EDA Intervention

In 2012, EDA became the first organization to introduce innovative education programs in the North Shewa Zone of the Amhara region focusing on early grades reading and writing which are foundation skills for children's future advancement. The funding for the program was secured by an anonymous donor.

The specific actions taken to achieve reading and writing proficiency include the following EDA:

- Forged a partnership with parents, schools, and local government leadership, technical and research institutions.
- Conducted Early Grade Reading Assessment to establish a benchmark and identify appropriate intervention points (see EGRA tool below)
- Trained teachers, community facilitators, educational supervisors, and parent-teacher association members.
- Mobilized communities to construct reading shades or camps, construct and renovate classrooms, support facilitators.
- Produced and supplied age and context-appropriate; locally relevant reading materials for the pre-primary and primary graders.
- Trained mother tongue teachers on teaching reading, and strengthening school leadership.
- Created a child-friendly school environment by improving infrastructures. This includes renovating and constructing classrooms, libraries, resource centers, toilets, and laboratory centers.
- Carried out action research to get a better understanding of early grades reading and teaching challenges and come up with innovative ways to address them. EDA established control and intervention groups to compare and contrast the outcomes.

About EGRA Tools

EGRA is an orally administered assessment targeted at measuring the pre-reading and reading skills foundational to later reading (and academic success). EGRA takes approximately 15 minutes to administer and is often combined with a questionnaire measuring a variety of student background variables to assist in explaining some of threading outcome findings. The Ethiopian EGRA consists of the following components, which have been found to be highly correlated with one another.

1. *Letter-naming (or fidel identification) fluency*: ability to read the letters of the alphabet (or the Fidel) without hesitation and naturally. This is timed test that assesses automaticity and fluency of letter or *fidel* sounds. It is timed to 1 minute, which saves time and also prevents children having to spend time on something that is difficult for them.

2. *Phonological awareness*: awareness of how sounds work with words. This is generally considered a pre-reading skill, and can be assessed in a variety of ways. In some Ethiopian languages, this task might be designed to determine whether children could differentiate the first syllable (or fidel) in a word, or whether they could identify all of the fields in a word.

3. *Familiar word fluency*: ability to read high-frequency words. This assesses whether children can process words quickly. The lists of words were derived from the 50 most frequently used words in Grade 2 and 3 textbooks in each language. It is timed to 1minute.

4. *Non-familiar or non-sense word fluency*: ability to process words that could exist in the language in question, but do not. The words were derived from the list of familiar words and follow the common patterns of the language. This component assesses child's ability to "decode" words fluently. It is timed to 1 minute.

5. *Connected text oral reading fluency*: ability to read a passage, about 60 words long, that tells a story. The stories were created to be appropriate for particular regions and targeted at Grade 2 and Grade 3 children. The component is timed to 1 minute.

6. *Comprehension in connected text*: ability to answer several comprehension questions based on the passage read.

7. *Listening comprehension*: being able to follow and understand a simple oral story. This assesses a child's ability to concentrate and focus to understand a very simple story, assessed by asking simple on inferential (factual) questions. It is considered a pre reading skill.

Note that each EGRA task was always adapted and essentially redesigned uniquely for each of the 6 languages in Ethiopia.

EDA Achievement

From 2005 to 2019, EDA has constructed or renovated over 30 classrooms and 15 restrooms in five districts of the Amhara region i.e DebreBerhan, Shewarobit, MinjarShenkora and Kewot districts. Overall, this project has benefited 12,357 (6,252 male 6,105 female) school children directly and 22,165 community members indirectly in the four districts of Amhara Regional State.

After successfully piloting the model in 20 government lower primary schools in North Shewa Zone, the approach is now adapted in upper primary grades (Grades 5-8) focusing on three core subjects: English, Math, and Science.

The following is a summary of key EDA's key achievements from January 2012 to December 2015 under the ''Just Read'' (JR) project in four districts of North Shewa Zone of Amhara Regional State

- ✓ Ten titles of supplementary reading materials for grades 1-4 were produced in collaboration with WHIZKIDs workshop P.L.C and over 110,000 books were distributed and made available to 36 target schools and six community reading centers. Five titles of the books were in Amharic and 5 titles were in English.
- ✓ Six blocks of Early Childhood Care and Education centers with 12 classrooms and 20 toilets were constructed or renovated which created a conducive learning environment
- ✓ One hundred reading corners were established and strengthened in all 20 target schools through the community support and all cluster schools at the districts adopted the practice.
- ✓ Forty-five adult facilitators were given ToT for ten days on how to facilitate adult literacy classes and continuous capacity building training throughout the project's period.
- ✓ Three formal Early Grades Reading Assessment tests were conducted in all the 20 target schools and 8 control schools which became the bases for the interventions.
- ✓ Local support was mobilized from communities and government where they contributed the equivalent of 4.1 million birr in cash and in-kind for various construction activities in the schools
- ✓ One hundred Early Childhood Care and Education management committee members were trained and they become active in supporting children's learning.
- ✓ Worked with communities to establish six reading centers in two woredas and distributed over 3,000 reading materials to the students
- ✓ Collaborated with stakeholders from Regional State Education Bureaus, and technical and research institutions like universities to conduct the Early Grade Reading

EDA Research

EDA established a learning research having an experimental and control schools to learn from its interventions.

As compared to years of 2013 – 2014 in all sub tasks (L-N-P-M, F-W-P-M, I-W-P-M and C-W-P-M) gradual improvement of reading is seen. In the case of mean fluency score

by grade - below 50% in all sub- tasks of year 2013 – 2014 was registered. When we compare mean fluency score by grade of Adisalem Elementary school of Grade three of 2014 – 2015. As shown below.

		2014 G.C	2015	Difference
✓	L,N,P,M	82.5%	107.2%	+24.7
✓	F,W,P,M	46.8%	80.1%	+33.3
✓	I,W,P,M	27%	53.1%	+26.1
✓	C,W,P,M	40.5%	55.4%	+14.9

When we see and summarize the change how big enough EGRA brought in comparison of fluency by woreda, grade, school and target schools versus control are described.

To mention some:

- Fluency by school Grade 3 and Grade 2 Selamchora of Debre Berhan and AdisAlem of ShewaRobit performed the best.
- In general G-2, and 3 girls perform better than boys.
- Target schools performed better than controls.
  Source – Report of EGRA and feedback given in 2015 by Zewdu G/kidan page – 13, 14, and 17.

Fluency by School Type

Data were collected from non-target schools for comparison purpose. The table below presents the mean fluency levels by school type. In all the subtasks, the target schools performed better than the control schools. The widest difference was observed in familiar words reading where students from the target schools were able to read additional eighteen words per minute on average.

Table1. Mean Scores of Subtasks by School Type

School Type	Statistics	Correct letter per minute (CLPM)	Correct words per minute (CFWPM)	Correct invented words per minute (CIWPM)	Correct passage words per minute (CPWPM)
Control	Mean	60.0	26.4	17.1	21.0
	N	150	150	150	150
Intervention	Mean	83.6	44.7	28.7	34.2
	N	785	785	785	785
Total	Mean	79.8	41.8	26.8	32.0
	N	935	935	935	935

Results

The reading program has transformed many students especially girls from shy and slow readers to book lovers and active participants in the classroom, which will have positive effects on their journey to continue learning. Girls now can compete with boys in reading and achieving higher grades in national exams. There is a significant reduction in dropout rates at lower primary grades. It decreased from 6.7% in 2012 to 2.8% in 2015, and about 1% in 2017. Also, the transition rate at lower primary schools increased from 85.4% in 2012 to 93.1% in 2015. Rate of repetition in 1st cycle primary schools decreased from 7.9% in 2012 to 4.1% in 2015 which is below 2% in 2017. Percentage of Early Childhood Care and Education children attendees has increased from 26% in 2012 to 87% in 2018 owing to increased community awareness and improved school environment. Early Childhood Care and Education facilitators used to be paid by EDA and community are now fulltime government employees only with communities recruiting and covering the cost of community caregivers. Starting in 2012, all government schools in EDA intervention areas have allocated a weekly reading period as part of the school curriculum. Girls' confidence has been boosted. In a reading competition organized for 4,680 students (2385 boys, 2295 girls) in the two woredas (Shewa robit and Kewot) girls outperformed boys which is not normal in many schools in Ethiopia where boys usually have an upper hand.

The Following Table Summarizes Early Grade Reading Assessment Result from 2013-2015 in the 20 EDA target schools.

Table2. Summary of students' reading proficiency per given task.

S/N	Description	EGRA 2013	EGRA 2014	EGRA 2015
1	% of children who read Letter Per Minute at basic proficiency level and above in Grades 2 and 3	70.1%	84.6%	90.3%
2	% of children who read Familiar Words Per Minute at basic proficiency level and above in Grades 2 and 3	64.4%	78.9%	83.6%
3	% of children who read Invented Words Per Minute at basic proficiency level and above in Grades 2 and 3	38.2%	62.1%	67.4%
4	% of children who read Passage Words Per Minute at basic proficiency level and above in Grades 2 and 3	49.1%	64.7%	69.9%
5	Mean fluency score of 2nd graders in reading Letter Per Minute	67%	70%	78.3%
6	Mean fluency score of 2nd graders in reading Familiar Words Per Minute	34.8	36.7%	37.5%
7	% of 2nd graders in reading Invented Word Per Minute at benchmark level		4.5%	6.7%
8	Mean fluency of 3rd graders in reading Letter Per	78.8%	88.1%	93.6%

	Minute			
9	Mean fluency of 3rdgraders in reading Familiar Words Per Minute	48.6%	52.3%	55.8%

The above table 2 shows that there has been significant progressive change on students' reading skill.

The Poorest School Ranks Top

Yaynebeba Worku, a 42 years of age school principal for Alemgena Primary School in Minjar Shenkora district says. "Alemgena School was one of the 20 EDA target schools in the four districts. It was meant for only vulnerable children who were not able to go to other big government schools in the district. When the project started in 2012, there were only 200 students who were in grades 1-4 and about 15 pre-primary children who did not have classrooms but learned under the shed with no facilitator though they were supported by volunteer primary school teachers. Today, Alemgena School is the best school in the district and It has ranked 1st out of the 68 government schools by the district education office. It has about 300 pre-primary school children and 865 primary school children with about 30 primary school teachers and 5 Early Childhood Care and Education center facilitators. The government pays the salaries of all Early Childhood Care and Education Facilitators. However, the caregivers' salary is being paid by the community.

Emmanuel Development Association's education project played a key role in changing our teaching methods. My school was meant for only vulnerable children who come from very poor families. It was allowed to operate only from Grade 1-4 due to unavailability of adequate classrooms. But now my school is a center of excellence for all schools in the district and in 2017 we have opened up to grade 8. Many own children left private schools to join to our school due to the improved teaching learning and attractive school environment, availability of adequate reading materials, and laboratory facilities thanks to the support EDA has provided. EDA renovated our classrooms, supplied relevant reading materials, trained our teachers, and many more. Our students are the best and our teachers are model teachers in the district. Reading has become a culture in my school, whoever comes to my school and asks me about reading. we don't have a single student who cannot read in all grade levels''

For a school principal like Yayneabeba, who struggled to improve the school environment with limited family support and low community contribution, this project has brought a dramatic change in a sustainable way. Emmanuel Development Association has intensively worked on community awareness about importance of education, particularly, importance of children's reading at early grades. Due to this, family support at home and the contribution of the community for school activities, the project school has improved.

Yayneabeba said the following about family support at her school: "Parents used to come to our school only when they were summoned to discuss matters related to their children's discipline in the school, but now they come to the school to know about their children's performances. Now I am not the only person to worry about the children's reading ability, I have all the school community beside me for follow up action at home, too".

At Alemgena School, the leadership has become gender sensitive and gives more focus on bringing girls to leadership positions, a practice which was uncommon in the area. About 75 percent of leadership positions are currently occupied by female leaders. The school's principal and vice principal are all female. Girls' education is given a high priority in the school. In fact, one of the project's strategies is increasing girls' participation in leadership and improving their education performance. And this has been made practical at Alemgena School under the leadership of Yayneabeba. For example, out of 530 upper primary grades students, 399 (75%) are female and they all scored above 75 percent mark on average in all subjects. Girls scored better than boys, which is quite unusual in other government schools in the district.

Yayneabeba says the following about tutorials in her school. "We give tutorial classes for girls because they have so many challenges at home and outside of home. Parents don't allow girls to go to the library or sit at home and read, unlike boys who are privileged to do whatever they want. We also have girls from adjacent districts who got married at early age but applied to continue their education in our school and we gave them the opportunity to do so."

Regarding the sustainability of the project, Yayneabeba, says: "I have no doubt about the sustainability of the project. This is because it is owned by the community, the teachers, the students, the education office, and school leaders. All of them work in unison as they share a common goal which is enabling grades 1, 2, 3 and 4 students to be able to read a minimum of 50, 60, 70 and 80 words per minute respectively. Alemgena School plans to achieve these results every year as though the benchmark for a lower primary student is to read at least 60 words per minute. This project was scaled up to upper primary grades in the previous couple of years, but we have continued implementing the same in the lower primary grades and this can be one indication that the project will be sustainable. More importantly, the school communities and leaders' attitudes has completely changed. They used to expect all support from the government and non-government organizations, but now every year the school community contributes from 30,000 to 100,000 birr voluntarily to strengthen the school. The school leaders (Parent -Teacher -Association leaders) play a key role in community mobilization".

I Feel Like I was Born Again: Etalemaw

Woizero Etalemaw is one of the parents in Minjar Shenkora district who attended Functional Adult Literacy program which was supported by EDA for the three consecutive years from 2012-2014. She had one daughter who attended Alemgena School up to Grade 8 and now her daughter is in Grade 9 in another school. Etalemawu had the following to say about the project:

"I feel like I was born again because of this project. I had never attended any literacy class before this project came to us. I could not support my only daughter in her education because I was illiterate myself. I can now read and write after attending a functional adult literacy program.

I now fully understand the importance of education and how to support my daughter. My daughter is now in Grade 9 and she has become an outstanding student. I have been given the best parent's award in 2019 due to my daughter's best result in Grade 9. I wish I had more children and brought them to this school".

EDA's Training has Made My Life Easy: Hirut Tadesse

Hirut Taddesse, 44, is one of the teachers, who used to teach in EDA's target school. She is now teaching in one of the non-target schools in Minjar shenkora woreda, Ararti town.. Hirut says "I came to this new school with the knowledge and skills I got from a training in another EDA target school. I introduced the reading project to my new school and trained all the lower primary teachers on teaching reading. Now we are trying to implement most of EDA project's activities despite the fact that many of the activities need financial support. The training I got from EDA's reading project has made my life easy. Now I am a teacher and a trainer. I have given training on 'eaching reading to over 85 mother-tongue teachers in Minjar Shenkora Woreda"

The Project is for the Community and by the Community

From the above results, it can be concluded that the project's basic principles are totally owned by the community and are practiced by the key actors like teachers, students, school leaders, principals, community, and parents. Reading has become a culture at the schools and in the community. Parents measure their children's reading ability at home and communicate to the schools whenever their children fail to read and achieve the appropriate grade level reading skill. Existing teachers volunteer to train newcomers with their own initiation without any cost. The schools have reading class at least once in their weekly schedule which is accepted by the district's education offices. Students and teachers talk about reading and know their expectations. Parents discuss about reading and help their children practice reading at home. The communities talk about reading and supervise community reading centers; school leaders give due attention to reading and support the schools. In fact, the project is for the community and by the community.

Table3. Students and Teachers who benefitted from the Project:

ECCE	17,802
Lower primary	24,764
Upper Primary	28,197
Teachers	4,560
Accelerated learning (ALFA) (age 9-14)	3,600
Total	78,923

CHAPTER 4
Community Based Reading Centers (CBRC): Bringing Libraries to Communities

Situation

Ethiopia is one of the developing countries where children commute 5-10 km every school day on foot to the nearest school. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, the communities in rural areas are so scattered and often built their houses in places where there are no access roads. Secondly, public transport is rare in many of these rural communities and when it is available families cannot afford transport fees. Most rural schools don't have libraries and the privileged few have limited books and other learning materials. During school hours children have limited or no access to libraries and only those who live nearby schools have the chance to access libraries after school hours. Those who commute long distances cannot stay longer or return to access libraries after schools or during evening hours. It is hard to imagine how children who cannot afford to buy their own books or borrow them and have no access to the internet or libraries could learn effectively and succeed in education.

The above challenges have resulted in poor reading practices and low comprehension and of course poor academic performance. In addition to the inaccessibility of reading centers, lack of adequate reading materials, poor family support at home, poor reading culture of the communities, were also the main bottlenecks of the children's poor performance in reading. The most affected children were those who come from remote kebeles and out of school/school dropout children.

Response

To address the challenges, EDA came up with the idea of establishing community reading centers where some aspects of the library are brought to communities where children can access books and other learning resources. EDA employed the Community Based Reading Centers (CBRC) approach to enhance children's access to reading and develop the reading culture of both children and the community.

CBRC was introduced in Minjar Shenkora and Kewot districts in North Showa Zone of Amhara Regional State in January 2014 where EDA was implementing its education program. Yelen, Madina, and Rasa Guba of Kewot woreda and Bolosilase, Wolenso, and KMWS in Minjar Shenkora woreda are the specific kebeles where the reading centers were located. The woredas were strategically selected for their semi-pastoralist nature where children travel a very long distance to fetch water before school and become absent even from school or come to school late. In the context of pastoralists and semi pastoralists, the community reading centers are called 'reading camps'.

Though the community reading centers were initiated by the project, communities were actively involved in strengthening the camps by constructing additional centers, assigning the volunteer facilitators, allocating land, etc.

The centers became operational in January 2014. The Kebele administrations provided buildings while EDA renovated the buildings, and furnished them with chairs, tables,

and shelves and provided the reading camps with relevant reading materials and storybooks.

EDA also provided sports kits to attract the children to the reading camps. It was mandatory to whoever came to the camps to play games or do physical exercises to attend the reading camp at least for one or two hours. The role of the schools included: looking after the reading materials, managing the reading sessions, and supporting children to go to reading centers to practice reading.

EDA employed facilitators for the reading camps for one year until they are handed over to the community.

The Following are Summary of EDA's Accomplishments:

- Established six reading centers in two woredas and all of the centers were donated by the community.
- Provided the reading camps with adequate supplementary reading materials, furniture, and sports and gaming materials.
- Recruited five community facilitators for the reading camps for one year.
- Undertook community mobilization activity to support the reading centers and their children to come to the reading centers.
- Linked the reading camps to neighboring primary schools so that the school director could give support to the camps.

The Kebele management recruited reading facilitators (one male and one female) on a voluntary basis. EDA paid the facilitators 500 birr from July 2005 to December 2005. It provided orientation on how to facilitate reading center activities which includes reading individually, shared reading, reading loudly, story reading and sharing the stories to the children, and supporting children who struggled to read.

A reading program was prepared for three days per week and facilitators did their jobs in two shifts - in the morning and the other in the afternoon giving them time for their own personal businesses. To encourage them to read, teachers gave students assignments to read stories provided by the CBRCs. The reading facilitators took attendance to know the motivation level of students and school dropouts/out of school children to read the stories. The centers also encouraged adults to read stories.
Children sometimes paraded wearing their sports uniforms and shouting "Let us read". This attracted many out of school children and even adults to come and read the stories in the center.

How Reading Camps are Managed

Since EDA's allocated budget only to pay the facilitators for one year, the communities played a big role in assigning facilitators for the reading camps. The facilitators had a good reputation among the community, they were able to read, write, and speak in the local language, and had great interest to serve the children and the community. The community's roles and responsibilities included raising funds for the facilitators' salaries and sending their children to the reading camps. The facilitators were fully responsible for the management of books, registration of students who come to reading camps, recording students' attendance, managing the reading camps' activities. The activities included: reading the storybooks to children, helping children to read individually and in

groups, and encouraging and facilitating for the children to participate in the reading activities and storytelling sessions. According to the assessment done in October 2019, about 100 children attend each reading camp per day.

Results

The stories highly attracted in-school and out-of-school children. The volleyball and football schemes and the promotion of children parading in the villages shouting slogans motivated people to come to the center.

According to the assessment carried out by schools, children who attended the reading centers regularly ranked between 1st and 10th in all the schools. Children from all the reading camps (Grade 1 to 4) have passed the standardized woreda exam on reading speed per minute, which is usually conducted at least twice every year.

In 2018/19 all Grade 8 students who were in Grade 4 at the beginning of the project have passed the regional exam and were promoted to Grade 9. The project has also contributed towards creating job opportunities for the facilitators by providing them with training skills.

Sustainability

In 2016, EDA handed over the centers to the schools after a three years' intervention. This is done after fulfilling the required materials for the reading centers and paying incentives for the facilitators for six months. Reading camps are now functioning in the target woredas following successful efforts. EDA target school directors and kebele administrators convinced the local community to cover the operational costs of the camps. The Woreda Education Office and the communities have been replicating the program in other woredas. For instance, at least two reading centers have been established under each primary school with full contribution of school communities. In all the existing centers, the facilitators' salary is being paid by the local community. Parents are happily sending their children to the reading camps and taking care of the reading camps which are fully furnished by EDA and the community.

Education Bureau Officials Testify

Ato Abate is a District Education Office Curriculum Preparation, Practicing Team Leader of Minjar Shenkora District. He is also a focal person for EDA Education project. Ato Abate had the following to say about the community reading camps:

''When any one goes to school and invite any student to read stories in Bolo Sillasie primary school which is a linked school to the reading camps, almost all students read to the expected fluency level which was something unthinkable before. If the children are requested to come forward and read in the class, most of them would stand up to read stories voluntarily which was not there before the intervention. This approach improved their reading skills and their confidence to present in front of others as well.''

Samuel Kifetew, Planning Department Team leader in Kewot District Education Office and a focal person of program said: "…currently, all the primary schools in the district are establishing reading centers supported by other donors. This is no doubt a direct replication of EDA's intervention in the District"

Challenges

At the beginning of the project's implementation, the efforts to make the community reading centers familiar with the community and the linking them with the schools was a challenge. In the beginning, the communities considered establishing community reading centers at the community level may hinder them from using their children's labor after school hours. However, after a thorough discussion with the parents and the school leadership, the communities became at the front to donate the land and construct the reading centers for their children. The schools also supervised the reading centers which have been linked with the school.

Lesson Learned

EDA has learned that increasing the awareness level of the communities about the reading problem of their children has made them send their children to the reading centers after school hours and support the reading centers.

CHAPTER 5

Centre of Excellence Schools Contribute to Neighbouring Schools

Introduction

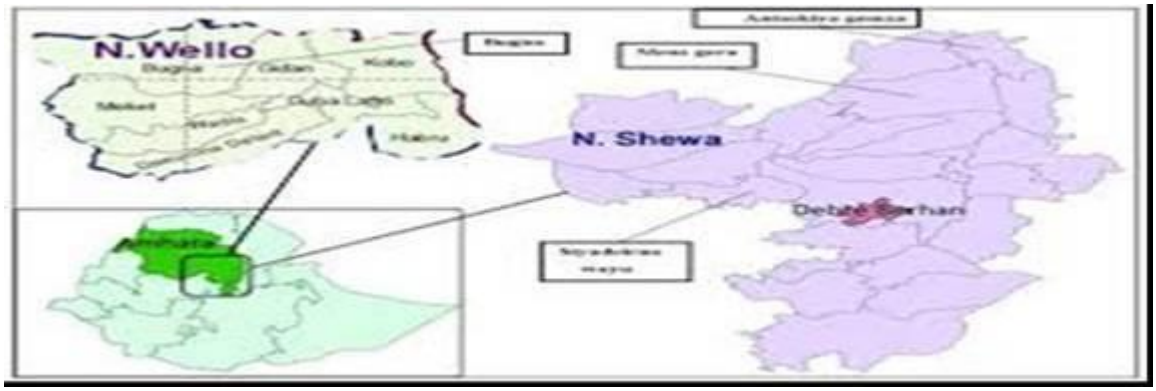
Education is the basic tool for development activities among communities in developing countries like Ethiopia. To improve the quality of education, working extensively using updated educational materials like the latest and standardized reference books, computers with adequate software and other materials is mandatory. Though ensuring the quality of education is the prime focus of the Ethiopian government, EDA (as a local NGO and development agent) is also involved in promoting quality education in targeted formal schools and ABE centers.

Before commencing implementation, EDA conducted a needs assessment with key stakeholders. The organization gave priority to bringing changes to its target area by fully understanding the context and identifying the problems.

EDA established four centers of excellence in four target woredas (one in each woreda) at the cluster school level with sufficient and latest reference books, computers, different lab-assistant application software, and other materials. The aim was to contribute to the quality of education by minimizing challenges in education.

Centers of excellence schools serve students to develop their creative work and their reading skills, especially on core subjects such as mathematics, science, and English. The centers are open for eight hours a day and five days a week to create easy access for students to modern, technology-assisted teaching-learning methodologies. This helped students to develop their reading skills, advance their knowledge, and improve their academic performance. The centers are meant to motivate and inspire students to be creative and innovative and help them to develop self-motivation for education as they progress from grade to grade. In the centers of excellence, students learn by themselves to maximize their knowledge from day to day and from grade to the next grade level.

Besides material support, EDA provided training for teachers; coached, supervised, and evaluated activities of the centers.



Map of North Shewa Zone, Amhara Regional State

Selecting, Establishing and Equipping the Center

Initially, EDA conducted a brief assessment on the practicability of the center of excellence schools and discussed with four education office representatives on how to select four schools which could serve as centers of excellences from 20 targeted schools in the four woredas based on agreed selection criteria. The main criteria for the selection were accessibility to other schools in the target woreda and performance of the schools compared to other target schools. Based on the criteria, four centers of excellence schools i.e. Atse Zereyakob ,Alemgena, Shewarobit, and Yelen Primary schools were selected from Debreberhan, MinjarShenkora, Shewarobit, and Kewot woredas, respectively.

The centers were equipped with computers, television sets, tables, chairs advanced reference books, and different lab assistance application software. Following the establishment of the centers, Minjar Shenkora Woreda Education Office and the community contributed finances for the strengthening of the center. NGOs, local government structures and the community have all been engaged in the selection process and in establishing and strengthening of the centers of excellence. These centers were managed by school directors and volunteer teachers and students controlled the overall daily activities

Importance of the Center of Excellence and its Unique Character

Before the centers of excellence were introduced, there was no school that could serve as a model for other schools. According to the initial brief assessment, students were dropping out of school due to a lack of quality education. Laboratories were not well equipped, libraries had no enough and updated reference materials and there were no computers for students to use. On the other hand, there was a very high demand for such services by students, teachers, and even parents. As a result, parents were reluctant to send their children to school.

Woizero Yayneabeba Worku, Director of Alemgena Primary School says the following about the centres of excellence and the impact they have made:

“The center modernized and standardized the teaching- learning process, especially science subjects such as chemistry, biology and physics as well as laboratory activities involving demonstration. It also increased the skills of students in computer. They learned and practiced writing, printing, drawing etc. using computers. The centre gave good base for future university education. The school has become modernized. I believe using computers has enabled target schools to share their best practices with non-target schools by using software.

These centers are unique in that their teaching-learning is supported by computers and technology. Other minimum standard for schools such as the availability of televisions, computers, reference books, printers, desks, chairs, tables, shelves and well equipped laboratories have been fulfilled in the centers to serve as model to other schools.

Major Achievements

Most of the activities of the centre of excellence aimed to achieve the intended goal i.e, quality of education. The following were the major achievements:

- Teachers of the three core subjects: English, mathematics and science and selected students have been trained on general usage of the resource centres, its purpose and importance as well as software application especially on physics, chemistry and biology subjects.
- Teachers especially math's and science teachers and their student use the computers with hands on active teaching application software for practical activity.
- Students learned how to use computers. They use the computers to study science and mathematics. English teachers and students refer to the reference books regularly. Information Technology (IT) teachers from Debre Birhan University updated the science laboratory with latest software free of charge.

All in all, around 4480 students and 68 teachers benefited from centre of excellence in four schools.

Changes Observed as the Result of the Intervention

Changes observed on teachers

Science and mathematics teachers have expressed satisfaction in the teaching and learning process. Previously, teaching science and technology-related subjects was considered difficult as the process was not supported by practical experiments and the use of IT.

Changes observed on students

A total of 26,880 students in 20 cluster level neighboring schools benefitted from the reading centers through book borrowing, reading at the center in their free time; practicing using computers in a lab assisting application software as well as learning and experience sharing among students.

The following major changes were witnessed, among students.

- According to classroom teachers and school directors, class participation has increased. The teachers said: "Previously children were too shy to participate in classroom activities. Some of them stayed silent throughout the class period. But now teachers of all subjects are witnessing improvement regarding class participation due to the impact of the establishment of the centers of excellence.
- Due to the conducive school environment that was created, students are now happy and their interest to learn has increased. In 2018 and 2019, for the first time, Alemgena school ranked first in science and mathematics in the five cluster school competition including private schools.
- Grade 8 students' marks increased from year to year following the establishment of the center of excellence from 2017 to 2019. Before the center was established the passing rate was 78% and currently, it has increased to 83 %.

- The school stood 1st in Grade 1 examination result among the primary school of Amhara Regional State in science subjects in 2018 and 2019. As a result, other schools started to learn lessons from Almegena Primary School as a model center.

Students are becoming more committed and developed confidence because their language competence has improved much and their science and mathematics skills exceed beyond their class level. Above all, their study habit is showing a tremendous increase. Teachers say that centers of excellence have greatly contributed to the improvement of quality of education. EDA provided shelves, chairs and tables, a 42-inch television, 5 computers, and application software and updated reference books for each grade level. EDA staff gave technical support that has contributed to the achievement of the expected results. Other schools in the woredas gained experience and learned lessons from the centers. Some schools were trying to establish the center in their schools despite the shortage of the resources they had.

Sustainability of the Center of Excellence

At the initial stage of establishing the centers, the local community and government stakeholders have been consulted and a series of discussions were made in order to take their needs into consideration and ensure their engagement. In fact, the centers were established and strengthened in collaboration and with contributions from EDA, government, and the community. During the establishment of the centers, Minjar Shenkora Woreda Education Office contributed 100,000 birr and the community's contribution amounted to 125,000. Similarly, the community worked closely with targeted schools and woreda education offices for the effective operation of the centers. This collaboration created a sense of ownership among the school communities thereby ensuring the sustainability of the centers.

Conclusion

The shortage of classes to start at the center was a very great challenge at the beginning. Classrooms given for the purpose of the schools were not up to standard and suitable. Though no new classes were constructed, EDA provided all the necessary furniture and materials to the centers, and students and teachers enjoyed the services at the centers.

Students became more committed and developed confidence thanks to the contribution of the centers of excellence. Their language competence improved and their science and mathematics skills exceeded their class level and they developed a reading habit. More importantly, the government started planning to replicate the centers of excellence.

Had there been more involvement of different development agents like NGOs, it would have been possible to achieve a better result in the area of quality education.EDA believes that the task of improving the quality of education should not be left to the government alone but other stakeholders including communities should be involved as we witnessed from our experience of establishing and strengthening centers of excellence.

CHAPTER 6

Bridging Capacity Rifts to Thrive on Education

Introduction

Early childhood is the most effective and cost-efficient time to ensure that all children develop their full potential, by preventing negative impacts of deprivations during the most formative life-phase as well by positively strengthening young children's capacities. High-quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs will usually improve children's cognitive functioning, readiness for school, and school performance. Improvements are seen in academic achievement, in reducing grade repetition and drop-out, and with growing evidence of life-transforming outcomes emerging in studies with longitudinal evidence (Jack Rossiter, 2016). ECCE is the backbone for lower and upper primary education. There is a big academic performance difference between children who attended the ECCE program and those who didn't attend while they join grade one, which is an important marker for children's continuity in school.

According to the Ethiopian Education Sector Development Program (ESDP)V. "a child who has completed three years of kindergarten is currently better prepared to enter school than a child who has received one year of O-class or Child-to-Child instruction – modalities that are emerging rapidly and are gradually improving in quality. If the expansion of pre-primary education continues to follow the same pattern across regions and kindergartens remain accessible almost exclusively to those in urban areas, it may only increase educational advantages for children from urban areas whose families are able to send them to kindergarten." P. 14. Moreover, the draft Ethiopian Education Development Road Map (2018-2030) P. 10 summarized the ECCE situation in Ethiopia: "…despite some promising opportunities, Early Childhood Education is still fettered by challenges and problems that span from problems related to governance, curriculum, teachers' qualification, location, facilities, and budget".

This is the current plight of ECCE in Ethiopia in general and the situation in North Shewa Zone is no different. The ECCE program was tied up with compounded challenges including the following:

- There was no community or local government structure to manage and run the ECCE program.
- Lack of ECCE's was mainly attributed to the absence of trained facilitators throughout the North Shewa Zone as a whole.
- Parents were not aware of the importance of sending their children to ECCE centers at the right age of 4 to 6.
- The potential primary schools which are supposed to host ECCE students didn't have the required facilities such as clean water, toilets, indoor and outdoor playing materials.

Regarding Primary schools (Grades 1-8), most teachers and some members of the school management were sick and tired of teaching and running schools due to very long and tedious services in the field. Teachers were operating solely dependent on

their prior and sometimes obsolete knowledge from their former training colleges. Again the new curriculum is harder to understand and it's suggested instructional approaches are different from what the teachers know from their original training. This challenge is also acknowledged on ESDP V. P. 20. "…within Colleges of Teacher Education (CTEs) there remain weaknesses in the practical experience of teacher educators and in the subject knowledge of teacher trainees. In addition, teacher pedagogical skills – which now receive greater emphasis in the diploma program – are still below the level needed to apply the active teaching and student-centered methods required by the new curriculum."

Refresher courses, on the job training, and forums for experience exchanges were limited or non-existent. Education supervision reports by EDA and government partners' assessment showed that there was a skill gap in primary school teachers. The baseline survey carried out by the Christian Children's Fund of Canada in Tarmaber woreda in 2012 had also confirmed similar results to that of other assessments. According to the survey report, most primary school teachers in the target areas lacked appropriate skills in lesson plan preparation, classroom management, interactive teaching skill, taking the continuous assessment, and so forth.

According to the draft, Ethiopian Education Development Road Map (2018-30) P.15,"Graduates of primary education lack competence which requires the integration of knowledge, skills, and the necessary values. The focus seems to be on factual knowledge, and a good proportion of children fail to master basic skills of learning at the completion of the first cycle." Consequently, students developed bad feelings for core subjects such as English, mathematics, and sciences and perform low in tests. ESDP V reported that a National Learning Assessment (NLA) conducted in Grades 4, 8, 10, and 12 during the ESDP IV was targeted for students to score at least 50% and 75%. However, test results showed a huge gap between what was planned and targeted and what has been achieved at all levels, with some progress made in Grade 10 but little elsewhere. Since results from national exams were low, most parents hesitate to send children to school and paid low attention to their schooling. An Early Grades Reading Assessment EDA conducted in 2012 by Debre Birhan town administration suggested that a significant number of Grade 4 students in government schools didn't have competency in basic reading skills, hence most parents decided their children should start all over again from Grade 1.

In connection to the school management bodies (School Directors, ECCE management committee, Kebele Education and Training Board (KETB), Parent Teachers Student Associations (PTSAs) members), they were not able to develop meaningful work plans, and can't prioritize academic improvement and school development-related problems and treat them accordingly. The school community's relation and participation in the schools' affairs were very remote; schools didn't show any demonstrated effort to raise internal revenues and connect schools with technology, and their resource management skill was very low. As a result, parents didn't have an interest to work with and trust schools; community participation was low, and schools were not attractive and convenient for learning.

Interventions:

In an effort to understand the extent of the problem, in the beginning, Emmanuel Development Association (EDA) conducted a survey and based on findings of the survey introduced the ECCE program in Tarmaber Shwearobit, Kewot, Debre Brihan, Minjar Shenkora, woredas in 46 government primary schools.

The Project Accomplished the Following Key Capacity Building Activities:

- Mobilized the community in 46 targeted schools and created awareness among parents about the value of ECCE for their children.
- Established an ECCE management committee consisting of seven members represented from all relevant sector bureaus. Three hundred ninety-nine committee members were trained in the management and leadership of the ECCE program. The capacity of these committees was continually built throughout the project life to ensure the sustainability of ECCE.
- Selected 86 ECCE facilitators and trained them on how to teach, care, and handle children aged 4 to 6 in ECCE centers. EDA facilitated linkage with Debre Birhan Teachers' Collage to train the facilitators for a month on how to facilitate age-appropriate and holistic development-based intervention for early childhood.
- EDA hired 86 ECCE facilitators on a contractual basis and paved the way for handing over the facilitators to the local government during the project phase-out.
- ECCE indoor facilities (such as building blocks, puzzles, toys, balls, mini writing board, etc) and outdoor playing materials (such as swing, slides, balance, ladder, etc.) were purchased and supplied to all ECCE centers.
- Trained the 86 ECCE facilitators on how to prepare indoor playing materials from locally available materials.
- Built 9 ECCE activities class and furnished them with the required furniture (mats, chairs, and tables), constructed 8 water points, and 8 VIP latrines.
- EDA formed and supported the work of a supervision team composed of school directors, woreda education officers, and EDA experts to support ECCE center activities.
- Facilitated 3 experience sharing visits to model ECCE's and adopted the best experiences in target centers.
- EDA organized various training and other capacity-building support activities to address the capacity challenges of the project's primary school management and teachers. The capacity building activities include:
- Trained 160 school management members (PTSA, KETB, and *woreda* education bureau representatives, and supervisors drawn from the five project target woredas on participatory school governance.
- Trained 252 selected teachers from all the 36 target schools on quality instructional approaches such as on SMART Lesson Plan preparation, active learning classroom management, and continuous assessment of students' academic performance.
- Organized comprehensive modular trainings in a series of training programs, for English, maths, and science subject teachers in the target schools.

- Equipped the target schools with the required laboratory equipment and chemicals; furnish libraries with collection of reading materials procured from the local market and with those produced by EDA, and equipped pedagogical centres with the required supplies and facilities. As observed during the field visit during the early documentation mission for this report, the project provided 20 desktop computers, four 28 inch TVs sets, and other library furniture for the four centres of excellence schools. Zereyakob School Director reported that the school is equipped with collection of reference materials for lower grades and upper grade student reading in two libraries. They have been given seven computers, and have three equipped laboratories. All project's schools of excellence have been equipped in a similar manner.

- Core subjects i.e English, maths and science teachers were trained by subject specific trainers from the Ministry of Education, Amhara Regional State Education Bureau, Hawasa University, and Debre Birhan Teacher Training College.

The training courses were supported with reference manuals, learning materials production, and additional reference materials produced locally and those procured from the market. Following the trainings, school directors and supervisors along with EDA's facilitator monitored the application on the ground of the competencies developed during the training.

Project Achievements:

As a result of the EDA's project capacity building interventions in the project target areas, the following results were registered:

- A total of 17,802 children of ages 4 to 6 have participated in the centers since 2012.
- A total of 37 child-friendly ECCE centers have been equipped with the required indoor and outdoor playing materials as well as water and sanitation facilities in the project target areas.
- Eighty-six ECCE facilitators have been equipped with the required skills to facilitate the centers. Through a one-month-long training, and follow up support has been given to them.
- The community has been capacitated to manage and support the centers. The community participated actively in ECCE management and has even started to contribute in the form of money, labour, and materials to strengthen the centers and ensure its sustainability.

- According to the school teachers interviewed on Nov 1, 2019, in Chira Meda Primary schools no preschool and primary school student is missing class or dropping out of school for lack of water and sanitation facilities in the school. Records of the primary schools show in 2015 the dropout rate was 2.4%. In 2019 it dropped to 1.3% due to ECCE's contribution to motivate the learners. ECCE made the school attractive for preschool children and they come to school and stay in class for the lessons.

Woizero Wube Masresha, is a science teacher at Alemgena School. She has the following to say about the capacity development efforts and the changes in her school:

"I had the opportunity to take part in the trainings that EDA had organized for science teachers. Before I took the training one day, I was trying mix chemicals in the lab. The chemical exploded and hit one of the students in the head and injured my face. That was because I didn't take the necessary precautions as I didn't have enough knowledge and skills. I can now perform laboratory activities very well with care and confidence thanks to the training. Now I can share my experience to others and even train fellow teachers."

Ato Merete Yitagesu, Aste Zereyakob School Director said,"The various trainings provided to primary school teachers, acquainted them with the latest information and skills in their fields of study. They brought about a paradigm shift in their mindset for teaching. Now teachers' confidence for teaching new things is boosted. They started to consider themselves as learning facilitators instead of an omniscient universal genius person called a teacher. They opened up for more time to students for class and outside of class activities. Now students are allowed to ask questions and inter into dialogue among them whenever needed."

Ato Kefelege Zewdie, Model No. 2, School Director in Debre Berhan, said the following. "Teachers started to appreciate the role of continues assessment instead of only one end line test to track students learning performance, which was decreed by the government but not applied for long. Now teachers developed appetite for new knowledge through reading various professional materials, sharing experiences on forums, adapt new insights in their classrooms, and to browse the internet. Some teachers even conduct action researches and read the works of other scholars to look for solutions to some of their classroom challenges."

W/o Yayeneabeba Worku, who is Alemgena School Director said the following: "Teachers' motivation increased in teaching English, maths and science subjects. They are now so motivated that they teach even outside the regular class hours. Primary school science and maths teachers are teaching Grade 7 students during off shift time and in the evenings as well as during weekends. Teachers are using hands on experimental activities and apply active learning approaches in science subjects. Hence, students are motivated to learn science subjects supported by laboratory experiments.

The increased capacity of teachers is directly reflected in the students' attitude to learning, retention, and performance in schools. Currently, as reports from all EDA project target schools indicate, students' regular feedback shows that they have started to develop positive attitudes and interest in English, maths, and sciences. On regular weekly programs, students take turns to debate in English on plenary sessions. The rate of students' retention and transfer from grades to grades has increased. In the beginning, only a few students were able to get passing grades in English, maths, and science but after the project intervention, almost all students were able to get passing grades and above on the national exam. Now parents have appreciated the changes and continued to pledge support to schools. For example, among Grade 8 students of Zerai Yakob School, 83% got a passing mark. In 2018 some 87% passed, and in 2019, 98% of them got passing marks. This put the school first in students' achievement from among other similar schools in the town. More importantly, for the first time in the history of Government schools, Zerai Yakob School was selected to send two high performing students to Dessie Boarding School where only high scoring students in the region could get admission.

The project training programs and the other capacity support efforts equipped the schools management with the required skills to develop meaningful school management and development plans and monitor their progress. In this process, 399 ECCE community management committees were trained and 20,976 community members were reached to raise their awareness on the value of early childhood education.

During interviews conducted with school teachers and directors for these documentation school teachers and directors said: "Almost all participants confirmed that there is a high spirit among the school management; the relationship among the school community has been strengthened and now community members love to join the management committees and support schools technically and administratively. Schools are now

generating internal revenues for some of their resource needs. The school's management and EDA facilitators are working hand in hand to solve some challenges. Now parents send their children happily. Recently about 400 parents of students in Zerai Yakob School signed a petition recommending the school to be upgraded to a secondary level."

The various capacity development efforts made at all levels in the pre and primary schools helped to improve the students' promotion rate. Accordingly, the compiled schools data as indicated in the table below shows in the year 2016 the average promotion rate of students for 1st cycle (Grades 1-4) primary in the target schools was 87.5%, and in the year 2019, this rate increased to 96.4%. Likewise, for the 2nd cycle (Grades 5-8) primary level in the year 2016 the promotion rate was 86% but the year 2019 shows 87.25% increase. Though the changes at the second cycle primary were not huge due to various other transitional challenges such as a change in the medium of instruction, stiff nature of the new curriculum, and the like, there is a meaningful result as far as promotion is concerned.

Table4. **Promotion Rate Target Students in Project Areas per Year and Cycle (1st and 2nd)**

Academic Year	Grade Level	Promotion Rate	Academic Year	Grade Level	Promotion Rate
2016	1-4	87.5	2016	5-7	86
2017	1-4	92.5	2017	5-7	86.3
2018	1-4	93.7	2018	5-7	87
2019	1-4	96.4	2019	5-7	87.25

In the same way, the full primary school (Grade 8) promotion/completion average rate registered in the year 2016 was only 82% but the rate increased to 85.6% in the year 2019. This shows a meaningful change in only three years period of the project activities.

Table5. Grade 8 Student Promotion Rate

Academic Year	Grade Level	Promotion Rate
2016	8	82
2017	8	83.5
2018	8	85.6
2019	8	87.7

Finally, the capacity building efforts of the project on the school management resulted in remarkable changes in the overall performance of the target schools and their management. As a case in point, among the 36 target schools the Zereyakob school Grade 8 students' achievement on the 2019 national exam put the school first out of 25

government schools in the town. The school received certificate of recognition from the Woreda Education office.

Due to this active engagement throughout the project capacity building programs, and making good use of the reading materials, Ato Merete Yetagesu, Zerai Yakob School Director stood first on a licensing test and became the first licensed school Director in town.

The following table 6 indicates that students' average score in the three subjects (English, math, and science)

Table6. Students' average score in English, Math and Science

Subject	Grade	2016 Average score out of 100	2017 Average score out of 100	2018 Average score out of 100	2019 Average score out of 100
English	5	46	60.8	67.9	76.5
	6	44.8	57.6	68.7	73
	7	54.5	61.4	68	72.5
	8	42	56	69	78
Science	5	57	71	88	91.3
	6	58.4	73	85	89.4
	7	64.7	76	83	87
	8	51	62	75	89
Math	5	43.2	61	68	71
	6	46.9	65	67.5	69.4
	7	51.9	57	67.5	75
	8	38	48	59	68

According to the schools' grade report in the above table, students' result in the three core subjects showed a series of improvement every year. In 2016, only 19 percent of grade 8 students scored 50% and above in the three core subjects (English, maths, and science) in the regional examination. However, the result has improved to 79% in 2019. EDA target schools were the best in their respective woredas.

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No more thirsty children in the school, pre-school made possible

Chera Meda is a kebele in Tarmaber Woreda, North Shewa Zone. According to Chera Meda Primary school teachers, the schools did not have preschool section. In fact establishing preschools and equipping and furnishing them was not their priority at all. As the result, pre-school children were remained home without developing the required mental, emotional and physical preparation that would enable them to cope when they join primary schools.

Schools didn't have clean potable water and children as well as teachers were often thirsty. Children were forced to drink unclean water that they fetched from the river that exposed them to water-borne diseases. Absence of proper latrine facilities made the school compound very dirty and unsanitary often causing illness to children. And children became absent from the school when they were sick.

EDA in collaboration with the local community and in consultation with the local education offices decided to improve the most needed services in schools and start preschool children. The first intervention was to set up preschool centres within the primary school compound. In line with the policy of the regional government, the preschools were made to accommodate children from ages 4 to 6 for a three year period. In the preschools, the required facilities such as seats, mats, learning materials, sleeping corners and outdoor playing materials were supplied. Preschool facilitators were selected and trained to manage the centres. To improve the water and sanitation problems faced by the schools, EDA installed water points from water sources available in the area. It also built latrines, separately for girls and boys and teachers.

Chera Meda School has now become clean and convenient for learning. According to the school teachers interviewed on Nov 1, 2019, there hasn't been any reported water born disease by the students and teachers. No student is missing class or dropping out of school due to lack of water and sanitation facilities in school. Dropout rate records of the school show that the dropout rate dropped from 2.4% in 2015 to 1.3 %in 2019. Students are now willing to come to school and remain in their classes for their lessons.

Currently the number of ECCE student enrolment in the center has reached an average of 56 children every year. This change has created opportunities for children to start their primary schooling at the right age for primary school admission, and according to the Universal Primary Education (UPE) requirement. The students also have the potential to continue their education in the primary grades because they will have the required basic skills for reading and math due to their prior exposure to letters and numbers identification early in the preschool. Obviously, this contributes for better children performance in their education in the years to come.

CHAPTER 7
Girls' Education and Female Students' Empowerment

Situation
The Ethiopian Education Statistical Abstract 2016/17 indicates that Ethiopia has made remarkable progress towards girls' education. Net primary enrolment rates jumped from 51 percent in 2003/04 to 95 percent in 2016/17. However, 1.6 million primary and secondary school-age girls are out of school; 47% of girls who start Grade 1 do not make it to Grade 5. Also, 75% of secondary school-age girls do not attend secondary school. Fifty-three (53%) of girls complete primary school, and only an estimated 10% enroll in college. Girls face several challenges in attending safe schools with quality education (UNICEF Fact Sheet –Girl's Education, 2018).

Girls in EDA target areas in Minjar Shenkora, Kewot, DebreBirhan, and Shewarobit districts, North Shewa Zone of Amhara regional face similar and in some cases worse challenges. The communities undermine the social, cultural, and economic role of women and girls. Women and girls themselves seem to have accepted this as a norm. Hence, girls' education was of low priority and traditionally they are subjected to drop out due to early marriage, labor exploitation, house chores, and so forth. Though the enrolment was almost proportional to the primary grades, the completion rate for girls was lower than boys. Girls become dependent on their husband and/or family for their basic needs. As a result, they play a limited role in making decisions about themselves, their families, and communities.

Poverty, socio-cultural factors - social norms and harmful traditional practices - gender-based violence, early marriage, and migration are among the main barriers to girls' and women's access to, and completion of education. Offering basic education and female students' empowerment is the surest way of providing girls and women who constitute over half of the world population with power and independence to make genuine choices over the lives, their families, and their community. By so doing they will be given the opportunity to contribute to the local and national development and become liberated members of society.

Response
EDA was one of the few non-government organizations to intervene on girl's education and female students' empowerment in Minjar Shenkora, Kewot, DebreBirhan, ShewaRobit, and Tarma Ber districts. EDA's interventions have supported a total of 71,557 students (36,495 male 35,062 female) in 36 schools of the five districts.

The following major activities were implemented from 2013 to 2019 in order to contribute to minimizing the challenges faced by girls and women and bring changes.

Community Sensitization
The purpose of the community sensitization session was to enhance awareness of the local community about the importance of girls' education and gender equality so that they can support girls' education and empowerment. From 2016 to 2019, EDA has organized 30 community sensitization sessions in which the targeted schools' community members (students, teachers, PTA members, school principals, and supervisors) participated. A total of 8000 school community members attended the

various sensitization sessions in Minjar Shenkora, Debre Berhan, Kewot, and Shewa Robit woredas. The sessions were led by district EDA educators in collaboration with experts in government education offices.

Economic Support to Needy Girls

In order to support at risk of dropping out girls due to economic problems, EDA provided 52 highly vulnerable girls with small ruminants. Each girl was provided with 2 ruminants, sheep, or goats. The aim of the support was to help girls continue their schooling by supporting themselves economically in a sustainable way. They are not expected to revolve the same to the implementing partners or other girls and it was given as direct support. The selection of beneficiaries was made in collaboration with Woreda Children and Women's Affairs Offices, Kebele administration, and school directors based on the agreed selection criteria.

Establishing and Supporting of Girls' Clubs

Girls' clubs have been established, strengthened, and supported in targeted schools. The donated materials were used both for action plan preparation and actual implementation of school club activities including counseling services. Girls' clubs were instrumental in fighting early marriage, and migration; and sanitary pad production from locally available materials and utilization.

Empowered to Empower: Girls Help Each Other

Lubaba Bushera is a 13 year old girl was attending Grade 8th in Sefi Beret Elementary School. Her fathers, Ato Bushra has seven children (three male and four female). He lives in Sefi Beret Kebele, Kewot District of North Shewa Zone, Amhara Regional State.

Lubaba says: "During my early school days, my interper communication, and class participation was very weak a didn't have sufficient time to study at home. My academ performance was not satisfactory. Early marriage, less attention given to girls' education by the community, lac confidence among girls caused low academic performar girls and stood in the way of many young girls' completi their education.

Lubaba was among 227 school girls who were supported by EDA on girls education in Sefi Beret formal full cycle school. Lubaba says," EDA has provided variety of supports including text books, exercise books, furniture, laboratory equipment; organized tutorial classes and capacity building trainings on life skill development, and gave training on how to fight harmful traditional and cultural practices. The support has helped me to give priority to my education, have study plan, build my confidence level and enabled me to communicate with people properly. My cognitive capacity has increased and I scored an average of 81.6 and ranked 2nd when I was promoted from Grade 7 to Grade 8 last year (2018/2019)". I am currently actively participating in class activities, and in different school clubs including Girls Club, Environmental Protection Club and Mini Media Club.

Early marriage case was among the other issues Lubaba wants to raise "there was a school girl forced by her family to marry early but we heard about it and working with school girls club and Young Women Can Do It (YWCDI) club at Kebel levels, and Kebele Administration the planned marriage was cancelled after discussion and consultation with her family". Lubaba added. "As a result of continues community orientation and campaigns conducted by school girls club on harm full traditional practices, there is increasing number of people who have brought attitudinal changes contributing to increased girls school enrolment and engagement. In this joint effort and satisfactory results, the contributions of EDA, Kebele Administration and people with better educational background were very vital"

Lubaba concluded saying: "The support that was provided to me to continue my

Woizero Yanyabeba Worku, Alemgena School Director said the following about the improvement in girls' knowledge due to the support received from EDA and other stakeholders.

"School girls' participation in class activities, laboratory experiments and in different functional school clubs has increased. School clubs like the girls' club that has membership of 30 girls has brought significant changes regarding fighting early marriage and migration working closely with Kebele Administration, The Young Women Can Do It (YWCDI) clubs at the kebele level and other community based institutions. Women and girls and are involving more in their community and are prepared for better decision-making."

Life Skills Training

In order for girls to advocate for themselves and their equality, they should be provided with life skill training. The training supports girls to be critical thinkers in schools and outside of school. It also helps them to learn how to tackle various problems that may arise at home, in school, and in their other social interactions. From previous years' experience, EDA has learned that empowering girls with life skill training is crucial and helpful for girls towards developing their confidence to become decision-makers in their own issues, and critical thinkers.

School girls got the opportunity to participate in life skills training which was carried out in 20 target schools in Minjar Shenkora, Kewot, Debre Berhan, and Shewa Robit woredas. The training covered topics such as quality leadership, self-esteem, critical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, role-playing, and the ability to set goals for the future. The training was cascaded by gender specialists from Children and Women's Affairs Offices in their respective target woredas/districts. A total of 6,500 girls benefited from the training. Two hundred sixty-eight club leaders- most of them female teachers-in 20 target school were part of the training to support girls' clubs in each school. This has helped to strengthen the girls' club in each school. It also has given an opportunity for girls to understand their passion, assess their potentials, articulate their vision to develop their personal goals, persistently follow their vision and endure challenges they encounter at home, in school, and in their vicinity.

Mentorship service

The aim of girls' mentorship services was to assist girls on how to solve different family problems, psychological problems, and others that push girls to drop out of school. Model female teachers and other members of the community were selected to mentor the selected girls from each school. One mentor was expected to mentor at least five girls in schools and out of schools. Before starting the mentorship, model female teachers and other mentors were provided with capacity development training on how to provide mentorship service effectively. They then went on and provided training to teachers and administration staff on how to support girls and jointly identified school girls with multiple challenges or problems related to socio-economic, academic performance, and behavioral problems. Consultations were carried out with the parents and based on the identified specific problems the project gave support in collaboration with the school community. The support included:

- Provided additional close follow up support giving priority to the subjects on which they are performing poorly.

- Mentors monitored the engagement level of the girls and solved the challenges faced by absentees and latecomers in consultation with the girls and parents. The monitoring was done through observation and taking attendance.
- Organized experience sharing events for parents of best and poorly performing students.
- Gave training on how to support girls to school management, directors, and the kebele administrations.
- Identified the most disadvantaged school girls to be supported with learning materials and goats and sheep in order to help them to cover their learning material costs. Due to this support, all the supported girls are still in school and are supporting themselves in a sustainable way.

Tutorial Classes

Tutorial classes were provided for low achieving girls in upper primary grades particularly, in English, maths, and science subjects. The aim was to bring the low achieving girls to the expected level by providing them with tutorial support which takes place at least for three hours each week. The trained tutorial agents were assigned to give them tutorial support in four Woreds of North Shewa Zone i.e DebereBerhan, ShewaRobit, Minjar, and Kewot. A total of 868 girls in 19 target schools have benefited from continuous tutorial classes. The tutorial classes have helped girls to improve their academic results, compensating the social and biological challenges of female students.
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"I'm Confident My Dream Will Come True": Hayat

The livelihood of Yelen Kebele communities in Kewot District of North Shewa Zone, Amhara Regional Sate of Ethiopia is dependent on farming activities especially on crop production. According to the data obtained from the district's Planning Commission, the total population of the Kebele is estimated to be 7,896 (4,274 male and 3,622 female). Hayat's parents live in Yelen kebele with their family of six (2 male and 4 female). Hayat,the eldest of the children, is currently a Grade 9 student in Tere Secondary School, located near Tere kebele.

Hayat describes the conditions that existed before EDA education program statrted working in her kebele. "From Grade 1 to Grade 4, my participation in class and school activties, and academic performance was very minimum. When I was promoted from Grade 3 to Grade 4 my average mark was 72.4 ranking 13th. I was a shy girl and was not able to communicate with people properly. I was afraid of talking people,and never looked at people in their eyes. This negatively afffected my self confidence.

Talking about the positive changes in her life Hayat says: "Now, I am a changed girl in many ways. Academic wise I became top of the class from Grade 5th to 8. I scored 849 out of 900 in the model exam and 60% in the Ministry of Education exam in grade 8 in 2018/2019. This is the result of the support provided by EDA and my hard work. I am also one of the active participants in school clubs such as Girls Club, My life my choice, and Environment Protection.

My communication with the people around me has improved significantly; my confidence has increased, Unlike the previous times, whatever challenges or problems I might face in the school, I' try my best to solve it in consultation with my friends and teachers before I inform the case to my family"

Regarding the attitude of some families towards girls' education Hayat said," In my village there were some families who do not want to send their daughters to school due to different reasons. Some families perfere their daughters to support them at home.They are also afraid that if their daughters become educated they might refuse to marry or disobey their husbands. However, there are now improvements on girls' school enrolment due to continuous awareness creation work on girls' education. In collaboration with relevant stakeholders girls are also taught how to combat the challenges affecting them, In fact, we need to continue our joint efforts for better achievements till the problems have been solved."

Talking about her future plans, Hayat said: "In the future, I want to become a doctor and help people, especially those living in the rural areas. That's why I'm focusing on subjects like biology which is more relevant to the field of medicine. I would like to thank all people who have helped me in my efforts to achieve my goal. I want to say thank you to EDA and the donors, my beloved parents, and teachers. Through their continued support I am confident my dream will come true."

Construction of Separate Latrines for Girls

EDA constructed and/or renovated a total of nine separate latrines for girls with four seats each in nine targeted schools in North Shewa Zone of Amhara Regional State benefitting 4,420 school girls and meeting the demand of female students in the school.

EDA planned and implemented all the above mentioned intervention in a way that ensures community and government engagement. For instance, the community in Madina kebele contributed in the form of labor and local material support during separate toilet construction for girls.

The Beautiful, Smiling Girl is Back in School

Seventeen year old Shitaye was born in Minjar Shenkora Woreda, Dodota Kebele. She attended her primary school from grades (1-4) in Dodota Primary School. After she completed her lower primary grades in Dodota Primary School, she joined Alemgena Primary School in Grade 5 where EDA education program was implementing girls' empowerment program. Shitaye is very calm in nature and beautiful with gorgeous smile. This program gave Shitaye an opportunity to get life skills training. The training focused on how to protect oneself, assertiveness, self-defence, decision making, etc. Her active participation in school clubs made other girls follow suit. Particularly, her managing skills in girls club attracted many of her friends to become member of the club.

When she was in Grade 8 her family tried to force her to marriage. As a result her academic performance decreased. However, she refused to marry, but did not report this to her school to prevent her parents from being embarrassed.

Because of the pressure from her family, she could not continue her education in the second semester; she dropped out from the school. The school community started to follow up on her condition and found out that she had finally surrendered to the pressure and married to a farmer and went to a remote countryside. When the school director contacted her through phone, she told him that she had made a lot of efforts to escape but she couldn't.

After some more efforts, she was able to escape and report to the woreda center. The school linked her to the woreda administrator and woreda legal bodies. Shitaye finally came back to

Results

As the result of the joint efforts of EDA, government structure, local community and other stakeholders in girls' education the following major changes have taken place.

- Girls' participation in school leadership has increased from 57 percent in 2016 to 72 percent in 2019.
- Girls' dropout rate has decreased from 3.2 percent in 2016 to 0.5 percent in 2019.
- Fifty two at risk of dropping out girls who got ruminant support have completed their academic year successfully and all of them are at school now.
- In 2016, out of the 20 schools only nine schools had separate toilets for girls and boys. However, in 2019 almost all the 20 target schools have separate toilets for girls and boys.
- Girls' club has been working on girls' dropout, absenteeism, gender based violence and other related issues in each school by their own initiative..
- Out of the 1,200 mentored girls, 100 percent of them have completed their academic year successfully and were promoted to the next grade levels.

- Enhanced community awareness about girls' education: In order to mainstream gender issues in the schools, various activities were implemented during the project period. Community sensitization was one of the activities EDA implemented during the reporting period. The purpose of community sensitization session was to enhance awareness of the local community about the importance of girls' education and gender equality. Implementing such activities has brought a significant change in communities understanding about girls' education. This was witnessed by low girls' dropout rate which is below one percent since the last two years. This indicates that there is enhanced community awareness towards girls' education and gender equality and communities are also supporting girls' education.
- Schools have adopted incorporating life skill training for girls in their annual school plan which is run by the trained school girls. This is becoming schools' culture in all target schools and benefiting school girls in their day to day activities as: promoting girls' education among the community, minimizing early marriage, girls' labor exploitation, girls dropout etc. In 2019, trained school girls have organized life skill training in each school which was initiated by the school girls and the schools management.
- All schools in EDA intervention area have girls club which is supported by the schools that advocates for girls' equity and equality, in the community and schools system.

Lesson Learned

Stakeholders' ownership is key to success in girls' education and empowerment.

EDA has established strong partnerships with government bodies and local communities. The stakeholders participate in initiating, planning, implementing, and monitoring & evaluation of the interventions on girls' education and empowerment. The Education and Children & Women's Affairs offices have been providing technical support and supervision. The full engagement of government structures at all levels from region to kebele was crucial for the success of the interventions. Working in partnership with the public and private sectors helped EDA to achieve the expected results. In the course of girls' education and female empowerment activities, EDA benefited a lot from government sector offices, Debre Berhan Teacher Training College, private consultants, and Whiz Kid Workshop that contributed to the success of the project with minimum cost and sometimes free of charge.

Synergies were created and this has increased results as girls' education interventions were addressed through the efforts and contributions of the stakeholders at multiple levels i.e. region to kebele. The changes would have not been greater if some relevant sectors or communities were not part of the interventions.

Long term interventions will bring remarkable changes if managed well

EDA has learned that implementing integrated programs in one specific area for a relatively long period is very important to achieve the desired goal than implementing just a single short term project. This has helped to continue in achieving successes by building on the past results obtained rather than allocating resources here and there for minimal change.

An integrated approach will result in better achievements in girls' educations to address the social and economic barrier

Efforts to improve girls' school enrolment and engagement will be more effective when it is combined with economic opportunities for girls. In this regard, EDA's provision of goats and sheep for income generation in order to help them cover the cost of learning materials has worked well. This is key to address both the social and economic barriers to girls' education and empowerment.

EDA has also learned that the establishment and strengthening of girls' clubs is a good tool to support and empower school girls by creating awareness on their rights and opportunities, build their social interaction, and self-esteem. Empowering girls with life skill training is crucial and helpful for girls towards developing their confidence to become decision-makers in their own issues, and critical thinkers.

Consultation with parents and community leaders and agree on key issues are vital for the smooth implementation of the planned innervations

EDA has learned that in working on girls' education, it is important to work with parents and communities closely to consulting issues such as school club and tutorial class scheduling and places and school community support and contribution. Engaging parents and community leaders in these processes helped to identify their needs and concerns to be considered in the planning and implementation of the interventions.

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